

**High-street fashion brand communication amongst  
female adolescents**

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**By**

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## **Abstract**

The nature of high-street fashion brands amongst female adolescents is a combined set of fast fashion movements and early adopter demands within a compressed timeframe. This research has investigated the need for a communication plan to appropriately deliver the brand message for this sector. There are a number of information barriers for high-street fashion brands to build customer value and differentiate the core values of their brands from competitors because of 1) imbalanced strategic communication implementation particularly in the encoding process, 2) ambiguous interpretation of target audience behaviour as a key disseminator of brand messages and 3) a lack of an integrated communication approach to complement the brand building communication plan. Accordingly, there is a need for a brand building communication framework to formulate and direct the female adolescent perceived values within a limited time based on mutual understanding and shared requirements between a high-street fashion brand and its target audience. Moreover, a strategic plan using an integrated brand-building communication in the encoding process which optimises the contribution of the audience must be developed. This research has revealed that high-street fashion brands should concentrate on consumer self-construal, consumer-brand congruence and consumer-brand relationships of female adolescents in order to clearly construct brand messages which match audiences' values and lifestyles. Due to the needs for informative cooperation amongst the target audiences, the brand-building communication strategy as a persuasive medium, which encourages audiences and prospects to initiate interactivity with the high-street fashion brand, was thoroughly examined in the empirical study. A conceptual model of a high-street fashion brand-building communication was developed and evaluated by means of design research methodology and soft systems methodology. The proposed model explains the platform of brand-building communication strategy in the encoding process for the high-street fashion market. A number of advantages are offered: Firstly, brand managers may use the model to overcome the barriers to integrate a fashion brand

communication strategy. Secondly, it can enhance the recognition of fashion brand-building communication. Thirdly, the model offers an approach to leverage customer-brand relationships by means of the communication process. Fourthly, it allows the description of a holistic view of brand message construction in the encoding process. Finally, it offers a strategy to integrate online and off-line communications.

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# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Since many high-street fashion promotions are aimed at female adolescents, these were selected to represent versatile attitudes regardless of underlying brand values. This research was designed to develop a conceptual model for a high-street fashion brand building communication strategy at the encoding process for the female adolescent. Moreover, a conceptual model for integrated fashion brand communication was examined and proposed as a platform for fashion promotion.

The current study integrated theories of five core dimensions of brand personality and the framework of value and lifestyles (VALS), fashion brand promotion with self-construal, customer involvement as well as brand communication strategies, and has proposed an integrated fashion brand-building communication model. In this chapter, three key subject explanations of the research, namely 1) overview of high-street brand, 2) theories and models of brand communication and 3) customer characteristics and fashion brand communication approaches, are presented. Additionally, the purpose of the research, including a problem statement and key research questions, research scope, aim and objectives, research contributions, and structure of the thesis are also explained.

## **1.1 Overview of high-street fashion brands**

High-street fashions move forward rapidly, with retailers and brands frequently trying to introduce new styles, to encourage customers to come back to the retailers and buy more often. High-street fashion retailers quickly take the best themes from the catwalk shows and transfer these styles into off the peg outfits. Although few young customers would want to actually buy from the designer brands, the Paris and London catwalks are a source of inspiration. These are often featured by the fashion magazines and transferred into affordable, similar outfits by the lower-priced retailers. High-street retailer own-brands control much of the market for young customer fashion. Fast fashion is a key driver of customers in youth fashion (Mintel, 2009a). High-street fashion brands are considered as mass fashion. The majority of people today wear mass market fashion, which provides for an even wider range of

customers than ready-to-wear fashion. Meadows (2009) suggested ready-to-wear represents a mix of mass market and haute couture. Whilst not individually tailored, a lot of care and attention to detail is applied to the design and finishing, which creates exclusivity which is expensive. In contrast, the mass market fashion producers for a larger range of customers than ready-to-wear. Clothes are made in large numbers with a wide range of common sizes, which means they are cheaper and more affordable for the average customer in retail distribution retailers. Mass market fashion is first produced and then sold through retail distribution retailers, typically owned by the brand. Fashion followers wear popular high street fashion brands. What influences fashion trends becomes a principle for brands to communicate with the customers. However, media and communication have been considered as powerful influences over the fashion market and fashion trends since communication tools play a very important role in influencing what is and isn't on-trend. Whatever high-street fashion brands convey, brand communication is how the brand delivers its label's message to the target audience since it covers a wide range of activities i.e. sales, advertising, publicity, special events and websites. Additionally, celebrities have a large influence on buying patterns. Style and design contribute the most significant aspects of fashion for female adolescents – with a lot desiring fashions which media icons wear because some of the main reasons which contribute to a brand's coolness are peers or celebrities (Martin and Bush, 2000). Therefore, a high-street fashion brand communication strategy should pitch the activities correctly (Meadows, 2009). The most important feature was if the communication contained a brand-differentiating message. In other words, did the communication stress a unique attribute which benefits the brand product? (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004).

### **1.1.1 Definition of fashion products**

Fashion change may be viewed as planned obsolescence promoted by fashion retailers which aims at motivating customers to continuously buy new clothes (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004). The fashion change process comprises of several stages, including changes in clothing and appearance styles, diffusion, acceptance and decline. Fashion change and fashion acceptance (defined as conceptual acceptance of a fashion which may or may not lead to actual consumption) is referred to as fashion cycles (Fring, 1994). Various frameworks about fashion change have been developed.

They include Simmel's Trickle Down Theory; Mass-market Theory (Levy and Weitz, 2009); Blumer's Collective Selection Theory (Jones, 2006); and Subculture Leadership Theory (Sproles, 1979). These frameworks endeavoured to find causes to explain why fashion changes from time to time and why a fashion trend becomes popular in a segment. In the Trickle Down Theory, the upper class in a society was the leader of new fashion. In the Mass Market Theory, the mass media caused new fashion to be transferred to all walks of life in a society and each customer group comprises fashion innovators and fashion followers. In the Collective Selection Theory, fashion was previously used as a socialising agent and served as a social standard. A change in fashion and subsequent adoption by buyers aims at conforming to the newly formed tastes in society. In the Subculture Leadership Theory, fashion originates from different subcultures in society and the fashion process bubbles up and changes according to popular culture which is reflected in the fashions worn on the street. Cholachatpinyo *et al.*, (2002) state that the degree of fashion change depends highly on the combination of social trends, individual needs for conformity and individual pressures from others.

Fashion is a continuous process for both industry and customers (Sproles, 1979). Clothing fashion is a typical symbolic product which symbolises fashion products. Its physical form does not significantly change, but social meaning assigned to a physical form is a major characteristic of clothing fashion (Hirschman, 1982). Fashion products have unique attributes. For example, usage behaviour is highly visible, and in turn symbolic meaning is essential to customer's purchases, and certain usage. Fashion can be regarded as a creative product which should satisfy two properties: novelty and value. Novelty is identified by comparing the new product with existing ones. To put this another way, a novel product is one which is different from all previously created products for similar purposes. Value is concerned with the usefulness of the product to human purposes (Akin and Akin, 1998)

Fashion encourages an interesting application of behavioural traits as a representative product which is highly visible by its nature. Due to the fact that the usage behaviour of clothing fashion is easily observable, it influences other customers as an information source. Symbolic meaning is more significant than the functional aspect as the motivation to purchase and use fashion. Using one fashion product can

stimulate demand for other fashion related products. Therefore, the usage behaviour of clothing fashion should be understood by considering the numerous different choices available and of each customer's perception regarding taste, preference and fashion. Customer usage behaviour as well as purchase behaviour exhibit variety and individuality more than dominance by a single fashion (Park, 1997).

### **1.1.2 The idea of fashion leadership and fashion opinion seeker**

The reasons why opinion leaders engage in information sharing and why they influence others are important to high-street fashion brands that want to target opinion leaders and to motivate positive communication activities. These concerns have raised the idea about the role of fashion leadership in this study.

Although opinion leadership has been defined in many ways, the concept is consistently linked with influence, information sharing or both (Goldsmith and DeWitt, 2003). The consideration in the adoption stage suggests that social acceptance is also essential in fashion leading groups (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004). Eliashberg and Shugan (1997) describe opinion leaders as people who are regarded by a group, or by other people, as having expertise and knowledge and who are considered as suitable sources for information and advice. Weimann (1994) explains that they play the double role of endorsers and information sources. Their influence is both verbal and visual.

The study of the relationship between innovation and opinion leadership found a positive relationship between the two (Weimann, 1994). Network hubs are people who communicate with more people about a certain product than the average person does. Researchers have conventionally referred to them as opinion leaders. In industry they are named “influencers”, “lead users”, or sometimes “power users”. Network hubs exist in all categories of conversation products. There are four types of network hubs: 1) Regular Hubs are people who act as a source of information and influence in a certain product category. They may be linked to only a few other individuals or to several dozens. 2) Mega-Hubs refer to the press, celebrities, analysts and politicians. These individuals have many two-way connections like regular hubs, but also they have thousands of one-way links with people who follow their message via mass



media. Conventionally these people have been categorised under labels such as “the media”. 3) Expert Hubs are people who have shown significant knowledge of a certain area. Expert hubs typically specialise. 4) Social Hubs mean those who are more central since they are charismatic, are trusted by their peers, or are simply socially active (Gladwell, 1999). The question is, in what way do you reach such people – these hubs? The tactics to contact mega-hubs – “the media” – are well known by publicity people (Rosen, 2000). Regardless of the methods which brands intend to use, always look for people who display the ACTIVE characteristics of opinion leaders. An easy acronym brand can help hubs to remember them: network hubs are ACTIVE. They are Ahead in Adoption, Connected, Travellers, Information-hungry, Vocal, and Exposed to the media more than others. Network hubs are not usually the first to try new products, although they are at least slightly ahead of the rest in their networks. How they are connected may vary. One hub may be heavily connected within her clique. Often hubs will have ties to a core group and in addition be connected to an outside information source (Rogers, 1995). It will be interesting to see if network hubs also tend to travel virtually more than others. Network hubs often act as “local experts”, network hubs always need to learn more. This is particularly true of expert hubs who are expected to provide answers to people in their groups or clusters. It is useful to bear this in mind when you communicate with network hubs in your market (Starch, 1996). Someone who is outspoken on the Internet is likely to be a good candidate for being a network hub. These are the people who speak out their opinions about issues and who are more likely to be heard. Studies have shown that network hubs open themselves to more mass media communications. Other studies have shown similar results among network hubs who are interested in fashion. However, buzz does not follow neat patterns, all network hubs do not learn about new products from mega-hubs in the media and then pass them on to their followers. This trickle-down theory used to be a common belief by researchers, although it does not always work that way. Therefore, hubs may use the media, but they also rely on friends for information and feedback (Summers, 1970). A common thread among all these characteristics is that network hubs establish links between their local system and the outside world. Since they travel and are exposed to the media, they can collect information which they can then broadcast within their clusters. However, grassroots activities and the buzz which they generate are much more difficult to detect than mainstream advertising or publicity (Rosen, 2000). The first step in working with

network hubs is to follow them. Setting up a system to record information about hubs is mostly a matter of making brands aware of them. The brand database build ought to contain information about the scope and source of their impact and the nature of the network they belong to. How to work with network hubs is as follows: target hubs first, give them something to talk about, stimulate them to teach others, give them the facts, don't abuse the relationships, and make sure people see hubs using brand products (McKenna, 1991).

Rosen (2000) added that if a brand is not giving customers the communication tools which make it easy for them to spread the word, that brand is missing out on opportunities to increase the buzz. Such a promotion is tell-a friend offers or pass-it-on communication tools. When opinion leaders or network hubs respond positively to a brand, remember that adoption is just the beginning. There is more to do. Opinion leaders are not as loyal as brands might hope, and if something better appears, they can change. Timing is important in reaching out to them. In each network there are a given number of networks hubs and mega-hubs, so it is essential to capture their hearts and minds before your competitors do. Often brands can try to achieve this by seeding. To increase the rate at which the news about a product spreads, smart brands seed their products at strategic points in a variety of clusters with seed units. A good seeding campaign goes beyond giving sample products to a small group of media contacts. A seed unit is an actual product or representative sampling from the product which brands use to promote, and place in the hands of seed customers. The seed unit can be offered products at full price, at a discount, or for free. Brands can use sampling programmes, touring programmes, or demo programmes, although the principle is always the same: the brand provides people in multiple clusters direct experience with the product. By doing so a brand plants seeds to stimulate simultaneous discussion in multiple networks. By seeding the networks, a brand is speeding up the regular adoption process. An easy mistake which brands can make is to believe that satisfied customers are also influential in their own networks. There is no evidence for any correlation between the two, because a single customer's satisfaction has very little to do with his or her centrality in social networks (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Customers tend to be more influenced by opinion leaders who are similar to them. Consequently, each social group has its own fashion innovators who determine fashion trends (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004). Fashion opinion leaders are a good example of this social phenomenon (Bertrandias and Goldsmith, 2006). Why do fashion opinion leaders have a higher requirement for uniqueness? Fashion leaders are expected to have higher levels of fashion innovativeness than most other customers (Flynn et al., 1996), which shows their ability to differ from social norms. Opinion leaders in fashion additionally have higher levels of self-monitoring than non-leaders (Davis and Lennon, 1985). Opinion leaders, despite their tendency to innovate and to stimulate changes in a social system, are in fact more conformist than the rest of the population (Marshall and Gitosudarmo, 1995). Gur-Arie et al., (1979) found that opinion leaders were as conformist as non-leaders, even if their motivations were different. Dawson and Ridgway (1987) reported a non-significant correlation between fashion leadership and the need for uniqueness, although they note that leaders prefer fashion brands which they perceive as unique. For the purpose of deliberately examining fashion opinion, CNFU (customer need for uniqueness) is related with fashion leadership. Fashion leadership and CNFU ought to be related to leaders' motivations to differ from the norm and to the advantages resulting from the adoption of nonconformist behaviours. Unconventional choices ought to facilitate and motivate communication about products: individuals are aware that original choices draw more attention from others and tend to establish a kind of superiority on the original customer, especially when s/he has an opportunity to talk about his/her choices. Furthermore, unconventional preferences seem to be more surprising and so, attractive. The reasons that original products or brands are chosen are naturally interesting and arouse curiosity (Simonson and Nowlis, 2000). Thus, higher scores of CNFU suppose a greater probability to make original and unconventional brand and product choices which are more likely to be seen by other people. This is a possible explanation for: fashion leaders' selection as recommendation sources; fashion leaders' motivation to talk about products or brands; and fashion leaders' influence (Bertrandias and Goldsmith, 2006). Chan and Misra (1990) also suggest that the act of spreading information through word-of-mouth communication makes opinion leaders stand out in their group and makes them "different" from the other members, but this spread of information generates social anxiety, particularly when their actions are visible publicly.

The communication influence process comprises only two types of individuals: those who are active (opinion leaders) and those who are passive (opinion followers). The notion of passivity and activity which are attached to the terms follower and leader are not always active, since followers may also initiate interaction with the opinion leader. Two kinds of opinion leaders have been identified: those who actively try to influence others (talkers), and those who do not but, regardless, are asked about their opinions (passive leaders) (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008). Those who are already well informed will look for additional information, and in this way widen the gap between the 'information rich' and the 'information poor' (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004). The communication planner endeavours to exploit the opinion leader's power over the group for the purposes of the planned communication. However, the opinion follower has to be motivated to seek information from the opinion leader, and the opinion leader has to find it worthwhile to inform others about the issue in question (Windahl et al., 2009).

Opinion seeking represents the complementary side of opinion leadership, although very little is known about fashion opinion seekers (Bertrandias and Goldsmith, 2006). Opinion seeking is conceptualised as a subdivision of external information search which happens when individuals ask for advice from others when making a purchase decision (Schmidt, 1996). Gatignon and Robertson (1986) explain interpersonal influence as an exchange process and focus on both information givers and on information seekers. Interpersonal information about products and brands obviously has value. Opinion leaders appear like particular information suppliers, and opinion seekers look like particular information demanders; while both are involved in the process of interpersonal information exchange. This raises the following questions: why opinion leaders generally share a lot of information and which kinds of rewards given by opinion seekers are associated with this behaviour? Flynn *et al.*, (1996) add that opinion seeking satisfies a need which is more than the simple willingness to improve the product choice and to reduce the perceived risk. For instance, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) stated that the desire to enter a group or to enhance the relationship with the group is a motivating factor to ask for advice about products. Interpersonal information seeking may also indicate that individuals want to understand a group's values and beliefs in order to comply with its norms.

To differentiate themselves from others in accordance with the CNFU, fashion opinion seekers with a high level of CNFU need to look for information leading to behaviours which reinforce their uniqueness. Nevertheless, the motivation of seekers appears to be opposed to the pursuit of uniqueness (Bertrandias and Goldsmith, 2006). Feick *et al.*, (1986) mention that opinion seekers collect “information or opinions from interpersonal sources in order to learn about and evaluate products and other areas of interest. Their main preoccupation is to make the correct choice or to enhance their own product or brand evaluations. Moreover, Flynn *et al.*, (1996) suggest that opinion seeking may be analysed as a socialisation process. By communicating about products and brands, seekers can discover an opportunity to create or to strengthen their ties with a group and they are implicitly receptive to normative influences.

After obtaining the different sources of information, customers start to filter the gathered information. Therefore, when audiences receive new fashion information, an interaction between customers’ self influence (personal taste on fashion) and external influence (environmental factors) takes place in the filtering stage. During the filtering stage, the ideal images (internal influences) and perceived images (external influences) will be compared. However, the images may be tangible and intangible. The tangible ones include styles created by remarkable fashion brands or worn by celebrities or fashion conscious peers who represent for them the desired visual and concrete roles. Intangible ones refer to vague images about situational circumstances in people’s mind. Additionally, it has been found that the degree of aesthetic development affects the conceptualization of ideal images and improves people’s creativity to create their own fashion images and appearances by mixing and matching different types of fashion (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004).

### **1.1.3 The diffusion of fashion product meaning**

It is an acknowledged fact that clothing and fashion help customers to develop their self-image and appearance. The variety of topics studied is semiotic of fashion consumption and fashion products as tools for self-expression. Impression formation is based on possessions (Dittmar and Pepper, 1994). Products are symbols by which

people convey something about themselves to themselves and to others (Solomon M. R., 1983), since the functions of products can be expected to fulfill their functions reasonably well. Symbolic meaning provides another method to differentiate products. Previous studies have shown that, with regard to the symbolic meaning of products, self-congruence is a significant factor in directing customer preference. Simmel (1904) pointed out that fashion depends upon the conflict between adaptation to society and individual departure from its demands. Customers prefer products and brands which have a symbolic meaning that is consistent with their self-concept (Govers and Schoormans, 2005). The symbolic meanings of products are captured by the use of personality related ideas, such as brand personality and product-user image (Aaker, 1997).

#### Five Dimensions of Brand Personality

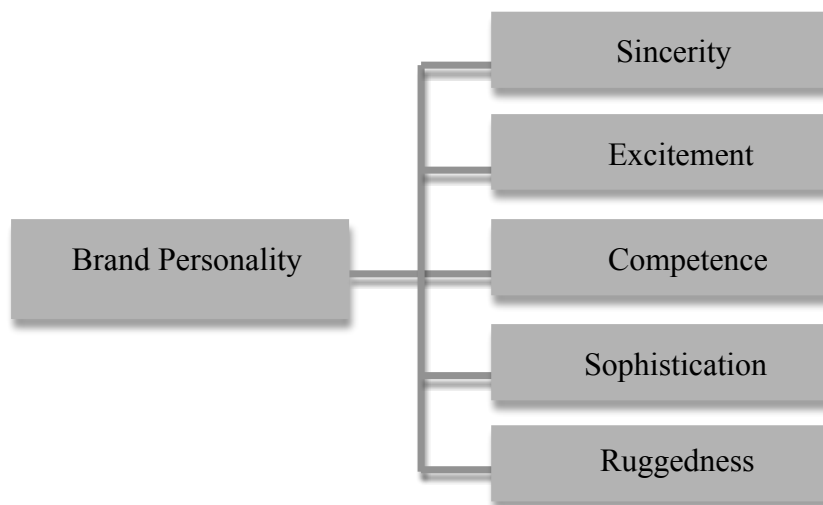


Figure 1.1: Five Dimensions of Brand Personality (Aaker, 1997)

The brand personality dimensions framework of Aaker may be used to study the current status of a brand and to describe the desired future status of the brand. Brands can speed up or extend the diffusion process of a specific product or style by developing merchandise and promotional strategies which encourage new additional uses of the product (Park, 1997). However, meaning transfer is largely achieved by such marketing vehicles as the promotion and fashion industries, which link functional products with symbolic qualities. These products, in turn, give their

meanings to customers as these products are used by them to create and express their identities in their daily lives as shown in figure 1.2 (McCracken, 1986).

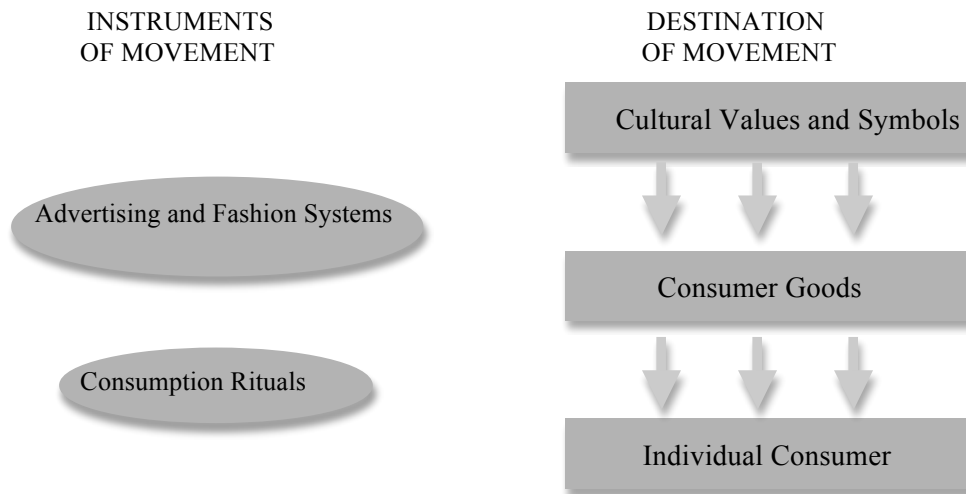


Figure 1.2: The movement of meaning (McCracken, 1986)

It is quite common for mainstream culture to change symbols identified with “cutting edge” subcultures and show these to a larger audience. As this occurs, fashion products undergo a process of cooptation, in which their original meanings are changed by outsiders (Blair, 1993). The selection of certain choices over others is the culmination of a complex filtration process which resembles a funnel. Many possibilities initially compete for adoption, and these are steadily thinned out as they go down the path from conception to consumption in a process of cultural selection as shown in figure 1.3.

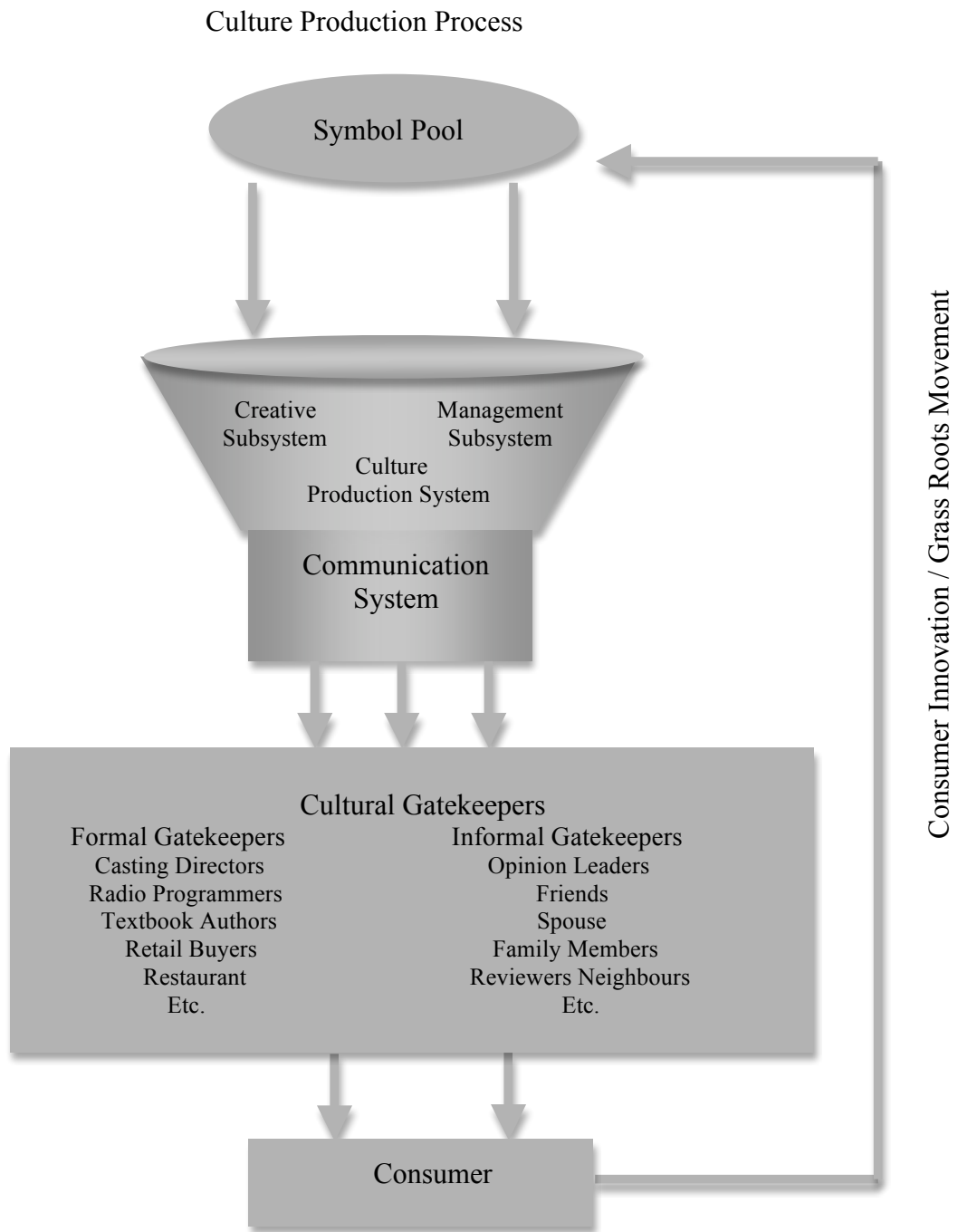


Figure 1.3: The Culture Production Process (Solomon, 1988)

The perceived degree of fashion of customers is created and determined by the cultural context and society. The norms formed by cultural requirements and social systems can move customers' attention towards specific types of fashion in a period of fashion change (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004). Also, fashion trends are moulded by culture, for example what is happening on the street, in clubs, lifestyle hotspots and fashion flash points (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006). Therefore, the point to



be considered, is that these movements in culture and the influence of popular culture, may occur anytime and from anywhere, creating important customer demand for a fashion style or trend. Therefore nothing can be planned to forecast these emerging trends, due to the fact that it is difficult, if not impossible, for predictions or forecasts to be made about these emerging fashion trends (Christopher *et al.*, 2004).

It can be summarised that congruence between product personality and the customer (product-personality congruence) also has a positive effect on customer preference. The “similarities attract” theory, also known as “homogamy”, explains that people are attracted to others who are similar to themselves. Moreover, similarity in personality is a significant factor in long-term relationships (Antill, 1983). In analogy to user-image congruence, there are two aspects concerning the self-concept: the actual and the ideal self. Sirgy *et al.*, (2000) identify four different self-concepts: 1) Actual self (defined as how people see themselves), 2) Ideal self (defined as how people would like to see themselves), 3) Actual-social self (defined as how people believe they are seen by significant others), 4) Ideal-social self (defined as how people would like to be seen by significant others). There is also the frequently quoted definition that the self-concept is “the totality of the individuals thoughts and feelings having reference to oneself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979). Therefore, this research referred to the self-concept of a young female adolescent as a single construct in order to study if customers link themselves with a fashion brand personality which matches their self-concept. As a result, brands can generate the influential and persuasive communication message that leads to a long- term customer-brand relationship.

#### **1.1.4 Characteristics of the high-street fashion market and high-street fashion consumption**

The purchasing and wearing of new clothes is an increasingly well–documented way in which some people try to improve their mood. It appears that more and more people are becoming addicted to the feelings they get when they decide to wear something new. Those feeling can be of enhanced or reinforced uniqueness or of pleasure in presenting a different appearance to the world (Barnard, 2002).

Zaichkowsky (1985) explains the two dimensions of use behaviour as the breadth and depth of consumption experience. Use frequency, is the number of times the product

is used or the number of occasions the product is purchased in the specific time period, which represents the depth of consumption. The breadth of consumption suggests a variety of use situations or the number of brands a person has consumed or purchased over a given time period. Usage frequency concerns how often the product is used regardless of the different applications for which the product is used. Usage variety refers to the variety of applications for which a product is used and the variety of situations in which a product is used, irrespective of how frequently it is used (Ram and Jung, 1989). The fashion retail market is split into a number of segments – luxury, high street, and supermarket/out-of-town discounters. Fast fashion has widely been acknowledged in the fashion press and within the industry as being a key strategy for success for modern fashion retailers.

High-street retailers like Zara and H&M have achieved a reputation for adopting a strategy of constantly renewing their product ranges using fashion-led styles which attract media attention and attract their (mostly) young female customers into their retailers frequently (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006). A high-street fashion brand is identified as fast fashion retailing which is a growing phenomenon in the fashion market (Gannaway, 1999). Fast fashion has the objective of putting clothing into retailers within the shortest possible time (Mintel, 2002). Some high street retailers are sourcing and buying weekly to bring in new fashionable items and to replenish stock. Businesses in the fashion industry are increasingly using time as a factor for enhancing competitiveness (Bruce and Daly, 2006). Concerning the fast fashion business model, they have achieved successful competitive advantage by responding quickly to catwalk trends (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006).

The degree of fashion adoption and fashion consumption cannot be identified before fashion change. The awareness stage consists of three types of needs to arouse personal desire, to change their personal appearance and clothing styles. These needs are psychological need, physical need and externally aroused need. The psychological need includes the personal wish to be fashionable and one's personal feeling, such as being bored with one's appearance. The physical need concerns the functional perspective of clothes (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004).

Changes in customer lifestyle and subsequent demands for newness have exerted

pressure on high-street fashion retailers. Therefore, those retailers in the market have moved the focus of competitive advantage from price towards fast response to changing fashion trends and customer demand (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006). Frings (2002) notes that the fashion industry relies on constant product change, correlating with customer change – their change of lifestyle and need to be different. Customer needs are changing at a much faster pace and the women of today are renewing their wardrobes more often, than in previous years (Mintel, 2003).

Since, the whole concept of fast fashion is centred on response to changing styles, trends and demand, a key component of the business model has to include the drive for information (Doeringer and Crean, 2004). The degree of fashion adoption (willingness to follow new fashion trends and appearances) cannot be determined before fashion change. Taking fashion information seeking into account, customers begin to search for information to satisfy their needs which occurs in the awareness stage. However, customers not only follow the latest fashion trends, but also look and search for various elements of fashion change. Those elements include changes in fashion trends, fashion styles, appearance styles or clothing styles. Also, it is of value to understand that fashion change can be shown in different ways (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004).

In these short life-cycle markets, being able to spot trends quickly and to translate them into fashion brand communication in the shortest possible time has become a pre-requisite for success. In response to the faster pace of the fashion cycle and fast fashion environment, high-street fashion brand communication needs to have the flexibility to respond quickly to changes in customer demands. Failure to react quickly enough to a fashion demand may result in missing significant sales and/or demand and a higher risk of obsolescence as it is clear from literature that fast fashion is associated with pressure on the lead-time in communication.

### **1.1.5 High-street fashion communication and decision making**

In fashion, high involvement results in higher satisfaction (Park, 1997). Communications play an important role in attitudes toward apparel. Recent improvements in media penetration have empowered advertisers to create and

promote images to accompany products. A subtle but powerful change in clothing advertising is being observed; fashion promotion has turned from selling a product to selling an image (Belleau, Didier, Broussard, and Summers, 1996).

Diamond and Diamond (1999) address fashion communication in two groups which include fashion advertising and fashion promotion. Regardless of how innovative or how spectacularly a new fabric is designed, none will achieve its potential success without customer awareness. The power of communication is such that it can quickly and succinctly send messages to specifically targeted groups. The delivery of the message not only serves the needs of the fashion brand, but it also plays a significant role for the recipients. Fashion advertising goals are improving the awareness of a brand, enhancing brand image and informing customers. Meanwhile, fashion promotion ranges from the simplest concepts, such as runway shows, to complex entries. The methods of promotion are designed to improve their saleability.

| Classifications of fashion advertising                                | Classifications of fashion promotion  |
|---|---|
| Brand Advertising (Label Recognition)                                 | Fashion Shows   |
| Retail Advertising (Retailer)   | Special Event (i.e. trunk shows for use in special ordering by invited customers)                       |
| Trade Advertising (Business to Business)                              | Fashion Videos (Retailers use them as mood-setting devices or to attract the attention of the passerby) |
| Institutional Advertising (Promoting image rather than specific item) |   |

Table 1.1: Classifications of fashion advertising and promotion (Diamond and Diamond, 1999)

According to the above table, getting the word out to the appropriate audience requires a collaborative effort that involves media as a key participant, as it is the communication channels which the advertisers use in order to get their messages to the market place. The specific channels used depend upon the type of fashion operation.

### **1.1.6 High-street fashion brand communication at the present**

In order to sell fashion products, many brands use heavy promotion. Fashion promotions for clothing represent a substantial portion of expenses in all forms of the communication vehicles (Belleau, Didier, Broussard, and Summers, 1996).

Popular culture has a major effect on shaping fashion trends. Customers are influenced by music, film, television and other media. There has been a significant movement in the way customers are influenced when purchasing fashion products. In the same way, mass communication provides the customer access to increased information about the latest trends or styles of fashion. The obsession with celebrities has increased with the number of weekly glossies which fuel customer demand for the latest look or product at a faster pace (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006).

Fashion advertising spending has risen rapidly as brands have endeavoured to move their positioning away from the price-driven competition of the past few years. With an ageing fashion audience and quickly changing media usage patterns, retailers and brands are having to innovate in their fashion communication in order to survive. The table below shows the statistics of high-street fashion brand communication seen and heard (Mintel, 2007).

|            | <b>Matalan</b> | <b>River<br/>Island</b> | <b>Dorothy<br/>Perkins</b> | <b>French<br/>Connection</b> | <b>Topshop</b> |
|------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
|            | <b>%</b>       | <b>%</b>                | <b>%</b>                   | <b>%</b>                     | <b>%</b>       |
| <b>All</b> | <b>36</b>      | <b>8</b>                | <b>7</b>                   | <b>10</b>                    | <b>14</b>      |
| Men        | 31             | 9                       | 6                          | 12                           | 13             |
| Women      | 42             | 7                       | 8                          | 7                            | 16             |
| 16-19      | 41             | 19                      | 14                         | 14                           | 31             |
| 20-24      | 33             | 16                      | 8                          | 20                           | 26             |
| 25-34      | 31             | 8                       | 7                          | 13                           | 19             |
| 35-44      | 37             | 4                       | 5                          | 8                            | 10             |
| 45-54      | 40             | 5                       | 5                          | 5                            | 6              |
| 55+        | 36             | 6                       | 6                          | 6                            | 10             |

Table 1.2: Fashion advertising seen/heard in the last 12 months, by gender, age, August 2007 (Mintel, 2007).

| Year         | 2006       | 2007       | 2008       | 2009       |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|              | %          | %          | %          | %          |
| Press        | 72         | 70         | 75         | 77         |
| TV           | 15         | 19         | 13         | 8          |
| Direct Mail  | 4          | 3          | 3          | 7          |
| Outdoor      | 4          | 5          | 3          | 4          |
| Internet     | 2          | 1          | 2          | 2          |
| Radio        | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| Cinema       | 1          | 1          | 2          | *          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |

\* less than 0.5%

Table 1.3: Fashion advertising, by medium, 2006-2009 (Mintel, 2010).

The bulk of fashion advertising spending goes into magazine and press. This is a medium which is closely targeted to the audience and additionally provides a good

place for PR activity. Mintel also reports that paid for publicity through media like TV, radio or cinema is declined by most high-street brands while electronic communication media increases with customers' usage. Retailers have begun to focus on promoting their ranges without overtly stressing price as a major message. To create a premium image to support the sales, most of the main clothing retailers are upgrading their retailer portfolios to make them more enticing to customers. Retailers have also spent on online advertising, although this is a small fraction of the advertising expenditure for youth fashions, which are becoming more in touch with fashion looks and are engaging customers more in ideas, two-way dialogue and rewards. Online retailers will continue to innovate their services and develop their websites to be even more interactive and social, to ensure that youth spending does not dry up. This will see even more tie-ins with networking sites (Mintel, 2009a).

### **1.1.7 Problems of high-street fashion brand communication**

Fashion communication represents a small proportion of total communication, with just 1.9% market share. Fashion communicators lag behind other retailing strategies in using the internet as a way to advertise. This results from several factors, and mainly the fact that a lot of retail retailers have not followed the progress of transactional sites or only recently have indicated their plan to sell online. Partly this is because customers prefer to see, feel and try on clothes to make sure they fit well before purchasing them (Mintel, 2009). Fashion brands tend to use more spending on the press than most because it is the best way of communicating high-quality images that enable people to look at them for more than a couple of seconds at a time. The most important difference in the way that fashion brands and retailers use their media from the rest of the market is in how little Internet communication they use. Customers are inundated by a series of high-impact campaigns for fashion retailers. High-street retailers are spending significant amounts of money on advertising particularly aimed at selling their products, although Mintel's research shows that the majority of the population remembers less. Hence, simply shouting louder at the customer may actually be counterproductive since messages are screened out (Mintel, 2007).

### **1.1.8 Summary of high-street fashion brand communication**

Many of the images which have been produced are youth-oriented. Female young customers regard communication tools as messages which show that clothing represents a significant part of their total image', and sometimes wear apparel because it has been promoted in the media, and they dress more for fashion than comfort (Belleau, Didier, Broussard, and Summers, 1996). Mintel (2009a) shows that the experimental and layered approach to fashion enables teenagers to create their own look, without needing to slavishly follow any single style. Therefore, fashion retailers should not slavishly stick to one look, but instead carry a portfolio of styles to cater for the trend. Many retailers rely heavily on the prime locations of their retailers to raise awareness of their brands and the new lines arriving in the retailers. Even so, the market for young customer fashion is highly competitive and so retailers also spend on above-the-line activities to build brand awareness and drive customer traffic. Advertisement spending is dominated by the big retail maintaining awareness of their brands. Mintel (2007) informs that the movement away from the traditional communication usage pattern is a core issue as these young customers are more likely to use fashion advertising to get inspiration. Female young customers are very receptive to all types of communication messages. Fashion advertising will need to become subtler in the method by which it communicates and the way in which it uses both established and new media. It will also need to re-examine its approach.



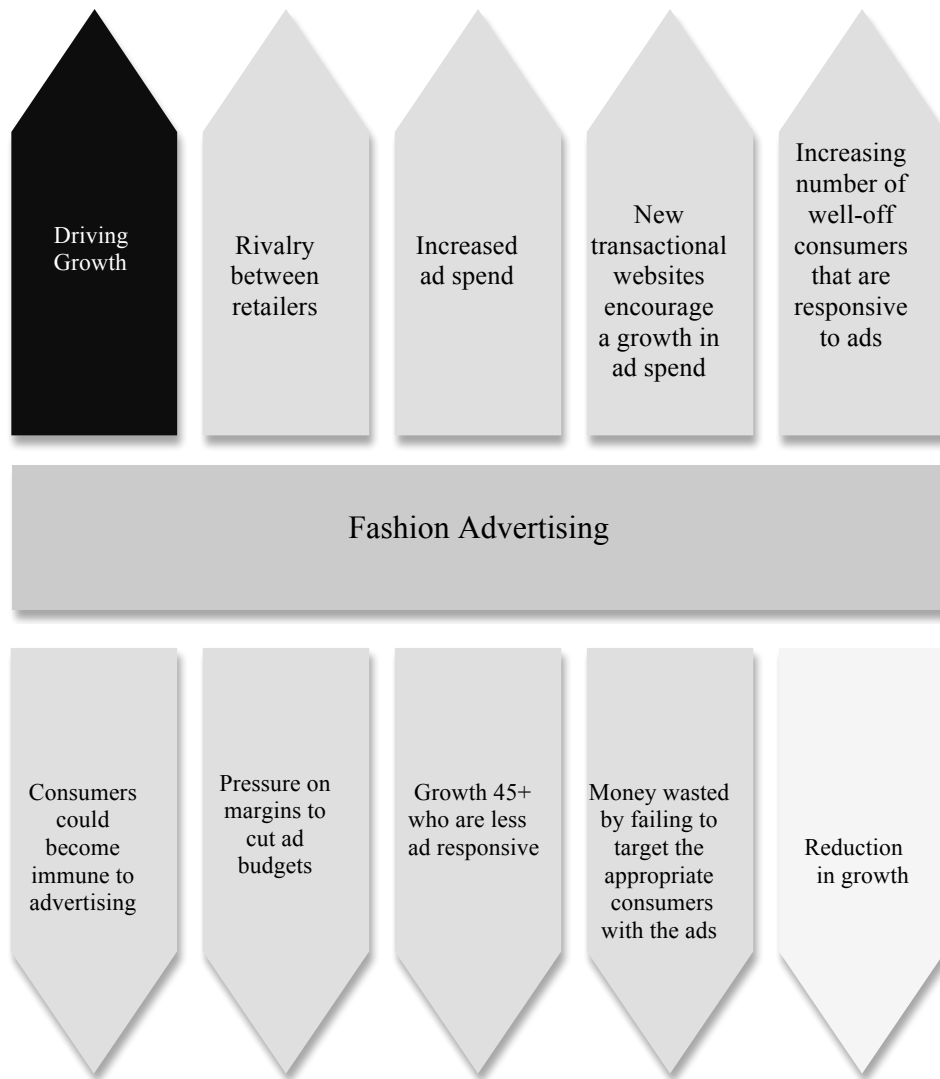


Figure 1.4: Strengths and Weaknesses in the market (Mintel, 2007)

Mintel's research shows that there are often wide variations between the audiences that a retailer's brand reaches and the customers who actually retailer in their retailers, even when they are not attempting to move their customer base in a particular direction. This means that retailers are losing money on targeting the wrong groups, which can give them a negative view of advertising's real effectiveness. With online communications, fashion advertisers often focus on newly-launched transactional websites.

## 1.2 Theories and Models of brand communication

Brand messages have been created with certain objectives in mind – to inform, impress / persuade, and / or generate response.

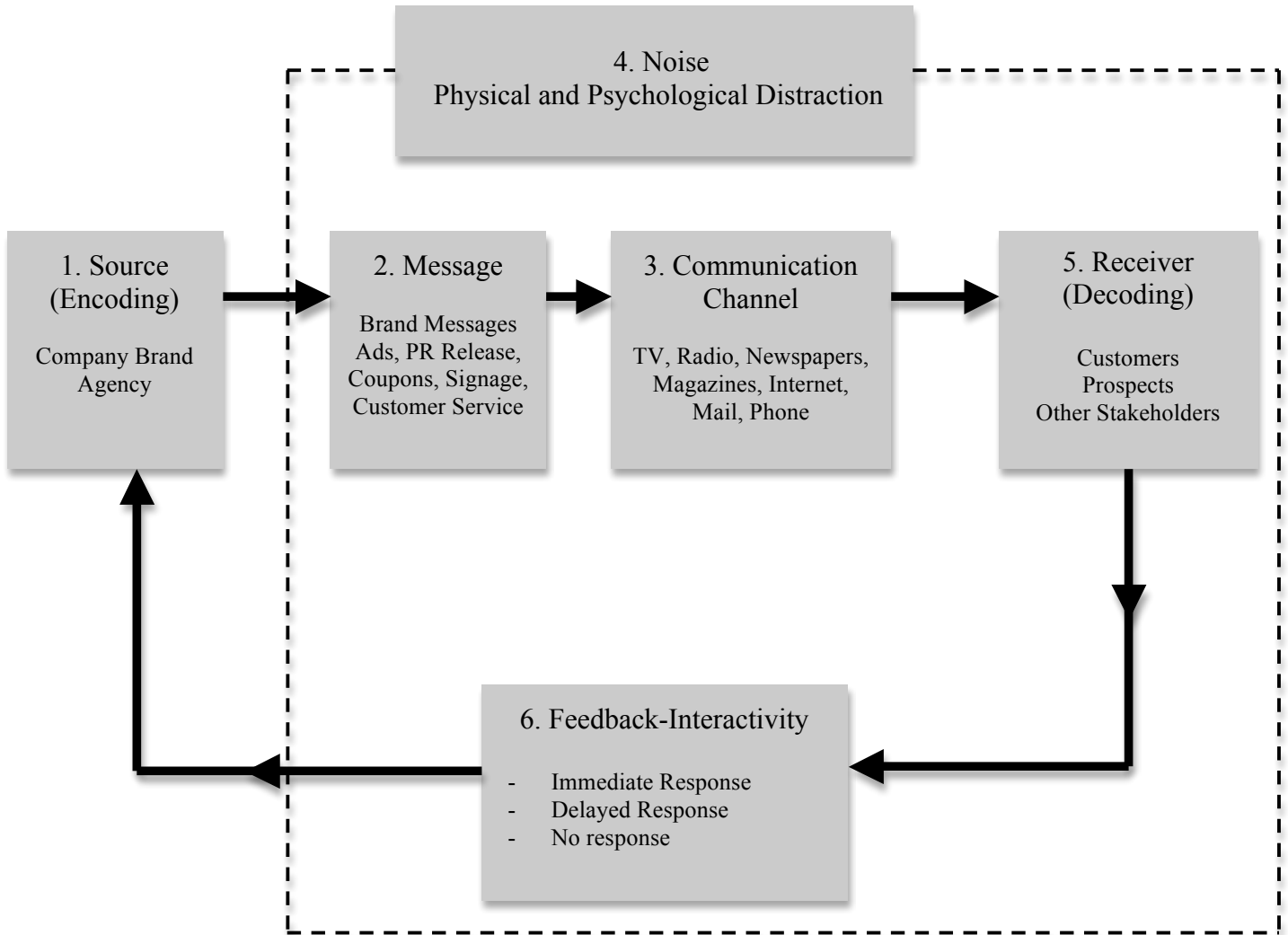


Figure 1.5: How Brand Communication Works (Duncan, 2005)

Once a company decides what it wishes to say, it begins the communication process, thereby becoming the source, or sender – the sender of the message. A communication channel, or media vehicle, is the way in which a message is delivered. The receiver is anybody who is exposed to a message. Decoding is the process of interpreting the meaning of a message. Also the response is called feedback, which is a response which conveys a message back to the source (Duncan, 2005).

### **1.2.1 Communication process and communication theory**

Windahl et al., (2009) suggest that communication is a transmission which results in a Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver model. Communication is the sending of signals and messages over a distance for the purpose of control. It is the representation of shared beliefs. What is transmitted in the communication process is defined as the message. Three dimensions have been proposed as follows:

- 1) The message describes a set of words or images expressed somewhere, somehow.
- 2) The meaning of communication content as understood or intended by the individual who expresses it.
- 3) The message embodies meaning attributed to its content by those receiving it.

The communication functions mentioned by Thunberg et al., (1982) are:

- The expressive function. Individuals express themselves effectively in order to establish an identity for themselves.
- The social function. By communicating together, people create a sense of community.
- The information function. Through communication, individuals can share information and in this way increase their knowledge.
- The control activation function. Communication results in joint action, changing the environment and improving the situation of individuals and their groups.

Effectiveness is a key objective in planned communication, which is measured in relation to the goals for the campaign set by the communication planner. Those goals should be consistent with established norms and values. If the norms on which a campaign is based reflect the planner / sender's point of view rather than the public/ receivers', the campaign is unlikely to be effective (McQuail, 1987).

Hence, communication is not a one-way information flow. Message rejection, misinterpretation and misunderstanding are the opposites of effective communication. An understanding of the target receiver or audience helps to identify what is

significant to the audience and how symbols, signs and language are understood (Smith and Taylor, 2004).

### **1.2.2 Basic component of brand communication**

The core concept of message framing is developed in various types of brand advertising campaigns. The hedonic principles of approach (happiness) and avoidance (pain) are well established in a theoretical foundation (Wedell, 1997). Message framing has been a controversial strategy in the academic and practical fields of brand communication for a long time. It is imperative to take into full account the target audience when examining the effects of message framing (Shiv *et al.*, 2004). The three customer characteristics of self-construal, customer involvement, and product knowledge are conceptualised as the key constructs, which affect the persuasiveness which the framing of an advertising message generates in the dimensions of attitude toward the advertising, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention as shown in figure 1.6.

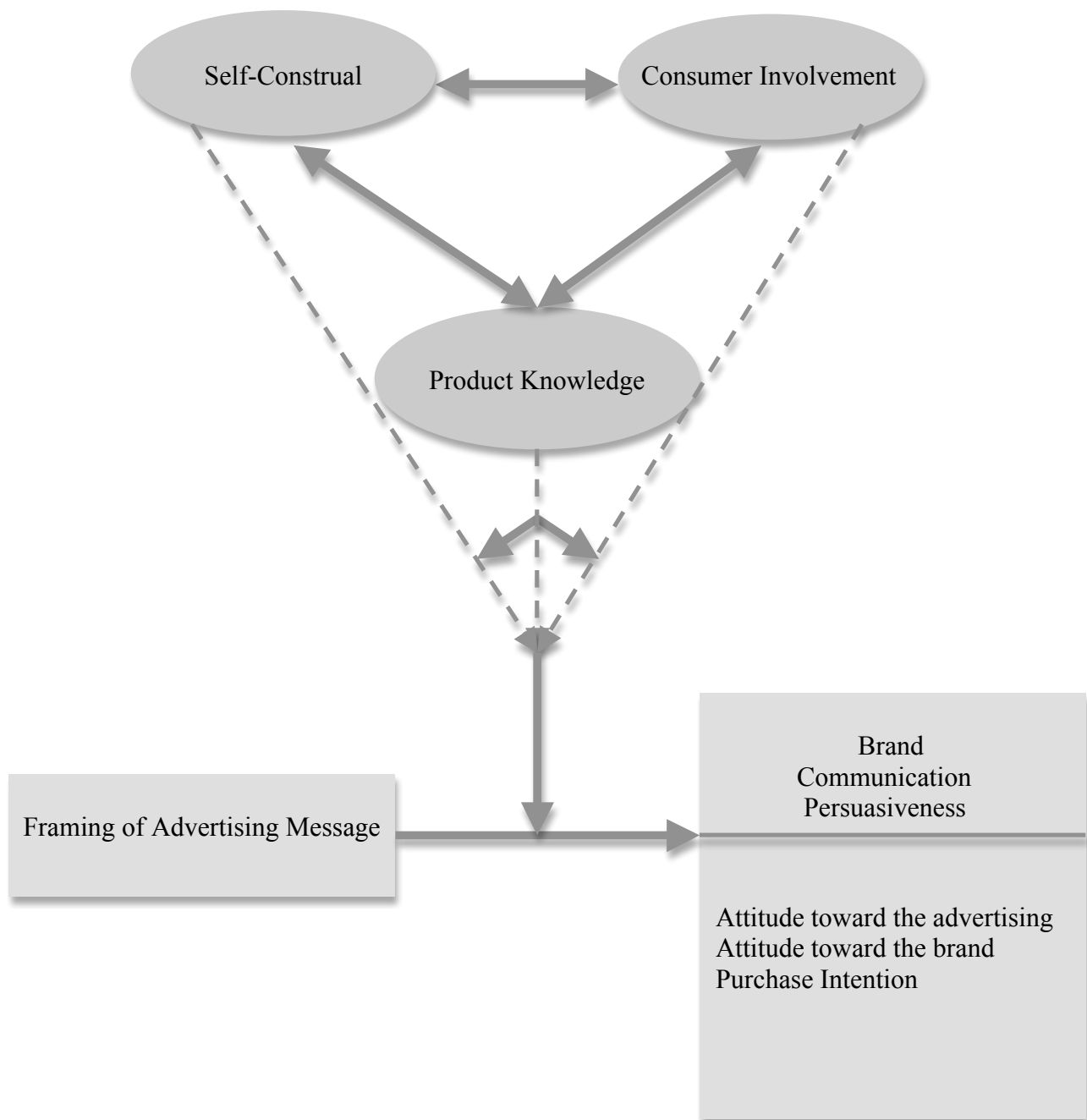


Figure 1.6: Message Framing for Brand Communication (MFBC) Model (Tsai, 2007).

The three main dimensions of communication for a brand are categorised to generally conceptualise the attitude toward the advertising (*Aad*), attitude toward the brand (*AB*), and purchase intention (*PI*). Message framing, which is widely used for brand communication, is intended to manipulate the advertising message into positive or negative frames in the hope that the audiences respond more favorably in these

dimensions (Tsai, 2007). Brand communicators are recommended to present the advertising message in as positive a manner as possible to improve persuasiveness (Chebat, Limoges, and Gelinias- Chebat, 1998). Shiv, Britton, and Payne (2004) recommend that the persuasive function framing really depends on what message is communicated, to whom, and under what conditions. Researchers are called upon to first identify the customer characteristics which may moderate the response to message framing and then include them in the process of examining the persuasiveness that message framing generates.

Furthermore, a brand-customer touch point is considered as any situation in which a customer comes into contact with a brand. The touch-point concept suggests that there are many types of brand messages and that media are not the only ways in which customers come into contact with a brand message. Understanding how touch points affect customers is critical to managing the customer expectations which drive brand relationships (Duncan, 2005). Touch points (customer interactions) have an important impact on customers' decisions since messages delivered at the touch points are often more powerful than anything in marketing communication (Hallowell, Schlessinger, and Zornitsky, 1996).

### 1.2.3 Key elements of encoding process

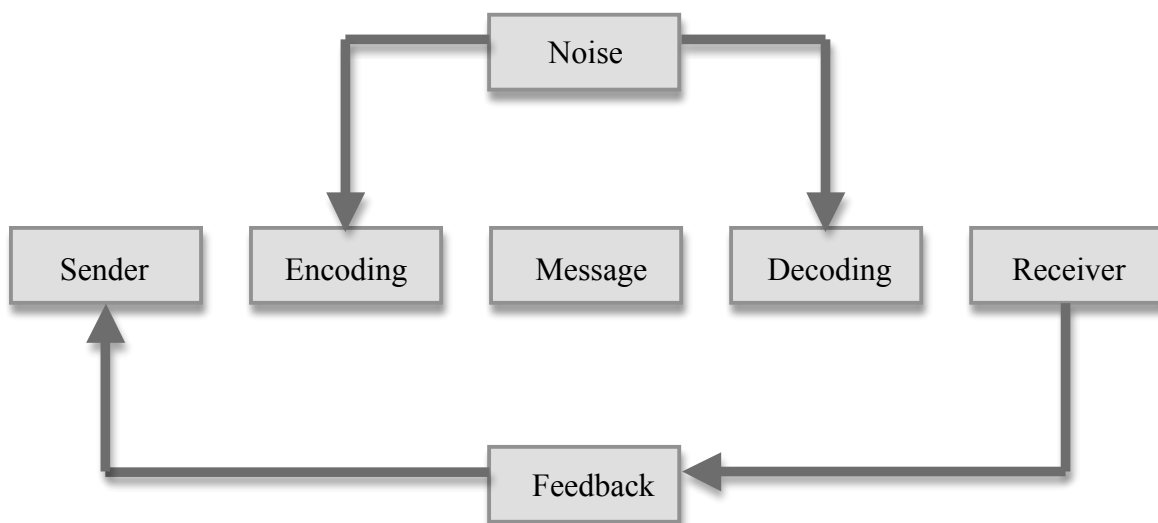


Figure 1.7: The Communication Process (Smith and Taylor, 2004 based on Schramm's 1995 model)

The creation of brand messages to give an intended meaning and elicit a certain type of response is called encoding. A message is a concept encoded in a combination of words, picture, actions, symbols, and/or events. The encoding challenge is to use words, pictures and other cues whose meanings are accepted by members of the intended audience (Duncan, 2005). Encoding means that the individual sending the message has to change it into a symbolic style that can be transmitted. The signal represents the transmission of a particular message making use of certain sets of media or other forms of communication (Fill, 1995). The message is dressed up or coded in a suitable way, sent through a media channel and, if it gets through all the other noise, it is finally decoded by the receiver (Smith and Taylor, 2004). The communication process explains how one party can send the meaning of ideas to another party. The sender of a communication is the communicator, who contributes to the interaction a field of experience or frame of reference. The receiver also has a field of experience. The extent to which the two fields of experience overlap indicates the common field of experience. In order for communication to take place, one essential condition is that there is an overlap between the two fields of experience, otherwise, neither party can understand each other. The encoding process involves interpreting an idea or the meaning of an idea (i.e., a mental state) that has to be communicated (i.e., to interpret what has to be communicated), in order that it can be communicated to another person. However, which approach is used, depends on the message channel which is selected to transmit the communication, or, which message channel is selected depends on which method of encoding is used. Communication only happens if the encoding process is correct and the decoding process is correct. The final issue a brand has to worry about concerning the communication process is noise. Noise is anything which interferes with the communication process. Noise may be a customer's prior negative attitude toward the product. In the latter case, the customer may begin to counter argue with the advertisement (i.e., mentally, and even verbally, start disagreeing with the contents of the advertisement) so that the intended message is not communicated to the customer (Calabash Educational Software, 2005).

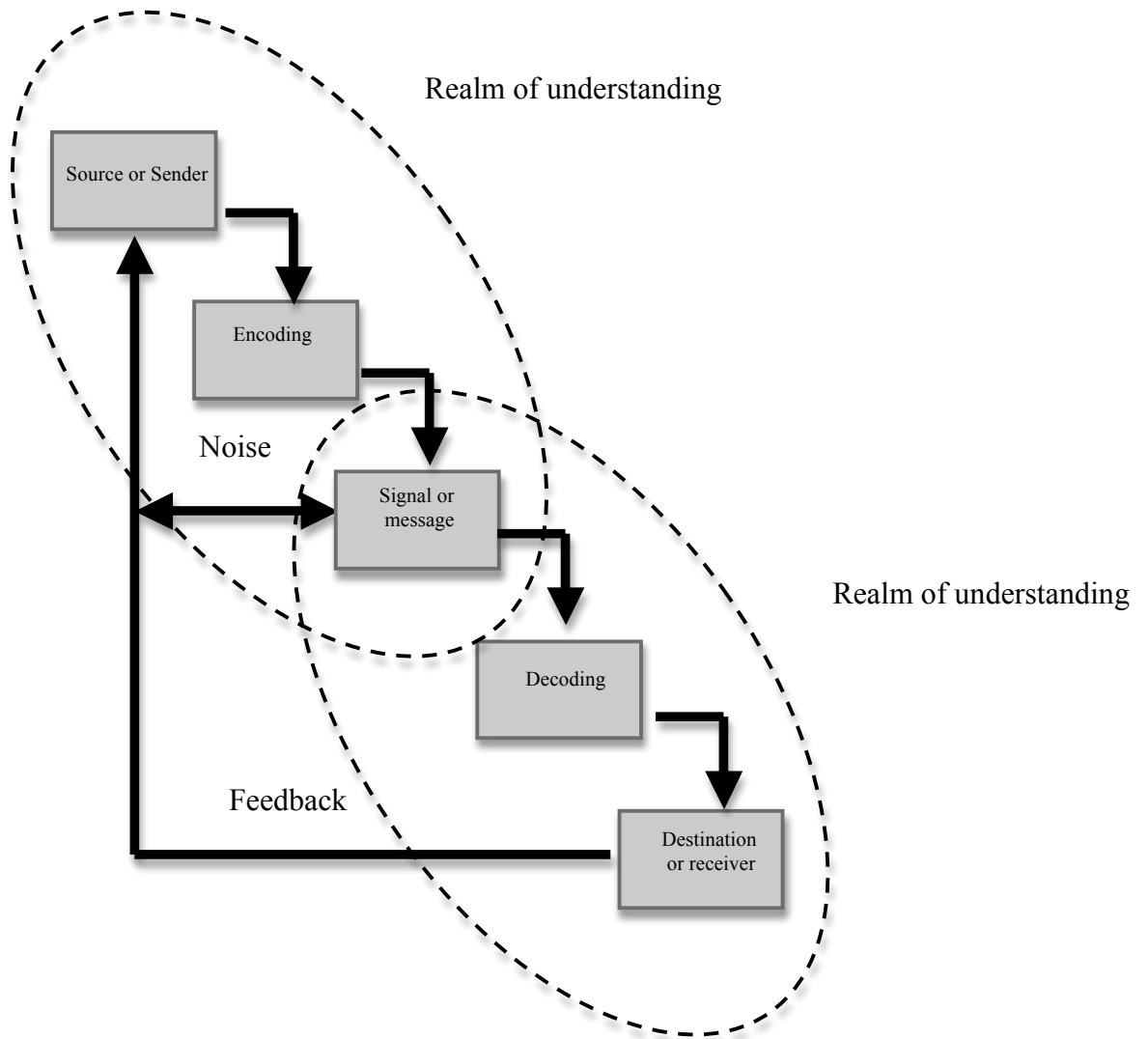


Figure 1.8: A linear model of communication (Fill, 1995)



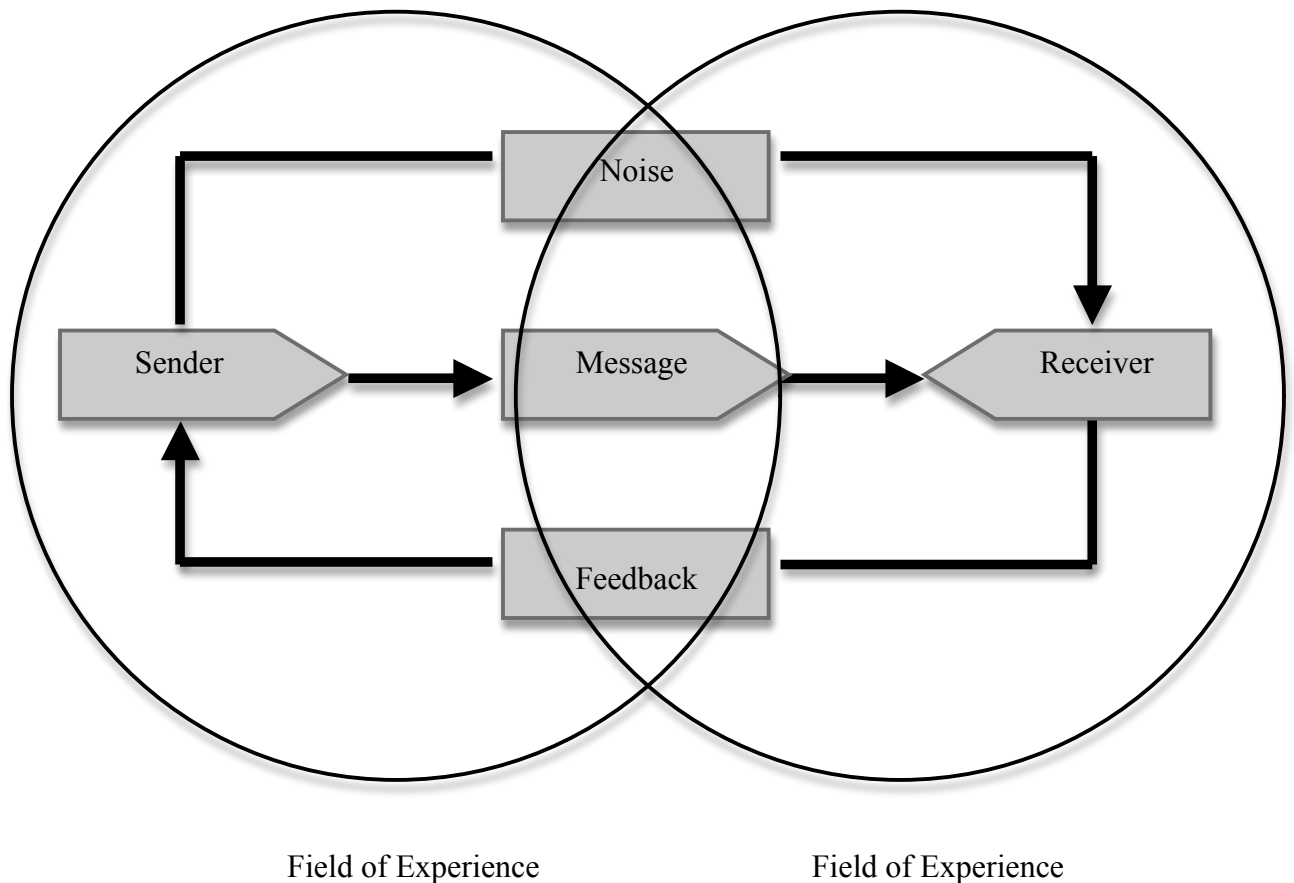


Figure 1.9: Interpersonal Communication Model (Schultz and Barnes, 1999).

A critical part of the communication model is the overlap of two fields of experience. This overlap is the basis of a relationship between the sender and the receiver. Their common experiences are what really enable communication between the sender and receiver to occur. Without a common basis for understanding, it is really hard for the sender and receiver to communicate (Schultz and Barnes, 1999).

#### 1.2.4 Relationship between brand communication and customer involvement

Customer behavior can give insights for communication strategies. Customer Involvement Theory is one method to understand the psychology and behavior of a brand target audience. Involvement refers to how much time, thought, energy and other resources people give to the purchase process. There are two dimensions: 1) Involvement and 2) Rational / Emotional. The Emotional / Rational scale represents a measure of reason vs. impulse, desire vs. logic, passion vs. prudence (McNamara, 2002-2008).

| Involvement                 | Example Product  | Communication  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| High Involvement/ Rational  | Expensive purchases relating to the technological infrastructure, car, home, financial services etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Know buyer and what information buyer wants.</li> <li>- Present sales argument clearly and concisely.</li> <li>- Consider longer format media, video, brochures, Web sites.</li> <li>- Organize sales story</li> </ul>  |
| High Involvement/ Emotional | Design products  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The content and style of a visual message should be strong, original, and rich in story value.</li> <li>- Emotionally engage</li> <li>- Consider longer format media, video, brochures, Web sites.</li> <li>- Provide lots of "personal" information. Not just products features and benefits, but interesting stories and lifestyles</li> <li>- Help prospective buyers immerse themselves in the experience of the product. Think of some imaginative ways, beyond traditional advertising</li> </ul> |

|                            |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Low Involvement/ Rational  | Most of the things you put into your basket at the drug store or market   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider price and sample coupons. Free giveaways.</li> <li>- Identify or create one big reason for people to switch, either rational or emotional.</li> <li>- Consider ways to re-position the product or service</li> </ul>  |
| Low Involvement/ Emotional | Product is emotional or sensual. Product does not last a long time. So we don't spend a lot of time thinking about the purchase such as candy, magazine or birthday card. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Go big on visuals, short on copy</li> <li>- Consider ways to re-position the product or service</li> <li>- Use celebrities or actors who bring instant recognition to the ad</li> <li>- Free samples</li> <li>- Look for ways beyond advertising to touch customers</li> </ul> |

Table 1.4: Customer Involvement Theory (McNamara, 2002-2008)

As with continuums of behaviour such as UACCA (Unawareness, Awareness, Comprehension, Conviction, Action) or AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action), the loyalty ladder starts from a point where the customer has Not Yet Purchased, then he or she purchases the product for the first time (Trialist), if the trial is successful he or she returns to buy again and again (Repeat Purchaser) and finally the customer buys no other brand (Brand Insistent). At the Not Yet Purchased Stage the customer is only a prospect. When he or she trials they become a customer. The Repeat Purchaser is a client because he or she is becoming loyal. Finally, the customer becomes an

advocate (i.e. activist or campaigner) because he or she is brand insistent. At this point the brand is difficult to dislodge because it has so much meaning to the customer. The loyalty ladder has been developed with the purpose of moving customers along a continuum of loyalty using a sequence of integrated communications techniques (it is also referred to as a branding ladder). Essentially, customers become loyal to a brand which has meaning for them concerning a product, service, solution or experience (Raphael and Raphael, 1995).



Figure 1.10: The Loyalty Ladder (Raphael and Raphael, 1995)

A success is nothing more than a special relationship (McKenna, 1991). Therefore, brand communication needs to contain consistency (a brand needs to deliver the same message and present the same image in all brand messages), accessibility (when there is a problem, customers want to contact someone and have the problem fixed), responsiveness (when questions and complaints are quickly and thoroughly handled, responsiveness can overcome negative feelings a customer may have about a brand), and commitment (customers want to feel that a company has their best interests at heart). The brand which achieves these is likely to satisfy and be liked and trusted by customers (see figure 1.11).

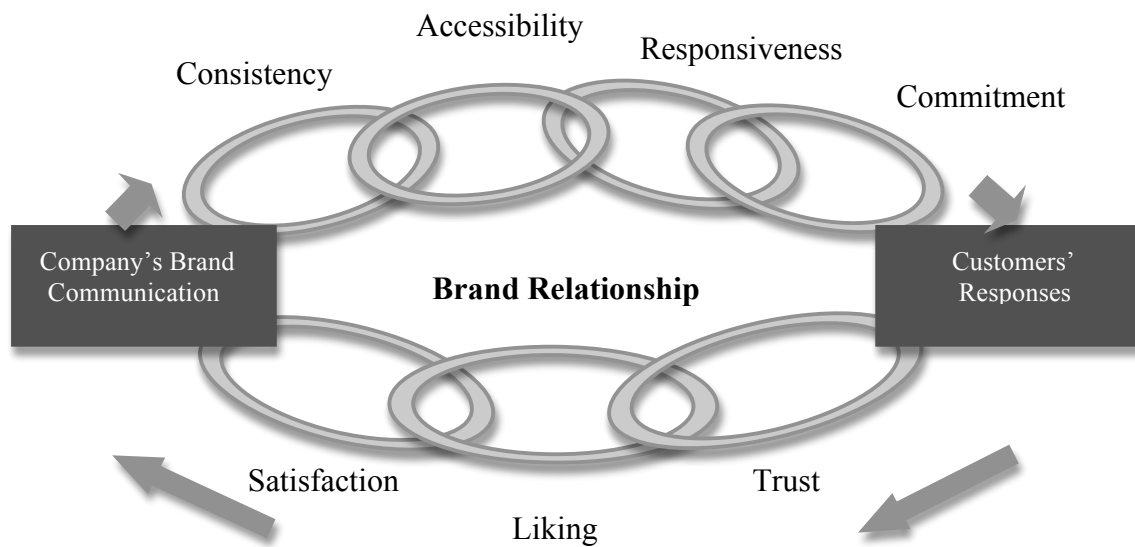


Figure 1.11: Links That Connect a Company to a Customer (Duncan, 2005)

Satisfaction (results from inputs like positive product performance, beneficial brand attributes not available from competitors, knowledge that others are using and happy with the brand), Liking (most people discuss their positive experience and things they like, and they influence prospective customers) and Trust (the primary consideration when choosing a brand), will be created after successful brand communication. The reason most often provided for making a particular brand choice is that the brand is trusted more than competing brands (Duncan, 2005).

The communication has to be presented consistently in all marketing initiatives. Messages need to show only product features which will try to rationally appeal to customers. Usually the focus would be a unique sales proposition (USP) or a selling idea which can differentiate the brand from its rivals. Moreover, it has been observed that customers will come up with descriptions like fun-loving or enjoyable. Furthermore, everyone desires something which can reflect or further improve his/her self-portrayal which then becomes a vital concern in customers' decisions. Communication builds the emotional image of the brand and the associated brand personality and in this way provides depth, feelings and liking to the relationship (Rajagopal, 2006).

### **1.2.5 Customer opinion alteration through the process of persuasive communication**

Customers' tastes and product preferences are not formed from nothing. Choices are driven by the images provided to them in mass communication, their observation of those around them or even their wishes to live in the fantasy worlds created by the brand. These options are constantly evolving and changing, accordingly, one trend can be quickly outdated (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004).

The study of persuasive communication seems to have mostly served as a vehicle for developing the manner in which individuals receive and respond to information which is presented to them with different degrees of clarity and types of emphasis. Expertise and trustworthiness constitute cognitive dimensions of source expertise. Besides, expert sources can be more likely to alter attitude (Cooper and Croyle, 1984). Studies on the cognitive characteristics of messages and the main impact on attitude change have been confined to two message characteristics: number of arguments and sidedness. The higher the number of arguments, the greater is the attitude change. Two-sided messages induce greater cognitive effects in attitude change than one-sided messages (Chebat, Filiatrault, Laroche, and Watson, 2001).

### **1.2.6 Summary of customer-brand relationship and brand communication practice**

A customer's product usage behaviour influences future decision making including repurchase, word-of-mouth, brand loyalty, retailer patronage etcetera. Hence, understanding customer usage behaviour is vital for marketers to understand their customers and adapt their strategies, so that they create a long-term relationship with customers. Indeed, efforts to understand customer usage behaviour beyond a purchase point ought to be integrated into marketing strategies, particularly for fashion products (Park, 1997). The key function of brand promotion is to communicate the brand together with the promise that can be delivered to the customers. The communication of a product has two dimensions – representing the core promise of the product as well as creating the customer personality by modifying the personality traits. This process improves the customer-brand relationship. Personification of a

brand through communication is actualised when there is a match between the personality of a branded product and of the customer. Actually a customer-brand relationship becomes functional after the purchase is realised by the customer at an appropriate opportunity. In branding the term media refers to communication vehicles and communicators use media to transmit commercial messages to their target audiences (Rajagopal, 2006). When brand messages promise more than products deliver, trust is weakened. This explains why managing customer expectations is so critical (Duncan, 2005).

### **1.3 Customer characteristics and fashion brand communication approaches**

Three main groups of young customer fashion behaviour have been defined. Shopping enthusiasts (keenest on shopping, it is a group of people who usually buy something when out shopping even if they do not really need anything) who like to browse around and take their time when shopping, and they are the most likely to like to look at lots of new things each time they visit a retailer). Apathetic (these teenagers seem apathetic at the prospect of shopping) shoppers who have low response rates for all of the attitudinal statements about going out shopping. Practical shoppers (the practical shoppers usually go shopping with something specific in mind) are the most likely to try to spend only a limited amount of money. The enthusiasts are much more likely to be young female customers. Shopping enthusiasts appear to be influenced by fashion, and they are much more likely to use the main fashion retailers for apparels. Retailers can take advantage of the higher spending habits of this group of shoppers, but must work hard to catch their enthusiasm and encourage them to come back on a regular basis. Their enthusiasm will result in less loyalty. Fast fashion will help to encourage a higher rate of return, since ranges change frequently throughout the year. Other techniques like loyalty schemes, good point-of-sale promotions and eye-catching displays may also help. Retailers will win the hearts and minds of their shoppers by making the shopping experience complete, with good retailer designs and service. This will also help to strengthen stronger relationships with the shoppers for the future (Mintel, 2003).

### **1.3.1 Impact of customer behaviours on fashion brand communication**

Performance, price, and places in which it is distributed influence the extent to which a customer buys and re-buys a brand. However, these three Ps – performance, price and place are often so similar among rival brands that repeat purchases and a customer's share of category spending are determined by behaviour variables (Duncan, 2005). The first step in creating a communications strategy is to identify, analyse and ultimately understand the target market and its buying behaviour. Buying behaviour is often more complex since individuals are generally unpredictable, although, in the aggregate, groups of customers can be more predictable. There are three key groups of questions which need to be answered before any communications can be carried out: Who is the buyer, Why do they buy and How, when and where do they buy (Smith and Taylor, 2004).

Fashion shopping is a pleasant experience. Fashion brands can take advantage of this feel-good-factor by creating the right shopping environment. Shopping is also an unhurried activity for most who like to browse around and take their time. Encouraging browsing makes shoppers spend more time in the retailers and ultimately this may lead to catching a higher share of their spending. Fashion brands should make sure that they create the right environment to catch the spirit of this feel-good-factor. Further results show that shopping with friends is more relevant to younger customers than older and belonging to and looking like their friends can be important to younger customers. Friends help to make decisions, although relatively few like to buy the same things as their friends. This implies that variety within retail communication is a significant feature, so friends shopping together can have a selection of goods without mimicry. Belonging to a group can be very important to teenagers who are still trying to assert their own sense of self and identity. Retailers targeting this age group of customers can capitalise on this sense of friendship by promotion and communication strategies (Mintel, 2003).

### **1.3.2 Definition and characteristics of a female adolescent towards fashion**

Men are much less likely than women to say that a communication campaign created



the desire to retailer at a particular fashion retailer (Mintel, 2007). In order to select to pursue the whole market with a single offer (mass market), market segmentation should be undertaken. The idea of this study is to classify the total female adolescent market into groups of potential customers with similar motivations, needs, characteristics or behaviour, who are likely to show homogeneous purchasing behaviour. According to market segmentation bases, psychographic segmentation (values, attitudes, lifestyle and aspirations) assists a brand to develop an appropriate brand strategy for the chosen market segment (Kotler and Armstrongs, 2002).

Among the various segments, the young segment is the study target in most fashion consumption research since young customers possess the courage and interest to try on new innovations; and new fashion often starts with the young (Kwon and Workman, 1996). Young customers have a higher propensity to adopt new fashion than do more mature customers. Theoretically, young customers show positive attitudes towards new fashion trends (Kean, 1997). Although, young customers want to adopt a particular fashion, the degree of expected social acceptance deters them from experimenting with innovative and trendy fashion (Law, Zhang, and Leung, 2004). Fashion for young males is less adventurous, and more traditional than for young female customers. The female adolescent is much more likely than males to take notice of the latest looks and endeavour to incorporate these into their outfits. Most of them have not associated themselves with a particular style, since they are encouraged to create their own look by layering up the garments from the broad palette of styling on offer together with the current trend. This is a fascinating and complex group of customers. They have substantial spending power and retailers that hit the mark right can significantly benefit. They have increasing amounts of money to spend on their appearance, and most are very independent shoppers, with a strong sense of identity, style and value. There are important differences between males and females in shopping activity, as well as attitudes towards shopping. Female young customers are much more likely to enjoy shopping as part of their social lives. They go shopping with friends at a younger age, and they are more influenced by fashion retail retailers. Their opinions are very influential compared with young male customers. Fashion is an essential factor which manipulates the demand for clothes in female young customers. They are image conscious, and the female adolescent desires to keep up with the latest fashions, and it also appears that a level of dissatisfaction

with the way that they look also helps to create demand for more fashionable clothes. They are much more likely to become fashion shoppers, and this is partly linked to the higher spending power that comes with a job (Intel, 2003). Fashion retailers should be careful not to try to force fashion labels onto their customers, especially now that fashions are something to be interpreted rather than slavish trends. Retailers need to find even more ways to stimulate shoppers to assemble looks and create outfits, possibly through online chat or using touch-screen technology in their retailers (Intel, 2009a).

### **1.3.3 Summary of how female adolescent fashion consumption behaviours affect brand communication at the present**

Female adolescent customers are impulse buyers. They have little loyalty and demand plenty of new experiences. They wish to see a lot of new things each time they go to the fashion retailers, and fashion retailers which vary their ranges on a regular basis can win favour. This includes incorporating new lines in addition to refreshing the retailer communication. The female adolescent purchase goods when they are shopping, even if they do not need anything. This supports the idea that the point of sale should be interesting and stimulating to encourage pick-up purchases. In addition, brand development is essential to successful growth in this market. Get it right and young customers will stay with it, spending their money to buy into the right brands. Brands which examine their wishes in depth, and create a complete shopping experience for them, will win a bigger share of the young customer expenditure for the future. Intel's report suggests that the importance of good retail brand development is vital as the female adolescent tends to take their time, browsing around and looking about before they buy. Retailers will benefit by creating slow areas of their retailers which support this browsing activity. They retailer with at least one partner, such as parents, friends or boy/girlfriends and so they want more space in the retailers than someone shopping alone. Retailers should not make the mistake of falling into the trap of designing gimmicky retailers which may quickly look out of date, but should include features into the displays and services to accommodate the needs of them (Intel, 2003). Intel (2009b) reports that the female adolescent loves browsing around retailers before purchasing and are fairly evenly spread across the age groups. This shows that 'window shopping' is alive and well despite the growth

of the Internet. It also puts the emphasis on retailers to create strong and enticing visual merchandising displays and adjacencies to stimulate such females to buy on impulse.

Furthermore, more than a third of the female adolescents are influenced by fashion magazines to buy new clothes. Therefore retailers with strong Public Relations (PR) activity that gets them free publicity will particularly benefit, although it is also important to maintain a high profile by advertising in suitable publications.

In order to get information on fashion items, young customers respond less to advertising (Te'eni-Harari *et al.*, 2007). Instead, according to Morton (2002), adolescents are more likely to collect information from specific sources that they consider reliable according to their own consumption needs. They are often “mistrustful of the mass media” and have a preference for “word-of-mouth promotion. Adomaitis *et al.*, (2008) argue that fashion media and fashion communications are regarded as driving sources which control female adolescents’ perception.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement and Key Research Questions**

Based on the literature review and primary research, the main problems in high-street brand communication amongst the female adolescent at the encoding process are:

1. Most studies concentrate on when a target audience filters the communication of fashion images/styles and fashion information, but concentrate very little on the encoding process. The impact of fashion brand communication is uncertain as the response to the fashion product communication system is different for different people. Apart from the unanticipated audiences’ perceptions, fashion communication that matches with audience’s requirements, can gain a positive response. However, no stable factors to control the fashion communication message and audience acceptance of high-street fashion products are defined.
2. Fashion investment on promotions is vast. However, the fashion

communications only concentrate on particular communication tools (i.e. mass media and press) in order to spread the message to mass audiences without an understanding of the integration between communication and brand strategy. As a result, it is difficult for fashion communications to penetrate the target audiences and provide a return on investment.

3. Feedback from fashion communication can also cause the response to fashion attitude formation, but with the unforeseeable impact of positive and negative feedback interactions, therefore, the final decision about the degree of fashion adoption cannot be determined. Nevertheless, the concept to optimise the contribution from the audience is still limited as most fashion communications neglect the importance of two-sided messages and dialogue between brand and target audiences.
4. With the fast moving characteristics of high-street fashion products, there is a need for a brand communication framework as a vehicle to direct the opinion and attitude of a target audience within a limited time.

To collaborate the problem statement with the objectives of the study, the proposition on how to resolve the problems has been drawn up. Consequently, this research is based on the key research questions shown below.

1. If the communication matches partly with the requirements of female adolescents, or does not match with the most important requirement, then they will reject the new trend or return to the exploratory information stage. Hence, a strategic method for the encoding process is viewed as a key indicator for this research for the reason that if fashion brand communication matches customers' perceived requirements, they will adopt the brand.
2. In the view of the fact that customer-brand relationship is a key principle of a successful brand, communication touch points that harmonise with the target audience can be used to enhance the brand communication strategies. A high-street fashion brand communication strategy conceptual model must address:
  - High-street fashion brands provide a source/sender context to play the role of an indicator of brand messages and brand contents. At this stage, the ability to grasp the meaning of what a high-street fashion brand stands for can lead to brand communication objectives, so as to distinguish the brand from

the crowd. Once the objectives are clearly established, a platform of the entire encoding process can be generated.

- High-street fashion brand attributes provide a brand message context to shape and form a content of what a brand needs to express with target audiences and prospects.
  - High-street brand communication channels provide a vehicle to deliver brand messages to target audiences. The criteria of high-street fashion brand communication selection is a core idea for customer approaches in order to enhance the effectiveness of the communication tool capability.
  - Female adolescents play the role of key audience context whom brands must tie brand messages to them. Target audience's characteristics, attitudes and communication consumption behaviours are key identifiers to distinguish the brand communication plan for each customer group.
3. Since brand communication has an effect on the customer-brand relationship, the exploration of an integrated brand communication process can be employed to develop customer-brand retention.

There is a lot of evidence to support the key research questions, as a large number of researchers propose new frameworks or redesign the former communication process model, so as to enrich the mutual understanding between brands and customers e.g. A linear model of communication (Fill, 1995) and Interpersonal Communication Model (Schultz and Barnes, 1999). Currently, the communication process tactics indicate 1) the interaction between brand and customer as a principle for brand-building communication (Schultz and Barnes, 1999), 2) how the brand communication process works and the role of each element in the brand communication process from sender to receiver (Duncan, 2005), 3) brand value building i.e. brand identity and brand equity in the function of the brand message in the communication process (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Nevertheless, fast fashion communication has received little attention in academic research, and as a concept, it was believed there was widespread misunderstanding of the nature of high-street fashion related to fashion brand communication. Therefore, it was thought that exploratory research, suitable for use when a subject is little understood, would be an appropriate way for researching the subject with a view to shaping the research agenda. Besides, fashion brand promotion mainly focuses on mass media in order to pass messages to mass audiences. This

statement guides the key research questions which aim to discover the communication fundamentals for a fashion brand communication format which generates customer-brand touch points at the encoding process with the purpose of persuasive brand messages and positive responses from audiences.

## **1.5 Research Scope**

The research focussed on three areas: 1) Strategic approach in fashion brand-building communication, 2) Key components in brand communication development at the encoding stage, 3) High-street fashion brand communication process and 4) Customer-brand relationship towards fashion brand communication.

- Strategic approach for fashion brand-building communication: This research explores fashion brand communication as an entirety to achieve the structure of fashion brand-building based on a communication approach. It is important to determine the efficiency of each communication tool in order to complement the other tools for brand message delivery. An examination of the various kinds of communication channels is highlighted in order to integrate the appropriate brand communication mix framework.
- Key components in brand communication development at the encoding stage: This research gives attention to all key components of brand communication at the encoding stage (i.e. source/sender, brand message, communication channel and receiver) and the key drivers for information conveyance. The research concentrates of these elements as factors that direct the decoding process and feedback response because it is the first stage of brand impression. Moreover, a better understanding of brand message conduction can outline the basic structure to bridge the gap between the process of encoding and decoding. Hence, the conceptual model will be developed from the integration between the brand building plan and brand communication strategies. Since this conceptual model intends to conquer the lack of mutual understanding between brand and target audiences, the model focuses on the activities at the message production phase. As a result this model will not cover the problems of the decoding stages, e.g. how a brand message will be interpreted or customer

feedback. Furthermore, it will not cover chaos (noise) that can distract the message meaning since it is an uncontrollable external factor.

- High-street fashion brand communication process: This research examines high-street fashion brand characteristics and fashion connotations as well as fashion consumption with the purpose to develop possible implications, which can direct and transform target audience opinion as brand strategists require.
- Customer-brand relationship towards fashion brand communication: Several theoretical models have been proposed with regard to customer-brand relations as a benchmark of successful brand building. In order to accomplish this, brand value building should be analysed under the context of communication since communication is the first opportunity for interaction between brand and customers.

## **1.6 Aim and Objectives**

This research aimed to examine and develop a conceptual model of high-street fashion brand communication amongst female adolescents and demonstrates four key issues: 1) fashion brand-building communication context, 2) eliciting key components of brand communication at the encoding process focusing on the role of each element and their association with other factors, 3) brand communication process and 4) key features that encourage and develop customer-brand relationships towards brand communication. The objectives were:

1. To analyse and evaluate the existing brand communication process: Examine and evaluate an established communication model together with brand-building communication, so as to investigate the successfulness of message conveyance.
2. To analyse the connection between brand message and target audience: Identify the relationships set up as a result of the interactivity between brand and audience.
3. To study the roles and the key characteristics of the female adolescent as a buyer: Finding the role of customer behaviour which leads to the factors which are helpful in generating influential communications. The focal concern

for study is the needs of target customers and prospects, so that brand communication strategies can be designed to tailor to and appeal to customers.

4. To recognize how the information search stage is developed in the brand-building communication process: Exploring where customers look for information to assist their decoding process. This study allows the brand strategist to look through what communication channels can direct customers to the sources.
5. To investigate and identify the fundamental components of brand communication at the encoding process: Pointing out the roles of source, communication medium and receiver which are the start of the brand communication process and identify the factors that have an effect on communication tool selections.
6. To find out how to bridge the gap between the strong and weak theories of how communication works: Evaluate communication situations in order to find out what are considered the pros and the cons.
7. To integrate the key features of the major communication tools together with the key factors of brand-building communication at the encoding process: Consider how these elements work as a source of communication strategies.
8. To apply all communication aspects to develop a new conceptual model.

## **1.7 Research Contributions**

This research endeavored to provide two key contributions:

1. An understanding of the integrated brand communication at the encoding process for high-street fashion brands: Effective communication is not a one – way producer-to-customer-flow. Producers need to understand the requirements and motivation of their target audience before they can talk to them in a meaningful way. Complete communication needs to be considered as a whole package. There is a requirement to blend the components of the promotional mix, so that a clear and consistent message is received by target audiences (Jobber, 2007). However, branding has often been thought of as a part of the promotional mix since most companies have placed much more



stress on the functional area of advertising and sales promotion than on brands and branding (Schultz and Barnes, 1999). Fashion companies have conventionally relied on their retailers, i.e. their physical presence in the market place, and their image with much less concern for the communication mix (Easey, 2009). Thus, this research aimed to provide an understanding into the fashion brand-building communication, which shows the collaboration of communication elements and brand value creation. Full development will be derived from the strong and the weak features of existing theories with the purpose of achieving a successful fashion brand communication. High-street fashion brand communication amongst the female adolescents is chosen as a fascinating case since it has to encounter fast moving products with fast moving customers within the brand building framework. The information from this research may also express the possibility of comprehensive knowledge of brand-building communication for other products, which relationship may be more productive for brand value building in spite of conventional information transmission.

2. A conceptual model of the high-street fashion brand communication is an implementable technique, which in this study aimed to serve as a persuasive brand enhancer. Brands have been at the core of advertising and selling almost since time began (Schultz and Barnes, 1999). In the brand leadership model, the brand strategist needs to direct the usage of a wide assortment of communication methods. This array of options brings up challenges: how to break out of the box to access effective media options, and how to coordinate messages across media. The way communication strategies make use of a broad scope of media can be coordinated to generate synergy and efficiency as well as impact (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). This research proposes a comprehensive conceptual model of high-street fashion brand communication to support strategic implications that brand communicators may utilise to maximise the persuasive function of the fashion brand message. The research encourages fashion communicators to understand the context of message design and communication selection which is fundamental for communication capabilities to set agendas for what target audiences and prospects should think about to reinforce knowledge, beliefs, and actions they already possess.

## 1.8 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters as shown below. The contents of each part are:

1. Introduction: This chapter introduces the focal topic areas, high-street fashion brands and brand communications amongst the female adolescents, summarises the key problems and key research questions, and clarifies the purpose of this research together with the aim and objectives.
2. Literature Review: To clarify the research questions and objectives, this chapter provides background information which is categorised by the communication components and integrated brand-building communication.
3. Research Methods: This chapter concentrates on the primary research as an approach to discover the characteristics of finding information. It describes the benchmark of the research design and selected subjects, and how all the primary research has been defined and conducted. Ultimately, it provides an overview of the analysis method in obtaining data.
4. Key Findings and Discussion: This chapter presents the results of the primary research. An outline of research information is examined and discussed in accordance with the eight objectives. Moreover, it summarises the requirements of the new conceptual model.
5. Model Formulation: This chapter demonstrates the formulation process, it relates the research proposition addressed as a key issue with the purpose of generating a new conceptual model and implementation.
6. Feedback and Modification: This chapter discusses the key foundation established to select the validating methods, the criteria employed to choose the features to validate the proposed model, how the validating processes are executed, results of the validation, and the modification of the proposed conceptual model in relation to the responses of the subjects.
7. Conclusion and Recommendation: This last chapter endows a summary and discussion regarding the whole research including methods, findings and outcomes and the recommendations on how to apply the proposed conceptual model and this study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The literature research aims to study brand-building through the process of brand communication in the high-street fashion market amongst the female adolescents in order to achieve objectives no. 1, 2 and 5 (see chapter 1). This chapter presents the key principles of the brand and communication process which presents brand influences upon an audience's mind. This chapter includes six parts: 1) the core concept of brand establishment, 2) the investigation of the fashion industry, 3) an overview of the female adolescent as a target audience, 4) communication perspectives, 5) brand communication, and 6) the effect of brand communication implementation. As a result, a thorough understanding of brand-building communication context and participation can be derived. Finally, the conclusion is summarised for the primary research.

### **2.1 The core concept of fashion brand establishment**

In this section, the literature on the importance of brand discipline, brand essences and brand strategy is reviewed.

#### **2.1.1 Importance of brand discipline**

Brands provide the basis by which customers may identify and bond with a product or service or a group of products or services (Weilbacher, 1995). A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a manner that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their requirements most closely (Chernatony and McDonald, 1998). The brand, in a way, acts as a credible guarantee for that product or service, allowing the customer to clearly identify and specify products which genuinely offer added value (Murphy, 1998). The Brand "promise" is the essence of the benefits (both functional and emotional) which customers can expect to get from experiencing a brand's products/services, which reflects the heart of the brand (Knapp, 2000). An opinion of a product is about the basic functions it provides while the brand is responsibly providing the product.

(Meenaghan, 1995). Brands are seen as an important part of creating a competitive advantage in a complex and changing environment. Brands are seen as essential to the superior value-creating resources that have important roles in accomplishing a sustained competitive advantage over competitors (Ponsonby-McCabe and Boyle, 2006). Also, Sterne (1999) inferred that a brand is neither an objective nor a marketing tool, instead, it is what a company offers to customers.

Branding is partly the effect of the increasing influence, sophistication and reach of the media. The platform crosses from brand-building to mind-altering. Customers do not really buy on the basis of product points, but brand affection. Brand humanises commerce with emotional appeals to allegiance, so a brand is a foundation on which to build every experience a customer has and a brand represents deep psychological energy and penetration. Key brand ingredients have been introduced as depicted in figure 2.1 (Grant, 2003). Branding invokes the innate human ways of thinking about the world. There are four elements which comprise a mental model. They come in two pairs. One pair deals with the basic ingredients of representation – coding – the two kinds of code being sense impressions and propositions. The other pair deals with choosing and relating these codes – mapping – and the two operations are used are metaphor and metonymy (George, 1987).

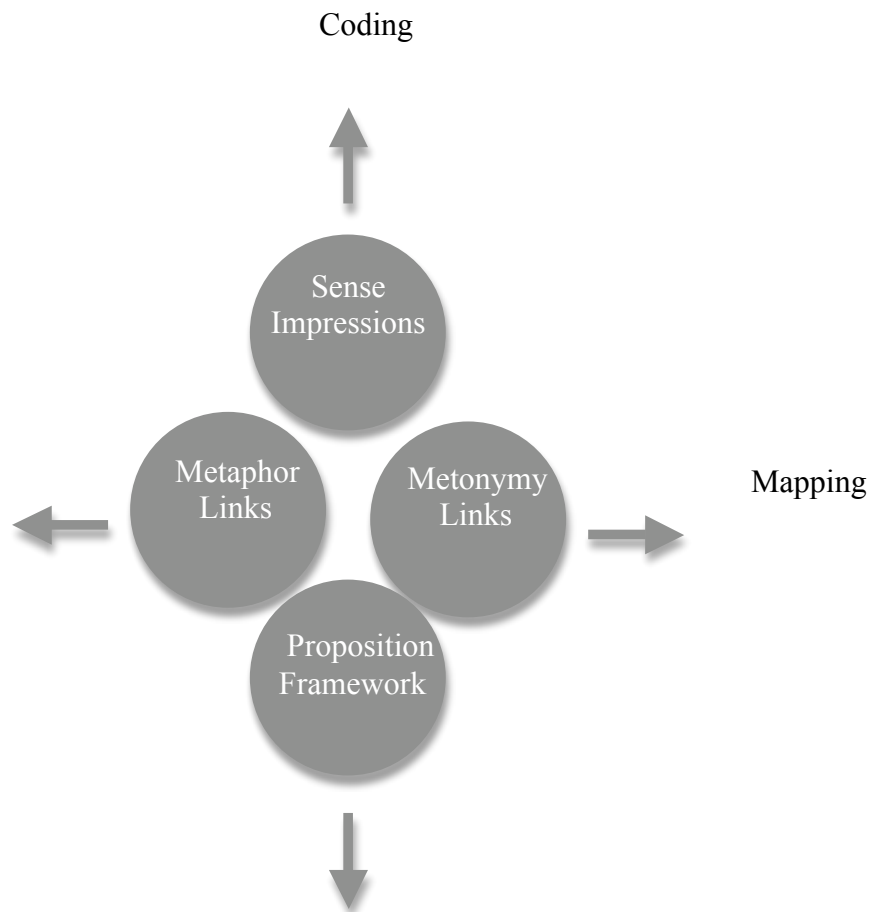


Figure 2.1: Key Brand Ingredients (Grant, 2003)

### 2.1.2 Brand Essences

A brand concept is about meeting customer needs. It is often helpful to provide a brand essence which captures the soul of the brand. A good brand essence statement captures what the brand represents. The brand essence may be viewed as the hub of a wheel linked to all the core identity elements (Aaker, 2002). A brand essence which is founded on emotional and self-expressive benefits provides a higher-order basis for relationships which may be less vulnerable to product-related changes or readily applied to new contexts (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Experiential needs are defined as wishes for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety, and/or cognitive stimulation. A brand with an experiential concept is designed to fulfill these internally generated requirements for stimulation and/or variety.

Four levels of brand features have been proposed; the first level aims to express the identity of the producer (i.e. label). The second level is called functional superiority (perceived by a customer as differentiation). The third level is known as emotional touch, and the fourth level refers to the power of self-expression (Ghodeswar, 2008). Moreover, Clifton and Simmons (2003) add that brands develop customer loyalty by filling an unmet or unsatisfied need. A brand has to highlight a resolute core purpose and supporting values. A brand concept has to continually look for what differentiates it by innovative creation and need fulfillment. One way to get a strong brand is to make sure that the link between customers and products and services is seen in the right way which will positively affect the brand.

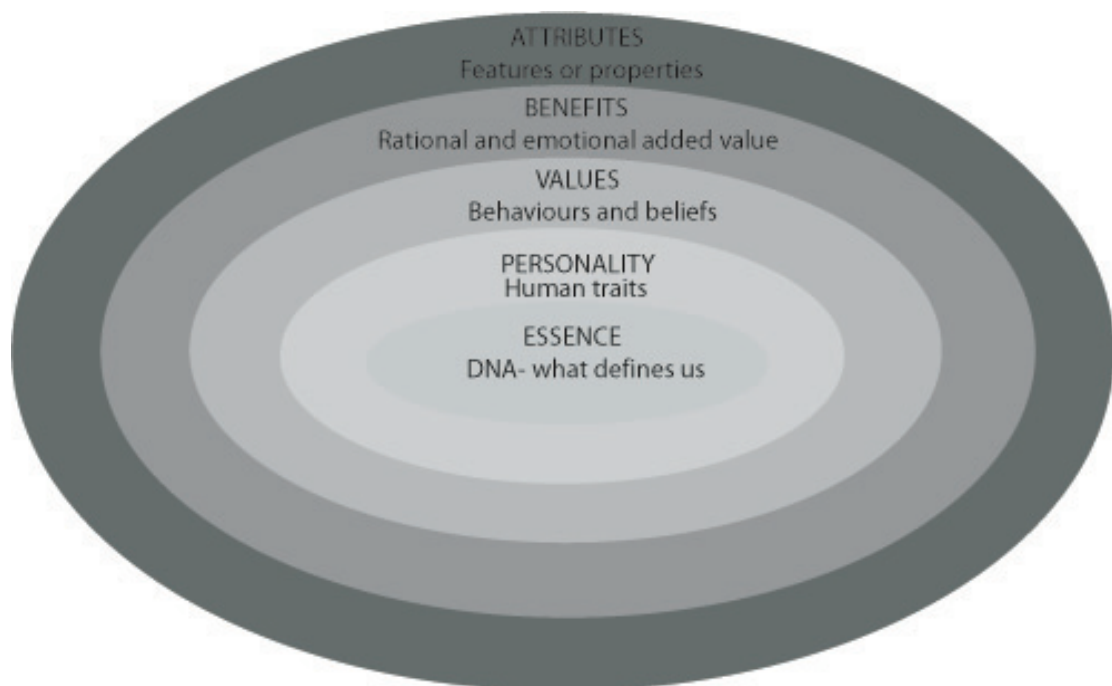


Figure 2.2: The behavioral brand framework (Buckingham, 2008).

The framework shown in figure 2.2 indicates the deep perception concerning the behavioral and values-driven DNA which belong to the brand. Buckingham (2008) described texture and character with the aid of the behavioral brand framework acting as a focus for brand strategy development.

#### 2.1.2.1 Brand Equity

Another important factor relating to a brand is its brand equity. A definition of brand

equity from Aaker (2002) explains brand equity as a value, as something which connects with a brand's name and symbol, of a product or service as a type of assets. By this theory, there are five assets: "brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary features."

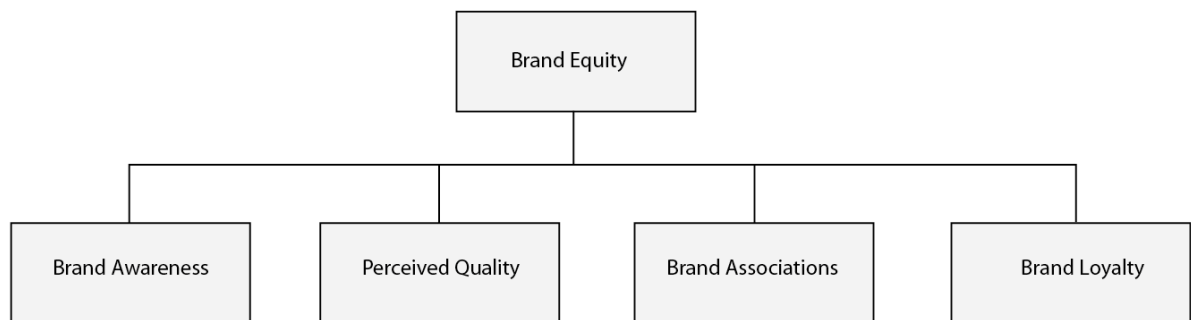


Figure 2.3: What Is Brand Equity? (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).

In order to explain brand equity, Kapferer (2004) proposed three levels of analysis: "brand assets (awareness/saliency, image), strength and value". Keller (1993) has introduced customer-based brand equity and has specified it as a brand effect on information which a customer has. The hypothesis defined brand knowledge as something which can build brand equity when there are outcomes which customers have from seeing and experiencing the brand. The content and structure of brand knowledge are important because these elements show how a customer will be affected. Customer brand-knowledge can be stated in terms of the personal meaning about a brand which is stored in a customer's memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information they have retained.

#### 2.1.2.2 Brand Identity

Grant (2003) postulated that a brand, by one definition, is 'a promise'. From building a brand image to building new customer mental models, most need a mix of formal media and informal media. Different types of media have been used in different ways, for different kinds of tasks: knowledge media, reality media, dialogue media, memetic media, community media, story media and reputation media. A brand identity is

inspirational and may suggest how a brand image needs to be changed or improved. In a fundamental sense, the brand identity shows what the organisation wants the brand to stand for (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). One key to successful brand building is to know how to develop a brand identity – to know what the brand represents and to effectively express that identity (Aaker, 1996).

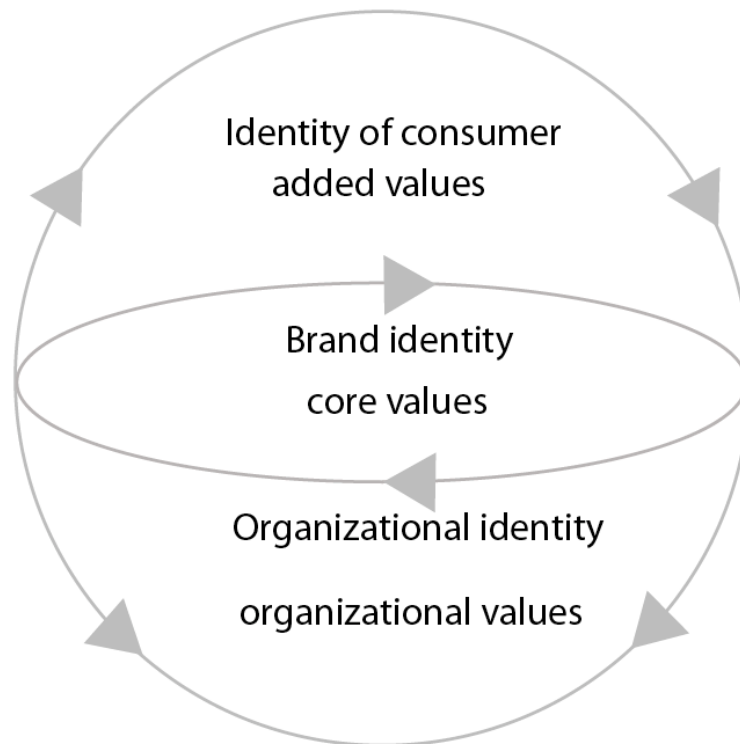


Figure 2.4: Brand identity - the core values as a mind-set (Urde, 2003)

A brand is a distinctive identity which differentiates a relevant, enduring, and credible promise of value associated with a product, service, or organisation and shows the source of that promise (Ward et al., 1999). To be effective, a brand identity needs to resonate with customers, differentiate the brand from rivals, and show what the organisation can and will do over time (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). A brand which presents a cohesive, distinctive, and relevant brand identity can establish a preference in the marketplace, add value to its products and services, and may command a price premium (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). According to Upshaw (1995), brand identity depends on who customers are as individuals, the environment



in which they live, and the signals sent from the brand itself. A brand's messages are perceived through a series of filters that exist within each customer's life.

### 2.1.2.3 Brand Personality

Allport (1961) described the personality as a real person. Personality is the dynamic organisation of psycho physiological systems which establishes a person's characteristic pattern of behaviour, thoughts, and feelings. A brand's personality contributes a richer source of competitive advantage than any functional feature can (Sherrington, 2003). A brand as a personality signifies an important transition phase since not all brands evolve into customer icons, especially if the customers do not relate to, or trust in, the communications of the brand, or they sense some inconsistencies with the brand's communications (Wee and Ming, 2003). Personality characteristics assist a brand to achieve sustainable differentiation as they are harder to copy than functional features of the product and service by rivals. Another advantage of the personality association is that it creates a direct relationship with the customers (Ghodeswar, 2008).

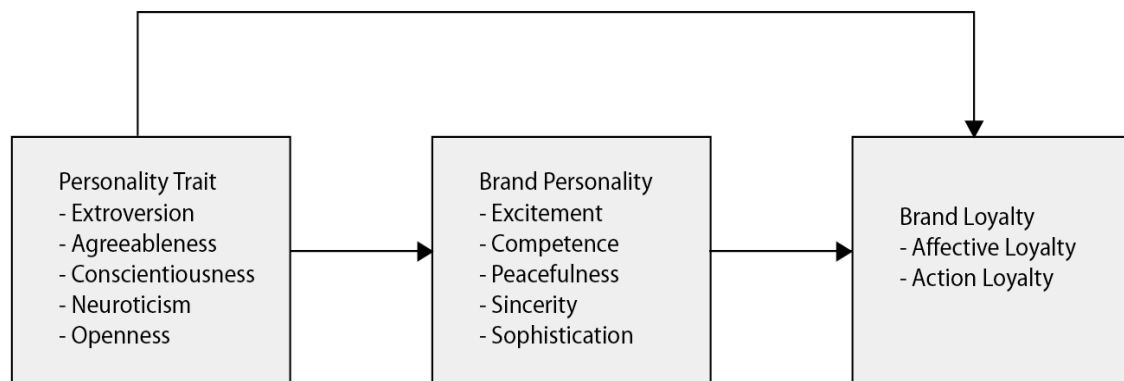


Figure 2.5: Model of loyalty (Lin, 2010)

Aaker (1997) defined brand personality as “a set of human attributes associated with a brand.” Brand personality mostly comes from three sources: the first one is the link customers have with a brand, secondly, the image a company tries hard to establish, and the third is about the product attributes. The Big Five Dimensions framework of brand personality is a model to explain the profile of a brand by using an analogy with

a human being. These are sincerity (down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful), excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date), competence (reliable, intelligent, successful), sophistication (upperclass, charming), and ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough). Each facet is one by one measured by a set of traits as follows: Down-to-earth (down-to-earth, family-oriented, small town), Honest (honest, sincere, real), Wholesome (wholesome, original), Cheerful (cheerful, sentimental, friendly), Daring (daring, trendy, exciting), Spirited (spirited, cool, young), Imaginative (imaginative, unique), Up to date (up to date, independent, contemporary), Reliable (reliable, hardworking, secure), Intelligent (intelligent, technical, corporate), Successful (successful, leader, confident), Upper class (upper class, glamorous, good looking), Charming (charming, feminine, smooth), Outdoorsy (outdoorsy, masculine, Western) and Tough (tough, rugged).

Personality is a useful variable in the customer's selection of brands. The brands chosen by customers are usually in compliance with their own personalities. Hence, brand personality provides the functions of self - symbolisation and self-expression (Keller, 1993). Furthermore, Kotler (2005) notes that customers usually choose brands which have self-concept congruence. However, sometimes, customers will choose a brand which matches to their ideal self-concept or the social self-concept. Thus, brand personality can provide the function of demonstrating and expressing their own personality at the same time. A successful brand understands how to build its distinct brand personality, which enables customers to perceive its unique brand personality, and then develops a strong binding relationship with the brand (Doyle, 1990).

#### 2.1.2.4 Brand Positioning

A brand position is part of the brand identity and value proposition which is to be actively communicated to the target audience and which shows its advantage over competing brands (Aaker, 1996). A well positioned brand has a competitively attractive position enhanced by strong brand associations (Aaker, 1991). To achieve the required goals of their communication strategy, a brand strategist needs to position their brands in the minds of customers. Positioning the brand based upon the attributes which are the customer priorities can assist in building superiority of their

brands in the minds of their customers (Ghodeswar, 2008). As a brand develops a source of value, its positioning in the minds of customers is vital to the actual value created. Therefore, a brand has to consider the minds and emotions of the target audience (Thompson, 2003). Positioning can simply be defined in terms of how a brand is positioned in the minds of the customer with respect to the values with which it is differentially linked or which it owns (Marsden, 2002). Brand positioning is the act of creating the company's offer and image so that they occupy a distinct and valued place in the target customer's minds (Kotler, 2003).

### **Synthesis brand model**

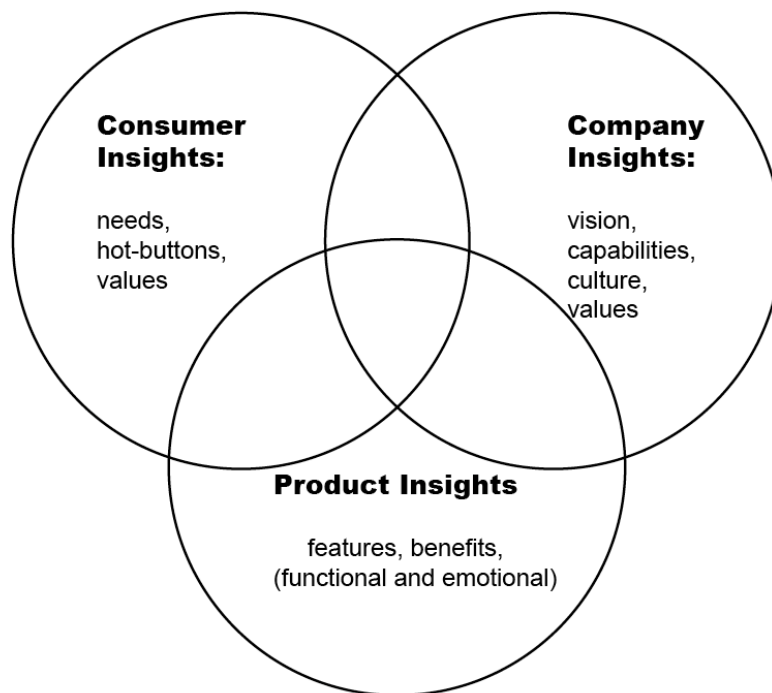


Figure 2.6: Synthesis brand model (Tait, 2001)

Thus, positioning involves finding the proper position in the minds of a group of customers or market segment so that they view a product or service in the right or desired way. The proper brand positioning needs the establishment of the correct points-of-difference (PODs) (Keller, 2003). Brand position is more aspirational, hence, the brand position ought to be actively communicated with specific communication objectives focused on changing and strengthening the brand image or

brand-customer relationship (Aaker, 2002).

### 2.1.3 Brand Strategy

Lindstrom (2007) suggested his idea that a brand strategy should include these keys: sensory branding, brand community and situation placement. Williams (2005) proposed the rule of branding as follows:

1. Brands which change culture sell more.
2. What is a brand key concept; a brand viewpoint.
3. Nowadays customers are leading from the front.
4. Customisation.
5. Ignore the transaction, most importantly give customers an experience.
6. Demonstrate clarity at the point of purchase; be pedantic about presentation.
7. You are only as good as your weakest part; know where your weaknesses are?
8. Social responsibility; what is your cause, what is your contribution to society?
9. Pulse, pace, and passion truly make a difference; brands have to think fast and move fast.
10. Brand strategy is innovation.

#### 2.1.3.1 Sensory Branding

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) advised that environmental stimuli influences an individual's emotional states which in turn affect their approach or avoidance responses in accordance with their S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model as shown in figure 2.7.

$$\text{Emotional Response} = \text{Sense Brought to Mind} \times \text{Positive Response} \times \text{Emotion}$$

Figure 2.7: Emotional response (Lindstrom, 2005)

The basic concept of the model concerns receivers' perception and behaviour. Lindstrom (2007) adds that all communication is influenced by what we see, what we hear, what we smell, what we taste and what we feel. Branding needs to grow its two-dimensional approach to become a five-dimensional concept.

### 2.1.3.2 Brand Community

A successful brand has been supported by a brand community where advertising is less credible, customers search for other sources of trust – communities supply an answer. By setting up a brand community where word-of-mouth does the talking a brand's media money will be used on people rather than on creating communications and commercials. It will need more than a website to accomplish this, and a consistent well thought-through approach will be necessary for success (Lindstrom, 2007).

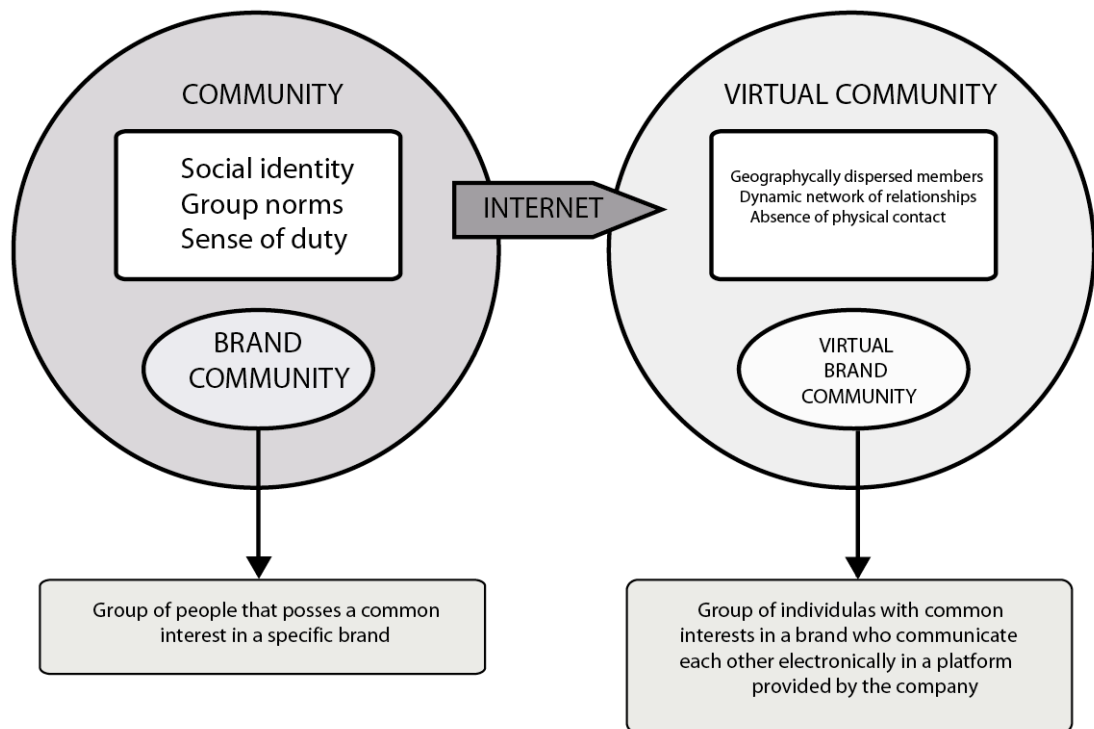


Figure 2.8: Customer-centric model of brand community (McAlexander *et al.*, 2002)

The premier and most significant aspect of community is consciousness of type, which shows the intrinsic link which participants feel toward each other, and the collaborative sense of difference from those who are not within the community (Bagozzi, R.P., Dholakia, U.M., 2006).

### 2.1.3.3 Situation Placement

Creating a brand in a virtual world may generate a brand commercial message (Lindstrom, 2007). In a similar manner, VanAuken (2008) added that building emotional connection and building customer-relevant creativity will be a vital success factors. Brands should co-create the customer experience while the customer and brand should concentrate more on creating/engineering the total customer experience. Strong brands will not only "stand for something," but they will also establish forums for people who trust in what the brands stand for.

## **2.2 Fashion Investigation**

In this section, the literature about fashion theory, fashion product, fashion connotation and fashion semiotic, and fashion branding are reviewed. Foremost, this section explains the characteristics in the UK fashion market for the purpose of further analysis of high-street fashion brands. In these contexts, the explanations of fashion market structure and high-street fashion background in the UK are considered.

### **2.2.1 Fashion Theory**

Fashion as industrial goods is more strongly influenced by global fashion capitalism than regional environmental factors. Thus, fashion has become a major global product (Corstjens and Corstjens, 1995). The nature of fashion is to come and go and be ready to cycle again like the wheel (Robinson, 1961). Fashion can somehow be regarded as a marketing plan which each retailer does to promote their brand and encourages people to buy their products endlessly. However, there are various market segments that are unlikely to be able to respond to their plan since they have their own trend

amongst their group. It can be noticed that the marketers are prone to market to the young segment as the members of the young group are in the self-experimental stage (Goldsmith et al., 1996; King and Sproles, 1973; Kwon and Workman, 1996; Palegato and Wall, 1990; Workman and Kidd, 2000). In this stage, the adolescent has a strong will to try to find themselves and to know which style suits them best.

Mass-market fashion sees the differences in each group of its targeted customers and develops fashion language complexity serving each customer's identity. This new process shows a fashion adoption across customer groups that provides a range of styles to meet the demands of different tastes and innovators are the group which influences fashion adoption. Furthermore, there are various aspects which cause the changes of fashion such as the changes in style, diffusion, acceptance and decline (Law *et al.*, 2004). Also, there are a few theories which can explain the fashion cycle which include:

- Trickle Down Theory (Simmel, 1904, 1971)

Fashion originates in the highest social class and flows downward through a "waterfall of imitation". Trickle-down or the "two-step flow" model describes that the source is in some ways more important than the receiving end. The water metaphor also assumes that information moves only in one direction, ignoring the fact that there is often a dialogue between people who spread the word about a product and those who are on the receiving end.

- Mass-market theory (King, 1963)

The theory has shown that mass media has been a key to push fashion towards its audiences. Hence, people are impacted by the effective media and transmit the form of fashion amongst fashion leaders and fashion formers.

- Collective Selection Theory (Blumer, 1969)

This theory has been developed about the groups of people that have power over the fashion business and fashion systems in society. Also, those people have been perceiving fashion knowledge as well as are being influenced by the same sources,

therefore, they are likely to provide their knowledge to the customers in society who aim to change and renew their style according to the new fashion perception in their culture following the social order.

- Subculture Leadership Theory (Sproles, 1979)

In this theory, the fashion development is completely contrasted with the principle of Georg Simmel's theory as the subculture will lead the way for the fashion for the mainstream. The subculture will process the bubble up and the change the fashion to one which mirrors their culture.

According to Biernat et al. (1996), one of the most important factors, that shows the strong aspect to push the fashion forwards, and to understand the main purpose behind human's consumption, is that human nature is eager to gain the sense of conformity. However, fashion needs to coordinate between the trend and individual's need, in order to respond to the expectations of the customers (Bruce, 2001).

### **2.2.2 Fashion Product**

In order for a fashion product to succeed it has to make good strategic decisions to facilitate choices to be made about its distribution, its promotion, and its pricing. As a result, a process of dialogue is needed for the sharing and even the creation of knowledge to occur between the product and its customers. Interactions may be initiated by planned communication messages which are based on actions implementing the strategic decisions (Grönroos, 2004).

Brown and Rice (1998) stated that the quality of clothing products has two dimensions: (1) a physical dimension which defines the use of the clothing item; and (2) a behavioural dimension which demonstrates what that item of clothing can achieve for the wearer. Since the physical features influence the behavioural characteristics, customers make choices about clothes based on the physical characteristics which they expect will support a specific behaviour. Aesthetic behavioural characteristics concern the beauty or aesthetic experience, which it creates for the customer buying the clothes, either at the sensory level (for example the textile does not wrinkle), or emotional (stimulating specific feelings for those who



wear them, or giving them pleasure, or giving them a dominant feeling), or cognitive (there is a certain symbolic significance for the customer such as it supports status, enables them to be a member of a group, or that it creates positive feedback from others, who are significant or function as reference groups (Fiore and Kimle, 1997). Fashion products are normally purchased by look, feel and self-image. Fashion can be seen as high customer involvement purchases because look and feel goods tend to be compared and evaluated before purchasing (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Therefore, the brand should produce both intangible and tangible assets to create emotional value between the brand and its customers (Tungate, 2005).

### **2.2.3 Fashion Connotation and Fashion Semiotic**

Clothing used positively will contribute to a person's feelings of self-confidence. Clothing can be thought of as an extension of the physical self and as an integral part of one's body image (Horn and Gurel, 1981). Clothing benefit is the construct of clothings' symbolic meaning and its use for social environments (Hwang, 1996). A study by Davis (1985) discovered that the feelings and self-perceptions of a person's body-build evaluated by somatographs was linked to fashion and clothing use.

Moreover, fashion creates an identity that portrays a personal expression at a specific time and place (Yarwood, 1992). Fashion also arouses one another for the reason that clothing plays the role of an index of social identity, social class and self-image (Ronald *et al.*, 1999). Fashion can be seen as prominent consumption. For the reason that fashion is entirely symbolic products, the fashion business depends on promotion and a marketing plan, so as to encourage customers (Veblen, 1979).

### **2.2.4 Fashion Branding**

Grant and Stephen (2005) explain about the brand expectations in fashion products. According to Kotler (2003), the buying of fashion items is strongly affected by the brand name and its associations for the buyer. Brand product influence operates at both conscious and subconscious levels. Customers are looking for extra customer services and benefits surrounding the core and actual products. These products will provide them with "bundles of benefits" which will satisfy their needs". Fashion

brands somehow have to react to this growing phenomenon by all means, hence, brand strategies are needed to understand what are the needs of their customers as well as to be able to come up with their implementation. However, it is not easy to build the brand or brand a brand. Also it is even harder to make the brand accepted by a large audience.

There are many driven strategies that the retailers do to capture the attention and to understand their customers (Hines and Bruce, 2001). Jackson and Shaw (2006) also gave an idea of tangible and intangible fashion assets as:

- Intangible asset: the primary reason for the intangible asset of each brand is to produce the sense of belonging. Also secondary, the nature of a human is craving to be in the centre of attention. These are the emotional values that each brand can build for their customers.

- Tangible asset: The main point is based on the product-focused, functions and other benefits. The brand owners should design the product according to the needs of their target customers, so that it would best suit their customers. Also, the characteristics of the brands should be easily recognised by their customers.

## **2.2.5 Characteristics of the UK fashion market**

In order to examine the UK fashion market, the structure of the fashion market and background of high-street fashions are reviewed.

### **2.2.5.1 Fashion Market structure**

According to Jackson and Shaw (2006), in the UK market, there are 4 levels of fashion brands including discount, high-street, high-end and luxury brands. Each level can be distinguished by terms of target customers, the quality and features of the products and price ranges. The fashion brands in each segment have to show the points of differences, so the customers will know exactly which one suits them best (Easey, 2008).

| <b>Levels of Fashion Brand in UK</b> | <b>Price</b>                  | <b>Features</b>   | <b>Target Group</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| <b>Discount Brand</b>                | Very cheap                    | Poor Quality<br><br>Low Price   | Very Mass Market    |
| <b>High-Street Brand</b>             | Cheap to affordable           | Better Quality<br><br>Reasonable Price<br><br>Fashionable                   | Middle Class        |
| <b>High-End Brand</b>                | Affordable to quite expensive | Good Quality<br><br>More Durability<br><br>Higher Price<br><br>Fashionable  | Upper Middle Class  |
| <b>Luxury Brand</b>                  | Expensive                     | Good Quality<br><br>High Durability<br><br>Superior Image<br><br>High price | Upper Class         |

Table 2.1: The structure of fashion in the UK market (Source: Easey, 2008)

### **2.2.5.2 Background of high-street fashion in UK**

Fashion business can be one of the toughest businesses because of the frequent changes as well as the broad variation (Burke, 2008). High Street Fashion in UK is the type of market that is carefully made to attract the customers by means of fashion

and affordable price. Moreover, fashion in this level could capture the mainstream regarding its design and price strategy. Fashion marketing is also a fast paced and competitive business as the trends and the demands from the customers are changing at all time. Most of the high street retailers are likely to supply the similar products as well as to launch the similar advertising which is possibly boring for the customers. Therefore, each high street fashion brand continually offers new products on a frequent basis. Nevertheless, the fashion brand should be able to position themselves in the market in addition to identify and differentiate themselves from other competitors. Each brand should also offer the remarkable value that others are yet to deliver or the emotional value that is hard to build, but worth to try (Bruce and Hill, 1998).

### **2.3 Female adolescent as a target audience**

Kotler (2006) stated that the companies need to define their market segments including geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral units to measure their customers in order to scope specific customers and create marketing plans according to the customers' preferences and lifestyle. McCracken (1985) implied that individuals show a common tendency to divide the world into smaller categories, or manageable segments, which formed the theoretical foundation for study. Kaiser (1990) noted that social meanings linked with appearance are not the result of the interpretations of just one or two people. People experience everyday life within the shared symbolic order of which the larger context of culture represents. Individuals can be grouped, or categorised, based on numerous observed characteristics (Hope and Mindell, 1994). Rosch's theory of categorisation posits that 'categories are composed of a "core meaning" which comprises of the "clearest cases" (best examples) of the category, surrounded by other category members of decreasing similarity to that core meaning (Rosch, 1973).

Thus, the target audience profile needs to be reviewed in order to understand the process of communication planning. This profile will include the definition of the female adolescent, fashion consumption amongst the female adolescent and influences of the reference group upon the female adolescent.

### 2.3.1 Female adolescent characteristics

Customers are bombarded with more messages than in the past. It is becoming increasingly important to refine and clarify the target segment, as messages by mass media fail to work. Customers are researchers, advocates, creators, promoters and marketers (Lyon, 2009). Fashion customers are more informed and so show more sophistication and discrimination when purchasing (Leung and To, 2001).

According to The Pew Research Center (2007), among people aged between 18-25 years old, the majority of this group's characteristics are individual and special. The members of this group grow up with the digital advances. This age group is the so called the "Look at Me" generation. The Pew Internet (2009) stated that young adolescents who have generally grown up in the Information Age, have been called the 'Net Generation'. Young customers can be categorized into four groups: Influencers, Edge Group members, Conformers, and Passives. As a customer, they are strongly prone to be affected by peer pressure, and these peers also are socialised by commercial communications, to own the right brand and the right products.

Young customers have become a key focus for many fashion retailers and therefore are perceived by retailers as a very attractive growth market (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004). However, as Cioletti (2001) identifies, marketers must be careful to not to create language or visuals that may seem patronising since "fitting in and being cool" is the highest concern for this young customer group (Lindstrom, 2003).

The young customer target group is a rich demographic, because they start buying on their own" (Levinson, 2001). Normally, a female adolescent is expected to purchase fashion products that shape up with their body as well as dressing up to be acceptable to their friends or their role models (Kaisers, 1990; Sproles and Burns, 1994; MacGillivray and Wilson, 1997). Dickerson (2003) states that though the complexity of customer behavior is inevitable, still, the brands need to find the strategies to tackle the setback. Moreover, the brands need to know their target market and be able to point out their self-portrait and their influence that affects their buying habit (Grant and Stephen, 2005). The influences towards the decision-making process by the customers are shaped by many aspects including the family, age, persona, role,

geography and society (Lamb et al., 2002; Stokes, 2002; Ross and Harradine, 2004).

### **2.3.2 Female adolescent values and lifestyles**

Mitchell (1981) established the concept of values and lifestyles (VALS) ratings. Originally, there were three classifications of customers: need-directed (purchase decisions based solely on need), outer-directed (purchase decisions based on perception of the way others view them) and inner-directed (purchase decisions out of some inner needs). The VALS rating approach measures the attitudes, beliefs, opinions, hopes, fears, bias, needs, and expectations of customers, which clearly links the concept, in many respects, to customer psychology (Shieh & Cheng, 2007). SBI (2009) explained that there are currently eight VALS types. Innovators (Innovators are successful, sophisticated, take-charge people with high self-esteem. Innovators are very active customers, and their purchases show cultivated tastes for upscale, niche products and services. Image is important to Innovators, not as evidence of status or power, but as an expression of their taste, independence, and personality), Thinkers (Thinkers tend to be well educated and actively look for information in the decision-making process. Thinkers are conservative, practical customers; they seek for durability, functionality, and value in the products that they buy). Believers (Like Thinkers, Believers are stimulated by ideals. They are conservative, conventional people with concrete beliefs based on traditions. As customers, Believers are predictable; they choose familiar products and established brands). Achievers (Motivated by the desire for achievement, Achievers have goal-oriented lifestyles and a deep commitment to career and family. With many desires and needs, Achievers are active in the customer marketplace. Image is significant to Achievers; they favour established, prestige products and services that demonstrate success to their peers). Strivers (Strivers are trendy and fun loving. Since they are stimulated by achievement, Strivers concern about the opinions and approval of others. Money defines success for Strivers, who do not have enough of it to meet their wishes. Strivers are active customers because shopping is both a social activity and an opportunity to demonstrate to peers their ability to buy). Experiencers (Experiencers are stimulated by self-expression. Young, enthusiastic, and impulsive customers, Experiencers quickly become enthusiastic about new possibilities, although they are equally quick to cool down. They look for variety and excitement, savouring the new, the offbeat,

and the risky. Their energy finds an outlet in exercise, sports, outdoor recreation, and social activities. Experiencers are keen customers and spend a comparatively high proportion of their income on fashion, entertainment, and socialising. Their purchases reflect the stress that they place on looking good and having "cool" stuff). Makers (Makers are unimpressed by material possessions apart from those with a practical or functional purpose. They live within a conservative context of family, practical work, and physical recreation and have little interest in what lies beyond that context). Lastly Survivors (Survivors live narrowly focused lives. Since they must focus on meeting requirements rather than fulfilling desires, Survivors do not show a strong primary stimulation). Each group is based on two dimensions: primary motivation and resources. The concept of primary motivation demonstrates customer attitudes and anticipates behavior. VALS comprises three primary motivations which matter for comprehending customer behavior: ideals, achievement, and self-expression. Customers who are primarily stimulated by ideals are guided by knowledge and principles. Customers who are primarily motivated by achievement seek products and services that show success to their peers. Customers who are primarily stimulated by self-expression desire social or physical activity, variety, and risk. These motivations provide the required basis for communication with the VALS types and for a variety of strategic applications. Also, resources which are deemed as energy, self-confidence, intellectualism, novelty seeking, innovativeness, impulsiveness, leadership, and vanity play an essential role. These psychological traits in combination with key demographics show an individual's resources.

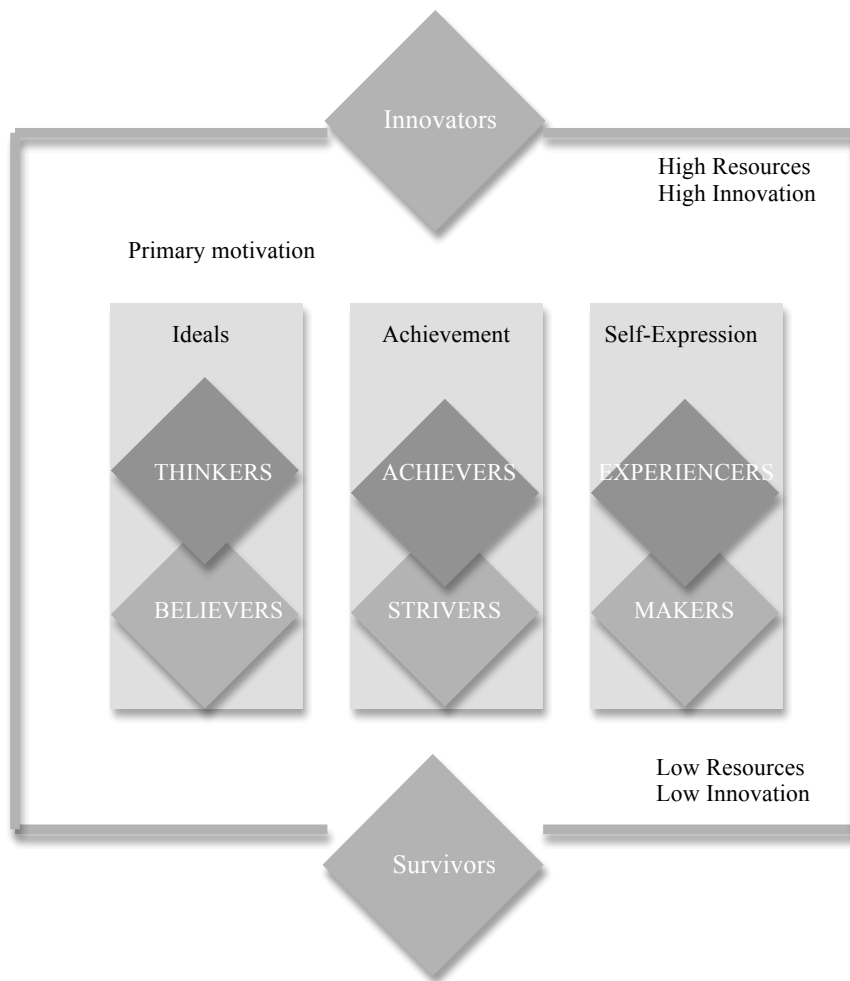


Figure 2.9: VALS Framework (SBI, 2009)

VALS segmentation which is different from traditional segmentation begins with people instead of products and classifies them into various types, each characterised by a unique style of living - it then determines how marketing factors fit into their lives. This perspective enables a three dimensional view of the target customer. The VALS segmentation has been applied to communicate much more effectively and much more accurately and to gain insight into why each target group acts the way it does.

Lee and Overby (2004) stated that experiential value was determined by the overall advantages obtained from the experience of off-line to online shopping, or from



sources of entertainment, including escapism, visual appeal, interactivity, and social stimulation.

### **2.3.3 Fashion Consumption Amongst the Female Adolescent**

“Young adolescents are more likely to be concerned about trends than most other age groups. In addition to being trend-setters for one another, they are also trend-setters for the larger population” (Martin and Bush, 2000). Moreover, there is the motivation among these young female adolescents for the emergence of something new, so they can be seen as innovative in their fashion view (Beaudoin et al., 2003). Evidence seems to indicate the fact that “young adolescents are an audience that has shown no particular brand loyalty” and in fact they are afraid of commitment. However, if young female adolescents adopt slowly, they may be perceived as weak which will leave them isolated and conspicuously alone” (Lindstrom, 2003). Solomon and Rabolt (2004), explain that these young female customers and their peer groups have a desire to conform to the fashion norms and match the older models who are presented by fashion.

Fiore and Kimle (1997) think that clothing can please females because it satisfies them on their emotional and cognitive levels and can meet their psycho-social needs. Gersak (2002), North et al., (2003) and Tate (2004) state that customers generally use brand names, price and place of purchase in their purchasing decision, particularly when they do not have knowledge about the label. Females may be able to use the brands as symbols in their cognitive reasoning. Therefore these become important for female customers regardless of the functional and/or sensory beauty of the fit. It may be more important that females can use items of clothing to satisfy specific psycho-social needs.

Grant and Stephen (2005) state that the adolescent customer is more knowledgeable about the market place and focuses more on the social significance of products in addition to other people’s perspectives. Klerk and Tselepis (2007) think that the female adolescent has psycho-social needs and clothing needs to be functional and beautiful at a sensory level. The cognitive behavioural qualities are normally satisfied by extrinsic factors, such as brand name, fashionability, or others opinion. Brands

have an important role in creating a desired look. A product needs to exist, to enable choices to be made about its distribution, its promotion, and its pricing. As a result, a dialogue process is needed for the sharing and even the creation of knowledge to occur between the product and its customers. Interactions may be initiated by planned communication messages and programs from this stage (Grönroos, 2004).

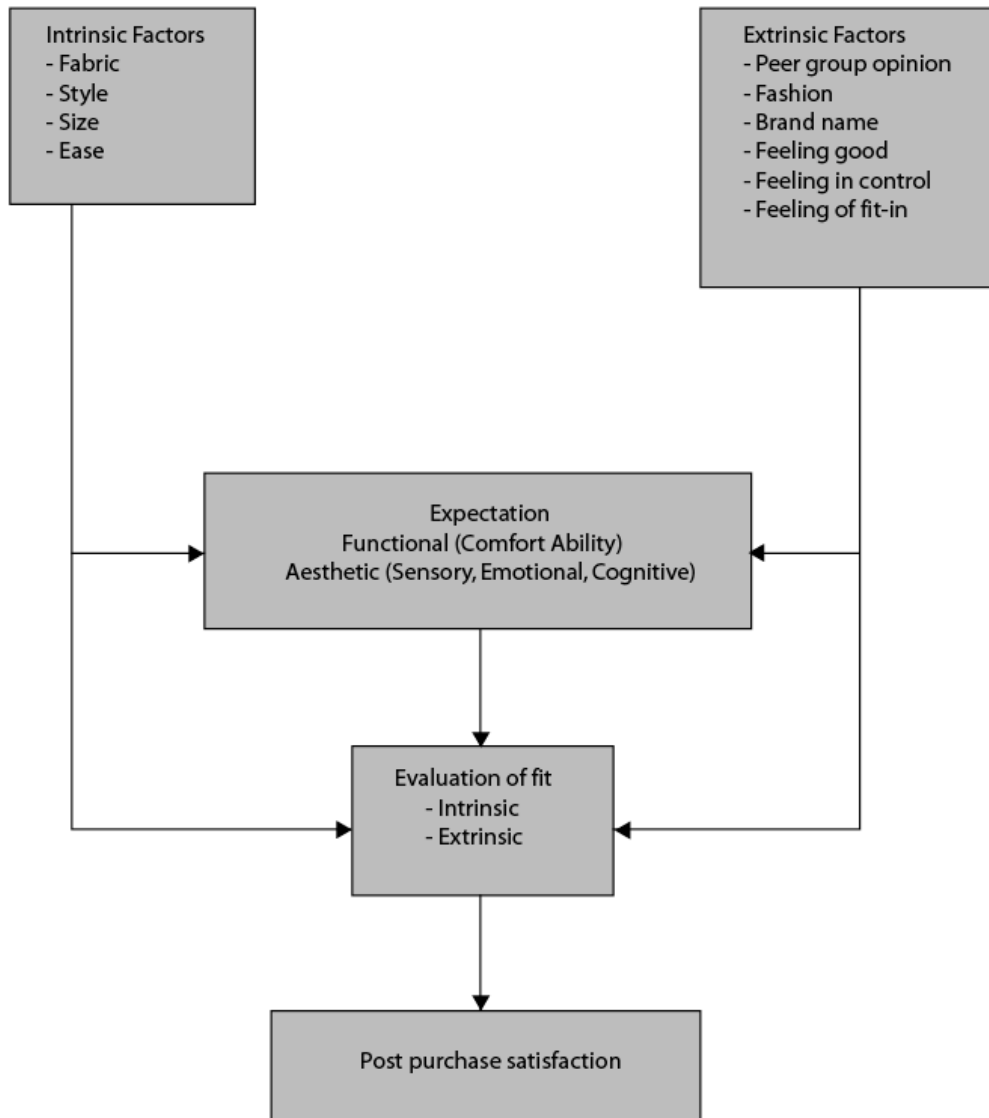


Figure 2.10: Schematic representation of the role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in young female customer's expectations and evaluation of the fit of clothes (Klerk H.M., Tselepis T, 2007).

Therefore, the customer is also concerned about the clothing product's functional

quality, and especially about the overall satisfaction in respect of the sensory, emotional and cognitive elements. A total aesthetic experience results for the customer (Fiore and Kimle, 1997). Female adolescents need visibility from a brand. Their clothing purchases and wearing them reflects their personality and self-image (Grant and Stephen, 2005). Brown and Rice (1998) explained that a specific brand clothing item may be perceived as beautiful for the adolescent because of the way it fits on her body (sensory enjoyment), or maybe it helps her to feel in control (addressing the emotions), or perhaps that it important for female identity as belonging to a specific group (cognitive).

#### **2.3.4 Influences of the reference group over the female adolescent (Peer Pressure)**

Antonides and Van Rajj (1998) showed that reference groups are the groups of people that have the mutual interest and point of view and frequently contact one another. The external influence that impacts upon the female adolescent group are role models who may be anyone that they socialise with or the ones that could alter their thinking or shape their behaviour. The role model may be anyone that they admire or respect including their family, friends, celebrities or their teacher. For the adolescent, therefore, the brand is their priority and is a must for a hard push towards succeeding in satisfying their needs (Lawrence, 2003).

Age can play a role. Young people, who tend to socialise more and be more influenced by their peers than their elders, seem to talk more about products (Starch, 1996). Friends are the number-one source for information (Rosen, 2000). Acuff (1997) depicts that a peer group is the main circle of influence amongst friends. The thinking of each individual can be manipulated by each member of the particular group they are in according to the sense of conformity. Despite the strong power of media, the peer group of society appears to be more effective in manipulating or controlling the notion of their opinion formation (North and Kotzé, 2001).

Rudd and Lennon (2000) discovered that female adolescents consciously compared themselves with supermodels and more attractive peers. Comparisons are frequently made with those more attractive than themselves, which produces greater concern

about appearance (Tiggemann and McGill, 2004). Female adolescents are more concerned about what they will look like, desire to look like, and desire not to look like. It can be seen that the picture of “casual”, “comfortable” and “being social” were preferable (Martin, 2005).

For the female adolescents, design and style are the key aspects of fashion – with many desired fashions worn by media icons (Martin and Bush, 2000). An increased understanding of other people’s viewpoints, together with a desire to create one’s own identity and acquiesce to group expectations, results in more interest in the social aspects of being a customer, making choices and consuming brands” (John, 1999).

The opinions of the group and the mass-media about the fit of clothing may influence expectations about how clothing is going to fit, while understanding that if successful the clothing will satisfy because it enables female adolescents to fit into the group which satisfies an important psycho-social need (Shim and Koh, 1997; Marshall et al., 2004). Recent research has suggested that today's adolescent still frequently uses fashion to establish conformity with their peer group (Meyer and Anderson, 2000).

| Topic                 | Reflective Stage  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Advertising knowledge | Sceptical attitudes towards advertisements: understanding, but not significant influence. However, parental and peer group influence is considerable  |
| Decision strategies   | Use multiple attributes:<br>Wide variety of personal and non-personal sources used in decision-making.<br><br>Full range of strategies:<br>Negotiation strategies employed when considered suitable for individuals self-interest |
| Information search    | Collect information on functional, perceptual and social aspects:<br>Extensive searching undertaken, although the social aspect (e.g. working conditions) has no impact   |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Product and brand knowledge | <p>Considerable brand understanding for adult-orientated as well as child-relevant product classifications:<br/>Highly aware of full brand range and of individual brands.</p> <p>Awareness of and enthusiasm for retail stores:<br/>Extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic about range of stores available.</p> |
| Product evaluation          | <p>Concentrate on important attribute information – functional, perceptual and social aspects:<br/>Thorough evaluations undertaken, with functional, perceptual and social aspects important, when buying fashion clothing.</p>  |

Table 2.2: Cognitive abilities toward the improvement of customer knowledge and decision-making skills (Grant and Stephen (2005); Adapted from John (1999)).

As long as a brand continues to provide satisfaction, customers will continue to be loyal to that brand. However, female adolescents are prepared to switch to other brands, which match their changing tastes, preferences and stage of development (Rossiter and Percy, 1987).

## 2.4 Communication perspectives

In order to understand the role of communication, this section gives explanations to understand the foundations of the communication plan. This section focuses on information seeking and collecting, communication process, communication strategy, traditional media and new media, and communication approaches. Finally, the communication channels both online and off-line are shown with the purpose to investigate the impact of each communication application involved in the communication process.

### 2.4.1 Information seeking and gathering

The information revolution drives changes in the fashion market. Schultz and Barnes (1999) explain that competition is developing customer knowledge. Therefore, communication must match the audience in terms of reach and impact on customers and prospects. The customer has power because he or she has information, access to

product data, the ability to compare prices and terms, and the selection of delivery channels. The twenty-first-century marketplace is interactive. Brands, channels, media and customers all share information and technology. Dialogues are created amongst audiences as shown in figure 2.11.

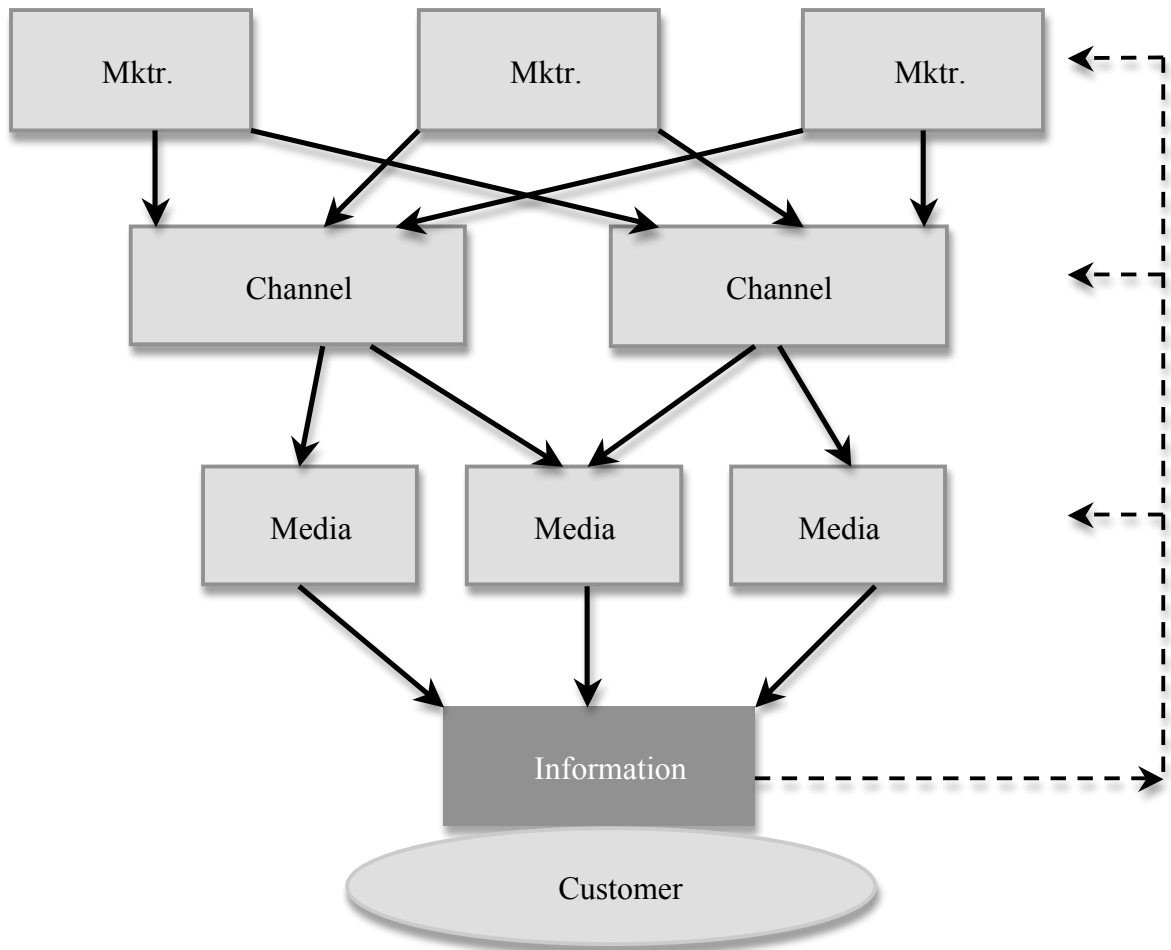


Figure 2.11: Marketplace Evolution and Revolution (Schultz and Barnes, 1999)

Information-age markets grow by nurturing the new customer concept. This is where the branding action is effective (Grant, 2003). Informationalism is the total system of change, catalysed by the Internet and other technologies, acting on human culture and society (Castells, 2000).

The information era has created fundamental changes in values and interactions

between individuals and groups on various levels (Holm, 2006). All communication stages are charted on a journey which starts with information search (Daye, 2009) to satisfy the fundamental needs of customers for information anytime and anyplace (Leth, 2008). Information search is significant for customers. Information search stimulates customers' attitudes towards a brand and helps to overcome the perceived barriers to shopping experiences (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004).

## **2.4.2 Communication Process**

McQuail and Windahl (1993) explain a communication model as comprising a sender, a channel, a receiver, a relationship between the sender and receiver, an effect, a context in which communication happens and a range of things which messages refer to. Three levels of communication problem occur: technical, semantic and effective (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). The communication of the information gives it meaning. By definition, communication involves sharing ideas, information, and messages with other people in a particular time and place (Lievrouw, 2005). Hernes and Bakken (2003) explain that communication should not be construed as only sending information from a sender to a receiver. Instead, information is perceived as being created with the receiver by interacting with his/her existing cognitive framework.

Both the brand and the customer may be expected to be influenced to communicate with one another, which Dichter (1966) states is a prerequisite for two parties is to participate in a dialogue, so that a platform of common knowledge is possible (Ballantyne, 2000). The intention of this process is to build shared meanings (Bohm, 1996). When a potential buyer gets information, the stages of the interaction process, what Berlo (1960) called connotative meaning might then be created by personal experience messages which take on meaning and a common knowledge platform of shared meanings can then grow.

Duncan and Moriarty (1999) split the possible origins of messages into four groups, which are, planned marketing communication (i.e. messages sent as part of the planned communication process), product and service messages (i.e. messages created

throughout the interaction process) and unplanned messages.

| Planned Messages                       | Product Messages     | Service Messages                    | Unplanned Messages      | Absence Of Communication  |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Mass communication (e.g., advertising) | Usefulness           | Interactions with service processes | Word-of-mouth referrals | Silence following a service breakdown   |
| Brochures                              | Design               | Deliveries                          | New stories             | Lack of information about the progress of service and manufacturing processes |
| Direct response                        | Appearance           | Invoicing                           | Gossip                  | etc.  |
| Sale                                   | Raw materials        | Claims handling                     | Internet chat groups    |   |
| www-pages                              | Production processes | Product documentation               | etc.                    |   |
| etc.                                   | etc.                 | Help centre services                |                         |   |
|  |                      | etc.                                |                         |   |

Table 2.3: Sources of communication messages in a relationship (Grönroos, 2000).

The fundamentals of communication are not necessarily designed to persuade (Mcquail and Windahl, 1993). An effective communication involves three aspects: contact, code and context. The message must be conveyed by means of a contact, formed in a code and described in a context (Jobber, 2007). Likewise, Jakobson (1960) suggests the model that illustrates the communication process from sender to receiver using a code for conveyance and context for implicit interpretation.

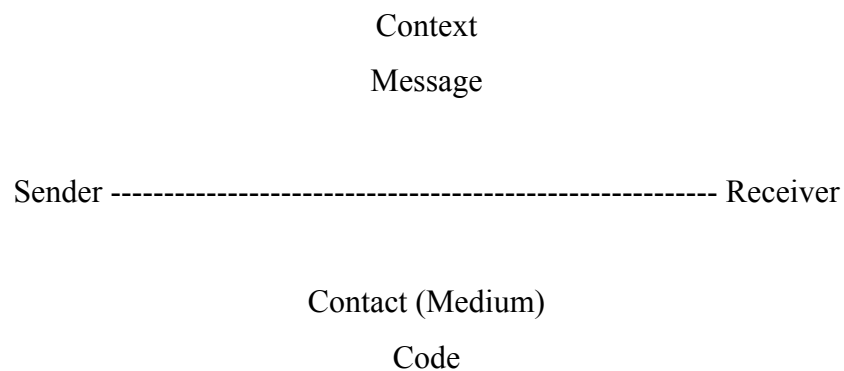


Figure 2.12: The Jakobson Model of Communication (Source: Jakobson, 1960)

The source (or communicator) encodes a message by translating the idea to be



communicated into symbols (Jobber, 2007). Hall (1980) discovered that the form of the message is decided by the process and, more significantly, that the receivers will influence the message which is being created as well as deciding what the meaning of the message is for them. However, a problem of communication still persists. In the process of decoding, receivers can construe the message another way dependant upon the differences of cultures, education and so forth (Berger, 2004).

### **2.4.3 Communication Strategy**

Current market expectations and competitive trends require quicker and better communication (González et al., 2004). Berger (2004) stated that a variety of communication channels have been applied to influence people to buy products and manipulate customers' wishes and action. Aesthetic matters in the media have a lot of effect upon the message sent. However, an overwhelming commercial communication may confuse customers and turn them off, to avoid message sent by new technology.

Holm (2006) explained that communication has become a basic element of strategy. Communication has always depended upon three different systems – sound, image and the written word – all of which need technological development. Main points are clarity about the brand's mission, direction, values and objectives.

Shannon and Weaver (1949) defined the characteristics of communication as the semantic dimension of meaning: which is, human communication that refers to or is linked to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. Communication may be defined as a “transactional process between two or more parties in which the exchange of meaning takes place by using symbols intentionally” (Engel et al., 1994). This, in turn, needs perception of senders' and receivers' fields of experience and understanding (Blythe, 2000). This means that each person taking part needs to completely understand the meaning of the other's communication, or a counterproductive dialogue may result, or no dialogue at all. It is only by knowledge and understanding of the communication process that the participants are likely to reach their objectives of influencing attitudes, knowledge and behaviour with the aim of influencing customers, which is one of the most important reasons for

organisations to communicate (Fill, 1999).

It has been found that lack of common language, understanding and motivation are the primary causes of failed or no communication. The significance of a common understanding of goals and meaning is therefore reinforced (Holm, 2006). Media and communication efforts need integrating into one consistent message (Smith and Taylor, 2004). Moreover, a communication plan can be formulated as a push/pull strategy. With the new media development, the multidimensional push and pull can now immediately convey a brand message and actually help a brand to build a real dialogue. Push media are primarily used to target passive customers while pull messages encourage a response from people and helps a brand to connect with the public in a very dynamic way (Gobe', 2001). A planned communication needs a balanced push and pull strategy (Smith and Taylor, 2004). Duncan (2005) infers that the communication challenge is to integrate push and pull strategies with respect to timing and theme.

#### **2.4.4 Traditional Media and New media**

Lindstorm (2007) gave the idea that advertising does not work any longer, so something new is needed. Clearly the online world has become the epicentre of most marketing communications. The impact of touchpoints has been to make all attempts to separate traditional from non-traditional media obsolete (Daye, 2009).

Nevertheless, Leth (2008) added that communication in the new media confused customers with its various platforms. Lyon (2009) argued that brands need to facilitate the conversation and activities by valuable online tools and concepts. Given a multi-sensorial experience and a multitude of engagement possibilities, brands may improve their customer experience beyond the traditional marketing tactics.

Furthermore, the media movement is moving from broadcast to anycast. Individuals are interacting with media to work things out. This is about using the media in an active way. The four segments of the new paradigm have been proposed in figure 2.13 (Grant, 2003).

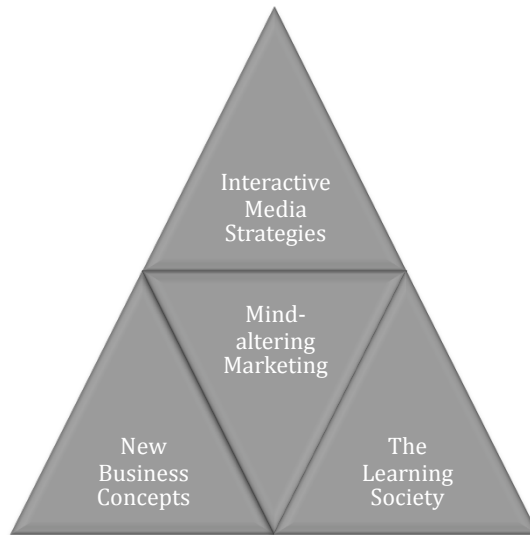


Figure 2.13: The new marketing paradigm (source: Grant, 2003).

## 2.4.5 Communication Approaches

Beard (2009) showed that communication channels are exponentially increasing. Customers can use these new channels, to engage with other customers, and give feedback to companies which has dramatically changed how marketers should behave. The explosion in new communication channels, and the growing ease with which customers may react to, produce content about, and generally talk about brands is challenging. Leth (2008) proposed the ideas of how communication should be approached in the future. The ideas consist of DADA, DATA, ALPHA and BETA. Technology combined with information has changed the way we tell stories. This is the time of social experience and community sharing.

| DADA   | DATA   | ALPHA                       | BETA   |
|--|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Re-evaluate and redefine all elements of marketing   | Metrics = Accountability   | Talk to customers who care  | Marketing and Product development must co-exist, not in a linear fashion |
| Co-creation. It's a cut and paste society. Customers are creating their own experience of the brand. | New forms of storytelling are evolving through the use of dynamic data | Talk to customers who share | Allow for customer co-definition of brand, products, service, experience |

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Lateral thinking required   | Allows for “Value Exchange” beyond entertainment              | WOM is outcome of good experiences                                    | Direct Marketing is the future of advertising, and digital is the future of Direct Marketing                                 |
| Lack-Of-DADA will prevent Google from conquering the world. Don’t shoot the creative yet. | Optimise performance  | Collaborate with customers.<br>Create opportunities for participation | Rapid changes in media landscape require constant testing and evaluation to be ready so they can be successfully implemented |
|   | Massively distributed personalisation of brand experience     | Create ongoing value exchanges particularly for early adopters        |  |
|   | Enable “Listening” as core competency of marketing department |   |  |

Table 2.4: How to think in the world gone digital (Leth, 2008)

Martin (2005) discovered the influences of media and/or advertising on the young female adolescent. As females start to link their self-worth with self-perceived attractiveness, appearance becomes an essential part of their identity. Females who find appearance important themselves naturally pay attention to appearance-related aspects of media and advertising. This is particularly true for young girls who are experiencing puberty and developing their identity (Tiggemann, 2002). To put this another way, customers find out what is culturally attractive by personal experiences, group experiences, and the mass media (Fill, 2006).

#### 2.4.5.1 Electronic/Digital communication

The Internet is one such example of technology that stimulates, promotes and enhances communication (DeGrandpre, 2001). Through ease of use and access, it has removed the barriers of more conventional forms of communication. Being in the Information Age needs individuals and societies to quickly and effectively communicate and disseminate information like never before and the Internet is the enabling tool (Israelsen, 2005).

The Internet creates a marketplace where buyers and sellers directly conduct transactions interactively and in real-time without the physical limitations of conventional retailers (Brynjolfsson and Smith, 2000). Lyon (2009) suggests that the

ubiquity of the internet and countless information hubs help customers to choose one product over another. With the broad customer conversation on social media sites and product pages, the internet and its vast network reach typically bypasses traditional push media. Leth (2008) showed that people revolutionise the way they use the Internet, therefore a variety of digital communication platforms have been created i.e. website, branded content, search engine, social media, mobile, viral video, widgets, dialogue/e-mail and online advertising. These digital applications enable an audience to dynamically respond to the brand in real time.



Figure 2.14: The Digital World WEB 2.0 Characters (Leth, 2008)

Ha (2004) suggested that the brand will be trusted according to the environment that is set up online. Also, e-commerce needs to always come together with trust to achieve the goal (Cheskin Research and Sapient, 1999). Additionally, the result is about a shopping environment which will be less physical, but have more online involvement (Bergstrom, 2000). The Internet allows customers to retrieve information

about a particular product or service by an online source. Among a number of alternative choices in the Internet, a source that provides the most clear and practical information will gain the heart of online customers (Bergstrom, 2000). Carpenter (2000) endorses this statement that online public promotion can be a main factor which leads to successful brand building. Therefore, requesting advice online is second nature for young adults.

Moreover, brand development on electronic channels is also based on the basic principles of branding used in the offline channel (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Lindstorn and Anderson (1999) suggested that a brand concept about online communication needs to be clear about how the brand is seen in the market, the core values of the brand, brand personality, target audience profiles and their experience with the Internet. E-brand needs to establish the purpose of the brand, how it can help people's lifestyle and the functional and emotional benefits being offered. E-brand platform achievement relates to the realised differentiation of the brand compared to rivals (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees (2004) propose a model of e-branding as shown in figure 2.15. They state that the more contact/communication between the two players and the more willing the brand is to respond to questions and solve problems, then the greater the trust. Trust is built on a solid relationship between e-branding and the customer. Hence, branding on the Web is about choosing a unique or distinctive package of benefits to be offered to the customer in a method that gives a competitive advantage to the brand.

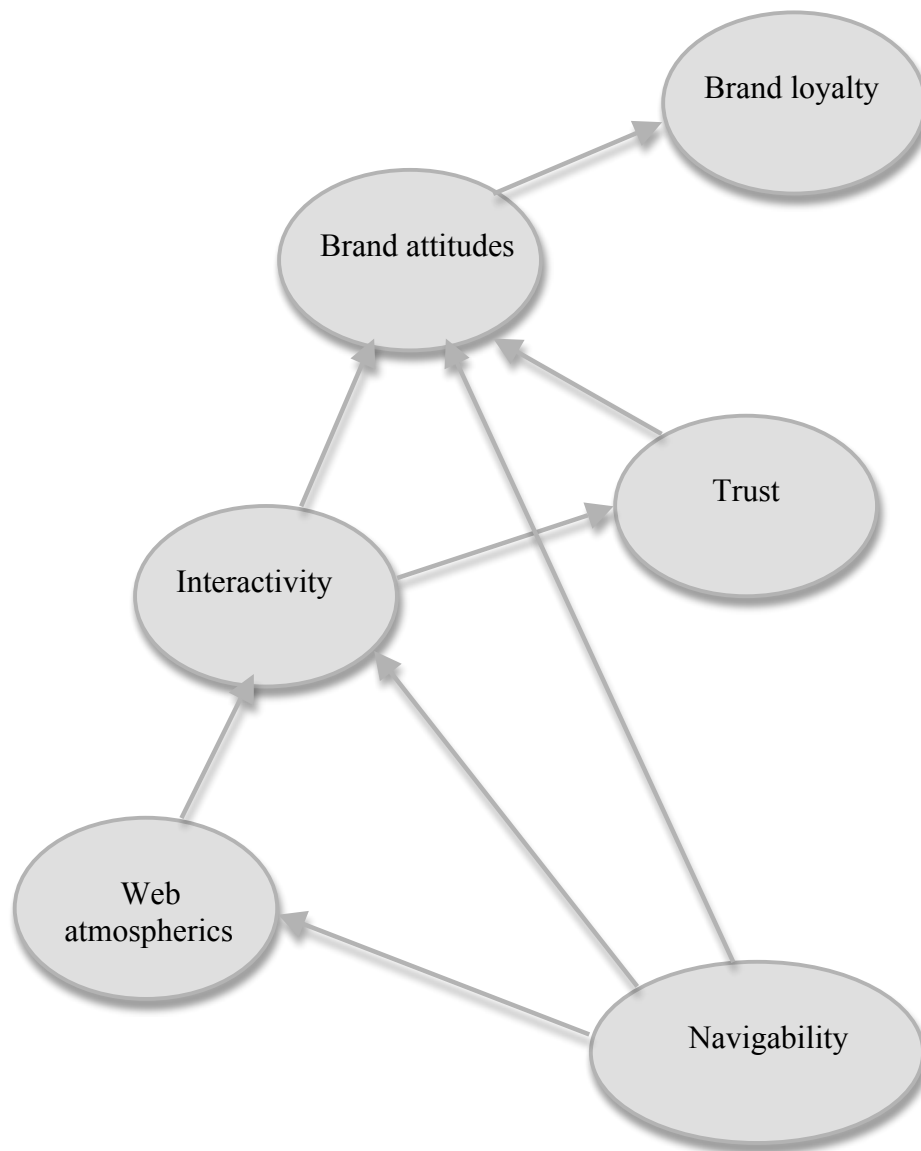


Figure 2.15: An integrated framework for e-branding (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004).

#### 2.4.5.1.1 Electronic Magazine (E-Zine)

The Internet has impacted upon the traditional print media products circulation (Kaiser, 2003). Other reasons for the Internet presence are to offer readers content extensions and support the brand (Barsh et al., 2001). From a recent study focusing on 71 magazine publishers, the top five objectives for magazine web sites in 2005 were:

- (1) to expand the readership further than the print audience by creating an online audience;
- (2) to get new readers of the print products;
- (3) to create revenue incomes and profits in the long term;
- (4) to build fans of the magazine brand; and
- (5) to have the way to communicate with the target audience on a more frequent basis (FIPP, 2005).

The key word here is online customer loyalty built by community activities (Ellonen and Kuivalainen, 2008). The magazine has benefited in several ways from the virtual community. The forums (one type of virtual community) were helped by the good feedback which resulted in positive network effects (Johansson, 2002) and led to the use of the service (Ellonen and Kuivalainen, 2008). Online community activities have been shown to influence customer loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion of the product/service (Wang et al., 2006), and even the attitudes about the brand's offerings (Gruen et al., 2006). The web site is not stealing the print circulation, it is an asset to and not a competitor of the print magazine (Ellonen and Kuivalainen, 2008).

#### **2.4.5.1.2 Electronic Retail Store (E-tail store)**

Traditional retail attributes – product, service, and store atmosphere – may be realised in the realm of e-tailing (Yun and Good, 2002). The E-tailer's shopping atmosphere is produced by the appeal of the e-tailer's site and how goods and services, service-specific features, and the entire interface of an e-tail site are presented. For competitiveness in the virtual marketplace, e-tailers have to find out how to create outstanding value for customers and how to maximise the value for loyal customers (Good and Yun, 2007). The most important e-tail atmosphere components appear to be convenient site design, user friendliness and navigation (Tarafdar and Zhang, 2005). E-tailers are finding it is not easy to keep customer attention by their marketing messages, and they are also finding it challenging to stop customers from buying competitive products and services (Hoffman and Novak, 2000). It is clear that customer's e-loyalty is a critical asset for e-tailers. Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees (2004) stated that there are a number of benefits for e-retailing. First, location is inconsequential. Second, size is not important. Finally, e-retailing can reach bigger



audiences. Successful e-retailers often make use of offline advertising integrated with online communications. Internet retailing – or e-tailing – is maturing quickly as a channel to communicate store information, to distribute information about products and services, and to execute transactions.

For product-related attributes on the Internet, product information is essential, because customers cannot see or touch the actual product. Adolescent customers, similar to many adults, find online shopping convenient and it may save money on shopping (Mintel, 2009a). However, more and more online-retailers are starting to realise that customers often want and need to interact with a live person in the way they did at the store. Once a human touch is introduced, buzz channels are open again (Rosen, 2000).

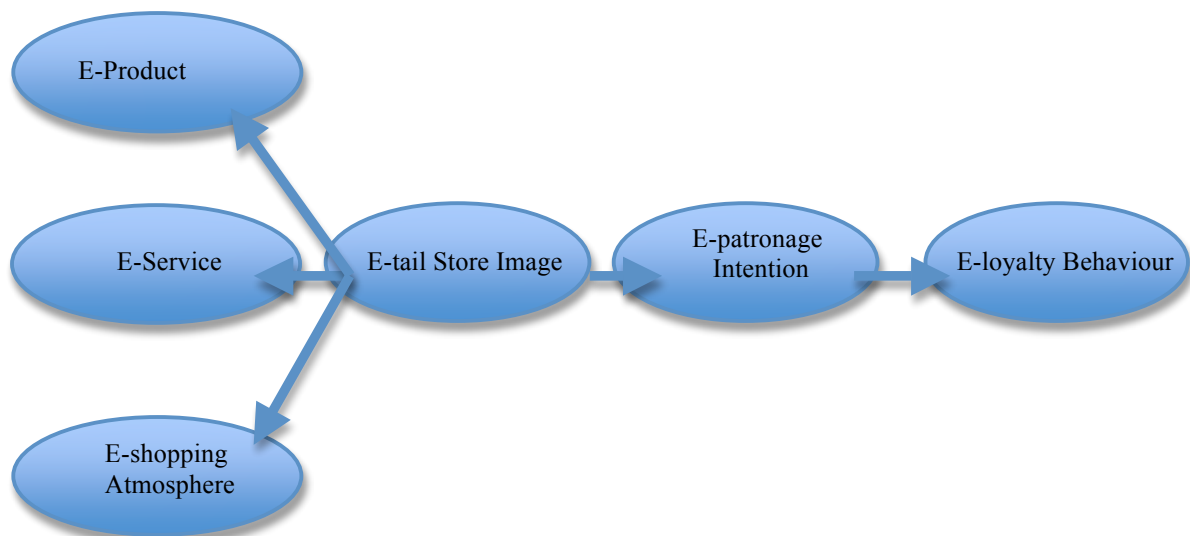


Figure 2.16: E-tail Store Image Model (Good and Yun, 2007)

The potential growth and energy of fashion product e-tailing appears almost infinite. In the fashion market, various kinds of retail channels, each providing its own unique array of services, have already been set up (Lee and Lee, 2007). High-street fashion e-tailing is a limited brand mall which relates to e-tailers selling their own brands and competing with other e-tailer types. The products and brands of an e-tailer are limited

to their own brands and customers are able to buy goods which are not easily found from other types of e-tailers, and can get more information such as fashion trends and coordination techniques compared to other sorts of e-tailers (Lee & Lee, 2007).

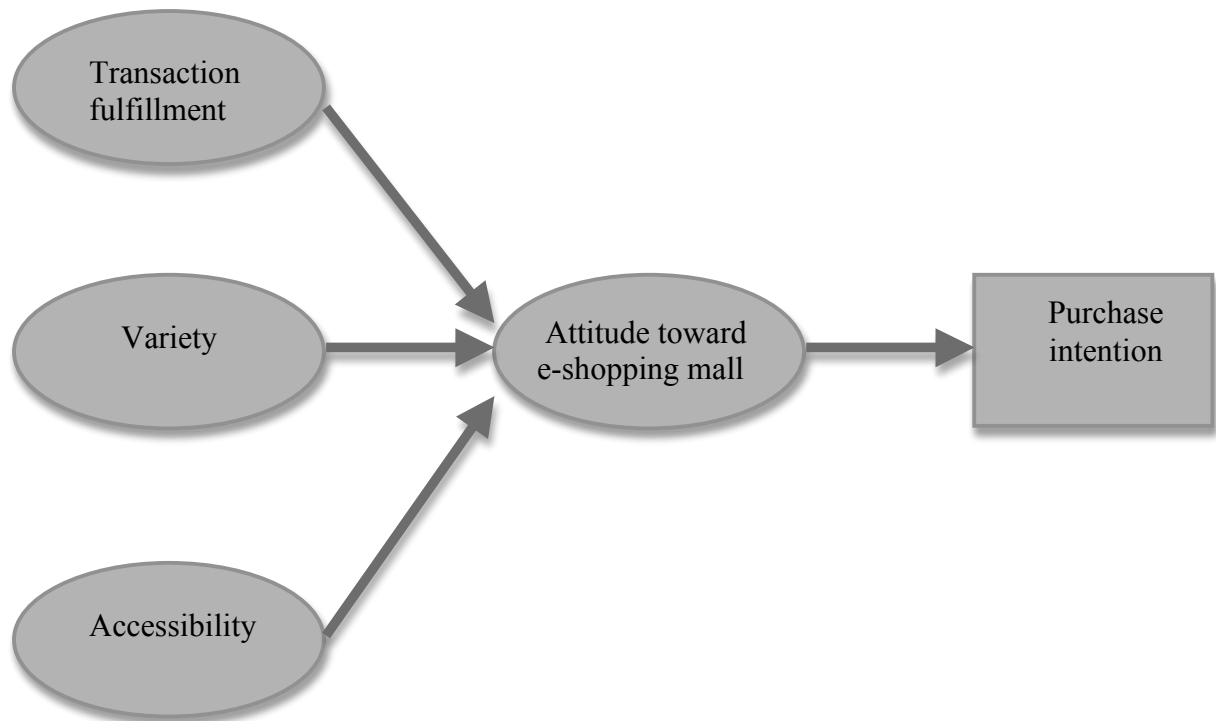


Figure 2.17: Effect of attribute dimension on attitudes and buying intentions in limited brand mall (Lee & Lee, 2007).

It is natural that the two channels (i.e. offline and online) share many similar characteristics in order to sell fashion products to customers (Wilde *et al.*, 2004). Hart *et al.*, (2000) proposed that price/promotion offerings, transactional support, and atmospheric environment can be listed, and suggested that electronic shopping included many of the same characteristics as normal shopping such as browsing possibilities. Also it can be assumed that the evaluation of the characteristics of e-tailers importantly influences customer's purchasing decisions.

E-tailer attributes affect the customers' buying intentions. Whilst it is true that traditional retailers and e-tailers share many similar attributes, e-tailers must include attributes pertinent to an Internet environment (Lee & Lee, 2007). Chen and Wells (1999) assert that entertainment, informativeness, and organisation influence

customers' attitudes toward the site.

Lynch *et al.*, (2001) verified that the characteristics of a website critically resulted in a growth in the probability of shopping and revisit for purchasing. They showed that site quality, trust and positive emotion of the website could definitely explain buying intentions and loyalty for the web site. Francis and White (2002) listed web store functionality, product attribute description, ownership conditions, delivered products, customer service, and security as the variables which influence customers' buying intentions in the Internet environment. Subsequently, attitudes towards web retailing influenced behaviour and adoption/non-adoption (O'Cass and Fenech, 2003). Moreover, the willingness to recommend the e-tailer to friends and family and the reluctance to switch from this e-tailer to another e-tailer are indications of e-patronage intentions, which lead to e-loyalty behaviours which are indicated by purchase frequency, volume, and word-of-mouth (Good and Yun, 2007).

In order to strengthen customer relationships and build e-tail store loyalty, implementation of e-CRM efforts (e.g. chat room, e-mail, worldwide web, etcetera) directly improves e-loyalty (Lee-Kelley *et al.*, 2003). Considering e-CRM features (e.g. e-bulletin board, FAQs, ability to quick order, complain, and track order status, etcetera), and technologies (e.g. internet survey, shopping agent, recommender software, etcetera (Feinberg and Kadam, 2002), e-tailers ought to create strategies to improve relational bonds (e.g. financial, social, and structural bonds) between customers and e-tailers, which lead to customer retention (Hsieh *et al.*, 2005).

Vrechopoulos and Siomkos (2002) suggested that sufficient and accurate amounts of information are thought to be essential elements of e-service. Therefore, textual and visual description are essential, and provide a sense of quality, together with price information, manufacturer name, brand name and product reviews by former purchasers or objective third parties (Szymanski and Hise, 2000). Nevertheless, a flaw of e-retailing is that e-selling has less power than face-to-face selling. This viewpoint is related to a concern of traditional high-street retailers that e-retailing offers a reduced role for their expertise, for example, there are obvious problems concerning products sold by atmosphere – touch, feel, smell – and impulse purchases (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004).

#### **2.4.5.1.3 Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM)**

Kotler and Keller (2006) say that marketers applied the word-of-mouth strategy to manipulate people to visit their website and disseminate a product's information to others. The word-of-mouth strategy is considered as an unplanned communication opportunity which must be managed consistently with the brand (Keller, 2003).

Customer satisfaction is commonly perceived as an important key to understand the reason why customers are willing to re-purchase with that particular store (Taylor and Baker, 1994). The explanation of the WOM would be best clarified as an effect on awareness, attitudes, expectations, perceptions, behavioral intentions and behavior (Ha, 2004), which can be both positive and negative depending on the situation (Chaffey, 2003). Contented customers are likely to spread their word on the positive side of that particular retail experience which would be implied as good word-of-mouth advertising, whereas, the customers who have a negative retail experience would rather dissuade others to get involved in that store, which is equal to harmful word-of-mouth advertising (File and Prince, 1992). Furthermore, WOM is a way to evaluate the reaction from customers towards the brands and products as well as the purchasing purpose (Bone, 1995; Ward and Reingen, 1990).

According to Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004); Belch and Belch (2007), today's digital WOM behavior has been conducted through many other options not only the electronic message. The innovative WOM has been widespread by the use of posting, blogging, uploading photos or audios as well as other social network's platform. The advantages of the electronic communication enable the WOM to work more effectively as it could capture and communicate to a large number of people in one time. New tools are emerging on the Net which may make electronic word of mouth even more powerful. Aggregated Buzz Tools have been established in order to store people's experience with products and services. For these tools to succeed, a brand has to address three issues: attracting enough people to participate, avoiding ballot stuffing (conspiracy between a brand and reviewers to create positive buzz), and making the information relevant to customers. Electronic word-of-mouth mimics

word-of-mouth as it occurs off-line as customers will always listen to people they trust (Rosen, 2000).

It is easy to maintain weak ties on the Internet, or at least easier to establish new ties on the Net and use these ties to get information (Wellman and Gulia, 1999). In the fast-moving Internet environment, new techniques keep appearing, there are three principles that a brand should bear in mind, so as to use electronic word-of-mouth on the Internet (Rosen, 2000).

1. Make a brand product part of the communication process (Sandberg, 1999).
2. Have customers interact: The bottom line is a structure that will enable the customers to interact (Tristram, 1999).
3. Prompt customers to spread the word without being intrusive (Rosen, 2000).

WOM can be perceived as an informal form of communication, it disseminates the information regarding product, service or a brand between customer groups. WOM allows customers to use both informational and normative influences on the product evaluations and purchase intentions of customers (Bone, 1995; Ward and Reingen, 1990). Thus, it is true to say that, in terms of word of mouth theory, online customers have more power and influence on the trust of other customers than traditional media (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004). Therefore, Word-of-mouth communications seem to be more valuable and trusted communications towards their customers than other business-sponsored types of communications (Dibb et al., 2006). A positive WOM is implied by McWilliam (2000) when an e-trust has emerged towards online communities. WOM is in some way acting upon the trust of customers on the brand (Ward and Lee, 2000).

#### **2.4.5.1.4 Customer-Generated Media (CSM): Blog or Weblog**

In recent years, social media, like forums, blogs, microblogs (*e.g.*, Twitter), and bookmarking services, have reduced the barriers to self-publishing on the Web. The question of what stimulates people to contribute to online communities is a key fundamental along with social advantages derived from a sense of community which can be powerful motivators for people to take part in a discussion group. People are

more likely to participate in online communities if they feel their contributions are unique (Thelwall, 2007).

Pete Blackshaw, a chief marketing and customer satisfaction officer of the Cincinnati-based Nielsen BuzzMetrics has established the term of “Customer Generated Media” (Blackshaw, 2007) to explain the array of new online information sources that have been found by customers who aim to learn more about particular brands, products, and services (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004). Unlike the paid media, CGM originates from the products-services experience of customers who are willing to share their direct experience with others. CGM has been clarified as one of the fastest growing media and is one of the long-lasting sources of influence (Blackshaw, 2007). The sources of their product reviews are generated and shared amongst customers, in which the content is believed to contain the facts, opinions, experiences and rumours. CGM is a way to get customers starting their conversation directly unlike others marketing strategies that plan to capture their mind. Additionally, Customer Generated Media is a type of media that trusts (or understands) their customer’s decision-making behavior unlike other types of marketing media that try to manipulate their customers to think or to react in a certain way (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2004).

An example of successful CGM is a blog. A blog can be referred as another information technology which reflects Word of Mouth (WOM) behavior (Westbrook, 1987) and a customer is a person who creates a blog which will contain what that customer perceives about the brand (Fill, 2002). Goldsmith and Lafferty (2002) suggested regarding the importance of blogs that they potentially affect the strength of a brand and an increasing opportunity to spread brand awareness through readers. Wright (2006) stated a blog is an information technology tool which can create an image for the brand and will be a powerful communication tool if it is used in terms of brand promotion.

A blog allows people to become an active media producer rather than the passive media customer (Kirby and Marsden, 2006). Moreover, if the brand owns a blog that is productive and competent, it could be helpful information in their virtual marketing (Pikas, 2005). A blog allows a brand to be able to see the direct feedback from the

customers as well as their customer's behavior (Wright, 2006). Brands are using blogs to understand the perception of their customers instead of the conventional media which results in the unexpected growing number of blogospheres as they come to realise how to use them effectively as communication tools (Brooks, 2006).

Blogs can draw the attention from blog readers that share the same interest in that particular area on a regular basis. Bloggers give the priority to the viewer to comment since they know that the power of the recommendation or suggestion is valuable and priceless for the blog readers. Therefore this presents opportunities for blog application to a brand strategist rather than conventional media-communications like television or print media (Simmons, 2007).

#### **2.4.5.1.5 Social Networking Site (SNS)**

It is human nature for people to make contact with others similar to themselves. The effects are clusters – sets of people who frequently communicate with one another according to dimensions such as age, sex, education, occupation, social class, area of interest, geography, and ethnic background (Woodside and Davenport, 1974). People tend to set up networks with individuals just like themselves, who probably are exposed to the same sources of information, and people outside these networks are significant in bringing in fresh ideas. The implication to businesspeople is to diversify connections (Brown and Peter, 1987).

While the network characteristics affect e-word-of-mouth (Ellonen and Kuivalainen, 2008), the female adolescent uses a social networking site (SNS) as a tool to communicate among their group by communicating with peers through a SNS like Facebook. Also it can be seen that particular young female adolescents are more likely to employ SNS to stay in touch with peers (Lenhart, 2009). A social networking site is a newer communication technology among young adults in comparison with e-mail and phone (Vitak, 2008). The United Kingdom was rated to have the second highest number of Facebook users in the world. Facebook has been used extensively amongst brands for managing relationships. It works brilliantly, generates enquiries, and drives traffic to a website (Chaffey, 2009).

With the rapid adoption of social media, connectivity allows value to be created and shared by network members. In the digital world, network activities occur on an open platform that enables participation and cloud computing (think Wikipedia and widgets). In networks, some members are more connected and active, and consequently have more influence. Today, more people want to be influencers, and they want to be enablers. As early adopters, they tend to be trendsetters who are followed by their friends and sometimes the masses (Capece, 2009). People in the community site are active in the creation of symbolic shared meaning and even in the development of the service and experience. It provides people more opportunities to find each other, to keep in touch and to share views, knowledge and resources (Rosen, 2000). Looking at networks assists in creating tactics that a brand can apply to accelerate adoption (Valente, 1995).

#### **2.4.5.2 Offline Communication**

Offline communication may be seen as a channel which interacts with the audience directly. Matei (2004) suggested that offline communication can foster and link with strong Internet and computer-mediated social relationships. In offline activities, people generally get acquainted in face-to-face settings, and then either maintain communication face-to-face or through the online communication channel (Lin, 2007). Koh and Kim (2003) support that offline activities improve the solidarity and cohesiveness of a virtual community, and strengthen the links between members.

##### **2.4.5.2.1 Retail store**

Customer behavioural shopping desires are influenced by both traditional retail stores and by online shopping spaces (Yun and Good, 2007). The physical store uses atmospherics in an attempt to change mood and provide customers pleasant emotional experiences when buying. Emotional cues may be visual, olfactory, tactile and aural (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Young customers are likely to be self-service shoppers, and they wish to try and test products in the stores rather than ask for advice from sales assistants. Retailers have to make the experience as a whole as complete as possible. In this way, retailing for the female adolescent will become more theatrical and more engaging, making their experience fun and stimulating more buying



(Mintel, 2003). Retailers use different promotional techniques to attract customers to their stores. The range is wide, one of the more effective ways of promoting a product is by window and interior product displays. The interior formats are used to maintain the enticement once the potential customers have entered the store (Diamond and Diamond, 1999). Moreover, in-store communication is also involved with how a fashion brand creates the store atmosphere for young customers such as background music (Mintel, 2003).

Webb (2006) also added some of the other measurement data that fashion retailers will find useful for customer measures which have been shown in table 2.5. In practice, the resources for running a fashion store are always limited, so it will not be possible to maximise performance across all criteria. A high-street retailer should focus on those benchmarks which best support its positioning and business model.

| Type of measurement | Measurement     | Definition  |
|---------------------|-----------------|---|
| Customer Measures   | Market Share    | Share of local market spending, by customer group, product category, period, etc. |
|                     | Awareness       | Percentage of target customers aware of the shop.                                 |
|                     | Footfall        | Number of customers entering the store.   |
|                     | Conversion rate | Percentage of visitors who purchase.  |
|                     | Walk-out rate   | Percentage who leave with nothing.  |

|  |                           |   |
|--|---------------------------|---|
|  | Average transaction value | Average value of each sale made.            |
|  | Multiple purchasing       | Percentage of shoppers buying linked items. |
|  | Visit frequency           | Elapsed time between visits to shop.        |
|  | Loyalty                   | Your share of periodic fashion shop visit.  |
|  | Advocacy rate             | Customer recommendation measure.            |

Table 2.5: Measuring fashion shop performance (Webb, 2006)

Among fashion retailers, the strategy typically determines the target market, location(s) and retail mix (Dunneet *al.*, 2002). Moore and Fairhurst (2003) explained the contexts of fashion retailing segment in which brands should tend to focus on different combinations of retail/marketing mix elements. Key informants from fashion retail who report greater capabilities linked with marketing differentiation also report higher performance levels. In practice, these elements are ideally integrated in a unique manner which adds value for end customers. Four contexts of marketing capability are studied: (1) customer service capability; (2) store image differentiation; (3) external (market level) knowledge; and (4) promotional capability.

Brand added-value benefits have been identified which together support the retailing function. In order for high-street fashion retailers to provide added-value, these features i.e., enjoyment, entertainment, building customer awareness and customer loyalty, customer-brand interaction and product information, should be discerned

(Webb, 2006). Ander and Stern (2004) put forward the ‘Est’ model in figure 2.18, which proposed that retailers with limited resources have to focus on being the best at some dimension of customer demand – and that this falls into four main areas: price; assortment choice; excitement and experience; and convenience (which has several dimensions).

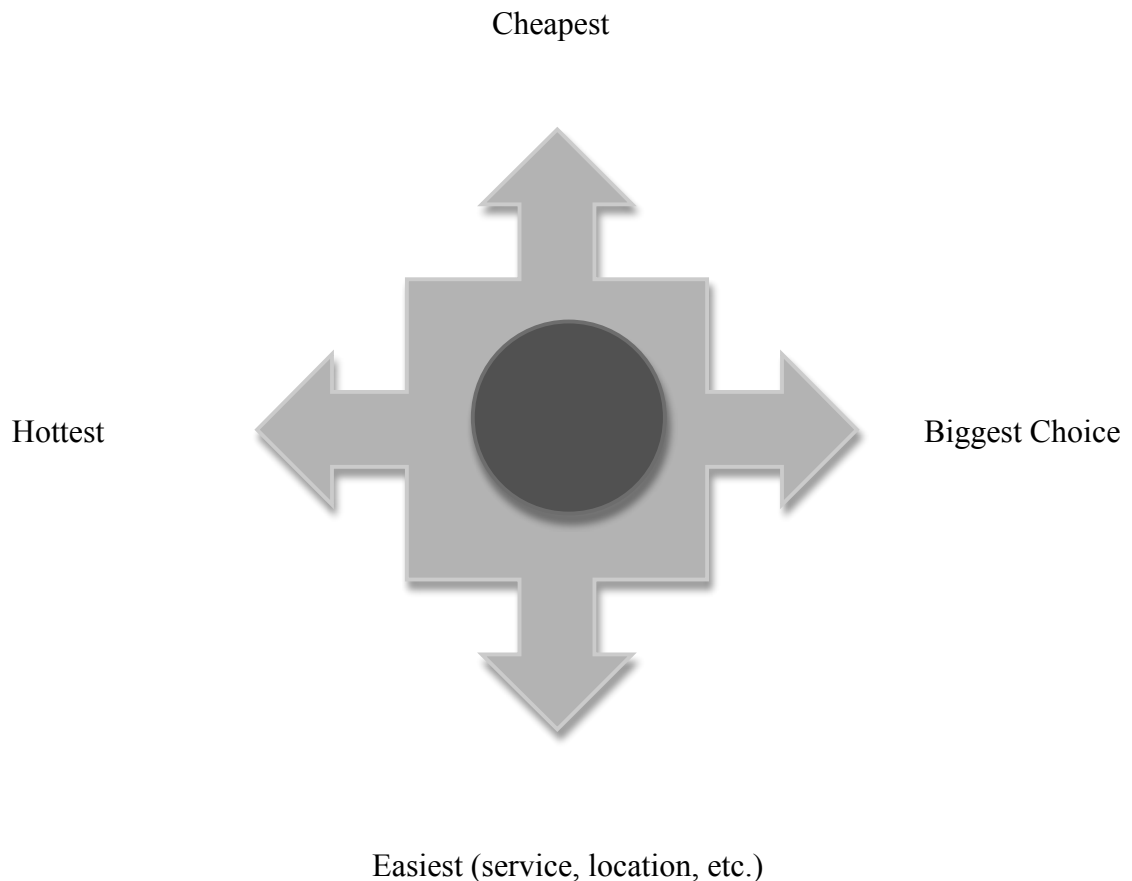


Figure 2.18: The retail ‘Est’ model (Ander and Stern, 2004)

Each of these areas of capability has been recognised as important to success in fashion retailing (Deter-Schmelz *et al.*, 2000).

#### **2.4.5.2.2 In-store communication**

Visual stimulation and communication have long been thought of as important aspects of retailing (McGoldrick, 2002). Visual merchandising is concerned with both how the product and/or brand is visually communicated to the customer and also if this message is decoded suitably as a positive psychological or behavioural outcome,

ultimately leading to purchase (Walters, 1987). The significance of attaining such an outcome has meant that within the retail environment, numerous methods have been applied to display products and communicate product and retailer brand information. This variety in visual merchandising methods has possibly also stemmed from the vast array of goods and services which are sold by retailers (Kerfoot, Davies, & Ward, 2003).

Lea-Greenwood (1998) suggested that there is a strong impact of visual merchandising stimuli within the retail store environment on customer perceptions and responses. Omar (1999) suggested that there are three kinds of interior display: product display, point-of-sale display and architectural display. The key facets within product display are identified by the literature as: layout, fixturing, presentation techniques, colour and packaging (Levy and Weitz, 1996).

The physical in-store environment has been studied in relation to various elements which are termed “atmospherics” (Davies and Ward, 2002). The physicality of the in-store environment focuses on the “communication” of elements by cues and stimuli which the customer digests through a number of sensory modalities (visual, aural, olfactory, haptic and taste). This then further supports the relationships between the visual merchandising and considerations of the physicality of the in-store environment. Therefore, from either perspective, knowing how to communicate product and brand images to customers through individual visual stimuli is essential (Kerfoot, Davies, and Ward, 2003).

Customer expectations concerning in-store design have increased (Buchanan *et al.*, 1999) and there is also an increased desire for shopping excitement, which can partly be delivered through innovative design of the physical environment (Erlick, 1993; Levy and Weitz, 1996). Such actions, together with effective visual merchandising, can also help in the creation of differentiation and brand identification (Israel, 1994). The potential links between visual merchandising and consumption intention are shown in figure 2.19.

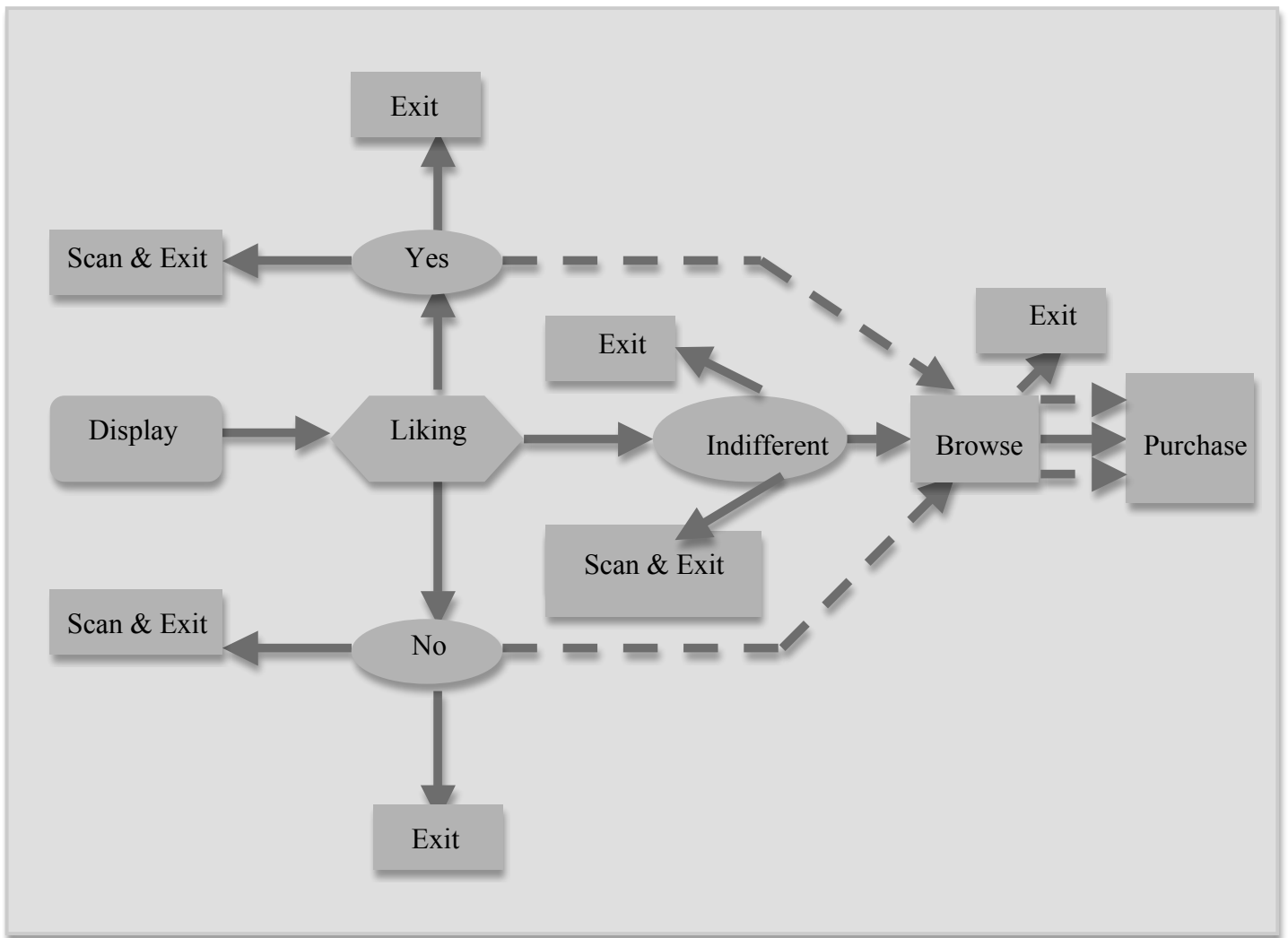


Figure 2.19: Behavioural process from display to consumption (Kerfoot, Davies, & Ward, 2003).

This means retailers need a detailed knowledge about their audience and also places a heavy emphasis on visual merchandising as a communication tool (Kerfoot, Davies, & Ward, 2003). Fashion retail stores would now have to use brand personality and shopping experience as a basis for competitive advantage and differentiation (Webb, 2006).

### 2.4.5.2.3 Lead users

Lead users are usually highly involved in using products for problem solving. In decision-making and information-processing terms, they engage in deep and active information processing, making numerous connections among ideas. Lead users are much more sophisticated in their information needs. They do not ask for elementary support that can be found elsewhere since they have already found it. They are typically the first to report a problem with a brand. It can be seen that the lead-user concept involves the twin elements of a learning relationship and a form of product development team (Pitta and Franzak, 1996). The information learned from lead users can then help to differentiate a brand from its competitors (Pine *et al.*, 1995).

Lead users are a source of innovation. Lead users are not early adopters and are often not existing customers. They are usually masters of the one-off special; people with a need so great that they create a customized product to take care of it without regard for whether or not anyone else has an interest in it. Lead users have two main characteristics. First, they have strong needs and because they expect to obtain significant benefits from finding a solution to those needs, they are prone to innovate. Second, their needs often foreshadow general market demand (Strategic Direction, 2007). According to von Hippel (1986), lead users are those who demonstrate a strong need and manage to solve that need by adapting existing products or processes not typically used in their respective fields. The lead user method aims to identify ideas or concepts for products that can be mass-produced, are task-specific and respond to individuals' needs. Clearly, the lead user method is based on “demand pull” – the needs and wants of individuals as opposed to the needs and concerns of community and society (Intrachooto, 2004). Pitta and Franzak (1996) suggested that a lead user is a potentially valuable source of customer information. Experienced product users, called lead users or lead customers, can serve as a problem-forecasting and problem-solving aid. Thus, lead user input can materially improve the market acceptance of new product concepts. Since lead users represent others like them, they will probably recognize a set of benefits which are valued by their peers. Findings suggest that tested lead-user concepts are valued by more typical users in target markets (Herstatt and von Hippel, 1992).

#### **2.4.5.2.4 Word-Of-Mouth (WOM)**

Word of mouth can be spread by peer groups or ordinary people who display themselves as brand ambassadors (Ferguson, 2008). In order to study about word-of-mouth specifically, a study showed that brands should develop customers starting from being loyal adopters, word of mouth advocates and ultimately the way new products are commercialised from opinion-leading young adolescents (Kirby and Marsden, 2006). The nature and content of word-of-mouth referrals may differ depending upon how long the customer has participated in the interaction process (Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos, 1999). As paid media is de-emphasized, the power of earned media and word of mouth is amplified. Think of new ways to share your story and build your reputation, and learn from entrepreneurial initiatives and listen to and engage the influential personalities (Capece, 2009).

Leth (2008) added that word-of-mouth can generate believers as customers talk and others listen to that particular story. Word-of-mouth can be published on different platforms such as YouTube, opinion share on blog and message board. The factor in deciding the importance of buzz to the brand is its audience (Money, Mary, & John, 1998). The more connected customers are to each other, the more the brand relies on their buzz. Therefore, due to the connectivity among customers a brand needs to be very open and direct with them (Fisher, 1996). Word-of-mouth is how adolescents shop (Rosen, 2000). Buzz or word of mouth plays a main role in the purchasing process of products. It requires not only a one-to-one interaction between the company and the customer, but also many exchanges of information and influence among the people who surround that customer (Marin and Boven, 1998). Word of mouth and validation from important personal relationships are essential for brand communication. Buzz is the sum of all comments about a certain product which are exchanged among people at any given time; it is an infectious chatter. Buzz is all the word of mouth about a brand. It's the aggregate of all person-to-person communication concerning a particular product, service, or company at any point in time (Hofstadter, 1985).

The spread of buzz is complex. People do not depend on any one source of information, so a brand should know about how to stimulate networks (McKenna,

1991). The opinion about the product is formed based on experience. The quality of the brand is key (Granovetter and Roland, 1986). Buzz is not something which a brand can push on people. A brand has to allow a product to spread itself through the invisible networks, permitting people to discover the product, get excited about it, and tell their friends (Elahian, 1997). A brand must understand that it is not selling to individual customers, but rather to networks of customers (Kotler and Armstrong, 1991). Also, energy and credibility make the word spread. Buzz spreads most smoothly through channels built on trust (Zeitchik, 1999).

The best buzz does not come from clever PR or advertising, but rather from attributes intrinsic to the brand and the product itself. Brands create an emotional response (the initial experience a customer has with a product is critical to buzz). Brands advertise themselves: a great deal of fashion products are spread in a similar way, fashion customers learn about fashion by observing what others are wearing. For observable products like clothes, people tend to discuss what they see. Understanding of this effect at the design stage is key. Brands leave traces: this is particularly true for brands that allow their users to express themselves. Brands become more useful as more people use them: the more people use them – the more communication. Brands are compatible: compatibility with expectations that people have. Brands are practical and easy to use brands spread faster because customers are hungry for simplicity (Rosen, 2000). The key to producing good buzz is balance. Always exceed expectations. Falling below customer's expectations will create negative buzz (Iacocca & William, 1984).

#### **2.4.5.2.5 Printed communication**

Englis et al., (1994) explained that each fashion magazine represents different aspects of customers' attitudes about beauty, fashion and styles. Solomon et al., (1992) also matched-up fashion and beauty types with particular magazines. The study showed the link between readerships and their fashion characteristics. A female adolescent uses magazines to get information and inspiration about clothes, fashions and lifestyle matters (Mintel, 2003). The fashion magazine columns are read closely and note is taken of personalities/celebrities who wear particular clothes. The most influential advertising media are magazines (Grant and Stephen, 2005).



#### **2.4.5.2.6 Celebrity endorsement**

Solomon et al., (1992) stated that a persuasive communication will present a good gestalt: a model whose beauty type and related image match the product with which they are linked will provide a coherent message, which, if in agreement with the customers' desired self-image, may support the acceptance of the advertisement". The positive inferences which customers make about physically-attractive endorsers has demonstrated that this attribution of "socially-desirable traits" supports a models' persuasiveness (Brumbaugh, 1993). Martin (2005) suggested that female adolescents are influenced by models in advertisements. Brand communicators need to use models who show the appropriate personality traits which ensure a good "match-up" to create persuasive ads. Additionally, the persuasiveness of a communication can be enhanced by repeated use of a suitable beauty "match-up" between a model and a product. Use a well known person to get into the minds of customers by creating positive attitudes and feelings (Porter and Claycomb, 1997).

Alexander (2003) noted that fashion customers want to be able to purchase things the celebrities are wearing or trends that they have seen from the catwalk, and more importantly, customers want them immediately. Brand owners select an appearance, so that the model embodies an appearance which meets the prescribed social preferences for physical attractiveness. If manipulations of the model's look in terms of body type, age, ethnicity, and dress, convey the epitome of physical attractiveness when integrated together in an advertisement, then the model is likely to be most successful in influencing customers through the communication (Jackson and Ross, 1996). One reason for this effectiveness is that customers can more readily identify products that are associated with a spokesperson (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). For celebrity campaigns to be effective, the endorser needs to have a clear and popular image. The celebrity's image and that of the product he or she endorses should be similar – this is known as the match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990).

### **2.5 Brand Communication**

Brand elements are the points of contact between the brand and the customer.

Formulating a good brand is important, although equally important is the execution or implementation of the brand through the brand elements. Therefore, communication and interactivity may also be considered brand elements (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Mass media or above-the-media no longer engages mass market audiences in the UK. Everything a brand does is communication. Certain types of brand communication provide information, or are aimed at leading directly to a transaction. Taking brand communication as a whole through all channels produces communication integration. Effective brand communications may be integrated in three different ways: functional integration, brand integration and thematic integration. In order to associate the brand with customers, there are many methods such as a communication of brand information and direct experience (Feldwick, 2003). To be successful a brand has to communicate a special advantage to the customer and the better it does what it says, the better will be the word of mouth recommendation by satisfied customers to others. “Brands encapsulate a whole range of communication, learning, history, and feeling about a product or company within a simple name and logo” (Keller, 1993, 2003; Pitta and Katsanis, 1995).

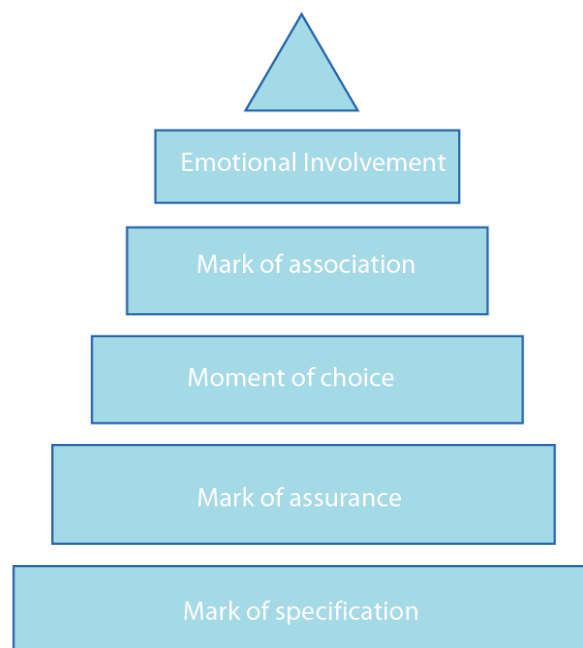


Figure 2.20: Brand Pyramid (dobney.com)

Beard (2009) suggests that communications may be reactive or proactive. The key thing is to use limited resources in a focused way. In order to build relevant value-

added content, concentration on the highest impact and highest consumption media channels will help promote brand promise. Foremost, concentrate on customer-brand engagement through the key media channels using a conversation which continually supports, develops and deepens brand promise. However, the key is to keep the interest of your target audience over time by using an intelligent dialogue which reinforces your brand promise.

A brand needs to carve a vision of how the brand should be seen by target audience. Understanding the brand concept will be helpful for resultant communication themes which help the brand strategist to set forth the communication objectives such as the type of message, brand differentiation to be achieved, and integrated brand communications. Sensational communication which appeals to the hearts and minds of the people creates an emotional relationship with customers (Ghodeswar, 2008).

Lyon (2009) proposed that customized and relevant messages, combined with customer engagement and empowerment are elemental in the new marketing era. Brand communication encompasses all forms of communication, actions and activities which influence and impact the relationship between the customer and the brand. Brand communication is what the customer and prospect find out about the brand from whatever source. It is this customer-focused approach to brand communication which differentiates marketing and brand communication from the functional activities (Schultz and Walters, 1997). Berger (2004) stated that brand communication ought not to be too indirect, so as to ensure that audiences recognise and remember the pertinent information and then do it again after a while. The main point is to stress the relationship between the promotional message and the contexts; which includes audiences, mediums and society. People are increasingly playing a proactive role in communications. In other words, they are to a greater extent becoming partners in the communication process (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004).

The new market will concern expanding people's minds with new concepts – rather than hypnotising them with brand images. It can be seen that this trend is typified by the information and communication industries (Grant, 2003). A brand can broadcast or a brand can connect. Broadcasting requires massive mailing or buying media, so that the messages can be sent simultaneously to all nodes in the network. Connecting

requires starting a dialogue with certain individuals in the network which brands are trying to influence. There are four methods a brand can use to identify such influential people: letting network hubs identify themselves, identifying categories of network hubs, spotting network hubs in the field and identifying network hubs through surveys (Lomas, 1991).

Communication consistency should be accomplished through sticking to brand core values. A brand has to engage people on this level. A brand has to plan a whole chain of events, experiences and interventions which an audience can pick up and use, to help them create their knowledge, concepts and beliefs in some new direction. The general solution to this problem is to create a brand's own media platforms. Even when working within existing media, inventing a brand's own genre (a media within a media) is a good way to think (Grant, 2003).

Ghodeswar (2008) suggested that it is necessary to build and implement long-term integrated communication strategies showing the brand's value to the target customers. The messages should be matched with the brand value, brand personality and other brand identity dimensions. A strong brand helps the company in positioning and extending its brand and has a greater impact on the customer purchase processes. Duncan (2005) stated that the fundamental principle is that communication is the beginning of all human relationships, concerned with the exchange of ideas, information and feelings. The communication basis is a communication at the centre of several simultaneous relationships, which is a circular process not a linear one.

## **2.6 The effect of brand communication implementation**

In order to know how to use a brand a communication programme to influence an audience mindset, the desired perceptual effects of communication are clarified. The relevant literature on how customers apply brand information to produce the brand perceived message i.e. attitude formation, attitude changes and relationship is reviewed. This section includes audience's responses in different aspects: brand awareness, brand image, brand trustworthiness, brand experiences, customer-brand interactions, customer-brand emotional bonds, and customer-brand relationships.

### 2.6.1 Brand Awareness

In order to encourage brand awareness, linking brand equity and brand awareness is a key for brand-building (Aaker, 2002). Also, Aaker (1991) infers that a customer has a brand awareness in order to establish the status of the brand. Rossiter and Percy (1987), proposed that the link between brand awareness and the strength of a brand is seen when buyers show how well they can recognise the brand and understand its difference from others. Also, brand awareness concerns the meaning and recognition of the brand, and it is an identification of products and services (Kapferer, 2004). Kotler and Keller (2006) added that brand awareness concentrates on customers and how they are able to recognise and identify a brand and how brand performance may influence them.

| Brand Recognition  | Brand Recall   |
|--|--|
| Brand recognition is related to an aptitude of customers to remember an opinion and identification of a brand. Customers need to have pre-learning and post-experience of the brand in order to accurately express their personal recognition. It also requires past experience, so that customers will be able to remember the brand from their previous visit. | Brand recall is related to an ability of customers to associate the brand with the category of product. Customers need to regain and recover their opinion of the brand that they recognise from their memory. |

Table 2.6: The meaning of brand recognition and brand recall (Aaker, 2002; Keller, 2003)

Aaker (1991) suggested that a consideration cannot occur without a brand remembrance. Langner, Schmitt and Geus (2006) proposed that brand remembrance can indicate the awareness of a brand. Strauss and Frost (2001) showed that communications strategy has become a potential aspect of brand strategy. Therefore,

these components should be used as the main tools to create brand awareness, preference, and selection.

### **2.6.2 Brand Image**

Image is a primary reflection of female adolescent fashion (Intel, 2009a). A brand is the amalgam of the physical product and the notional images which go with the brand (Parameswaran, 2001). Image is a product of people's perceptions, that is, the way in which people consider or even imagine something to be (Temporal, 2000). Keller (1993) proposed that brand image is viewed in the mind of a customer through its association. Aaker (1991) also talked about brand associations in which a brand image is part of a systematic set. There are various brand dimensions that are thought to influence these associations, for instance, "product attributes, a celebrity spokesperson, or a particular symbol" which all influence the memory of a customer (Aaker, 2002). Keller (2003) stated that brand image is used to build a positive view of a brand in the memory.

### **2.6.3 Brand Trustworthiness**

Trust reinforces the brand relationship and can be enhanced through suitable cues (Dennis, Fenech and Merrilees, 2004). Trust is the currency of effective communication, but it is easily damaged (Blackshaw, 2007). Covey (2006) suggested that the four things that build trustworthiness are: Integrity: honesty following brand values; Intent: brand motives, brand agenda; Capabilities: the features that create confidence; and Results: brand history of achievements. The brand story has been told through a range of communication channels. The understanding of how trust is created and disseminated is a core concept. Consequently, brand loyalty can be viewed as a link in the chain of effects which indirectly connects to brand trust. The brand loyalty can lower the vulnerability of the customer base to competitive action and may directly translate into future sales and profits (Ghodeswar, 2008).

#### **2.6.4 Brand Experiences**

The social interaction inherent in the shopping experience may cause the unplanned fashion purchase impulse as a result of emotional involvement (Cha, 2001). Sensory appeals can create a customer preference which distinguishes a brand from its competitors. Sensory elements can be the key factors distinguishing one brand experience from another (Gobe', 2001).

Sensory experiential products play a more significant function in symbolic interaction with customers' hedonic or emotional experiences in market environments. This indicates that the purchasing experience may be more significant than the product acquisition. Fashion purchasers who patronise a store because they enjoy the environment may unexpectedly spend more money resulting from the positive-mood-inducing atmosphere (Park, 2006). Fashion customers more probably engage in impulse buying when they are influenced by hedonic desires (Hausman, 2000). It is customer-generated creativity with the brand. Customers need something which is mine, not mass-produced for everybody (Williams, 2005).

#### **2.6.5 Customer-brand Interaction**

Grönroos (2004) explained that interaction evolves as a concept which replaces the product concept. Customers' perceptions of relationships are holistic and cumulative. The relationship continues in an interactive process with different types of contacts over time. Hancock (2009) illustrated that it is essential for a brand to engage with their customers on a more personal and human level -- potentially enriching their relationship. Lindstorm (2007) supported that branding is all about building emotional relationships between a product and its customers. In order for a brand to interact more effectively with customers, that brand ought to allow customers to get involved with the brand by listening to their feedback. This is the concept of development, test and learn and at the same time using customers' help and creativity (Leth, 2008).

#### **2.6.6 Customer-brand Emotional Bond**

Emotion that encompasses affection and mood is an important factor in customer

decision making (Watson and Tellegen, 1985). Multi-sensory, fantasy, and emotional consumption are all driven by advantages such as fun use of the product and aesthetic appeal (Lindstorm, 2005). Several qualitative studies reported that customers felt uplifted or energised after their shopping experience (Bayley and Nancarrow, 1998). Dittmar and Pepper (1994) explained that positive emotion may be facilitated by a person's pre-existing mood, affective disposition, and reaction to present environmental encounters (e.g. desired items, sales promotions).

The emotional participation a customer has with a product is a good predictor of how many people he or she will inform about an experience (Rosen, 2000). According to Temporal (2000), the branding focus ought to be on adding psychological value in the form of intangible benefits. The ability to endow a product, service or corporation with an emotional significance beyond its functional value is an important source of value creation (Sherrington, 2003).

Customers in more positive emotional states tend to have less complex decision making and shorter decision times (Isen, 1984). Customers with positive emotion show greater impulse buying (Rook and Gardner, 1993). While shopping, emotion may influence purchase intentions and spending in addition to perceptions of quality, satisfaction, and value (Babin and Babin, 2001). Customers' fashion-oriented impulse buying behaviour is predictable by an attitudinal component (e.g. fashion involvement) and emotional factors (e.g. satisfied, excited) for young customers (Childers, Carr, Peck and Carson, 2001). Lindstorm (2005) added that branding has always been about setting up emotional ties between the brand and the customer. As in any relationship, emotions are based on information collected from senses. The role of sensory branding is to ensure a systematic integration of the senses in communication, product and services. This will stimulate the imagination, improve the product and bond customers to the brand.

### **2.6.7 Customer-brand Relationship**

The intangible factors used in building brand equity comprise the feeling that the brand tries to elicit in customers, and the type of relationship it seeks to build with its customers (Keller, 2000). Clearly, a relationship takes more effort than a transaction.



Therefore, a relationship marketing strategy has to create more value for the customer. The customer needs to see and appreciate this value which is created by the on-going relationship. There must be a positive value process parallel to the planned communication and interaction processes that are appreciated by customers. Therefore, the communication activities in the planned communication process should encourage this value process and not conflict with or destroy it (Grönroos, 2004). “Value is considered to be an important constituent of relationship marketing and the ability of a company to provide superior value to its customers is regarded as one of the most successful strategies...” (Nilson, 1992).

Jackson (1985) proposed that a relationship is an approach to take care of interactions with customers. Relationship marketing is also helped by relationship-oriented integrated marketing communications (Schultz, 1996). However, marketing is also perceived more as market-oriented management (Grönroos and Gummesson, 1985). Schultz et al., (1992) said “We adapt to the customer’s or prospect’s communication wants or needs and begin the cycle all over again. This is truly relationship marketing at its best”.

The customer’s interaction includes interactions with products, service processes and with other parts of the interaction process which also include elements of communication. The relationship is first and foremost a process. Customers demand a much more holistic offering including information (Grönroos, 2004). Gummesson (1999) implied that integrated marketing communications is different from relationship marketing, but clearly, it is an essential part of a relationship marketing strategy (Duncan and Moriarty, 1999). Grönroos (2004) added that the characteristic part of communication in the relationship marketing context is to try to create a two-way or sometimes even a multi-way communication process. Although a two-way process is not relationship marketing, the integration of the planned communication and the interaction processes into one strategy, which is systematically implemented, creates relationship marketing. In such a case the customers’ perceived value of the relationship develops favorably.

The idea of trust created by prior contact or by the increased length of a relationship is based on the premise that through ongoing interactions, parties to a relationship learn

more about each other, and develop trust about norms of equity (Bolton, 1998).

Good and Yun (2007) suggested that customer relationship management (CRM) applications are important to develop the customer experience and to continuously build a close relationship. In conclusion, the interaction process is the centre of relationship marketing, and the planned communication process is the special communications part of relationship marketing, and the value process is the result of relationship marketing. When these processes are integrated it creates a consistent total marketing communication impact. If this integration succeeds, the interaction and planned communication processes may develop into a dialogue in an on-going relationship between a customer and a supplier or service provider (Grönroos, 2004).

Zineldin (2000) added that total relationship management, is a philosophy which stresses the communication of the organisation's overall thinking, as well as specific messages concerning its products, services or corporate identity. Successful branding supports the process of transforming functional assets into relationship assets (Ghodeswar, 2008). Customers value their relationships with their branded possessions (Alexander et al., 2002). In terms of customer relationships, trust is a long-term factor depicting its own consequence (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Singh and Sirdeshmukh, 2000).

Beard (2009) stated six steps you can take to make sure your brand effectively influences customers with your brand promise in this growing complex and chaotic environment: 1) Be Different, Special and Better, 2) Know Your Target's Media Habits: Customers consume media content in different ways, 3) Measure the Marketing Contact Point Impact, 4) Equip Your Organisation to Deliver the Brand Promise, 5) Organise your Team to Engage Key Media Channels and Amplifiers, and 6) Create Value-Added Content.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This literature review has intended to achieve three objectives: 1) to examine and study the established communication process together with the brand-building

programme, 2) to evaluate the interaction of participants in the communication process, and 3) to identify key fundamental components of brand communication at the encoding process. The literature reveals the outline of a communication process which delivers an intended brand message with the intention of creating positive responses toward perceived brand information. However, the lack of research about brand-building communication in the high-street fashion market underpins the need for this research to be conducted.

Firstly, the literature review has presented the importance of brand discipline as an influential asset which creates invaluable value in customer minds. This perceived value increases the differentiation between the brands before customer commitment. Brand concept represents a competitive advantage to employ as a core approach. It is clearly stated in the literature that the brand practice is the key element in any communication plan that a high-street fashion strategy might develop.

Secondly, the literature has analysed fashion theory, fashion structure, fashion process and the importance of fashion products. An overview of the high-street fashion market has been discussed within a fast moving environment. The developments in the UK fashion market have been defined with customer demands for high-street fashion apparel.

Thirdly, the female adolescent as a target audience of this research has been investigated through the literature. The literature has revealed the characteristics of the female adolescent in terms of behaviour and fashion consumption. The impact of peer pressure influence over female adolescent decisions can be seen as a driving factor for further information seeking processes.

Fourthly, the literature on communication perspectives has been reviewed with the purpose of analysing the role of communication. The literature has represented the communication effort through the message delivery process. The stages of message conveyance have been identified in order to investigate the audience responses which are the outcomes of information gathering at the encoding process. To illustrate the basic elements related to the brand communication scheme, the basic elements of communication models have been examined. Moreover, the advantages of

communication channels have been investigated through the impacts of online and offline communication tools. The study has shown that online and offline communication needs to work together in order to create and strengthen brand knowledge.

Fifthly, brand communication plans have been evaluated through the literature review. Brand communication approach starts with the thorough understanding of the brand objective and communication medium. The literature has demonstrated that brand communication strategy has to bring all of the communicative elements together by highlighting the audience requirements.

Lastly, the effects of brand communication strategy have been explained. The holistic view of the brand communication process causes the changes in audience perception as an outcome after the stage of brand message receiving. To determine brand communication impact, the consequences of changes in attitudes, opinions and beliefs have been explained in terms of brand awareness, brand image, brand trustworthiness, brand experiences, customer-brand interaction, customer-brand emotional bond, and customer-brand relationship. The literature has revealed the extent of brand communication responses in the way customers interpret brand messages by emotional and sensory perception. These customer responses which have been based on relevant literature identify the connection between a brand and its customers in the process of brand communication with the ultimate purpose of generating a positive long-term relationship.

## Chapter 3 Research Methods

In this chapter, all the primary research methods are presented as a tool for collecting and examining data in this research. The methods employed to formulate and validate the conceptual model will be explained later in chapter 5 and 6. The purposes of primary research are key findings to answer objectives nos. 3-6 (see figure 3.1). The procedure for conducting the appropriate primary research methods comprises of four steps. Firstly, an evaluation of the questions and objectives nos. 3-6 which meets the information needs of the study. Secondly, the key issues are stated as a viable scope of the primary research. Thirdly, primary research methods are selected for every key needed information which depends upon their suitability. Eventually, research design is executed for information gathered from the appropriate resources.

Relating to female adolescent's online leisure interests, the Internet is perceived as a communication channel which female adolescents spend a lot of time on. Observation shows that online communication is exchanged very quickly between a group of female adolescents that have a diversity of opinion sharing activities. The diversity of the mass market leverages the wisdom of collected information and which gives a diversity of insights. Therefore, Howe (2008) stated that knowledge of diversity is essential to the comprehension of collective intelligence, and collective intelligence is an essential part of the main categories of crowdsourcing techniques. Bell (2010) explained internet based crowdsourcing similar to a widely spread problem-solving and production model. Problems are sent to an unidentified group of solvers as an open call for solutions. Online platforms like social media permit large groups of people to stay linked with an open environment. The Internet creates a niche fragmentation of people, although, the online platform is the way to distribute massive amounts of transparent information in a dynamic environment. The method by which people exchange information changes from e-mail to a social media platform, so, they are exchanging one another's social media information (Qualman, 2009). Moreover, Bell (2010) explained that a crowdsourced project may finally cost a business more than a conventional approach due to additional cost needed to draw a project to a suitable conclusion. Yudkin (2010) also suggested the existence of a hidden cost in the case where a research has been suitably designed.

However, the effort to obtain enough of people's knowledge for the purpose of getting information from the Internet for problem-solving and future prediction is not easy and takes a lot of time. However, the crowdsourcing technique using an online platform enables more diversity of ideas, whilst analysis about individual viewpoint's is not easy unless the researcher and participants interact. However, participants engage in different roles in their lives and depict different characteristics which are dependent upon the social context or the person they are interacting with, so, the information may be culled from a wider range of undefined attitudes within the online platform. Since they are unknown sources, online crowdsourced submissions may not be knowledgeable concerning the high-street-fashion industry, resulting in a significant amount of widely irrelevant opinions about the research topic. The disadvantage of this would be to cause misdirection of the data collection for the research.

In conclusion, a main concern of the online crowdsourcing technique is the irrelevant data which can occur about the process and this may result in an incorrect interpretation of the output. This limitation brings up the question about how suitable crowdsourcing is as a research method. We may conclude that crowdsourcing is unsuitable for this research because of the unreliability of the information sources and to the need to use more time to understand and analyse a huge amount of data. Furthermore, the demographic target for this research is female adolescents who typically participate less in the learning procedure which is needed to get a deep understanding about the research subject.

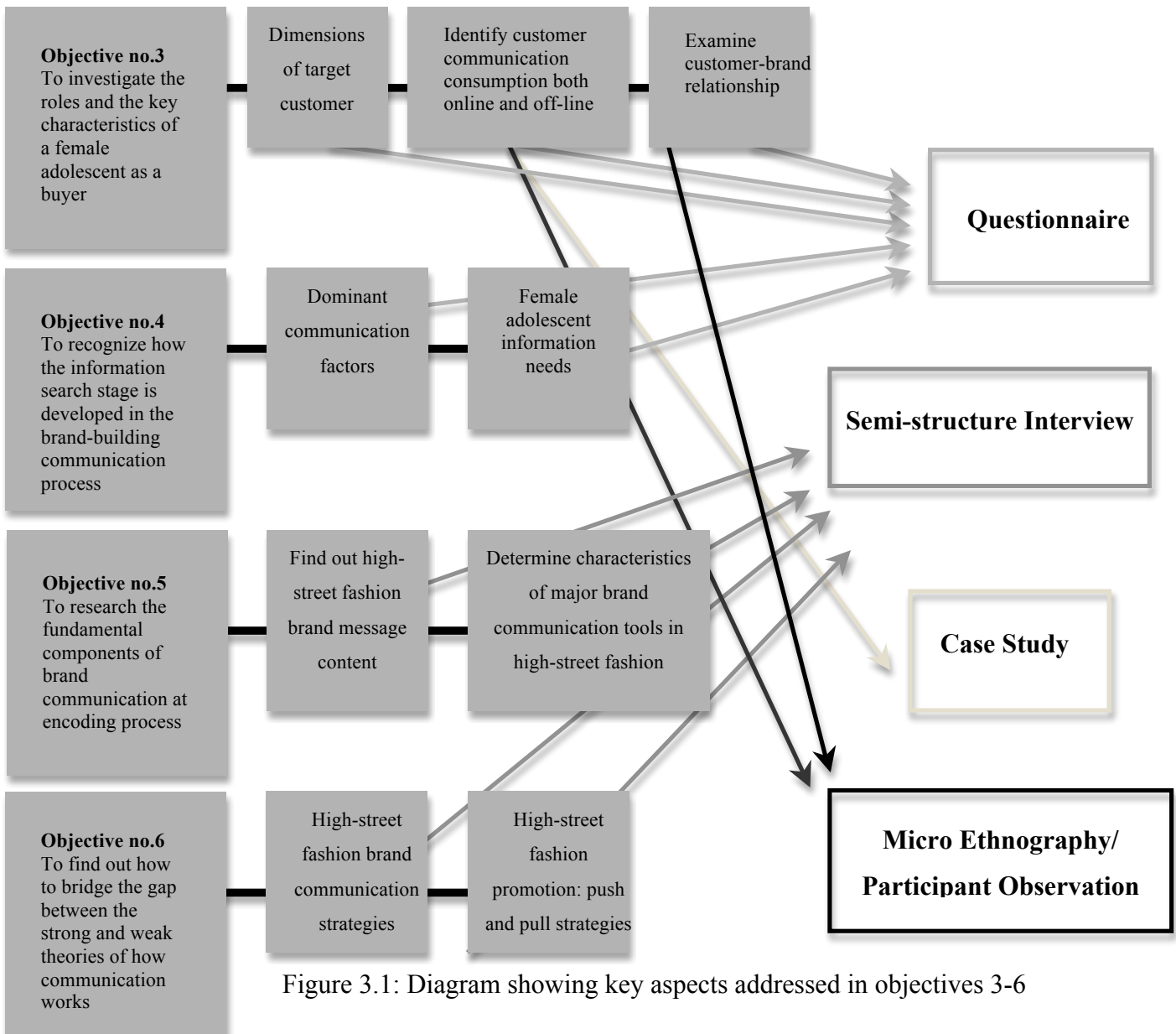


Figure 3.1: Diagram showing key aspects addressed in objectives 3-6

According to the diagram, there are three key features: 1) to discover the dimensions of a female adolescent as a target customer, 2) to identify communication consumption among female adolescents i.e. information search and information influences and 3) to examine the relationship between high-street fashion brand and customers which are addressed in relation to objective no.3., and 4) Objective no. 4 consists of two aspects: 1) dominant communication factors that affect information seeking activities and 2) female adolescent information needs. 5) Objective no. 5 looks at two issues: 1) to find out fashion brand message content and 2) determine the characteristics of major brand-communication tools in the high-street fashion market.

6) Objective no. 6 plans to learn fashion brand building communication strategies and fashion brand promotion in terms of push and pull strategies. After all needed information had been identified according to each research objective, the research design and research methods were implemented with the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire was selected to thoroughly investigate the dimensions of target customers, how customers consume information from each communication channel both online and off-line, fashion customer-brand relationships, dominant communication factors and female adolescent information needs. This research method was employed to study these areas because it is usually designed with the intention of determining operational definitions of concepts, instruments that reflect strength of attitudes, perceptions, views and opinions from respondents (Black, 2000). As a result, an in-depth view of customer behaviour as a receiver can be examined.

A semi-structured interview was applied to collect more detailed data regarding to the aspect of fashion brand message content, characteristics of major brand-communication tools, and communication strategies and fashion brand strategies. This research approach may result in unexpected and insightful information, thus enhancing the findings (Hair, Money, Samouel, and Page, 2007). A case study was adopted to investigate the current high-street fashion brand communications particularly on online channels. In order to gain the real picture of how high-street fashions communicate the brand with online audiences, a case study was conducted to enable this research to identify what is the current situation of online fashion communication. The reason for the study was derived from the existing situation of online fashion brand communications which have been ignored compared to off-line communications. To start with fashion brand communication, high-street fashion brands did not focus on online communication as much as off-line communications. High-street fashion brands mostly concentrate on pricing strategy regardless of brand-building communication when communicating through online channels. Secondly, the ability of online communication is massive as it generates two-sided messages, but none of the high-street fashion brands employ the online tools effectively. Lastly, an insufficiency of high-street fashion brand messages on online communication channels did not supplement audiences' brand knowledge. By examining the online communication which is generally regarded as a medium which enables a brand to spread an intended message comprehensively, the researcher discovered how to



bridge the gaps between off-line and online communication, such as balancing positive contributions of each communication channel in order to outline a potential high-street fashion brand-building communication. As a result, the information from earlier and existing online communication could point out the way to integrate online and off-line together as a holistic communication.

Micro ethnography and participant observation approaches concentrate on the numbers of subjects in relation to fashion customer-brand relationship, how female adolescents consume brand messages which possibly directs high-street fashion brands to generate appropriate content to suit the target audiences' interests. In addition, these methods explored how audiences associated various communication channels together. These methods were chosen because an overview of target customers will be presented, clarification and deeper response will be obtained and the research problem and research opportunity will be interpreted. Bryman and Bell (2007) clarified that micro ethnography and participant observation enable researchers to understand an insiders' point of view. The methods engaged the researcher with the target group to probe specific issues of interest. The target group has been used to test reactions to communication initiatives since their view about the current communication environment can be gained. The technique develops an understanding about why people feel the way they do, with a certain view among participants within a similar environment. Likewise, the behaviour of brand message consumption among female adolescent, the effects of high-street fashion brand communication and communication conveyance are key aspects in this process.

It can be noticed that there were certain points in common of the research methods and key aspects. For instance, both questionnaire and participant observation have a purpose to emphasis an in-depth understanding of the female adolescent as a brand message receiver group. At the same time as the questionnaire focused on female adolescent attitude and lifestyle, the participant observation concentrated on female adolescent behaviour. Thus, the essences from all investigations were embraced.

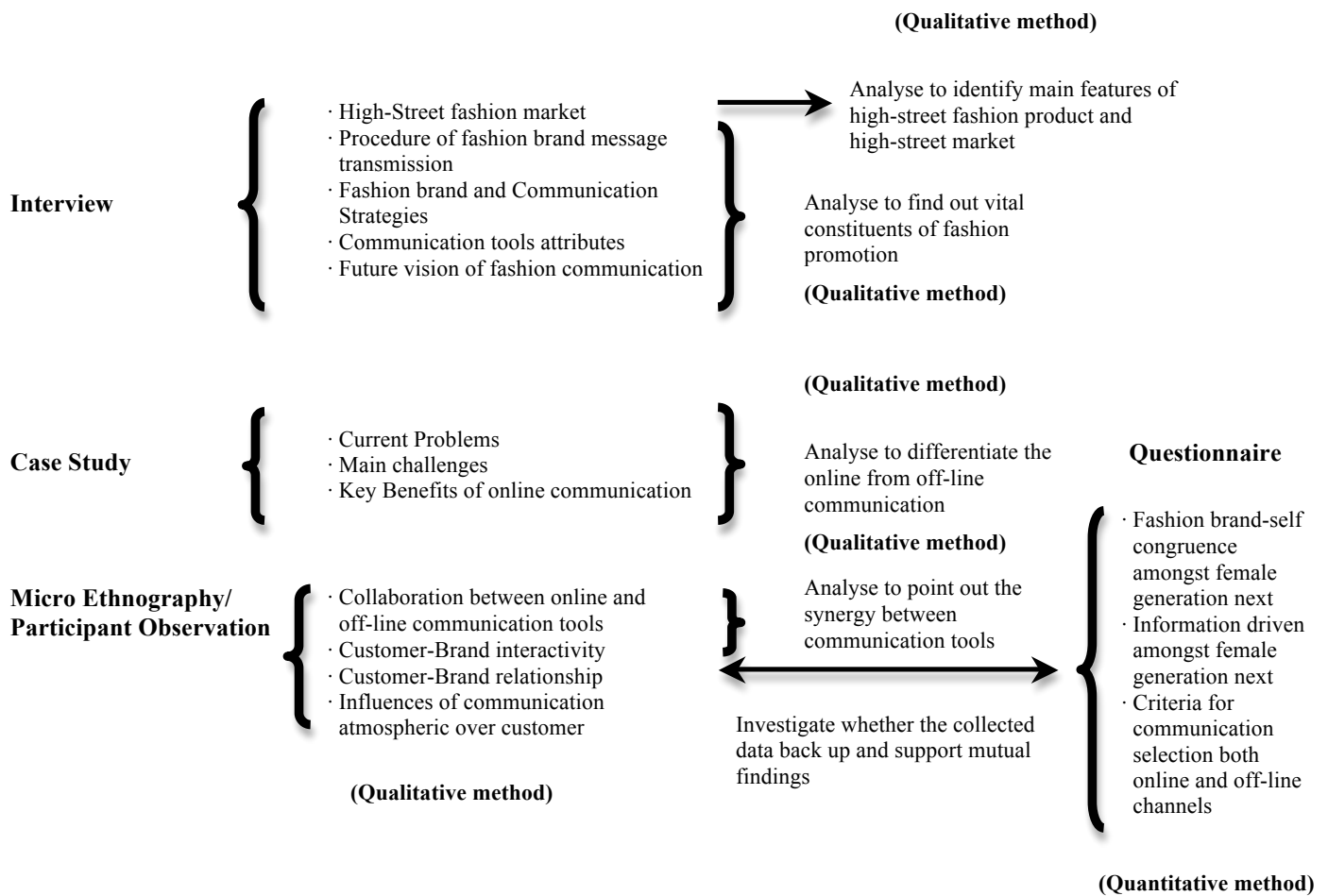


Figure 3.2: Diagram representing the structure of the primary research

### 3.1 Questionnaire

With the clear objective, a questionnaire can bring the useful responses to improve the study questions in a cost-effective way. Potentially and informative data can be collected from a large portion of a target group (Bryman and Teevan, 2005).

Aims: The purpose of the questionnaire focused on four key aspects:

1. To gain views of customer attitude, customer fashion lifestyle and customer fashion behaviour which provide this research an insight into understanding female adolescents as a message receiver. The data collection could be very useful for encoding an appropriate message to suit the key audiences.
2. To specify the way that target audiences consume information from wide-ranging communication channels both online and off-line in order to examine

- their behaviour towards information exchange. The procedure of brand message transmission is necessary for the direction of the encoding process.
3. To identify the criteria of the communication system in order to find out the factors that arouse and encourage audiences intention. The questions of existing communication process will be discovered to improve brand communication methods.
  4. To recognise the extent of information needs amongst the female adolescent group with the aim of brand message coverage.

**Hypotheses:** According to the study scope, there were three experimental predictions. Firstly, it was predicted (two-tailed prediction) that there would be a correlation between customer shopping lifestyle and customer fashion attitude. Secondly, it was predicted (two-tailed prediction) that there would be a correlation between customer fashion attitude and communication tools on online and off-line channels. Thirdly, it was predicted that there would be a correlation between information seeking on online and off-line communication channels. Fourthly, it was predicted that there would be a correlation between brand emotional tie and communication tools on online and off-line communication channels. Lastly, it was predicted that there would be a correlation between brand emotional tie and communication tools on online and off-line communication channels.

**Participants:** Female adolescents whose age was between 18-25 in London were chosen as the targets of the questionnaire design by the reason of two central points. Firstly, the questionnaire survey could lead to an insight understanding of female adolescents as the target customers of a high-street fashion brand. Various dimensions of these target customers were investigated in terms of their personality towards high-street fashion brand personality, their fashion attitude, their shopping lifestyle and information consumption with the view of obtaining communication channel criteria; which could help a brand's communication plan to generate an appropriate fashion brand message for target audiences and prospects. Secondly, an indication from the literature review and the case study showed that the female adolescent played the role as early adopter of fashion innovation and was an active information seeker from various communication channels. Female adolescent characteristics and prospects as target customers of a high-street fashion brand were powerful influences of brand

communication. Their characters are complicated according to their needs i.e., a need to be in fashion, a need to be informed, a need to have an identity, a need to belong to the communities, a need of self-esteem and so on. In agreement with a previous study, researchers have actually documented that fashion promotions are a point of comparison and have an impact on their young readers. Communications were designed to appeal to and influence this market segment (Adomaitis and Johnson, 2008). The respondents (18-25) were randomly chosen on the high-street shopping area in London as London can be seen as a central city of the fashion world, so these respondents are commonly fashion conscious and expose themselves to fashion information. The proportion of the respondents is:

Table 3.1: Age group of the questionnaire respondents

| Age group             | 18-25 | Total |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| Number of respondents | 200   | 200   |
| Percentage            | 100%  | 100   |

**Material:** The questionnaire was designed and conducted in an effort to perceive the meaning of their conceived personality in order to understand their consuming behaviour towards communication channels. Hence, the questions were divided into three groups as following:

1. **Audience self-interpretation profile:** This set of questions constituted the areas of self-congruence with fashion brand personality, fashion attitude, fashion shopping lifestyle and their emotional tie with a high-street fashion brand. The number of different words and VALS theory from literature review were employed to represent audience personality corresponding with brand personality in order to specify the categories of target customers.
2. **Criteria of communication chosen both online and off-line channels:** The major communication channels of online (Internet browsing activity, E-tail store, Social Networking site) and off-line (Retail store, In-store communication, Window display) were questioned with an effort to understand the key informants about which channels target customers seek fashion information from. The respondents were asked about their visit

frequency, how they received fashion messages through communication channels and how communication channels persuaded target audiences by means of message elements.

3. **Fashion brand information seeking process:** The alternatives of major communication channels were investigated in order to investigate the specific effects that the fashion communication process had on female adolescents and how fashion messages were used and interpreted by them. The overall goal was to identify the seeking activities in the encoding process that were presented through the variety of communication channels targeting female adolescents.

The questionnaire was designed to ask in multiple-choice form together with types of attitude scale. The keywords were provided to portray the terms of customer personalities towards a high-street fashion brand (see Appendix A). The consequences were analyzed and assessed by computer software called SPSS which is a well-known application for statistic calculation. After this, a proposition concluded from audience self-interpretation profile, criteria of communication chosen both online and off-line channels and fashion brand information seeking process were deduced.

## 3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

With the semi-structured interviews, this method allows researcher to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). Consequently, it can be seen as an adequate tool to encapsulate how the interviewee thinks with the findings from other methods as the relevant questions were asked to confirm the hypothesis.

**Aims:** The primary research planned to verify and gain a comprehensive knowledge in relation to key ideas pointed out from literature review. The following five aspects were examined:

1. The fashion brand characteristics which make fashion products different from another.
2. The communication strategy that a fashion brand applied to achieve an established purpose.
3. The attributes of major communication channels which are generally used in the fashion industry.
4. The elements of a brand message that a fashion brand should stand for.
5. Personal opinions about the future of fashion brand communication.

**Subjects:** The study examined key subjects who were selected based on their expertise and responsibility related to the main criteria. The factors used to select the interviewees were as follows:

1. The interviewees must denote the key knowledge engaged with high-street fashion brand communication. According to the literature review, the key disciplines are:
  - Fashion retail: This discipline is involved with the responsibility of fashion retail store management, therefore, an in-store communication and an insight vision of customer behaviour would be endowed from the interviewees. However, fashion brand promotion is different for each particular brand depending on brand strategy.
  - Fashion designer: This multi-disciplinary is involved with the human behaviours i.e. fashion change and related cultural transformation since fashion allows customers to represent their identity through apparels. A comprehensive understanding of fashion products as a core meaning of a brand would be provided through designer duties.
  - Communication designer: This discipline is involved with the transmission of information from a brand as a sender to a target audience as a receiver by focusing on the medium. In essence, a communication designer formulates key components which induce audiences' interest through brand communication channels by designing them in a meaningful way.
  - Media and communication researcher: This discipline denotes the expertise involved in communication theory together with attributes of communication channels. This responsibility would cover the knowledge about the era of movement of information and the future trends in terms of communication technologies and media consumption.

- Brand strategic planner: This discipline is directly involved with the brand communication plan in accordance with the marketing program. This position is responsible for media planning, campaign development and develop plans to support brand communication.
2. The interviewees have experiences within the fashion industry or communication industry. Since their related knowledge can develop the new strategy for an effective brand communication, it is necessary to point out their opinion in order to identify the current fashion market.
  3. The interviewees were chosen based on their field works especially on their speciality in communication design aspect in order to accumulate various views and approaches of message creator.
  4. It was preferable if the interviewees had previous work experience in the high-street fashion industry. As a result, they could distinguish the fundamentals of a high-street fashion product and high-street fashion customers.
  5. It is also preferable if the interviewees had experiences in the mass media industry as the strategies to accomplish successful brand promotion are different by communication tool selection. The collaboration between a team of planner, advertiser or designer to produce a brand message was important because these experiences describe the preliminary expertise of communication methods.

Table 3.2: Profiles of each interviewee

| <b>Expertise</b>                            | <b>Profile of the Interviewees</b>   |
|---|--|
| Fashion retail store operator<br>(2 people) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was a high-street retail store operator of well-known fashion brand in the United Kingdom.</li> <li>• She was responsible for multi-disciplinary functions in a retail store starting from stock handling to customer services and in-store event.</li> </ul> |
| Fashion retail supervisor                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was a retail store supervisor of a mid-range fashion brand in the United Kingdom.</li> <li>• She was responsible for day-to-day store management, product display in the store, in-store event and personal services.</li> </ul>                              |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Assistant retail department             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was an assistant in the retail department of a luxury fashion brand in the United Kingdom.</li> <li>• He was responsible for stock handling, product display and store image.</li> </ul>  |
| Fashion designer                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person had an experience as a haute couture fashion designer and established her own ready to wear fashion label.</li> <li>• She was part of designer team for a British designer brand.</li> <li>• She was involved in the fashion design process starting from the manufacturing stage.</li> </ul>                 |
| Public Relation (PR) and fashion buyer  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person had been working as a public relation along with the position of assistant fashion buyer for a luxury Italian brand.</li> <li>• She was responsible for brand promotion together with a brand spokesperson. She had been involved with the media and communication channels for fashion promotion.</li> </ul> |
| Fashion column writer                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was a column writer in fashion and lifestyle free paper.</li> <li>• She was responsible for updating trends and fashion lifestyle of young adolescents.</li> </ul>  |
| Creative director/<br>Strategic planner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was a creative director and the owner of his own advertising agency.</li> <li>• He was a former creative director of global advertising agency.</li> <li>• His current duties included design, communication strategy and brand strategy.</li> </ul>  |
| Graphic designer<br>(2 people)          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was an in-house graphic designer for a British luxury brand.</li> <li>• He was responsible for the visual elements of in-store communications i.e. window display.</li> </ul>   |
| Media researcher                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This person was a media researcher and an instructor</li> </ul>   |



|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>in university.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Her work was mostly involved with the communication process and communication strategy.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**Materials:** The same series of questions of interview were employed in order to form the focal frame of study. Additional questions were asked to supplement what were seen as meaningful issues.

1. Interviewee's profile: All the interviewees were asked to explain about their expertise, work experiences, roles and responsibility of current duties within their organisation in relation to the fashion industry and communication strategies.
2. Characteristics of the high-street fashion industry and fashion promotion: The interviewees were asked about their knowledge related to fashion campaign, the purpose of fashion brand promotion, the approaches to reach that goal and the communication tools which were employed. Additionally, the interviewees were asked to signify the need for communication in terms of brand message sending together with spotting the main problems and challenges of fashion brand communication.
3. Opinion on brand strategy and communication tools: All interviewees were asked to differentiate the attribute of major communication tools along with brand strategy in order to gain the core idea of how to select an appropriate tool.
4. Opinion on the future of fashion communication: All interviewees described about the current communication process from brand to key audiences. What direction would the technologies in the future information era lead the fashion communication method and what are the basic brand approaches to serve the needs of being informed customers in the future were the primary questions.

**Procedure:** Two interviews were conducted through the internet, and nine interviews were conducted face-to-face. The responses from questions were digitally recorded, transcribed, construed with the research study and prepared for translation for the qualitative analysis.

### 3.3 Case Study

**Aims:** The research focused on successful online communication channels to consider:

1. Practical methods to achieve an effective message transmission.
2. Practical methods to enable two-sided messages.
3. Practical methods to build brand value with the Internet power.
4. Practical methods to discover certain similarities that integrate online and off-line communication channels with the aim of brand-building communication.

**Subjects:** A range of online communication channels were selected on the groundwork of their approaches which induce audiences to interact with online mediums. Hence, the intelligence from the previous communication strategy by the use of the Internet could be examined and learned. As this research emphasised on the online medium itself, the function and the combination of message design were evaluated. High-street fashion brand official website, Social Networking Site and Customer Generated Media (Blogs) were chosen due to the fact that these channels reach all the criteria set out below. As Yin (1994) pointed out multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating the pattern-matching, thus increasing confidence in the robustness of the theory. Fernie et al., (1997) stated that the central London market has been a focus for the development of fashion activity since London is regarded as the chic fashion city in the world. Therefore, TOPSHOP and H&M were selected for their online brand communication within this case study research since 1) TOPSHOP is regarded as an unbeaten UK high-street fashion brand amongst the female adolescent and 2) H&M is regarded as a renowned global fashion brand which has become very successful in the UK market. Their communication strategies in the phase of the encoding process have stimulated audiences' eagerness about fashion products and maintained customer-brand relationships. Nonetheless, this research explored the advantages of an assortment of online mediums as a holistic brand communication process, and these two brands were only chosen as the examples of high-street fashion brand communications over the Internet because of their online conveyance platform. This will clearly vary from one company to another.

**Criteria no.1:** *'The online communication method signifies a synergy of high-street fashion brand message and information technologies through the mixture of channels over the Internet'*. The boundary barrier was overcome by the power of the Internet as it connected people and brands together. It can be seen that the Internet provides many routes for fashion brands to exchange information and interact with target audiences and prospects dissimilar from off-line mediums and each online medium has strong but different attributes.

**TOPSHOP:** TOPSHOP captures the mainstream of audience information seeking behaviour over online mediums, then, uses them as the brand communication tools. TOPSHOP applied its communication strategies by employing various online communication mediums as channels of message transmission. Brand messages are carried by different tools with different achievements in accordance with online communication innovations and brand strategies.

**H&M:** Like TOPSHOP, H&M follows an information seeking trend among its audiences and prospects. H&M encodes its brand message through numerous online tools as part of the brand strategy.

**Criteria no.2:** *'The online communication method generates two-sided messages'*. The characteristics of online communication allow audiences to share their opinion about the fashion brand. The generated dialogue provides customer feedback and customer attitudes towards a fashion brand. Online channels create a virtual space beyond face-to-face contact where a brand and its customers can get closer; it is a touch point that ties a brand and its customers together.

**TOPSHOP:** Blogging is a form of online word of mouth branding. It contains branding comments, sentiments, and opinions. Word of mouth (WOM) branding is based on social networking and trust, because people rely on families, friends, and others in their social network. In commercial situations, WOM involves customers sharing details, their opinions, or reactions about businesses, products, or services with other people (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, and Chowdury, 2009). TOPSHOP employs social networking sites like Facebook as an application where the brand generates TOPSHOP community for their target customers. Both visual and verbal messages

have been exchanged between this brand and customers. Moreover, customers who admire the brand have launched customer generated media i.e. Blogs where forums are generated to share an opinion between customers. These are the cases of viral marketing and WOM branding that a brand uses as communication strategies.

**H&M:** Similar to TOPSHOP, H&M has established its own profile on Facebook together with customer's blogs in order to gain the feedback and create the dialogue between the brand and target customers.

**Criteria no.3:** *'The collaboration of online communication method with other communication tools'*. The flexibility and the mutual support between online and off-line communication methods should be complemented as a whole plan. An effective brand strategy can be best achieved by ensuring that online and off-line mediums are the integral part of the brand communication process.

**TOPSHOP:** TOPSHOP integrates both online and off-line methodologies together in order to complete the brand message purpose in term of marketing and branding. The brand communication framework combines fashion product information with its communication tools by ensuring that consistent identity is maintained.

**H&M:** H&M incorporates viable communication methods between online and off-line tools like TOPSHOP; only the brand statements are different.

**Material:** A literature research was reviewed in order to derive the case study direction. Data collection of the two cases was supported by literature, interviews and target audience observation. Many literature researches acknowledge TOPSHOP and H&M as strong high-street fashion brands. The literatures provide content in the area of target customers, fashion products, the usage of communication channels, fashion brand promotion and fashion brand strategies. The information of TOPSHOP and H&M communication applications were also attained from their official websites, bloggings, social networking site and fashion electronic magazines.

**Procedure:** Zonabend (1992) stated that case study is done by giving special attention to completeness in observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the cases under study. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two high-street

fashion retail store operators (TOPSHOP and H&M) along with survey researches (i.e. direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts) with a purpose of revealing high-street fashion brand communication principles. The extent of the case study structure is shown below:

1. High-street fashion brand communication overview: brand message objectives and communication approaches
2. High-street fashion brand communication challenges: “What patterns of communication mediums have emerged from the current online environment and the perceived needs for brand information amongst the female adolescent”, “What are the key characteristics of the female adolescent based on behavioural perspectives in response to high-street fashion brands’ online communication activities”, “What characteristics of the mainstream online mediums contribute to the patterns of information acquisition and information search?”, “What online channels arise from the rapid changes of information technologies and how important have those online channels been adopted as a high-street fashion brand medium?” and “How high-street fashion brand balances the need for technological adoption with the need to continue the accomplishment of the brand encoding process?.”
3. Sources of high-street fashion brand online communication: Social networking site, Website, E-zine and E-tail store.

A whole study where the data are gathered from various sources and conclusions drawn on those facts was compared in order to deduce the problems, challenges, similarities and differences between these case examples. Accordingly, the key informants influencing a successful integration of communication tools were indicated. An analytic strategy that leads to case study evidence analysis called grounded theory was applied to interpret the collected data. Lastly, practical implications were employed to 1) balance all the relevant evidence, 2) combine the differences, 3) enhance and develop significant contributions of the case study and 4) create a synergy.

### 3.4 Micro Ethnography/ Participant Observation

Micro ethnography involves a focus on one specific aspect of a topic (Wolcott, 1990). However, both ethnography and participant observation are often difficult to distinguish. In both, a researcher is immersed in a group for an extended period of time, observing behaviour and listening to what is said in conversations (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). However, in this section the study was only conducted as shown below:

1. The researcher was immersed in a high-street fashion retail store for a period of time
2. The researcher made a regular observations of female adolescent behaviour in a retail store
3. The researcher collected and reviewed information about the target audiences behaviours in order to develop an understanding of the communication context

**Aims:** There were three objectives that micro ethnography and participant observation planned to achieve:

1. To gain an insight view of customer behaviours towards in-store communications of a high-street fashion brand and how these communication tools have an effect on them. This is to reassure the outcomes from the questionnaires and interviews.
2. To identify the potential of in-store communication tools over target audiences. How the results of information consumption possibly lead to further action and how these communications were implemented.
3. To discover the collaboration between each communication tool in retail store and browsing activity.

**Subjects:** In this research, there were two aspects of social setting for micro ethnography and participant observation:

1. In order to gain a deep understanding of in-store communication tools, the study was an extended examination derived from the findings of questionnaires and qualitative research. The field of study explored the role of each in-store communication tool (i.e. interior, window display, layout, look book, catalogue, flyer or leaflet, printed advertisement and product display) and how each tool associated

and complemented a brand message as a channel of a brand communication plan. A clear linkage of each brand communication tool was pointed out by the researcher playing the role of participant observer. As a participant observer who acted as a brand message receiver, the influences of communication tools on audiences were clearly perceived. Also the data of how female adolescents encountered and interacted with brand messages through the in-store communication channel was collected.

2. Brand values were transmitted through communication tools as the integral element of retail stores where the fashion products are displayed. Being part of the community in the actual scenario allowed the observer to experience the atmosphere in the high-street fashion retail stores. The occurrence of communication activities which encourage emotional bonds between a brand and its audiences were acknowledged by the observer being involved in the platform of the brand communication location.

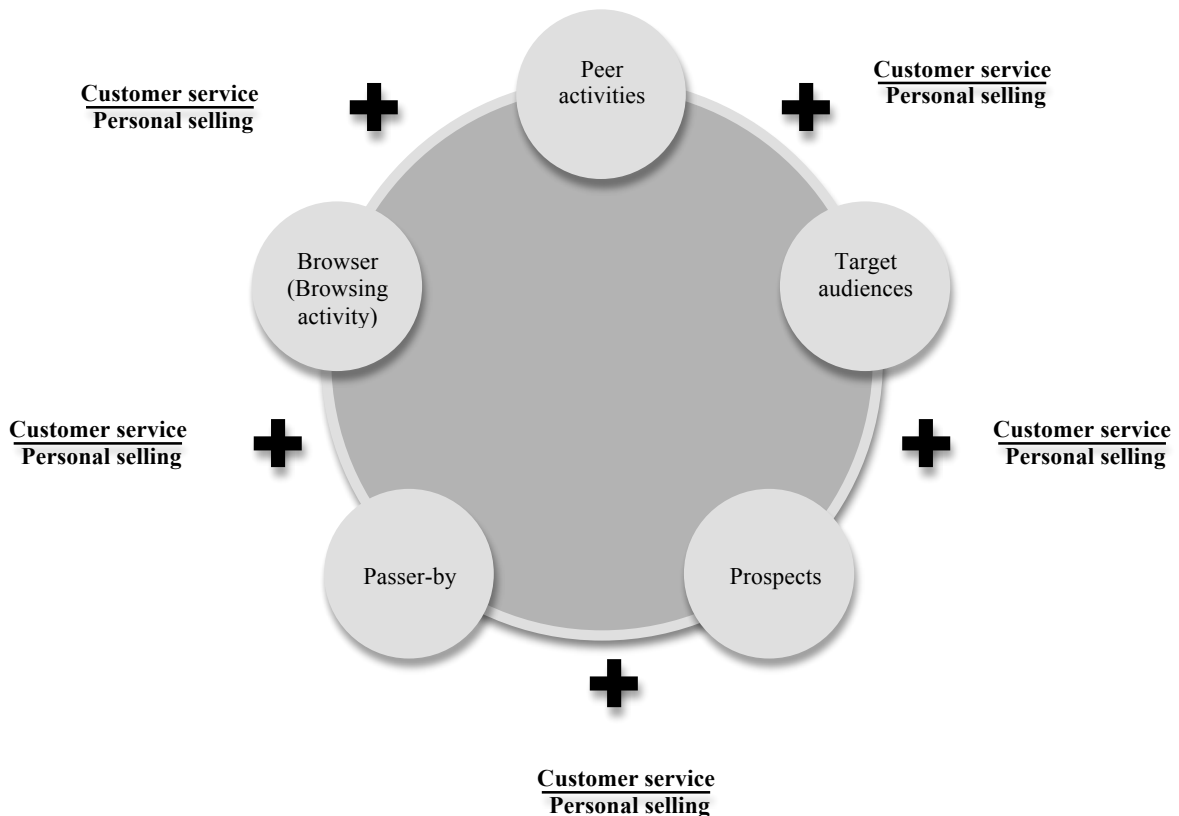


Figure 3.3: Diagram representing participants in the observation conducted in this research

**Material:** Micro ethnography and participant observation were employed to complement other research methods. Within the certain brand scenario, observer embedded fashion activity with the observation methods provided insight into the

processes by which brand information were searched before a purchase decision. The retail store was regarded as a setting field where these research methods could take place. An insight of certain behaviour within a fashion retail store was highlighted such as why certain fashion products gain customer's attention. These methods were implemented within fashion retail stores, so as to combine data on information of fashion lifestyle needs. In-store communication tools such as store layout, unique point of sale etcetera, were also evaluated.

**Procedure:** These methods could identify patterns of behaviour, but could not provide information on the reasons behind that behaviour (Easey, 2009). Therefore, the study questions and key informants of micro ethnography and data collection were derived from literature review and questionnaire researches. Field notes and recording devices for photograph and video were used in store to detect the interest of communication stimuli amongst female adolescents while the researcher adopted the role of fashion shopper. After access to the retail store as an actual setting scenario, the recorded behaviour from digital devices were transcribed, interpreted, analysed and deduced together with the previous research study.

### 3.5 Analytical Methods

The research applies two types of analytical methods for data analysis (see figure 3.4).

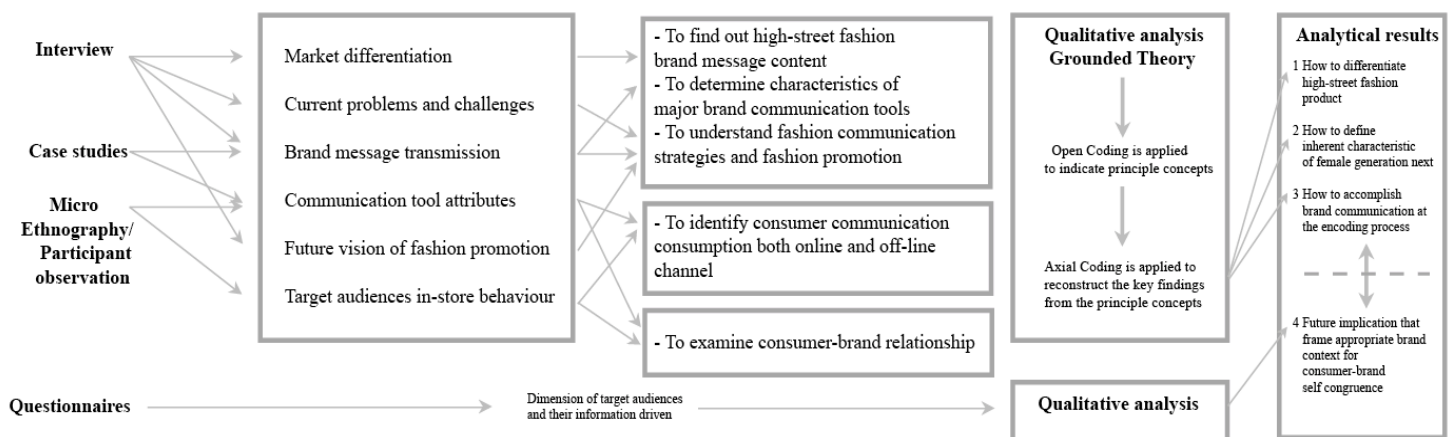


Figure 3.4: Diagram representing associations between key findings and analytical methods



Firstly, quantitative data analysis was conducted to examine questionnaire findings. The methods for analyzing quantitative data are presented as followings:

1. Classifying the outcomes into different tables in order to indicate in the table the amount of respondents and the percentage belonging to each of the groups of the variable in questionnaire. Then, frequency tables were generated to identify the options which reached the maximum point for each question.
2. Exploring the respondents' data with the purpose of user profile indication. The statements which were used to portray female adolescent as a group of target audience were categorized to specify their self characteristics towards a fashion brand. Then, comparison between the findings from the questionnaire and existing key characters of female adolescents was conducted.
3. Identifying the key factors which influence the information seeking activities on major online and off-line communication channels by ranking the options that achieved the highest score in each question group. Also, the view to obtaining brand messages from major communication tools were sorted to find the interaction process between the target audience and brand communication.
4. Pointing out by the tools which information has been searched the most by ordering the communication tools from highest to lowest.
5. The relationship between fashion shopping lifestyle and fashion attitude, Brand information seeking and high-street retail store, online and off-line communication tools and customer-brand emotional ties and communication tools were discovered by the means of statistical non-parametric test. A chi-square test measured the (two-tailed) prediction that there would be the association of the above hypotheses.
6. Considering the collected data to find out 1) the female adolescent opinion of what characteristics they view themselves towards fashion brand personality and 2) how and which communication tools have been employed as brand message channels. Afterwards, the findings were evaluated with the previous and current knowledge in order to identify similarities and differences.

Secondly, a qualitative data analysis framework called “Grounded Theory” was conducted to decode the data from the interviews, case studies and micro ethnography/participant observation. Bryman and Teevan (2005) stated that grounded

theory has two central features which are its development of the theory out of data and iterative approach, or recursive as it is sometimes called, meaning that data collection and analysis proceed in tandem repeatedly referring back to each other. Hence, the information was broken down into categories with the purpose to infer the key findings, then, the information was reformulated. Lastly, the outcomes from the analytical methods were combined in order to provide a principle for a conceptual model formulation.

### **3.5.1 Grounded Theory Analysis**

Grounded theory is seen as a powerful research method for analysing research data (Allan, 2003). Thus, this method was chosen as a framework to combine and evaluate the qualitative research analysis. The grounded theory was applied to analyse the data gathered from interviews, case studies and micro ethnography/participant observation. The “Studied Phenomenon” drawn from grounded theory endowed a meaningful understanding of the research topic. Then, an enhanced vision of collected data and grounded theory were best achieved as a goal of the study. Grounded theory data analysis involves codes (open coding, axial coding and selective coding), concepts and categories, however, this research employed only open coding and axial coding.

**Open Coding:** Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorising and describing the phenomena found (Borgatti, 2006) because the aim of open coding is to discover, name and categorise phenomena, so it follows that the aim of data gathering is to keep the collection process open to all possibilities (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The procedure of doing open coding in this research was demonstrated in five steps as shown below:

**1. Data Preparation:** The notes and digital recordings from the interviews, case studies and micro ethnography/participant observation were transcribed for their core content and reexamined repeatedly in order to accustom with the responses and conceive the key findings. In addition, essential ingredients were marked by the key words used by respondents.

**2. Labelling phenomena:** The data were fragmented for classification. The data that shared the same characteristics were named similarly as an index system and as an incident that enabled the study to identify their significance.

**3. Discovering categories:** The incidents were constructed into categories for easy sorting and interpretation development (see figure 3.5). Each category contained the group that shared certain common concepts. For instance, the incidents named *message transmission from sender to gatekeeper and then to receiver, the brand campaign strategy is designed and delivery procedure of brand message content* were grouped, since they all described a brand communication context.

**4. Naming categories:** The names of the categories derived from the concept of the data. These names were represented as headings of the groups of data (see figure 3.5). The name 'brand communication context' served as the chosen name of the category. In this term, 'brand communication context' was inferred as "*all the forms of communication actions and activities that influence and impact the relationship between the customers and the brand*" (Schultz and Walters, 1997). Alternatively, it brings the relevant concepts of the communication process together with the brand strategies, such as transmission context and promotion context.

**5. Developing categories in terms of their properties and dimensions:** The properties and dimensions of each category were identified by the mean of their attributes (see figure 3.5). In this case, properties were the key features of a category which can be varied along the dimensional range. Portraying a flight as a category example, the properties are height, speed and duration, while the dimensions are height ranged from high to low and speed ranged from fast to slow (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this study, dimensions of the categories were ranged based on the summarised interpretation of each property. For example, the characteristics of high-street fashion brands like H&M were explained "*H&M says that it owes its success to three factors: inventive design, the best quality at the best price, and efficient logistics*" (Tungate, 2005). Accordingly, the research deduced and entitled 'high' as the dimensional range. Nevertheless, the given dimensional range was examined for similarities with the information from other sources in same area before concluding the dimensional range.

The transcript of the interview with the retail supervisor

Fashion brand name is a mental set of values. Fashion consumption is the act of design consumption, therefore, interior layout and window display play the important roles. It can be said that design is a tool for adding value and creating atmosphere that supports a brand image and produces attraction.

**Incident:** In-store communication including communication tools, communication elements, etc.

Figure 3.5: Example of labelling procedure

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. Comparing similar labeled incidents or phenomena</b>               | Defining target audience characteristics clearly                   |
|  | Defining communication tools function clearly                      |
|  | Defining high-street fashion brand clearly                         |
| <b>2. Choosing a name that symbolises all phenomena (subcategories)</b>  | Defining fashion brand message context clearly                     |
| <b>3. Developing properties and dimensions for each category</b>         | Identifying self-construal together with fashion brand personality |
|  | Developing mutual understanding between brand and customers        |
|  | Focusing on the brand proposition not brand image                  |
|  | Matching shared-function of online and off-line communication      |
| <b>4. Relating all categories together in the new way (Axial Coding)</b> | Main category  |



Figure 3.6: Example of establishing categories and naming categories

Table 3.3: Example of properties and dimensions within categories

| <b>Category</b>                                   | <b>Properties</b>   | <b>Dimension</b> |
|---|---|------------------|
| Differentiating high-street fashion brand product | • Defining product life cycle based on time consumed                                  | Short            |
|   | • Identifying the volume of product production  | High             |
|   | • Combining elements of fashion innovation, fashion inspiration and fashion lifestyle | High             |
| Framing user profile inherent characteristic      | • Identifying the fashion innovation adoption process                                 | High             |
|   | • Exploring the sources of fashion  | High             |

|  |  |                                      |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
|  | information where customers search for fashion reports<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining fashion information demand</li> <li>• Emphasising the importance of strong identity building on the basis of self-expression need</li> <li>• Understanding peer pressure which leads to conformity of requirements</li> </ul>  | High<br>High<br>High                 |
| Illustrating brand communication at the encoding process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing the purpose of the fashion brand message</li> <li>• Defining the mutual understanding between the fashion brand and its target audience</li> <li>• Determining the brand values proposition</li> <li>• Encouraging an interrelationship between the brand and its key audience</li> <li>• Embedding an integration of communication tools with information technologies</li> <li>• Obtaining feedbacks from an audience for brand message development</li> </ul> | High<br>High<br>High<br>High<br>High |

**Axial Coding:** Axial coding is the process of relating categories to their subcategories and linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Accordingly, the linkage between subcategories and the main categories and investigation of the connections creates a narrative. The relationship framework elements are presented below:

1. **Casual condition:** These are the sets of properties. These are the incidents that lead to occurrences or development of a phenomenon.

2. **Phenomenon:** Phenomenon stands for the name of the frame. The concept of

incidents that is defined as a core idea to a respondent or a set of associated actions/interactions.

3. **Context:** The specific set of conditions that interconnect to create a form of action/ interactional strategies.

4. **Intervening Condition:** The conditions that have an effect on the strategies.

5. **Action/ Interactional Strategies:** The strategies that perform in response to the phenomenon.

6. **Consequences:** The outcomes of the action/interactional strategies.

Reconstructed data of the properties and the dimensions of the categories of the open coding were conducted with the purpose of identifying the association within categories. The relationships between a category and its subcategories were examined by supporting data to form an explanation about phenomena. Lastly, how categories related with the properties and dimensional levels were formed in the paradigm model (see figure 3.7).

| <b>Casual Condition</b>                                 | <b>Phenomenon</b>  |
|---|--|
| Unevenness of communication channels emphasis           | Achieve integrated brand-building communication tools of high-street fashion brand             |
| <b>Properties of integrated communication</b>           | <b>Specific dimensional of Integrated Communication</b>  |
| Shared communication purpose                            | Clearly indication of goal and objection High  |
|   | Clearly defined of vision and mission statement High   |
| Clear understanding of communication tool functionality | Understanding the criteria of communication disciplines. High                                  |
|   | Communication plan SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities and threatens) analysis High        |
|   | Understanding the brand message transmission as integral part of brand communication plan High |
| Developing relationship between participants            | Developing a customer-brand touchpoint High  |
|   | Generating mutual understanding and the bond between participants High                         |

### **Context of fully integrated communication**

Under conditions where fashion industry mainly focuses on promotion and advertising despite communication strategy while brand-building strategy is a key fundamental, there is a requirement for developed framework for high-street fashion brand strategist to accomplish and integrate brand values with communication tools in order to fully obtain the contributions of integrated brand communication programme.

### **Strategies for brand communication programme**

1. Clearly identify product features
2. Characterize target audiences
3. Prioritize customer demand as a brand message driver
4. Insight view of communication process
5. Clearly defined the role of each communication stage
6. Comparing relevant approaches within industry
7. Develop new way of thinking from other disciplines
8. Focus on brand value strengthen
9. Increase sender-receiver mutual understanding
10. Building brand experiences

### **Intervening Conditions**

- For TOPSHOP, the communication context is well established. Online and off-line communication channels are employed in accordance with brand strategy programme, therefore, all respondents understand has a lesser amount of difficulties with the integrated communication process
- For H&M, online communication tools were only conducted as brand message channels. The brand did not employ the online site as a distribution channel, therefore, it was hard for fashion brand to reach and collect customer database over the Internet.

With partial communication tools in the competitive fashion industry context, the comprehensive contributions from respondents are hardly specified.

### **Consequences**

In spite of the fact that both high-street fashion brands employed both online and off-line communication tools as a brand message channel, the extent of integration is dissimilar. Both high-street fashion brands join with the statement of 'Share communication purpose' and 'Clear understanding of communication tool functionality'. However, TOPSHOP has greater achievement of 'Relationship between participants', as information technologies and communication function is conveyed through brand communication strategies. It can be considered that this outcome was reached by the underlying of clearly defined communication purpose and well-developed communication selection strategies structure.

Figure 3.7: Paradigm Model showing result of this research

### 3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the primary research examined four key aspects 1) current communication plan and communication implementation of high-street fashion brand communication strategy, 2) identification of what challenges and problems of brand communication development in fashion industry reflect the information driven demands amongst the female adolescent and how to achieve them, 3) an improvement of brand communication at the encoding process which encourages brand message proposition and serves target audience requirements and 4) how to accomplish a combination of online and off-line communication channels as an integral of brand-building communication . In summary, the primary research consisted of three qualitative tools; 1) semi-structured interview, 2) case study and 3) micro ethnography/participant observation; and one quantitative tool, the questionnaire. The advantages and disadvantages of each research tool have been shown in table 3.5. Grounded theory analysis was conducted to interpret the discovery of the qualitative research, while the questionnaire outcomes were analysed by the statistic tool called ‘chi-square’ test. After all of the grounded theory analysis process, four paradigm models denoting three phenomena: 1) how to distinguish the main characteristics of a high-street fashion brand product in order to segment its fashion market, 2) how to clearly define fundamental elements of the encoding process as an integral part of brand communication procedure, and 3) how to portray and structure the inherent characteristics of the female adolescent profile; were construed. Additionally, the fundamentals of brand-building communication plan were extracted from both qualitative and quantitative analyses. The consequences of primary research will be deliberated and explained in Chapter 4, and then they will exploited as a platform for the conceptual model formulation demonstrated in chapter 5.

Table 3.4: Advantages and disadvantages of each research method

| Method        | Advantages   | Disadvantages                           |
|---------------|--|---|
| Questionnaire | Clear perception about self – awareness of the respondents | Missing data and misinterpretation were |



|                          |  |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|
|                          | <p>were obtained. Moreover, questionnaire contained an assortment of relevant queries, therefore, useful information for a fashion brand to develop the process of message transmission through various tools were covered.</p>  | <p>found in some parts of questionnaire as a respondent might lose their attention, especially in this female age group. Despite the fact that multiple-choice was convenient to complete, it constrained the potential views.</p> |
| Semi-structure interview | <p>It is seen as an efficient tool to describe a meaningful thought of a particular study field, an in-depth information about the fashion brand strategy, fashion brand promotion, target audience clarification, information consumption and communication tools were covered.</p> | <p>The difficulty to interpret the interviewee answers in terms of brand communication aspect as this area partly covered marketing communication, therefore, confusion remained in the answer.</p>                                |
| Case study               | <p>Examining strong high-street fashion brands endowed a meaningful method to integrate online communication tools, partnership with fashion designer, information technologies, audience demands with a brand and their brand strategy.</p>   | <p>Nevertheless, data gathering from case study was insufficient as these two cases presented partial information of communication strategy in terms of brand-building communication.</p>  |
| Micro ethnography and    | <p>The methods helped the</p>  | <p>It took a considerable</p>  |

|                                |   |  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| <p>participant observation</p> | <p>research explore and experience the scene of customer-brand interaction through communication channels more intensively. The method allowed the researcher to immerse in the social setting for an extended of time. This engagement provided the researcher a chance to understand customers within the context of the brand-communication environment.</p> | <p>time consumption in order to examine the activities of in-store communication and what in-store communications could lead the next stage actions. Moreover, collected data needed to be revised several times since behaviour interpretation through observation was a complex subject.</p> |
|--------------------------------|---|--|

## Chapter 4 Key Findings and Discussion

High-street fashion brands target the female adolescent with fast fashion and competitive price through fashion media promotions which partly concern about an integrated brand communication plan. High-street fashion communication needs to be built upon the fundamental of brand building by an appropriate information dissemination strategy. The research aimed to investigate the role of each communicative participant in the encoding process in order to create a solid foundation for brand-building communication implementation. This chapter synthesises the analysis of the criteria derived from the literature review, qualitative researches and quantitative research. The way in which the high-street fashion brand is communicated through a range of communication mediums and the role and significance of communication in the encoding process are discussed.

The key findings from the primary research are shown in this chapter, and these findings can be classified into two groups which are the outcomes of qualitative and quantitative approaches. These two results are combined in order to produce the final result as portrayed in figure 4.1. The synergy of the qualitative results is integral to the quantitative results framework. Brand communication criteria contributes towards customer-brand self congruence in the encoding process while a statement of qualitative results constitutes a method to differentiate high-street fashion brand products, identify inherent characteristics of the female adolescent and clarify brand communication in the encoding process from qualitative results. At the next stage, an understanding is deduced from the collaboration of qualitative and quantitative results. From the primary research, an interconnection between collected data from each method produced a range of results, therefore, the results are divided into four groups: 1) methods to signify the core value of high-street fashion brands, 2) methods to classify key characteristics of the female adolescent, 3) methods to match up the communications plan with the fashion brand strategy in the encoding process and 4) brand communication criteria. This chapter demonstrates the results which critically examined and processed together with the raw finding are presented in Appendix B.

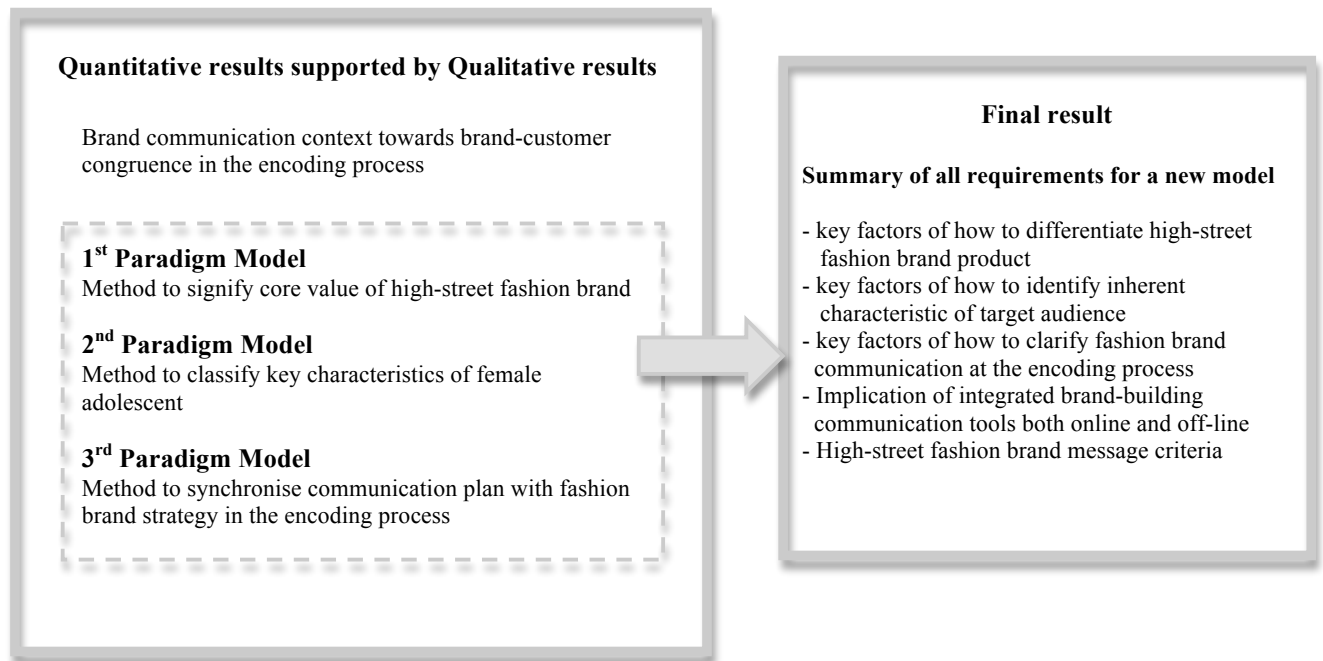


Figure 4.1: Collaboration of qualitative and quantitative results

## • Qualitative key findings and discussion

### 4.1 Methods to signify core value of high-street fashion brand content

To establish the viable methods to define the role of a high-street fashion brand as a sender of the brand message, it is necessary to distinguish the core value of a high-street fashion brand. The fundamentals of the background and the problems are examined through an analysis process of the results from interviews, case study and micro ethnography / participant observation. As a result, this section illustrates three key issues: 1) background and core characteristics of a high-street fashion brand 2) main problems of a high-street fashion brand product, 3) alternative ways to solve identified problems of high-street fashion brands as a message creator and 4) conclusion.

### **4.1.1 Background of high-street fashion brand**

The description below shows an outline of a high-street fashion brand background which was deduced from the primary research:

#### **1. High-street fashion brand production moves rapidly**

Five interviewees stated that a high-street fashion brand is in practice transient since the market consistently changes following fashion trends and variations of customer requirements. Moreover, fashion change, fashion adoption process and fashion acceptance are external factors which influence the process of high-street fashion procedure. Demand for the high-street fashion product is expanding at a considerable rate according to fashion consumption, hence, the lead time needs to be decreased. Fad and fast moving customer goods (FMCG) are a term which defines high-street fashion precisely according to its product life cycle. A high-street fashion product has a very short shelf-life and short lifespan with an intention to keep its pace with current trends which directly affects the production process. Fast forward, latest, newest and cutting-edge are considered as the ideal concepts intended to encourage target customers and prospects to endlessly buy new fashion items. The concept of high-street fashion within the context of fashionable, fast fashion is highlighted as a brand concept. It is important to balance the degree of fashion change and fashion adoption process in the high-street fashion industry in an attempt to reinforce its supplied capability and satisfy customer expectations.

#### **2. High-street fashion product aims mass market**

Four interviewees explained that high-street fashion brands position their products to be accessible to all target customers. The idea of product-driven affects high-street fashion to be regarded as ready to wear with mass production at reasonable price. The product is more wearable compared to other market segments due to the standard of fashion design and the large volume of manufacture. With the nature of fashion products together with mass production, fashion mass consumption directs high-street brands to employ market development as well as new product development as part of

their brand strategies. An efficient distribution channel becomes a core idea of product dissemination. Therefore, the activities of promoting the product to the public are vital in order to draw customer attention. Media and communication tools then play a role to deliver the information of the product and expose the brand to target audiences.

### **3. High-street fashion is an effect of fashion leadership collaboration**

It is unarguable that fashion tends to create a new proposition continuously within its industry. Most interviewees depict that fashion design is a mixture of idea, lifestyle, subculture and way of thinking together. Likewise, high-street fashion is a combination of trickle down theory and trickle up theory. High-street fashion is a hybrid of haute couture, designer wear and street style in a simple presentation with the aim of commercial purpose. However, it can be seen that the trend-driven from the catwalk is mostly embraced as an inspiration for high-street fashion products by colours, key elements or patterns. As a result, high-street fashion has shifted power from other fashion sources rather than self-generated design.

### **4. High-street fashion offers homogeneous function**

As a participant of the observation approach, the observer discovered that high-street fashion brands offer the indifferent value of their products compared with competitors. High-street fashion condition focuses on not getting behind the fashion mainstream. A minor modification of current fashion is applied to the high-street fashion product design process in order to revoke the trend in customers' minds. Hence, the function level concentrates on basic features that mainly offer the current fashion expose without identity consciousness. It can be seen that high-street fashion is an innovative imitation without changing the fashion consumption pattern. A high-street fashion product conveys the sign of conformity rather than individuality and the homogeneous language not imitator. The similarity of the product helps the brand to be easily accepted by customers. However, the alternative values of high-street fashion products are now trying to offer co-design between designer label and high-street style in order to increase their brand benefit. The perceived collaboration leads to the quality of higher design and higher status properties.

## **5. High-street fashion market greatly focuses on competitive retailing strategy**

With the competitive environment, high-street fashion brands compete with competitors by delivery, price, plan, offer, fashion newness and product renewal. Most interviewees explained that retail can be considered as the heart of the high-street fashion market as it is a channel of simultaneous transactions between brands and customers. Retail not only plays the role of distribution channel, but it also expresses product content. It is a place where brands can learn and understand customers much better than other channels, and at the same time, customers can actually get in touch with actual products. The high-street stresses the importance of retail strategy as a contact platform where a brand can stimulate the customer's curiosity. The brand can represent itself on the shelves as well as provide a range of products to be accessible on the shelves to maximise the purchase experiences. A particular own-label retail store directly forms and supports overall customer preferences towards its high-street fashion brand and also overall quality insight by creating its own shopping situation.

Nevertheless, there are particular factors which affect high-street fashion brands that might change over time since a property of the fashion industry is that it requires constant innovation. These factors are considered as external causes which might constrain the capacity to predict future development and future latent strategy. For example, unpredictable behaviour change and upcoming fashion technologies impact the way in which high-street brands can control the customer environment. The results of these variable determinants are a set of complex interactions of fashion system criteria. To ensure a successful strategy for a high-street fashion brand, the contribution of distribution channels, communication channels and experience with appearance should be reconciled and enhanced.

### **4.1.2 Main problems of high-street fashion brand product**

A summary below shows the main problems deduced from the primary research.

### **1. High-street fashion brand proceeds under a time constraint**

Most interviewees point out that the fast fashion environment restrains the time for the high-street fashion brands to get products in stores. The shortest time of the production process is preferable since new fashionable items need to move along with fashion change in order to enhance the competitive advantages from seasonal fashion promotion and concurrent trend information from mass media. The aim of high-street fashion is then to concentrate more on the supply chain rather than brand strategy. Moreover, the high-street fashion product development cycle is short which leads to an ongoing period of brand strategy improvement in response to the pace of fast fashion. As a result, the quick response of being up to date shortens the phase of brand communication strategy at the same time. An important question arises whether an effective brand communication strategy can be established within the time-compressed conditions in the right timeframe.

### **2. High-street fashion brand overlooks the importance of self-construal**

As an observer in the process of participant observation, the collected data can be interpreted to show that market segmentation is not clearly defined with the purpose of reaching a mass audience. Today customers apply fashion clothing as a way of self-expression and individuality, although, high-street fashion products offer a variety of fashion apparels which cover different kinds of styles. Accordingly, it can be seen that high-street fashion ignores the concept of using fashion as a means for communication in a certain context. High-street fashion discards the feature of individual differences which are key components of its target audiences who are active in fashion. An absence of satisfying these more demanding customers shows its weak market segmentation strategy.

### **3. Lack of brand identity is the barrier that causes indifferent brand personality**

This is a salient point in the case of high fashion retailers as brand identity is a core concept of strong brand strategies. The collected data from case studies and interviewees show that high-street fashion brands pay less attention to build brand identity, but highly emphasise on fashion product benefit. These benefits tighten a



customer-brand relationship based on fashion product-related attributes which mainly engages an emotional function in customers' memories. However, high-street fashion brands concentrate on product benefits delivery in terms of tangible assets but customers also indirectly pay for intangible assets from the brand. One interviewee clarified that it could not be argued that fashion brand essence is built on self-expressive value benefits. An ambiguous brand identity has an affect on brand value evaluation in customers' minds in terms of the capability to differentiate one brand from competitors. Since brand identity is directly involved with brand personality, it is complicated for a high-street fashion brand to create customer brand-knowledge which is connected to personal meaning in the customers' perception. Accordingly, customer-brand commitment in the customer mindset is weakened due to an inadequate thorough understanding of its self-brand congruence.

#### **4. Integrated competitive strategy needs to be comprehended**

The traditional view of a high-street fashion brand very much concentrates on product / service orientation. Most interviewees report that interdisciplinary techniques are not comprehended in the high-street fashion market. High-street fashion brands employ marketing strategies in a linear direction with the purpose of market penetration, market development and product development by excluding brand strategy at the next stage. Therefore, a gap occurs while carrying out the execution plan because of an absence of a holistic view.

However, there are certain circumstances which get in the way of a potential solution and improvement which are caused by the nature of fashion. For instance, different vision and mission statements direct dissimilar brand strategies, thus, every high-street fashion brand has its own strategy in accordance with its aims and objectives. To narrow down the customers by clearly defined target audience characteristics might lead to decreased revenue, it may be suitable for some high-street brands to comply with the mainstream without offering uniqueness traits with the intention of mass consumption maintenance due to its broad segmentation.

### **4.1.3 Alternative ways to solve identified problems of a high-street fashion brand as a message creator**

A summary of alternative approaches to solve the identified problems in terms of brand communication aspect are shown below:

#### **1. Communication strategies must be reformulated based on the fashion cycle timeframe**

Many interviewees recommend that the time-compression in the fashion industry is an influential key to structure brand message content apart from the communication objectives. A high-street fashion brand needs to be able to reflect current trends together with brand essence at the earliest stage and be proactive for fashion change. As a result, a high-street fashion brand can exploit the advantages of relevant mass media to assist the conveyance process of fashion movement information. For instance, key patterns of current seasonality i.e. key fabrics, colours and shapes generally automatically get these messages placed on mass media. Therefore, high-street fashion brands immediately gain these benefits from media coverage that echoes its latest fashion design patterns. High-street fashion brands can then reduce their financial plan and rather than focusing on an advertising campaign, the brand can balance the funds to heighten brand awareness. This indicates that communication strategies must be early adopted in the fashion informative process in order to gain advantages from other sources of communication tools.

#### **2. A clear interpretation of target audience feedback needs to be embraced**

Many interviewees and case studies gave an idea about the feedback of target audiences as a key determinant to understand their mindset. Both positive and negative feedbacks of a well-defined fashion segment direct the way how high-street fashion brands send out positive brand messages. Target audience feedbacks endorse high-street fashion brands to reach a responsive stage since the way customers process information about the brand will be analysed. These feedbacks represent the degree of customer assessment and customers exposure to high-street fashion brand

information. Feedback-effects denote how to modify brand communication strategies to match meaningful self-congruence through customers' attitudes and beliefs. As a result, high-street fashion brand communication strategies can develop a positive brand perceived fit towards customer expectations and this perception can result in better customer-brand relationships.

### **3. An association of cohesive brand identity with the relevant personality of the target audience should be understood**

Apart from an assortment of functional, symbolic and experiential benefits of fashion apparel, a proposed idea from many interviewees illustrated that brand core identity is in principle an essence of brand uniqueness. The advantages of self-expressive benefit and strong identity combination can possibly encourage an extended effect of the emotional bond between high-street fashion brands and their target audiences. This outline labels a set of brand associations implying the needs of brand message content which resonate the context of customer requirements and differentiates the brand from competitors. Hence, a coherence between brand identity and the relevant personalities of target audiences is considered as a core component of brand contents which form a vision of how high-street fashion brands should be perceived by their target audiences. Nevertheless, for a high-street fashion brand it is necessary to identify the target audience in respect of an in depth comprehension of market segmentation approach with the intention to recognise significant factors relating to prospect customers and the brand.

### **4. An integration of fashion trait, communication and brand strategy should be built up**

To construct a powerful brand language, some interviewees stated that a new framework should integrate the nature of a high-street fashion product, communication conveyance and brand strategy as a holistic view of high-street fashion brand implementation. For instance, a creative director from an advertising agency explained that an appreciation of a fashion brand derives from customer response towards the provided information, thus, comprehensive interrelated fundamental elements should be integrated in the message substance. In the fashion

industry, the more favourable effects of the brand communication process are deduced from the exposure of the brand message. The scenario engages values of high-street fashion brands / high-street fashion products as informative sources, communication strategies as conveyance processes and brand strategies as holistic views to stimulate customer-brand dialogues. Despite the integration of how to create positive brand messages in order to result in developing suitable perceptions and attitudes to brand communication campaigns, the processes of brand information transmission are regarded as message composition phases in the encoding processes as well.

To summarise, in order to investigate the core values of the high-street fashion brand content thoroughly, a clearly defined communication objective was required. Consequently, a contribution from each discipline can be reformulated. The grounded theory analysis was applied to scrutinise these findings. The outcomes are presented below:

Table 4.1: Properties and dimension range of ‘High-Street Fashion Brand Significance’ Phenomenon

| <b>Category</b>                                      | <b>Properties</b>  | <b>Dimension</b>                                |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Signify core values of high-street fashion brands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Competence to distinguish high-street fashion brands from other fashion categories</li> <li>· Interrelationship of high-street fashion brands and entire fashion system</li> <li>· In depth understanding of high-street fashion brand target audience</li> </ul> | <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>             |
| 2. Activities  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Pointing out key characteristics of high-street fashion products</li> <li>· Highlighting high-street fashion brand identities</li> <li>· Identifying high-street fashion brand contexts and criteria</li> <li>· Exploring relevant networks of high-</li> </ul>   | <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> |

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
|  | street fashion brands  |      |
|  | · Understanding shared characteristics of high-street fashion brands and other fashion segmentations | High |
|  | · Recognising convergent points of high-street fashions within fashion systems                       | High |
|  | · Being aware of high-street fashion promotions being driven by time pressure                        | High |
|  | · Clearly identifying the characteristics of target audiences  | High |
|  | · Developing framed brand messages based on target audience expectations and requirements            | High |

| <b>Casual Condition</b>   | <b>Phenomenon</b>  |      |
|---|--|------|
| Ambiguous understanding, misinterpreted and overlapped characteristics, weak brand identity | Well-defined core value of high-street fashion brand                                 |      |
| <b>Properties of high-street fashion brand significance</b>                                 | <b>Specific Dimensional of high-street fashion brand core value</b>                  |      |
| - High-street fashion brand differentiation   | Key characteristics of high-street fashion brand are clearly specified               | High |
|   | High-street fashion brand identity is clearly identified                             | High |
|   | High-street fashion band essence is accurately determined                            | High |
| - Interrelation of high-street fashion brand and fashion system                             | Correlation between high-street fashion brand and entire fashion system is described | High |
|   | Overlapped structure of high-street fashion and fashion segmentation                 | High |
|   | Interdisciplinary of fashion framework is clearly comprehended                       | High |
|   | Shared-characteristics of high-street and other fashion categories are embedded      | High |
| - In depth understanding of target audiences  | Comprehensive background of target audiences is established                          | High |
|   | Functional and emotional requirements of target audiences is combined                | High |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Target audiences view towards high-street fashion brand is identified | <p style="text-align: right;">High</p> <p><b>High-street fashion brand significance</b></p> <p>Under conditions where perception towards high-street fashion brand is sceptical, a comparison between fashion product categories, meaningful brand messages regarding high-street fashion and a connotation of target audience featured needs to be interpreted, and a thorough understanding of the role of brand message sender needs to be constructed based on fundamental content derived from high-street fashion brand core attributes.</p> <p><b>Strategies to signify high-street fashion brand values</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Point out the high-street fashion brand key characteristics</li> <li>2. Discover the underlying high-street fashion brand identity</li> <li>3. Identify the context and criteria of the high-street fashion brand</li> <li>4. Explore high-street fashion brand networks</li> <li>5. Understand shared characteristics between fashion segmentation</li> <li>6. Recognise fashion convergence</li> <li>7. Be aware of the high-street fashion timeframe</li> <li>8. Clarify target audience characteristics</li> <li>9. Develop high-street fashion brand messages based on its target audiences</li> </ol> <p><b>Intervening Conditions</b></p> <p>There are certain circumstances regarded as problematic conditions that cannot be analysed according to the character of fashion nature. Firstly, unpredictable innovation within the industry is the key to standardise high-street fashion brand messages. Secondly, time-constraints in the high-street fashion cycle limits the communication timeframe. A short period of communication duration affects the brand knowledge in customers' memory. Moreover, a high demand for high-street fashion products influences the importance of the production process rather than the customer-brand relationship. Accordingly, a complete improvement to strengthen high-street fashions as brands is challenging.</p> <p><b>Consequence</b></p> <p>The contribution of the high-street fashion brand must be deduced before the process of brand messaging. High-street fashion brand messages must be developed from meaningful core attributes to brand message contents; so that high-street fashion easily fits customer preferences for the process of obtaining information.</p> |
|---|---|

Figure 4.2: Paradigm Model-phenomenon of signifying the core value of high-street fashion brands

#### **4.1.4 Conclusion- Methods to signify the core value of a high-street fashion brand**

Currently, the core value of high-street fashion brands is not clearly delivered through the process of brand communication because of 1) misinterpreted or ambiguous brand

significance caused by an inadequate understanding, 2) brand identity programme discard, and 3) insufficient thorough investigation of target audiences because their development plans mainly focus on lead time and the production process. The brand message sender plays an important role in the encoding process as it is a source of brand information, therefore, vague brand statements mislead the audiences' perception towards high-street fashion brands and dilutes high-street brand equity. A precise construe of brand characteristics directs brand message formation in terms of its content with the purpose of depicting high-street brand significances that stand out from competitors. An avoidance of market size reduction is considered as a condition which a high-street brand considers as part of its basic plan. However, the generalised and wide-coverage brand message that is delivered to the mass market is difficult to transform, since most high-street fashion brands need a lot of investment to redesign an integrated brand communication programme. As a result, the researcher initiated examination of other relevant issues, which can help the brand communication strategist construct a message from the high-street fashion brand as an information sender and how to specify the main attributes of a high-street fashion brand.

To pursue these suggestions, it is necessary to understand the meaningful characteristics of high-street fashions as a key principle to form brand message content based on target audience requirements together with brand communication plans. The core values of high-street fashion brand properties should be indicated from the communication objectives that the high-street fashion chooses to deliver by appropriate communication means. Hence, brand message formation in the encoding process can be accurately developed. This framework should be considered as a provisional high-street fashion brand-building communication strategy to reassure that the key components are entirely included in the encoded brand message.

## **4.2 Methods to classify key characteristics of the female adolescent**

The age range of the female adolescent has gained the attention and interest of the markets especially in the fashion industry. The purchasing ability of this group is a

rich target. It can be seen that the female adolescent becomes a key focus for high-street fashion brands as they possess economic power which drives high-street fashion growth. Nevertheless, this female age group between 18 to 25 years old is a complicated and sensitive area since there are considerable variable contexts to determine the characteristics of the female adolescent. In this research, the key characteristics refer to their perspective towards high-street fashion attributes, e.g. emotional dimension, knowledge dimension, functional dimension and social dimension, which interconnect and bind them and the brands together. Therefore, an approach of key characteristics of the female adolescent classification points out the key informant of creating or visualising the encoded brand message. The utmost concern of the female adolescent associates self-construal, self-expression and individuality with the demands of fashion apparel as well-publicised tools which assist them to be part of the cool group. An example point of view from one interviewee states that *'the brand communication strategist should be able to define target audience behaviour. Basic questions that brands need to uncover are customers' requirements, how they interact with high-street fashion products, influential determinants at the pre-purchase stage, purchase stage and post-purchase stage, and feedback from customers' experiences. This gathered evidence is required as a basis for the brand communication process to embrace in order to outline the encoded message as precisely as possible.'* In order to create an appropriate high-street fashion brand message, a proper framework of encoding process directly affects the view which the target audiences decode from the brand message. Essentially, these criterias impact a brand fit which is to be perceived at the next stage after the brand message is encoded.

#### **4.2.1 Alternative ways to classify key characteristics of the female adolescent**

A synopsis of the approach to study target audience characteristics in terms of message receiver deduced from the primary research is shown below:

##### **1. Cluster individual differences of the female adolescent based on target behaviour**



There are many influences of personal factors towards fashion function (desire personality, self-construal, knowledge and learning), all of which are interpreted in terms of societal communicating factors not a psychographic group. The main thrust of the analysed findings centres on how a brand can communicate effectively through the perpetual change of the way customers decode messages as this context directly impacts the way a brand encodes transmitted information. Participants observation and case studies portray changes towards high-street fashion brands amongst target audiences as presented in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Female adolescent characteristics shift in the communication process

| From  | To  |
|---|---|
| Demographic Y Study:<br>The children of demographic x or baby boomer (Baker, 2000). | Targeting Behaviour Examination<br>- Identity proliferation (Self-perceived view)<br>- Conformity (Network influence) |
| Buying Attention Focus  | Encourage Earned Attention<br>- Customer-generated Media  |

Of uttermost concern is what processes the target group pursues when brand information is sent out. To dissect a core idea of the female adolescent towards communication strategy, a contribution of a target group characteristics cluster assists a brand to develop a holistic view of the female adolescent more specifically. Hence, an understanding of the female adolescent characteristics towards high-street fashion brands needs to link together with the brand message encoding.

## **2. Consider the female adolescent as a source of information rather than product information**

Drawn upon different perspectives of many interviewees and case studies, this research revealed that the female adolescent characteristics are in common with Generation C conception. Generation C is based on the idea of customer generated media where customers are considered as an information generator. The female

adolescent qualifies as part of Generation C as the group shares the characteristics of content, connected, creativity, co-creators, conversation and control. The findings derived from online sources of case studies suggests that this target audience are fluent digital users who extensively turn to Internet knowledge resources and create their own content. Blogs and other customer-generated media alter the power and authority of a brand as an information source. For instance, customer opinions arise from the conversations of customer-generated media. Hence, online communication is a vast source of knowledge that the female adolescent employs as a source of high-street fashion information. The female adolescent are media multitaskers therefore communication-based messages can be delivered faster than for other age groups.

### **3. Collaboration between high-street fashion brands and the female adolescent in order to gain invaluable feedback**

The concentration of this research is that, in order to understand how to create positive perception towards high-street fashion brands amongst the female adolescent, it is necessary to look at how they experience and process brand information. Collaboration changes the practice of communication construction; in considering customer-brand activities. The assemblage of customer-brand interrelation instructs the new brand message formation in terms of how it is engaged with the interaction of information processing (information seeking, information gathering and information interpretation). It is increasingly important for high-street fashion brands to fulfil the expectation by valuing the audience's opinion. Now the boundaries between fashion product, fashion brand and customer are unclear as a brand is not only the informer in the communication place. A helpful example is the suggestion from one interviewee *'the female adolescent feel gratitude when a high-street fashion brand respects their opinion since they feel as part of the brand. They are active to give details of their beliefs and their preferred lifestyle. Customers are a store of a great amount of useful knowledge and a brand needs to engage them better. As a result, the high-street fashion brand can gain advantages by improving the products, so that they better fit their requirement and expectations.* A core question is whether the collaboration of brand and customer optimises an informative function of the feedback. This means that invaluable feedback heightens a brand value proposition through collaboration of communication plan and audiences.

#### **4. Assimilate the rise of network influence as a key driven characteristic**

The response to peers/reference group is as influencers of self-knowledge towards high-street fashion brands. The rise of social networks drives the scene of activity where customers interact with each other and sustain acquaintances. Case studies exhibit that these networks (Myspace, Facebook, Twitter or Website) allow customers to discuss and share information broader than off-line communication resources. The female generation exploits communication network attributes to imitate purchase activities of their peers. Moreover, these are sources when they seek for advice when they lack experience with a fashion product. This behaviour represents the importance of people power where peers are more influential than brand representatives amongst the female adolescent. The communication power is transferred from brand / producer to customer. Therefore, it obviously shows the impact of these social networks on their fashion shopping behaviour.

#### **5. Improve brand communication strategy as a place where the female adolescent develop brand intelligence immersion**

An effective brand communication strategy may encourage a new platform of high-street fashion brand knowledge. For example, case studies describe the attribute of online communication channels in terms of interactivities between high-street fashion brands and customers. The ability of online applications i.e. customers generate media (blog, video streaming site or podcast) allows audiences / customers to be information originators instead of brands themselves. These online sites endow participatory actions between the audiences who create content, the audiences who share content, the viewers who look at the content and the high-street fashion brand. This practice endorses and develops brand communication tool capabilities as well as enlightens customer knowledge towards the brand. Accordingly, building up communication channels to be places of brand distributed cognition to the phase of sharing / providing / exchanging brand information might assist customers to gain brand intelligence.

The problematic relationship between the female adolescent and high-street fashion

brands can be investigated through the fashion diffusion process. The female adolescent can be seen as early adopters within the fashion context and also active information seekers within the communication context. Accordingly, the female adolescent are multitaskers, although, they are concurrently viewed as fast switchers. Although, the active engagement of the female adolescent in the brand communication process emerges to be central in the customer-brand interaction, changes in the female adolescent lifestyle and consequent demands for innovation affect a brand's communication plan. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly define the key characteristics of the female adolescent as main participants of the brand encoding process. The grounded theory is conducted to deduce all findings as shown in table 4.3 and figure 4.4.

Table 4.3: Properties and dimensions of the female adolescent classification

| <b>Category</b>  | <b>Properties</b>   | <b>Dimension</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Classify key characteristics of the female adolescent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Thoroughly understand the female adolescent desired personality towards fashion consumption</li> <li>· Differentiate female adolescent behaviour from other demographic segments in the communication context</li> <li>· Identify high-street fashion brand information sources amongst the female adolescent</li> <li>· Discern the female adolescent as a message generators not only a message receivers</li> <li>· Recognize customer feedback as a source of customer key indication</li> </ul> | <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p>             |
| 2. Activities  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Identify the female adolescent requirement in a high-street fashion context</li> <li>· Scrutinize a concept of self-construal amongst the female adolescent</li> <li>· Examine the basic needs of female adolescent towards fashion consumption</li> <li>· Clarify communication activities amongst the female adolescent</li> <li>· Compare information processing procedures to other demographic segments</li> <li>· Define the movement of brand learning</li> </ul>                             | <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> <p>High</p> |

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
|  | experience   |      |
|  | · Indicate the principle needs of fashion communication amongst the female adolescent            | High |
|  | · Investigate a communication activity through communication tools amongst the female adolescent | High |
|  | · Recognize features of the female adolescent who act as a customer-brand connectors             | High |
|  | · Realize the main characters of opinion leaders in the female adolescent group                  | High |
|  | · Acknowledge the value of the female adolescent opinion   | High |
|  | · Generate conversation between brands and the female adolescent                                 | High |
|  | · Embrace the female adolescent experiences to improve brand information                         | High |

| <b>Casual condition</b>  | <b>Phenomenon</b>  |      |
|--|--|------|
| Unable to carry brand message to fit female adolescent preference        | Classify key characteristics of female generation next               |      |
| <b>Properties of female adolescent key characteristics signification</b> | <b>Specific Dimensional of a significance</b>                        |      |
| - Understanding female adolescent desired personality                    | Clearly defining female adolescent fashion demand                    | High |
|  | Clearly describing female adolescent change                          | High |
|  | Clearly understand female adolescent lifestyle                       | High |
| - Differentiating female adolescent behaviour                            | Identify female adolescent requirements                              | High |
|  | Identify female adolescent experiments                               | High |
|  | Identify female adolescent adjusting attitude                        | High |
| - Identifying brand information sources amongst female adolescent        | Being aware of information seeking process                           | High |
|  | Being aware of information-driven activities                         | High |
| - Discerning female adolescent in a role of message creator              | Understand information sharing activity amongst female adolescent    | High |
|  | Understand a need to express own viewpoint amongst female adolescent | High |
| - Recognizing customer feedback  | Embrace new insights idea towards fashion brand                      | High |
|  | Engage customer suggestions towards fashion brand                    | High |
|  | Value customer experiences towards fashion brand                     | High |
|  | Encourage customer-brand interactivity in the communication process  | High |

### **Context of female adolescent key characteristics classification**

Under a condition where a high-street fashion brand message currently concentrates on carrying information without regarding the importance of congruence; an optimal perception of customers towards a brand is hardly achieved. Accordingly, a high-street fashion brand requires a new framework of how to accurately classify key characteristics of the target audiences in order to create a brand perceived fit in the encoding process.

### **Strategies for female adolescent key characteristics classification**

1. Identify the female adolescent requirements
2. Scrutinise a concept of self-construal
3. Examine basis needs of fashion consumption
4. Clarify communication activities
4. Compare information processing procedures
5. Define the movement of brand learning experiences
6. Indicate the principle needs of fashion communication
7. Investigate communication activities through communication applications
8. Recognise features of the female adolescent who act as a customer-brand connectors
9. Realise the main characters of an opinion leader in the female adolescent group
10. Acknowledge the value of female adolescent opinions
11. Generate conversations between brands and the female adolescent
12. Embrace the female adolescent experiences to improve brand information

### **Intervening Conditions**

It is difficult to customise a brand message for each individual. Hence, the new framework should exploit the female adolescent conformity nature (need to be part of the group) by clustering them from main characteristics. Mass communication allows a brand to increasingly broadcast information, although, it is hard to manipulate an expected outcome in the decoding process.

### **Consequences**

High-street fashion brand context and the female adolescent requirements must be scrutinised before a new framework can be developed. With the purpose of creating brand perceived fit messages for the female adolescent, the new framework should pinpoint the female adolescent characteristics as a benchmark of receiver context in the brand communication process. Moreover, it should enhance the role of the female adolescent as a message senders at the same time.

Figure 4.3: Paradigm Model-phenomenon of the key characteristics of the female adolescent classification

#### **4.2.2 Conclusion – Methods to classify key characteristics of the female adolescent**

A high-street fashion brand presently concentrates on a large number of collective people in order to send the messages out extensively rather than understanding its target audience requirements. A fashion brand overlooks the importance of the female adolescent characteristics as a factor to create an appropriate message to fit their preference. It is important for a high-street fashion brand to not only regard the female adolescent as a message recipient, but also embrace them as participants in the encoding process. In order to leverage the efficiency of the brand encoding process, it is vital that a high-street fashion brand identifies their characteristics precisely and engages them in brand conversation. The best description is commented by one of the interviewees, an art director, she explained *'it is customers who are influencing and being influenced. Communication is available no longer only to the brand, customers also empower their opinion towards brands through communication channels. Likewise, the female adolescent discounts the value of the brand message, they believe messages from their peers. Attempts to engage them by creating collaboration between customer-brand communication cannot be neglected.'*

The optimal key characteristics of the female adolescent as a target audience are necessary to establish the brand communication strategy at the encoding process. This new framework must be constructed based on brand-building communication with the intention of creating suitable brand fashion messages to correspond with target audience preferences. The focus for responding to target audience self-construal should be included in the brand message content. Accordingly, the new framework creates a meaningful and comprehensible brand language which suits the target audience conditions. Besides, target audience key characteristics should synchronise with high-street fashion brands to underpin brand message contents before delivery to the encoding process.

## **4.3 Methods to synchronise communication plans with fashion brand strategies in the encoding process**

This research concentrates on brand-building communication in the encoding process. Therefore, a convergence of high-street fashion as a message sender, the female adolescent as a message receiver and communication tools as a message carrier, are involved in building brand communication strategies. The methods to accomplish a proper match-up of communication plans with fashion brand strategies are evaluated from the key findings of the interviewees in relation to fashion promotion and case studies exploring the current online communication applications of two well-known high-street fashion brands in addition to participant observations carried out in off-line communication environments. Consequently, this section explains 1) collaborative relationships, 2) alternative ways to synchronise communication plans with fashion brand strategies in the encoding process and 3) conclusion.

### **4.3.1 Collaborative relationships: combining all participants in the encoding process together**

One major problem of high-street fashion brand communication is that the communication approach conducts a one-size-fits-all to deliver brand messages to target audiences. Moreover, high-street fashion brands emphasis on exploiting communication tools without thoroughly understanding the characteristics of the tools as a communication channel which results in an inappropriate message to send out to target audiences. Therefore, the main thrust of the research centers on generating a positive association amongst high-street fashions, target audiences and communication plans. The results from primary research have been analysed and illustrated with collaborative relationships amongst participants in the encoding process as shown below:



## **1. Determining shared requirements: customer-brand / customer-communication / brand-communication**

To create an effective brand-building communication plan, a high street fashion brand needs to look at the whole communication process by placing the brand at the core. An acknowledgement about target audiences allows a high-street fashion brand to be able to classify them in terms of their brand information processing. Therefore, a high-street fashion brand should be able to determine the shared requirements of customer-brand, customer-communication and brand-communication. Many interviewees and case studies exhibit that a high-street fashion brand's share of brand-build communication used by target audiences needs to be defined. The intention is to determine the high-street fashion brand value that target audiences perceive through the process of the brand communication process. The shared requirements are categorised as follows:

1) Customer-brand: A fashion product encapsulates the construction of individual self-expression. Simultaneously, fashion is seen as an outward manifestation where an ambivalence emerges from artifact and authenticity since fashion is also employed as a means of individuality and conformity towards peers / reference group. It can be seen that the real value of a high-street fashion brand is truly located in customers. If a customer does not value the brand or if a customer discounts brand value, the value of the brand is diluted and decreased as well. In this research, the shared requirements between brands and customers are discussed in terms of their attitudinal or perceptual value. Customers combine brand meaning by relating high-street fashion brands with their social dimension, functionality, emotional dimension and activities that produce the experiences towards a brand. In this way, high-street fashion brands and customers are connected through the brand properties. This connection encourages customers to develop brand / product meaning which might eventually generate an actual interaction between a high-street fashion brand and customers. The female adolescent creates the brand value for themselves by their perception and experience. This brand-perceived fit is unique and individual. Since the female adolescent initiates identities through fashion clothing, the female adolescent gives importance to what pictures of themselves are seen through the eyes of other people. Consequently, customer-based brand equity is a term which appropriately describes the summary of

shared requirements and interactions between brands and customers. Therefore, it is a concept of how a brand can be valued based on customer's perception. The loop of brand proposition and customer based perception stores customer-brand shared requirements. The shared requirements lead to the valuable relationship between customers and the brand. Thus the task of a high-street fashion brand is to determine the current and future value of the brand to target audiences by the communication approach.

2) Customer-Communication: The findings showed that the female adolescent as customers involve themselves closely in the development of information processes to ensure what they are informed exactly matches their requirements. The involvement between customers and communication activities initiates from the process of brand investigation. Audiences are involved in the communication process by seeking and assessing brand information which they are interested in such as browsing activity in the store to browsing the internet. The browsing activities amongst the female adolescent represent ongoing information search activities from high-street fashion retail store exploration, fashion magazine reading to word of mouth. Apart from brand information spreading from the browsing activity, it can be seen that this activity is another route for a brand to communicate with customers since the browsing process strengthens high-street fashion product involvement through online and off-line store experiences. For example, when the female adolescent browses in a high-street fashion retail store, brand information transmits its message concurrently. Therefore, product information enhances brand knowledge and then possibly encourages customers to the next stage of purchase behaviour. There are various communication variables which influence browsing activities in retail environments such as retail atmosphere, interior decoration and in-store communication, etcetera. High-street fashion brands gain customer experience by recreational sensory offers. Hence, the gratification of fashion shopping can be concurrently delivered together with brand product information. After a process of brand investigation, the female adolescent normally becomes involved with brand messages. In order for high-street fashion brands to achieve customer involvement, brand communication needs to offer valuable brand assets that customers can share. However, an investigation of online case studies shows that online communities are places where the female adolescent supply their knowledge and experiences towards a brand. Communities where the

like-minded female adolescent shares common fashion interests and fashion activities strengthen the trust among online members towards high-street fashion brands. The female adolescent gains advantages i.e. edutainment (education and entertainment) from online communication channels. At the same time, brands also gain invaluable feedback from them. Currently high-street fashion brands not only build strong communities, but also establish customer-brand interaction through online applications. Brands apparently develop themselves by their communication approach to be communities where transactions, interests and relationships are combined through the procedure of customer-brand information exchange.

It is well-known that an interpretation of brand ingredients, i.e. brand positioning, brand identity, brand equity, brand essence, brand personality and brand characteristics, is obviously created in the target audiences' minds. Therefore, a successful brand communication strategy should manage the brand from not only its own brand vision, but also from the customers' points of view. Brand message consequence is established by the responses related to what customers perceive about a high-street fashion brand.

3) Brand-Communication: Many interviewees agreed that high-street fashion brands now compete for customer knowledge endowment. A brand communication strategy must correspond with its target audiences in order to reach and stimulate customers and prospects. Power in the high-street fashion market has shifted from producers to customers since overwhelming information and communication means allow them to access all relevant fashion product data. It is not brands, but customers who choose information delivery channels. Thus, the shift of information movement causes brands to differentiate encoded messages since the functional dimensions of high-street fashion products are similar and easy to replicate even in fashion promotion plans. In an era of fashion product confusion, branding and brand communication are now viable strategies in competitive high-street fashion markets. It can be considered that a brand is promoted primarily through an assortment of communications. Communication carries meaning from high-street fashion brands to audiences. Communication includes brand and customers together in the process of information exchange. Therefore, brand communication is the total set of benefits, values, ingredients and product attributes sent through brand messages, which provide

meaning, to audiences. Consistent and effective communication needs to be embraced as an integral part of a brand-building strategy in order to generate and maintain positive perceptions in customers' minds.

Integrated brand communication in the encoding process enlightens / enhances / adds information to target audiences' previous experience towards brands by a mixture of communication tools. Moreover, it is vital to address every element of brand communication in the encoding process in order to ensure the comprehensive criteria for brand message transmission. Thus, the functional dimensions of online and off-line communication tools should be determined in brand-building communication plans as mediums to transmit brand messages. The findings from semi-structured interviews, case studies and micro ethnography / participant observation are presented in tables below.

Table 4.4: Main discussion of the Interviewees

| Interviewee   | Main Discussion   |
|---|---|
| Fashion retailer                                    | <i>"Fashion retailing is regarded as the heart of a fashion brand. Customers currently express their lifestyle through their fashion consumption. Customers, especially the female adolescent, demand for new shopping experiences that involve them as a part of a brand community. Therefore retail stores are more dynamic in order to meet customers' expectations. Retail store is a face-to-face point of contact where a fashion brand communicates with customers directly. Retail store works together with in-store communication in order to be able to create bonds with customers and shape their view by providing them with emotional engagement."</i> |
| Fashion retail supervisor                           | <i>"Some high-street fashion retailers differentiate their brand position from competitors through the price strategy. However, the platform of fashion concept is a brand which represents an identification of a certain lifestyle and values."</i>   |
| Assistant retail department of luxury fashion brand | <i>"Fashion is considered as a self-expressive form of individual communication. As part of the fashion industry, a high-street fashion brand must understand customer requirements, behaviour and consumption process as a platform for a communication approach. A high-street fashion product not only satisfies customer needs, but also conveys the message of the brand. Therefore, the main idea is how the brand can develop the communication approach through the seasonal product and appropriate communicative mediums."</i>  |
| Fashion designer                                    | <i>"Fashion is involved with design and innovation. However, it can be considered that a high-street fashion product lacks differentiation comparing designer labels. Within the fast-moving industry, a high-street fashion product must create competitive advantage from the brand and</i>   |

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|                                       | <i>communication total experiences.”</i>   |
| Public Relations and fashion buyer    | <i>“A mass fashion product implies the concept of conformity and uniformity of style and self-image. Fashion moves rapidly within the compressed timeframe, so communication activities will be best achieved by promptly corresponding with the desired self-image of target audiences together with the most recent fashion trends.”</i>   |
| Fashion column writer                 | <i>“A high-street fashion product is motivated by trends and innovation in the fashion industry. As a result, the brand is a key driver that distinguishes and identifies the core meaning of the product.”</i>  |
| Creative director / strategic planner | <i>“A highly competitive characteristic of the high-street fashion market needs the communication plan to be developed in order to differentiate the homogeneous positioning from a range of brands. Intangible asset and value uniqueness generated by the communication plan can stimulate the adoption process of fashion products.”</i>  |
| Graphic designer                      | <i>“A high-street fashion brand should transmit consistent brand messages in all communication supports. Brand contact touch points cannot operate in isolation to accomplish the communication goal, holistic communication mediums must be integrated. Broader communication complements and maximises the effect of each customer-brand touch point. The key point is brand elements composition.”</i>  |
| Media researcher                      | <i>“The optimal brand communication plan must cover the full extent of communication activities with the clearly defined objectives. Accordingly, a high-street fashion brand has to incorporate communication messages with its audience involved at the contact points in order to develop customer-brand engagement. The principle question is what the high-street fashion brand stands for and what purpose the communication plan needs to achieve.”</i> |

Table 4.5: Main discussion of case studies and micro-ethnography

| <b>Communication Channels</b> | <b>Communication Tools</b>                             | <b>Communication Roles</b>  |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Online Channels               | High-street fashion brand official website (E-tailing) | Brand information and product description are explained on official website clearly both text and graphic visualisation. By combining newsletter, style advisor, blogs, links to social networking sites (Facebook/ Twitter) and podcasting (Youtube) in official websites, high-street fashion brand widens the extent of brand information sources to give a variety of brand messages. The website design is based on user-friendly navigation which facilitates |

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|  |                        | <p>audiences and prospects to find brand information and products they are looking for without difficulty. In order to create a relationship with these customers and prospects, a high-street fashion brand encourages them by offering relevant fashion products when audiences click on the item they are interested in. It can be concluded that this approach also plays the role of style advisor which increases the sale. The collected data shows that although most of the time the female adolescent visits the website without purchase intention, the information seeking process initially ties them with the brand. This can be clearly seen from the two case studies of renowned high-street fashion brands i.e. H&amp;M and TOPSHOP. The collected data found out that there are considerable demands for online buying from the female adolescent. Therefore, the brand can collect purchase history in a customer database.</p> |
|  | RSS feeds              | <p>RSS is adopted by a high-street fashion brand official website and fashion related blogs. A high-street fashion brand exploits this application to deliver brand information and new fashion products. The investigation shows that high-street fashion brands are more concerned with content consumption needs amongst audiences. Nevertheless, high-street fashion brands cannot anticipate the numbers which this communication approach can reach.</p>  |
|  | Social Networking Site | <p>Social networking sites enable high-street fashion brands to build their own community where hundreds or even thousands of friends who share common interests, lifestyle and attitude are</p>  |

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|  |                          | <p>gathered. The members start from peers to the world. The wide range of number of people allows high-street fashion brands to establish connections with them. The opinions which reside on high-street fashion brand social networking sites are regarded as invaluable sources. For instance, TOPSHOP and H&amp;M gain feedback and suggestions straight from target audiences and prospects through the social media platforms like Facebook. The gathered information helps these two leading high-street fashion brands to improve products and brand strategies. However, it can be seen that the role of social networking sites represents a decentralisation of brand authority.</p>   |
|  | Customer-Generated Media | <p>There are many blogs or weblogs which contain articles related to fashion composed by customers. Blogs provide the space for customers or prospects to comment, share opinion and post the links. The blogs application allows everybody to be an author or a reviewer. Fashion blogging emerges as an increasingly influential communication means. The blogosphere generates an association of conversational topics as the customers move from site to site.</p> <p>For example, TOPSHOP creates a link from its official website to TOPSHOP blogs as a newsletter source where audiences can share opinions. The main feature of the blogs is a good source of viral marketing and WOM since information often spreads rapidly through the function that allows links to post to all other sources by blogroll where there are other blogs that TOPSHOP affiliates with.</p> |
|  | Podcasting (Youtube)     | Youtube is a communication means where  |

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|  |   | <p>customers can tell a story by broadcasting themselves visually and verbally. This behaviour can be seen generally by the group of female adolescents as a need for self-expression. Apart from being a source of information, Youtube leaves the space for viewers to share opinions and links for viewers to move on relevant issues. Hence, an interaction between sender and receiver is generated. For example, TOPSHOP and H&amp;M post their own video contents on Youtube and link to them on their official website. Therefore, high-street brand information is delivered in a form of brand storytelling. It can be seen that brand edutainment (education + entertainment) is delivered by this communication means and customer feedbacks are concurrently gained.</p> |
|  | <p>Electronic Magazine (E-Zine)</p>     | <p>It is a digital version of a magazine where audiences can access online anytime. The online function allows an e-publisher to track a number of online readers. Alike a printed magazine, E-zine carries fashion messages extensively by visualisation. However, E-zine can engage readers through its free cost content. Findings from case studies show that only H&amp;M embraces E-zine on its official website by transferring the format of page layout and content from a printed version.</p>  |
|  | <p>Electronic Word Of Mouth (E-WOM)</p> | <p>Electronic communication mediums (online discussion, forums, blogs, social networking sites) facilitate electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) to spread amongst the female adolescents. E-WOM provides various sources of information from a wide range of people. The shared knowledge amongst customers underpins the female adolescent experience by an information</p>  |



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|                   |  | transfer process. Therefore, these online communities have an influential impact on audience perception towards brands.  |
| Off-line Channels | In-store Communication                             | <p>Micro ethnography examines in-store communication mediums in terms of retail store components: visual merchandising, window displays, store atmosphere, fashion product assortment, services, personal selling, promotion, in-store event, interior design / layout, lookbook, catalogue, leaflet and in-house magazine. The findings show that these components help brands transfer the meaning of fashion products and services from high-street fashion brands to audiences by providing additional values. As a fashion retailer plays the main role of distribution channel, the brand communication strategy is recognised based on multiple communication tools in order to strengthen customer awareness through the process of brand information seeking i.e. trying out fashion apparel. The advantages of these brand communication tools add customer appeal by creating experiences. Unlike electronic retailing, brand services are heavily involved with human relationships.</p> |
|                   | Fashion Event (Trunk show, Special in-store event) | <p>Fashion event is a communication medium which highly creates an atmosphere of excitement and entertainment. The findings from participant observation shows that high-street fashion brands i.e. TOPSHOP and H&amp;M employ these tools in order to directly interact with target audiences and prospects by inviting them to fashion shopping events. Target audiences and prospects can then have a chance to participate and interact with the brand information and brand environment. Hence, the bond between customer-brand</p>   |

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|  |  | <p>is strengthened. Moreover, the collaboration between high-street brand and well-known fashion designer is made for communication purposes, so as to encourage information-driven demands by the use of celebrity name endorsement. For example, customers are invited to an exclusive product preview before it launches in the retail store. Hence, product demands are raised since the celebrity cult is employed as a tool to spread high-street fashion brand messages.</p>   |
|  | Public Relations (PR)                      | <p>Public relations is a communication medium where high-street fashion brands gain free coverage from mass media i.e. editorial coverage in newspaper or magazine. The findings from case studies reveal that PR is an important component of high-street fashion brand communication tools due to the relationship between the brand and the media. PR is also viewed as an integral feature for a high-street fashion brand to inform, induce, educate and direct the opinion of the public towards the brand. Enhanced brand images by positive editorial comment prevents potentially negative perception since audiences normally believe information of story telling more than straightforward advertisement. Therefore, a credibility advantage is generated by publication.</p> |
|  | Self-Expressive (fashion as communication) | <p>The female adolescents exhibit fashion products on their bodies despite distribution channels. The results from micro ethnography illustrate that fashion products have been used as a medium for the female adolescent to create identity. The conformity aspect arouses the female adolescent to research information about</p>  |

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|  |          | <p>the fashion brand / product in order to be part of the group while the need to be unique stimulates the female adolescent to seek information about fashion brands / products for different self-expression. Therefore, a relationship of conformity and individuality are employed as a non-media communication medium. The corresponding fashion clothing code activates information absorption amongst peer groups.</p>  |
|  | Magazine | <p>Printed fashion magazines cannot be segregated from the high-street fashion brand communication plan since they are a vast source of fashion information where fashion knowledge is provided and they are the most powerful pathway for fashion brand transmission. The results from participant observation show that fashion content coverage focuses on female audiences. Printed magazines offer the tactile experience of fashion message compared to electronic magazines. It could not be argued that fashion magazines empower the cult of celebrity by utilising celebrity endorsements to send messages to readers. Moreover, the female adolescent recognises fashion magazines as invaluable sources of fashion brand information which provide knowledge of fashion trends and fashion innovations. Likewise, the female adolescent uses fashion magazines as a resource of fashion fixes and fashion tips. High-street fashion acknowledges that fashion magazines can offer a wide range of visual brand message presentations i.e. editorial, advertorial, advertisement and fashion columns with the clear target segmentation. Therefore,</p> |

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|  |                     | high-street fashion brands incorporate fashion magazines as an essential off-line communication medium. For example, fashion magazines have a regular special edition including the high-street fashion brands (TOPSHOP or H&M) issue as a pack. In addition, TOPSHOP and H&M also launch their own magazines in retail stores in order to increase brand message exposure and customer response.  |
|  | Word Of Mouth (WOM) | Viral messages have been generated through word of mouth (WOM) with a purpose of spreading brand messages. The results from participant observation illustrated that high-street fashion brands aim to create word of mouth as a tool to penetrate communication activities amongst the female adolescents since more audiences disregard the information from bombarded media. Hence, word of mouth plays the role of communication channel that transmits brand messages from customer to customer. It can be seen that high-street fashion brand communication values the customer voice greater than before. |

Table 4.6: Summary of semi-structured interview, case studies, and micro-ethnography

| <b>Communication channels</b> | <b>Communication mediums</b>           | <b>Communication impact</b>   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Off-line communication        | In-store communication in retail store | A mixture of communication mediums are employed in a high-street fashion retail store such as high-street fashion products themselves, brochures, leaflets, store magazines, visual merchandising, window display and interior design, etcetera, with the purpose of gaining its target audience attention. The finding indicates that a high-street fashion brand content in a retail store is critical as it is a source of |

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|                      |                                | <p>meaning and understanding of the fashion product. The research focussed on the female adolescent responsiveness to in-store information. The result found out that group exposure can be enhanced by the means of certain factors i.e. message frequency, message consistency, message relation, message newness, message creativity and human factors (customer services or personal selling). These communicative functional aspects differentiate and maintain competitive advantages for high-street fashion brands. However, the store environment (atmosphere) is a key informant that influences the female adolescent consumption behaviour. An integrated in-store communication creates a communicative atmosphere which develops emotional dimensional benefits as a brand added value.</p> <p>In-store communication mediums convey brand messages from the brand to audiences with the purpose of enhancing purchase activities and product information whilst the female adolescent seeks for information and entertainment through the atmosphere created by in-store communication in the retail store. The female adolescent is not only seeking for a fashion innovation, i.e. latest trend on information offer, but is also searching for enjoyment through the process of browsing activities.</p> |
| Online communication | Social Networking Site (SNS)   | <p>Due to the characteristics of the female adolescent, the group is an early adopter of information diffusion. The findings reveal that the female adolescent exploits social networking sites to share information about her brand preference in order to exchange opinions and express their attitudes towards the brand. Becoming an integral part of a high-street fashion brand community page on a social networking site, the female adolescent not only interacts amongst their peers, but also participate with the brand. A social networking site is a place where a brand can gather all the feedback from the target audiences (customer profile) whilst the target audience can have a conversation directly.</p>   |
|                      | Customer Generated Media (CGM) | <p>Customer Generate Media in this research focuses on the use of Blog and Video Streaming (YouTube) since they are popular tools amongst the female adolescent for broadcasting her personal information and exchanging their attitude towards fashion products. Customer Generated Media (CGM) is a form of electronic word of mouth (WOM) and online communities.</p>   |

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|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>There are several fashion blogs on the Internet. Fashion blogs content contains insight thoughts, opinions, and experiences to exchange with the reader and weblogger. Blogosphere is a place for the female adolescent to express her individualities. Moreover, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is embraced as a function in fashion weblogs in order to deliver the news of the fashion industry. The female adolescent users employ fashion weblogs to receive the latest trends and peers' opinions towards fashion direction. Therefore, a high-street fashion brand can exploit the fashion blogosphere to investigate the conversation amongst the female adolescents in order to gain meaningful information of their communication behaviour. Moreover, a high-street fashion brand can develop the technique to convert their audience to word of mouth networks.</p> <p>YouTube (video streaming) is another communication channel which the female adolescent uses as a means for self-expression towards fashion. The functional benefits of YouTube allows users to broadcast information audibly and visually, whilst audiences can leave comments and share opinions towards the post directly.</p> <p>These two applications not only allow the female adolescent to play the role of content generator, but also offer the female adolescent to be a storyteller. This rich information helps a high-street fashion brand to develop fashion linguistics to match target audience message exposure. It can be seen that the female adolescent defines her own relationship with the brand liberally by means of Customer Generated Media (CGM) i.e. Weblog and YouTube.</p> |
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## **2. Communication and the functional value of fashion brand strategy improvement**

With accessible brand information, audiences are now the decision makers of which extent of the communication process they want to be involved with. The key findings from case studies and observations reveal that high-street fashion brands might create brand identity but target audiences actually own the brand because they interpret it specifically in their own minds. High-street fashion brand communication directs the

process of interpretation by transmitting brand messages verbally and visually. The brand communication strategist firstly needs to identify the purpose of the communication plan, main target audiences, time duration and a set of communication activities. The functional role of communication is noted as an information combination used from the process of information searching to the process of information interpretation amongst audiences. It can be obviously seen that most fashion communication is encoded and sent through impersonal and personal sources. As message senders, high-street fashion brands exploit the communication function based on the multiple communication tool dimensions in order to widen target audiences since audiences are appealed to by a choice of communication sources for a variety of reasons. Fashion communication exposure amongst audiences motivates them to potential desired fashion consumption when the fashion information fulfills their requirement.

In order to develop an effective high-street fashion brand strategy, a persuasion to encourage audiences and prospects to initiate interactivity with the brand is the core benefit of the communication function. A viewpoint integration of a high-street fashion brand as a sender and the female adolescent as a receiver is a crucial criteria before planning the brand communication strategy. Communication builds the fashion brand values by transferring brand meaning through appropriate brand messages and brand mediums. The credibility of high-street fashion brands amongst audiences is enhanced by communication behaviour engagement.

### **3. The core value of high-street fashion brand language**

Brand valuation is evaluated by customer judgment. Thus, it is essential for high-street fashion brands to speak to the customer by including the shared requirements of participants as brand message ingredients. The result from interviewees points out that high-street fashion brands employ language to communicate. A brand emphasises brand language as a means to bridge the philosophy of message sender and message receiver. Then, an intended customer behaviour is an outcome of communication goal achievement. It can be seen that a principle of high-street fashion brand language is a competence to establish trust and accuracy. High-street fashion brand language describes the content of who the brand is, what the brand does and how the brand

benefits from conversational information. The fashion brand language is uncomplicated, understandable and directly expressive in order to strengthen the perceived level of efficiency and clarity. However, it can be noticed that high-street fashion brand language fully contains creativity in order to express fast moving fashion items to early adopters like the female adolescent. If a high-street fashion brand simply used simple messages in the communication process, it could not create differentiation and draw attention from the female adolescent. A high-street fashion brand attempts to build the language conveying desired personalities which resemble target audience expectations. A high-street fashion brand forms different kinds of language through a communication medium with the purpose of generating an incentive story. The capability to speak the same language with the target audience enables high-street fashion brands to tighten the bond and strengthen emotional ties between brands and customers. A strong customer-brand connection can be built up by means of affirmative conversational brand language. As a result, a core value of a high-street fashion brand is an ability to create engaging communication which forms interest and memory in the audience's minds. However, it is a challenging procedure since the female adolescent is much more elusive and diverse compared to other customer segments. The visual and verbal traits of a high-street fashion brand are constructed of corporate identity and communication context. Thus, a high-street fashion brand needs to ensure that the transmitted language sends out the right signals to the right target group. Similarly to human language, brand language can easily misspeak and be misinterpreted by different audience awareness. An interplay between high-street fashion content analysis and communication in the encoding process can underpin how effectively brand language interacts with target audiences and prospects.

#### **4. Criteria of high-street fashion brand communication strategy**

The need to be informed and the need for interactivity regulate brand communication tools to be informative and capable to pass on meaningful information inside brand messages. This research found out that the high-street fashion brand communication strategy begins with the consideration of the key components communication programme. This suggestion is best described by one interviewee '*communication structure is an outline where fashion brand communication can be built. An analysis*



*of the fashion market need be reviewed. The analysis for fashion brand communication differs from full marketing strategy. Firstly, the communication plan needs to concentrate on communication aspects by clearly identifying the components of the communication process, target audiences and communication effects. The criteria of identifying target audiences should be addressed in terms of segmentation as a principle, e.g. can this target audience be contacted and what is the target audience profile, in order to deliver brand / product benefits related to audience interest. Then, the appropriate message can be sent through the appropriate communication medium. Secondly, communication objectives have to be established together with time duration constraints. These objectives are a vision which directs the fashion brand communication plan of how to accomplish these aims. Communication objectives usually refer to how and to what extent brand communications can affect the target audiences' minds. Lastly, communication strategy is developed with the purpose of how to achieve the objectives. An integration of communication tools and communication tactics are planned.'*

Additionally, the outcome of participant observation research points out that high-street fashion brand perception is a result of information experiences in customers' minds. Without customers' brand awareness, brand value could not be created. Therefore, high-street fashion brand communication must impact upon how target audiences conceive the meaning of the brand.

The uncertainty is a difficulty to identify customer understanding toward high-street fashion brands, since there is no particular brand discernment amongst a group of target audiences. A wide range of brand perceptions depends upon how audiences and prospects are exposed to brand information. Information technology is a factor which affects brand communication development.

#### **4.3.2 Alternative ways to synchronise the communication plan with the fashion brand strategy in the encoding process**

A summary of the practical methods derived from the primary research is presented below.

## **1. An aggregation of high-street fashion brand information-packages**

High-street fashion brand campaigns should inform rather than sell. The results from interviewees notes that push and pull strategies are applied in the process of high-street fashion brand communications. Currently, high-street fashion brands focus on push strategy with an attempt to force audiences to receive brand message content without creating awareness. However, the outcome of the case studies reveals that a few high-street fashion brands, i.e. TOPSHOP and H&M, employ a pull strategy on online communication channels by allowing audiences to pull brand content towards themselves. Social networking sites of high-street fashion brands have become places where audiences are interested in learning about high-street fashion brand knowledge. It can be seen that high-street fashion brand communication tries to activate a customer-brand engagement. The brand endeavors to encourage the process of information seeking to fulfill audience requirements. When framing message content, brand information has to incorporate push and pull strategies in order to deliver information and allow perceived values to be developed in customer's minds. As a result, high-street fashion brand information contains the core conception between sender and receiver. An aggregation of sender and receiver requirement is required to be at the centre of brand information. Then, an encoded message shares what communicator and audience simultaneously have in common. The intention of high-street fashion brand information reflects an understanding of how the brand views the audiences. Moreover, the intended meaning of high-street fashion brand information might fulfil various functions at a time based on the communication objectives. High-street fashion brand communication activities not only transfer the meaning to audiences, but also include them as part of the social group. Brand information is necessary to empower the relationship between sender and receiver.

## **2. Co-creation of high-street fashion brand value**

Understanding the factors that affect customer acceptance of brand information would help ensure brand communication success. Many interviewees recommend that high-street fashion brands can no longer operate separately in the process of brand communication since the female adolescent acts as a proactive receiver and influential generator at the same time. Therefore, the customer-brand interaction is deemed to be

a basis for co-creation of high-street brand value. High-street fashion product constituents with their own values, and brand communication are channels that exchange these values from producers to customers. High-street fashion brands could not create value without the engagement with audiences. The effectiveness of a brand communication strategy depends on the infrastructure for interaction between brands and customers where experiences are created. Brand messages are substances which audiences decode and store for future use or reinforce previous brand knowledge. High-street fashion brands must create an experiential communication environment which enables them to co-construct experiences. High-street fashion brands target audiences and communication devices must be in harmony, so ultimately, the roles of high-street fashion brand and customer converge with the purpose of co-creation of brand value. Combining an appropriate brand communication strategy enables high-street fashion brands to better engage audiences as collaborators.

Moreover, co-creation of high-street fashion brand value is based on two-way communication in which a brand intends to get a response from the customer-brand relationship. A meaningful brand message needs to build, maintain and enhance the relationship establishment. In the interaction process of customer-brand relationship, a co-creation high-street fashion brand value is best transferred through a communication medium which encourages the brand value creation in customers' minds. As a result, the optimal perceived value emerges in the encoding process. Consequently, to build a co-creation value, active engagement of the audience in the encoding process develops the experience of co-design communication activity. One interviewee suggested that '*viable brand engagement derives from allowing message sender and message receiver an opportunity to interact with the brand content through a communication medium.*' However, co-creation of high-street fashion brand value highlights the fact that brand value will be decreased when customers discount the value of the brand.

### **3. Conversational communication from monologue to dialogue**

Through consistent customer-brand dialogues, high-street fashion brands can relate brand information to target audiences. The outcomes from case studies and interviews illustrate that a meaningful conversation benefits high-street fashion brands to deeply

understand target audience ambitions, motivation, expectation and behaviour in order to eliminate brand message vagueness. Dialogue is a shared communication between brand and customer. It is an engagement and interrelationship process in which brands not only listen to customer opinion, but also learn from them. Dialogues also enhance the ability to build high-street fashion brand communities. The dialogues represent the interactive communication places where brand communication not only concentrates on what to say, but also determines what audiences want to hear. Brand value enhancement emerges from two-sided dialogues which dialogue processes support the interactivity by building a communication strategy. Audience perceived value is transferred and partly created from customer-brand dialogues since creation of value is needed to demonstrate a shared requirement of need-fulfillment and value-generation between brands and customers. One of the communication strategists explains that *'dialogue involves customer's perception in the relationship process where the brand information exchange is carefully conducted in a trustworthy manner. Dialogue is a conversational discussion where a brand and a customer comes into contact. Understanding the interaction between a brand and a customer is critical for a brand communication programme to establish a customer point of contact. The customer-brand point of contact develops the place of conjunction where brand communication strengthens customer-brand relationship. To strengthen this relationship, dialogue is built upon trust.'* Furthermore, purposeful integrated brand communication mediums should embody dialogue activities that create a profitable relationship towards high-street fashion brands. The response from dialogues develops the form of feedback where the brand message is interpreted in the process of customer-brand interactivity. Thus, the profitable relationship leads to an in depth customer feedback.

#### **4. Develop high-street fashion brand language through sensory structure**

In order to construct brand message, the important question is how fashion brand employs brand content to emotionally achieve change in audiences' minds. The results from primary research reveal that for a fashion brand message to be successful it needs the active participant. An incentive story can generate the impression of an emotional rather than an informative message. Fashion brand story in this context

implies the meaning of the brand message. Fashion brand meaning can be generated through the communication process about which a particular high-street fashion brand actually stands for. One interviewee suggests that *'brand storytelling is a stimuli that creates a sensitivity and judgement about the message. Without an emotional and sensory link, a brand message is just another approach of conversational presentation. Brand storytelling transforms brand content to be an informer who has a power to engage with an audience emotionally because it involves sender and receiver for an exchange of the roles.'* Moreover, a fashion brand is highly involved with the emotional statement because it transmits the concept of self-expression, lifestyle, inner aspiration and behaviour. Therefore, fashion brand language will contain valuable conceptions when it contains real brand meaning. The emotional association goes beyond fashion product information and fashion brand attributes with the power of storytelling. The power of brand language helps brand content to establish emotional links which potentially lets brands speak in different ways with audiences. An appropriate fashion brand language draws people to bring more of their personalities towards fashion customer-brand congruence. Emotional and sensory distinctiveness becomes message content which allows brands to speak by an approach of storytelling.

The stories generate brand meaning since brand communication is a process of storytelling and meaning. Brand communication is an external approach which delivers overall brand definition. A brand is developed from the innermost core, but is evaluated outwardly by audiences. The emotional and sensory brand attributes provide the core essence of the brand meaning which is a platform for brand communication strategy. High-street fashion brand language plays the role of how to create emotional engaging messages for external audiences.

To conclude, the research discovered that brand communication strategy is exploited to complement high-street fashion brand strategy. From the point where fashion strategy and brand communication connect, the co-creation amongst participants in the encoding process is linked. The relationship between high-street fashion brand communication (message sender) and communication approach (message channel) is tied in order to deliver brand information to the female adolescent (receiver). The interaction in brand communication process embraces an integrated communication

mix and shared requirements of the communication participants into one strategy that generates a convergent relationship. Accordingly, brand perceived value is created based on mutual understanding between sender and receiver. However, the research only focused on planned brand communication in the encoding process in order to create interactivity between high-street fashion brands and the female adolescents. Planned brand message content and selected communication tools are formulated to generate brand credibility amongst target audiences and prospects. High-street fashion brand communication should fulfill customers' expectations together with endowing fashion product knowledge, i.e. designs, functions, service and distribution channels. High-street fashion brand communication in the encoding process should motivate the high-street fashion brand (sender) and the female adolescent (receiver) to communicate and exchange information. High-street fashion brand engagement in a dialogue procedure leads to a customer-brand relationship based on shared common meaning. Therefore, a planned encoded message develops dialogue which creates an insightful view of audiences. Moreover, additional value of a high-street fashion brand can be generated through emotional engagement where shared meaning is conceived and connected. However, individual differences amongst the female adolescents cause different high-street brand message interpretations, therefore, the value of brand perceived fit might be decoded in various ways. The grounded theory analysis was used to evaluate the research outcomes. The analytical result is shown below.

Table 4.7: Properties and dimensional range of communication plan and fashion brand strategy match up

| <b>Category</b>   | <b>Properties</b>  | <b>Dimension</b> |
|---|--|------------------|
| 1. Communication plan and fashion brand strategy match up | · Aggregating shared informative function and informative requirement between high-street fashion brand (sender) and female generation next (receiver) | High             |
|   | · Co-creating high-street fashion brand value by participants in the encoding process  | High             |
|   | · Initiating conversational communication  | High             |
|   | · Formulating high-street fashion brand language based on customer-brand emotional association   | High             |

|               |   |      |
|---------------|---|------|
| 2. Activities | · Examine the role of sender, receiver and medium in the encoding process                     | High |
|               | · Identify characteristics of sender and receiver   | High |
|               | · Understand the gold standard of message generator and message receiver                      | High |
|               | · Distinguish high-street fashion brand value from sender aspects and receiver points of view | High |
|               | · Specify an effect of communication mediums  | High |
|               | · Point out shared common knowledge between sender and receiver                               | High |
|               | · Encourage a mutual understanding between sender and receiver                                | High |
|               | · Define the information exchange process   | High |
|               | · Develop emotional links in audiences' minds through high-street fashion brand messages      | High |
|               | · Recognise high-street fashion brand core values   | High |
|               | · Construct high-street fashion brand message content based on sensory attachments            | High |

| <b>Casual condition</b>   | <b>Phenomenon</b>   |      |
|---|---|------|
| An unawareness of fashion brand-building communication strategy               | Synchronisation of communication plan and high-street fashion brand strategy          |      |
| <b>Properties of a communication plan and fashion brand strategy match up</b> | <b>Specific Dimension of a communication plan and fashion brand strategy match up</b> |      |
| - High-street fashion information aggregation                                 | Understand the characteristics of sender, receiver and mediums                        | High |
|   | Understand the functions of sender, receiver and mediums                              | High |
|   | Understand the goal or purpose of sender, receiver and mediums                        | High |
|   | Ensure that requirements of sender and receiver are shared                            | High |
| - Value co-creation   | Clearly define what is a high-street fashion brand core value                         | High |
| - Brand communication dialogue  | Generate a mutual understanding of brand message content                              | High |
|   | Build up shared common knowledge between  | High |

|  |   |      |
|--|---|------|
|  | participants in the communication process                                   |      |
| - High-street fashion brand language   | Recognise the effects of fashion brand language towards sender and receiver | High |
|  | Acknowledge functional and emotional features in fashion brand language     | High |
| <b>Context of communication plan and fashion brand strategy match up</b>   |   |      |
| Under the conditions where fashion brand strategy currently focuses on fashion promotion rather than communication strategy, a fashion brand communication cannot be accomplished. Fashion promotion cannot establish distinctive brand information in the audiences' minds. Accordingly, there is a need to synchronise the brand communication plan with fashion brand strategy in order to construct brand-building communication.  |   |      |
| <b>Strategies for communication plan and fashion brand strategy match up</b>   |   |      |
| 1. Examine the role of sender, receiver and medium in the encoding process   |   |      |
| 2. Identify the characteristics of sender and receiver   |   |      |
| 3. Understand the gold standard of message generator and message receiver  |   |      |
| 4. Distinguish high-street fashion brand value from sender aspects and receiver points of view   |   |      |
| 5. Specify an effect of communication mediums  |   |      |
| 6. Point out shared common knowledge between sender and receiver   |   |      |
| 7. Encourage a mutual understanding between sender and receiver  |   |      |
| 8. Define an information exchange process  |   |      |
| 9. Develop emotional link in audiences' minds through high-street fashion brand message  |   |      |
| 10. Recognise high-street fashion brand core values  |   |      |
| 11. Construct high-street fashion brand message content based on sensory attachment  |   |      |
| <b>Intervening Conditions</b>  |   |      |
| With the purpose of communication plan and fashion brand strategy synchronisation, it is difficult to develop an effective brand-building communication strategy if a high-street fashion brand cannot clearly identify its core values.   |   |      |
| <b>Consequences</b>  |   |      |
| An approach of how brand communication strategy can contribute to high-street fashion brand perceived value is required. The consideration of brand-building communication needs to understand all means of communication by participants in order to inform, persuade or change audience perception directly or indirectly towards high-street fashion brands. However, a planned communication in the encoding process must be designed in accordance with high-street fashion brand communication objectives. |   |      |

Figure 4.4: Paradigm Model-phenomenon of a communication plan and fashion brand strategy synchronisation



### **4.3.3 Conclusion - Methods to synchronise communication plan with fashion brand strategy in the encoding process**

According to the results of case studies and participants observation, brand communication plan is a means by which high-street fashion brands can establish conversational communications with target audiences and prospects in order to build customer-brand relationships. Brand communication strategy complements the effectiveness of the high-street fashion brand strategy, and one significant purpose of brand communication roles is to contribute to high-street fashion brand values. An integration of communication plan and high-street fashion brand strategy formulates a well-planned fashion brand message which encourages a positive brand evaluation after the encoding process. The desired brand information is transmitted through communication mediums in the encoding process with an attempt to generate a customer-brand relationship. The essential question is how can a high-street fashion brand suitably exploit the communicative functions of each communication tool. Accordingly, the research considered how to optimally develop a high-street fashion brand communication strategy to create a brand value perceived fit amongst the female adolescents. In order to tighten the customer-brand bond, a high-street fashion brand requires brand language that fully contains sensory and emotional links to audiences' experiences. The complexity of target audience, i.e. the female adolescent, results in the need for a high-street fashion brand to enhance the total impact of fashion brand language. Moreover, the case studies demonstrate that audiences' see the brand communication through self-referencing. The female adolescent embraces brand message content which can refer to herself. Hence, encoded brand value should contain emotional attachments in order to be interpreted simultaneously by the female adolescent. The female adolescent is regarded as an active information-driven audience, therefore, interactivity that reinforces the ultimate customer-brand bond is a core idea. Brand communication is a key that leverages the concept of high-street fashion brand building.

It can be seen that an in depth comprehension of sender and receiver characteristics leads to a mutual understanding between participants when communication activity

occurs. However, the brand communication activity must be constructed according to the goal and purpose of the brand as a communication planner.

## • **Quantitative key findings and discussion**

### **4.4 Brand communication context towards customer-brand congruence in the encoding process**

In order to develop the context of high-street fashion brand communication, the target audience and communication applications of high-street fashion brands needed to be examined. Accordingly, the findings could be divided into five groups: 1) customer self-construal, 2) customer-brand emotional ties, 3) information seeking process, 4) online communication tools and 5) off-line communication tools. All the collected data was developed based on questionnaire findings. Lastly, brand communication context towards customer-brand congruence in the encoding process was constructed. (The findings represented in this section are already analysed, the raw findings of the questionnaire are shown in Appendix B).

#### **4.4.1 Customer self-construal**

Currently high-street fashion brands focus on the female adolescent as target customers based on their demographics. According to the complexity of the target group, the holistic view of female adolescents requires a comprehensive recognition at a deeper level. As a result, the findings from the questionnaire examine the female adolescent in terms of how the group perceives themselves, so as to gain insight understanding about their fashion consumption behaviour. In order to quantify the response, the Likert scale is applied to measure the degree of target audience feelings. Therefore, the score is represented by the unit of mean value. In this section, two hundred respondents whose age was between 18-25 were questioned as follows:

**1. Customer personality:** The aims of this section were to explore 1) the relationship

between customer personality and brand personality, 2) determine the female adolescent self-perceived personality corresponding to The Big Five dimensions framework in the context of fashion products.

In order to categorise individuals from a prototype or ideal best example for each category the research observed, the collected data implied that certain images are preferred and negative stereotypes exist for less preferable images amongst female adolescents. Hence, the social psychological responses to the stimuli on the part of the female adolescents in this study were viewed as working to sustain and recreate a cultural understanding. In addition to the female adolescent's perceptions of the stimuli are the results of a group of people's negotiated understandings in relation to high-street fashion brand communications. The target audiences were asked to respond to the key words in order to represent their self-perceived personality towards high-street fashion brands. The statistic results of mean value are shown in figure 4.5:

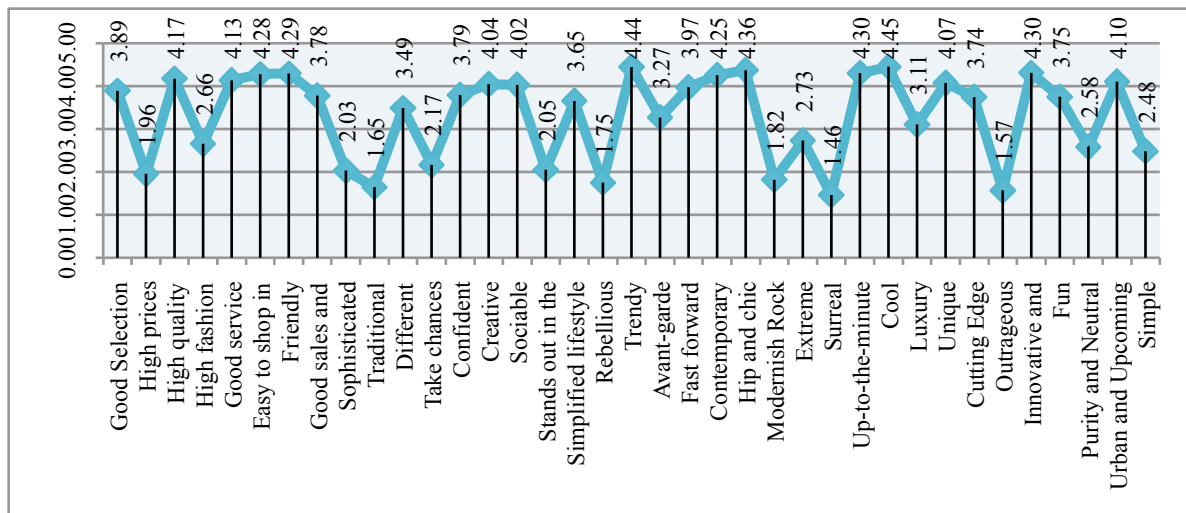


Figure 4.5: Plot area of female adolescent self-perceived personality towards high-street fashion brand by unit of mean value

All the key words in the questionnaire are extended from ‘The Big Five Dimensions Framework’ in the context of high-street fashion brands. In order to specify the female adolescent self-perceived personality towards high-street fashion brand personality, the research classified respondents’ responses into a group according to

the cluster analysis. In accordance with the nature of the data, the results was not a normal distribution, therefore, the non-parametric statistic (median) was conducted as the statistics based on the rank of statistical findings. However, the parametric statistic (mean) was applied together with the non-parametric statistic as shown in table 4.8 in order to clearly define the congruence of audience personality and brand personality.

Table 4.8: Female adolescent self-perception towards high-street fashion brand by unit of mean value, median and standard deviation

| <b>Description</b>        | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| Good Selection            | 3.89        | 4.00          | 0.791     |
| High Prices               | 1.95        | 2.00          | 0.732     |
| High Quality              | 4.17        | 4.00          | 0.651     |
| High Fashion              | 2.65        | 3.00          | 0.669     |
| Good Service              | 4.13        | 4.00          | 0.697     |
| Easy to shop in           | 4.28        | 4.00          | 0.593     |
| Friendly                  | 4.29        | 4.00          | 0.623     |
| Good sales and promotions | 3.78        | 4.00          | 0.705     |
| Sophisticated             | 2.03        | 2.00          | 0.617     |
| Traditional               | 1.65        | 2.00          | 0.566     |
| Different                 | 3.49        | 4.00          | 0.716     |
| Take chances              | 2.17        | 2.00          | 0.671     |
| Confident                 | 3.79        | 4.00          | 0.654     |
| Creative                  | 4.04        | 4.00          | 0.633     |
| Sociable                  | 4.02        | 4.00          | 0.58      |
| Stands out in the crowd   | 2.05        | 2.00          | 0.608     |
| Simplified lifestyle      | 3.65        | 4.00          | 0.655     |
| Rebellious                | 1.75        | 2.00          | 0.556     |
| Trendy                    | 4.44        | 4.00          | 0.564     |
| Avant-garde               | 3.26        | 3.00          | 0.676     |
| Fast forward              | 3.97        | 4.00          | 0.789     |
| Contemporary              | 4.25        | 4.00          | 0.566     |
| Hip and chic              | 4.37        | 4.00          | 0.503     |
| Modernish Rock            | 1.82        | 2.00          | 0.627     |
| Extreme                   | 2.73        | 3.00          | 0.678     |
| Surreal                   | 1.46        | 1.00          | 0.500     |
| Up-to-the-minute          | 4.3         | 4.00          | 0.593     |
| Cool                      | 4.45        | 4.00          | 0.547     |

|                          |      |      |       |
|--------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Luxury                   | 3.11 | 3.00 | 0.629 |
| Unique                   | 4.07 | 4.00 | 0.712 |
| Cutting Edge             | 3.74 | 4.00 | 0.604 |
| Outrageous               | 1.57 | 2.00 | 0.506 |
| Innovative and Different | 4.3  | 4.00 | 0.56  |
| Fun                      | 3.75 | 4.00 | 0.721 |
| Purity and Neutral       | 2.58 | 3.00 | 0.596 |
| Urban and Upcoming       | 4.1  | 4.00 | 0.673 |
| Simple                   | 2.48 | 2.00 | 0.539 |

The Non-Hierarchical Cluster was conducted to analyse two hundreds cases of respondents as illustrated in table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of female adolescent self-perception towards high-street fashion brand

|                           | Cluster     |    | Error       |     | F      | Sig. |
|---------------------------|-------------|----|-------------|-----|--------|------|
|                           | Mean Square | df | Mean Square | df  |        |      |
| Good Selection            | 8.586       | 4  | .462        | 195 | 18.599 | .000 |
| High prices               | 3.672       | 4  | .471        | 195 | 7.791  | .000 |
| High quality              | .904        | 4  | .413        | 195 | 2.188  | .072 |
| High fashion              | 1.525       | 4  | .426        | 195 | 3.578  | .008 |
| Good service              | 4.124       | 4  | .411        | 195 | 10.036 | .000 |
| Easy to shop in           | 1.128       | 4  | .335        | 195 | 3.364  | .011 |
| Friendly                  | 2.558       | 4  | .343        | 195 | 7.452  | .000 |
| Good sales and promotions | 3.847       | 4  | .428        | 195 | 8.985  | .000 |
| Sophisticated             | 2.520       | 4  | .337        | 195 | 7.475  | .000 |
| Traditional               | 2.099       | 4  | .284        | 195 | 7.387  | .000 |
| Different                 | 2.186       | 4  | .478        | 195 | 4.573  | .001 |
| Take chances              | 5.176       | 4  | .353        | 195 | 14.659 | .000 |
| Confident                 | 3.534       | 4  | .364        | 195 | 9.699  | .000 |
| Creative                  | 4.829       | 4  | .310        | 195 | 15.598 | .000 |
| Sociable                  | 3.457       | 4  | .272        | 195 | 12.710 | .000 |
| Stands out in the crowd   | 1.589       | 4  | .344        | 195 | 4.615  | .001 |
| Simplified lifestyle      | 3.390       | 4  | .369        | 195 | 9.190  | .000 |
| Rebellious                | .884        | 4  | .297        | 195 | 2.973  | .021 |
| Trendy                    | .716        | 4  | .310        | 195 | 2.313  | .059 |
| Avant-garde               | 1.929       | 4  | .427        | 195 | 4.519  | .002 |
| Fast forward              | 11.938      | 4  | .390        | 195 | 30.601 | .000 |
| Contemporary              | 1.055       | 4  | .305        | 194 | 3.455  | .009 |
| Hip and chic              | 1.690       | 4  | .224        | 195 | 7.560  | .000 |
| Modernish Rock            | 1.291       | 4  | .374        | 195 | 3.450  | .009 |
| Extreme                   | 1.582       | 4  | .436        | 195 | 3.625  | .007 |
| Surreal                   | .382        | 4  | .247        | 195 | 1.545  | .191 |

|                          |       |   |      |     |        |      |
|--------------------------|-------|---|------|-----|--------|------|
| Up-to-the-minute         | 2.094 | 4 | .316 | 195 | 6.626  | .000 |
| Cool                     | 2.772 | 4 | .248 | 195 | 11.167 | .000 |
| Luxury                   | .383  | 4 | .396 | 195 | .968   | .426 |
| Unique                   | 2.479 | 4 | .467 | 195 | 5.305  | .000 |
| Cutting Edge             | 3.630 | 4 | .297 | 195 | 12.212 | .000 |
| Outrageous               | 1.132 | 4 | .238 | 195 | 4.750  | .001 |
| Innovative and Different | 2.839 | 4 | .262 | 195 | 10.846 | .000 |
| Fun                      | 1.654 | 4 | .497 | 195 | 3.329  | .012 |
| Purity and Neutral       | .754  | 4 | .347 | 195 | 2.170  | .074 |
| Urban and Upcoming       | 3.256 | 4 | .395 | 195 | 8.248  | .000 |
| Simple                   | .674  | 4 | .283 | 195 | 2.380  | .053 |

Table 4.10: Cluster analysis of female adolescent self-perception towards high-street fashion brand

| Cluster Number of Case | Good Selection | High Price | High Quality | High Fashion | Good Service | Easy to shop in |
|------------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. Mean                | 4.00           | 4.00       | 5.00         | 4.00         | 3.00         | 5.00            |
| Median                 | 4.00           | 4.00       | 5.00         | 4.00         | 3.00         | 5.00            |
| N                      | 1              | 1          | 1            | 1            | 1            | 1               |
| Std. Deviation         |                |            |              |              |              |                 |
| 2. Mean                | 3.35           | 2.17       | 4.02         | 2.77         | 3.88         | 4.08            |
| Median                 | 3.00           | 2.00       | 4.00         | 3.00         | 4.00         | 4.00            |
| N                      | 60             | 60         | 60           | 60           | 60           | 60              |
| Std. Deviation         | .577           | .717       | .651         | .673         | .613         | .561            |
| 3. Mean                | 4.33           | 2.02       | 4.33         | 2.41         | 4.33         | 4.43            |
| Median                 | 4.00           | 2.00       | 4.00         | 2.00         | 4.00         | 4.00            |
| N                      | 49             | 49         | 49           | 49           | 49           | 49              |
| Std. Deviation         | .658           | .803       | .658         | .537         | .591         | .577            |
| 4. Mean                | 4.26           | 1.55       | 4.23         | 2.64         | 3.89         | 4.38            |
| Median                 | 4.00           | 2.00       | 4.00         | 3.00         | 4.00         | 4.00            |
| N                      | 47             | 47         | 47           | 47           | 47           | 47              |
| Std. Deviation         | .736           | .583       | .666         | .705         | .759         | .610            |
| 5. Mean                | 3.72           | 1.98       | 4.12         | 2.76         | 4.53         | 4.23            |
| Median                 | 4.00           | 2.00       | 4.00         | 3.00         | 5.00         | 4.00            |
| N                      | 43             | 43         | 43           | 43           | 43           | 43              |
| Std. Deviation         | .766           | .597       | .586         | .684         | .592         | .571            |
| Total Mean             | 3.89           | 1.96       | 4.17         | 2.66         | 4.13         | 4.28            |
| Median                 | 4.00           | 2.00       | 4.00         | 3.00         | 4.00         | 4.00            |
| N                      | 200            | 200        | 200          | 200          | 200          | 200             |
| Std. Deviation         | .791           | .732       | .651         | .669         | .697         | .593            |

| Cluster Number of Case | Friendly | Good sales and promotion | Sophisticated | Traditional | Different | Take chances |
|------------------------|----------|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1. Mean                | 3.00     | 2.00                     | 4.00          | 3.00        | 4.00      | 3.00         |
| Median                 | 3.00     | 2.00                     | 4.00          | 3.00        | 4.00      | 3.00         |
| N                      | 1        | 1                        | 1             | 1           | 1         | 1            |
| Std. Deviation         |          |                          |               |             |           |              |
| 2. Mean                | 4.53     | 3.52                     | 1.85          | 1.85        | 3.38      | 1.90         |
| Median                 | 5.00     | 3.00                     | 2.00          | 2.00        | 3.00      | 2.00         |
| N                      | 60       | 60                       | 60            | 60          | 60        | 60           |
| Std. Deviation         | .503     | .567                     | .481          | .577        | .666      | .730         |
| 3. Mean                | 4.16     | 3.98                     | 1.88          | 1.51        | 3.82      | 2.12         |
| Median                 | 4.00     | 4.00                     | 2.00          | 2.00        | 4.00      | 2.00         |
| N                      | 49       | 49                       | 49            | 49          | 49        | 49           |
| Std. Deviation         | .624     | .721                     | .666          | .505        | .527      | .526         |
| 4. Mean                | 4.40     | 3.62                     | 2.17          | 1.40        | 3.26      | 2.00         |
| Median                 | 4.00     | 4.00                     | 2.00          | 1.00        | 4.00      | 2.00         |
| N                      | 47       | 47                       | 47            | 47          | 47        | 47           |
| Std. Deviation         | .614     | .610                     | .601          | .496        | .846      | .590         |
| 5. Mean                | 4.00     | 4.12                     | 2.26          | 1.74        | 3.49      | 2.74         |
| Median                 | 4.00     | 4.00                     | 2.00          | 2.00        | 4.00      | 3.00         |
| N                      | 43       | 43                       | 43            | 43          | 43        | 43           |
| Std. Deviation         | .617     | .731                     | .581          | .539        | .703      | .441         |
| Total Mean             | 4.29     | 3.78                     | 2.03          | 1.65        | 3.49      | 2.17         |
| Median                 | 4.00     | 4.00                     | 2.00          | 2.00        | 4.00      | 2.00         |
| N                      | 200      | 200                      | 200           | 200         | 200       | 200          |
| Std. Deviation         | .623     | .705                     | .617          | .566        | .716      | .671         |

| Cluster Number of Case | Confident | Creative | Sociable | Stands out in the crowd | Simplified lifestyle | Rebellious |
|------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| 1. Mean                | 5.00      | 3.00     | 4.00     | 4.00                    | 2.00                 | 3.00       |
| Median                 | 5.00      | 3.00     | 4.00     | 4.00                    | 2.00                 | 3.00       |
| N                      | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1                       | 1                    | 1          |
| Std. Deviation         |           |          |          |                         |                      |            |
| 2. Mean                | 3.83      | 4.40     | 4.25     | 2.13                    | 3.32                 | 1.62       |
| Median                 | 4.00      | 4.00     | 4.00     | 2.00                    | 3.00                 | 2.00       |
| N                      | 60        | 60       | 60       | 60                      | 60                   | 60         |
| Std. Deviation         | .642      | .558     | .474     | .596                    | .537                 | .555       |
| 3. Mean                | 4.10      | 4.20     | 4.24     | 1.86                    | 3.88                 | 1.80       |
| Median                 | 4.00      | 4.00     | 4.00     | 2.00                    | 4.00                 | 2.00       |
| N                      | 49        | 49       | 49       | 49                      | 49                   | 49         |
| Std. Deviation         | .743      | .676     | .662     | .577                    | .600                 | .499       |
| 4. Mean                | 3.38      | 3.74     | 3.62     | 2.13                    | 3.70                 | 1.72       |
| Median                 | 3.00      | 4.00     | 4.00     | 2.00                    | 4.00                 | 2.00       |
| N                      | 47        | 47       | 47       | 47                      | 47                   | 47         |
| Std. Deviation         | .491      | .441     | .491     | .536                    | .623                 | .498       |
| 5. Mean                | 3.79      | 3.70     | 3.91     | 2.02                    | 3.84                 | 1.88       |
| Median                 | 4.00      | 4.00     | 4.00     | 2.00                    | 4.00                 | 2.00       |
| N                      | 43        | 43       | 43       | 43                      | 43                   | 43         |
| Std. Deviation         | .466      | .513     | .426     | .636                    | .688                 | .625       |
| Total Mean             | 3.79      | 4.04     | 4.03     | 2.05                    | 3.65                 | 1.75       |
| Median                 | 4.00      | 4.00     | 4.00     | 2.00                    | 4.00                 | 2.00       |
| N                      | 200       | 200      | 200      | 200                     | 200                  | 200        |
| Std. Deviation         | .654      | .633     | .580     | .608                    | .655                 | .556       |

| Cluster Number of Case | Trendy | Avant-garde | Fast Forward | Contemporary | Hip and Chic | Modernish Rock |
|------------------------|--------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Mean                | 4.00   | 3.00        | 4.00         | 3.00         | 3.00         | 3.00           |
| Median                 | 4.00   | 3.00        | 4.00         | 3.00         | 3.00         | 3.00           |
| N                      | 1      | 1           | 1            | 1            | 1            | 1              |
| Std. Deviation         |        |             |              |              |              |                |
| 2. Mean                | 4.43   | 3.00        | 3.87         | 4.25         | 4.55         | 1.73           |
| Median                 | 4.50   | 3.00        | 4.00         | 4.00         | 5.00         | 2.00           |
| N                      | 60     | 60          | 60           | 60           | 60           | 60             |
| Std. Deviation         | .621   | .664        | .676         | .654         | .502         | .482           |
| 3. Mean                | 4.37   | 3.49        | 4.78         | 4.41         | 4.22         | 1.76           |
| Median                 | 4.00   | 4.00        | 5.00         | 4.00         | 4.00         | 2.00           |
| N                      | 49     | 49          | 49           | 49           | 49           | 49             |
| Std. Deviation         | .528   | .582        | .422         | .537         | .422         | .662           |
| 4. Mean                | 4.64   | 3.40        | 3.43         | 4.28         | 4.47         | 1.72           |
| Median                 | 5.00   | 4.00        | 3.00         | 4.00         | 4.00         | 2.00           |
| N                      | 47     | 47          | 47           | 47           | 47           | 47             |
| Std. Deviation         | .486   | .681        | .617         | .452         | .504         | .649           |
| 5. Mean                | 4.33   | 3.23        | 3.79         | 4.07         | 4.19         | 2.07           |
| Median                 | 4.00   | 3.00        | 4.00         | 4.00         | 4.00         | 2.00           |
| N                      | 43     | 43          | 43           | 43           | 43           | 43             |
| Std. Deviation         | .566   | .684        | .742         | .507         | .450         | .669           |
| Total Mean             | 4.44   | 3.27        | 3.97         | 4.25         | 4.37         | 1.82           |
| Median                 | 4.00   | 3.00        | 4.00         | 4.00         | 4.00         | 2.00           |
| N                      | 200    | 200         | 200          | 200          | 200          | 200            |
| Std. Deviation         | .564   | .676        | .789         | .566         | .503         | .627           |

| Cluster Number of Case | Extreme | Surreal | Up-to-the-minute | Cool | Luxury | Unique |
|------------------------|---------|---------|------------------|------|--------|--------|
| 1. Mean                | 4.00    | 1.00    | 4.00             | 4.00 | 3.00   | 3.00   |
| Median                 | 4.00    | 1.00    | 4.00             | 4.00 | 3.00   | 3.00   |
| N                      | 1       | 1       | 1                | 1    | 1      | 1      |
| Std. Deviation         |         |         |                  |      |        |        |
| 2. Mean                | 2.83    | 2.17    | 4.02             | 4.32 | 2.98   | 4.15   |
| Median                 | 2.00    | 2.00    | 4.00             | 4.00 | 3.00   | 4.00   |
| N                      | 60      | 60      | 60               | 60   | 60     | 60     |
| Std. Deviation         | .642    | .717    | .651             | .504 | .651   | .633   |
| 3. Mean                | 2.51    | 1.49    | 4.49             | 4.84 | 3.16   | 4.37   |
| Median                 | 2.00    | 1.00    | 4.00             | 5.00 | 3.00   | 4.00   |
| N                      | 49      | 49      | 49               | 49   | 49     | 49     |
| Std. Deviation         | .617    | .505    | .505             | .373 | .688   | .668   |
| 4. Mean                | 2.89    | 1.45    | 4.49             | 4.45 | 3.11   | 3.81   |
| Median                 | 3.00    | 1.00    | 4.00             | 4.00 | 3.00   | 4.00   |
| N                      | 47      | 47      | 47               | 47   | 47     | 47     |
| Std. Deviation         | .759    | .503    | .505             | .544 | .699   | .741   |
| 5. Mean                | 2.63    | 1.33    | 4.28             | 4.21 | 3.21   | 3.93   |
| Median                 | 3.00    | 1.00    | 4.00             | 4.00 | 3.00   | 4.00   |
| N                      | 43      | 43      | 43               | 43   | 43     | 43     |
| Std. Deviation         | .618    | .474    | .549             | .559 | .412   | .704   |
| Total Mean             | 2.73    | 1.46    | 4.30             | 4.45 | 3.11   | 4.07   |
| Median                 | 3.00    | 1.00    | 4.00             | 4.00 | 3.00   | 4.00   |
| N                      | 200     | 200     | 200              | 200  | 200    | 200    |
| Std. Deviation         | .678    | .500    | .593             | .547 | .629   | .712   |



| Cluster Number of Case | Cutting Edge | Outrageous | Innovative and Different | Fun  | Purity and Neutral | Urban and Upcoming | Simple |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| 1. Mean                | 4.00         | 3.00       | 4.00                     | 2.00 | 3.00               | 4.00               | 2.00   |
| Median                 | 4.00         | 3.00       | 4.00                     | 2.00 | 3.00               | 4.00               | 2.00   |
| N                      | 1            | 1          | 1                        | 1    | 1                  | 1                  | 1      |
| Std. Deviation         |              |            |                          |      |                    |                    |        |
| 2. Mean                | 3.53         | 1.63       | 4.55                     | 3.63 | 2.40               | 3.95               | 2.45   |
| Median                 | 4.00         | 2.00       | 5.00                     | 4.00 | 2.00               | 4.00               | 2.50   |
| N                      | 60           | 60         | 60                       | 60   | 60                 | 60                 | 60     |
| Std. Deviation         | .503         | .486       | .502                     | .688 | .643               | .699               | .594   |
| 3. Mean                | 4.18         | 1.45       | 4.45                     | 3.78 | 2.69               | 4.37               | 2.67   |
| Median                 | 4.00         | 1.00       | 4.00                     | 4.00 | 3.00               | 4.00               | 3.00   |
| N                      | 49           | 49         | 49                       | 49   | 49                 | 49                 | 49     |
| Std. Deviation         | .697         | .503       | .503                     | .685 | .585               | .602               | .474   |
| 4. Mean                | 3.74         | 1.70       | 4.19                     | 3.98 | 2.64               | 4.34               | 2.40   |
| Median                 | 4.00         | 2.00       | 4.00                     | 4.00 | 3.00               | 4.00               | 2.00   |
| N                      | 47           | 47         | 47                       | 47   | 47                 | 47                 | 47     |
| Std. Deviation         | .441         | .462       | .495                     | .766 | .605               | .562               | .496   |
| 5. Mean                | 3.51         | 1.44       | 3.93                     | 3.67 | 2.63               | 3.74               | 2.40   |
| Median                 | 4.00         | 1.00       | 4.00                     | 4.00 | 3.00               | 4.00               | 2.00   |
| N                      | 43           | 43         | 43                       | 43   | 43                 | 43                 | 43     |
| Std. Deviation         | .506         | .502       | .552                     | .680 | .489               | .621               | .541   |
| Total Mean             | 3.74         | 1.57       | 4.31                     | 3.75 | 2.58               | 4.10               | 2.48   |
| Median                 | 4.00         | 2.00       | 4.00                     | 4.00 | 3.00               | 4.00               | 2.50   |
| N                      | 200          | 200        | 200                      | 200  | 200                | 200                | 200    |
| Std. Deviation         | .604         | .506       | .560                     | .721 | .596               | .673               | .539   |

The statistical analysis shows the median and mean value in terms of a set of personality traits towards brand personality as shown in table 4.9 and table 4.10. Cluster analysis in table 4.10 demonstrates female adolescent shared common interests in order to classify respondents into groups. The number of cases in each cluster is shown in table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Number of Cases in each Cluster

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| Cluster | 1       | 1.000   |
|         | 2       | 60.000  |
|         | 3       | 49.000  |
|         | 4       | 47.000  |
|         | 5       | 43.000  |
|         | Valid   | 200.000 |
|         | Missing | .000    |

According to the statistical examination, the cluster number of case number one is not statically significant because the sample size in this category is too small. Therefore, the respondents can be divided into four groups as shown in table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Respondents segment analysis towards brand personality

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Group 1 | Friendly, Creative, Sociable, Hip and Chic, Innovative and different   |
| Group 2 | Good selection, High quality, Easy to shop in, Different, Confident, Simplified lifestyle, Avant Garde, Fast Forward, Contemporary, Up-to-minute, Cool, Unique, Cutting edge, Urban and upcoming |
| Group 3 | Trendy, Fun  |
| Group 4 | Good service, Good sales and promotions, Sophisticated, Take chances   |

This research aimed to classify the respondents into groups in relation to a set of personality traits towards brand personality extended from The Big Five Framework as shown in the table below.

Table 4.13: A set of personality traits towards brand personality extended from The Big Five Framework

| <b>The Big Five Framework</b>  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Spirited</b><br><b>Up to date</b><br><b>Daring</b><br><b>Cheerful</b><br><b>Intelligent</b><br><b>Imaginative</b>   | <b>Reliable</b><br><b>Up to date</b><br><b>Imaginative</b><br><b>Daring</b><br><b>Successful</b><br><b>Intelligent</b><br><b>Spirited</b>  | <b>Daring</b><br><b>Cheerful</b>  | <b>Reliable</b><br><b>Intelligent</b><br><b>Daring</b><br><b>Imaginative</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Hip &amp; Chic</li> <li>· Innovative and different</li> <li>· Friendly</li> <li>· Creative</li> <li>· Sociable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Good selection</li> <li>· High Quality</li> <li>· Easy to shop in</li> <li>· Different</li> <li>· Confident</li> <li>· Simplified lifestyle</li> <li>· Avant-garde</li> <li>· Fast forward</li> <li>· Contemporary</li> <li>· Up-to-minute</li> <li>· Cool</li> <li>· Unique</li> <li>· Cutting edge</li> <li>· Urban and upcoming</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Trendy</li> <li>· Fun</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Good service</li> <li>· Good sales and promotions</li> <li>· Sophisticated</li> <li>· Take chances</li> </ul> |

At a deeper level, a high-street fashion brand can be perceived by the female adolescent as a character within brand personality. According to the above table, a set of personality traits of the female adolescent towards five core dimensions of brand

personality prioritises the importance of brand dimensions in terms of excitement (spirited, daring, imaginative, up-to-date), competence (intelligent, successful), and followed by sincerity (cheerful).

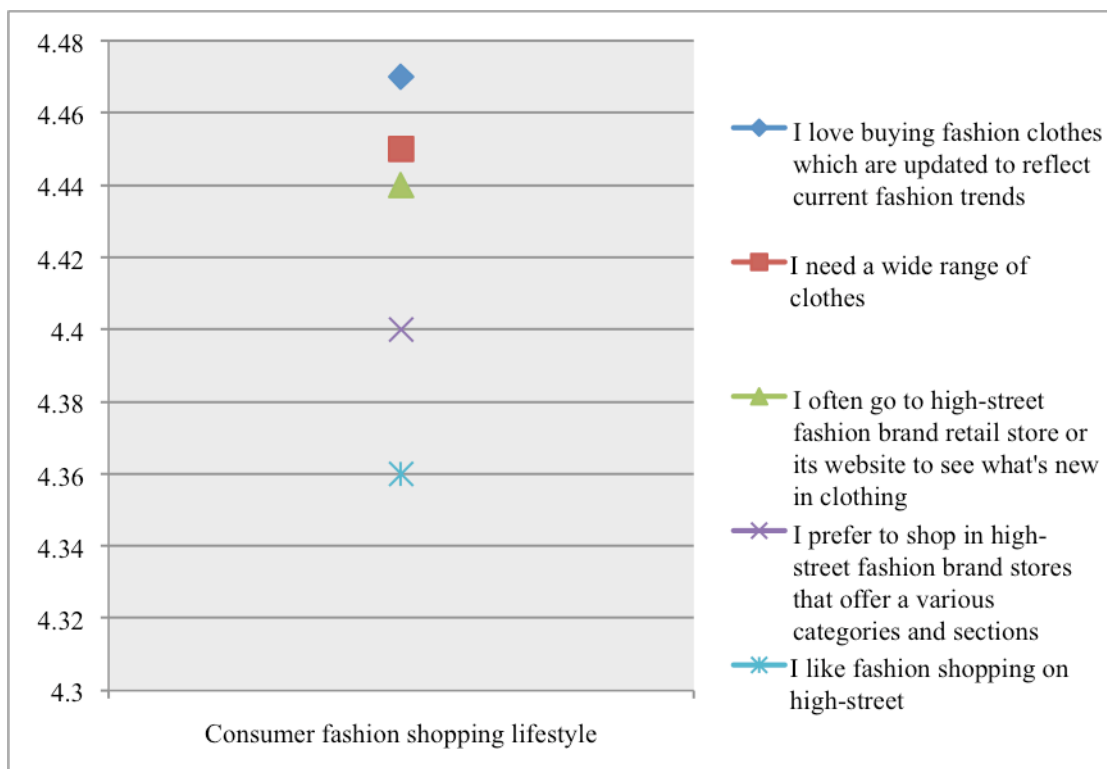
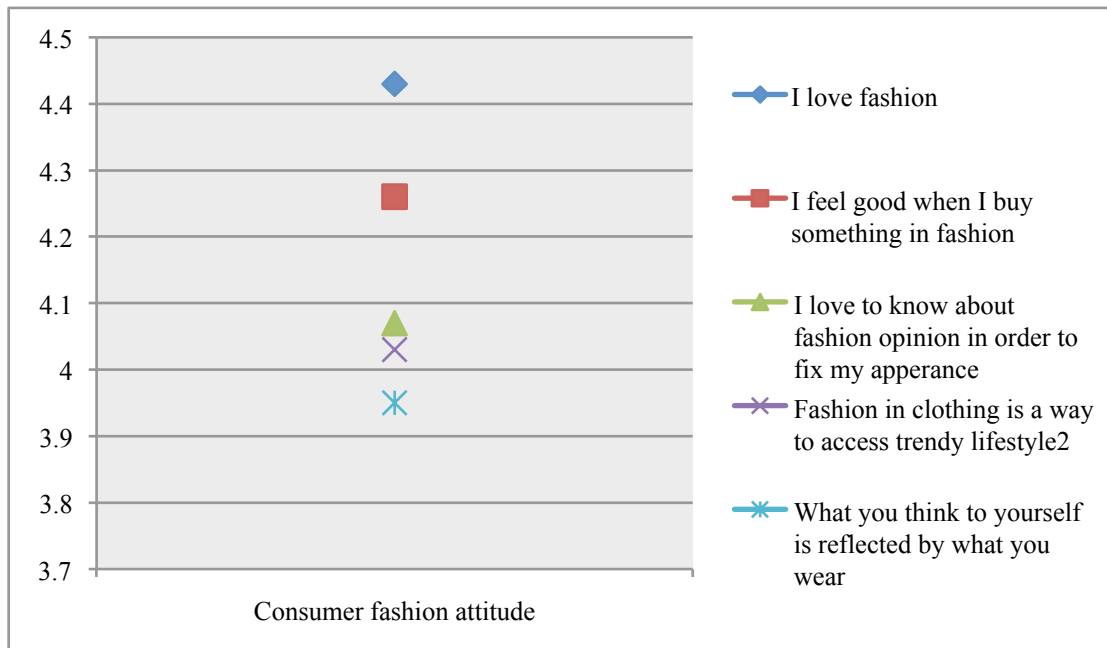
**2. Customer value and lifestyle:** The aim of this section is to describe high-street fashion shopping behaviour amongst the female adolescent in order to improve and introduce fashion brand communication which serves customers' value. In order to specify the female adolescent values and lifestyles towards high-street fashion brands, the respondents answered questionnaires in terms of customer fashion attitude and customer fashion shopping lifestyle. The statistical analysis showed the results by unit of median value as represented in table 4.14:

Table 4.14: Female adolescent value and lifestyles towards high-street fashion brand

| <b>Customer fashion attitude</b>   | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|--|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| I love fashion   | 4.00          | 4.43        | 0.507     |
| I buy clothes I like, regardless of current fashion  | 4.00          | 3.82        | 0.779     |
| I buy new fashion looks only when they are well accepted   | 4.00          | 3.45        | 0.906     |
| I prefer to buy well-known designer labels rather than take a chance on something                      | 2.00          | 2.56        | 0.986     |
| I prefer to buy high-street fashion brands and I look for modest prices and fashion wearability        | 4.00          | 3.64        | 0.796     |
| My friends consider me as a good source of advice on fashion selection                                 | 3.00          | 3.36        | 0.625     |
| My fashion decision is upon my friends as they are a good source of what to wear in the current season | 3.00          | 2.51        | 0.501     |
| I am confident of my own good taste in clothing  | 4.00          | 3.75        | 0.624     |
| I'm not afraid to be the first to wear something different in fashion looks                            | 3.00          | 2.99        | 0.865     |
| I am the first to try new fashions, therefore many friends regard me as being a fashion pacesetter     | 3.00          | 2.74        | 0.853     |
| I feel good when I buy something in fashion  | 4.00          | 4.26        | 0.511     |
| What you think of yourself is reflected by what you wear   | 4.00          | 3.95        | 0.570     |
| I plan my shopping trips carefully. I have information about fashion news before I go shopping         | 3.00          | 3.44        | 0.662     |
| Fashion represents your status. You can tell you are just a bit better than                            | 3.00          | 3.47        | 0.530     |

|   |               |             |           |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| someone else if you dress better than they do   |               |             |           |
| Being in fashion leads me to being part of society  | 4.00          | 4.05        | 0.422     |
| I plan my wardrobe carefully  | 4.00          | 3.56        | 0.498     |
| I dislike being told what to wear by so-called fashion experts  | 2.00          | 2.58        | 0.637     |
| I love to know about fashion opinion in order to fix my appearance  | 4.00          | 4.07        | 0.606     |
| Fashion in clothing is a way to access trendy lifestyle   | 4.00          | 4.03        | 0.664     |
| There is something wrong with a woman who does not care about dressing nicely and fashion news  | 3.00          | 3.03        | 0.609     |
| I love to dress like my admired celebrity   | 4.00          | 3.86        | 0.863     |
| <b>Customer fashion shopping lifestyle</b>  | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
| It is important to me to be treated well as I like the royal treatment in fashion retail stores.  | 3.00          | 3.45        | 0.499     |
| I like fashion shopping on high streets   | 4.00          | 4.36        | 0.521     |
| I buy fashion products only at the retail store   | 2.00          | 2.47        | 0.520     |
| I buy fashion products either online or at the retail store   | 4.00          | 3.87        | 0.621     |
| I often go to a high-street fashion brand retail store for window shopping or its website to get ideas although I have no intention of making purchases | 4.00          | 3.90        | 0.618     |
| I often go to a high-street fashion brand retail store or its website to see what's new in clothing   | 4.00          | 4.44        | 0.497     |
| I prefer to shop in high-street fashion brand stores that offer a various categories and sections   | 4.00          | 4.40        | 0.490     |
| I need a wide range of clothes  | 4.00          | 4.45        | 0.498     |
| I like to shop in one high-street fashion brand store   | 2.00          | 2.28        | 0.645     |
| I like to shop in many different high-street fashion brand stores   | 4.00          | 3.73        | 0.661     |
| I search for forward fashion trends in fashion magazines before visiting a high-street fashion brand retail store                                       | 4.00          | 3.70        | 0.665     |
| I love to experiment with fashion clothes   | 4.00          | 3.74        | 0.695     |
| I love buying fashion clothes which are updated to reflect current fashion trends   | 4.00          | 4.47        | 0.511     |
| I don't want to buy fashion accessories and clothes that make me stand out highly from everyone else  | 4.00          | 3.84        | 0.760     |
| I only buy fashion items at only very low prices  | 2.00          | 2.14        | 0.750     |

Figure 4.6: Plot area illustrating customer fashion attitude and customer fashion shopping lifestyle by top five ranking



According to the statistical analysis, it can be seen that the female adolescents' values' and fashion lifestyle act as experiencers motivated by the characteristic of self-expression as it addresses the criteria of impulsive customers who are seeking for

a variety of fashion products for social activities. The understanding of fashion value and lifestyles assists high-street fashion brand communication to evaluate fashion information adoption amongst the female adolescent.

To summarise, according to the above discussion, it can be assumed that there is an association between self-personality and brand personality amongst the female adolescent. Self-construal of the target group is represented through the concept of The Big Five dimensions framework and VALS. The findings show that the female adolescent matches self-perceived traits with brands in terms of excitement (spirited, daring imaginative, up-to-date), sincerity (cheerful) and competence (intelligent, successful). The female adolescent is an experiencer in the high-street fashion market with the needs of individuality. It can be seen that self-interpretation of female adolescents is a key which assists a high-street fashion brand to understand the target group comprehensively.

#### **4.4.2 Customer-brand emotional tie**

Like many other fashion products, a high-street fashion brand is known for its role in the development of self-consciousness and self-expression. The convergence of fashion consumption behaviours is emotionally constructed and strengthened from the customer-brand relationship. Therefore, the customer-brand emotional tie is a vital touch point for high-street fashion brand-building communication strategy. According to the literature review (Chapter 2), the questionnaires were designed based on brand components to build brand relationship strength. The investigation of the influential factors that affect the female adolescent emotional linkages towards a particular high-street fashion brand by rating scales are shown in table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Influential factors affecting female adolescent emotional linkages towards high-street fashion brand

| Customer-brand Emotional Tie  | Median | Mean | SD    |
|---|--------|------|-------|
| High-street fashion BRAND A has always been good for me                             | 7.00   | 6.63 | 0.552 |
| I trust high-street fashion BRAND A   | 7.00   | 6.54 | 0.664 |
| High-street fashion BRAND A and I have a lot in common                              | 6.00   | 6.07 | 0.877 |
| High-street fashion BRAND A can always count on me                                  | 5.00   | 4.99 | 0.856 |
| I have feelings for high-street fashion BRAND A that I do not have for other brands | 4.00   | 4.29 | 0.877 |

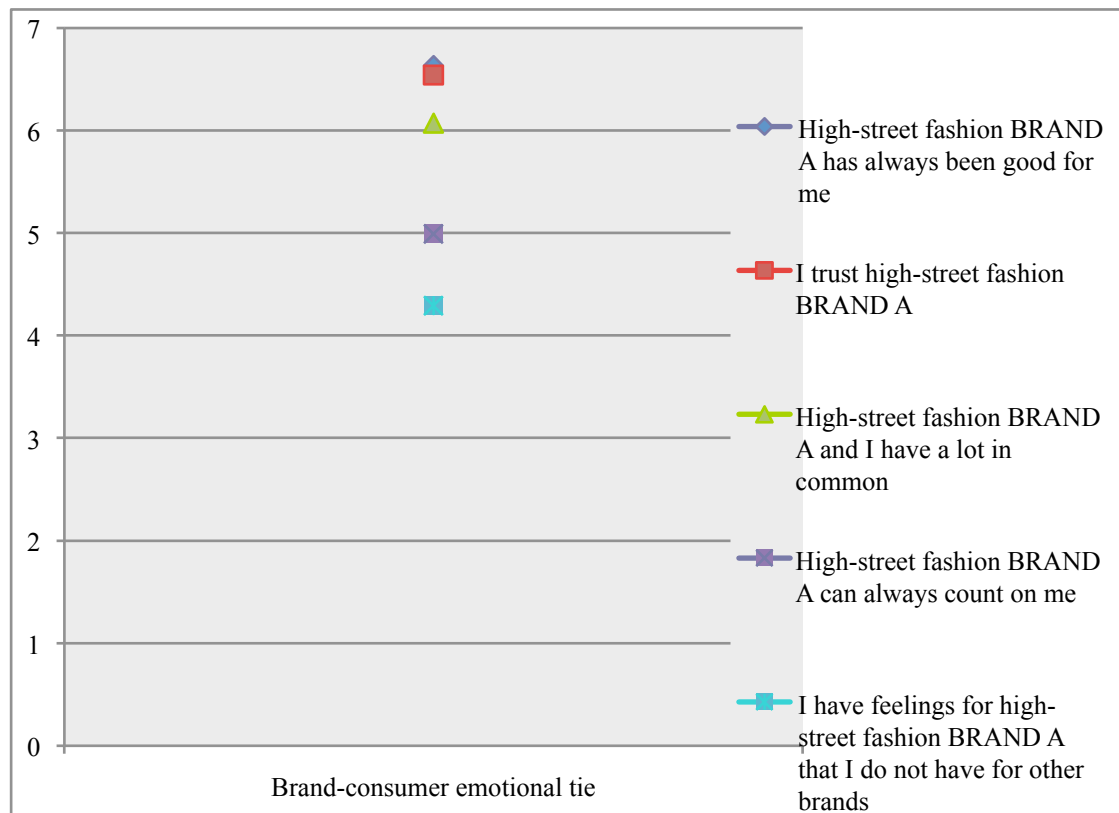


Figure 4.7: Plot area illustrating influential factors affecting female adolescent emotional linkages towards a high-street fashion brand

The foundation of the customer-brand relationship related to perceived quality was examined amongst the female adolescents. The trust was ranked first with the set of questions of High-street fashion Brand A has always been good for me (mean value 6.63 and median value 7.00) and I trust high-street fashion BRAND A (mean value



6.54 and median value 7.00), followed by alignment and mutuality with the question of High-street fashion BRAND A and I have a lot in common (mean value 6.07 and median value 6.00), and commitment with the set of questions of High-street fashion BRAND A can always count on me (mean value 4.99 and median value 5.00) and I have feelings for high-street fashion BRAND A that I do not have for other brands (mean value 4.29 and median value 4.00). This suggests that customer-brand emotional linkages can be created by trust as a principle in the process of customer-brand relationship building.

### 4.4.3 Information seeking process

The female adolescent is regarded as an early adopter with a high demand for innovative information. The female adolescent actively accesses brand information. The target audiences have the power to choose the medium and message which they want to consume. Therefore, a high-street fashion brand needs to send an appropriate message to suit their expectation. According to the literature review (Chapter 2), the questionnaires were designed based on the type of brand information search in order to examine the female adolescent behaviour of high-street fashion brand information search by the Likert scale and the results are shown in table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Female adolescent behaviour of high-street fashion information search

| Information Seeking   | Median | Mean | SD    |
|---|--------|------|-------|
| I would love to be informed about high-street fashion brand news even I do not buy its product at this time   | 4.00   | 3.65 | 0.538 |
| I will revisit and make a purchase after several times of hearing and seeing the high-street fashion brand information  | 4.00   | 3.54 | 0.608 |
| I will stay with the high-street fashion brand that keeps informing me by its newsletter.   | 3.00   | 3.27 | 0.630 |
| I sometimes go to another high-street fashion brand, but I still want to be informed about the brand that I used to purchase.   | 4.00   | 3.44 | 0.684 |
| I always go from one high-street fashion brand to another high-street fashion brand if its fashion products have been published and promoted i.e. magazine, newspaper or website. | 4.00   | 3.70 | 0.503 |
| I consider myself as a loyal high-street fashion customer as long as the  | 3.00   | 2.69 | 0.705 |

|   |      |      |       |
|---|------|------|-------|
| brand keeps informing me by its newsletter. |      |      |       |
| I review fashion customer reports           | 2.00 | 2.33 | 0.530 |

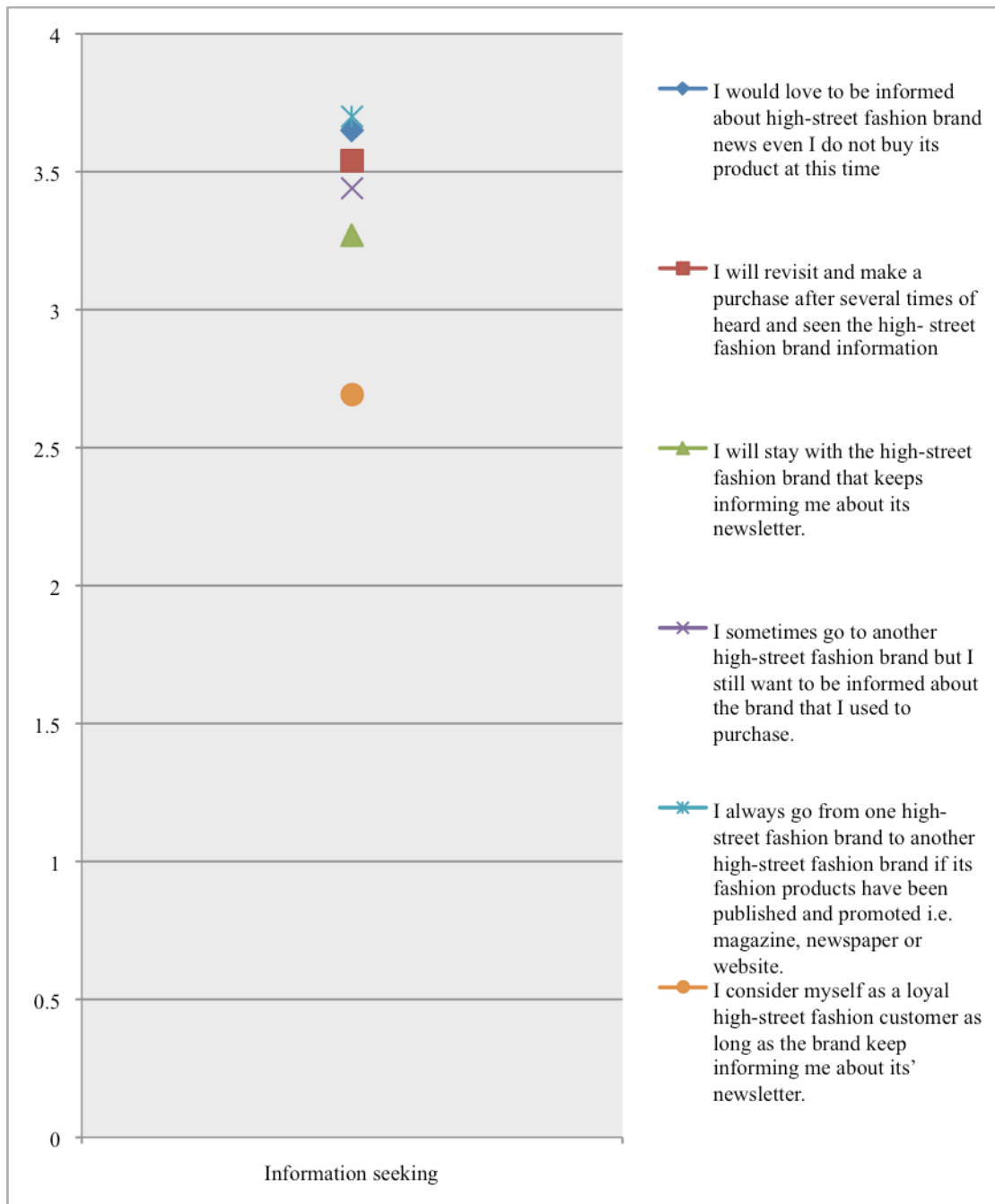


Figure 4.8: Plot area illustrating the female adolescent behaviour of high-street fashion information search

As depicted in figure 4.9, the results from a set of the following questions are: I always go from one high-street fashion brand to another high-street fashion brand if

its fashion products have been published and promoted i.e. magazine, newspaper or website (mean value 3.70 and median value 4.00) and I would love to be informed about high-street fashion brand news even I do not buy its product at this time (mean value 3.65 and median value 4.00) demonstrates the browsing information activity as the first rank. The pre-purchase information activity is in the second rank with the question of I will revisit and make a purchase after several times of hearing and seeing the high - street fashion brand information (mean value 3.54 and median value 4.00), followed by ongoing information activities with a set of the questions of I sometimes go to another high-street fashion brand, but I still want to be informed about the brand that I used to purchase (mean value 3.44 and median value 4.00), I will stay with the high-street fashion brand that keeps informing me about its newsletter (mean value 3.27 and median value 3.00) and I consider myself as a loyal high-street fashion customer as long as the brand keeps informing me by its newsletter (mean value 2.69 and median value 3.00) and I review fashion customer reports (mean value 2.33 and median value 2.00).

Moreover, additional questions were elicited from respondents in order to investigate the brand information recognition process as shown in figure 4.9 and figure 4.10:

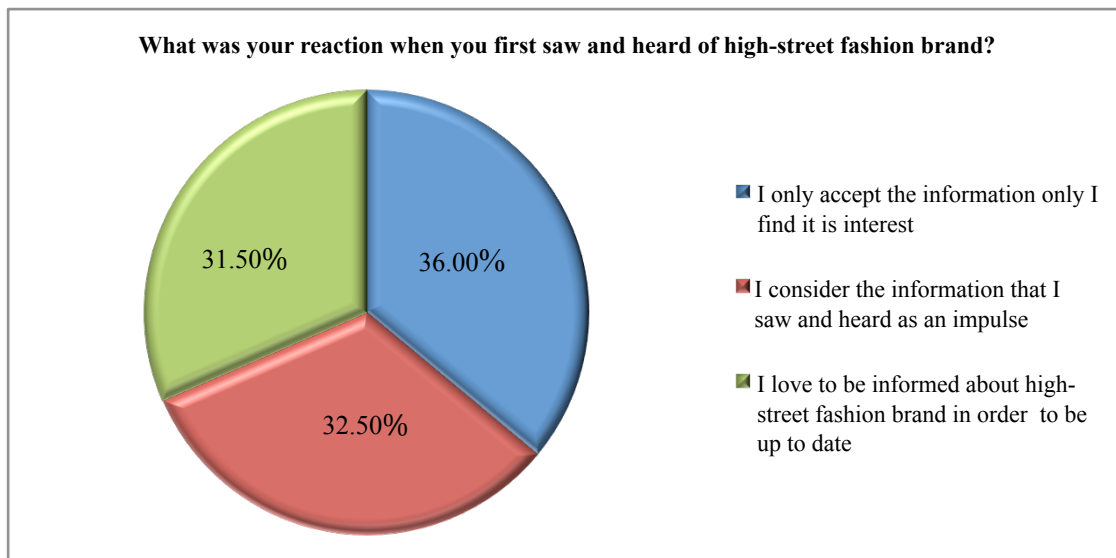


Figure 4.9: Brand information first recognition amongst the female adolescent

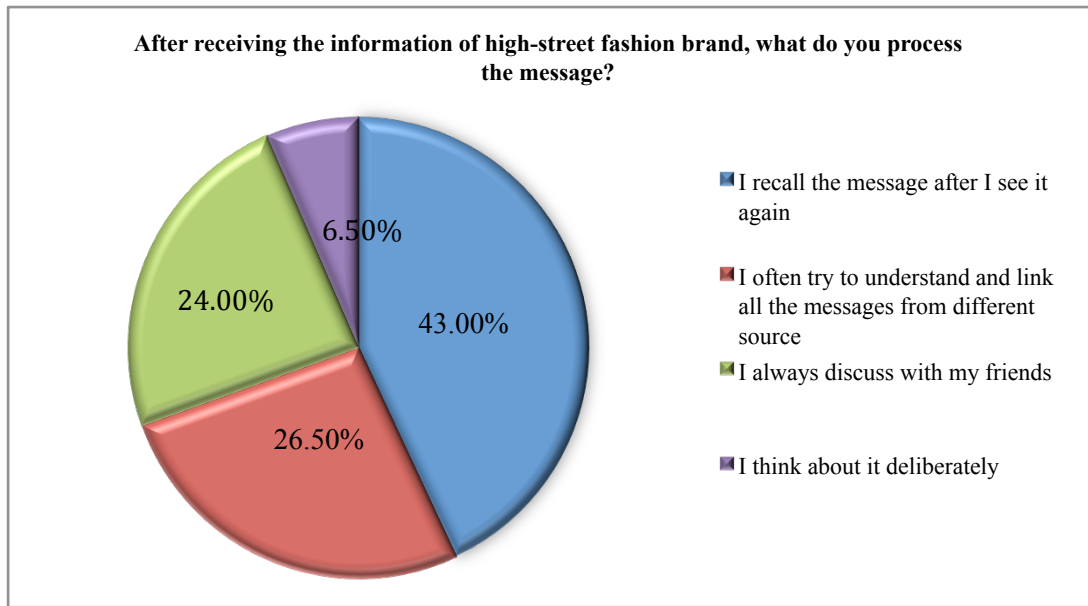


Figure 4.10: Brand information recognition amongst the female adolescent after receiving the message

According to the pie charts, it can be seen that the female adolescent normally accepts only the information which they find is interesting (36.0%), followed by considering the information as an impulse (32.5%), and receiving the information in order to be up to date (31.5%). After brand information is transmitted, however, the female adolescent recalls the message after it sees it again (43.0%), followed by trying to understand and link all the messages from different sources (26.5%), discussing with peers (24.0%) and rarely thinks about the information deliberately (6.5%).

Furthermore, the respondents indicate the sources of high-street fashion brand information and the evaluation of components in high-street fashion brand messages as presented in table 4.17 and table 4.18:

Table 4.17: High-street fashion brand information source amongst the female adolescents

| <b>High-street fashion brand information source amongst the female adolescents</b> |       |
|--|-------|
| Fashion Magazine   | 83.0% |
| Fashion Website  | 82.5% |
| Word Of Mouth (WOM): Friends   | 64.0% |
| Internet Search Engine   | 63.0% |
| Fashion Ads: Poster, Billboard   | 52.0% |
| Fashion Event: Fashion show, Fashion exhibition                                    | 42.5% |
| In-store communications: Retail store  | 31.0% |
| Newspaper  | 30.0% |
| Mobility Media: Ads on public transport  | 29.5% |
| Electronic Magazine (E-zine)   | 26.5% |
| TV   | 12.0% |
| Radio  | 12.0% |

Table 4.18: Components of high-street fashion brand message evaluation

| <b>Components of high-street fashion brand message evaluation</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Image   | 8.00          | 8.27        | 0.813     |
| Text  | 7.00          | 6.97        | 0.835     |
| Image & Text  | 9.00          | 8.68        | 0.761     |
| Good design   | 9.00          | 8.88        | 0.734     |
| Interactive message   | 8.00          | 7.85        | 0.827     |
| Animated message  | 7.00          | 7.15        | 0.89      |

According to the above tables, the female adolescent indicates fashion magazine as the largest source of high-street fashion brand information (83.0%), followed by fashion website (82.5%), and Word Of Mouth (WOM) (64.0%). Besides, the female adolescent considers design and creativity in high-street fashion brand information as key attractions (mean value 8.88 and median value 9.00), image and text (mean value 8.68 and median value 9.00), image (mean value 8.27 and median value 8.00) and interactive message (mean value 7.85 and median value 8.00). It can be assumed that the female adolescent searches for high-street fashion brand information from both

online and off-line communication sources. An aesthetic (good design) and visualisation are essential elements that draw attention from the female adolescent. To conclude, the results represent that the information seeking process is mostly found in browsing activities, followed by pre-purchase information search derived from consistent brand messages which evoke an ongoing information search with previous brand awareness. These findings reveal that the degree to which respondents respond to the brand communication effort and relate themselves with the brand information only occurs when they are interested in the informative messages. Brand messages are regarded as an impulse in which respondents are more inclined to spend time to become informed in order to gain the latest fashion information. Moreover, most respondents easily recall brand knowledge from past experiences after spotting repetitive or relevant brand messages. A comparison of information sources (e.g., public sources or peers) was evaluated with the purpose of brand decision making. The female adolescent searches high-street fashion brand information from both online and off-line sources. Fashion magazine, Internet site and Word Of Mouth (WOM) are the largest resources. Design and visualised information are the principles of brand message components that draw attention from target audiences.

#### 4.4.4 Communication tools

In order to consider the appropriate communication mediums that best deliver high-street fashion brand messages to the female adolescent, it is essential to determine the female adolescent attitude towards online and off-line communication tools in order to enhance the impact of encoded high-street fashion brand messages. In addition it is necessary to examine the key brand communication tools, for information recognition at the pre-purchase stage as shown in table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Brand information awareness at the pre-purchase stage

| <b>I recall fashion trends from other medias like fashion magazine or fashion website during my search for high-street fashion products in retail store</b> |       |
|---|-------|
| Very likely   | 18.5% |
| Likely  | 66.0% |
| Unsure  | 15.5% |

| <b>I recall fashion trends from TV and Radio during my search for high-street fashion products in retail store</b> |     |
|--|-----|
| Unsure   | 39% |
| Unlikely   | 61% |

As table 4.19 shows, fashion magazine and fashion website are the most memorable communication sources and followed by TV and Radio. It can be assumed the target audiences have freedom to choose and accept information from their preferred communication choices, i.e. fashion magazine and fashion website while one-way sender-to-receiver communication mediums, i.e. TV and radio, are declined.

### 1. Online communication tools

Before an integrated brand communication in the encoding process is designed, the understanding of the perception and motivation of the female adolescent needs to be examined. To achieve the communication objectives, an examination of the extent to which the female adolescent evaluates an online communication source is shown in table 4.20 and table 4.21.

Table 4.20: The female adolescent opinions towards online communication sources

| <b>Opinion towards online communication source</b>  | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Repetition and same old thing makes be bored. I am more excited by fashion web pages exploration                    | 4.00          | 4.18        | 0.541     |
| I use Internet to keep me more update   | 4.00          | 4.04        | 0.440     |
| Internet releases me from tedious routine, it helps me see the world widely   | 4.00          | 3.81        | 0.568     |
| I am fascinated by trends, styles and knowledge from around the world which I use the Internet to discover          | 4.00          | 4.03        | 0.584     |
| I have been seen as an expert on the computer. When people have questions on the Internet, I always have the answer | 2.00          | 2.33        | 0.471     |
| I often visit general fashion websites to review fashion trends   | 4.00          | 4.19        | 0.582     |
| I like fashion website browsing   | 4.00          | 4.40        | 0.490     |
| I often go to fashion websites for product reviews or recommendations.  | 4.00          | 3.88        | 0.455     |

As depicted in table 4.20, the female adolescent employs the Internet as a source of browsing information search as the findings show that website browsing (mean value

4.40 and median value 4.00) is the first rank. Moreover, these results suggest that online communication is a vast source of innovation and entertainment for the target audience as fashion trends reviewing (mean value 4.19 and median value 4.00) is positioned at the second rank, followed by fashion web pages exploration (mean value 4.18 and median value 4.00) and innovative information drivers (mean value 4.04 and median value 4.00).

Table 4.21: The female adolescent opinion towards online distribution channels

| <b>Opinion towards online distribution channel</b>  | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| None of my friends shop on the Internet.  | 2.00          | 1.88        | 0.503     |
| Online fashion buying is an enjoyable way to shop   | 4.00          | 3.85        | 0.550     |
| I enjoy buying fashion merchandise in online retail store.  | 3.00          | 3.35        | 0.507     |
| I do not know much about online shopping.   | 2.00          | 2.28        | 0.450     |
| I find the online high-street fashion shopping process is hard to understand and use                                      | 2.00          | 2.22        | 0.453     |
| I am struggling with online fashion product searching. I could not find what I need                                       | 2.00          | 2.18        | 0.389     |
| I do not believe online fashion stores carry things I want.   | 2.00          | 2.29        | 0.455     |
| I often visit the high-street fashion official website to preview products.   | 4.00          | 4.06        | 0.655     |
| I would shop on the Internet more if the high-street retail store was too difficult to access                             | 4.00          | 3.89        | 0.474     |
| I would like not having to leave home when shopping.  | 2.00          | 1.84        | 0.492     |
| I love the help and friendliness I can get from the high-street retail store which I could not find in Internet shopping. | 4.00          | 3.81        | 0.453     |
| I think high-street retail store has better service policies than online store  | 4.00          | 3.64        | 0.634     |
| Internet shopping would avoid the hassle of actual high-street retail shopping  | 3.00          | 3.09        | 0.532     |
| I think online high-street fashion shopping offers a better deal than high-street fashion retail stores.                  | 3.00          | 2.82        | 0.381     |
| I believe online high-street fashion shopping offers better selection than high-street retail stores.                     | 2.00          | 2.23        | 0.422     |
| Online stores have better prices and promotions than high-street retail stores.   | 3.00          | 3.00        | 0.481     |
| I would shop on the Internet more if the prices were lower or with great offers.  | 4.00          | 3.78        | 0.419     |
| I dislike the delivery charge and backorders of online high-street fashion buying   | 4.00          | 3.50        | 0.716     |
| I do not like waiting for fashion products to arrive in the mail.   | 2.00          | 2.49        | 0.567     |
| I like having fashion products delivered to me at home  | 3.00          | 2.77        | 0.422     |
| I often discuss with my friends before buying a fashion product online.   | 3.00          | 2.82        | 0.547     |

According to table 4.21, the requirements of the online distribution channel facilitates the browsing activity by exploiting fashion websites for product review (mean value



4.06 and median value 4.00), which is placed at the first rank. However, the finding about the present attitude concerning the advantages and disadvantages of electronic retail stores functions in comparison with actual retail stores is shown in figure 4.11.

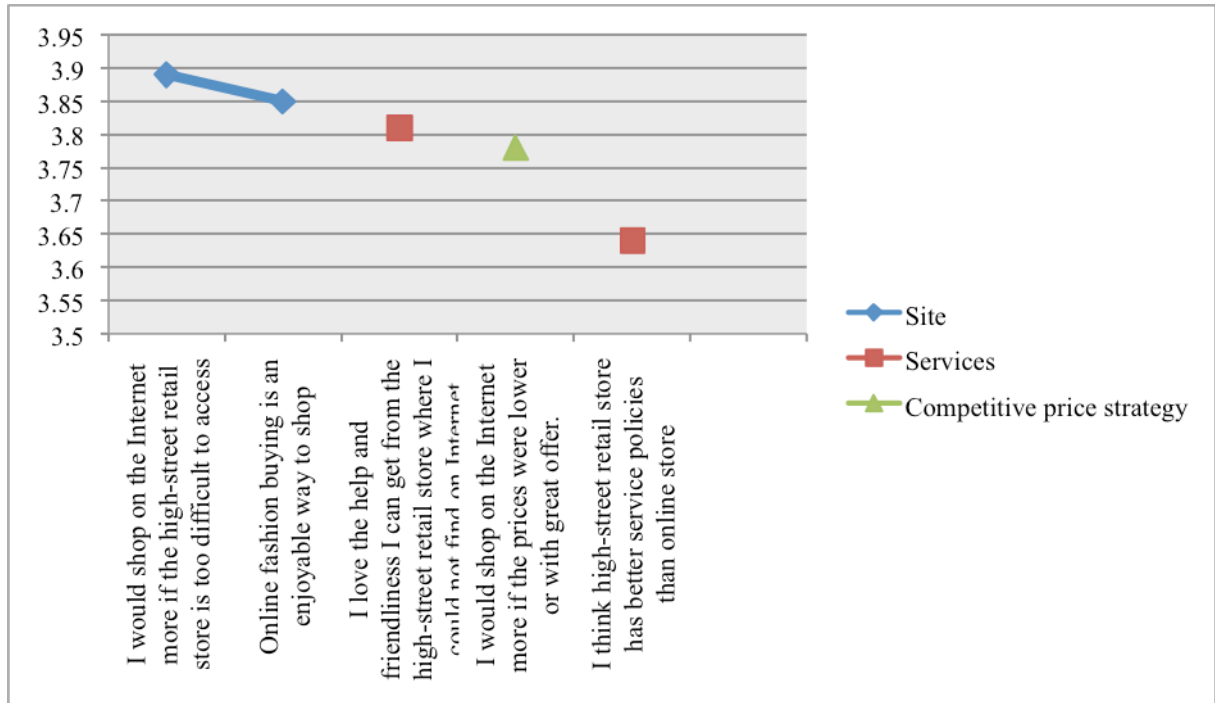


Figure 4.11: Plot area illustrating the female adolescent opinion towards online distribution channels

From the figure 4.11, it can be seen that the female adolescent addresses the advantages of online sites as easy access and entertaining atmosphere (mean value 3.85-3.89) with location in first position and followed by competitive price preference (mean value 3.78). However, the importance of customer services is ranked in second position (mean value 3.81 and 3.64) as an electronic distribution channel disadvantage. It can be assumed that the greater services in actual retail stores are beneficial for the female adolescent.

The electronic fashion marketplace is another distribution channel apart from actual retail stores. The female adolescent online activities are presented in table 4.22.

Table 4.22: The female adolescent online communication activities

| Online communication activities  |                                  |       |
|--|----------------------------------|-------|
| Did you personally make, influence, or participate in any high-street fashion product purchases on the Internet? | Yes                              | 100%  |
| How often do you visit high-street fashion websites for product pre-purchase / purchase / post-purchase?         | Several Times a Week             | 13.5% |
|  | Several Times a Month            | 64.0% |
|  | About Once a Month               | 22.5% |
| Which online source do you use when you purchase your high-street fashion products?                              | Purchase on the official website | 75.5% |
|  | Purchase through auction sites   | 24.5% |
| Visiting high-street fashion brand sites looking for fashion trends  | Daily                            | 5.0%  |
|  | Several Times a Week             | 60.0% |
|  | Several Times a Month            | 35.0% |
| Looking for job opportunities  | About Once a Month               | 28.0% |
|  | Less than Once a Month           | 72.0% |
| Finding and viewing fashion photographs, clipart and images  | Daily                            | 7.5%  |
|  | Several Times a Week             | 52.5% |
|  | Several Times a Month            | 40.0% |
| Making a purchase of high-street fashion products  | Daily                            | 13.0% |
|  | Several Times a Week             | 42.0% |
|  | Several Times a Month            | 45.0% |
| Opinion sharing and Social networking  | Daily                            | 22.0% |
|  | Several Times a Week             | 64.0% |
|  | Several Times a Month            | 14.0% |
| Visiting message newsgroups  | Daily                            | 3.5%  |
|  | Several Times a Week             | 61.5% |
|  | Several Times a Month            | 35.0% |

It can be seen from the above table that the female adolescent is an active online user who participates in online activities in various ways. Most of the activities are online fashion purchase, information search and social interaction.

According to the secondary research in Chapter 2, two main online communication applications, i.e. website and social networking, are examined through questionnaire research. The findings show the behaviour of target audiences towards these tools in table 4.23 and table 4.24:

Table 4.23: The female adolescent behaviour towards high-street fashion brand official websites

| <b>High-street fashion brand official website</b>   |  |       |
|---|--|-------|
| How often do you visit high-street fashion retail website?  | Several Times a Week                             | 15.0% |
|   | Several Times a Month                            | 72.0% |
|   | About Once a Month                               | 13.0% |
| How did you get to know about a particular high-street fashion retail website?  | Peer i.e. Friends                                | 70.5% |
|   | I knew from fashion retail store                 | 65.0% |
|   | Seen on fashion media i.e. fashion magazine      | 61.5% |
|   | I knew the website name                          | 56.0% |
|   | Internet Advertising                             | 47.5% |
|   | Search Engine                                    | 26.5% |
|   | Guessed the web address                          | 10.0% |
|   | Link from another webpage                        | 6.5%  |
| How often do you use high-street fashion website to find out fashion products   | About Once a Week                                | 6.5%  |
|   | Several Times a Week                             | 27.5% |
|   | Several Times a Month                            | 66.0% |
| Did you find what you were after on high-street fashion retail websites   | Yes, I found exactly what I was looking for      | 7.5%  |
|   | Yes, it is the one I firstly sought for          | 60.0% |
|   | I found a related product, but not what I wanted | 32.5% |
| If a high-street fashion retail website fulfilled what you needed, how likely would you be to recommend and revisit this website? | Very likely                                      | 17.0% |
|   | Likely   | 69.5% |
|   | Unsure   | 13.0% |
|   | Unlikely   | 0.5%  |

Information sources which encourage the female adolescent to interact with high-street fashion brands were investigated. Peers were ranked in first with 70.5%, followed by retail store acknowledgement 65.0% and fashion magazine 61.0%. The female adolescent mostly employs high-street fashion websites as a source of fashion information. If high-street fashion websites constitute a resource which the female adolescent uses to satisfy their requirements, they will revisit the website again in the future.

Likewise, information-drivers from social networking become a communicative source amongst the female adolescent. To determine further functions of the social networking arena, the questionnaire aims to inspect the female adolescent behaviour towards social networking sites as shown in table 4.24.

Table 4.24: The female adolescent behaviour towards social networking sites

| <b>Customer Social Networking</b>  | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|--|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| I am an active social networking member who joins high-street fashion brand groups in order to be part of their community  | 4.00          | 3.46        | 0.701     |
| I always join high-street fashion brand groups where my peers join   | 4.00          | 4.07        | 0.641     |
| I share my fashion opinions and knowledge on social networking sites   | 3.00          | 3.41        | 0.703     |
| I have lots of friends and stay close to them. I spend a lot of time on social networking sites to keep updated of what they are doing with their fashion interest | 4.00          | 3.62        | 0.630     |
| My fashion interest is a very important part of my life. I use the social networking sites to expand this interest to my peers                                     | 3.00          | 3.29        | 0.631     |
| I could track and trace my favourite celebrity fashion trends via social networking sites  | 3.00          | 2.90        | 0.553     |
| I often follow fashion opinions on my peers bulletin board   | 3.00          | 3.28        | 0.586     |

According to the above table, the female adolescent is an active user of social networking sites. A social networking site is a public square for high-street fashion brands to communicate with the worldwide audiences who share the same interest. Peers are regarded as group fashion opinion leadership (mean value 4.07 and median value 4.00), they play the role of influential fashion sources. However, the celebrity function as a source of attractiveness has the lowest impact (mean value 2.90 and median value 3.00).

## **2. Off-line communication tools**

High-street fashion brands emphasise more on the retail store as a distribution channel and off-line as a communication source. High-street fashion retailers communicate to the audience on a continuous basis through store ambience. In order to thoughtfully examine retail communication, the source of existing and previous brand knowledge should be clarified as shown in table 4.25.

Table 4.25: Information sources which encourage ongoing information search in a retail store

| <b>Information sources which encourage ongoing information search at retail store</b> |       |
|---|-------|
| Fashion Magazine  | 43.9% |
| Fashion Website   | 24.5% |
| Word Of Mouth (WOM): Friends  | 73.5% |
| Mobility media: Advertisements on transportation                                      | 25.5% |
| Fashion Event: Fashion show, Fashion exhibition                                       | 23.0% |
| In-store communications: Previous visit   | 25.5% |
| Electronic Magazine (E-zine)  | 24.5% |
| Fashion advertisements: Poster, Billboard   | 5.1%  |
| Newspaper   | 0.5%  |

The findings from table 4.25 reveal that encouragement from Word Of Mouth (WOM) from peers is ranked first 73.5% and followed by fashion magazine 43.9%. It can be assumed that an ongoing information search in retail stores will occur from a consistent integrated brand communication approach.

Moreover, establishing a retail communication that meets the female adolescent needs is vital since the retail store is a channel where fashion product information moves from brand to ultimate customers. Therefore, the questionnaire is designed to understand the female adolescent opinion towards retail communication characteristics as shown in tables 4.26 and table 4.27.

Table 4.26: Information expectations of high-street fashion brand retail stores

| <b>High-street fashion retail store information expectation</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| Fashion relation  | 8.00          | 7.99        | 0.601     |
| Lifestyle relation  | 7.00          | 7.18        | 0.648     |
| Store Information   | 7.00          | 6.97        | 0.57      |
| Design attractiveness   | 6.00          | 6.19        | 0.882     |
| Entertaining  | 5.00          | 5.17        | 0.762     |

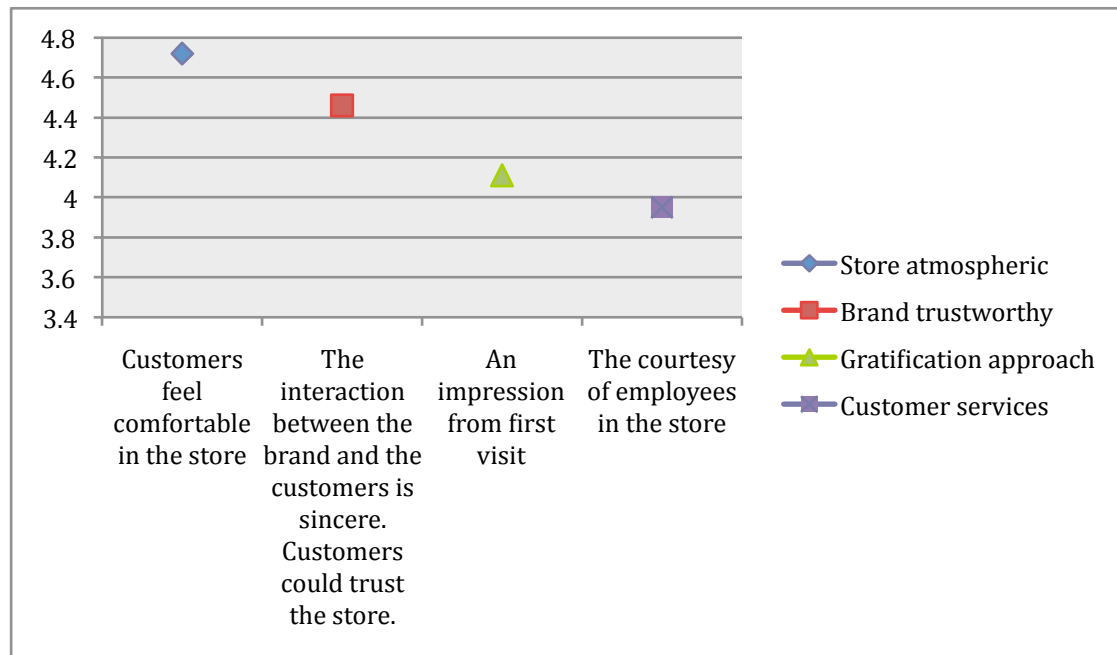
According to table 4.26, to best achieve the response from the target audience in retail stores, retail communications should provide fashion related information (mean value 7.99 and median value 8.00) as a basis, followed by lifestyle related (mean value 7.18 and median value 7.00) and store information (mean value 6.19 and median value

6.00). Moreover, the findings in table 4.27 reveal a combination of communicative factors in retail stores which provide brand information. The retail channel is a cooperative communication which combines information driven factors such as personal selling, store atmosphere, point of purchase display, services, etcetera. To enhance the fashion brand knowledge through retail information, the highest mean value in terms of communicative factor is store atmosphere (mean value 4.72 and median value 5.00), followed by brand trustworthiness (mean value 4.46 and median value 5.00), gratification approach (mean value 4.11 and median value 4.00) and customer services (mean value 3.95 and median value 4.00). The key communicative factors of high-street fashion retail stores are presented in figure 4.12.

Table 4.27: Communicative factors of high-street fashion brand retail stores

| <b>Communicative factors of high-street fashion retail store</b>                                 | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|--|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| The identical design of retail store   | 3.00          | 3.04        | 0.489     |
| The corporate identity (such as shopping bags, catalogues, or advertisements)                    | 3.00          | 2.95        | 0.478     |
| The visual display of the store  | 3.00          | 3.09        | 0.461     |
| The convenient location of the store   | 3.00          | 2.89        | 0.350     |
| The contemporary and modern design of the store  | 3.00          | 3.15        | 0.512     |
| The attractive physical facilities in the store  | 3.00          | 2.96        | 0.423     |
| The ease of the store layout assists and directs customers                                       | 3.00          | 3.00        | 0.448     |
| The promotional campaign of the store (such as event, exhibition, or sale)                       | 4.00          | 3.55        | 0.591     |
| The services in the store  | 3.00          | 2.86        | 0.348     |
| The availability of various categories and sections  | 3.00          | 3.08        | 0.505     |
| The store has post-purchase services   | 2.00          | 2.28        | 0.530     |
| The sufficient information about products in the stores is available for customers               | 3.00          | 3.04        | 0.458     |
| The interaction between the brand and the customers is sincere. Customers could trust the store. | 5.00          | 4.46        | 0.656     |
| The brand services provide individual attention for customers                                    | 3.00          | 2.95        | 0.473     |
| Customers feel comfortable in the store  | 5.00          | 4.72        | 0.541     |
| The quality of the fashion products  | 3.00          | 3.27        | 0.459     |
| The store offers the reward card or loyalty scheme   | 3.00          | 3.23        | 0.549     |
| The courtesy of employees in the store   | 4.00          | 3.95        | 0.689     |
| An impression from first visit   | 4.00          | 4.11        | 0.600     |

Figure 4.12: Key communicative factors of high-street fashion retail stores



Moreover, in-store communications need to be clearly clarified in order to support retail communication efforts. The findings in table 4.27 reveal how the female adolescent evaluates the in-store communication tools which include a combination of brochure and point of purchase.

Table 4.28: In-store communication evaluation

| High-street fashion store pamphlet / leaflet / brochure / point of purchase | Median | Mean | SD    |
|---|--------|------|-------|
| Design attractiveness   | 8.00   | 8.18 | 0.801 |
| Fashion relation  | 8.00   | 8.14 | 0.655 |
| Entertaining  | 8.00   | 7.95 | 0.772 |
| Store Information   | 8.00   | 7.68 | 0.774 |
| Lifestyle relation  | 7.00   | 7.26 | 0.952 |
| Professionalism   | 7.00   | 6.98 | 0.736 |

As depicted in table 4.28, design attractiveness (mean value 8.18 and median value 8.00) is ranked in first, followed by fashion related (mean value 8.14 and median value 8.00), entertaining (mean value 7.95 and median value 8.00) and store information (mean value 7.68 and median value 8.00). Furthermore, window display and visual merchandising are essential components of retail communication. To consider in-store communicative coordination, the window display and visual merchandising are integrated to deliver brand messages in retail stores. The further findings of the female adolescent opinion towards window display and visual merchandising are presented in tables 4.29 and table 4.30.

Table 4.29: The female adolescent opinion towards window display and visual merchandising

| <b>Window Display and Visual Merchandising</b>  |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| High-street fashion window displays or visual merchandising function                              | Provide updated trends  | 74.4% |
|   | Entertain your shopping experience  | 73.3% |
|   | Imagine how the clothes look on body  | 73.3% |
|   | Encourage you into the store  | 43.6% |
|   | Lead you to the purchase stage  | 20.0% |
| Window display or visual merchandising recognition  | Likely  | 56.5% |
|   | Unsure  | 36.5% |
|   | Unlikely  | 7.0%  |
| Association of window display and visual merchandising with the high-street fashion brand product | Recognise the fashion brand image from other medias: Print advertising from magazine, Internet browsing | 70.2% |
|   | Recognise the fashion product   | 69.2% |
|   | Fashion brand identity  | 63.6% |
|   | Notice brand components   | 62.1% |
|   | Have been to the store  | 26.3% |
|   | Notice brand logo   | 21.2% |

Table 4.30: The female adolescent expectation towards window display and visual merchandising

| <b>The importance of window display and visual merchandising as a communication tool</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|--|---------------|-------------|-----------|
|  | 9.00          | 8.38        | 0.699     |
| <b>Window display and visual merchandising expectation</b>                               | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
| Update latest trend  | 9.00          | 9.22        | 0.76      |
| Creativity   | 9.00          | 9.17        | 0.728     |
| Excellent styling  | 9.00          | 9.17        | 0.777     |
| Ability to see   | 9.00          | 8.76        | 0.669     |
| Neat and clean   | 7.00          | 7.02        | 0.719     |
| Quality material   | 7.00          | 6.62        | 0.767     |

According to table 4.29 and table 4.30, it can be seen that the female adolescent gives the importance of window displays and visual merchandising as information sources. Meanings are communicated through visual elements of window display and visual merchandising, the highest score in terms of fashion communication indicates fashion



change information in the first rank, followed by design attractiveness, store experiences enhancement and store inducement. Furthermore, window display and visual merchandising are tools to create interest and draw attention from target audiences and prospects. Window display and visual merchandising are used purposefully to complement and reinforce other in-store communication tools. It can be seen from the findings that the respondents firstly recognise and link the distinctive image of visual merchandising from other fashion mediums, followed by the fashion product and fashion brand identity.

To deliver high-street fashion brand messages, it can be concluded that communication tools need to be integrated. Online and off-line communication applications significantly impact how audiences perceive the brand. The female adolescent exploits both online and off-line communication channels as a source of brand knowledge. With bombardment of information from a diversity of sources, the female adolescent then plays the role of information influencers. Therefore, the female adolescent integrates all the information and distinguishes the choice of delivery channels. Fashion magazine and online fashion information are the valuable resources of the information seeking process amongst respondents. The Internet allows online applications to be sources for edutainment (education + entertainment). Online information hunting is indicated in terms of website browsing activities with the purpose of fashion information requirements and recreation. Most respondents specified that the female adolescent is an active online user with online communication activities (e.g. online fashion purchase, information search and social interaction). Online distribution channel or E-tail store are places where the female adolescent browses to obtain product information with entertaining atmosphere with easy access. The female adolescent enthusiastically exploits social networking sites as places to share the same fashion interests and exchange fashion brand information. Peers play the role of opinion leaders and influential fashion sources. Peers are regarded as personal sources which create the highest believability amongst the female adolescent, followed by past experiences of brand acknowledgement and fashion magazines. However, most respondents were still concerned with the quality of customer services that online channels could not offer compared to actual retail stores.

Additionally, off-line communication tools need to work together with online communication tools in order to increase the efficiency of the brand communication plan. The research explores the off-line communication tools within the retail store since most of the literature indicates the retail store as the heart of fashion. The findings reveal that the retail store is a key communicative channel where target audiences and prospects experience brand environments. The extent of audience experiences depends upon communication activities within the retail store by transmitting powerful brand messages based on impulse experiences. Word Of Mouth (WOM) and fashion magazine are the impacting sources which mainly encourage ongoing information search in retail stores amongst the female adolescent. The information search activities of the female adolescent are mainly illustrated in terms of browsing activities in order to obtain retail environment and product information. The female adolescent anticipates high-street fashion brand messages in retail stores to be fashion and lifestyle related, store informative, design attractive and entertaining. To enlighten and enhance the high-street fashion brand experience, the primary research results show that informant factors in retail stores and in-store communicative criteria are store atmosphere, brand trustworthiness, gratification approach and customer services together with design attractiveness. Moreover, window display and visual merchandising are viewed as brand message ingredients which endorse the retail store communications and store environment. The synergy of words, pictures and design aesthetics induce and inform target audiences, to become prospects in response to fashion innovative information. Therefore, brand message execution in a high-street fashion brand principally necessitates creating an emotional connection to the brand in order to develop and improve brand experiences, customer-brand relationship, brand added value and brand trust through integrated brand communication tool attributes.

## 4.5 Quantitative Research Hypothesis

According to the purposes of the questionnaire research, the female adolescent buying behaviour, high-street fashion information seeking and gathering, influences of brand communication mediums and high-street fashion brand involvement were investigated. In order to understand and enhance understanding of the female adolescent perception in response to high-street fashion brand communications, the correlation analysis of questionnaire survey was therefore conducted. Several hypotheses were drawn from the qualitative and quantitative findings. The first two hypotheses are relevant to the female adolescent self-perceived personality, while the latter two hypotheses concern brand information seeking and the last hypothesis considers customer-brand involvement.

### **H1: Female adolescent self-perceived personality will be associated with female adolescent value and lifestyle**

A chi-square test assessed the two-tailed prediction, that there would be an association between the female adolescent self-perceived personality and value and lifestyle to be significant at 0.021 as shown in Appendix B. The P value (Sig.) was significant at 0.05. Hence, there was a significant association between the female adolescent self-perceived personality and the female adolescent value and lifestyle.

### **H2: Female adolescent self-perceived personality will be associated with communication tools**

A chi-square test assessed the two-tailed prediction. The P value (Sig.) was significant at 0.05. However, the results provided evidence that the correlation between the female adolescent self-perceived personality and four variable communication tools was not significant at 0.191, 0.708, 0.513 and 0.256 as shown in Appendix B. Hence, there was not a significant association between the female adolescent self-perceived personality and the female adolescent information consumption towards communication tools (Online communication: high-street fashion brand official

websites, social networking; Off-line communication: retail stores, window displays and visual merchandising).

**H3: Online communication activities will be associated with off-line communication activities**

A chi-square test assessed the two-tailed prediction. The P value (Sig.) was significant at 0.05. However, the results provided evidence that the correlation between online communication activities and off-line communication activities was not significant at 0.820 and 0.686 as shown in Appendix B. Hence, there was not a significant association between online communication activities and off-line communication activities (retail stores and visual merchandising).

**H4: Information seeking process will be associated with communication tools**

A chi-square test assessed the two-tailed prediction. The P value (Sig) was significant at 0.05. However, the results provided evidence that the correlation between information seeking process and communication tools was not significant at 0.897, 0.685, 0.733 and 0.313 as shown in Appendix B. Thus, there was not a significant association between information seeking and communication tools both online and off-line (high-street fashion brand official websites, social networking, window displays and visual merchandising and retail stores).

**H5: Customer-brand emotional ties will be associated with communication tools**

A chi-square test assessed the two-tailed prediction. The P value (Sig) was significant at 0.05. However, the results provided evidence that the correlation between customer-brand emotional ties and communication tools was not significant at 0.434, 0.419, 0.280 and 0.486 as shown in Appendix B. Therefore, there was not a significant association between customer-brand emotional ties and communication tools both online and off-line (high-street fashion brand official websites, window displays and visual merchandising, social networking and retail stores).

The above discussion shows that there was only correlation between the female adolescent self-perceived personality and the female adolescent value and lifestyle. The findings reveal that value and lifestyle have an effect on how the female adolescent associates and perceives themselves with high-street fashion brand personalities. However, the self-perceived identity was not interrelated with communication mediums. Likewise, brand information seeking and customer-brand value and lifestyle of the female adolescent were not associated with brand communication tools. Moreover, the female adolescent activities on online and off-line communication channels were not correlated.

## 4.6 Conclusion of the Findings

The empirical studies were conducted to analyse the current problems of high-street fashion brand communications amongst the female adolescent. The principle findings construct a key concept for a conceptual model as shown in figure 4.27

Table 4.31: Comparison of key findings from qualitative and quantitative researches

| Key factors from research findings   | Literature Review | Qualitative Research | Quantitative Research |
|--|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Clearly identify missions and vision statement                                | Δ                 | Δ                    |                       |
| 2. Establish an in depth understanding of high-street fashion brand requirements | Δ                 | Δ                    |                       |
| 3. Clearly define high-street fashion brand contexts and criteria                | Δ                 | Δ                    |                       |
| 4. Outline the situation analysis of the high-street fashion market              | Δ                 |                      |                       |
| 5. Target audience understanding   | Δ                 | Δ                    |                       |
| 6. Customer self-construal and customer-brand congruence                         | Δ                 |                      | Δ                     |
| 7. Customer self-perceived personality   | Δ                 |                      | Δ                     |
| 8. Customer information source and information seeking activities                |                   | Δ                    | Δ                     |
| 9. Brand message framing   | Δ                 | Δ                    |                       |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Brand message presentation  | △ | △ |   |
| 11. Brand message mass customisation  |   | △ |   |
| 12. Brand communication mediums selection   | △ | △ |   |
| 13. Integrated brand communication strategy   | △ | △ |   |
| 14. A comprehensive brand-building communication strategy                           | △ |   |   |
| 15. Maintaining brand-building communication consistency                            | △ |   |   |
| 16. Generating customer-brand interactions by conversational dialogues              | △ | △ |   |
| 17. Building and nourishing customer-brand relationships                            | △ |   |   |
| 18. Enhance brand communication experience through emotional and sensory engagement | △ | △ |   |
| 19. Appreciate communication effect   |   | △ |   |
| 20. Establish a holistic view of brand-building communication strategy              |   | △ | △ |

1. Set objectives and create well-defined communication plan: High-street fashion brands must clearly identify missions and visions based on brand core values in order to identify the objectives of brand-building communication strategies in the encoding process. Clearly defined objectives are essential principles for a brand-building communication strategy in order to direct communication activities purposefully.

1.1 Establish an in depth understanding of high-street fashion brand requirements

1.2 Clearly define high-street fashion brand contexts and criteria

1.3 Specify the intentions of the brand communication processes

1.4 Outline the situation analysis of the high-street fashion market

2. Target audience understanding: It can be seen that the target audience as a message recipient is an influential factor which frames communication objectives with the purpose of ensuring that brand messages accurately reach the target audiences.

2.1 Develop an in depth understanding of the female adolescent

2.2 Identify meaningful interpretation of the female adolescent fashion behaviour i.e. fashion consumption and communication activities

2.3 Thoroughly understand the female adolescent desired personality towards high-street fashion consumption in order to point out customer self-construal and develop customer-brand congruence

2.4 Consider the female adolescent as a high-street fashion brand information resource

2.5 Indicate high-street fashion brand information sources amongst the female adolescent group. The various findings of the research can be categorised, as the female adolescents who were regarded as target audiences, into three groups:

2.5.1 The female adolescent dimensions: Fashion products serve the needs of self-actualisation and self-fulfilment by self-expression amongst the female adolescents.

2.5.2 The female adolescent self-perceived personality.

2.5.3 The female adolescent's information sources: Female adolescents obtain a range of high-street brand information in various ways from interaction and communication channels. Information search activity is a process where an awareness set is created.

Key findings from the research classified the female adolescent information resources as explained below:

1) Personal sources: Peers are fundamental sources which provide trustworthiness and likeability. Personal sources are the most credible resources between the female adolescents.

2) Public sources (commercial sources): Fashion media (e.g. fashion magazine), online sources and retail stores are resources providing fashion information, comment and criticism in response to high-street fashion brands.

3) Experiential sources: The information search reviewed relevant information from personal past experiences. Recognition and recall processes bring brand information back from audience's memory.

3. Brand message framing: To generate a brand communication strategy, planned messages in the encoding have to be developed to achieve the set objectives.

Messages have to carry strong impact and brand values with the purpose of capturing audiences' attention. The messages have to deliver the desirable and credible benefits based on trustworthiness.

3.1 Identify core values of high-street fashion brand language.

3.2 Aggregate high-street fashion brand packaged information.

3.3 Construct and frame brand messages based on target audience expectations and requirements.

3.4 Deliver the intentions and meanings in brand messages. The findings reveal three key components of message framing as presented below:

3.3.1 Message planning: High-street fashion products can be categorised as fast moving customer goods with low involvement. Fashion consumption is more related with emotional problem-solving as the primary received functionality of a fashion product has the same role. Moreover, decision-making about a high-street fashion product is low on rationality, according to the product characteristics which associate with feelings and images. Therefore, brand communication for the low involvement product like high-street fashion apparel should build awareness in accordance with customer-brand personality congruence together with brand values. High-street fashion brand communication needs to maintain the brand core value by consistently creating relevant brand knowledge. High-street fashion brand messages should describe brand attributes, brand experiences and brand values based on participants' shared requirements.

According to the nature of fashion products, high-street fashion brand messages should be emotional appeals. Desirable added value is associated with self-interpretation or self-construal, experiences and shared emotions. The findings show that preferred communications amongst the female adolescents tend to be more effective.

3.3.2 Message content design: Apart from persuasively transmitting brand information to target audiences, high-street fashion brand messages should share the mutual understanding between the brand and the female adolescent. Content analysis should be conducted in order to transmit an intended message correctly. The findings reveal that a brand message has to carry and deliver brand knowledge and emotional involvement. The functions of a planned brand message need to reflect the meanings of the high-street fashion brand as shown below.

3.3.3 Message presentation: High-street fashion brand message effectiveness depends upon the presentations as well as message contents. Two-way communications that allow the female adolescent to participate and interact with the brand are potentially more effective. The dialogue provides an invaluable feedback for the sender to tailor the message to fit audience information requirements. In addition, brand message attractiveness is represented by the synergy of design, creativity of the visualisation of the message in relation to the aspect of fashion relation and the latest fashion trend.



3.3.4 Message mass customisation: One message is unable to fit all audiences according to the differences of message receiver characteristics. It is a process of brand added value customisation in order to fulfil individual information requirements. Hence, customised brand messages are based on audience behaviour interpretation. In addition, customer-brand relationships can be promoted concurrently to individual audience's needs.

3.3.5 Message differentiation: High-street fashion brand messages must create differences in the audience's mindset by providing different kinds of brand value. Brand messages should deliver differential benefits which allow audiences to distinguish the values from the crowd. Hence, a high-street fashion brand message must seek a value proposition that match the requirements of target audiences more convincingly than competitors. Finally, the perceived value of differential brand message propositions cause target audiences to prefer the brand's offer to those of others.

4. Brand communication mediums selection: Communication mediums are the places where audiences will view and will process planned brand messages contained in these tools. The brand communication strategist needs to plan what communication media will best convey the planned message format to target audiences and prospects. High-street fashion brands must acknowledge and comprehend the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of each communication application. The capability to understand communication tools primary advantages allows the brand to exploit those benefits to gain more persuasive impact and positive attention of the target audiences and prospects.

4.1 Understand the strengths and weaknesses of communication tools

4.2 Recognise the potential impact of communication tools

4.3 Generate collaboration between all participants in the encoding process

4.4 Incorporate high-street fashion brand strategies directly to brand message plans and communication selection

4.5 Determine the shared requirements between high-street fashion brand (message sender), the female adolescent (message receiver) and communication mediums

4.6 Identify the perception of how high-street fashion brands should be presented

4.7 Envisage the key features of brand communication tools

4.8 Decide to what extent each communication function will be exploited

5. Implement an integrated communication strategy: Every communication medium has own limitations, therefore, an integrated communication allows the limitation of one selection medium to be counterbalanced by the strength of another in the communication combination.

5.1 Indicate the criteria of high-street fashion brand communication strategy

5.2 Reformulate the communication strategy based on fashion cycle timeframe

5.3 Build up an association between personal traits, the communication strategy and the brand-building plan

5.4 Distinguish high-street fashion brands from other fashion categories

5.5 Point out key characteristics of the high-street fashion brand

6. A comprehensive brand-building communication strategy rather than independent promotional mediums: The positive impact of brand-building communication in the encoding process can be maximised by a meaningful understanding of all stakeholders. High-street fashion brands should embrace the brand communication dimensions of customer-brand contact points. A holistic view of planned messages should be derived from integrating all stakeholders' requirements into an integrated communication program. Brand message sender, brand message, brand medium, target audience and information effect are the principle elements of brand communication in the encoding process. Besides interrelating these key informants, brand communicators must also decide to what extent each role will contribute to communication in the encoding process. Moreover, it is essential for brand-building communication to ensure that the brand core competencies are properly packaged and delivered to audiences.

7. Maintaining brand-building communication consistency: A brand-building communication plan must be consistent with brand messages, brand strategy and communication application in order to avoid brand information confusion. The consistency of the brand message executed strategy must be reinforced by communication reach and frequency. With the purpose of distinct brand knowledge in an audience's mind, the continuity and connection of the brand message component in

communication mediums should to be considered. Brand core values and communication objectives are the principles to maintain strategic consistency.

## 8. Generating customer-brand interactions by conversational dialogues

8.1 Encourage a mutual understanding between sender and receiver

8.2 Define the information exchange process

8.3 Involve customers in the brand communication plan

8.4 Create purposeful dialogues

9. Building and nourishing customer-brand relationships: With the strong customer-brand relationship, the communication credibility will increase in audiences' minds. The findings show that the female adolescent receives brand information from various sources rather than the brand itself. Hence, in order to attract and maintain the female adolescent's interests, it is essential to generate strong relationships and ongoing interactions with key audiences by both online and off-line communication channels. Within, the time compressed high-street fashion industry, the best way to achieve a successful communication strategy is to have consistent and in depth interactions with the female adolescents in order to comprehend their changing needs and concerns. The more feedbacks and interactions are gained, the more integrated the audiences will be in the brand communication strategy. Ultimately, the value-adding role of positive customer-brand relationships is generated by a two-way brand-building communication plan.

9.1 Promote co-creation of high-street fashion brand value based on customer-brand interaction.

9.2 Embrace audience feedback as a key informant.

9.3 Clearly interpret audience feedback in order to improve customer-brand relationships.

10. Enhance brand communication experience through emotional and sensory engagement: Persuasive brand experiences can be generated through brand communications which relate and connect audiences' lifestyles. High-street fashion brand information can deliver desirable experiences through integrated brand communication strategies which stimulate emotional engagement. The female adolescent requires emotional information drivers which provide creativity,

entertainment and an educational atmosphere. Sensory experiences can be induced by sound, touch, taste and smell. As a result, the emotional engagement creates affective brand experiences which creates brand knowledge in audience's minds. The range of integrated brand communication helps a high-street fashion brand convey brand experience messages. For example, a communicative experiential environment on an off-line distribution channel is a combination of retail store and in-store communication that not only transmits brand added value, but also motivates audiences to interact with the brand. Likewise, online communication channels create brand experiences by replacing live experiences and entertaining experiences through audio, animation, image and video. It can be assumed that high-street fashion brand connectors are emotional and sensory components which complement brand communication experiences.

11. Communication effect: In order to influence an intended audience, the importance of communication effects should be considered as an integrated brand communication plan. A high-street fashion brand should highlight stimulating factors of brand message contributions under particular communication contexts. Relevant factors that might affect the desired response from audiences must be addressed in order to develop high-street fashion communication contents. Changes in knowledge, attitude and behaviour depend upon the influential degree of the communication strategy. It is essential for high-street fashion brands to clearly define what the purposeful impact of the communication effect has on target audiences and prospects. Valuing the effects of brand communication strategy enables a high-street fashion brand to build up an alternative plan and improve communication efficiency. High-street fashion brand communication efforts aim to produce effects broadly amongst aggregates of individuals, so the communication strategy should view these individuals as the entity to be changed. With the purpose of a well-defined communication effect, a high-street fashion brand needs to maintain the communication effects which arouse interest by conveying brand information that convinces audiences to show considerable interest. Ultimately, the communication effect can lead intended audiences to generate other communications within the group. The effect can then cause Word Of Mouth (WOM) and viral communication which might lead to a greater level of brand message persuasion since personal communication sources are regarded as the most powerful information resources amongst the female adolescents.

12. Establish a holistic view of brand-building communication strategy which empowers brand equity: High-street fashion brand-building communication is based upon tailored information which directly enhances its benefits. The brand needs to build the credibility in its communication strategy in order to develop a value proposition in the audiences' minds. The outcome of a positive customer-brand relationship then leads to a desired perceived brand value in terms of its attributes, aspirations and experience.

12.1 Clarify the brand core value.

12.2 Understand how brand communication can create the value in audiences' minds.

12.3 Maximise and reinforce the value in the brand communication strategy.

12.4 Develop tangible and intangible assets through the brand communication.

strategy

12.5 Improve a comprehensive value proposition in the brand communication strategy

12.6 Analyse brand added value in the brand communication strategy.

12.7 Evaluate the result of audience exposure in response to the brand communication strategy.

However, bombarded and overloaded brand messages cause audiences to block and screen out commercial brand messages. The female adolescent finds the brand message which most fits their needs. Therefore, message interpretation may be perceived differently based on individual differences. Moreover, there are certain constraints that currently limit the brand communication plan of high-street fashion brands. These conditions are: 1) the short time frame of fashion changes control the length of the brand communication plan; 2) the flow of brand information moves rapidly through communication technology which causes difficulties for a brand to control the negative messages; 3) the rise of customisation and personalisation amongst the female adolescents affect the high-street fashion changes and high-street fashion brand information. In this research these constraints are considered as fixed conditions of the new conceptual framework of the brand-building communication strategy.

## **Chapter 5 Model Formulation**

This chapter clarifies the procedure of the conceptual model formulation, which can be divided into four phases. Firstly, the requirement summary in this research is explained. Secondly, the chosen creative techniques and soft systems methodology are chosen to formulate the conceptual model. Thirdly, the method of formulation is illustrated. Finally, the new conceptual model is described.

### **5.1 Conceptual Model Requirements**

According to the aims and objectives of this research, the principle findings from qualitative findings and quantitative findings give rise to the requirements which must be addressed in the conceptual model of high-street fashion brand-building communication as presented below.

- 1) Proposing a high-street fashion brand core value-based communication on the basis of shared requirements of all participants in the encoding process.
- 2) Developing a high-street fashion brand communication as a platform for the female adolescent to convert brand information to brand knowledge in order to strengthen the brand-building strategy.
- 3) Encouraging the target audiences to get involved and engage in the process of brand-building communication towards customer-brand congruence in the encoding process.

Moreover, Wilson (1991) described the main concerns before a new conceptual model can be developed: a) what is the study boundary, b) what interactions are undertaken within the boundary, and c) what activities are exhibited within this area. Accordingly, the required clarification of the conceptual model of high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process amongst the female adolescent is shown in figure 5.1. The illustration shows a) brand communication in the encoding process is the boundary of the study because a decoded interpretation is unpredictable based on individual differences, b) the interaction between a high-street fashion brand as a message sender and female adolescent as a message receiver has been examined, and c) brand-building communication strategy has been presented as an area of the study.

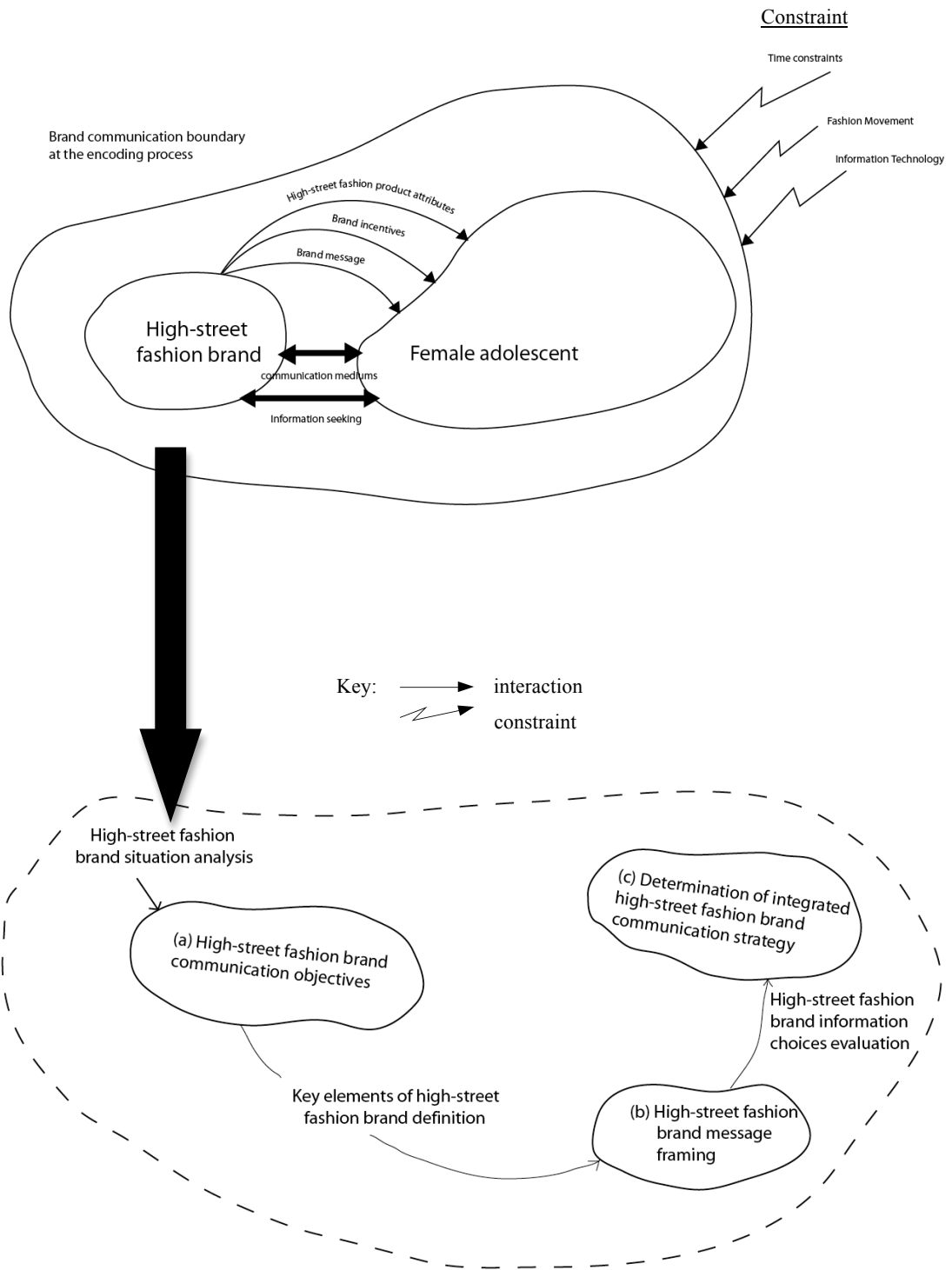


Figure 5.1: Boundary of high-street fashion brand communication in the encoding process activities.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the internal activities of the high-street fashion brand communication in the encoding process together with the external factors and

constraints that have an effect on the system. It is clear that a high-street fashion brand needs to determine how the brand can be built through a range of communications in order to fulfil its target audience information requirements by formulating the structure of a brand message framework and communication strategy.

Based on the above requirements, the new conceptual model needs to extend the structure of the existing communication models, because of the characteristics of message sender and message receiver. Not only high-street fashion changes move fast, but also the female adolescent requires a rapid flow of brand information, hence, a basic guideline for communication and brand-building models needs to be integrated for use under certain circumstances. Moreover, the generic models focused on how messages are delivered from sender to receiver rather than the process of brand-building creation from brand messages to target audiences which are essential for a brand-building communication strategy.

It is understandable that a new conceptual model requires not only an extended framework, but also a new communicative approach in the encoding process with the constraints of a fast moving market and short time to market. Whilst the basic model illustrates elementary participants in information processing, the new model directs brand-building structure through a communication strategy in the high-street fashion market amongst the female adolescent by developing a brand value proposition. Hence, it can be seen that the new model will converge with the existing model. With the purpose of integrating brand-building strategy with encoded message framing within the compressed timeframe, the new conceptual model concentrates on the effect of brand message components from the key informant to target audience criteria, such as enhancing the persuasiveness of a fashion brand message with an integrated communication programme. Consequently, this model will not cover the individual message interpretation in the decoding process, e.g. audience response, positive or negative feedback.

With the aim of developing a comprehensive brand value driven by an encoding process, a soft system methodology technique was adopted for the procedure of the new conceptual model formulation. As a brand communication process is involved with the human situation in which the sender engages in a certain communicative



effort purposefully, so, this action will be best identified by the process of the soft system thinking. According to Checkland and Scholes (1999), the concept of modelling purposeful activity – in order to discover real world action – before modelling can commence choices have to be made and stated. Thus, given the complexity of any situation in human affairs, there will be a large number of human activity system models which could be constructed; so the first decision to be made concerns which ones are probably the most relevant (or insightful) in exploring the situation. The soft system thinking technique is not only applied to help the brand thoroughly investigate the meaningful communication action, but is also employed to formulate the new conceptual model. The procedure of soft system methodology technique is illustrated in the following section.

To accomplish the second requirement, the new conceptual model must focus on the stage of brand message structure and customer-brand congruence rather than portraying a communication system like most generic models.

Ultimately, to achieve the last requirement, the interaction between a brand and its target audiences and the brand's contact touch points must be clarified in order to create the required effect.

## **5.2 Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)**

High-street fashion brand communication in the encoding process is involved in the process of human situation in which the brand intends to communicate with target audiences and prospects purposefully. It is clear that a high-street fashion brand and the female adolescent both simultaneously play the role of message senders and message receivers. Therefore, soft systems methodology is considered as a suitable approach to examine the research system. According to Checkland (1981), soft system methodology identifies all situations in which we undertake action research with a human situation in which people are trying to take purposeful actions which are meaningful for them. This has led to the concept of modelling purposeful human activities which together can take advantage of the emergent property of purposefulness. Before modelling can begin, decisions have to be made and stated; so the first choice to be made concerns which ones are probably the most useful (or

insightful) in exploring the situation. Checkland and Scholes (1999) developed the concept of constructing models of concepts of purposeful activity which appeared useful for making progress in tackling the problem situation since the obvious problems required solution. The best method to continue would be to create an initial handful of models. Skyttner (2001) supported that soft systems methodology is a holistic approach for problem solving. Therefore, this research applied soft system methodology as an approach to justify the research key finding for model development.

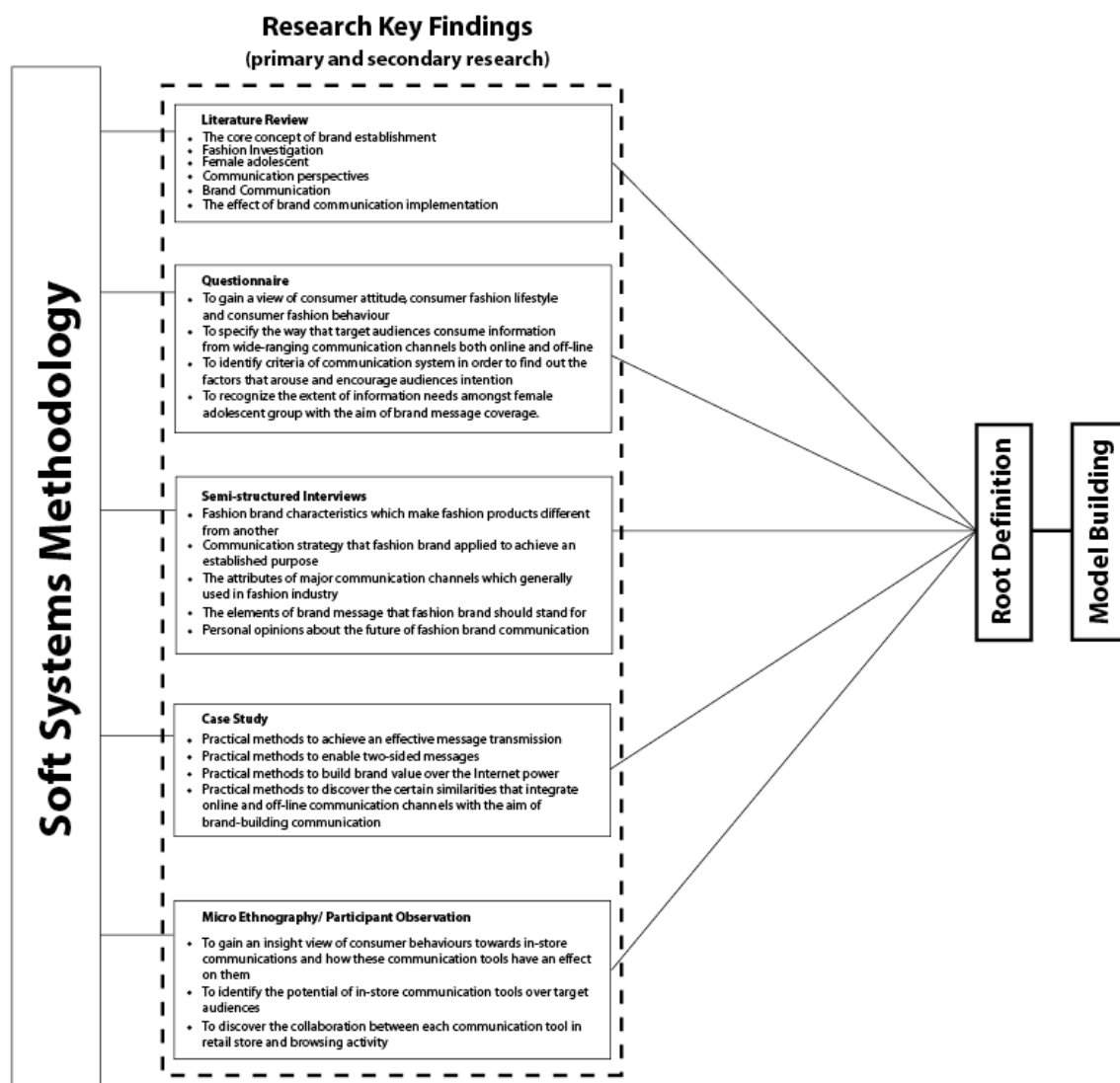


Figure 5.2: Applying the soft systems methodology approach at the beginning

### 5.2.1 The structure of systems

In order to develop the new conceptual model, the past literatures on systems thinking were reviewed in order to define the concept of brand communication structure.

Wilson (1991) explained that the concept of resolution level is essential to the development of systems' models. This is best understood through the concept of a systems hierarchy. A system is a selection of resolution levels or the choice of levels of detail in which the research needs to describe the activities.

Waddington (1977) suggested that a hierarchical scheme is a feasible descriptive structure of how human association operates – what is its strategy, what are its tactics, and who gives orders about what?. The hierarchical chain of command diagram is a basic structure depicting the human relationships entity. The hierarchies distinguish various levels of operation for the purpose of analysing the complex structure into a number of more elementary units by studying the relationships of these units to discover the inner-relations which can be divided into a few separate classes with few intermediaries. Checkland (1981) added that hierarchies are characterised by processes of control functioning at the interfaces levels. Hierarchy theory is about the basic differences between one level of complexity and another. Its ultimate aim is to give an account of the relationships between various levels and an account of how perceived hierarchies are established: what generates the levels, what separates them, and what links them? However, whatever form it finally takes, it seems likely to be founded upon the fact that emergent properties linked with a set of elements at one level in a hierarchy are linked with constraints of freedom of those elements. As a human activity system, high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process was defined as a system of framing a fashion brand message, to deliver planned information and to generate a required effect amongst the female adolescent based upon this research point of view. Consequently, the hierarchy structure was considered as a best technique to illustrate the correlation of encoded message transmission from the generator to the end receiver. From the elementary components of brand-building units, the hierarchy system produced a comprehensible diagram which clearly demonstrated how certain brand message components work together. According to the hierarchical scheme, the structure of a new conceptual model was built upon the interaction between the units of communication in the

encoding process together with brand-building communication component parts which were based on the research key findings.

### 5.2.2 Processes in the systems

Since several literatures and the research findings reveal that a high-street fashion brand moves rapidly in order to deliver the latest fashion innovation information, hence, the brand communication must proceed under the short time constraint. With the purpose of developing high-street fashion brand communication to convert brand information to brand knowledge as a requirement of the new conceptual model, time is of fundamental significance which alters the communication effect.

According to Waddington (1977), in an open system, things are moved into the system from the outside, are processed, and something different is moved outwards again. Therefore, the brand communication process is an open system in which attitude changes will grow over time. Windahl, Signiter and Olsen (2009) suggested that the time frame comprises of two time lines, one for the communication stimuli and another for expected and / or desired effects as shown in figure 5.3.



Figure 5.3: Determining the overall time frame of a communication effort (Windahl, Signiter and Olsen, 2009)

However, the short time span of the high-street fashion movement is an uncontrollable constraint that influences the functional role of the brand communication plan. Therefore, the time compressed duration of the communication is the key factor for a brand to consider. Lang and Lang (1985) stated that immediate

effects often fade quite quickly. People tend to forget, and new communications soon get their interest. It is important for communication planners, if they desire long-lasting effects, to incorporate ongoing communication efforts into their strategies.

It can be seen that the conversion point at which the brand information develops to brand knowledge is considered as an end-state goal which the system moves towards. A number of literatures define high-street fashion brands as a fad. Therefore, high-street fashion brand-building communication has to create brand value drivers to enable audience involvement by brand knowledge in preference to sales impulse. With the aim to fulfill this need, the growth of brand information transmission over the period of time needs to be looked at since attitude changes towards fashion brands may be developed over time. Waddington (1977) explained that the rise can only go on indefinitely when there are infinite spaces and raw materials available, although the growing system soon begins to be constrained by the size of the container. However, the audience mindset is unlimited and open-ended, so, the brand information can exponentially develop for a time as shown by Waddington's growth system as an S-shaped curve.

### **5.2.3 Feed-back in systems**

A high-street fashion brand plays the role as a main message provider who encodes brand information to create changes in the female adolescent's mind. On the other hand, the female adolescent is both message receiver and content creator. Hence, the relationship between the participants is formed in the terms of dialogue and Friend and Jessop (1987) explained that the dialogue model comprises of a continuing interchange of information and influence across the interface between two systems.

Waddington (1977) suggested that the hierarchical structure gets divided out into a various quantity of branches which go off, dividing and dividing again, into a large quantity of various end results. There are interconnections between the branches and twigs, which is called a network. If one of the channels of communications becomes constrained by unbranched sequences, the flow will just circumnavigate it, along one or more of the alternative pathways the network provides. The idea of brand

communication in the encoding process can be best described by the amount of information measurement theory.

### **5.3 Problem Analysis: Finding out the problem content**

Based upon a particular view of the problem-solving, a clear definition of a problem situation can be described as follows:

- 1) The female adolescent is the message recipient whom a brand needs to respond to and supply her information requirements since the real value of the brand resides in her mind. Hence, there are needs of customer-brand shared requirements to be met in order to develop successful brand message execution strategies and generate customer brand value of high street fashion brands.
- 2) The participants in the system consist of the brand message planner (high-street fashion brand) and the brand message recipient (female adolescent). The scope of the problem definition concentrates on brand communication in the encoding process within a compressed timeframe, in which fashion movement and information technology are considered as constraints.
- 3) There is a lack of concentration of brand-building in communication in the encoding process. A high-street fashion brand mainly focuses on fashion promotion, fashion changes (i.e., style and trend movement) and fashion distribution in order to arouse product interest rather than brand proposition.
- 4) The segregation of fashion communication tools has an effect on brand message consistency.

### Encoding Process

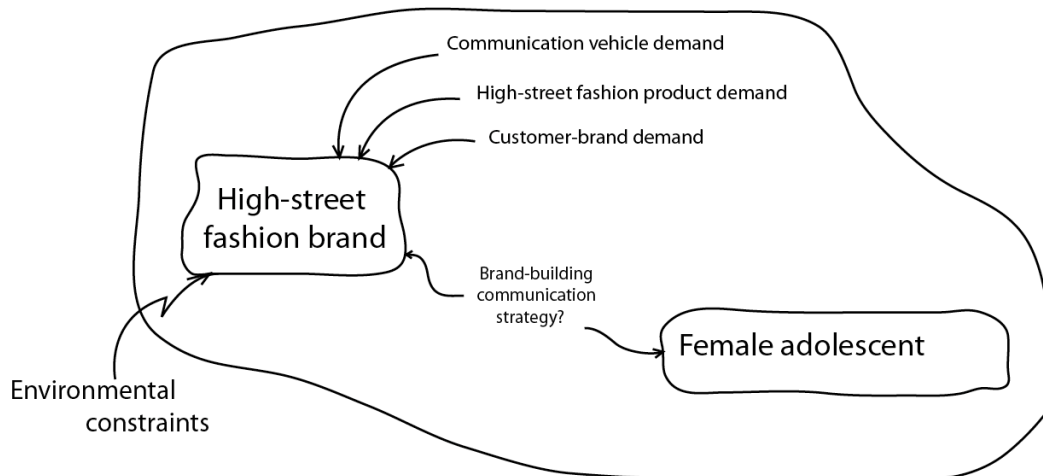


Figure 5.4: A problem situation expressed

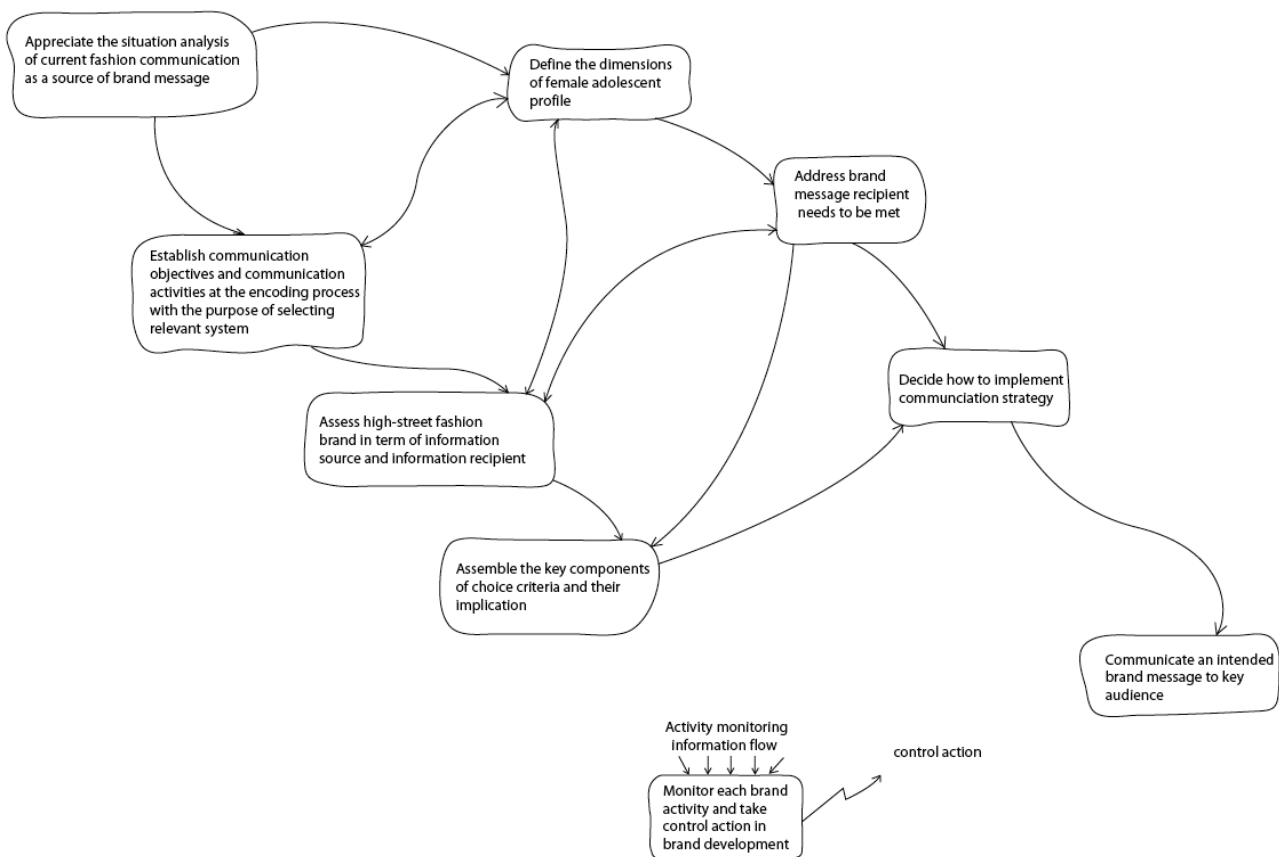


Figure 5.5: A problem – solving system

According to the pictorial problem situation above, there are a number of influences upon the process of brand information delivery: a high street fashion brand needs to match the female adolescent information requirements, a high-street fashion brand message transmission needs to match the communication medium's vehicle, communication medium's vehicle needs to match the female adolescent information seeking processes, and interactivities between a high-street fashion brand and the female adolescent in the encoding process.

It can be summarised that a problem situation raises the question of how the structure and process relate to each other within the situation investigated. Wilson (1991) clarified a problem as any expression of concern about a situation. According to the high-street fashion brand problem situation, it can be seen that such a brand represents the statements of two roles. A high-street fashion brand is at the same time, both the problem owner and the problem solver as presented in figure 5.5.

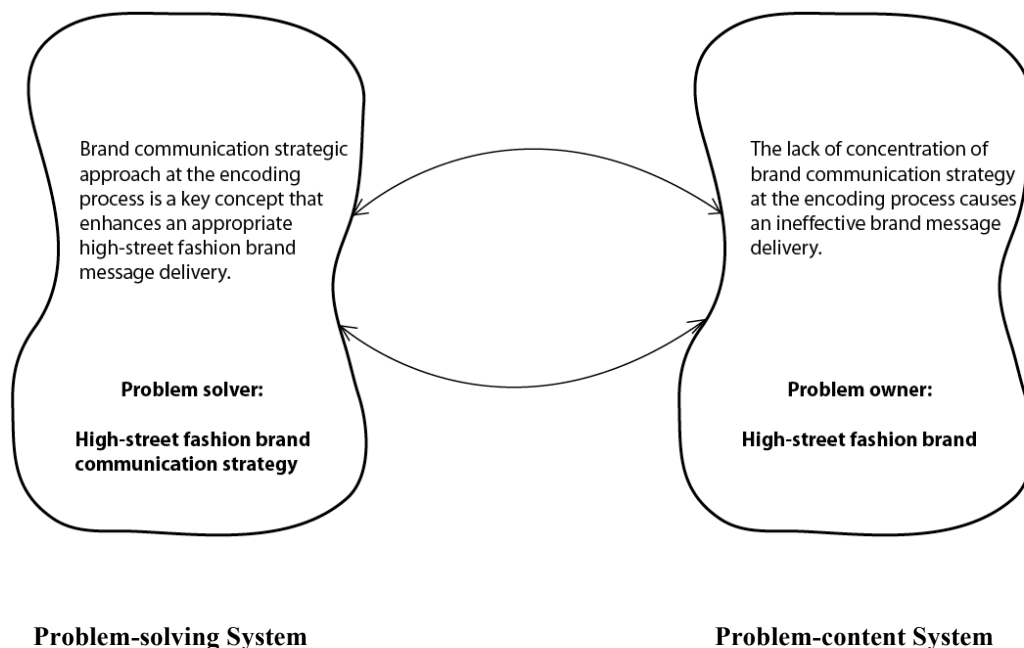


Figure 5.6: A view of high-street fashion brand problem solving

## 5.4 Choosing Relevant Systems

The relevant system of this research is based on the task to develop brand-building through the process of communication within the boundary of the encoding stage. The





Due to the fact that a basic concept of Human Activity System (HAS) is that it is a transformation process, the element T or transformation process has to be shown as a core of the root definitions (Wilson, 1991).

#### 5.4.2 Root Definition formulation: CATWOE

The definitions of the root definition elements are summarised with reference to a set of letters which are easy to remember in the mnemonic CATWOE (Checkland and Scholes, 1999).

| Consideration                                      | Amplification  |
|--|--|
| (1) Ownership (O)                                  | Ownership of the system, control, concern or sponsorship   |
| (2) Actor (A)                                      | The agents who carry out, or cause to be carried out, the transformation processes or activities of the system |
| (3) Transformation (T)                             | A transformation process carried out by the system   |
| (4) Customer (C)                                   | Client (of the activity), beneficiary, or victim, the sub-system affected by the main activities               |
| (5) Environmental and wider system constraints (E) | Elements outside the system which it takes as given  |
| (6) Weltanschauung (W)                             | The worldview which makes this T meaningful in context   |

Table 5.1: The set of CATWOE elements (Checkland, 1981)

Wilson (1991) added that the root definition is an explanation of what the system is and the conceptual model is an explanation of what it has to do to be that system.

Checkland and Scholes (1999) stated that “CATWOE is a method of explaining an

interpretation of what exists or some ideas relevant to what exists”. According to the CATWOE, the root definitions of this research are clearly specified as shown in the figure 5.7.

Thus, a root definition relevant to fashion brand-building communication based upon this research boundary could start as follows; A high-street fashion brand-building communication system in the encoding process amongst a group of the female adolescents.

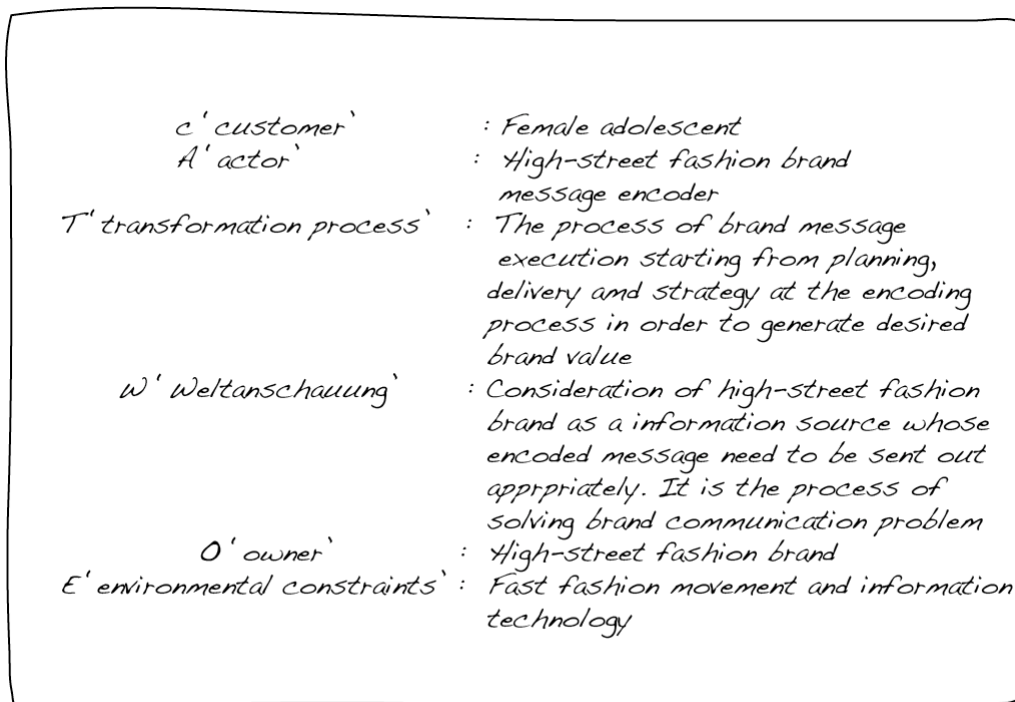


Figure 5.8: A root definition, CATWOE of high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process

## 5.5 Model Building

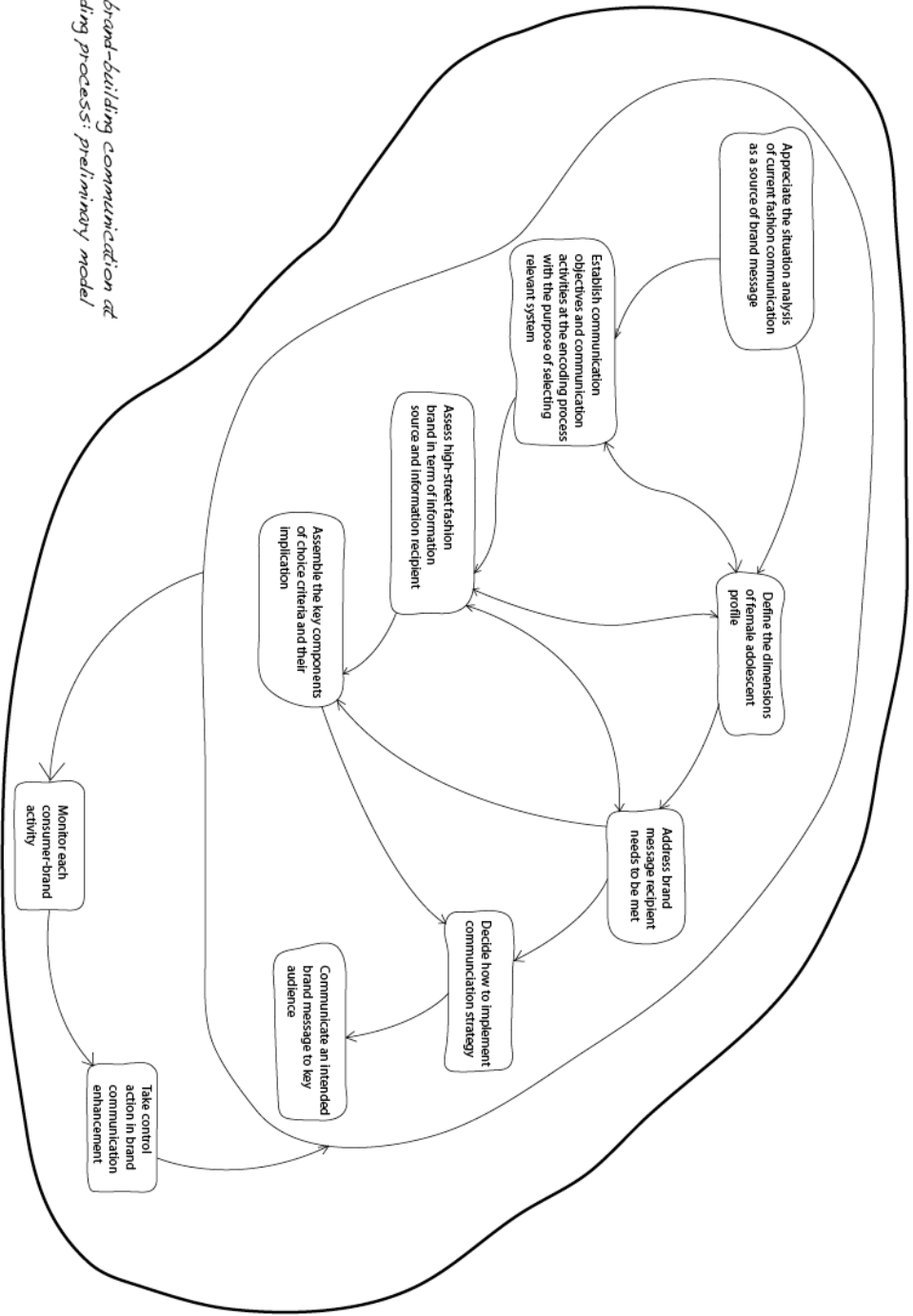
To put together the minimum required activities to satisfy the needs of the root definition and CATWOE, modelling needs the formulation of an opinion so as to answer an original question for which it was produced. Consequently, a model is the explicit interpretation of one’s understanding of a situation. It may be stated in symbols or words, although it is mainly a description of entities, processes or

attributes and the relationships between them. A conceptual model, therefore, is obtained from a root definition with 100% commitment to a single Weltanschauung (Checkland and Scholes, 1999). The use of CATWOE supports the research to get a meaningful definition of a high-street fashion brand-building communication system in the encoding process. Consequently, in order to develop a new conceptual model based on the definition, three principles are needed to build brand value through the communication process which are:

- (1) Decide how a high-street fashion brand can generate changes in a target audience's mindset by the means of communication
- (2) Implement a brand-building communication strategy
- (3) Manage communication in the encoding process

An initial stage in conceptual model development is to construct a high-street fashion brand-building communication system in the encoding process system in terms of eight subsystems. According to the Key findings and Discussion in Chapter four, the conceptual model (at the first level of resolution) consisted of the following activities:

- (a) Know the current situation of high-street fashion brand communication strategy as a source of information encoder
- (b) Establish communication objectives and communication activities in the encoding process in order to gain a clear picture of communication direction
- (c) Evaluate information resources required to build a high-street fashion brand communication structure
- (d) Define the dimensions of the female adolescent profile
- (e) Describe brand information needs amongst a group of the female adolescents
- (f) Assemble the key components of selection criteria of brand communication in the encoding process
- (g) Decide the communication strategic implementation in the encoding process
- (h) Deliver intended brand messages in the encoding process
- (i) Monitor and control brand communication activities in order to achieve the research requirement



*The brand-building communication at encoding process: preliminary model*

Figure 5.9: A preliminary model of first resolution level

These subsystems are chosen according to the conceptual model requirements. To develop a final conceptual model, it is necessary for the research to analyse all of the communication activities of the high-street fashion brand. The findings of successful high-street fashion brands i.e. Topshop and H&M are employed as illustrative examples in order to build up the generic proposed model for a high-street fashion brand. The brand communication strategies that Topshop and H&M target to a group of female adolescents outline the framework of the proposed conceptual model as follows.

- (1) A system to understand the current situation of the high-street fashion industry and fashion communication approaches in order to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the communication strategy. The analysis then leads the high-street fashion brand to comprehend the information requirements within the fashion industry.

### **System 1: High-street fashion brand clarification**

The main characteristic of high-street fashion is its fast movement in order to follow up the current and latest trends with the purpose to gain fashion customer attention and arouse fashion customer consumption needs. High-street fashion manipulates much of the female adolescent market with fast fashion as a key driver. A high-street fashion product is regarded as a low involvement product that a customer can purchase frequently and continually in response to a competitive price strategy. High-street fashion brands as mass market fashion could not fulfil individual self-expression needs especially in a group of the female adolescents because of its homogeneous function. However, communication strategy has been considered as an approach to promote fashion innovation and fashion changes (i.e. style and trend) with a smaller amount of brand building concentration. A high-street fashion brand currently greatly employs retailing strategy as a principle for communication activities compared to other communication mediums.

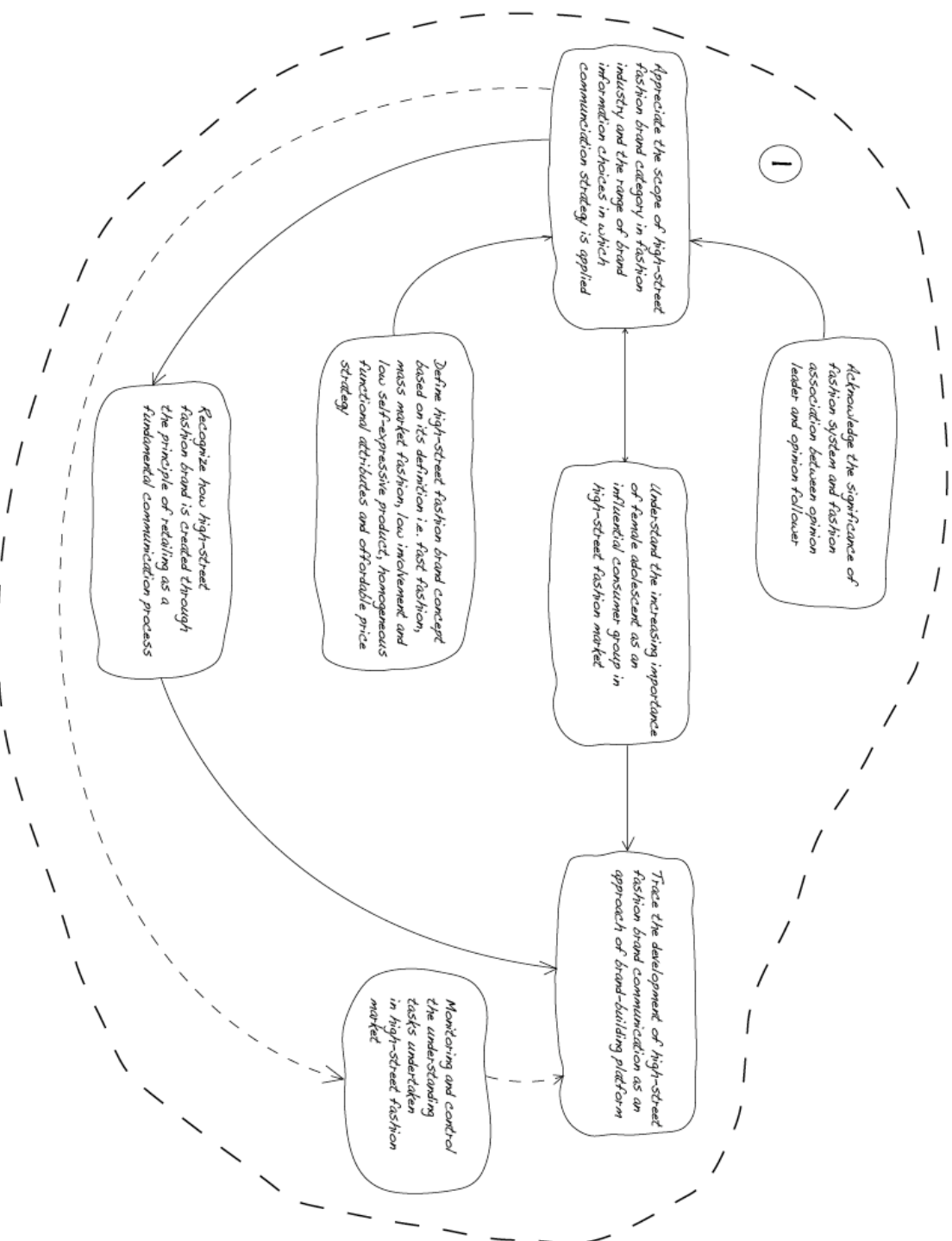


Figure 5.10: Conceptual model of the high-street fashion brand clarification subsystem

- (2) A system to establish a set of communication objectives and communication activities in the encoding process which aims to achieve the holistic view of high-street fashion brand communication strategy.

## System 2: Establish high-street fashion brand communication objectives and activities

In order to achieve the optimal requirements to be met by means of the brand communication strategy, the current problems of a high-street fashion brand need to be addressed first. The research pointed out that the main problems within high-street fashion are (a) a high-street fashion brand proceeds under time constraints, (b) a high-street fashion brand overlooks the importance of self-construal, (c) lack of brand identity is the barrier which causes indifferent brand personality amongst high-street fashion brands, and (d) the need for an integrated competitive strategy between a high-street fashion brand and communication application.

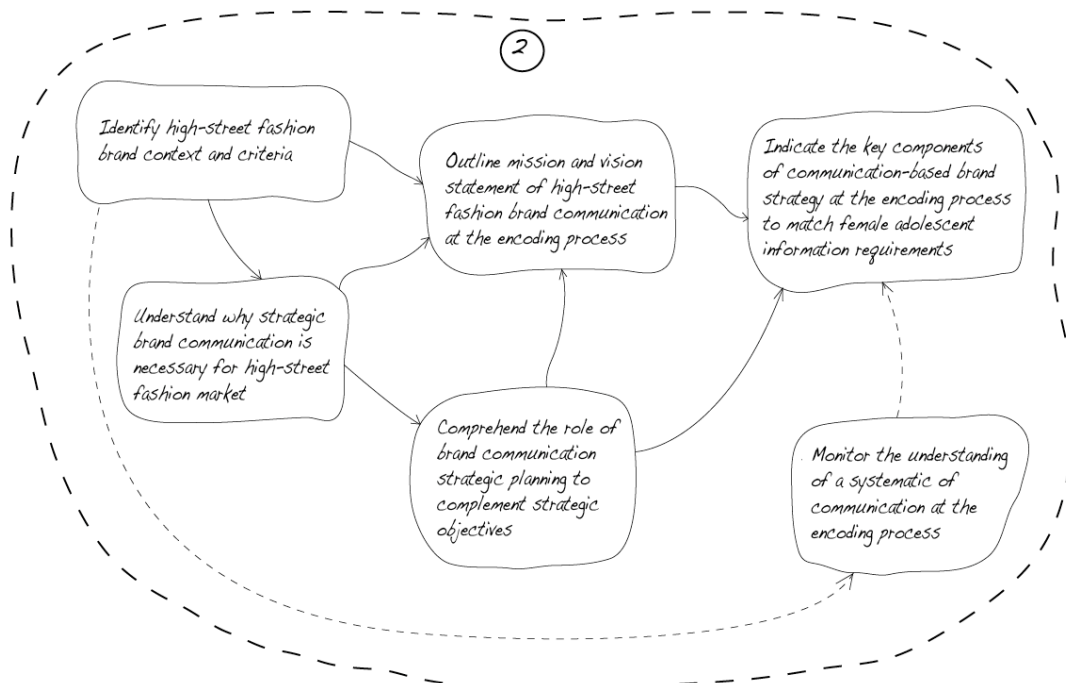


Figure 5.11: Conceptual model of high-street fashion brand communication objectives and activities establishment subsystem



(3) A system to evaluate information resources where a high-street fashion brand requires to carry out the successful encoded communication structure.

**System 3: Obtain and use brand information resources**

The relevant activities for obtaining brand information resources are limited within the context of high-street fashion brands and the female adolescent association. The techniques for acquiring brand information resources are through the processes of brand-building strategy and consumer-brand contact points by means of communication. Further information resources could possibly be obtained from fashion newness and information technology drivers. According to the research findings, brand information resources are based on how to solve the above mentioned problems.

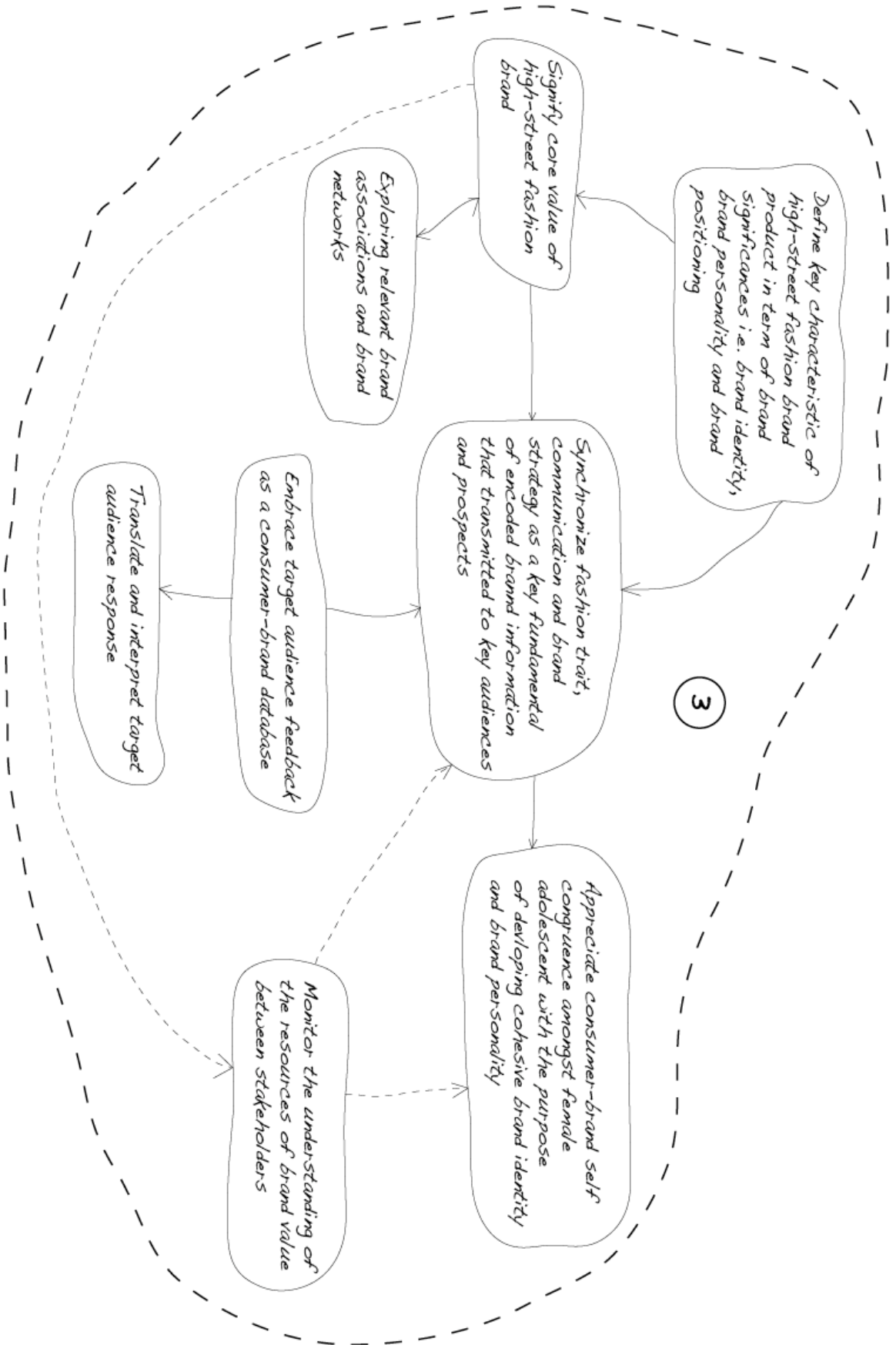


Figure 5.12: Conceptual model to obtain and use brand information resources subsystem

- (4) A system to define the female adolescent behaviour and female adolescent requirements as an audience database with the purpose of framing appropriate brand messages to fulfil their needs.

**System 4: Acknowledge dimensions of the female adolescent behaviour**

Communication influences have a greater effect on young female customers. The female adolescent is an early adopter who actively seeks for new innovations. The female adolescent can be seen as an impulse buyer. The female adolescent views fashion consumption as an entertainment and a self-expression where the extent of her activities start from a browsing activity to a post-purchase activity. Accordingly, the research deliberately examines the female adolescent as a key audience by identifying her needs, characteristics, motivation, lifestyle and behaviour in response to brand information consumption.

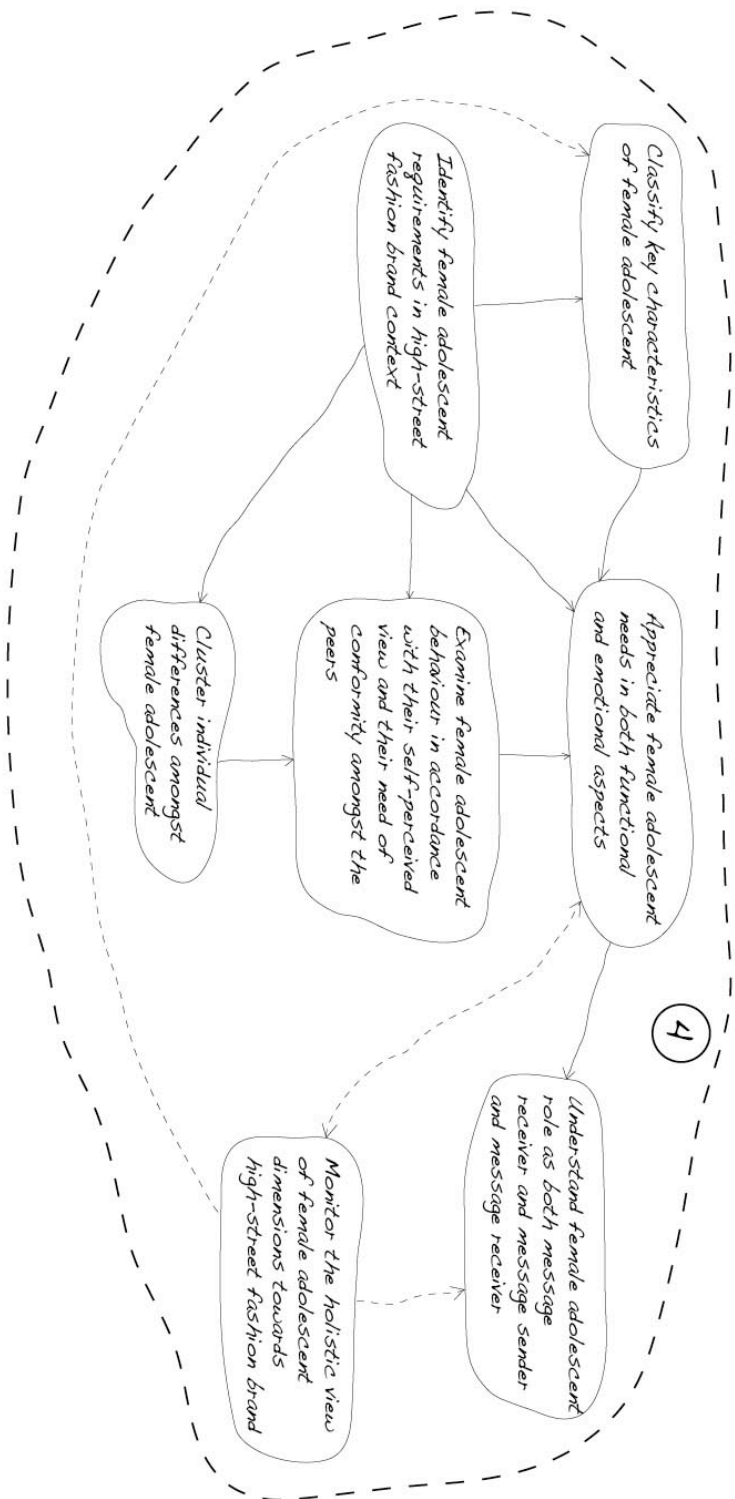


Figure 5.13: Conceptual model of dimensions of the female adolescent behaviour acknowledgement subsystem

(5) A system to describe the demands of high-street fashion brand information amongst a group of the female adolescents.

**System 5: Description of the female adolescent brand information consumption**

In the encoding process, the assessment of the female adolescent brand information consumption results from the process of the female adolescent key characteristic classification. The main characteristics of the female adolescent indicate a key informant of creating or visualising encoded brand messages. However, the main concern of the female adolescent associates self-construal, self-expressive and individuality with the demand for fashion apparel with a well-publicised tool which assists them to be part of the cool group.

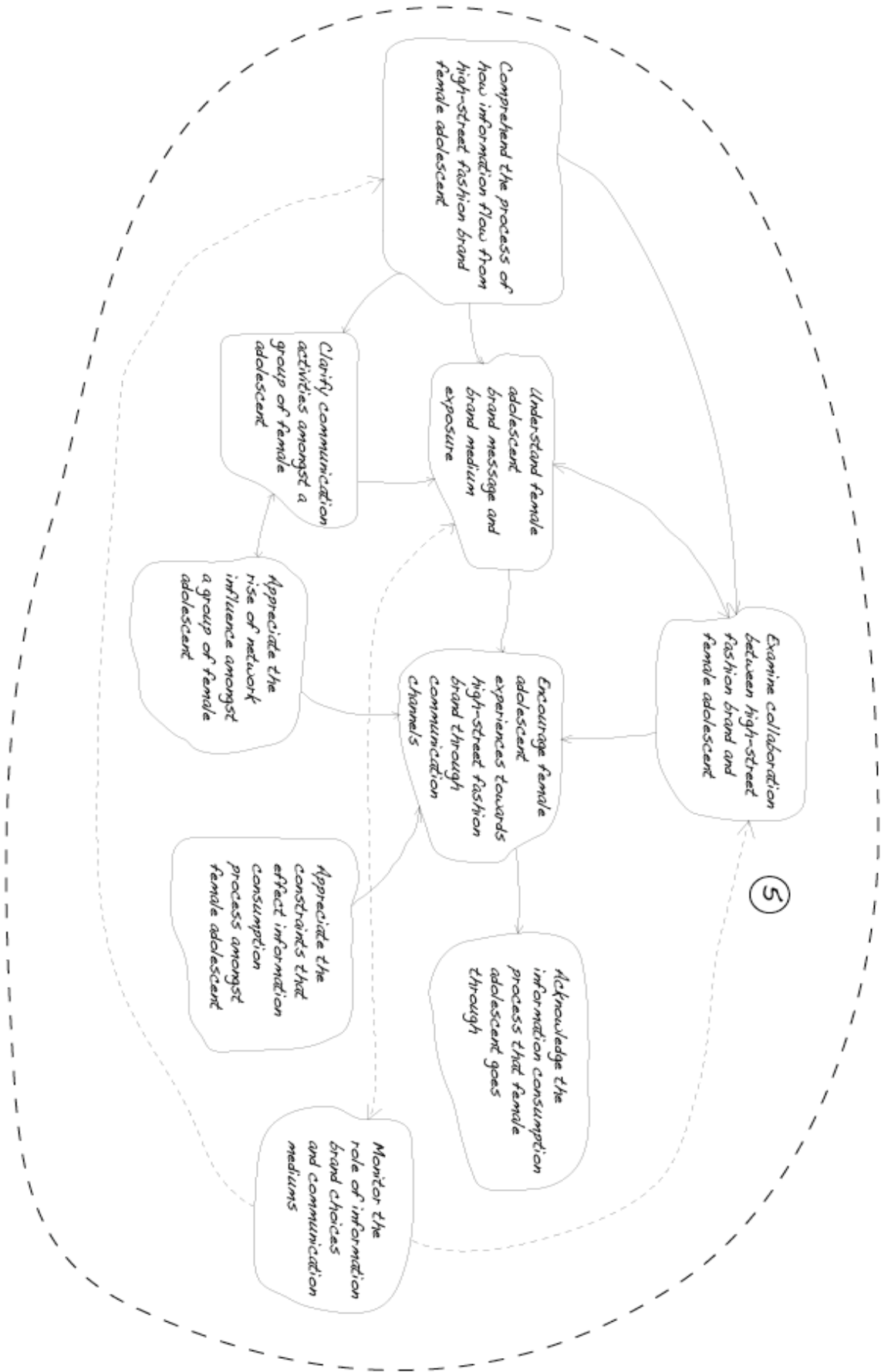


Figure 5.14: Conceptual model of female adolescent brand information consumption description subsystem

(6) A system to assemble the key components of relevant choices of brand communication in the encoding process.

**System 6: Assembly of brand communication key components**

To incorporate brand communication key components, the high-street fashion brand core value must be clearly identified. A brand communicator needs to acknowledge the value that a brand provides for both the female adolescent and the high-street fashion brand organisation. To thoroughly comprehend high-street fashion brand value, it is essential to distinguish the different valuations that the communication strategist and the target audience place on the brand. The value of the brand truly resides in customers' minds, thus, brand communication key components need to deliver brand value propositions and brand inducements which lead to the positive brand valuation. The core idea focuses on how communication in the encoding process can build and enhance the brand through audience perceptions and preferences. The synergy of the high-street fashion brand strategy and communications has to be integrated in the brand-building communication programme.

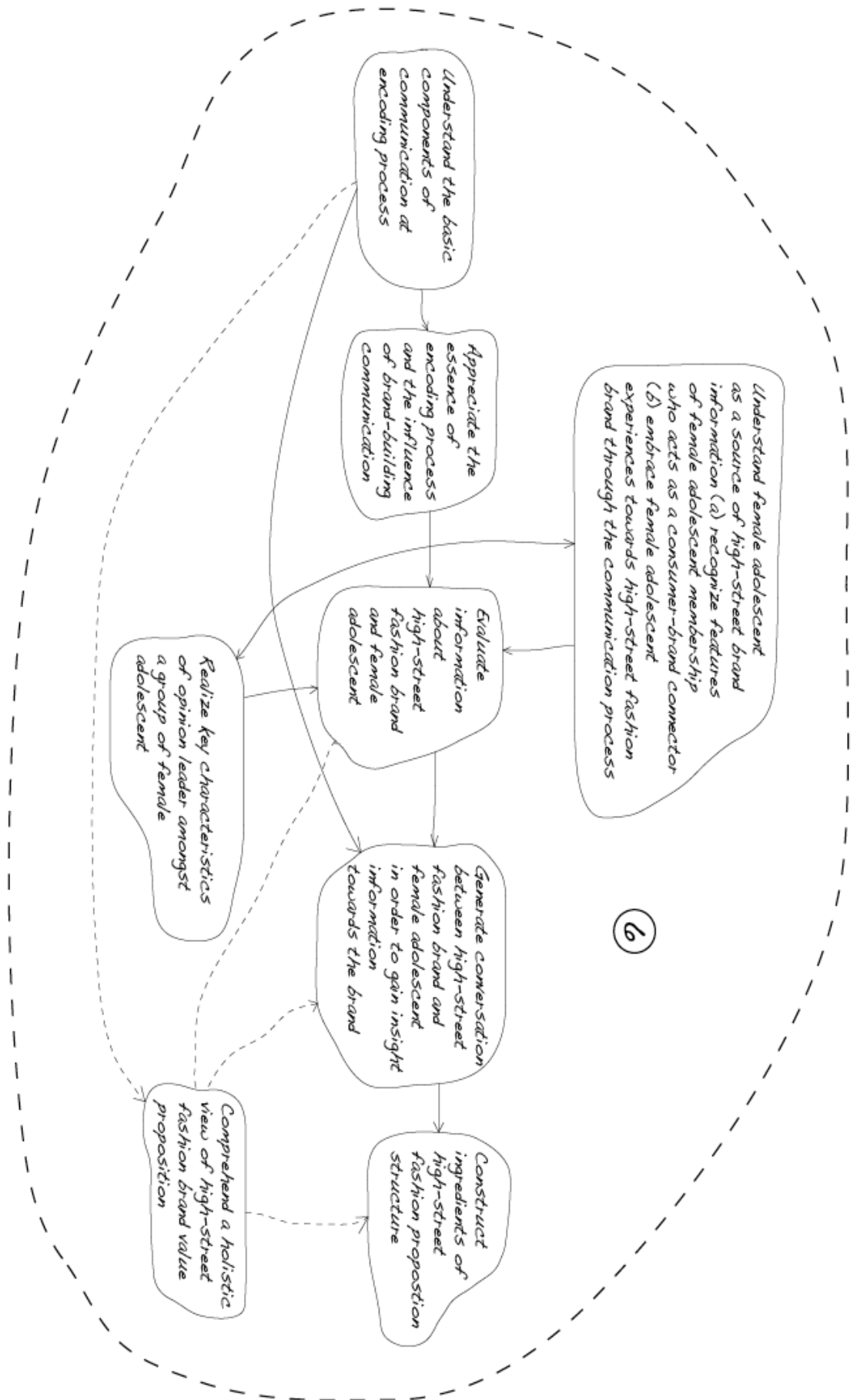


Figure 5.15: Conceptual model of the brand communication process assembly subsystem



(7) A system to define the female adolescent behaviour and female adolescent requirements as an audience database with the purpose of framing appropriate brand messages to fulfil their needs.

**System 7: A planned brand message delivery process**

The brand-building communication strategy creates brand message delivery alternatives. The decision taken in choices of communication activities leads to the encoded delivery process which is carried out amongst target audiences and prospects. Regardless of whether the communication medium choices are online or offline, a high-street fashion brand must understand the role and the impact of each brand message vehicle, recognise the brand-consumer contact touch points where interactivity between the brand and the female adolescent occur, determine brand two way information flow between high-street fashion brands and the female adolescent, and then develop effective brand message delivery processes to achieve high-street fashion brand-building objectives.

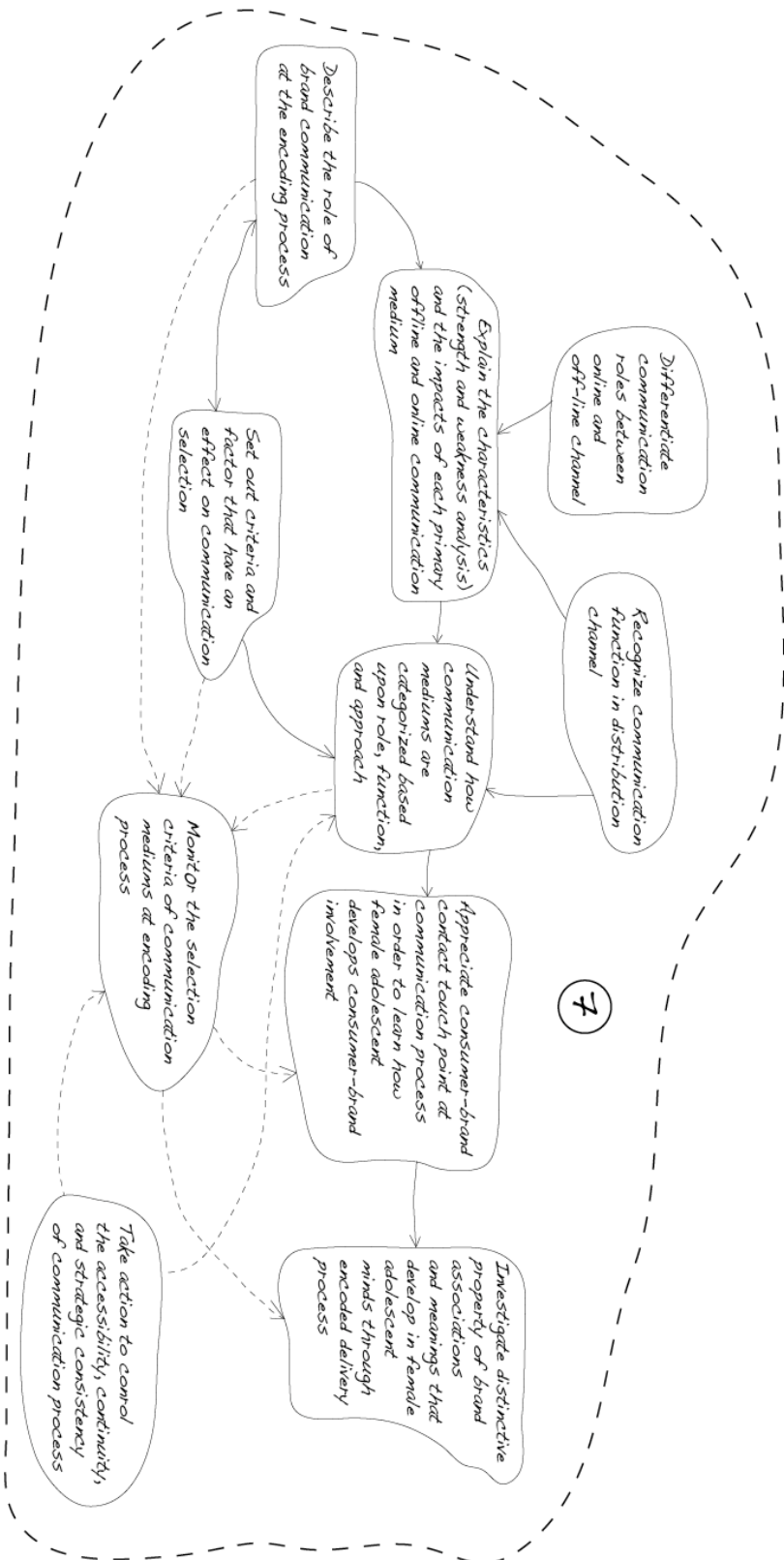


Figure 5.16: Conceptual model of a planned brand message process subsystem

(8) A system to implement a high-street fashion brand communication strategy in the encoding process.

**System 8: Implement a brand-building communication strategy**

The research initially began with the objective to establish what leads to brand strategy formation. The process of integrated brand-building communication strategy of a high-street fashion brand is based upon how a communication effect can establish changes in attitude, feeling, and opinion amongst a group of the female adolescents. The principle of the brand communication strategy was derived from accurately understanding consumer behaviour and consumer-brand relationship, then, a brand-building communication strategy could be developed to influence the target audience. A brand-building communication strategy is a holistic view of functional brand communication activities rather than focusing on a particular tactic.

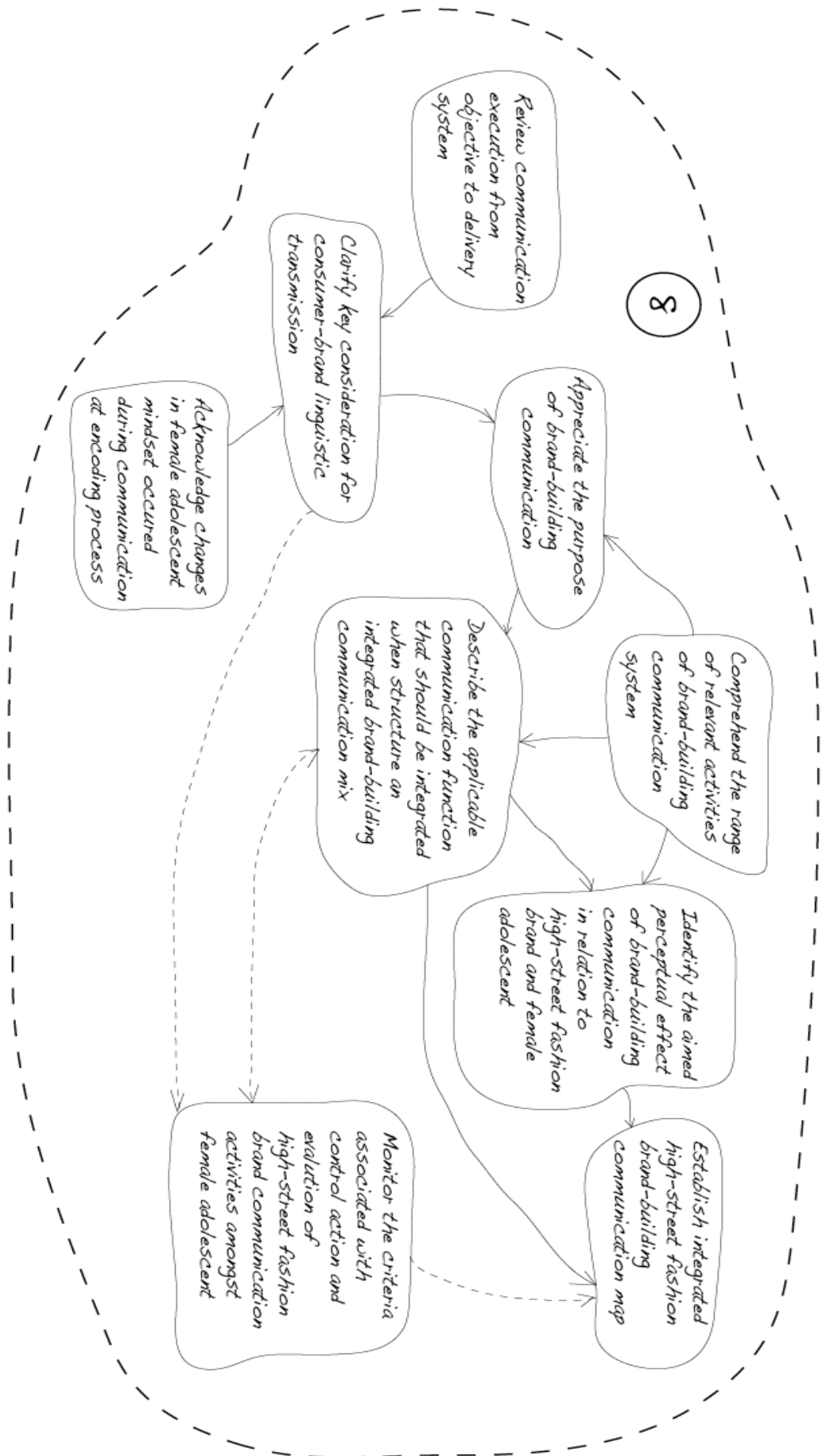


Figure 5.17: Conceptual model of brand-building communication strategy implementation subsystem

(9) A system to monitor the overall system activities and take action to enhance the efficiency of brand communication in the encoding process in order to accomplish the desired outcome.

### System 9: Monitor and control activities

A control and monitoring system to examine brand-building communication in the encoding process was undertaken to look into the question of what and how the brand wants target audiences and prospects to perceive the brand. Therefore, the process of brand-building communication concentrates on the degree of communication effectiveness assembly in total. However, the controlling system is of interest to a high-street fashion brand which plays the role of message sender. In this research, it is the high-street fashion brand-building communication planner who needs to appreciate the approaches in the encoding process.

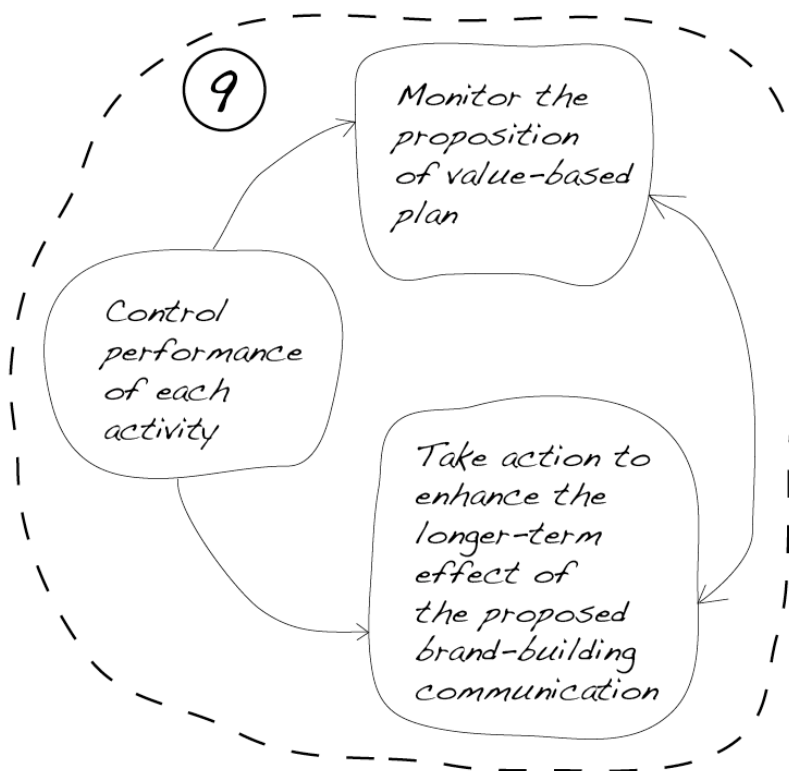
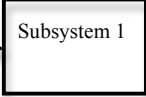
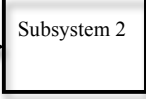
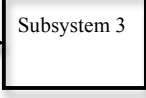
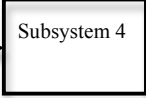
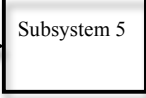
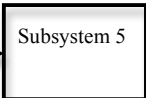
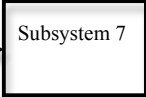
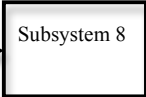
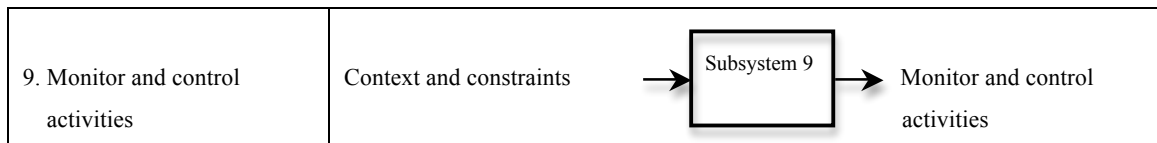


Figure 5.18: Conceptual model of monitor and control activities subsystem

Each of the activities in the conceptual model is further developed to formulate the final conceptual model. The table below represents each subsystem in order to clearly define a holistic view of transformation processes within a new conceptual model.

Table 5.2: Transformation process of subsystems

| Subsystem  | Input   | Output  |
|--|---|---|
| 1. High-street fashion brand defining  | Knowledge of current high-street fashion brand situation →  →   | High-street fashion brand definition                              |
| 2. High-street fashion brand communication objectives and activities establishment | Desired high-street fashion brand communication plan →  →   | High-street fashion brand communication objectives and activities |
| 3. Obtain and use of brand information resources                                   | List of brand information choices, contexts and criteria →  →  | Obtain and use of brand information resources                     |
| 4. Dimensions of the female adolescent behaviour acknowledgement                   | Female adolescent database →  →   | Dimension of the female adolescent behaviour                      |
| 5. The female adolescent brand information consumption description                 | Categorisation of information consumption activities starting from browsing activities to post-purchase activities →  → | The female adolescent brand information consumption               |
| 5. Brand communication key components assembly                                     | Identify shared requirements of each stakeholder →  →   | Key components of brand communication in the encoding process     |
| 7. A planned brand message delivery process  | Detailed components of brand message execution →  →   | Brand message delivery process plan                               |
| 8. Implement brand-building communication strategy                                 | Needs for brand communication implementation →  →   | Brand-building communication strategy                             |
| 1. High-street fashion brand defining  |   | 266   |



The structure of high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process amongst the female adolescent was demonstrated hierarchically in order to clearly define the imperative activities in the system as shown in figure 5.18. The above figure shows the process that leads to desired consumer perceived value and brand equity. In order to achieve the proposed requirement, the conceptual needs were to answer the questions (a) how to clarify high-street fashion brand value-based communication, (b) how to process high-street fashion brand communication to convert brand information to brand knowledge, and (c) how to interact with the target audience in order to tighten consumer-brand bonds in the process of brand-building communication.

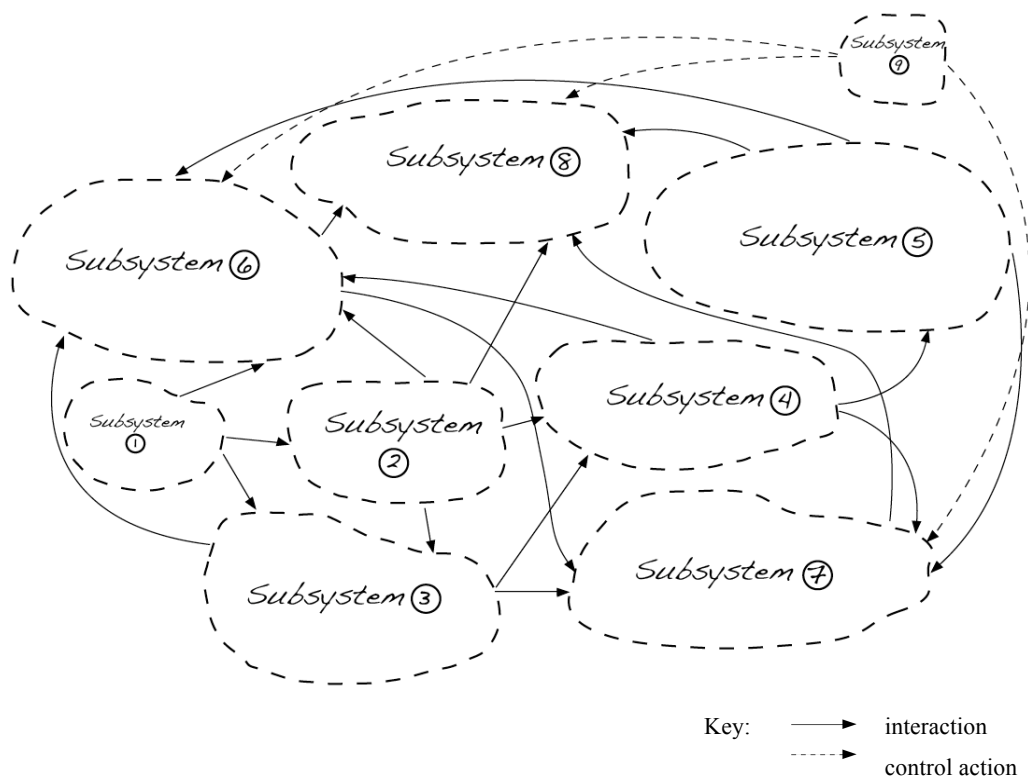


Figure 5.19: The interactions between subsystems in brand-building communication

Constraints: compressed  
timeframe, information  
technology, fashion  
movement

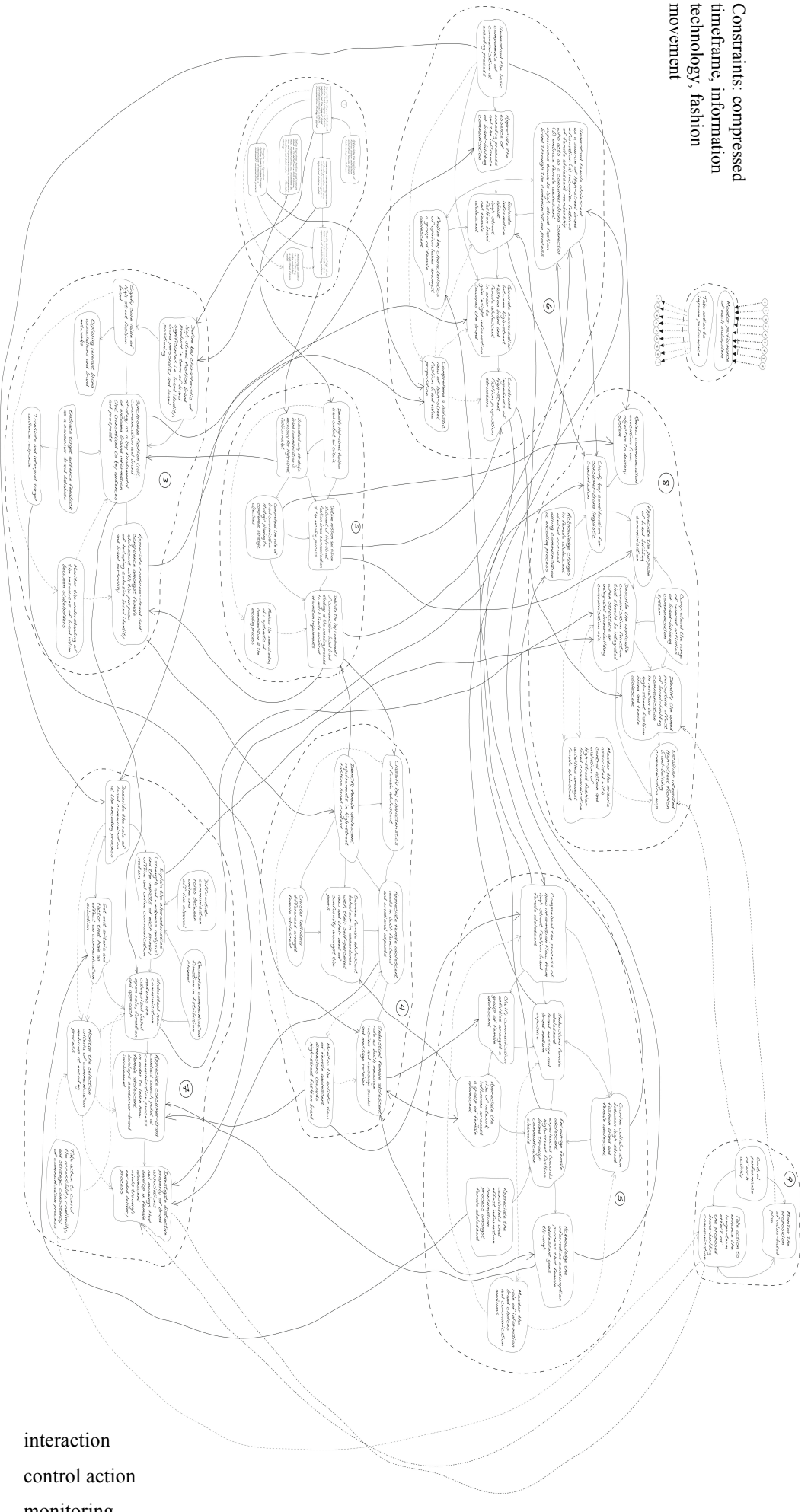
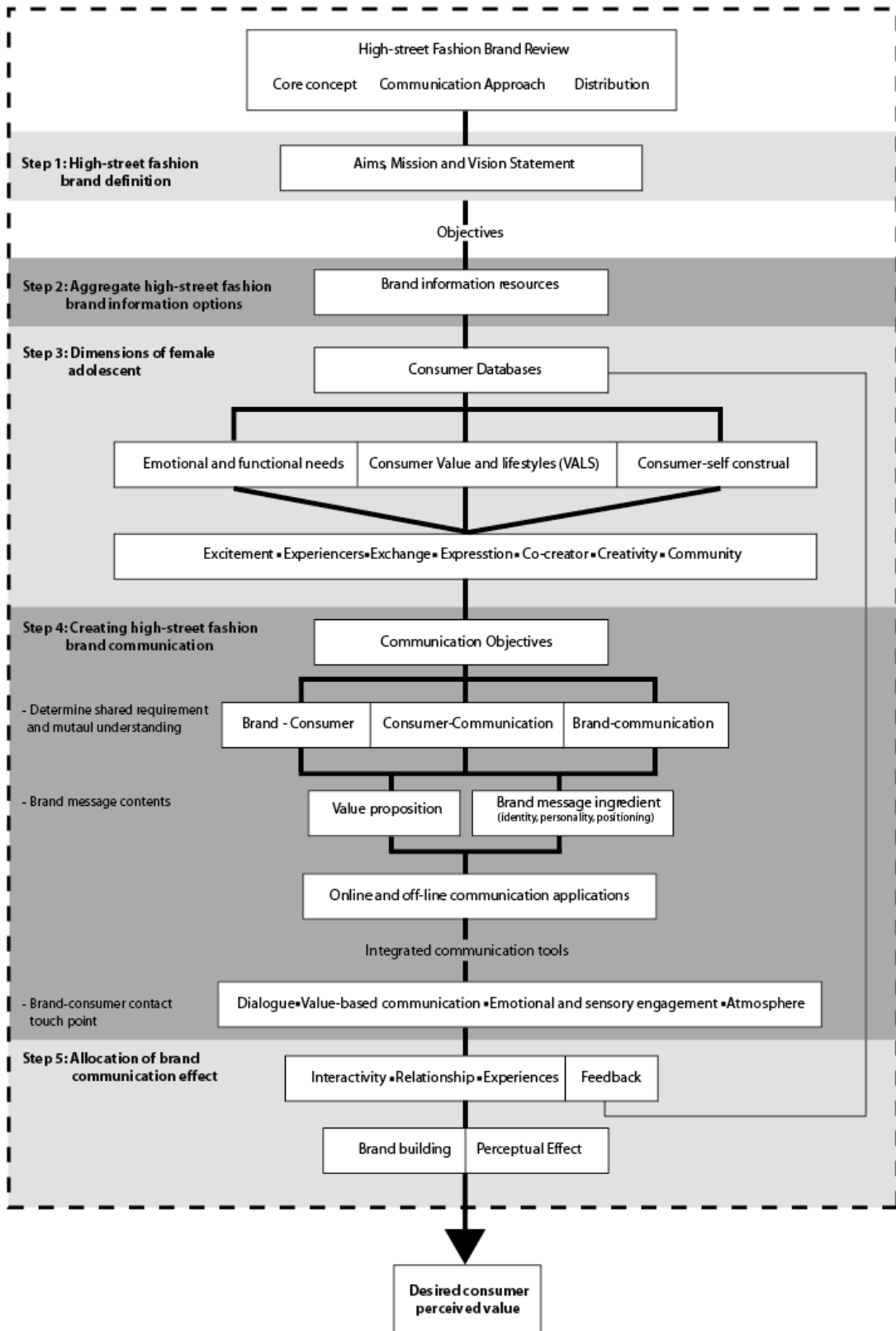


Figure 20: A new conceptual model of high-street fashion brand-building communication amongst the female adolescent at the encoding process



Figure 5.21: Brand-building communication plan in the encoding process



## **Conclusion**

The new conceptual model was derived from subsystems which represent a structure of activities to achieve the research requirements. The model explained the main activities of brand communication in the encoding process. The intended message that the high-street fashion brand is a sender of information resources showed the encoding process in such a way that a brand played the role of message controller. The activities in the whole system implied a brand-building communication framework in the encoding process to direct and influence the response of target audiences and prospects to interpret or decode the information in order to build brand equity in the decoding process. Therefore, the successful brand-building communication affected the desired perceptual effect and perceived value in a customer's mindset. Moreover, it could be seen that the female adolescent was concurrently a message co-creator, sender and recipient, hence, the female adolescent behavioural dimension needed to be carefully defined.

However, the model boundary merely covered the extent of the encoding process, so the process of how an audience interprets brand messages was not clarified. The degree of brand equity measurement could only be evaluated after the encoding process in which the female adolescent eventually decoded the message. Communication continued along with the fashion movement and information technology, so it was difficult to indicate the control system of these factors which influenced the system of high-street fashion communication within a compressed timeframe. This timeframe, therefore, constrained the duration process of the communication system in terms of the latest information delivery.

This chapter has developed and formulated a high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process conceptual model as the final result of this research. The conceptual model was based upon key findings of primary and secondary research by using soft system methodology to analyse the result. The establishment of a high-street fashion brand-building communication model was built up of a number of subsystems which contained the activities in each stage of the encoding process in order to develop the desired perceptual effect. The application of the conceptual model will be evaluated and discussed by soft systems methodology in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 6 Research Evaluation and Discussion**

This chapter describes an evaluation of the proposed model and discusses the research results. Firstly, a comparison process of the proposed conceptual model is explained by a comparison method of soft system methodology. Secondly, a recommendation from the interviews is discussed. Lastly, a summarised view of the final model is created.

### **6.1 Comparison process**

The research reviews opinions of interviewees who represent the role of the female adolescent. They were questioned to determine their opinions towards their role and activities which are compared. Since the conceptual model contains a set of those activities which must be included in the system by the specific root definition, the opinions of interviewees was used to show how a set of activities emerge in the system. Wilson (1991) explained that what is being seen in a problem situation is a resultant mixture of many selected 'hows'. This suggests a selection from a set of choices of 'hows'. The key to understanding the distinction is by the concept of resolution level. A conceptual model will comprise of an interconnected set of 'whats' which are constrained by these particular 'hows'. The purpose of the model is to facilitate discussion about what exists and about how it exists, in order to introduce change. Therefore, a discussion of questions in relevance to the research issue was carried out as a method of comparison. The general discussion in relation to the new conceptual model was clarified by interviewees' opinions towards their role and activities in the system of high-street fashion brand communication.

The developed final model has been discussed in response to interviewees' perception of their role and activities within a communication flow system. The comparison consists of interviewees fully involved as participants of brand message transmission activities through the role of message receivers. Certain information from interviewees could provide a meaningful knowledge of procedures needed to fulfil receiver requirements. The first stage of the comparison method included a number of

interviews which were undertaken; five questions were answered of five female representatives who strongly carry the female adolescent attributes and share behavioural aspects toward high-street fashion in common. The semi-structured interview was conducted amongst these respondents. The given opinions lead to essential learning about the encoder and recipient in terms of the brand information consumption process.

Aim: The female adolescent opinions as a target audience were employed to assess the proposed conceptual model in chapter five in terms of:

1. Key informant of a brand communication procedure addressed in the conceptual model including 1) a holistic view of brand message transmission, 2) collaboration between high-street fashion brand as a message sender and the female adolescent as a message receiver, 3) high-street fashion brand communication effort, and 4) customer-brand contact touch points of communication mediums
2. Interaction between activities within a brand-building communication system

All summarised opinions of each interviewee to each question are presented below:

Table 6.1 summarises the opinions of each female adolescent to question one:

***According to the proposed model, how should high-street fashion brand communication connect you through the means of communication mediums?***

According to the key informant in the model, communication mediums are only the factors which facilitate the transmission process, but the core idea is the interactivities which occur within the communication process. All of the interviewees agreed that the model might be useful for a high-street fashion brand to properly deliver the encoded message by the approach of how to select the appropriated communication mediums.

Table 6.1 Summary of opinions to question one

| Summary of Opinions |  |
|---------------------|--|
| A                   | I perceive a high-street fashion brand through product, online and off-line communication approaches. This female adolescent points out that she simultaneously interacts with several different communication mediums |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <p>which reflect her lifestyle and preference. This model will be a good framework for a high-street fashion brand to formulate congruent customer-brand messages to match desired information requirements amongst the female adolescents.</p>  |
| B | <p>Brand messages not only contact me through communication mediums, but also affect the interactivities between a brand and me. The interaction at the communication level can lead me to the connection level. I am an active information recipient. I am not only adopter, but also observer and participant. I exchange information, discuss their opinions, investigate, seek and inform brand information amongst my peers especially on social media and blogs. It is practical for a high-street fashion brand, for the model to embrace the collaboration between brand and the female adolescent as a database rather than a concentration of mediums.</p> |
| C | <p>I think the female adolescent goes beyond the communication owned by a high-street fashion brand, they control the power of communication mediums by screening out irrelevant messages. The female adolescent connects and contacts with the brand through positive feelings towards the brand by using communication mediums as vehicles. The guideline of this model explicitly illustrates the emotional and functional needs of the female adolescent in the communication process. The model will possibly direct a positive perceived brand value in the female adolescent mindset.</p>   |
| D | <p>This model will be very helpful for a high-street fashion brand to encode an intended message. However, the communication mediums are only the tools that contact a brand with its audience. The connection between a brand and the female adolescent is a principle.</p>   |
| E | <p>I consider the distinction between online and off-line communication applications proposes different benefits. High-street fashion brand messages are perceived through both communication channels. The accessibility and attraction are key factors which attract me to contact and connect with brand communication mediums. This model can be regarded as a structure of high-street fashion brand communication, as it represents co-creation activities between a brand and its audience in order to generate customer-brand linguistics.</p>   |

The female adolescent interviewees indicated that the model would be more effective by expanding the extent of contact touch points and collaboration through communication mediums. They also identified that the model is a foundation for a high-street fashion brand to make strong connections between them and the brand. The key components of the model highlight the importance of emotional bonds at the contact touch points which the interviewees agree are foundations to develop relationships.

Table 6.2 summarises the opinions of each female adolescent to question two:

***According to the proposed model, how should a high-street fashion brand message be delivered to you?***

The interviewees have the same opinions that the proposed model has clearly defined an appropriate brand message delivery plan. The model will be very useful for a high-street fashion brand to manage its brand-building communication strategy in order to nourish customer-brand relationships.

Table 6.2 Summary of opinions to question two

| Summary of Opinions |  |
|---------------------|--|
| A                   | I consider the proposed model as a structure of message strategy that could improve the delivery process of high-street fashion brand messages according to the synergy of brand strategy and communication strategy. The model undoubtedly illustrates key components which cover the process of how information is sent from a brand to the female adolescent. |
| B                   | The transmission process of how the message is sent out was clearly demonstrated in the model. However, I think playful experiences and entertainment that I can gain from the communication atmosphere will increase brand recognition in the delivery process.   |
| C                   | I think the current high-street fashion brand communication overlooks customisation and personalisation in the encoding process. Hence, the proposed model created more targeted delivery processes as well as more targeted messages for the female adolescent.   |
| D                   | A high-street fashion brand needs to concentrate on creating and maintaining   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | customer-brand relationships through its communication process rather than fashion trend based information. I agree with the proposed model, that the performance activities in the encoding process about how brand information is constructed and delivered, have to be clarified before sending out the messages to target audiences.          |
| E | I believe that rich experiences in the brand communication process influence the delivery process. In my opinion, the process of brand information gathering can be aroused by the experiential communication. Accordingly, the proposed model can be seen as a guideline which endows a communication framework for a high-street fashion brand. |

The female adolescent interviewees pointed out that experiential communication, i.e. entertainment, is the key to enhance and maintain customer-brand relationships. Moreover, the mass customisation of brand messages will create brand language that properly communicates with the target audiences. Interviewees' opinions support that customer self construal and customer-brand congruence are the key informants of how a high-street fashion brand can frame the desired brand language amongst a group of the female adolescents.

Table 6.3 summarises the opinions of each female adolescent to question three:

***According to the proposed model, how should high-street fashion brand communication fulfil your fashion information requirement?***

The interviewees responded to the proposed model that they think the model could be viewed as a fundamental framework for a high-street fashion brand because the model reflects the recipient's role as a participant in the brand communication process. As a result, information fulfilment is an outcome of stakeholder share value analysis before sending out encoded messages.

Table 6.3: Summary of opinions to question three

| Summary of Opinions |  |
|---------------------|--|
| A                   | It is essential for a high-street fashion brand to embrace my opinion as a source of brand message construction. I need a high-street fashion brand to |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | listen to my responses and integrate my feedback to complement the brand communication proposition. It is obviously noticed from the proposed model that the research emphasised the importance of audience feedback as a key to fulfil information requirements.   |
| B | I learnt from the proposed model that the message receiver can play the role of brand message co-creator. I admit that being a participant of a high-street fashion brand fulfils my information requirement, as I want to express and exchange my opinion amongst my peers. Therefore, the proposed model will be useful for a high-street fashion brand to plan brand communications which increase brand likability. |
| C | The proposed model clearly explains the procedure of how a high-street fashion brand can completely communicate with the female adolescent. I strongly agree that the process of understanding the female adolescents' behaviours will lead to information fulfilment in an audience's mindset.   |
| D | I am exposed to all communication approaches both online and off-line channels, but I only select the information which matches my requirements. The proposed model suitably indicated the procedure of how a high-street fashion brand can meet audiences' expectations.   |
| E | Apart from the brand message proposition, entertainment is also the aspect that I am searching in brand information. The collections of subsystems' activities in the proposed model were very helpful for a high-street fashion brand to communicate and inform me properly.   |

The female adolescent interviewees indicate that it is essential to clarify brand communication in the encoding process because the high-street fashion communication role is ambiguous. A high-street fashion brand mostly uses a functional perspective of communication efforts with the requirement for information conveyance. The interviewees stress the importance of entertainment atmosphere which a high-street fashion brand should incorporate in online and off-line channels. Therefore, they considered the proposed model as an approach for a high-street fashion brand to implement in order to develop the method to fulfil their requirements.



Table 6.4 summarises the opinions of each female adolescent to question four:

***According to the proposed model, how should high-street fashion brand communication create the perceived value in your mind in the encoding process?***

The interviewees agree that the proposed model demonstrated how to conduct high-street fashion brand value analysis efficiently. Thus, the analysed brand value allows alternative communication strategies which possibly can produce the desired perceived value amongst the female adolescents.

Table 6.4: Summary of opinions to question four

|   | Summary of Opinions   |
|---|---|
| A | The proposed model suggested the integrated brand communication that showed how to create and represent the core value of high-street fashion brands by comprehending the mutual understanding and shared requirement. I think the mutual understanding is a key issue to present for a high-street fashion brand to develop and address as identified in the proposed model.                                     |
| B | I strongly agree that it is not enough for a high-street fashion brand to broadcast and provide information about fashion movement; a high-street fashion brand has to communicate fashion brand value effectively to target audiences and prospects. A number of communication activities in the proposed model can be seen as a framework of how the brand can persuade audiences to perceive brand advantages. |
| C | Communication efforts primarily transmit information from a brand to its audiences. The proposed model suggested a high-street fashion brand to encapsulate core functional and emotional attributes of audiences. This approach helps me to classify the value of a particular brand from competitors.   |
| D | The proposed model facilitated the method of how a high-street fashion brand can establish its brand value proposition. A high-street fashion brand must offer the brand information choices different from the homogeneous value which other brands presented.   |
| E | I think a comprehensive brand communication strategy helps me create a  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | positive brand value in my mind. The extent of the proposed model is well formulated for a high-street fashion brand to determine the concept of brand value in order to pass on this value to the female adolescents. |
|--|--|

The female adolescent interviewees identified that they want not only financial brand value, but also perceptual brand value from a high-street fashion brand. The interviewees agreed that these values can be created concurrently through core value representations both functional and emotional. Consequently, the opinions supported that the proposed model represented the details of how a perceived brand value can be created in brand communication in the encoding planning.

Table 6.5 summarises the opinions of each female adolescent to question five:

***Do you have any recommendations on the activities which are shown in the new conceptual model?***

The interviewees provided their comments to improve the model development and future study. They suggested that there are other factors for brand communication to include in the system such as strategic consistency or information continuity.

Table 6.5: Summary of opinions to question five

|   | Summary of Opinions  |
|---|--|
| A | The proposed model was a foundation for fashion communication to reach the target audience. However, I think continuity and consistency of brand communication will develop my understanding towards a high-street fashion brand.  |
| B | This proposed model clearly addressed the key factors for a high-street fashion brand to plan communication strategy. However, the process can be varied based upon communication objectives and communication choices.  |
| C | I think the proposed model comprehensively covered the key aspects that a high-street fashion brand needs to consider. Nevertheless, the accessibility of the communication channels should be thought about. The challenge is to have brand information available for audiences to communicate with the brand by the communication mediums. |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| D | I agree that brand communication in the encoding process is a principle key before a brand can send out the message. The proposed model clearly defined the activities in the encoding process, although, the future research can then extend to the decoding process in order to interpret and measure an audience's response.  |
| E | High-street fashion brands mostly inform me about the fashion products without developing brand engagement. The bond between the brand and me is weak so I easily go to another brand that serves my requirements. Hence, the proposed model was very supportive as a guideline for a high-street fashion brand to improve customer involvement. However, strategic consistency and message continuity will improve brand communication performance. |

Each activity in the new conceptual model can be extended with the particular sub-factors in subsystems. Moreover, this proposed model could be developed as a platform for empirical study to examine a holistic view of brand communication in the fashion industry. The female adolescent interviewees indicated that the proposed model concentrates on the strategy of how to effectively build up a high-street fashion brand in the encoding process. However, the interviewees comment that as the platform of encoded brand communication, the proposed model can be developed to build up a framework for decoded brand communication by integrating different communication contexts.

The summary of opinions towards the proposed model was used in the process of the comparison stage of soft systems methodology. Wilson (1991) indicated that it is of value to do a superficial comparison to support that belief. If comparison implies that the alternative choices might be useful, then the analyst will not have lost their time elaborating models. Accordingly, Checkland's tabular display was exploited to analyse the proposal by methods of comparison as shown in table 6.6 in order to validate that each activity in the model was legitimate. The results of this comparison provide a meaningful understanding of the interactivities of the current 'hows' in the model system. The key aspects of concern were illustrated as follows: *problems were investigated in relation to high-street fashion brand-building in the encoding process*

*amongst the female adolescents particularly in terms of value-based communication effort.*

Table 6.6 Comparison stage based on the proposed model in Chapter 5

| <b>Activities in model</b>   | <b>Real world</b>  | <b>Comments</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| Identify key informants that affect the connection between a high-street fashion brand and the female adolescent | Customer-brand interactivity within the brand communication process<br><br>Collaboration between a high-street fashion brand and the female adolescent<br><br>Understand customer-brand congruence | The proposed model and interviewees are in agreement   |
| Identify core concept of brand message delivery process  | Synergy of brand strategy and communication implementation<br><br>Desired experiences and atmosphere   | The proposed model and interviewees are in agreement   |
| Identify key issues to fulfil brand information needs  | Make good use of feedback and audience response as a source of relevant information<br><br>Stakeholder shared value requirement<br><br>Establish customer-brand mutual understanding               | The proposed model and interviewees are in agreement   |
| Identify the process of brand value building   | High-street fashion brand core value proposition in the communication process  | The proposed model and interviewees are in agreement   |
| Identify relevant factors to monitor high-street fashion brand communication                                     | Brand information availability<br><br>Frequency of communication approaches<br><br>Brand message presentation  | Highlight the accessibility, continuity and strategic consistency in the process of brand-building communication<br><br>Future research can be |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | conducted in the decoding process in order to comprehend the holistic view of brand-building communication |
|--|--|--|

As the female adolescent is regarded as a target audience and brand message co-creator, so the female adolescent interviewees played the role of problem solver concurrently. The results of the comparison stage revealed that the proposed model potentially formulated the framework for high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process. The discussion with the female adolescents pointed out that the proposed model can provide the desired conceptual effect in an audience’s mindset. The interviewees comprehensively perceived the activities in the system. However, the comments on overall brand-building communication in the encoding process were developed as a set of recommendations of soft systems methodology.

## 6.2 Recommendations for change

The comparison stage of soft systems methodology supported a set of recommendations for changes in the proposed model. According to the opinions of the female adolescent interviewees, there was a minor change involving a set of ‘hows’ without alteration of ‘whats’ within the existing system of high-street fashion brand communication in the encoding process. Wilson (1991) suggested that the need to implement could be seen as another problem within the same situation, and at this stage a root definition and conceptual model could be developed.

According to the problem situation and root definition a new conceptual model was addressed in Chapter 5, and the output of the new conceptual model was a perceived high-street fashion brand value amongst groups of female adolescents. As a result, it was legitimate to include the interviewee opinions as a set of ‘hows’ to develop appropriate activities in the proposed model. The comments of the female adolescent interviewees were clarified as shown in table 6.6.

Table 6.7: Summary of interviewees' comment

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| The concern      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can we access to high-street fashion brand information when we want?</li> <li>- Does a high-street fashion brand inform us when we want to be informed?</li> <li>- Can a high-street fashion brand message easily be understood when we receive the information from different mediums?</li> </ul> |
| The expectation  | - Monitor system to control these questions in the process of high-street fashion brand communication.  |
| Research problem | - How can a high-street fashion brand accurately conduct the performance in communication activities  |

According to the above table, the root definition used for the application in the proposed model was as follows:

A system to monitor and control activities of planned brand message delivery process in order to fulfil brand information requirements amongst a group of the female adolescents.

The activity to monitor the selection criteria of communication mediums in the encoding process was extended by interconnecting with the control activities. The application of monitor and control activities in the planned message delivery process system was implemented as shown in the figure below.

Constraints: compressed  
timeframe,  
Information technology,  
fashion  
movement

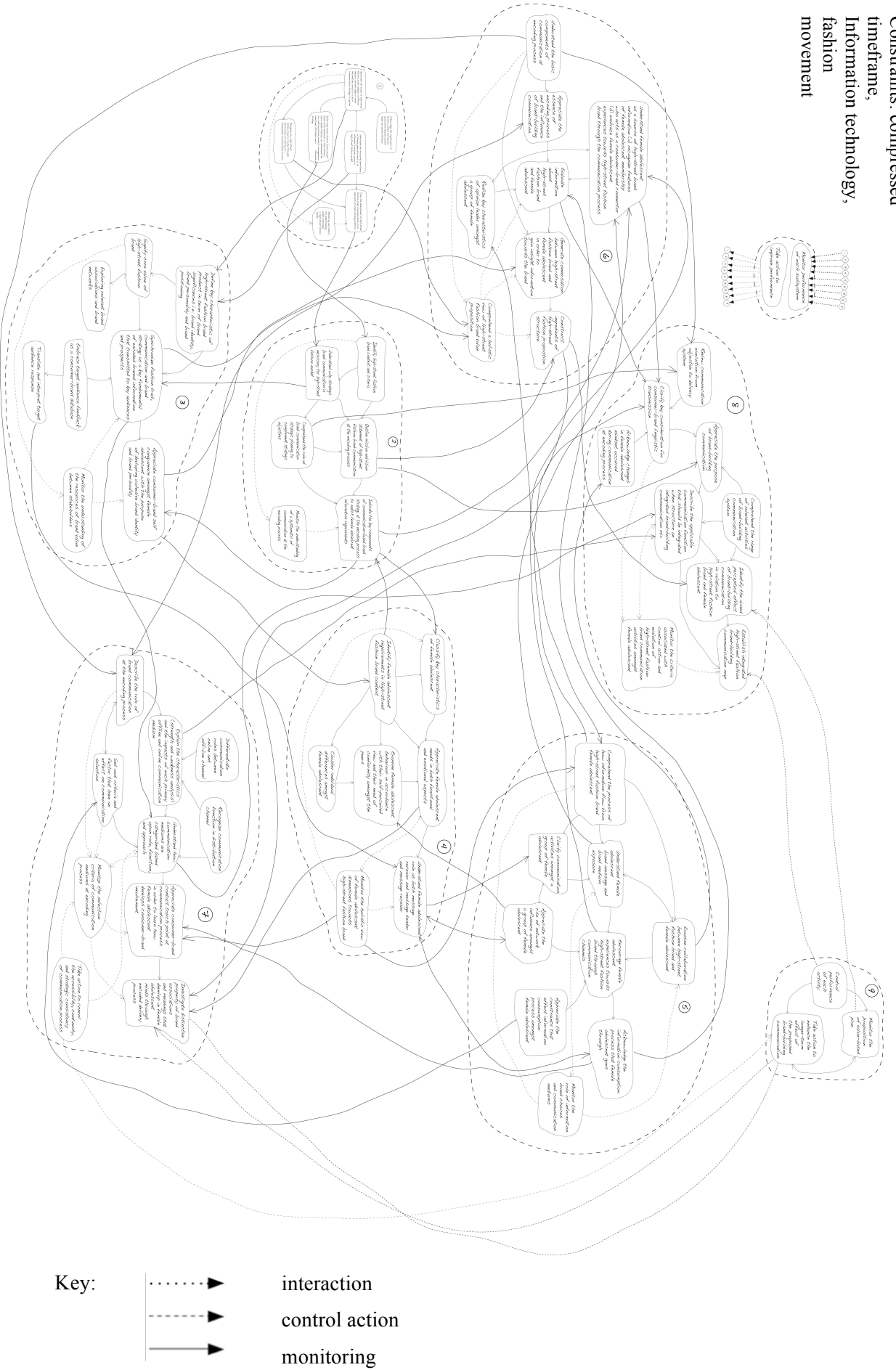


Figure 6.2: A final conceptual model of high-street fashion brand-building communication amongst female adolescent at the encoding process

After the alteration of activities in the subsystem, the development of a final conceptual model is represent in figure 6.2.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter used the interview results as a source for a comparison method of a soft system methodology in order to validate the proposed model. The female adolescents interviewed came to an agreement with the model usability and development as a framework for high-street fashion brands to communicate with them. Moreover, they recommended the opinions towards the proposed model in order to develop the final conceptual model. In relation to the female adolescent interviewees' opinions, the model could potentially accomplish a feasible level of validity as a practical system. The final model illustrated in figure 6.2 might appear complex, but it has clearly provided the basis for brand-building communication in the fashion industry in order to structure a coherent set of communication activities amongst the female adolescents. Moreover, four principle issues about communication in the encoding process have been discussed at the comparison stage in order to implement model modification. The questions compounded the activities of a) how to identify key informants that affect the connection between a high-street fashion brand and the female adolescent, b) how to identify core concepts of the brand message delivery process, c) how to identify the process of brand value building, and d) how to identify the relevant factors to monitor high-street fashion brand communication. As a result, the set of these planned interviews has supported the process of the comparison stage in order to establish the discussion credibility and the mutual understanding between the researcher and the female adolescents. The comparison method was essential for the change in the recommendation stage in the research with the purpose of model modification. Hence, the final conceptual model was developed based upon the analysis from the choices provided from interviewees who acted as target audience and problem solver simultaneously.



## Chapter 7 Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of the whole research and comprises of three sections: 1) research contributions, 2) research limitations, and 3) suggestions for future research.

### 7.1 Contributions of the research

This research has five key contributions:

1. It has proposed a new conceptual model of high-street fashion brand-building communication in the encoding process amongst the female adolescents by examining the two successful high-street fashion brands (Topshop and H&M) as case studies to illustrate the proposed model. The new conceptual model can be applied as a framework to develop a value-based brand communication in the fashion industry in order to communicate with target audiences and prospects accurately. This new conceptual model was an application which offers a number of advantages, which other models have overlooked to provide:

- The lack of comprehension in brand communication among high-street fashion brands prevents the integrated brand communication being developed and enhanced. Therefore, the new conceptual model overcame these barriers to integrate high-street fashion brand characteristics by synchronising brand strategy with communications implementation. The findings indicate when the idea of communication objectives and brand strategy were integrated, the encoded brand communication efforts facilitated a high-street fashion brand to convey the needed communication effect in association with brand consciousness correctly set up in the target audience's mind.
- It enhanced the recognition of building the fashion brand through the process of communication rather than just focusing on fashion movement and fashion promotion. Since the proposed model was designed to deliver high-street fashion brand value by strengthening customer-brand relationships, it could be used for different fashion categories.
- It assisted the understanding of the encoding process based on the fact that brand attitude formation and customer brand value could be built up by the

means of a value-based communication strategy. As the conceptual model was built upon the activities of brand message format, message representation, and message component, it was ultimately best for enhancing the influential impact of the brand message proposition.

- It offered an approach to leverage customer-brand relationships for high-street fashion brands compared to the generic model of a communication process. The new conceptual model was a platform for a fashion brand to expand customer-brand contact touch points in order to strengthen customer-brand ties by emotional customer-brand engagement in the communication channels. The proposed model helps a fashion brand to prevent the negative effects that can be developed in an audience's mindset from other medium sources.

2. It has reformulated the direction of brand message construction in the encoding process. A developed framework emphasised the importance of customer-brand congruence and customer self-construal as resources for encoding fashion brand information. Therefore, an appropriate customer-brand linguistic was created as a key informant for a high-street fashion brand to communicate with target audiences and prospects by the same language. It implied a practical solution which decreased high-street fashion brand switching by using of brand communication. It increased the extent of media exposure in the target audience's mind.

- It presented the persuasive impact of a communication effort which increases brand message reach by embracing an audience as a co-creator. The collaboration activities illustrated in the proposed model support the brand message significances and brand incentives.

3. It has generated a competitive advantage by means of an integrated brand-building communication strategy. It has enhanced the purposeful customer-brand interactivities. The new conceptual model has provided a strategy to counter the proliferation of homogeneous value propositions in the high-street fashion market.

4. It has provided instructions of how to develop an intended communication plan which leads the message recipient to the field of communicative epidemiology.

5. High-street fashion brands currently separate online and off-line communications with brand message inconsistency which weakens the planned messages brands sent out. The proposed model has provided a means to manage brand communications for fast fashion for active information adopters. It is a guideline for fast moving customer

goods and low involvement products. The procedure for brand communication activities are represented below:

- Know the current communication of a situation of within a particular field by conducting situation analysis
- Set up communication objectives and communication activities in the encoding process in order to gain a clear picture of communication direction
- Evaluate information resources required to carry out the brand communication structure
- Define the dimensions of the target audience profile
- Describe the brand information needs for the group of target audiences
- Assemble the key components of choice criteria of brand communication in the encoding process
- Decide the communication strategic implementation in the encoding process
- Deliver intended brand messages in the encoding process
- Monitor and control brand communication activities in order to achieve the research requirement

## **7.2 Limitations of the research**

There are a number of limitations of this research as summarised below:

1. Due to the main characteristic of a high-street fashion brand, a high-street fashion brand communication needs to communicate rapidly in order to inform the latest trend, therefore, the compressed timeframe in the fashion industry is an uncontrollable and unpredictable factor which affects the duration of the brand communication. The research cannot specify the time period of how long each brand communication activity should last - the communications between an audience and high-street fashion brand communication need to work together with fashion trend movements.
2. The female adolescents who are regarded as the target audience in this research lack understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of brand communication mediums. Moreover, their information preference and lifestyle of information consumption continually changes in response to information technology. Hence, it was difficult to gain and interpret their actual behaviour towards communication mediums.

3. There was a lack of academic study contributed to this area, since most academic papers focused on fashion marketing and fashion promotion rather than building the fashion brand through communication. Accordingly, it was challenging for this researcher to conduct the investigation in this area.
4. The generic model normally demonstrated only the communication process starting from encoded activities to decoded activities without regard to the clarification of the activities in the communication process. There were insufficient literatures to support secondary research of this empirical study.
5. According to the conceptual model complexity, the proposed model is designed for a high level of planning, and is not suitable for the operational level.

### **7.3 Suggestions for future research**

This research was designed to enhance the performance of a communication strategy as a tool for high-street fashion brand-building amongst the female adolescents. There are certain areas that can be insightfully developed in relation to this study, but they are beyond the boundary of the research objectives.

1. The conceptual model can be enhanced and developed by further study of brand communication in the decoding process. From an investigation of a whole communication process, the model can thoroughly support a brand-building programme by a whole communication process in order to close the loop of communication.
2. As the female adolescent profile continually changes and develops in terms of self-perceived personality, self-construal and information consumption, so the conceptual model needs to be reformulated in accordance with the audience database.
3. In order to increase the persuasiveness of high-street fashion brand communication, this conceptual should embrace the aspect of design to improve message representation techniques in order to draw audience attention.

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# Appendix A: Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire aims to investigate the fashion communication and fashion consumption which directly have an effect on brand-building communication programme for high-street fashion market. This questionnaire is part of the PhD research, Department of design, Brunel University.

## Section 1: Consumer self-construal

### • Consumer personality

Below are key words that portray fashion brand personalities which best corresponded with your personality. Please select the answer that accurately indicates the way you would describe your preferred high-street fashion brand.

|                           | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Good Selection            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| High prices               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| High quality              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| High fashion              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Good service              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Easy to shop in           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Friendly                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Good sales and promotions |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Sophisticated             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Traditional               |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Different                 |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Take chances              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Confident                 |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Creative                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Sociable                  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Stands out in the         |                |       |         |          |                   |



|                          |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| crowd                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Simplified lifestyle     |  |  |  |  |  |
| Rebellious               |  |  |  |  |  |
| Trendy                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Avant-garde              |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fast forward             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Contemporary             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hip and chic             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Modernish Rock           |  |  |  |  |  |
| Extreme                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Surreal                  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Up-to-the-minute         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cool                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| Luxury                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unique                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cutting Edge             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Outrageous               |  |  |  |  |  |
| Innovative and Different |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fun                      |  |  |  |  |  |
| Purity and Neutral       |  |  |  |  |  |
| Urban and Upcoming       |  |  |  |  |  |
| Simple                   |  |  |  |  |  |

• **Consumer Value and Lifestyles**

**Consumer fashion attitude**

I love fashion.

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

I buy clothes I like, regardless of current fashion.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I buy new fashion looks only when they are well accepted.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I prefer to buy well-known designer labels rather than take a chance on something new.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I prefer to buy high-street fashion brand as I am about modest prices and fashion wearability.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

My friends consider me as a good source of advice on fashion selection.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

My fashion decision is upon my friends as they are a good source of what to wear in the current season.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I am confident of my own good taste in clothing.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I'm not afraid to be the first to wear something different in fashion looks.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I am the first to try new fashions, therefore many friends regard me as being a fashion pacesetter.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I feel good when I buy something in fashion.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

What you think of yourself is reflected by what you wear.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I plan my shopping trips carefully. I have information about fashion news before I go shopping.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Fashion represents your status. You can tell you are just a bit better than someone else if you dress better than they do.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Being in fashion leads me to being part of society.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I plan my wardrobe carefully

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I dislike being told what to wear by so-called fashion experts.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I love to know about fashion opinion in order to fix my appearance.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Fashion in clothing is a way to access trendy lifestyle.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

There is something wrong with a woman who does not care about dressing nicely and fashion news

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I love to dress like my admired celebrity

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

**Consumer fashion shopping lifestyle**

It is important to me to be treated well as I like the royal treatment in fashion retail stores

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I like fashion shopping on high streets.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I buy fashion product only at the retail store.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I buy fashion product either online or at the retail store.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I often go to a high-street fashion brand retail store for window shopping or its website to get ideas although I have no intention of making purchases.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I often go to a high-street fashion brand retail store or its website to see what's new in clothing.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I prefer to shop in high-street fashion brand stores that offer a various categories and sections.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I need a wide range of clothes.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I like to shop in one high-street fashion brand store.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I like to shop in many different high-street fashion brand stores.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I love to experiment with fashion clothes.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I love buying fashion clothes which are updated to reflect current fashion trends.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I don't want to buy fashion accessories and clothes that make me stand out highly from everyone else.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I only buy fashion items at only very low price.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

## Section 2: Consumer-brand emotional tie

Please indicate the degree of which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

High-street fashion BRAND A and I have a lot in common.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

I trust high-street fashion BRAND A.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

I have feelings for high-street fashion BRAND A that I do not have for other brands.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

High-street fashion BRAND A has always been good for me.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

High-street fashion BRAND A can always count on me.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

### **Section 3: High-street fashion brand information seeking process**

I will revisit and make a purchase after several times of hearing and seeing the high-street fashion brand information.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I sometimes go to another high-street fashion brand but I still want to be informed about the brand that I used to purchase.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I always go from one high-street fashion brand to another high-street fashion brand if its fashion products have been published and promoted i.e. magazine, newspaper or website.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I review fashion consumer reports

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I would love to be informed about high-street fashion brand news even I do not buy its product at this time.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I consider myself as a loyal high-street fashion customer as long as the brand keep informing me about its' newsletter.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I will stay with the high-street fashion brand that keeps informing me by its newsletter.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

What was your reaction when you first saw and heard of high-street fashion brand?

- I consider the information that I saw and heard as an impulse
- I love to be informed about high-street fashion brand in order to be up to date
- I only accept the information only I find it is interest
- I neglect to receive the information which I consider as an advertising
- I prefer to seek all the info of high-street fashion brand myself

After receiving the information of high-street fashion brand, what do you process the message?

- I think about it deliberately
- I often try to understand and link all the messages from different sources
- I always discuss with my friends



- I recall the message after I see it again
- I have never paid attention of what I have seen and heard

Where have you often heard about high-street fashion brand? (You can choose more than one answer)

- TV
- Radio
- Fashion Website
- Fashion Magazine
- Fashion Ads: Poster, Billboard
- Fashion Event: Fashion show, Fashion exhibition
- Mobility Media: Ads on public transport
- In-store communications: Retail store
- Internet Search Engine
- Newspaper
- Word Of Mouth (WOM): Friends
- Electronic Magazine (E-zine)

Please could you value the elements of high-street fashion information that you will pay attention to:

|                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Image               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Text                |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Image & Text        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Good design         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Interactive message |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Animated message    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

## Section 4: Communication Tools

I recall fashion trends from other medias like fashion magazine or fashion website during my search for high-street fashion products in retail store

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I recall fashion trends from TV and Radio during my search for high-street fashion products in retail store

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

### • **Online communication tools**

Please check one box that best indicates how well the statement describes your fashion buying behaviour. Even if you don't use the Internet, from what you may have heard about it, please check the box that best reflects your impressions.

### **Opinion towards online communication sources**

Repetition and same old thing makes be bored. I am more excited by a million web pages to exploration.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I use Internet to keep me more update.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Internet releases me from tedious routine, it helps me see world widely.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I am fascinated by trends, styles and knowledge from around the world where I use the Internet to discover.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I have been seen as an expert on the computer. When people have questions about the Internet, I always have the answer.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I often visit general fashion website to review fashion trends.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I like fashion website browsing.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

### **Online distribution channel**

None of my friends shop on the Internet.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Online fashion buying is an enjoyable way to shop.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I enjoy buying fashion merchandise in online retail store.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I do not know much about online shopping.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I find the online high-street fashion shopping process is hard to understand and use.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I am struggling with online fashion product searching. I could not find what I need.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I do not believe online fashion stores carry things I want.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I often visit the high-street fashion official website to preview products.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

I would shop on the Internet more if the high-street retail store was too difficult to access.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I would like not having to leave home when shopping.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I love the help and friendliness I can get from the high-street retail store which I could not find in Internet shopping.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I think high-street retail store has better service policies than online store.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Internet shopping would avoid the hassle of actual high-street retail shopping.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I think online high-street fashion shopping offers a better deal than high-street fashion retail stores.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I believe online high-street fashion shopping offers better selection than high-street retail stores.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Online stores have better prices and promotions than high-street retail stores.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I would shop on the Internet more if the prices were lower or with great offers.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I dislike the delivery charge and backorders of online high-street fashion buying.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I do not like waiting for fashion products to arrive in the mail.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I like having fashion products delivered to me at home.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

I often discuss with my friends before buying a fashion product online.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

### **Online activities**

Did you personally make, influence, or participate in any high-street fashion product purchases on the Internet?

- No  
 Yes

How often do you visit high-street fashion websites for product pre-purchase / purchase / post-purchase?

- Everyday
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Which online source do you use when you purchase your high-street fashion product?

- Purchase on the official website
- Purchase through auction site

Visiting high-street fashion brand sites looking for fashion trends

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Looking for job opportunities

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Finding and viewing fashion photographs, clipart and images

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Making a purchase of high-street fashion products

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Opinion sharing and Social Networking

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Visiting message newsgroups

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

**High-street fashion brand official website**

How often do you visit high-street fashion retail website?

- Daily
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month



- About Once a Month
- Less than Once a Month

How did you get to know about a particular high-street fashion retail website?

- I knew from fashion retail store
- I knew the website name
- Search Engine
- Guessed the web address
- Seen on fashion media i.e. Fashion magazine
- Peer i.e. Friends
- Internet Advertising
- Link from another webpage

How often do you use high-street fashion website to find out fashion products?

- Daily
- About Once a Week
- Several Times a Week
- Several Times a Month
- Less than Once a Month

Did you find what you were after in high-street fashion retail website?

- Yes, I found exactly what I was looking for
- Yes, it is the one I firstly sought for
- I found a related product, but now what I wanted

If a high-street fashion retail website fulfilled what you needed, how likely would you be to recommend and revisit this website?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure

- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

**High-street fashion brand Social Networking Site**

I am an actively social networking member who joins high-street fashion brand groups in order to be part of their community

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I always join high-street fashion brand groups where my peers join

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I share my fashion opinions and knowledge on social networking sites

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I have lots of friends and stay close to them. I spend a lot of time on social networking sites to keep updated of what they are doing with their fashion interest

- Very likely

- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

My fashion interest is a very important part of my life. I use the social networking sites to expand this interest to my peers

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I could track and trace my favourite celebrity fashion trends via social networking sites

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I often follow fashion opinions on my peers bulletin board

- Very likely
- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

• **Off-line communication tools**

What was the last source you saw or hear information before visiting high-street fashion retail store? (You can choose more than one answer)

- Fashion Website
- Fashion magazine
- Word Of Mouth (WOM): Friends
- Mobility Media: Advertisements on transportation
- Mobility Media: Advertisements on transportation
- Fashion Event: Fashion show, Fashion Exhibition
- In-store communications: Previous visit
- Electronic Magazine (E-zine)
- Fashion advertisements: Poster, Billboard
- Newspaper

**Retail Store**

What should high-street fashion store be, please give values:

|                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Entertaining          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Fashion relation      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Lifestyle relation    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Store information     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Design attractiveness |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

The elements below have been employed to support brand impression and brand recognition. Please check one box for each statement to indicate the extent of which you are agree or disagree with the components of high-street fashion retail store.

The identical design of retail store

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The corporate identity (such as shopping bags, catalogues, or advertisements)

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The visual display of the store

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The convenient location of the store

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The contemporary and modern design of the store

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The attractive physical facilities in the store

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The ease of the store layout assists and directs customers

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The promotional campaign of the store (such as event, exhibition, or sale)

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The services in the store

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The availability of various categories and sections

Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The store has post-purchase services

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The sufficient information of product in the stores is available for customers

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The interaction between the brand and the customers is sincere. Customers could trust the store.

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The brand services provide individual attention for customers

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

Customers feel comfortable in the store

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The quality of the fashion products

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The store offers the reward card or loyalty scheme

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

The courtesy of employees in the store

- Excellent     Very Good     Good     Fair     Poor

An impression from first visit

- Excellent   
 Very Good   
 Good   
 Fair   
 Poor

**In-store communication evaluation**

What should high-street fashion store pamphlet/ leaflet/ brochure/ point of purchase be, please give values:

|                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Entertaining          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Fashion relation      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Lifestyle relation    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Store information     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Design attractiveness |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Store information     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Professionalism       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

**Window display and Visual merchandising**

What is the function of window display and visual merchandising? (You can choose more than one answer)

- Entertain your shopping experience
- Provide updated trends
- Imagine how the clothes look on body
- Encourage you into the store
- Lead you to the purchase stage
- Other (Please specify) .....

From high-street fashion window display, could you recognize which brand or store the window display belongs to?

- Very likely
- Likely

- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

According to above question, how could you associate fashion brand with the store display? (You can choose more than one answer)

- Have been to the store
- Recognise the fashion product
- Notice brand logo
- Notice brand components
- Fashion brand identity
- Recognise the fashion brand image from other medias: Print advertising from magazine, Internet browsing

How important of window display for high-street fashion brand, please could you give values.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |

Please give values of what extent do you expect from high-street fashion window display?

|                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Neat and clean      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Ability to see      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Creativity          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Quality material    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Excellent styling   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| Update latest trend |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |



## Appendix B: Statistical Analysis

Table B-1: Case processing summary of consumer fashion shopping lifestyle \* consumer fashion attitude

|   | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|   | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|   | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Consumer shopping Lifestyle * Consumer fashion attitude | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-2: Contingency table of consumer shopping lifestyle \* consumer fashion attitude

|                             |         | Consumer fashion attitude |       | Total |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|                             |         | Neutral                   | Agree |       |
| Consumer shopping Lifestyle | Neutral | 27                        | 15    | 42    |
|                             | Agree   | 70                        | 88    | 158   |
| Total                       |         | 97                        | 103   | 200   |

Table B-3: Chi-square value of consumer shopping lifestyle \* consumer fashion attitude

|                                    | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square                 | 5.304 <sup>a</sup> | 1  | .021                  | .024                 | .016                 |
| Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup> | 4.534              | 1  | .033                  |                      |                      |
| Likelihood Ratio                   | 5.352              | 1  | .021                  |                      |                      |
| Fisher's Exact Test                |                    |    |                       |                      |                      |
| Linear-by-Linear Association       | 5.277              | 1  | .022                  |                      |                      |
| N of Valid Cases <sup>b</sup>      | 200                |    |                       |                      |                      |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.37.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

Table B-4: Error prediction of consumer shopping lifestyle by consumer fashion attitude

|                    |                                       | <b>Directional Measures</b> |                                   |                        |              |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
|                    |                                       | Value                       | Asymp. Std.<br>Error <sup>a</sup> | Approx. T <sup>b</sup> | Approx. Sig. |
| Ordinal by Ordinal | Symmetric                             | .159                        | .067                              | 2.318                  | .020         |
|                    | Consumer shopping Lifestyle Dependent | .133                        | .057                              | 2.318                  | .020         |
|                    | Consumer fashion attitude Dependent   | .200                        | .084                              | 2.318                  | .020         |

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table B-5: Product of a chi-square test (consumer shopping lifestyle \* consumer fashion attitude)

|                      |                      | <b>Symmetric Measures</b> |                                   |                        |                   |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
|                      |                      | Value                     | Asymp. Std.<br>Error <sup>a</sup> | Approx. T <sup>b</sup> | Approx. Sig.      |
| Ordinal by Ordinal   | Kendall's tau-b      | .163                      | .069                              | 2.318                  | .020              |
|                      | Kendall's tau-c      | .133                      | .057                              | 2.318                  | .020              |
|                      | Gamma                | .387                      | .153                              | 2.318                  | .020              |
|                      | Spearman Correlation | .163                      | .069                              | 2.322                  | .021 <sup>c</sup> |
| Interval by Interval | Pearson's R          | .163                      | .069                              | 2.322                  | .021 <sup>c</sup> |
| N of Valid Cases     |                      | 200                       |                                   |                        |                   |

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Table B-6: Case processing summary of consumer fashion attitude \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Case Processing Summary                         |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|   | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|   | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|   | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Internet or Website * Consumer fashion attitude | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-7: Contingency table of consumer fashion attitude \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Crosstab            |                   | Consumer fashion attitude |       | Total |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|                     |                   | Neutral                   | Agree |       |
| Internet or Website | Strongly Disagree | 12                        | 22    | 34    |
|                     | Disagree          | 69                        | 70    | 139   |
|                     | Neutral           | 15                        | 11    | 26    |
|                     | Agree             | 1                         | 0     | 1     |
| Total               |                   | 97                        | 103   | 200   |

Table B-8: Chi-square value of consumer fashion attitude \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) | Point Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 4.388 <sup>a</sup> | 3  | .223                  | .191                 |                      |                   |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 4.816              | 3  | .186                  | .191                 |                      |                   |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 4.291              |    |                       | .191                 |                      |                   |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.905 <sup>b</sup> | 1  | .048                  | .060                 | .032                 | .014              |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

b. The standardized statistic is -1.976.

Table B-9: Case processing summary of consumer fashion attitude \* social networking

| Case Processing Summary                       |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|   | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|   | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|   | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| social networking * Consumer fashion attitude | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-10: Contingency table of consumer fashion attitude \* social networking

| Crosstab          |          |                           |       |       |
|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|                   |          | Consumer fashion attitude |       | Total |
|                   |          | Neutral                   | Agree |       |
| Social networking | Likely   | 10                        | 14    | 24    |
|                   | Unsure   | 31                        | 29    | 60    |
|                   | Unlikely | 56                        | 60    | 116   |
| Total             |          | 97                        | 103   | 200   |

Table B-11: Chi-square test of consumer fashion attitude \* social networking

| Chi-Square Tests             |                   |    |                       |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                              | Value             | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | .692 <sup>a</sup> | 2  | .708                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | .694              | 2  | .707                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .078              | 1  | .780                  |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200               |    |                       |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.64.

Table B-12: Case processing summary of consumer fashion attitude \* high-street fashion retail store

| Case Processing Summary  |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| High-street fashion retail store*<br>Consumer fashion attitude | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-13: Contingency table of consumer fashion attitude \* high-street fashion retail store

| Crosstab                          |           |                           |       |       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|                                   |           | Consumer fashion attitude |       | Total |
|                                   |           | Neutral                   | Agree |       |
| High -Street fashion retail store | Fair      | 9                         | 11    | 20    |
|                                   | Good      | 77                        | 75    | 152   |
|                                   | Very Good | 11                        | 17    | 28    |
| Total                             |           | 97                        | 103   | 200   |

Table B-14: Chi-square value of consumer fashion attitude \* high-street fashion retail store

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 1.333 <sup>a</sup> | 2  | .513                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 1.342              | 2  | .511                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .295               | 1  | .587                  |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.70.

Table B-15: Case processing summary of consumer fashion attitude \* window display

|   | Case Processing Summary |         |         |         |       |         |
|---|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|   | Cases                   |         |         |         |       |         |
|   | Valid                   |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|   | N                       | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Window display *<br>Consumer fashion attitude | 200                     | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-16: Contingency table of consumer fashion attitude \* window display

| Crosstab       |                |                           |       |       |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|                |                | Consumer fashion attitude |       | Total |
|                |                | Neutral                   | Agree |       |
| Window display | Agree          | 44                        | 55    | 99    |
|                | Strongly Agree | 53                        | 48    | 101   |
| Total          |                | 97                        | 103   | 200   |

Table B-18: Chi-square value of consumer fashion attitude \* window display

| Chi-Square Tests                   |                    |    |                          |                         |                         |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|----|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                    | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square                 | 1.291 <sup>a</sup> | 1  | .256                     |                         |                         |
| Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup> | .989               | 1  | .320                     |                         |                         |
| Likelihood Ratio                   | 1.292              | 1  | .256                     |                         |                         |
| Fisher's Exact Test                |                    |    |                          | .262                    | .160                    |
| Linear-by-Linear Association       | 1.284              | 1  | .257                     |                         |                         |
| N of Valid Cases <sup>b</sup>      | 200                |    |                          |                         |                         |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 48.02.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table B-19: Case processing summary of high-street fashion brand official website \* window display

| Case Processing Summary              |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--------------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|                                      | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|                                      | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|                                      | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Window display * Internet or Website | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-20: Contingency table of high-street fashion brand official website \* window display

| Crosstab       |                |                     |          |         |       |       |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------|
|                |                | Internet or Website |          |         |       | Total |
|                |                | Strongly Disagree   | Disagree | Neutral | Agree |       |
| Window display | Agree          | 16                  | 71       | 11      | 1     | 99    |
|                | Strongly Agree | 18                  | 68       | 15      | 0     | 101   |
| Total          |                | 34                  | 139      | 26      | 1     | 200   |

Table B-21: Chi-square value of high-street fashion brand official website \* window display

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) | Point Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 1.778 <sup>a</sup> | 3  | .620                  | .686                 |                      |                   |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 2.167              | 3  | .539                  | .686                 |                      |                   |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 1.723              |    |                       | .694                 |                      |                   |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .000 <sup>b</sup>  | 1  | .994                  | 1.000                | .547                 | .099              |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .50.

b. The standardized statistic is .007

Table B-22: Case processing summary of high-street fashion brand official website \* high-street fashion retail store

| Case Processing Summary                                |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| High-street fashion retail store * Internet or Website | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-23: Contingency table of high-street fashion brand official website \* high-street fashion retail store

| Crosstab                          |           |                     |          |         |       |       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------|
|                                   |           | Internet or Website |          |         |       | Total |
|                                   |           | Strongly Disagree   | Disagree | Neutral | Agree |       |
| High -Street fashion retail store | Fair      | 4                   | 13       | 3       | 0     | 20    |
|                                   | Good      | 23                  | 108      | 20      | 1     | 152   |
|                                   | Very Good | 7                   | 18       | 3       | 0     | 28    |
| Total                             |           | 34                  | 139      | 26      | 1     | 200   |

Table B-24: Chi-square value of high-street fashion brand official website \* high-street fashion retail store

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) | Point Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 2.185 <sup>a</sup> | 6  | .902                  | .820                 |                      |                   |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 2.298              | 6  | .890                  | .848                 |                      |                   |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 3.624              |    |                       | .780                 |                      |                   |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .498 <sup>b</sup>  | 1  | .480                  | .523                 | .282                 | .080              |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |

a. 7 cells (58.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .10.

b. The standardized statistic is -.706.



Table B-25: Case processing summary of information seeking process \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Case Processing Summary                      |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Internet or Website *<br>Information seeking | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-26: Contingency table of information seeking process \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Crosstab            |                   |                     |         |       |       |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|
|                     |                   | Information seeking |         |       | Total |
|                     |                   | Disagree            | Neutral | Agree |       |
| Internet or Website | Strongly Disagree | 1                   | 31      | 2     | 34    |
|                     | Disagree          | 5                   | 121     | 13    | 139   |
|                     | Neutral           | 0                   | 24      | 2     | 26    |
|                     | Agree             | 0                   | 1       | 0     | 1     |
| Total               |                   | 6                   | 177     | 17    | 200   |

Table B-27: Chi-square value of information seeking process \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                          |                         |                         |                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(1-sided) | Point<br>Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 1.592 <sup>a</sup> | 6  | .953                     | .897                    |                         |                      |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 2.506              | 6  | .868                     | .844                    |                         |                      |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 3.516              |    |                          | .977                    |                         |                      |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .246 <sup>b</sup>  | 1  | .620                     | .708                    | .377                    | .131                 |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                          |                         |                         |                      |

a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .03.

b. The standardized statistic is .496.

Table B-28: Case processing summary of information seeking process \* window display

| Case Processing Summary                |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Window display*<br>Information seeking | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-29: Contingency table of information seeking process \* window display

| Crosstab       |                |                     |         |       |       |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|
|                |                | Information seeking |         |       | Total |
|                |                | Disagree            | Neutral | Agree |       |
| Window display | Agree          | 4                   | 87      | 8     | 99    |
|                | Strongly Agree | 2                   | 90      | 9     | 101   |
| Total          |                | 6                   | 177     | 17    | 200   |

Table B-30: Chi-square value of information seeking process \* window display

| Chi-Square Tests             |                   |    |                       |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                              | Value             | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | .756 <sup>a</sup> | 2  | .685                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | .769              | 2  | .681                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .371              | 1  | .542                  |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200               |    |                       |

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.97.

Table B-31: Case processing summary of information seeking process \* social networking

| Case Processing Summary                   |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|   | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|   | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|   | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Social Networking*<br>Information seeking | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-32: Contingency table of information seeking process \* social networking

| Crosstab          |          |                     |         |       |       |
|-------------------|----------|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|
|                   |          | Information seeking |         |       | Total |
|                   |          | Disagree            | Neutral | Agree |       |
| Social networking | Likely   | 0                   | 21      | 3     | 24    |
|                   | Unsure   | 3                   | 52      | 5     | 60    |
|                   | Unlikely | 3                   | 104     | 9     | 116   |
| Total             |          | 6                   | 177     | 17    | 200   |

Table B-33: Chi-square value of information seeking process \* social networking

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                          |                         |                         |                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(1-sided) | Point<br>Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 2.158 <sup>a</sup> | 4  | .707                     | .733                    |                         |                      |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 2.691              | 4  | .611                     | .701                    |                         |                      |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 1.981              |    |                          | .718                    |                         |                      |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .386 <sup>b</sup>  | 1  | .534                     | .549                    | .316                    | .097                 |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                          |                         |                         |                      |

a. 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .72.

b. The standardized statistic is -.621.

Table B-34: Case processing summary of information seeking process \* high-street fashion retail store

| Case Processing Summary                                  |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| High-street fashion retail store*<br>Information seeking | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-35: Contingency table of information seeking process \* high-street fashion retail store

| Crosstab                          |           |                     |         |       |       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|
|                                   |           | Information seeking |         |       | Total |
|                                   |           | Disagree            | Neutral | Agree |       |
| High -Street fashion retail store | Fair      | 2                   | 16      | 2     | 20    |
|                                   | Good      | 4                   | 135     | 13    | 152   |
|                                   | Very Good | 0                   | 26      | 2     | 28    |
| Total                             |           | 6                   | 177     | 17    | 200   |

Table B-36: Chi-square value of information seeking process \* high-street fashion retail store

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) | Point Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 4.515 <sup>a</sup> | 4  | .341                  | .313                 |                      |                   |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 4.112              | 4  | .391                  | .485                 |                      |                   |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 3.734              |    |                       | .389                 |                      |                   |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .454 <sup>b</sup>  | 1  | .501                  | .521                 | .322                 | .137              |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |

a. 5 cells (55.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .60.

b. The standardized statistic is .673.

Table B-37: Case processing summary of emotional tie \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Case Processing Summary             |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|                                     | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|                                     | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|                                     | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Internet or Website * emotional tie | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-38: Contingency table of emotional tie \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Crosstab            |                   |               |          |       |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
|                     |                   | emotional tie |          | Total |
|                     |                   | Unsure        | Unlikely |       |
| Internet or Website | Strongly Disagree | 15            | 19       | 34    |
|                     | Disagree          | 48            | 91       | 139   |
|                     | Neutral           | 10            | 16       | 26    |
|                     | Agree             | 1             | 0        | 1     |
| Total               |                   | 74            | 126      | 200   |

Table B-39: Chi-square value of emotional tie \* high-street fashion brand official website

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) | Point Probability |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 2.829 <sup>a</sup> | 3  | .419                  | .434                 |                      |                   |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 3.101              | 3  | .376                  | .446                 |                      |                   |
| Fisher's Exact Test          | 2.798              |    |                       | .417                 |                      |                   |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .041 <sup>b</sup>  | 1  | .840                  | .897                 | .472                 | .101              |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |                      |                      |                   |

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .37.

b. The standardized statistic is .202.

Table B-40: Case processing summary of emotional tie \* window display

| Case Processing Summary        |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|                                | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|                                | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|                                | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Window display * emotional tie | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-41: Contingency table of emotional tie \* window display

| Crosstab       |                |               |          |       |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------|-------|
|                |                | Emotional tie |          | Total |
|                |                | Unsure        | Unlikely |       |
| Window display | Agree          | 36            | 63       | 99    |
|                | Strongly Agree | 38            | 63       | 101   |
| Total          |                | 74            | 126      | 200   |

Table B-42: Chi-square value of emotional tie \* window display

| Chi-Square Tests                   |                   |    |                          |                         |                         |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                    | Value             | df | Asymp. Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(2-sided) | Exact Sig.<br>(1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square                 | .034 <sup>a</sup> | 1  | .854                     |                         |                         |
| Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup> | .001              | 1  | .970                     |                         |                         |
| Likelihood Ratio                   | .034              | 1  | .854                     |                         |                         |
| Fisher's Exact Test                |                   |    |                          | .884                    | .485                    |
| Linear-by-Linear Association       | .034              | 1  | .854                     |                         |                         |
| N of Valid Cases <sup>b</sup>      | 200               |    |                          |                         |                         |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 36.63.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table B-43: Case processing summary of emotional tie \* social networking

| Case Processing Summary          |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|                                  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|                                  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|                                  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| Social networking* emotional tie | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-44: Contingency table of emotional tie \* social networking

| Crosstab                |               |          |       |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------|-------|
|                         | Emotional tie |          | Total |
|                         | Unsure        | Unlikely |       |
| Social Networking Agree | 36            | 63       | 99    |
| Strongly Agree          | 38            | 63       | 101   |
| Total                   | 74            | 126      | 200   |

Table B-45: Chi-square value of emotional tie \* social networking

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 2.546 <sup>a</sup> | 2  | .280                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 2.615              | 2  | .270                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .168               | 1  | .682                  |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.88.

Table B-46: Case processing summary of emotional tie \* high-street fashion retail store

| Case Processing Summary                          |       |         |         |         |       |         |
|--|-------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
|  | Cases |         |         |         |       |         |
|  | Valid |         | Missing |         | Total |         |
|  | N     | Percent | N       | Percent | N     | Percent |
| High-street fashion retail store * emotional tie | 200   | 100.0%  | 0       | .0%     | 200   | 100.0%  |

Table B-47: Contingency table of emotional tie \* high-street fashion retail store

| Crosstab                          |           |               |          |       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------|----------|-------|
|                                   |           | Emotional tie |          | Total |
|                                   |           | Unsure        | Unlikely |       |
| High -Street fashion retail store | Fair      | 8             | 12       | 20    |
|                                   | Good      | 53            | 99       | 152   |
|                                   | Very Good | 13            | 15       | 28    |
| Total                             |           | 74            | 126      | 200   |

Table B-48: Chi-square value of emotional tie \* high-street fashion retail store

| Chi-Square Tests             |                    |    |                       |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|
|                              | Value              | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 1.441 <sup>a</sup> | 2  | .486                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 1.414              | 2  | .493                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .373               | 1  | .542                  |
| N of Valid Cases             | 200                |    |                       |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.40.



## Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Results

The summary of semi-structured interview results are shown below:

Table C-1: Procedure of semi-structured interview method

| Interviewees  | Interview Key Questions   | Aims  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fashion retail store</li> <li>• Fashion retail supervisor</li> <li>• Fashion retail department</li> <li>• Assistant retail department</li> <li>• Fashion designer</li> <li>• Public Relations (PR) and fashion buyer</li> <li>• Fashion column writer</li> <li>• Creation director/ strategic planner</li> <li>• Graphic designer</li> <li>• Media researcher</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fashion campaign</li> <li>• Purpose of fashion promotion</li> <li>• Approaches to reach the goal and communication tools which were employed</li> <li>• Needs of communication (problems and challenges)</li> <li>• Brand strategy and communication tools</li> <li>• Future of fashion communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fashion brand characteristics which make fashion products different from another</li> <li>• Communication strategy that fashion brand applied to achieve and establish purpose</li> <li>• The attributes of major communication channels which are generally used in fashion industry</li> <li>• The elements of brand message that fashion brand should stand for</li> <li>• Personal opinions about the future of fashion brand communication</li> </ul> |

Key findings of the semi-structured interviews are encapsulated in five aspects:

### **High-street fashion brand characteristics**

- 1) Represent transient practice, short product life cycle, fad, and fast moving consumer goods, fast fashion.
- 2) Compete to deliver current and latest fashion trend.
- 3) Easy access at affordable price generates a mass consumption of high-street fashion product.

- 4) Provide a wider range of ready-to-wear garments with a mass production system. High-street fashion brand offers a homogeneous functional proposition.
- 5) High-street fashion product development derives from innovative modification of a broad spectrum of fashion categories particularly from luxury fashion.

### **Communication strategies**

- 1) Convey the sign of conformity amongst audiences.
- 2) Stimulate dialogue between the target audience and the brand.
- 3) Highly focus on retailing as a place for fashion communication and fashion distribution channel concurrently.
- 4) Maintain message consistency between a range of communication applications.

### **Brand message framing**

- 1) A holistic view of high-street fashion brand message derived from an incorporation of high-street fashion brand informative substance amongst target audiences and prospects in the communication process.
- 2) A clear definition of communication objectives of a high-street fashion brand.
- 3) An investigation of high-street fashion brand core values.

**Purpose of high-street fashion brand communication:** Communication is employed to carry the meaning from a high-street fashion brand to audiences. Communicative structure is an outline where a high-street fashion brand communication can be built. Ultimately, communication strategy is developed with the purpose of how to achieve the set objectives.

### **Future of high-street fashion brand communication**

- 1) Initiate proactive communication plan that is able to reflect current fashion trends together with brand essence at the early stage.
- 2) Exploit the advantages relevant to fashion mass media to cover product information.

- 3) Thoroughly understand target audience background as a key determinant to comprehend their behavioural trait in order to fulfil their requirements towards high-street fashion brands.
- 4) Embrace audiences' feedbacks as a key informant to construct high-street fashion brand message content along with communication approach.
- 5) Ascribe target audience as a participant of communication activities in the encoding process.

## Appendix D: Case Study Results

The summary of case study results are shown below:

Table D-1: Procedure of case study method

| Case Studies  | The extent of case studies   | Aims  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Two leading high-street fashion brands in London, i.e. TOPSHOP and H&amp;M</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand message objectives and communication approaches</li> <li>• High-street fashion brand communication plan</li> <li>• Communication medium techniques emerge from current online environment and online informative demands amongst the female generation next</li> <li>• Viewpoints of the female generation next based on behavioural perspectives in response to high-street fashion brand online communication activities</li> <li>• Attributes of the mainstream online communication mediums contribute to the patterns of information acquisition and information search</li> <li>• By the matter of fact that online communication channels arise from the rapid change in information technologies, the principle question is how these online applications play the role of</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical methods to achieve an effective message transmission</li> <li>• Practical methods to enable two-sided messages</li> <li>• Practical methods to build brand value over the Internet power</li> <li>• Practical methods to discover certain similarities that integrate online and off-line communication channels with the aim of brand-building communication</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <p>high-street fashion brand communication mediums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How a high-street fashion brand balances the need for technological adoption with the need to continue to disseminate brand message in the encoding process</li> </ul> |  |
|--|--|--|

Key findings of the case study are presented below:

- 1) Two high-street fashion brands, i.e. TOPSHOP and H&M, aim to communicate with audiences focusing on informing fashion product by a synergy of high-street fashion brand messages and information technologies through the mixture of channels over the Internet. High-street fashion brands arouse online communication experiences through the sensory incentives of entertainment by the means of visualisation, sound and interactive communication design.
- 2) Online applications stimulate audiences to exchange opinions and perceived attitudes toward high-street fashion brands. The beneficial functions of online communication channels provide a space for audiences to express their interests and knowledge by involving themselves as message co-creators. Brand message content can then be strengthened by integrating audiences' feedbacks as brand message resources. Accordingly, a high-street fashion brand should not only consider target audiences and prospects as recipients in the brand communication process but also embrace target audiences and prospects as communication participants in message formulation development.
- 3) According to the female adolescent behavioural dimensions, the audiences are enthusiastic and show vigorous effort to learn about high-street fashion products through a number of online communication applications such as Youtube, Blogging, Social networking site and so on. The principle needs amongst the female adolescent can be described in terms of edutainment (education and entertainment), which helps brands develop the degree of brand awareness. For the most part, high-street fashion brands (TOPSHOP and H&M) have developed fashion communication programmes based on how

the brands can extensively deliver fashion product information in order to stimulate greater responses and fashion consumptions. The brands communicate heavily on fashion promotion rather than brand value proposition. However, high-street fashion brands currently have started to acknowledge the importance of brand-building in the high-street fashion competitive environment. Consequently, brand communication plans are being developed by high-street fashion brands in terms of impact on target audiences and prospects through online and off-line communication tools simultaneously. In accordance with the extent of case studies in this research, the influences of online communications make it easier for a high-street fashion brand to reach and penetrate audiences' mindsets remotely. The online communication tools have an effect on consumer-brand communication activities purposefully by increasing brand value offer directly through interactivity on online channels.

- 4) Audience sources of high-street fashion brand information are various, based upon individual behavioural differences. The ultimate communication plan then must be consistency and creativity in both online and off-line communication channels with the intention to best achieve brand communication aims. Consequently, a high-street fashion brand can eventually develop audience status from brand message recipient to brand advocacy. Examples of this are the existent online brand communities where audiences represent their loyalty and strong bond with the fashion brands.

## Appendix E: Micro Ethnography/ Participant Observation Results

Micro ethnography / participant observation was conducted to complement other research methods. Retail stores were regarded as setting fields where off-line communication activities taken place. The summary of micro ethnography/ participant observation results are shown below:

Table E-1: Procedure of micro ethnography/ participant observation method

| The extent of micro ethnography/ participant observation  | Aims  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the role of each in-store communication tool and how each tool associates and complements high-street fashion brand message contents</li> <li>• Examine communication activities which occurred that possibly encourage the emotional bond between brand and audiences in the platform of brand communication premises.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To gain an insight view of consumer behaviours towards in-store communication tools of high-street fashion brands and how these communication tools have an effect on them</li> <li>• To identify the potential of in-store communication tools over target audiences</li> <li>• To discover the collaboration between each communication tool in retail stores and browsing activities</li> </ul> |

Key findings of the micro ethnography / participant observation are as follows:

- 1) In-store communication tools, i.e. visual merchandising, store atmosphere, fashion product assortment, services, personal selling, promotion, in-store event, interior design/ layout, lookbook, catalogue, leaflet and in-house magazine encourage audience interest by generating desired atmospheric in retail stores. These combinations of in-store communication tools incorporate behavioural strategy with a brand communication plan. The in-store communication tools include target audiences and prospects in the process of actual communication consumption with the activities of fashion promotion in order to obtain the desired responses. Moreover, an intended brand message associated with audience perceptions can enhance fashion brand information by encouragement of attention. For example, the brand informative message at

a unique selling point emphasises the brand perceived value to encourage further interactivities between the high-street fashion brand and the female adolescent.

- 2) To determine the degree of how in-store communication tools influence the target audiences and prospects. The results reveal that the communication efforts are based upon how high-street fashion brands communicate the messages to the audiences. However, individual preference is an uncontrollable determinant that has an effect on audience's receptive mind. Therefore, clearly identified target audience behaviour leads a communicator to ultimately accomplish communication objectives and properly select communication mediums. The effect of in-store communication tool components can be achieved by correctly delivering high-street fashion product characteristics and fashion product benefits in accordance with consumer brand value through suitable communication tools.
- 3) The research identifies browsing activity in terms of ongoing information search. Therefore, the communication consumption is openly driven by the in-store communication tools. The findings reveal that browsing activity in a high-street fashion retail store atmosphere enables browsers or audiences to gain recreational experiences together with fashion information transmission. Browsing activity inevitably endorses fashion product involvement through communication surroundings in retail stores. As a result, the acquired experiences of in-store communication can increase on the basis of the time consumed by audiences and pleasant retail environment. The benefits received from browsing activity in store, therefore, strengthen the consumer-brand relationship through product involvement and high-street fashion retail store visits. Moreover, an influential activity of peers and opinion leaders immediately exemplifies consumption action through the stage of browsing activity. A positive linkage of high-street fashion product with audiences are simply perceived and associated through opinion leaders as unintentional human media in the stores.



# **Appendix F: Paper for 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of the AM's: Brand, Corporate Image, Identity & Reputation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

## **Consumer-brand relationship in teenage fashion market: The brand communication mix at encoding process**

Kanwipa Methanuntakul and Ray Holland

### **Abstract**

The fashion industry offers a range of products for teenagers who are regarded as the majority group in this market. In the highly competitive environment, fashion brands have been exploited across the broad spectrum of the teenage market with the intention of identity and image enhancement. Self-identity and self-image are crucial factors for teens to settle in one group. Accordingly, semiotic of fashion brand messages are interpreted and embraced so as to serve this need. This empirical study examines the sensory experiences of teenagers associated with emotional fashion branding with the intention of how to manage the stimuli process of communication. The paper aims to explore a brand communication mix that relates brand to consumer at the step of encoding in an attempt to disseminate the brand impact of communication on teen's degree of brand involvement, which leads to consumption and long-term relationship, by investigating the future effectiveness of conversation generated by each brand communication channel. To understand the communication development, the research key is focused on the extent of the teen emotional relationship with the fashion brand at pre-purchasing stage in the context of marketing aesthetic. Hence, the paper will show strategic directions to establish of how the fashion brand can make consumers aware of the product and how much consumers think or perceive they know about the brand.

# **Appendix G: Paper for 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the AM's: Brand, Identity and Corporate Reputation**

## **The Influences of Offline and Online Communication over Female adolescent: An Implication for High-Street Fashion Brand**

Kanwipa Methanuntakul, Busayawan Ariyatun and Ray Holland

Female young adults show concern about the importance of looking good in order to be accepted among their community. The association between “How I look” and “Fashion brand” becomes an essential issue for brand strategists to select appropriate key communication tools. The behaviour of the female “generation next” forms the focus of this study in order to understand their self-image and its relationship to fashion language.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to develop key brand communication tools at the encoding stage of offline and online interaction which create and maintain the bond between the female adolescent and the high-street fashion brand.

**Design/ methodology/ approach:** Quantitative research constituting questionnaires completed by females age 18-25 years old, and an observation analysis developed after evaluating available literature review.

**Findings:** The principle findings relate to message transferring and show the key decision factors when generation next and peer group receive media. The fashion brand relationship is strongly influenced by brand communication. The findings demonstrate that respondents were loyal to high-street branded clothing which was deemed to be unique. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the role of fashion brand communication and influences from the peers was derived from female adolescent behaviour. A comparison between offline and online communication was completed to demonstrate the concept of the consumer-media relationship.

**Originality/ value:** The impact of communication tools has great influences on female adolescent image.

- Female adolescent compare themselves with peers mostly by offline community and online community communication tools
- For marketing this may have important implications for the communication strategy.

**Keywords:** Communication, Fashion, Marketing Communication, Social Networking Media.