

Guest editorial: Marketing and retailing clothing and fashion – the long view

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It is a great pleasure to introduce this special issue focussed on clothing and fashion in relation to the history of marketing. The exponential expansion of literature exploring the history of fashion and clothing over the last 30 years has been mirrored by research into the history of retailing and consumption through social, economic and business histories over a similar timeframe. Histories of retailing often consider clothing, fashion and textiles, which form a large sector of the market as a human necessity alongside food, but specific studies are still surprisingly rare in the field, especially those that consider a wide geographical reach and explore working and middle-class practices as well as those of the elite. This journal issue will aim to start filling this gap with a collection of articles brought together to highlight both the importance of the clothing and fashion sector in marketing history and the innovations it stimulated within the whole field.

This special issue of the *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, therefore, collates articles drawn from current research by both dress and fashion historians and retailing and marketing history scholars to produce a volume that will span both research areas, emphasising the importance of both fields as well as considering implications for future research.

In the first article, “‘Get rid of fashion’: The Salvation Army’s marketing and retailing of clothing in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”, Ruth McDonald and Flore Janssen consider how this charitable religious organisation used marketing and branding tools both to advertise their religious mission and to raise money for the organization. In the course of doing this, they became large clothing manufacturers and a trusted brand for the working-class communities that they served.

“Beijing Opera (Jingju) Costumes in Pre-1949 China: A Special Stage Costume with Multilevel Marketing Functions”, maintains the concentration on a similar period from 1840 until the second world war era. Tony Yan gives a new perspective on a specific theatre costume, considering the role that Jingju or Beijing Opera costumes played as garments encoded with social and cultural significance, which served to express, and reinforce, Chinese Nationalistic identity and political values. Used as a marketing tool for the Chinese state, they were also, at times, subverted to show discontent with the authorities, as well as used by the government abroad to diffuse Chinese cultural values.

Tomáš Jelínek, in his article “MISS KIN in the World of Fashion: 1902–1939”, explores the manufacturers of dress fastenings in central Europe and their export markets within Europe and, importantly, in the USA. The modernity of specific dress fastenings, such as poppers and zippers, became integral to fashion during this period, taking over from lacing, buttons and hooks and eyes. Working at the cutting edge of marketing and advertising strategies, Waldes, the company used as a case study in this article, thrived particularly in the USA during this period, showing the close correlation between clothing and fashion companies and progressive modern marketing.

The suburbs is the setting for Liz Tregenza’s article, “Styling the suburbs: Irene Sherman’s dress shops and fashion networks in the twentieth century”, as she focusses in detail on a British family business in the context of the suburban environment, questioning whether it was the perceived backwater it is usually categorised as, in terms of both marketing and advertising approaches and the fashion made available there for consumers.



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Tracing familial and business networks allows the reconstruction of an important retailer in the area, re-situating the significance of such firms within the national context.

For the final contribution to this special edition, Alexis Walker also focusses on how clothing can be appropriated and used to market and influence identities with her article, “‘The Coat of the Age’: The Kul-e-Tuk Brand Parka, Inuit Cultural Appropriation and the Commercialization of Settler Canadian Identity”. Such actions can develop into a medium for big business and the insidious marketing that follows. This appropriation subverts Indigenous culture and the original context of the garment to create new settler identities, a colonial commercial process to sell a particular version of Canada.

There are common threads between all the articles, despite their wide geographical focus and differing time periods. Offering identity through clothing is a primary one, whether branded to become part of an organisation such as the Salvation Army or the British suburban local elite, or inherent as part of nation-building in China and Canada. Using and developing marketing and advertising tools that were cutting edge allowed clothing retailers and manufacturers to flourish both in their home markets and in wider, often export markets, as discussed across several of the articles.

This collection of articles shows the importance of both subject areas to each other and to wider historical research and we hope will lead to further research in this field. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this volume, including the publishers, the peer reviewers and not least, the authors for their contributions.

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