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## **Introduction**

In this essay I will be discussing about 3 keywords that have sparked my interest. These three words consist of branding, fashion, and social media. I will be exploring each word as well as their links together. Firstly, in chapter 1 I will be discussing branding and exploring the branding prism by J. Kapferer and the effect it has on brands. Furthermore, I will be discussing the importance of brand strategy and the impact it can have on businesses. Secondly, in chapter 2 I will be exploring the brand Peachy Den by evaluating their branding as well as discussing how important branding is for fashion companies and the impact it has on the consumer. Thirdly I will discuss the importance of social media presence and how brands rely on it to help them as well as the impact it has on the planet.

## **Chapter 1, Branding**

A brand identity or corporate identity is the image of which a business or firm presents itself towards their audience. "A brand image is a customers' perception of the brand" (Rukosuev, 2023). Elements of this include logos, tag lines, typeface, shapes, colour schemes etc. Figure 1 shows a brand identity prism created by J. Kapferer in 1986 which highlights six important steps to a good brand identity.

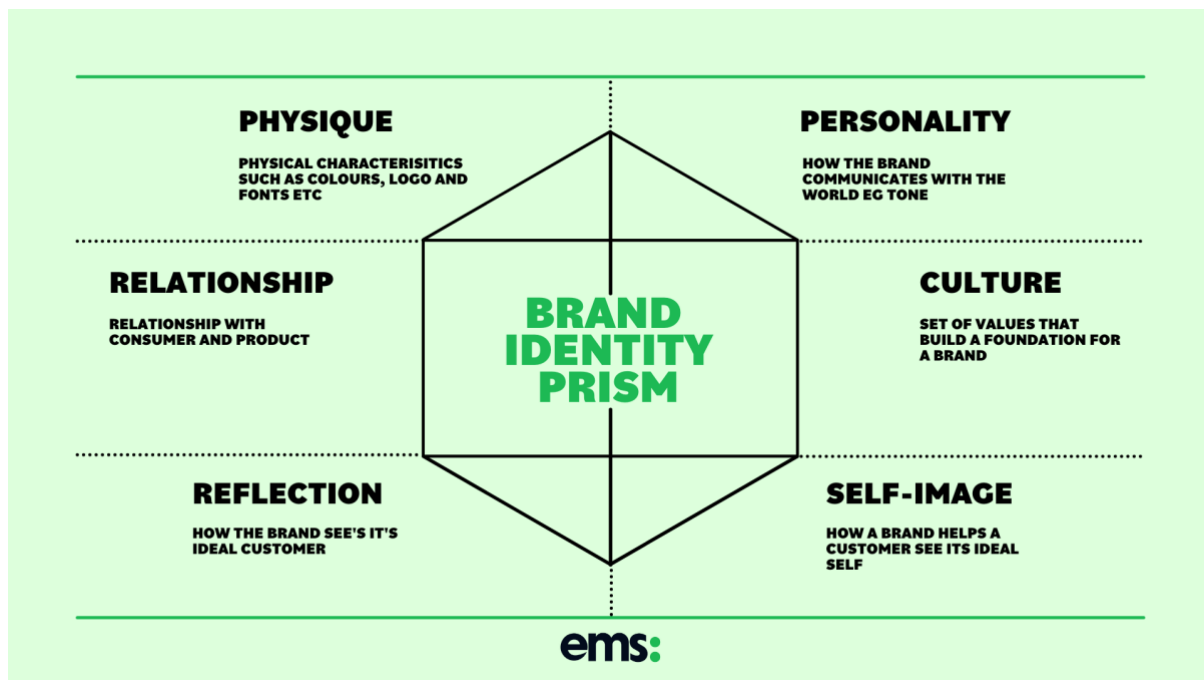


Figure 1 Brand Identity Prism (Bailie, 2021)

This prism is used as a marketing model which is intended to help a brand understand and enhance all aspects of its identity (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). These aspects of identity include “physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image” (Bailie, 2021). The physique is the logo, fonts, colours and shapes. This part of the brand needs to be recognisable. An example of this is the Nike logo being a tick mark. The personality is how the brand presents and communicates itself to the public, such as McDonald’s personality is known to be happy and friendly. Culture can be what the brand stands for and represents, any values or principles they hold as a company. An example of this would be how H&M believe in being one team “We encourage and help each other to win together” (H&M, 2022). Relationship stands for trust between the brand and the consumer, do customers expect anything outside of the product/service they offer? The reflection stands for the target audience, who is the ideal buyer/customer? Finally, is self-image which is how the customer sees their ideal self. What lifestyle does this brand

aim to give the consumer? Later in this essay, the importance of lifestyle within branding will be discussed. This brand identity prism has been around for 20 years, which helps achieve a successful branding identity for anyone who uses it.

Branding is incredibly strong and effective. There is a reason for everything when it comes to brand identity. For example, the use of negative space and the effect that has on the consumer. Negative space is used to make design look less cluttered, also giving the design a certain elegance. Luxury brands know this and apply it even in their store designs as well as any design elements they have. Products are displayed one at a time, with each product being surrounded with plenty of negative space. It shows customers the exclusivity of the items and shows them that these items are high end. The use of negative space can be applied to any part of branding whether that's in stores or brand logos. What is negative space in logo design? It is the empty space which has been left surrounding the illustrated object that helps to define it (Miller, 2023).



*Figure 2 Brand Strategy 101 (Stec, 2022)*

A branding strategy is also important for brands and businesses. “Brand strategy is part of a business plan that outlines how the company will build rapport and favorability within the market” (Stec, 2022). The first aspect to brand strategy is purpose. What is your brand’s purpose, and how does it differentiate from other brands? The purpose can be defined in two ways, functional and intentional. The focal point of functional is making money, with intentional being able to make money and have a positive impact on the world. Consistency is important for brands to help keep their customers and gain new customers. It also helps customers achieve a higher knowledge of the brand. “Consistency builds that bridge by increasing consumer knowledge about the brand” (Wong, 2022).

## Chapter 2, Fashion

“Branding is the conscious management of the public perception of, and personal identification with, a fashion label” (Hes, 2010). Branding is important for fashion labels as people associate a certain lifestyle with it which they can choose to be a part of by buying into that brand. New fashion labels could struggle with gaining loyal customers because the public do not yet know what lifestyle the brand represents.

Independent fashion brands can utilise branding to stand out against larger more established fashion labels. “The number of independent fashion businesses has grown by 23 per cent in just one year” (Smith, 2022). Designers could possibly have more freedom in their work when working with independent brands as opposed to bigger and popular brands. “If your client or manager understands why you want to make certain creative choices, they may be more likely to go along with them” (Indeed, 2022). Brand recognition has an affect on the customers. Customers are more likely to trust a brand if they can recognise it, this links back to the relationship in the brand identity prism. Brand recognition includes a logo, colours, a tag line, a jingle and more. Some examples of this includes the McDonalds logo, the Nike logo etc. To succeed in this there are many factors, making the customers aware of your brand, maintaining a good reputation, showing trust and loyalty.

Peachy Den is an independent fashion brand that promotes sustainability and empowerment of women (Peachy Den, 2023). They believe you can be comfortable

and confident in what you are wearing which is their focus when designing their clothes. This brand also focuses on quality and wanting their customers to be able to rely on that, as well as having an all-seasons approach with colour palettes etc. They have a fun but simple and timeless branding that perfectly captures the brand lifestyle for consumers to see. As previously discussed, this factor is important, which likely plays a role in the success of the Peachy Den fashion brand.

What is sustainable fashion? “Put simply, it is fashion that is ethically made and environmentally friendly” (Marshall, 2022). This brand pushes for customers to invest in high quality pieces that are wardrobe staples which can be worn multiple different ways. For example, this description of a cotton jumpsuit from their online store: “You can pair this organic cotton jumpsuit with anything from heels to trainers to bare feet; the perfect stay-at-home fit, easily dressed up or down” (Peachy Den, 2023). Over the past few years sustainable fashion has become more and more popular, which could be considered another factor in Peachy Den's success.



*Figure 3 Peachy Den logo (Peachy Den, 2023a)*

Peachy Den's branding is very simplistic and timeless which is important for brands. "A timeless brand that doesn't require updating to avoid looking outdated will make your logo continue to work for you, rather than against you" (Dodhia, 2021). This logo is simplistic and minimal yet captures the aesthetic of the brand perfectly well.

Is branding different in the fashion industry? "Building a strong identity is key for any fashion brand. It allows for representation of a clear idea of what's being sold" (Moore, 2021). As previously discussed, branding in the fashion industry is incredibly important and will determine the brand's success. Customers need to know what type of lifestyle they are buying into and becoming a part of. "A brand is a company's personality and what it hopes to represent to the customer" (Moore, 2021). A way of a brand communicating their lifestyle to consumers can be done in many ways. One which has grown significantly over the years is having ambassadors and influencers to promote their products and to reach potential customers. Brands carefully curate who fits their lifestyle and ensure they have the correct target audience. This is done because brands today understand consumer behaviour. "Consumer behaviour consists of the psychological and social processes people undergo in the acquisition, use and disposal of products" (Bagozzi et al., 2010). Another point is peer to peer influence, research shows that people are more likely to trust other people rather than brands/companies. Research that was carried out showed that 75% of Gen Zers and Millennials typically see content from influencers at the minimum of once a day and 72% of them expressed that they are more likely to trust a recommendation from an influencer if they had shown brand loyalty (Jakobsson, 2022).

### Chapter 3, Social Media

Social media is an interactive technology for people to use to find information and connect with other users. It started in the 2000s with Myspace being the first platform reaching a million users which was achieved in 2004 (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2023). Social Media has changed the world and has made it a fast-paced environment. There are pros and cons about social media and the affect it can have today. The many cons of social media include addiction, negative impact on mental health, privacy, and data security and more (Sus, 2023). However social media is a perfect way to reach potential customers and connect with them to highlight your brand. It is the primary source for information for customers, brands take advantage of this. “The fashion industry, particularly, is benefitting the most through social media” (Dennis, 2021).

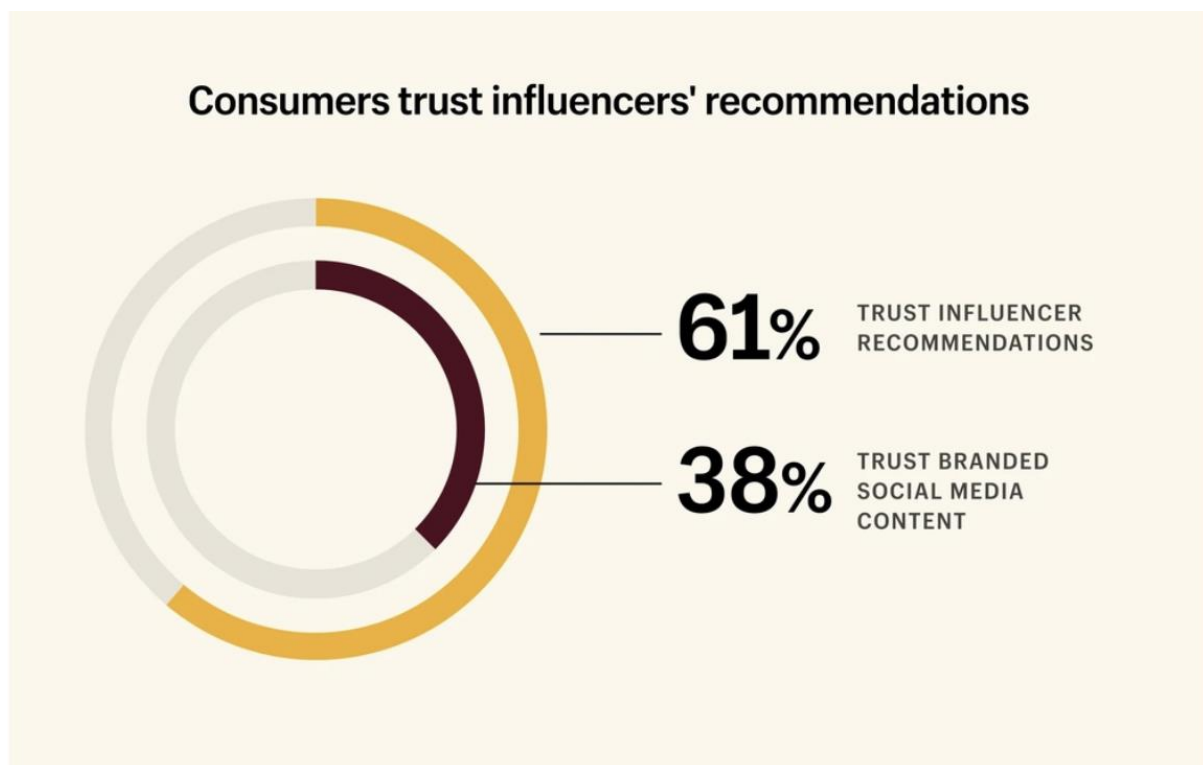


*Figure 4 Consumers trust influencers recommendations (Shepherd, 2023)*

Previously discussed influencers are a big impact for brands as they help bring in more customers. Brands carefully pick influencers who fit their brand identity as they have the correct target audience. “51% Say Influencer Marketing Helps Them Acquire Better Customers” (DMI, 2022). Influencers in some cases are paid to advertise certain products and, on some occasions, given unique discount codes to draw the customers in more. There are multiple reasons why brands use influencer marketing. It raises brand awareness, improves brand advocacy, reaches new or targeted audiences, and increases sales conversions (DMI, 2022). Influencer marketing has had a big impact on brands, making it become more in demand. Due to this, it has grown tremendously over the last few years and will likely continue to grow. “Influencer Marketing Has Grown to Become a \$13.8 Billion Industry” (Shepherd, 2023). This sparks brands planning on increasing their spend on influencer marketing due to the incredible results they are receiving. Research has shown that micro influencer marketing will start to grow due to it having a lower cost and their audiences being more likely to act (West, 2023). Social media is a perfect way for fashion businesses to be able to provide good customer service. They can analyse what customers like and dislike as well as seeking how to meet potential customer’s needs. This can result in a satisfied happy customer, which is a goal for most brands. This can also achieve higher website traffic, as it is reaching out to more potential customers. Without this, customers may not become aware of brands as it will not be put in front of them.

## Conclusion

To conclude it is clear to me that branding, fashion, and social media all have an impact on each other. Fashion brands are taking advantage of influencer marketing which is all about that influencer fitting their brand to connect with the right target audience. This is interesting to me because of the growth in this area I have witnessed by growing up using social media. For a while I have been thinking about how the next step is using micro influencers and how it can have a good effect on brands. Finding out that micro influencer marketing is becoming more popular has surprised me and supported my knowledge so far. I have learnt how important branding is and the effect it can have if it is done poorly. I have learnt how to apply the brand identity prism to any brand and any future brand I could work for in the future. The fashion industry has always been a particular interest of mine, however over the past few years I have been more interested in smaller independent fashion brands. This is because I personally feel they are more authentic and have more of a goal than to make money. I would like to do more research if independent businesses and fashion brands will become more popular, as micro influencers have become more popular. Is it the same? Will it have the same affect? Independent fashion labels tend to be more focussed on sustainability which is another interest of mine. Sustainable fashion seems to be more on the rise over the past few years. More people want to invest in better quality items of clothing and choosing quality over quantity. However, with the cost-of-living crisis it is hard to convince people that quality over quantity is better for their money. I want to find out if this can be changed, and what will convince people to switch. Is it possible to get more people

on board with the current cost of living situation? Will branding and micro influencer marketing be able to have an impact on this problem? I would like to explore this question for my dissertation, how does the role of graphic design shape sustainable fashion?

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