Master Thesis Exposé

Involvement, Attitude and Perception in the Fashion Industry: a Contemporary Reassessment of the Elaboration Likelihood Model

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ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** Involvement, Attitude and Perception in the Fashion Industry: a Contemporary Reassessment of the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

**Keywords:** fashion-clothing involvement, Elaboration Likelihood Model, brand perception, brand attachment, advertising, attitude toward advertising, messaging

**Background:** During the last decades the concept of consumer involvement has been studied in its connection to marketing, particularly in relation to the way people perceive advertising messages. In this field, particular relevance was gained by the model developed by Petty and Cacioppo, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which states the probability people will be engaged in a communication as a factor depending on their degree of involvement in the issue proposed.

**Purpose:** The connection made in the Elaboration Likelihood Model between personal involvement and attitude towards a message has not been applied to contemporary fashion industry. This thesis therefore aims at verifying its current validity in this sector, by examining how people with different levels of interest in the fashion industry perceive advertising messages and brands’ images. Based on these results, a second purpose of this work will be that of giving feedbacks on their brand perception to firms considered in the study, as well to advise them on how to improve their communication practices.

**Method:** In order to conduct the study three brands will be chosen, of which consumers brand perceptions are going to be studied. Moreover, this thesis will analyse their communication strategies and following fashion messages spread and attitude toward advertising created. The study will involve the collection of data through a quantitative questionnaire, which will be spread in four countries: Italy, Germany, USA and South Korea. The survey will be directed both to people involved and non-involved in the fashion industry, in order to understand whether and how their personal attitude influences their messages’ perception. Therefore the population of the chosen country, meaning people aged among 15 and 75 years, composes the sample of this survey.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBBE – Customer Based Brand Equity
ELM – Elaboration Likelihood Model
FCI – Fashion Clothing Involvement
IMC – Integrated Marketing Communication
1. INTRODUCTION

Fashion industry is characterised by a high degree of evolution, considering the rapidity by which products change over time, following a seasonal orientation. The process by which new clothing, apparel concepts and tastes continually cycle across population has been the subject of popular commentaries for centuries (Tigert, Ring, & King, 1976). In contemporary society, however, fashion lifecycle further speeded up, as a consequence of materialism and increasing search for variety. It is now fundamental for firms to have a clear understanding of people’s interpretation of fashion items, as well as a strong knowledge on best communication practices (Auty & Elliott, 1998).

In such a context, communication and brand strategy are acquiring more and more importance. This has to be linked with a recent issue, meaning the continue growth and spread of new means of communication, that challenge firms in creating and maintaining a coherent brand image. The mean by which brand strategies should communicate a comprehensive plan is related to the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication. A critical review of IMC previous definitions shows they all agree on saying that coordination between the communication disciplines is needed in order to create a competitive brand (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). Moreover, it emerged the importance of directing communication efforts toward customers, as a tool to affect their behaviours (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). The audience is considered relevant also in the definition given by Kliatchko, who describes Integrated Marketing Communication as “the concept and process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centred, and result-driven brand communication programs over time” (Kliatchko, 2005, p. 21).

The coherence between communication efforts is surely of primary relevance for firms operating in the fashion sector. Indeed, in an industry whose products change every six months (or less), it is not possible to connect advertising just on the product itself, but it is necessary to develop a feeling toward the brand, for which specific patterns have to be followed. Marketing strategies have to synchronize every aspect of consumer relation with the brand, harmonizing brand equity approach in line with consumer’s cognitive, affective and behavioural experience perspective. In this sense, it is fundamental to accompany marketing strategies so that the desired thoughts, feelings, images, opinions and perceptions become linked to the brand (Kim, 2012).
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To clothing manufacturers and advertising agencies is therefore particularly important to understand what actually drives people’s perceptions and preferences toward the brand.

In order to deepen the concept of consumer perception, it is relevant to take account of the contribution given by Auty and Elliott (1998), who demonstrated how different groups of individuals actually make different judgements about the same clothing brands. This study suggests that advertisements do indeed create meanings in fashion items that are decoded with surprising consistency depending on differing levels of fashion involvement (Auty & Elliott, 1998).

From the explained starting point, this work aims at understanding what drives people’s attitudes and perceptions towards fashion brands, with a particular connection to the pre-purchase phase, and will therefore analyse the way people react to communications they are exposed to. Moreover, the thesis will verify whether involvement still is one of the main influencing variables affecting people’s perception, despite the changing the fashion world passed through, as its rapid evolution and the change of communications and marketing tools.

The main variable considered will therefore be fashion involvement. It will be analysed in relation to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which constitutes the theoretical basis of the work. This model, developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1981), connects personal involvement with people’s attitude to get engaged and to elaborate the information they come into contact with.

In terms of fashion clothing, the Elaboration Likelihood Model implies that highly involved consumers use a central route to their fashion clothing decision-making, as, finding fashion clothing personally relevant, they are motivated by. Alternatively, less involved consumers tend to follow a more peripheral route to their fashion clothing decision-making (Hourigan & Bougure, 2011).

Primary purpose of this thesis, therefore, is that of analysing the extent by which fashion involvement affects consumer perception of brands’ communication strategy, verifying the applicability of the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Secondly, given the nature of clothing consumption, which is symbolic and meaningful, the work will investigate differences between brands perceptions in the four different countries
analysed. Indeed, consumers in different cultures are expected to be diverse in terms of the way they perceive a given brand. Image and symbolic meanings attached to brands tend to be shaped by a local culture where economic and social values of brands might differ based on collective ideas about the brand (Jung & Sung, 2008). The present international study, through a comparison, will highlight whether particular brands are considered more valuable in one country than in the others, verifying if brand experience is affected by the cultural context.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section has the aim to provide a theoretical overview on the main concepts this thesis takes into account: attitude, involvement and perception. Attitude will be briefly defined and will then be explored as a consequence of involvement, the main variable of the work. After a general overview on involvement, it will be analysed in relation to marketing and in particular to the fashion industry.

A third section is dedicated to brand perception, and contains an highlight on fashion brands.

2.1 ATTITUDE

Several are the definitions given to attitude in social psychology, most of which place the concept inside the mind of the individual. Campbell (1963), provided a statement of this approach, considering attitude as a behavioural disposition, a state of the person that come into being on the basis of some transaction with the environment.

The contribution given by Buller (2005) on the topic is different concerning the moment during which predisposition are created inside individuals’ minds. He affirmed that people are affected by a pre-existing predisposition, or a bias, that operates since their first approach with a new environment yet. This bias directs attention to the stimuli, which is the attitude, indeed (Buller, 2005).

The contribution by Buller appears to be in contrast with what Campbell (1965) stated. Consisting with his definition, indeed, it is possible to say that attitude does not exist until individual perceives an attitude object and responds to it on an explicit or implicit basis.

Therefore, according to this line of research, attitude does not exist before the individual comes into contact with an environment (Campbell, 1963; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Only
after the first exposure, meaning the first contact with something new, individuals react, developing a predisposition that leaves a mental residue in their minds. That residue, which we can call attitude, is what predisposes people to respond consistently with it during future exposures (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Eagly and Chaiken labelled the residue as a tendency, and used this concept in their definition. According to them, attitude is defined as a “psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p.1). They therefore gave an interesting contribution to the issue, categorizing three essential features of attitude: evaluation, attitude object and tendency. The three elements together refer to an individual propensity to evaluate a particular entity with some degree of favorability or unfavorability. Evaluations refer to all classes of evaluative responding, whether overt or covert, or cognitive, affective or behavioural (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007).

2.2 INVOLVEMENT

2.2.1. TERM DEFINITION

The notion of involvement originates from the persuasive communication literature, a branch of social psychology. In this field of research it is connected with the social judgement theory, which considers how individuals judge messages they receive through a three-attitude scale: the latitude of acceptance, the latitude of rejection, and the latitude of non-commitment (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965). What may affect the structure of the three judgemental latitudes is, indeed, the notion of “ego-involvement”, that can be explained as the relationship between the individual and a considered social issue (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2006). The attitude a person shows towards a message and his degree of persuasiveness may therefore depend by his involvement in the matter. To provide an example, it is possible to say that highly involved individuals with wider latitude of rejection are not susceptible to persuasive communication.

Therefore, in social psychology, “ego-involvement” is connected to the centrality or importance of a social issue in a person’s life. It is defined as “arousal singularly on, in combination of the individuals’ commitment or stands in the context of appropriate situations” (Sherif et al., 1965, p. 176). In other words, it is possible to say that a person is involved on an issue when this is significant or central to his self-identity, or when a person is
strongly committed to a position.

2.2.2 INVOLVEMENT AND MARKETING

The highlighted conceptualization of involvement, along with its strong connection with persuasion, has been the basis for applying and treating involvement in the marketing field, particularly in the consumer behaviour domain. Starting from Krugman’s early works on involvement and television advertising (1965), which related the ad to personal connections, a substantial field of research evolved examining involvement in the context of persuasive communication.

Among the pioneering contributions, particular relevance has the one given by Mitchell and Olson (1977) who focused on people’s attitudes towards advertising. The concept of people attitude-towards-advertising-in general has been defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in the consistently favourable or unfavourable manner to advertising in general" (Lutz, 1985, p. 53). In particular, it has been demonstrated how the attitude-towards-the-ad (Aad), actually affects advertising effectiveness, being an important antecedent of brand attitude (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Lutz, 1985; Mackenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mehta, 1994). The influence of Aad on brand attitudes has been related to the concept of involvement, showing how its strength is even more significant under conditions of low involvement, or in case of emotionally based transformational advertising.

Following this line, Zaichkowsky, in her works, adopted a general view of involvement, connecting it with personal relevance. She defined the concept as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests” (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p.342).

The connection between involvement and interest seems to constitute a fil rouge in the definitions given by researches, and among them a consensus seemed to emerge (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985).

In particular, it has to be highlighted that researchers used five diverse antecedent conditions of involvement: interest in the product category, enjoyment or pleasure derived from it, perception of self expression through product category, and the two components of perceived risk: the stake and subjective probability factors (Bauer, 1967). The first facet (interest) is an antecedent of enduring involvement only. Pleasure and sign value may apply to both enduring and situational involvement. Perceived risk induces mostly situational involvement. In any case by measuring a consumer's position on each of these five facets, the exact nature
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of his/her involvement is specified. Laurent and Kapferer (1985), developed a five-dimensions scale through which measuring the concept.

Petty and Cacioppo (1981) made a further step to the marketing context, connecting involvement with marketing persuasion and the strength of advertising arguments. They developed a theoretical model, the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion, which states that some factors, and combinations of factors, determine people’s motivation and ability to think about the arguments they come into contact with (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Specifically, is the degree to which the message recipient is involved with processing the message that influences the effect of ad attitude on his brand attitude judgement. In this sense, people highly involved show high elaboration likelihood, which should be an evidence for the allocation of cognitive resources to the persuasive appeal. On the other hand, non-involved recipient are not motivated to elaborate the information they are provided, and will either conserve their cognitive resources or expend cognitive resources in another task.

Petty and Cacioppo (1981) suggested that there are "central" and "peripheral" routes to persuasion, with the "central route" representing the processes involved when elaboration likelihood is high and the "peripheral route" typifying the processes operative when elaboration likelihood is low. The two different approaches are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Comparison of central route processing and peripheral route processing. Personal elaboration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Central route processing</th>
<th>Peripheral route processing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaboration</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Processing</strong></td>
<td>Receiver examines carefully contents of the messages</td>
<td>Receiver is influenced in his judgement by other factors, not just messages’ content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td>Changes or is reinforced depending on characteristics of messages as strength</td>
<td>Changes depending other factors, not in relation to the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength of attitude formed/reinforced</strong></td>
<td>More enduring and less subject to counterarguments</td>
<td>Less enduring and subject to change through future persuasive messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To conclude, it is possible to say that, in the advertising domain, involvement is manipulated by making the ad “relevant”, in order to make the receiver feel personally affected, and hence motivated, to respond to the ad (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981).

2.2.3. FASHION INVOLVEMENT

The concept of involvement acquires different degrees of importance in relation to the industry to which it is applied. Apparel has frequently been cited as a product category likely to induce high involvement, being it strictly connected with self-expression and identity (Kim, 2005).

Fashion clothing involvement (FCI) is defined as “a continuum from total attachment (or absorption” in fashion clothing and related activities (very high involvement) to complete detachment or automaticity” (O’Cass, 2004, p. 878).

One of the most important contributions related to this phenomenon is the one given by O’Cass (2000), who investigated involvement also in non-imminent purchasing situations. He created a scale for measurement, proposing and testing four different types:

1. Product involvement
2. Purchase decision involvement
3. Advertising involvement
4. Consumption involvement

The author also proposes different measurement tools for each explained kind of involvement.

In order to deepen the numerous what actually affects fashion consumers’ involvement Vieira (2009), created a model correlating relevant variables, including also the ones highlighted by previous researches, which are shown in the following table.
2.3 BRAND PERCEPTION

Brands are assuming an increasing importance in contemporary society, becoming an important part of firms’ equity. Brand equity is defined as a “set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 1991, p.15). Aaker identified five dimensions of brand equity: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other propriety brand assets (Nair & Mohandas, 2012). His theory on brand equity was further developed by Keller, who focused the entire discourse on customer-based brand equity (CBBE), as a result of deficiencies in the traditional accounting and finance approaches to measure the relative value perception of consumers and the successful drivers of consumer loyalty (Kim, 2012). She defined CBBE as the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993, p.2). Keller concludes affirming that this kind of equity exists when the customer is “aware of the brand and holds some favourable, strong and unique brand associations in the memory” (Keller, 1993, p.17). Basic premise of CBBE is therefore that the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences over time (Kim, 2012).

From the cited definitions the value of a brand reveals to be strictly connected to customers, being it related to the creation of meanings and associations that born in their minds. It
appears that the power of a brand lies in what customers experience over time and in their perceptions, meaning their psychological associations with the brand itself (Kim, 2012). As explained, CBBE implies that the stream of brand associations that occur during consumption are fundamental experiential aspect of consumer behaviour. The set of brand associations can be distinguished broadly in terms of more functional, performance-related meanings, which constitute the cognitive experience, or more abstract, imagery-related meanings, the affective experience. Based on the previous associative experience, brand attitudes can be formed by cognitive judgments, focusing on customers’ personal opinions and evaluations, or through an affective experience, formed by feelings, which emphasizes customers’ emotional reactions and responses (Kim, 2012).

In terms of marketing strategies, this raises the necessity to accompany marketing communication so that the desired thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions, and opinions become linked to the brand (Keller, 2010).

2.4 BRANDS AND FASHION

Fashion brands have come to reflect consumer preference, needs, and desire having the highest magnitude of equity when compared to any other product categories (Simon & Sullivan, 1993). This kind of brands, indeed, provide a cue that reflects consumers’ identity, lifestyle and interests, reinforce symbolic and social value and generate emotional responses (Kim, 2012). Fashion, indeed, constitute a symbolic consumption, where the features of the product do not always represent the main decision variable for customer.

Since the symbolic meaning attached to fashion brands provides additional value, it is necessary for firms to maintain a clear identity, in a fragmented and evolving fashion context. They should strive to develop multi-sensory fashion experiences that include sight, sound, scent, touch, and taste stimuli. Another idea is to ritualize fashion consumption by offering consumers transcending experiences during which they can escape from the everyday life (Kim et al., 2007a, b). Second, incorporation of social value to the fashion brand can be the growth engine for relational experiences of the next decade. Personalizing and digitalizing the social interactions by exploiting social media, such as blogs and Twitter, can create vigorous brand interactions with the consumer. Third, to enhance the cognitive experience, a brand portfolio should consider products and prices since Korean consumer segments are becoming more diverse, while brands need to maintain a clear identity. That requires creating
multiple tiers in products and pricing and building capabilities to cope with the ensuing complexity (Kim & Shin, 2011).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section aims at presenting papers, articles and books that have been used during the analysis process in order to acquire knowledge and get useful insights and opinions. As outlined in the theoretical framework, main topics of which theories have been deepened are advertising involvement and fashion involvement. This section is therefore divided according to the two main topics cited, of each a separate overview is provided, and further divided between books and articles. A third table includes literature review on customer-based brand equity and brand perception, which will constitute the basis for the categorization of fashion brands according to their means of communication.

Sources are classified in alphabetical order, according to the authors’ names.

Table 3. Literature review. Articles on involvement & persuasion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lutz, R. J., MacKenzie, S. B., &amp; Belch, G. E.</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>The role of attitude toward the Ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness: A test of competing explanations</td>
<td>Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 23, 2, 130-143</td>
<td>This study describes a structural equation between previous models on the relationship between brand-related and ad-related responses. The results suggest that a dual mediation hypothesis, which postulates that Aad influences brand attitude both directly and indirectly through its effect on brand cognitions, is superior to other models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehta, A.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>How advertising response modeling (ARM) can influence advertising effectiveness</td>
<td>Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 33, 3, 62-74</td>
<td>Attitudes towards advertising in general were found to influence the effectiveness of specific ads. Respondents' general attitudes towards advertising affected measures of advertising intrusiveness and persuasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
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</table>
| Auty, S. & Elliott, R. | 1998 | Fashion involvement, self-monitoring and the meaning of brands | Journal of Product and brand Management, Vol. 7, 109-123 | This study considers the importance of fashion involvement in the interpretation of brands of jeans as measured by Snyder’s revised self-monitoring scale, which discriminates between people who are highly motivated to respond to social cues and those who remain “true to themselves”.
| Hourigan, S. R. | 2012 | Towards a better | Australasian | This study is concerned with |
understanding of fashion clothing involvement

Marketing Journal, Vol. 20, 127-135

consumer involvement in fashion clothing. Amidst the consumer objects that facilitate everyday life, fashion clothing is an important and meaningful object for many consumers. In the extant consumer literature few studies have attempted to examine fashion clothing involvement, particular in terms of its causes and attitudes. This study then focuses on building a reliable normological network to bring a greater understanding to this facet of consumer behaviour.

Kim, H. 2005

Consumers profiles of apparel product involvement and values


This study sets out to explore how consumers may be segmented based on their levels of apparel product involvement using Kapferer and Laurent's consumer involvement profiles (CIP). It also seeks to examine whether consumers within each profile group could be differentiated by their personally-held values.

Michaelidou, N. & Dibb, S. 2006

Product involvement: An application in clothing

Journal of Consumer behaviour, Vol. 5, 442-453

The paper examines the dimensionality of involvement with clothing. The discussion focuses on enduring, situational and response involvement, emphasising the dimensionality of the construct.

O’ Cass, A. 2000

An assessment of consumers product, purchase decisions, advertising and consumption involvement in fashion clothing


This work tests four types of involvement and proposes a higher order construct called consumer involvement. Measures of all four types of involvement are developed and empirical tests are performed using CFA and structural equation modelling.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vieira, V. A.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>An extended theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement</td>
<td>Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, Vol. 13, 179-200</td>
<td>In the context of fashion marketing management, marketing models that try to explain the determinants of fashion clothing involvement are incomplete. This paper aims to test an extended theoretical model of fashion clothing involvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Literature review. Articles on customer-based brand equity and brand perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keller, K. L.</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity</td>
<td>Journal of Marketing, Vol. 57 No. 1, 1-22</td>
<td>The author presents a conceptual model of brand equity from the perspective of the individual consumer. Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keller, K. L.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Brand equity management in a multichannel, multimedia retail environment</td>
<td>Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 24, 58-70</td>
<td>Today's multichannel, multimedia retail marketing environment presents a number of brand management challenges. From a micro perspective, marketers must manage each individual channel and communication option. From a macro perspective, marketers must design and implement channel and</td>
</tr>
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</table>
communication options such that sales and brand equity effects are synergistic.

This study aims to understand the multifaceted fashion-brand experience. By identifying the constructs and conceptualizing the building process of fashion-brand experience, this study also aims to demonstrate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral brand experience dimensions in accordance with the customer-based brand equity hierarchy.

The research paper is a study on impact of gender on brand perception of national and international brands of apparels. It was observed that males are more brand conscious than females. Women are more regular in their shopping pattern.

**Table 6. Literature Review. Books**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Editor place</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sherif, C.W., Sherif, M. &amp; Nebergall, R.</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Attitude and attitude change: The social judgment</td>
<td>Philadelphia: Saunders</td>
<td>Presentation of social judgement theory, which relates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

41. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A study conducted by Auty and Elliott (1998), demonstrated how fashion brands’ messages are decoded in diverse ways by customers, depending on their level of involvement in the industry. Given the drastic changes the fashion industry went in during last years, which completely altered firms’ communication tools, this thesis aims at verifying the contemporary validity of that proposition. In particular, I will investigate whether, according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model proposition, people perceive and elaborate fashion advertisements’ messages differently, in relation to their level of involvement in the industry. Indeed, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, the effectiveness of persuasive messages depends on the person who is actually decoding them. In this sense, persuasive messages operate through two different routes; the first one, named as central route to persuasion, is the one followed by people who totally understand the advertising argument. It is provided when the argument is strong.

On the other hand, there are factors affecting the route to persuasion, in this case the peripheral routes, which appear to be relevant in case of weakness of advertising arguments or difficulty for a given person to process the message. In the advertising context, peripheral cues can be found in celebrity endorsement.

Petty and Cacioppo (1080) stated that, generally, peripheral cues affect mostly people who are not involved in a sector, being less keen on processing the argument itself and therefore more sensible to distractive factors.

Applying this model to the fashion industry will therefore implying testing whether people with different levels of fashion involvement do perceive fashion advertising differently.

Therefore, a first research question that will be used to guide the research is the following:
RQ1: To what extent is it possible to apply the Elaboration Likelihood Model to contemporary fashion industry, considering involvement as a significant variable influencing consumer perception of advertising messages?

A second point refers to the attitude towards fashion advertising, which is presented in the work by Petty and Cacioppo (1981) as a variable influenced by involvement. In order to verify the validity of this statement the thesis will investigate and deepen respondents’ reactions towards advertising, to get the connection between them and people’s level of involvement.

In relation to this, the research will verify whether people who are less fashion involved show a different sensibility toward advertising arguments. In particular, according to the ELM propositions, non-involved individuals should be more affected by peripheral cues, which push them toward positive attitude changes.

This work will therefore verify whether and how advertising may influence consumers’ persuasion, getting an insight on the way persuasive clues affect differently those who are and those who are not fashion involved:

RQ2: Do persuasive cues that aim at changing consumer attitude toward a brand operate differently on involved and non-involved consumers?

To answer this second research question, the work will focus on persuasion obtained through advertisements, measuring the extent by which consumers liked the ad, what they do remember about it and the opinion they have of it.

This thesis will therefore deepen the cues of brand image reinforcement, especially focusing on two different advertising channels, the printed and the video ad. It will therefore analyse advertising persuasion on different advertising media, which will be related with attitude toward advertising in general and fashion involvement.

Lastly, this work will investigate customer cultures, which are expected to influence the way they perceive a given brand. Image and symbolic meanings attached to brands, indeed, are shaped by local culture where economic and social values of brands might differ based on collective ideas about the brand (Jung & Sung, 2008). Evidence shows that particular brands
are considered more valuable in one country than in others, suggesting that brand experiences
can vary depending on a given cultural context (Kim, 2012). However, in recent years,
marketers had to face the rapidity by which marketing tools had changed, particularly
because of the increasing use of the Internet and the new consumer-generated content of the
Web 2.0 (Falkenreck & Wagner, 2010). Given this evolving context, characterized by
perpetual connectivity and by the use of same social platforms across countries, it would be
interesting to analyse the contemporary extent of differences among customers of different
nationalities, that are now exposed to the same messages.

After segmenting respondents according to their level of involvement, this thesis aims
therefore at answering to this third research questions:

**RQ3:** Considering consumers equally involved in fashion, do nationality and local
culture still affect consumer perception of clothing brands and of their marketing
messages?

### 4.2 HYPOTHESES

As explained in the previous paragraph, Auty and Elliott (1998) stated that people decode
fashion messages they come into contact with according to their level of involvement in
fashion in general. This approach is consistent with the findings stated by Petty and Cacioppo
(1981), related to involvement and its influence on the decoding of advertising messages.

Given the cited theoretical basis, first hypothesis of this work therefore is:

**H1a:** Fashion clothing consumption involvement affects customer brand perceptions.

From which derives that marketing messages are given different meanings, according to the
person who actually decodes them, and the interest this person shows toward the subject.

Therefore:

**H1b:** Same fashion messages are perceived differently by people characterized by
diverse levels of involvement.
Secondly, as stated in the model by Petty and Cacioppo (1981) that guides this research, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the level of a person involvement in the industry influences his own attitude towards the advertising related to that industry. In terms of this research, this implies that people who are involved in fashion are keener on elaborating and decoding messages of fashion advertising. In addition to this, they are more interested in the content of advertising arguments and more careful to their strength.

From that starting point, a second hypothesis this work aims at verifying is:

**H2: Persuasion obtained through fashion advertising is influenced by the level of consumer fashion involvement.**

If the above hypotheses will be confirmed, marketers will have a clue of the role of fashion involvement in shaping brand perception and advertising messages. By knowing how people interpret and react to different marketing strategies, marketers will be able to target different individuals, characterized by diverse levels of fashion involvement, in the proper way.

Referred to this last point, a third purpose of the work will be that of verifying the existing differences between firms’ communication tools, in order to understand whether the choice of communication channel has a direct influence on the perception of the brand and of the message advertised. In particular, this work will deepen two diverse fashion-advertising channels, the video and the printed one. To do that, two among the three brands analysed are going to be chosen, of which brand perception and communication strategies are going to be studied and tested. Indeed, the survey will present to respondents a printed and a video advertisement for two brands, in order to be able to compare their differences in terms of people reactions.

hyp:

fashion involved people care more about the content of the ad compared to non-fashion involved people (strong arguments).

Aim: deepening advertising persuasion (to be related with attitude toward advertising in general and fashion involvement) on different advertising media

Relation between brand advertising and emotional attachment
Therefore, a third hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

**H3:** Advertising channel’s choice influence people’s attitude toward the ad and perception of the ad itself.

Testing this hypothesis, therefore, will help marketers in getting an understanding of the potentialities of different advertising channels, which is surely an up-to-date discourse. In the increasingly complex communication environment, indeed, it is fundamental for firms to have a clear understanding of the reactions that some communication channels and strategies provoke on people with different levels of personal fashion involvement, in order to address them properly.

Moreover, after having a clear understanding of how different advertising media may provoke different reactions and advertising perceptions in consumers’ minds, this work will relate this result with respondent fashion involvement. In particular, it will test whether, given a level of attitude toward advertising in general, people who are involved in the fashion industry show different reactions toward fashion advertising, compared to people with a low level of fashion involvement.

From that basis:

**H4a:** Given a level of respondent attitude toward advertising in general, fashion involved consumers like fashion advertising more than those who are not involved in fashion.

And:

**H4b:** Given a level of respondent attitude toward advertising in general, fashion involved consumers elaborate messages spread in fashion advertising more than those who are not involved in fashion.

Lastly, this work reflects on the concept of involvement in its relation to emotional bonds consumers feel for brands. Highly involved individuals, indeed, appear to be emotionally attached to a brand, even if showing different levels of emotional intensity (Honsel, Klaus &
Wagner, 2011). Acquiring knowledge on what motives attachment is relevant for companies, given that the bond between a brand and its fans is the source of superior market success. Indeed, fans actuate positive word-of-mouth, adopt a function as brand ambassador and show an above average purchasing behaviour (Honsel, Klaus & Wagner, 2011).

In order to deepen this, the thesis will analyse respondent’s brand attachment for each one of the selected brands and relate it with related brand perceptions. This result will allow understanding if and to what extent emotional attachment do influence the perception of the brand.

On this basis, fourth and last hypothesis of this work can be formulated as follows:

**H5a: Emotional attachment shapes consumer brand perception.**

Moreover, this work will verify whether consumers perceive the same advertising messages differently, in relation to their level of attachment to the brand advertised.

Consequently:

**H5b: Emotional attachment towards a brand shapes the extent by which brand advertising are liked and interpreted.**

### 5. METHODOLOGY

**Method of research:** Exploratory study via an online questionnaire

**Description/data analysis:** Quantitative technique

In order to test the stated hypotheses I will conduct a quantitative study with the help of an online questionnaire, which offers a greater reach than the offline one and is easily accessible.

The survey will be split into three main sections. In the first one I will ask about general behaviours to understand respondent’s clothing involvement. Questions will be mainly based on the scale of fashion involvement developed by O’Cass (2000), which has been proved to be one of the most effective one.
In addition to this, I will ask respondents a few questions regarding advertising, as exposure to different advertising channels and use of social media, to get a clue about their attitude in this direction.

The second section of the survey will be dedicated to the chosen brands. Its aim will be that of understanding respondents’ brand perceptions, to be able to relate them to their level of fashion involvement in the analysis phase. The survey will investigate each brand separately, to get feedbacks about each brand perception.

Moreover, the questionnaire will include a section of brands’ advertisements. This study will be carry on for two out of the three brands studied, for reasons due to questionnaire length. The survey will show two different commercials for the chosen brands, a printed and a video one and ask questions about people’s reactions to them. The way respondents perceived and elaborated the ad will be related, in the analysis phase, to their level of fashion involvement.

Third and last section will include a few personal questions on respondents’ profiles and some questions concerning lifestyle, based on the AIO scale, which will be useful for the segmentation.

**Setting:** The questionnaire will be launched from November 2015.

**Instruments:** The online survey will be created through dedicated software - Sphinx

**Sample and participants:** As highlighted in the abstract, people from 15 to 75 constitute the population of the survey. The countries where the survey is going to be launched are Italy, Germany, USA and Korea.

Being fashion a culturally influenced consumption the study will take into account differences among countries, so data collected will be analysed separately and diverse results will be compared.
## 6. WORKPLAN

*Table 7. Plan of work (own representation)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2015-20.09.2015</td>
<td>Literature research and Exposé draft</td>
<td>Acquiring a specific knowledge on relevant issues through researches on databases and analysis of theoretical background. Understanding the gap to fill and the structure to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.09.2015</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
<td>Handing in the Exposé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.09.2015 – 15.11.2015</td>
<td>Theory &amp; Methodology</td>
<td>- Adjusting theoretical framework according to received feedbacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Deepening and writing final theoretical framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing the survey draft, survey review and pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.11.2015</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Lauching the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.11.2015-10.12.2015</td>
<td>Theory &amp; Review</td>
<td>Implementation of theoretical part in the final document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.12.2015-14.12.2015</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>- Closing the questionnaire and organizing data collected through it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Data analysis and review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Range</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.01.2016-15.01.2016</td>
<td>Finalization</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Final document review</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Power point presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.01.2016</td>
<td>Deadline</td>
<td>Final discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Gill, J. D., Grossbart, S. & Laczniak, R. N. (1988). Influence of involvement, commitment and familiarity on brand beliefs and attitudes of viewers exposed to alternative ad claim


Involvement, attitude and persuasion in the fashion industry


