

BRITISH MENSWEAR, LEADING THE WAY!

‘Heritage’ in Premium British Menswear: Innovations, Providing solutions towards a more sustainable future?

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ABSTRACT

Fuelled by celebrity culture, the 1990’s saw a huge trend for luxury goods and fashion brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Prada, trading on their so called heritage to promote rapid growth and global expansion. We have experienced the near global domination of a few international luxury goods conglomerates who, have flooded the market with increasingly diverse product ranges and used the high profile ready to wear and couture designer collections to increase the desirability of these products and fuel a fast fashion culture.

“Today the luxury industry is like Monopoly. The focus is no longer on the art of luxury; it’s on the bottom line” Dana Thomas (2007)¹

This paper will reflect on this phenomenon and examine the status quo. By exploring recent trends and developments within the premium menswear market, in particular British Heritage Brands, I hope to identify key themes, approaches, strategies and methods, which could be employed by the high-end fashion and luxury goods industries providing solutions towards a more sustainable future.

Throughout the late 1980’s, 1990’s and the early part of the new millennium, the premium and luxury menswear market focused on high-end global designers, premium denim brands and branded sportswear. In recent years there appears to have been a shift in thinking around what British men, shopping at this level want and expect from their clothing. There has been an increase in the popularity of established and well known ‘British Heritage’ brands such as Dunhill, Burberry, Pringle and Barbour, and an increased demand for products that last and endure the fleeting trends dictated by fashion. This has led to the re establishment of forgotten brands such as E Tautz , the introduction of new brands such as Heritage Research and One Nine Zero Six and a shift in thinking for brands such as 6876, who draw on heritage as a strategy and a model for their business and marketing practices.

By focusing on British menswear brands, I will first consider what ‘Heritage’ means to these brands and the British male. I will explore the areas of, Design, Production, Marketing and Retail activity to identify emerging themes, approaches and strategies. I will discuss how these might provide potential solutions towards a more sustainable future for our global fashion industries, which reflect concerns about the economy, environment, provenance and longevity and represent the unique heritage of the four major fashion cities represented by the Colloquia series.

INTRODUCTION

Savile Row is internationally recognized as the spiritual home and centre of the British Men’s fashion industry, with its long history and reputation for producing the highest quality, bespoke tailoring. Providing business and formal wear, military uniforms and sporting clothing for all manner of country pursuits, to the British gentleman for generations. Over

centuries, the suit became established in the psyche of the British male as, the acceptable and standard form of dress, particularly in professional circles, for work and all formal occasions.

Over the latter half of the 20th Century and the early 2000's we have seen a gradual shift toward a more casual approach to dressing amongst British men. With more relaxed dress codes in the workplace, increased leisure time and the rise of youth culture from the 1950's onwards, the market for more formal and tailored styles of clothing, which were traditionally seen as the strengths and the backbone of the British men's fashion industry, have been in decline.

Throughout the 1990's and 2000's the international fashion industry experienced rapid growth and global expansion. This in part had been fuelled by an increased fascination with celebrity, Hollywood and popular culture, perpetuated by the fashion, lifestyle and mainstream media. Top end international fashion designers like Versace, Dolce & Gabbana and Calvin Klein employed celebrities from the music, film and television industries as well as international sporting stars to promote their products through advertising and endorsements. European luxury leather goods brands such as Gucci, Prada and Louis Vuitton expanded their ranges to include clothing and an increasingly diverse range of products. This celebrity culture phenomenon and the rapid levels of global expansion by the fashion and luxury goods industries have created immensely powerful vertically integrated corporate groups, whose focus has become maximizing profits and the bottom line, continually looking for new products, markets and ways to reduce the costs of production, sourcing from over-seas. This phenomenon where the latest fashion is constantly changing, introducing new 'must have' products, has fuelled a fast fashion system within the middle and budget markets with high street multiples and budget retailers such as H&M, Zara and Primark introducing new stock in store on a sometimes weekly basis. During this same period younger men have continued to show an increasing interest and awareness of fashion, lifestyle and appearance with an increase in readership and the number of men's lifestyle magazines available on the market. Drawing on her 40 years' experience, Margaret Howell believes men have always cared about what they wear. *"Men are interested in what they put on themselves," she says. "It's just become more acceptable for them to say that. They're also conscious of trends but in menswear it's about a subtler movement of feeling or fashion; details such as cut, proportion and styling."* ⁱⁱ

Although long term trends have revealed a generally more casual approach to dressing, it has been observed recently that younger men in particular appear to be reversing this trend by rejecting the ubiquitous use of sportswear as casual clothing, a look they associate with the older generation or a down market, 'chav' appearance. Preferring instead a smarter approach to dressing, the obvious gap between sportswear and formal tailored clothing is being filled by smart leisurewear brands, often carrying a strong brand identity or designer label.

The UK Menswear market contributes a much smaller proportion of the total Clothing retail market than womenswear, accounting for approx 29.6% (£11.7bn) in 2010 (Fenn, 2010)

(Mintel, April 2011) Reports, the menswear market appears to be the first subsector of the clothing markets in the UK to be showing gradual signs of recovery from recession. As we entered 2011 the sector was showing a slight increase in sales in value terms. However further analysis suggests that much of this growth may be driven by rises in average selling prices, caused in part by increased rates of VAT from 17.5% to 20% in January 2011 and rising rates of inflation.

With demographic trends showing a decline in the male fashion conscious under 25s sector and a rise in older men within the UK population. It is expected that it will be down to the professional, single, A B's in the 25-34s category to provide a boost to the menswear market over coming years as C1's cut back on spending and C2s trade down. Whilst the young 16-24s care most about dressing fashionably, the professional 25-34s opt for more classic clothing and report to shop weekly for clothing. (Fenn, 2010)

Menswear buyers it seems, remain cautious as we emerge from recession and as a result, more men appear to be choosing to invest in quality garments, preferring to prioritise spending on classic well made garments that can be worn for many seasons or even years. Reflecting concerns about the economy, the environment and globalization there has been a recent trend in the UK towards British brands, with some retailers observing that UK fashion consumers are "turning to 'made in Britain' brands" (Times, 2009) what market researchers Ledbury Research have dubbed 'fashionalism'. They believe that it is not patriotism that is driving this behavior but an interest in authenticity. The interest is in younger British brands whose core values represent products with integrity and a preference for garments with authenticity and longevity rather than trend led fashion items. Michael Williams, founder of the website, a continuous lean.com, speaks of this trend for authenticity, "For a long time, we invested in this throwaway culture where everything was fast and new and you bought something for a season. There is a push back to that now. People and brands, too, are realising there is value in heritage and in this classic stuff." (Grady, 2010)

It is within this context that this paper focuses on the recent trend for, 'Heritage' and 'Heritage Brands', which form a distinct branding category. By focusing on the smaller scale, independent premium brands currently making waves in the UK Menswear market whose brand values, products and marketing strategies are in some way related to heritage and target the style conscious, quality focused 25-34 year old fashion consumer. I aim to explore emerging themes, approaches and innovations within these contemporary menswear brands to reveal strategies, which could be employed by the wider fashion industry, providing solutions towards a more sustainable future. By sustainable, I mean an industry, which is local, focused on longevity, creating and supporting brands to become durable and relevant and ensuring that craftsmanship, traditional skills and production methods are preserved for future generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW: Heritage and British Menswear

"If there is one single attribute of a brand that provides sustainable competitive advantage, it is Heritage" ⁱⁱⁱ

Heritage is a term that has been around in fashion for some time, whether to reference specific brands, garments, materials, and processes or to communicate stylistic trends and a particular fashion story or narrative.

Before tackling the subject of Heritage Brands specifically, it is necessary for me to define what is meant by heritage here, drawing from the literature I have reviewed, and to explain its use within the context of contemporary British menswear.

Heritage is a modern concept, which communicates and relates a common history, a tradition or narrative. It suggests something that is passed on or handed down from generation to generation, inherited, a status that is acquired through birth, a birthright. It can be simultaneously tangible and intangible, related to objects, artefacts, buildings and even garments as well as to the ideas, meanings, memories and traditions of the cultures they

reflect or represent. It has been clearly articulated by The Center for Heritage and Society at The University of Massachusetts Amherst, "*Heritage is the full range of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. Most important, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behaviours that we draw from them.*"^{iv} They also believe that Heritage is a valuable facet of public life and should therefore, be the subject of reflection, debate, and discussion, providing a medium for intercultural dialogue, a means of ethical reflection, and the potential basis for local economic development.

The subject of Heritage has been given some recent attention by the fashion industry, brand strategists and managers, academics and researchers. In April 2011, The International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes held its annual conference in Paris and made Heritage, in part, the focus of the conference theme. Some of the research presented at this conference, has provided background and been reviewed along with other literature and sources for this paper.

In the context of British menswear Heritage can be explained as a range of characteristics, which symbolise and speak of 'Britishness', classic styles, of authenticity and a nostalgia, for traditional materials and manufacturing processes, of the home-spun. Fashion Designer, Margaret Howell gives an insight into how she views British heritage. (Fisher, 2011)
"Our heritage is a stimulating place to start, isn't it? I think it is British heritage that people like. When you think of the French or the Italians, their looks are much smoother and more chic. Maybe we have a certain honesty or authenticity, a naturalness. Some of our manufacturing was very closely linked to the land, with the natural colours, the wool. There's something quite deep about that that attracts people. It certainly does me. I love the landscape and I love people who are close to that"^v

The symbols, which we may consider to communicate 'British' heritage within menswear can be somewhat loaded with cliché and historical or social stereotype. The Monarchy might be considered to be one of the most potent symbols of Britishness, alongside the aristocracy and the class system, Savile Row, the dandy, the country gent, Tweed and the Barbour jacket or Burberry raincoat. Ailene Ribeiro reminds us of this in her chapter 'On Englishness in Dress', "*the kind of 'heritage' clothing such as Burberry coats, Savile Row suits, cashmere twinsets – are part of one kind of white Anglo-Saxon Englishness,*" (Breward, 2002) she contrasts this with another type of Englishness in Dress, the rich diversity of street styles adopted and initiated by English subcultures. The Teddy boys of the 1950's, The Mods, Rockers, Skinheads and Punks of the 1960's and 70's, New Romantics and Soccer Casuals of the 1980's, and more recently, the Chav, all of whom take their unique place and constitute different parts of the same complex history, one of a multi-cultural Britain and of a rich heritage of British menswear.

Heritage Branding

'Heritage speaks of status, character, social class, and a history. It speaks of a traditional way of life that is of value to present and future generations. It speaks of inheritance, of shared experiences, and of a common history.' (Benson, 2007)

Benson (2007) Discusses some of the many brand types that we recognise as having a great Heritage, from the recognisable consumer brands whose products and services we buy and experience, to universities, movies and even people, who have become brands within their own times. He believes that '*What makes these brands great, what they have in common, is*

that they have had the time to build a meaningful and relevant past – a heritage.’ (Benson, 2007) A heritage that is born in, and nurtured over time.

He believes that all of these brands communicate and share their heritage in the form of a narrative, a meaningful and relevant brand story. He goes on to explain that it is only when these brand stories, connect with our collective consciousness and associate themselves with the great stories of our common heritage, that they can be used as a tool to build and sustain strong brands. *‘The common stories of our heritage live in our minds and hearts. When a consumer product, a university, a classic film or an individual successfully attaches themselves to one of these stories, they gain entrance into our hearts and minds. And when they are in our minds and hearts, they take on the stature of a brand.’* (Benson, 2007)

Urde et al.(2007) go further to define heritage within branding as *‘ a dimension of a brands identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly in an organisational belief that its history is important.’* (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007) Their work on brand heritage and corporate heritage brands in particular has been useful when considering and discussing the menswear brands, which feature as case studies within this paper.

It is their belief that ‘heritage brands’ constitute a distinct branding category in their own right, with a specific set of defining criteria and approaches for brand management and leadership. Their work identifies three existing heritage branding approaches from their own literature review, Retro Branding - Which relates to a particular epoch or period, often defined by their character of nostalgia. Iconic Branding - Refers to the use of myth making in the process of creating iconic brands. Heritage Marketing – which is largely associated with the heritage and tourism industries and as such is usually focused on brands aligned to a particular era and therefore retrospective.

All the above definitions of heritage have included some reference to history or the past, it is important to recognise the differences between heritage and history in this context and to realise that these two terms are not interchangeable. Urde et al. (2007) cite the work of Lowenthal, who articulates this difference clearly, *‘history explores, and explains what is often an opaque past; in contrast, heritage clarifies and makes the past relevant for contemporary contexts and purposes.’* Pg5. (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007) This applied within the context of branding means, a positive history alone is not sufficient to build a strong brand, however it is through heritage that brands can make their history, relevant to the present and future. Highlighting the key difference between historical and heritage perspectives, Urde sees brands with an historical overview, similar to that adopted by retro brands or within heritage marketing, as being necessarily grounded in the past, whereas ‘heritage branding’ they believe, embraces three time frames, the past, the present and the future and therefore relevant to present and future markets. In their view *‘Heritage Brands are distinct in that they are about both history and history in the making.’* (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007)

Benson (2007) also holds this view, believing that history alone is not enough to build a great brand, that it must be relevant and of value, to present and future generations in order to become part of our shared experiences, a common history – a heritage.

The view and perspective on heritage shared by Urde et al. (2007) is not limited to a specific genre of organisation, concentrating on the idea of heritage, as something which can be harnessed and employed as a strategic resource by many kinds of organisation. Key to this is what they define as, a brands ‘Heritage Quotient’ (HQ), based on their case studies, they

believe that Heritage brands can be recognised by the presence of certain characteristics (Elements of Brand Heritage). The conceptual framework they propose for determining a brand's HQ is based on the principle that, the more one observes these characteristics within a brand, the higher its Heritage Quotient is likely to be. The model below (Figure 1) illustrates this framework. The five elements of brand heritage surrounding 'brand stewardship' in the centre, which the authors consider to be the process of managing the five elements in order to nurture, maintain and protect brand heritage and build strong, relevant brands for present and future markets.

Elements of Brand Heritage

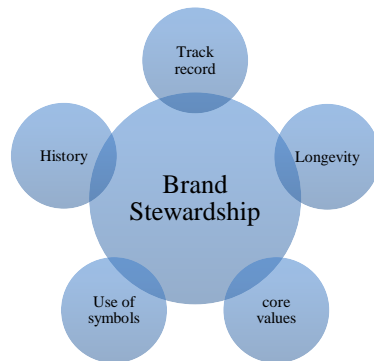


Figure 1 Adapted from source: (Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007)

In the competitive premium menswear market a strong brand identity with significant equity is the goal of any brand, whether well established or newly entering the market place. Keller (2001) developed a 'Customer-Based Brand Equity Model' the basic premise of which is that, the power of any brand lies in what its customers have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand over time. He believes the challenges that face anyone trying to build a strong brand are ensuring that its customers have the right kind of experiences of the brand, through its products, goods and services and associated marketing activities, so that *"the desired thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, and so-on become linked to the brand."* Pg 3 (Keller, 2001) since the power of the brand lives in the minds of its customers. Keller's model identifies 4 steps on the branding ladder which must be developed in sequence in order to achieve sufficient equity; Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand Response and Brand Relationships. The 4 steps are based on fundamental questions that customers ask about brands, implicitly if not explicitly.

Brand Identity = Who are you?

Brand Meaning = What are you?

Brand Response = What do I think or feel about you?

Brand Relationships = How much of a connection would I like to have with you?

Keller uses The Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid (Figure 2) to provide structure and to illustrate how the 4 steps to building a strong brand can be achieved through six brand building blocks.

Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid

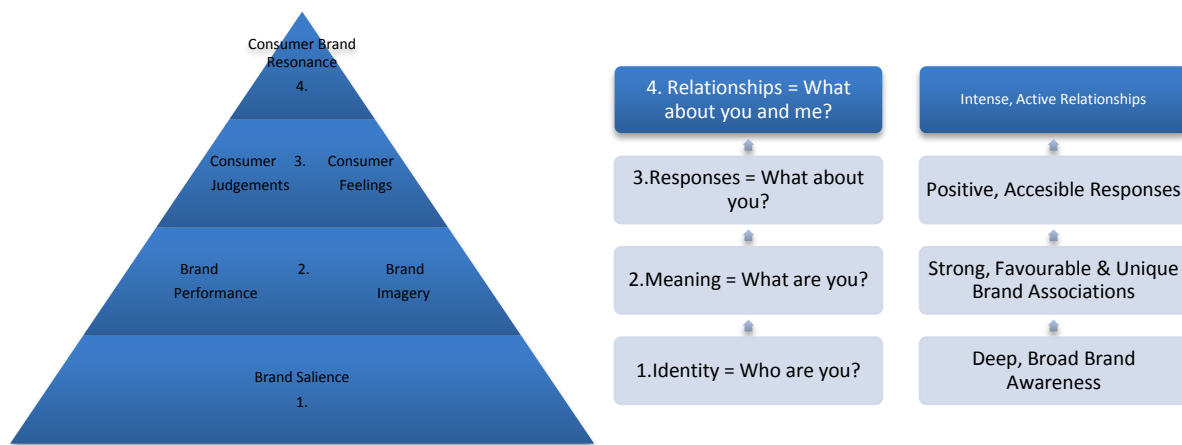


Figure 2 Adapted from source (Keller, 2002)

Looking at this Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid, it is evident to me that Heritage could be employed as tool for brands, faced with the challenges of building strong Customer-Based Brand Equity. And how, if managed correctly, showing good brand stewardship, it has an important role to play in achieving each of the 4 steps Keller identifies and in nurturing, maintaining and protecting a brands' heritage. As Benson suggests, Heritage is a master brand builder.

CASE STUDIES: Brands with 'Heritage' and 'New Heritage'

The easiest characteristics of a 'heritage brand' to recognise are quite possibly longevity and track record, associated with its history and reputation. There are countless well known, established British brands such as Burberry, Barbour, Dunhill and Trickers' who each use their individual company histories and symbols of heritage, which stand for quality British menswear to market their brands and products. These brands have experienced a revival in recent years, enjoying a kind of new renaissance or 'heritage boom'. Some have expanded and diversified their product ranges in line with contemporary trends across the global fashion industry, whilst others have had a design revamp or complete brand overhaul, employing young new design talent as creative directors to update and make their products relevant to a modern consumer. The focus of this paper however, is not on such brands, but rather a different group of premium brands, some are well established brands, others' were long forgotten and have recently been reincarnated as modern brands for a contemporary market, whilst some are brand new. Each may or may not be considered, or consider themselves as a 'heritage brand' for a number of reasons. However it is my belief that each has a relationship with heritage because of their core values, use of symbols or their organisational belief that history and heritage are important. These brands might be considered as 'New Heritage' representing many different incarnations of heritage and employ a wide range of strategies and approaches.

"Design for maximum wearability, whether it be seasonless or made with quality materials, is a trend that extends beyond green fashion: It is popping up in mainstream fashion, as the 'Heritage' trend." Grady (2010)

E Tautz

Patrick Grant was announced Menswear Designer of the Year in 2010 by the British Fashion Council, he is the proprietor of the Savile Row firm, Norton & Sons which he acquired in 2005. Founded in 1812 by Walter Grant Norton the business has a long heritage of providing a discreet and impeccable, bespoke tailoring service to its discerning gentleman customers which have included prime ministers, rock stars and Hollywood actors. He is also creative director of E. Tautz / House of Tautz.

The E. Tautz brand has historically been owned by Norton & Sons and was revived by Grant in 2010 to produce a men's ready to wear collection. The House itself was originally founded by Edward Tautz in 1867 and from the outset became renowned as the sporting tailor of choice for the wealthy European elite including Winston Churchill, for whom the firm made military uniforms and sports clothing. The house also received royal warrants from the King of Italy, The King and Queen of Spain and the Austrian Emperor. Edward Tautz himself was seen as an innovator in cut as well as cloth, becoming renowned for the cut of his sporting trousers and breeches, his stores in London and Paris were continuously releasing new products in innovative materials and stocked the finest products, all hand made in the UK.

The modern incarnation of the House of Tautz is deeply attached to its' heritage. Dedicated to craftsmanship and with a no compromise approach to use of materials, everything is made by hand in the UK. *“All of our cloths are sourced from fine British mills and some individual hand-weavers. We have a great passion for British heritage production and we are proud to support the diversity of fine menswear producers in the British Isles, from the socks to the shirts, and the tailoring to the ties.”*^{vi}

Patrick and the house place a great deal of value on the relationships they have with their suppliers and manufacturers. The firm has taken great care to source and train the best craftspeople, all tailoring is produced in their own Savile Row workrooms and they have a small network of small, largely family owned mills and producers, with whom they have worked very closely to get their products up to the required level and to support the full diversity of the product range. For example, in her 'Case Study for Innovation in Contemporary Tweed' (McDougall, 2011) Kirsty McDougall, herself a supplier of hand woven innovative tweed fabrics, through her company Dashing Tweeds, discusses the importance of Grants use of 'authentic' British produced tweed for both his brands. She describes one such relationship with Breanish Tweed where Grant wished to reproduce a cloth from 35 – 40 years ago which had been used in a suit given to him by a client, but update this cloth to suit the contemporary market, 'Grant describes that particular cloth as having Harris Tweeds heavy character. Wanting to hold onto its other characteristics, but allow it to be more wearable by a contemporary client, Grant had it reproduced in Lamb's wool' (McDougall, 2011) McDougall recognizes that this example of how Grant manages heritage not only of his brands own identity and history, but through the products he creates, has its own sense of heritage, something being handed down, what she describes as '*an intergenerational physical manifestation of something intangible*'. (McDougall, 2011)

The collections draw inspiration from a rich menswear history, characters such as the Duke of Windsor and the great British explorers such as Shackleton and Scott as well as sporting and military figures of the past. This reflects the house's original clientele and the history of the brand. The archive of the house is used continuously as reference, holding a huge collection of pieces from some of the great Savile Row houses as well as sporting pieces for

hunting, fishing and shooting, from underwear to rugby shirts. Grant uses all of these to infuse the modern incarnation of the House of Tautz with its own heritage status. The company's collections reflect a smart approach to dressing, with a focus on traditional garments, classical styling, luxury fabrics and high quality manufacture. The range of tailoring, knitwear, shirts, ties and socks are all manufactured in the UK using traditional British fabrics and the best craftsmen.

Whilst Grant, in his interviews with McDougall agrees that heritage is fundamental to what he does with both brands, he is cautious and talks of the danger of overusing it particularly within the marketing for the brand "*the way we think about how we talk about the brand is very much influenced by its heritage. But what we try to avoid is being heritage driven in the way we market ourselves*" (McDougall, 2011). Grants aim with his brands is to present a modern face to the world and to be relevant to a contemporary market place in terms of the products he produces and the way these brands are presented what he calls the physical incarnation of the brand. The caution that Grant exercises here allows his brands to employ heritage within the marketing strategies and activities of the brand and is an example of careful 'brand stewardship' allowing him to avoid the risk of overusing heritage and nostalgia to merely create a retro or iconic brand, instead creating a true 'Heritage Brand', which places heritage at the heart of its activities, a brand which embraces tradition and celebrates its past, however through its contemporary collections and modern design aesthetic makes the past relevant to contemporary and future markets. A Heritage Brand of the type Urde et al. (2007) discuss.

The brands' website is a prime example of the above by presenting the brand in a fresh, modern way. The website is kept graphically simple and uses a limited colour palette of grey and yellow and a simple typeface, also used in the house logo which features a galloping fox, a detail which is a nod to the original house and which has been used within the collections, featuring on knits, ties and pins. The simple horizontal layout and banner headings make the site very easy to navigate its pages, which include the 'House of Tautz', 'collections', 'postcards', 'stockists' and 'shop'. The history and story of the brand are communicated within the 'House of Tautz' pages, using a narrative accompanied by archive images from the original house and other sources of inspiration for the modern brand. The use of cut-out images and a collage style to the layout gives a hint of scrapbook to the sites appearance, also reflected by cut-out lettering used to indicate each season within the 'collections' pages and the 'postcards' page which displays actual postcards sent to the company by its devotees and fans 'Tautzists'. The company encourages visitors to the site to send postcards featuring anecdotes, quotes and tips to be featured on the postcards wall. This is a mechanism for the company to engage its customers in an interaction with the brand, creating bonds which foster relationships and encourage loyalty. The medium itself, using postcards as opposed to a blog, which might be considered the obvious approach, carries its own sense of heritage offering a gentle nod to the past.

Due to the limited production capacity, the first E. Tautz collection for Spring Summer 2009 had a very small distribution, selling only in the UK through Matches and Harrods and in Japan through Beams. Since the first collection the brand has expanded its collections and is now also represented and available in the USA through Barney's New York, in Seoul through the Galleria Department Store and online via Mr Porter and Oki-Ni. The brand also sells a limited range of knitwear, shirts, ties, socks and handkerchiefs, as well as a selection of curiosities, vintage toys, comic books and accessories through its own website.

www.etautz.com

E. Tautz may not present the opportunities for volume, one would normally look for in a ready to wear brand but this is fine for Grant who says, “*we will scale the business slowly and with a lot of investment and time.*”^{vii} It is the Brands high level of ‘Heritage Quotient’ and Grants considered approach to ‘brand stewardship’ that should ensure that the House of Tautz can successfully nurture, maintain and protect the brands’ heritage at the same time as making it sustainable and relevant to the contemporary and future menswear market.

Heritage Research

Heritage Research established in 2008, by Russ Gater and Daniel Savory, the two were united by their passion for vintage clothing, Gater having previously sourced vintage clothing for a living and both worked in the design and fashion industry for 9 years.

The brand uses their extensive knowledge and expertise of menswear and references their vast collection of vintage denim, military and sportswear garments. The brands’ approach to handling these garments as reference takes many forms, the company have created exact recreations of historic garments paying acute attention to detail, for true authenticity; an example of this commitment is a collaboration project between Heritage Research and The Eastman Leather Co. This collaboration project went to great lengths to faithfully recreate exact replicas of the A-1 Flight jacket from WWII America. The company also use a design process that references original heritage garments, using natural fabrics such as linen, cotton and wool to provide a rich texture and ensure durability, creating modern hybrids which reference the best elements but are not necessarily an exact copy. This use of historical garments is one way in which the brand uses heritage, referencing designs and details from the past as symbols of heritage. More important though is their organisational belief, that history and heritage are important that allows them to be considered a heritage brand.

The timing of the launch of the Heritage Research brand into the UK market was right for Gater, who believes that consumers had become fed up with the products that generic brands have to offer and that they “*are actively seeking out new and interesting clothing that actually has a point for being made beyond making money.*”^{viii}

This belief extends to the brands approach to production. Often each individual garment is made by hand, by one machinist from start to finish. This approach itself references a more traditional process of making clothes rooted in the practice of tailoring far removed from the production lines, conveyor belts and laser cutting of contemporary production methods.

“there’s an emphasis on each garment being constructed using traditional English tailoring methods.....

Patterns for each style are cut by hand allowing for subtle adaptations as the garment is developed, the garments are ‘crafted’ rather than ‘produced’....

Our processes use only the simplest machinery to ensure the garments retain the feel of a bespoke piece and not the homogeneous output of a large factory.”^{ix}

6876

The **6876** brand was first established in 1995, by Kenneth Mackenzie having previously been sales director for the Duffer of St George. The brand, whose name derives from the years of the Paris student riots in 1968 and the emergence of punk in the UK in 1976, market themselves on their website as “A brand that eschews direct advertising to create its own

distinctive imagery & aesthetic whilst concentrating on integrity of product as its primary concern.” (www.sixeightsevensix.com)

The brand quickly gained a large following leading to Mackenzie being recognised as a designer, positioned at the forefront of contemporary British menswear and the brand soon became a global concern, with a turnover of over £1m by 2002. The brand's aesthetic was one which combined an experimental and tasteful approach, using classic sportswear shapes and faultless construction, at the time blurring the distinction between formal and casual wear, the 6876 aesthetic inspired a host of designer sportswear ranges from the likes of Prada and Hugo Boss, a style that became dubbed ‘Urban Sportswear’ in the mid- late 1990’s.

The brand became part of the establishment, but never became predictable or conservative and enjoyed a strong following in the UK as well as Scandinavia, Japan and the USA, with a reputation for understatement and technical innovation. However Mackenzie became disillusioned with the fashion system “*Suddenly I got pulled into doing what I’d avoided for so long. It was the tradeshows, new collections and so on.*”^x Mackenzie found it difficult to continue the twice yearly, seasonal cycle and believed it to be outdated. After a break from producing clothing he re-launched the label with a different take on things and a new strategy as a ‘rolling product’ company and decided to work on more collaborative projects.

The aim of the ‘rolling product’ concept for Mackenzie was to reduce the amount of wholesale, based on seasonal collections and to do more sales online. This concept initially was difficult to communicate to existing retailers, used to the traditional wholesale model. Trying to sell the concept of rolling product to these retailers, Mackenzie described it thus “*you can go to a company and they’d design a collection for you every six months and tell you you’ve got to spend five grand. Or you can come here, look at what we’re doing, look at archive stuff, chat about what you’re into and we can develop stuff together.*”^{xi} The first retailer to work in this way with the brand was United Arrows and this relationship has continued over the 3 years since the re-launch.

The brand has continued to develop products with the original 6876 aesthetic and ethos, a focus on quality and innovation, working closely with fabric mills and producers on small batches of production. These products are only available through a select few retailers internationally as well as online through the company’s online store. This situation suits the brand, since they developed the online store it has not been in their interest to sell to a large number of retailers.

The company has also worked on a number of collaborative projects in partnership with manufacturers, sportswear brands and retailers, including British Millerraine, Rohan, Welsh Brand ArcEnd and the VCMP project in collaboration with multiple partners, including Reebok and Hanon Shop. The most successful partnership has perhaps been their collaboration R6, with Regent, England’s premier luxury leather producer.

The R6 project is an accessories line launched in 2010, which combines the 6876 aesthetic, with the manufacturing expertise of Regent’s artisans, to produce belts, bags, wallets and lanyards. The range is batch produced in small quantities using British sailcloth canvas and fine quality leathers in Regent’s Northamptonshire factory and is only available as limited editions in select retailers and through the company’s online store. Regent has a legacy and sound reputation as one of the UKs finest leather goods producers who are carrying on centuries of tradition and craftsmanship. Contributing to Northampton’s rich heritage as the centre of the UK leather industry, from cutting to shaping, stitching and finishing, the

company use only traditional techniques, tools and methods to manufacture the finest quality belts and leather goods.

When discussing heritage Mackenzie's own views might lead to some confusion as to why the brand might be included within this paper. It is his belief that the Heritage boom of recent years has produced some questionable re-vamps when the original products were strong in the first place, with companies capitalising on the use of heritage as a marketing tool, in some cases creating what he refers to as 'fake heritage'. Within the 6876 collection traditional British fabrics and manufacturing process are used frequently but he stresses they are not 'heritage' in aesthetic or feel.

I believe this brand has a more subtle sense of heritage than perhaps the previous two examples, one not grounded in a romanticised nostalgia of days gone by, 'fake heritage', but one which references a more recent past 'new heritage'. For me Mackenzie's commitment to the original 6876 aesthetic and ethos, his use of the company's own back catalogue and history, which he believes "*Illustrates how 6876 has maintained a clear thread of innovation, minimalism, design integrity and following our own beliefs, guided by faith in longevity rather than temporary trends.*"^{xii} and the company's use of British cloth, mills and producers, artisans and craftsmen who bring their own sense of heritage, as well as the core values behind projects such as R6 that make this brand relevant for discussion. Not because I believe it should be considered a 'heritage brand' in its own right.

One Zero Nine Six

One Zero Nine Six launched its first ready to wear collection for Autumn Winter 2011. The project is a premium menswear line designed by Dean Webster, who previously worked for Burberry and Barbour and is produced by Gymphlex, a well established manufacturer in the UK who, have supplied British schools, sporting champions and the military with sportswear for over 100 years, as well as manufacturing for brands such as Burberry and Barbour. The project has been described as "*an important return to British manufacturing and design, a contemporary collection incorporating design details, finishes and heritage materials all inspired by the Gymphlex archive.*"^{xiii}

Webster's take on the history and heritage perspective is an interesting one, believing that the 'heritage' tag carries some negative connotations and that the brands, 105 year history brought with it a certain amount of unnecessary baggage, hence he decided the brand needed to adopt a more progressive design viewpoint. The brand aims to define its own design vision and direction, producing clean, contemporary menswear with classical overtones, which Webster believes is relevant to today's market, whilst supporting what is left of the British clothing manufacturing industry.

The conscious decision not to refer directly to the history of the Gymphlex brand in terms of product or brand image present the brand with a constant challenge, to find new ways to translate the brands history and make it relevant to its contemporary and future customer. There are many references in the current collection that reflect the brands past, however Webster believes these to be more emotive than literal and hopes he offers a more visually progressive interpretation of that history, it is not his intention to produce authentic or replica products. For him "*heritage should say more about attributes, attitude, craft, service standards and reliability, not a perception of how products should look.*"^{xiv}

As well as their own manufacturing sources the brand has been forging strong links with a number of high quality British mills, manufacturers and suppliers such as Fox Brothers and

Ventile, it is their intention to develop these relationships, working closely with a tight group of suppliers as the brand moves forward. The second collection for Spring Summer 2012 has introduced luxury soft tailoring to the product offer, and utilizes quality craft and technique to progress the stylistic viewpoint in how the collect both looks and is produced. The brands belief in British manufacturing is at the heart of its activities and one of its core values which defines its heritage status.

CONCLUSION

Due to the small scale and independent nature of the brands which constitute the focus of this paper, they have been producing a limited quantity of products for wholesale. The scale and premium level of these brands makes their products most suited to a more exclusive retail environment within international department stores and premium independent specialist menswear retailers or increasingly online through appropriate online retailers or their own websites and online stores.

Most of these brands have been selective and targeted with the choice of retailers they supply. This way they can ensure that the representation of their brand is appropriate and that the customer is receiving the right messages about the brand, creating strong brand identity and awareness, appropriate brand meanings and positive brand responses to create intense and active brand relationships.

Through the literature review and brand case studies above, I have attempted to focus on the role heritage has played within the design, production, retail and associated marketing activities of the brands featured. The aim of the paper was to identify key themes, approaches and innovations which could be employed by any brand, providing strategies towards a more sustainable future for our local and global fashion industries. The following emerged.

Archive

Consumers are looking for references to the past in the clothing they buy (Grady, 2010) Emma Grady gives this niche market a name, the “Archivisti”, ‘Young consumers whose consumption patterns tend toward products with Heritage.’ She believes this appeals to the moneyed middle-age consumers also, who are looking for classic clothing with durability and longevity rather than trend driven fashion items. The “Archivisti” are looking for products that have meaning, history and a story.^{xv} It is Grady’s belief that, this kind of clothing, the kind produced by the brands featured in this paper, will combat fast fashion, a belief I share.

“Many Companies are using their Heritage quite literally by creating capsule collections that make use of archival designs.”

Drawing from the brands featured, a number of approaches to design have been employed, some which reference archives and explore the past through recreation of vintage or classic clothing styles and construction details. Heritage Research do this through their faithful reproductions of classic garments from the past as well as their ability to reference, the vast collection of vintage garments they have amassed over the many years they have been collecting, to generate new designs using classic fabrics, creating modern hybrid garments which reference the past but are relevant to a contemporary audience. Patrick Grant at E.Tautz also uses the archive of Norton & Sons and the original House of Tautz as inspiration and reference within the brands collections as well as to communicate the brand identity and core values of the brand, which reflect the heritage of the original house.

Craftsmanship

The majority of the brands featured within this paper have core values which favour more traditional approaches and methods of production, preferring to produce their goods as far as is possible within the UK, using British fabrics. They are focused on the development of small networks of highly skilled manufacturers and value the importance of strong relationships with suppliers, mills and producers. The majority of the brands have limited production capacity, producing small batches or limited editions.

Most claimed to value the intangible qualities and the authenticity that this type of production brings to their garments and products, with many speaking of a feeling for something bespoke and a respect for the traditional skills of craftsmen and artisan production methods. This type of production is far removed from the industrial scale, highly mechanized factories, associated with the global production methods of most fashion and demonstrates a preference for a slower approach to fashion and clothing production. These brands value heritage and the preservation of traditional skills and craftsmanship, however this is not their *raison d'être*, they are creating modern brands whose collections are contemporary in aesthetic and feel and whose core values and marketing strategies respect the past, but are grounded in the present and look to the future.

Collaboration

The brands featured have been engaged in a range of projects and collaborations with specific specialist, mills, manufacturers, and craftspeople. The nature of these collaborations varies from developing one off or limited edition products, with reverence for the artisan, craft production skills and methods of the producers involved. E. Tautz work with a number of mills and suppliers in this way, developing innovative new fabrics which fit the contemporary needs of their customers whilst simultaneously respecting the traditions and techniques of these highly skilled small producers and protecting their heritage qualities and status.

6876, when, re-launching the brand as a rolling product company, did so with the aim of enabling more collaboration with, fabric mills, specialist manufacturers, brands and retailers. This has been a major activity for the brand, which no longer produces seasonal collections for wholesale instead, preferring to release new products as and when they have evolved, over time through dialogue and collaboration. The Brands collaboration in 2010, with the Welsh sustainable sportswear brand ArcEnd, produced the Rusland Ventile Jacket, which was manufactured in the UK using 200g Ventile fabric, reused leather and hand crafted natural birch bark cord pullers and fused the design aesthetic of 6876 with the core values of ArcEnd brand. During 2011 the brand has been collaborating with Rohan to produce a 5 item tri- climate collection for release in Spring 2012. The brand have engaged in a number of collaborations with many partners over the years since the re-launch, it is however the ongoing collaboration with Regent to produce the R6 collection, now in it's third season, which represents this core value of the brand and the spirit of collaboration most which aims to preserve traditions and develop products, which have integrity and longevity.

Online

Without large advertising budgets these small independent brands concentrate their brand marketing activities on their company websites. The web offers these brands the opportunity to communicate their Heritage, Brand identity and core values directly to a wider audience and enable them to achieve the 4 steps of the Customer Based Brand Equity Pyramid presented by Keller; Brand Recognition, Brand Meaning, Brand Relationships and Brand

Resonance. McMahon & Morley (2011) discuss the opportunities and threats the internet presents to these brands to communicate and achieve effective brand relationships with the consumer, noting that unlike traditional marketing activities where the brand acts as custodian of its message, online strategies mean that brands must become facilitators of that message, these new technologies allow consumers to become part of that story making process through interaction. The increased use of social networking sites and blogs means that word of mouth, which would have been one of the traditional ways these brands would rely on their message being spread, now has a global reach and far more power. These brands must develop deeper relationships with the consumer and new online marketing strategies, which realise the power the consumer has, in communicating their experiences, thoughts, feelings and beliefs about the brand. McMahon & Morley (2011) believe that these brands can use heritage when developing these strategies to deepen the relationships with their consumer, creating unique and positive online experiences to strengthen the brand position and harness the power of the consumer to market the brand beyond its own company websites, recognizing that the power of the brand lives in the minds of its' consumers.

This paper has explored how the trend for Heritage over recent seasons has lead to the development of a number of brands whose notions of Heritage may vary, but go beyond a nostalgia for times gone by, each has a unique relationship with heritage, history and the past and through innovative approaches and respectful core values has allowed them to create strong contemporary brands which reflect what the modern menswear consumer is looking for in clothing.

None of these brands would necessarily be considered as sustainable brands or to be producing green fashion either, however through their approach to design and production which values durability, longevity and integrity, they create products that have a reason to exist beyond making money, each demonstrates core values, which go against the fast fashion cycle.

Notes

ⁱ Thomas, Dana (2007) *Deluxe; How Luxury Lost its' Lustre*, London, Penguin Books

ⁱⁱ Margaret Howell in Men's Fashion Gets Smart
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/may/29/mens-fashion-designers-wardrobe>
accessed 21/06/11

ⁱⁱⁱ Benson, J (2007) *Heritage: A Master Brand Builder*
<http://www.allaboutbranding.com/index.lasso?article=393>
accessed 05/07/11

^{iv} <http://www.umass.edu/chs/about/whatisheritage.html>

^v Margaret Howell in Men's Fashion Gets Smart
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/may/29/mens-fashion-designers-wardrobe>
accessed 21/06/11

^{vi} Patrick Grant on Brummell Magazine Blog, post 16 February 2011:
<http://www.brummellmagazine.net/style/2011/2/16/brummell-blog-patrick-grant.html>
accessed 29/03/11

^{vii} Patrick Grant in Amed, I (2009)

^{viii} Russ Gater in an Online Interview for Proper Magazine
<http://www.propermag.com/site/heritage-research-interview-with-russ-gater-2011-01>
accessed 15/07/11

^{ix} Russ Gater in an Online Interview for Proper Magazine
<http://www.propermag.com/site/heritage-research-interview-with-russ-gater-2011-01>
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^x Kenneth Mackenzie quoted in Gentlemans Corner, Blog Post by Jason Dike, Feb 22, 2011
<http://www.gentlemanscorner.com/2011/02/craft-on-the-net-kenneth-mckenzie-on-changing-6876-to-a-rolling-product-company.html>
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^{xi} Kenneth Mackenzie quoted in Gentlemans Corner, Blog Post by Jason Dike, Feb 22, 2011
<http://www.gentlemanscorner.com/2011/02/craft-on-the-net-kenneth-mckenzie-on-changing-6876-to-a-rolling-product-company.html>
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^{xii} <http://www.sixeightsevensix.com/archive>
accessed 20/07/11

^{xiii} <http://www.back-and-forth.net/2011/05/introducing-one-zero-nine-sixaw11/>
accessed 15/07/11

^{xiv} <http://www.back-and-forth.net/2011/06/dean-webster-one-nine-zero-six-interview-by-scott-rapson/>
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