“THESE AREN’T THE SAME PANTS YOUR GRANDFATHER WORE!”
THE EVOLUTION OF BRANDING CARGO PANTS
IN 21st CENTURY MASS FASHION

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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ABSTRACT

In this study, fashion and brand ideologies are utilized in explaining how cargo pants (the fashion) are no longer the main attraction for the consumer when purchasing the pants. It appears that the consumer may identify with the branding concept used to contextualize cargo pants and to create a selling story; these branding channels sometimes create a hyperreality\(^1\) that entices the consumer to buy the garment thinking s/he is “purchasing” part of the fantasy. Understanding this phenomenon is key to this investigation of cargo pants that have been manipulated and changed through brand culture.

The goal of the study is to build upon these fashion studies synthesizing the theoretical foundations of branding by conducting an applied study of a cargo pants in fashion. By examining a single garment type, it was possible to comprehend how all elements of the fashion system are manipulated and systematically changed through branding, and how a garment’s meaning becomes context dependent. This is important for understanding that during a particular fashion season a garment can have multiple meanings, thereby appealing to more consumers who may or may not purchase the garment for the same reasons. By deconstructing changes in fabrications, garment labeling, design features, and contextual placement, the reader will begin to understand that cargo pants are no longer the same army uniform pants worn by their grandfathers.

As the American culture continues to become more diverse and multicultural, the goal of retailers becomes not only one of showing how a garment is multi-functional, but also how these companies must market a similar garment to a number of diverse target markets. The re-invention of cargo pants in brand advertising serves as a key to understanding change in American material and popular culture. While fashion advertising is referenced in many studies to depict fashion and its evolution, few fashion scholars discuss how the branding (context) of the garment is the actual vehicle that aids in changing the perception, meaning and “language” of fashion.
Dedicated to my mother

Margaret A. Miller

Your bravery and courage have inspired me.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Finally, a special thanks goes to all those individuals who have made this research project possible including: Bruce Weber and Nathan Kilner for allowing me to use Weber’s photographs from A&F’s magalogues; Bob Giampietro and Michael Francis for use of the Target circular advertisement; Sergeant Luther Hanson for his assistant with
the military history of cargo pants; Derek Banton for use of his images from Vintage Trends; and finally Joy Moody whose skills as a professional photographer allowed for such spectacular visual images of each cargo pant used for this study.

Over the last ten years, my life has changed. I have grown intellectually, professionally and personally. A great amount of appreciation for support goes to my mother, Margaret A. Miller. My mother has always been a role model for me because she was a single parent who attended graduate school while working full-time as an elementary school teacher. On April 2, 2004, she suffered a major stroke that left her permanently disabled. Our parent/child roles changed as we became roommates and developed a whole new interpersonal relationship. I would like her to know that while I now take care of her, she is never a burden and that her daily motivation inspired me to finish my degree.

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Lastly, as a dog lover I have to recognize the two most loyal pets who have been with me since I began graduate school 15 years ago. While, I greatly miss Stasha who passed away two years ago from stomach cancer, her sixteen-year old sister, Julip, is still one of the loves of my life. Her tail wagging makes each day a delight!
## VITA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tbody>
</table>
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue: The Beginning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Review of Fashion and Branding Literature</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context, Consumers, and Macro Arbiters of Fashion</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions, Storytelling and Cultural Branding</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding and Meaning Management</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology & Chapter Objectives ......................................................... 22

Objective I: The Origins of Cargo Pants................................................. 23

Objective 2: A Conceptual Framework For Branding Cargo Pants ........... 26

Objective 3: “What’s in a Name?” The Branding of Ralph Lauren Cargo
Pants........................................................................................................ 29

Objective 4: The Use of Popular Culture for the Detail Branding of Cargo
Pants........................................................................................................ 30

Conclusion: Findings & Future Research............................................... 31

2. The Origins of Cargo Pants................................................................. 32

Identifying the Icon: Cargo Pants ....................................................... 32

What Are Cargo Pants & Where Did They Come From? .................... 34

What Are Cargo Pants?........................................................................ 35

The Military History-Cargo Story #1 .................................................... 35

The Military History-Cargo Story #2 .................................................... 36

The Military History-Cargo Story #3 .................................................... 37

The Military History–Cargo Story #4..................................................... 37

Summary of History............................................................................... 38

The 20th Century Evolution of Cargo Pants .......................................... 38

Iconic Groups and the Adoption of Cargo Pants.................................... 39

Cargo Pants in the 21st Century............................................................ 42

The Exploitation of the Icon Cargo Pants............................................. 42

What Distinguishes One Cargo From Another? Branding.................... 43

Postmodernism and Hyperreality in Advertising ................................. 47

Postmodern Branding Semantics .......................................................... 49

Advertising, Meanings and Storytelling .............................................. 52

Hamilton’s Micro-Macro Theory ......................................................... 52

Debord’s Contextual Tyranny .............................................................. 55

Branding and Storytelling ................................................................. 56

A Summary of Postmodern Advertising ............................................ 57

Reinventing Cargo Pants: Abercrombie & Fitch ............................... 58

Interpreting Abercrombie & Fitch ..................................................... 62


The Innocents Abroad ........................................................................ 64

Curriculum/Academics ...................................................................... 66

London Experiences .......................................................................... 68

Magalogue 2. A&F Quarterly Presents... Summer 2003 ...................... 69

Cinema ............................................................................................... 70

Nudity ................................................................................................. 71

Celebrities ......................................................................................... 72

Erotic Triangles, The Vampyre’s Kiss and The Male Objectified: ....... 73

Interpreting A&F’s Visual Presentation of Cargo Styles ....................... 73

Figures C.39 and C.40: Erotic Triangles .............................................. 73
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure C.45: The Vampyre’s Kiss ......................................................... 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures C.44 and C.46: The Male Objectified ........................................... 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary ........................................................................................................ 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. &quot;What's in a Name?&quot; The Branding of Ralph Lauren's Cargo Pants ........... 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Construction of Luxury Branding .......................................................... 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Luxury ............................................................................................. 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury Codes .................................................................................................. 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Business History of Ralph Lauren ............................................................. 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Luxury Brand Business Models ............................................................... 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Luxury Pyramid ....................................................................................... 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Constellation Model ................................................................................ 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Luxurification of Ralph Lauren Cargo Pants .......................................... 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass-tige ......................................................................................................... 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brand Analysis of Ralph Lauren Cargo Pants .......................................... 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cargo Pant Analysis ....................................................................................... 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do These Cargo Pants Reflect the Ralph Lauren Brand? .............................. 106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary ......................................................................................................... 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Using Popular Culture for the Cultural Branding of Cargo Pants ............ 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Branding ......................................................................................... 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Cultural Branding? .......................................................................... 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Power of Myths and Narrative for Building Brand Culture ................. 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing Meaning Management ................................................................ 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Influences: Fashioning Future Fashions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying the Popular Cultural Context to Cargo Pants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting Art: Keanan Duffty’s British Style for Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Another Culture: Diesel’s Asian Branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help Godzilla! Energie’s True Pop Cultural Reference to War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Return to Cargo Origins: Rheul and Gap’s Military Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Summary and Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 (Objective 1: The Origins of Cargo Pants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 (Objective 2: A Conceptual Framework for Branding: Creating Context and Meaning for Cargo Pants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 (Objective 3: “What’s in a Name?” The Branding of Ralph Lauren’s Cargo Pants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 (Objective 4): Popular Culture and the Detailed Branding of Cargo Pants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Future Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A-Figures for Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B-Figures for Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C-Figures for Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D- Figures for Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E- Figures for Chapter 5................................................................. 276
Glossary.................................................................................................................. 294
Bibliography.................................................................................................. 298
# LIST OF FIGURES

<p>| Figure A.1 | Cover of Target Sunday Circular August 17, 2003. | 141 |
| Figure A.2 | Keanan Duffty Cotton Cargo Pants for Target Fall 2006. | 142 |
| Figure A.3 | Energie Men’s Cotton Capri Short Back Right Pocket Summer 2006. | 143 |
| Figure A.4 | Inside Gap Cargo Short Pocket Summer 2006. | 144 |
| Figure A.5 | Various Hang Tags from Abercrombie &amp; Fitch, Old Navy, Banana Republic, and Kenneth Cole. | 145 |
| Figure A.6 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop 2000. | 146 |
| Figure A.8 | Individual Wearing Cargo Pants. | 148 |
| Figure A.9 | Individual Wearing Cargo Shorts. | 149 |
| Figure B.1 | 1944, 2-Pocket Field Pants, Herringbone Cotton Fabric. | 151 |
| Figure B.2 | 1994, 6-Pocket Desert Camo, Cotton Nylon Fabric. | 152 |
| Figure B.3 | 1967, 7-Pocket Jungle Fatigues, Cotton Poplin. | 153 |
| Figure B.4 | 1952, M1951 OG 107 Field, Cotton Fabric. | 154 |
| Figure B.5 | Battle Dress of United States Army Soldier During World War II. | 155 |
| Figure B.6 | Eisenhower leading the troops during WWII. | 156 |
| Figure B.7 | Eisenhower leading the troops during WWII. | 157 |
| Figure B.8 | United States soldiers during WWII | 158 |
| Figure B.9 | 1943, Green Herringbone M-43 Combat pants | 159 |
| Figure B.10 | American soldiers capturing Germans during WW II | 160 |
| Figure B.11 | 1945, Green Twill, Flying Type A-8 Air Force | 161 |
| Figure B.12 | 1945, A-11 Cotton, Alpaca lining Air Force pants, $125.00 | 162 |
| Figure B.13 | 1951 Khaki Wool Battledress Pants, $95.00 | 163 |
| Figure B.14 | 1955, F-1 Sage Nylon Air Force pants, $95.00 | 164 |
| Figure B.15 | 1979, Green Polyamide Hot Weather Fire Resistant pants | 165 |
| Figure B.18 | The 1979 Village People’s <em>Live and Sleazy</em> album cover featured cargo pants | 168 |
| Figure B.19 | 1984 Movie <em>Sixteen Candles</em> | 169 |
| Figure B.20 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch | 170 |
| Figure B.21 | J.Crew Cotton Herringbone 2-Pocket Cargo 2004 | 171 |
| Figure B.22 | Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Gray Flannel Wool and Cashmere $565.00 Fall/Winter 2005 | 172 |
| Figure B.23 | Old Navy Nylon T-Shirt Lined Active Cargo $19.99 Winter 2001 | 173 |
| Figure B.24 | Hangtags from Various Retailers | 174 |
| Figure B.25 | Inside Gap Cargo Short Pocket Summer 2006 | 173 |
| Figure C.1 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | 177 |
| Figure C.2 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | 178 |
| Figure C.3 | Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts Summer 2005 | 179 |
| Figure C.4 | Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts Summer 2005 | 180 |
| Figure C.5 | Ezra Fitch “Casual Luxury” By Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Summer 2005 ......................................................................................................... 181 |
| Figure C.6 | Ezra Fitch “Casual Luxury” By Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Summer 2005 ......................................................................................................... 182 |
| Figure C.7 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Twill Cargo $54.50 Fall/Winter 2000. .......................................................................................................................... 183 |
| Figure C.8 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Twill Cargo $54.50 Fall/Winter 2000. .......................................................................................................................... 184 |
| Figure C.9 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Sand Lake Zip Off $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000....................................................................................................................... 185 |
| Figure C.10 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Sand Lake Zip Off $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000....................................................................................................................... 186 |
| Figure C.11 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Gray Bedford Cotton Corduroy Red Velcro Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000. ................................................................................................................. 187 |
| Figure C.12 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Gray Bedford Cotton Corduroy Red Velcro Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000. ................................................................................................................. 188 |
| Figure C.13 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Green Bedford Cotton Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000. ............................................................................................................. 189 |
| Figure C.14 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Green Bedford Cotton Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000. ............................................................................................................. 190 |
| Figure C.15 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Stone Bedford Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000. ............................................................................................................. 191 |
| Figure C.16 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Stone Bedford Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000. ............................................................................................................. 192 |
| Figure C.17 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Button Front Zip Pocket Cotton Utility Cargo $39.98 Fall/Winter 2000. ................................................................................................. 193 |
| Figure C.18 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Button Front Zip Pocket Cotton Utility Cargo $39.98 Fall/Winter 2000................................................................................................. 194 |
| Figure C.19 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $69.50 Fall/Winter 2000....................................................................................................................... 195 |
| Figure C.20 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $69.50 Fall/Winter 2000 | Page 196 |
| Figure C.21 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Longer Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 197 |
| Figure C.22 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Longer Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 198 |
| Figure C.23 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Side Zip Cotton Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 199 |
| Figure C.24 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Side Zip Cotton Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 200 |
| Figure C.26 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 202 |
| Figure C.27 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton and Nylon North Basin Roll-Up $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 203 |
| Figure C.29 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Tie Bottom Cargo $59.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 205 |
| Figure C.30 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Tie Bottom Cargo $59.50 Spring/Summer 2001 | Page 206 |
| Figure C.31 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Camo Cargo Short $44.50 Spring/Summer 2002 | Page 207 |
| Figure C.32 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Camo Cargo Short $44.50 Spring/Summer 2002 | Page 208 |
| Figure C.33 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Long Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2002 | Page 209 |
| Figure C.34 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Long Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2002 | Page 210 |
| Figure C.35 | Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Corduroy Cargo Pant $49.50 Holiday 2002 | Page 211 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.36</td>
<td>Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Corduroy Cargo Pant $49.50 Holiday 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.37</td>
<td>Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Recon Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.38</td>
<td>Abercrombie &amp; Fitch Cotton Recon Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.39</td>
<td>“London Garden Party”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.40</td>
<td>“London Garden Party”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.41</td>
<td>Trafalgar Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.42</td>
<td>The American Rugby Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.43</td>
<td>The British Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.44</td>
<td>Gladiator from A&amp;F’s “The Forbidden Warriors”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.45</td>
<td>Vampire Attack from A&amp;F’s “The Vampyre’s Kiss”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.46</td>
<td>Nude from “House of Love”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.1</td>
<td>Armani Exchange Cotton Front Pocket Cargo Pants $88.00 Summer 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.2</td>
<td>Armani Exchange Cotton Front Pocket Cargo Pants $88.00 Summer 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.3</td>
<td>Armani Exchange Sateen Cotton Cargo Pant $88.00 Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.4</td>
<td>Armani Exchange Sateen Cotton Cargo Pant $88.00 Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.5</td>
<td>DKNY Sateen Low Pocket Cotton Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.6</td>
<td>DKNY Sateen Low Pocket Cotton Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.7</td>
<td>DKNY Cotton Twill Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.8</td>
<td>DKNY Cotton Twill Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure D.9  Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006.....238
Figure D.10 Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006.....239
Figure D.11 Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006......240
Figure D.12 Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006.........................................................................................................................241
Figure D.13 Kapferer’s Luxury Pyramid Model..............................................242
Figure D.14 Kapferer’s Constellation Model..................................................243
Figure D.15 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Black Poplin Cotton $89.50 Spring/Summer 2003........................................................................................................246
Figure D.16 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Black Poplin/Cotton/$89.50 Spring/Summer 2003........................................................................................................247
Figure D.17 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.............................................................................................................248
Figure D.18 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.............................................................................................................249
Figure D.19 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Khaki Corduroy Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.............................................................................................................250
Figure D.20 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Khaki Corduroy Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.............................................................................................................251
Figure D.21 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Grey Flannel Wool Blend $225.00 Fall/Winter 2004.............................................................................................................252
Figure D.22 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Grey Flannel Wool Blend $225.00 Fall/Winter 2004.............................................................................................................253
Figure D.23 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Navy Twill Ramie and Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005. Author’s note: Purchased in London...............254
Figure D.24 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Navy Twill Ramie and Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005. Author’s note: Purchased in London...............255
Figure D.25  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00
Spring/Summer 2005. ..................................................................................... 256

Figure D.26  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00
Spring/Summer 2005. ..................................................................................... 257

Figure D.27  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00
Spring/Summer 2005. ..................................................................................... 258

Figure D.28  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00......... 259

Figure D.29  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Brown Heather Canvas Cotton $225.00
Spring/Summer 2005. ..................................................................................... 260

Figure D.30  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Brown Heather Canvas Cotton $225.00
Spring/Summer 2005. ..................................................................................... 261

Figure D.31  Ralph Lauren Cargo Short Tan Corduroy Cotton $85.00 Spring/Summer
2005.............................................................................................................. 262

Figure D.33  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Brown Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter
2005.............................................................................................................. 264

Figure D.34  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Brown Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter
2005.............................................................................................................. 265

Figure D.35  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter
2005.............................................................................................................. 266

Figure D.36  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter
2005.............................................................................................................. 267

Figure D.37  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter
2005.............................................................................................................. 268

Figure D.38  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter
2005.............................................................................................................. 269

Figure D.39  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Gray Flannel Wool and Cashmere $565.00
Fall/Winter 2005. ......................................................................................... 270

Figure D.40  Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Gray Flannel Wool and Cashmere $565.00
Fall/Winter 2005. ......................................................................................... 271
| Figure D.41 | Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Cream Twill Cotton $89.50 Spring/Summer 2006 | 272 |
| Figure D.42 | Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Cream Twill Cotton $89.50 Spring/Summer 2006 | 273 |
| Figure D.43 | Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Tan Canvas Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2006 | 274 |
| Figure D.44 | Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Tan Canvas Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2006 | 275 |
| Figure E.1 | Email from J.Crew for 100% Cargo for Men | 277 |
| Figure E.2 | Patch inside J.Crew’s *Vintage Corduroy Cargos*, September 2006 | 278 |
| Figure E.3 | Keanan Duffty For Target Cotton Cargo Pant $29.99 Fall 2006 | 279 |
| Figure E.5 | Keanan Duffty hangtag on Target cargo pant | 280 |
| Figure E.6 | Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006 | 281 |
| Figure E.7 | Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006 | 282 |
| Figure E.8 | The Inside Asian characters of Diesel’s Cargo Pants | 283 |
| Figure E.9 | Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006 | 284 |
| Figure E.10 | Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006 | 285 |
| Figure E.11 | Energie Men’s Cotton Capri Short Back Right Pocket Summer 2006 | 286 |
| Figure E.12 | Energie Short Inside Detailing of “We Want Only, Only Toy Tank.”... | 287 |
| Figure E.13 | Still from the original 1956 *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* | 287 |
| Figure E.14 | Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts $58.00 Summer 2005 | 288 |
| Figure E.15 | Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts $58.00 Summer 2005 | 289 |
| Figure E.16 | Ruehl details for their cargo shorts | 290 |
| Figure E.17 | Gap Rip-Stop Cotton Cargo Short $38.00 Summer 2006 | 291 |
Figure E.18  Gap Rip-Stop Cotton Cargo Short $38.00 Summer 2006....................... 292

Figure E.19  Inside Gap Cargo Short $38.00 Summer 2006................................ 292
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table C.1</th>
<th>Back-to-School 1999: Cargo Pants ................................................................. 215</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table C.2</td>
<td>Back-to-School 1999: Curriculum/Academics ....................................................... 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table C.3</td>
<td>Back-to-School 1999: London Experiences ................................................................ 217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table C.4</td>
<td>Summer 2003: “A&amp;F” Quarterly Presents...” .............................................................. 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table C.5</td>
<td>Cinema Genre and Film Titles in A&amp;F Summer 2003 Magalogue .................................. 224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table C.6</td>
<td>Erotic Scenes and Nudity ......................................................................................... 224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table C.7</td>
<td>Celebrities and Their Credits ................................................................................ 228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table D.1</td>
<td>Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Styles .............................................................................. 244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROLOGUE
THE BEGINNING

In 1983, I purchased my first pair of cargo pants after being influenced by the New Wave fashions I saw in the media. During this same time, pop groups such as B-52s, Bananarama, Thompson Twins, Fun Boy Three, The Belle Stars, and The Clash wore these pants on MTV in personalized and accessorized ways. Of course, I identified with my favorite pop singers on the channel. And dreaming of being part of the alternative fashion scene, I had to purchase camouflage cargo pants that my favorite singers donned. I was too naïve at this time to realize MTV was really a marketing vehicle for product promotion. My conservative preppy friends would have never been caught wearing camouflage cargo pants; some of them still wore the plain khaki Calvin Klein version, allowing them, in some small way, to be part of the MTV rebel culture of the 80’s.

Throughout my undergraduate years at Indiana University, I owned black cargo pants by Bugle Boy, desert camouflage from Army Navy, Guess cargo jeans and a tan baggy version with bellowing pockets by Girbaud. I even purchased the conservative version by Calvin Klein because I loved the cargo style so much.
Another event that changed my awareness of fashion, was my new part-time job as a sales associate at The Gap. From 1983 to 1997, I worked for Gap briefly leaving to work for County Seat. For over a decade, I noticed that the variety and styles of cargo pants were labeled as “trendy” or “fashion pants,” but that they were never considered basic or essential to men’s wardrobes. Despite their non-essential status, I was amazed that cargo pants were never left out of Gap’s assortment of pant choices; moreover, cargo pants frequently appeared in the women’s area of the store as well.

It was also during this time that Banana Republic published their Banana Republic Guide to Travel & Safari Clothing (1986). It was in this guide that cargo pants were attached to a safari and utilitarian type function. On pages 29, 33, 93, and 104, they showed four different versions of cargo-styled pants: Jungle Fatigues, Franco Pants, Kenya Convertibles and Outback Pants.²

In 1997, I was a Fashion Branding Consultant for Structure’s (now Express Men) marketing department where I helped with a national in-store campaign for their version of cargo pants called “X-Pants.” My marketing position at Structure allowed me to witness how context was created around garments to make them appear unique and new to consumers. I attended photo shoots in Los Angeles where models were told to dirty their cargo pants, tear them, pull them below their waist line in order to show the tops of their butts, and to wrestle around together in various staged poses. While watching these scenarios, I realized that the cargo pants were not the focus of these photo shoots, rather, it was the context and “stories” staged to highlight the pants that became more important.

During this same time, I also held the position of competitive shopper and brand strategist, where I documented the marketing campaigns and strategies of our benchmark competitors. I shopped J.Crew, Banana Republic, Gap, Old Navy, Abercrombie & Fitch, Eddie Bauer, American Eagle, Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Nautica, DKNY and others in order to identify key fashion trends for Structure to emulate.

In 1998, I began to realize that cargo pants were an essential item for each of the identified benchmark competitors. Cargo Pants were being sold at all of the benchmarks. While there were minor style differences in the cargo pants of each of these retailers and designers, what really made them unique at each retailer was the “selling story” and marketing campaigns. I finally realized the marketing of the garment was more important than the design of the garment itself.

In 2000, I accepted a position with the Target Corporation. It was during my two years as an Executive Team Leader in charge of softlines that I realized cargo pants were even more of a selling phenomenon with the big-boxed retailers (Target, Wal-mart and K-mart). These two stores located in Ohio and Oregon, could never keep enough of the pants in stock to satisfy customer demand.

In 2006, the fashion market is still inundated with cargo pants. With casual dress in the workplace often as the norm, cargo pants have edged their way into basic core fashion assortments of almost every mass retailer. Cargo pants are being worn for dress and casual wear by almost all generations. Advice articles in fashion magazines give
male consumers suggestions on how to pair their Timberland cargo pants with a Ravazzolo blazer for $1795 or some John Varvatos suede loafers for $285 in order to wear them to the office.

Meanwhile, retailers such as Abercrombie & Fitch (known for their youthful flair) still feature the same basic cargos in their stores that they originally displayed in their 1999 marketing campaigns. While the A&F basic cargo pant remains the same 100% over washed cotton twill the context and selling story seems to be the only thing that has changed.

In today’s tough economy, retailers with similar fashion assortments (garments such as cargo pants) need strategies in order to market their garments so that they appear unique to consumers. Branding refers to this process that allows retailers to personalize a garment incorporating it into their merchandise assortment. As Evelyn Brannon states branding is:

A competitive strategy that targets customers with products, advertising, and promotion organized around a coherent message as a way to encourage purchase and repurchase of products from the same company.

In this study, the new total brand design and/or marketing context for cargo pants can possibly erase and delude the actual origin of this garment: its actual history becomes lost and eventually erased in the minds of consumers. Cargo pants could become part of the montage of mass fashion products such as T-shirts, ball caps, khakis and polo shirts that are losing their true histories over time with each new generation. Therefore, a study

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suggesting how branding impacts popular and material cultural garments, such as cargo pants, needs to be told. Fulfilling this need, I examine the origins of cargo pants from a popular cultural perspective. I investigate theories of fashion and cultural brand theory that support how perceived images of cargo pants are manipulated and distorted by how they are designed and marketed in advertising through a process called fashion branding.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Since the 1940s, cargo pants have gone from traditional army fatigues to a popular casual pant worn by every segment of the consumer market. Despite their rising popularity, little has been written about these pants. While they are visually prevalent in popular culture and at times dominate fashion trends, much about cargo pants remains a mystery. Since the 1970s, when hippies wore them as a sign of protesting war, until today, cargo pants have undergone a considerable transformation, changing in both texture and form. They are part of the basic core of casual garments that developed during the last twenty-five years. With casual dress in the workplace, changes in consumer’s active lifestyles, and a growing awareness and need to consume fashion, cargo pants no longer relate to their original use as a functional utility work garment.

The proliferation of cargo styles - basic cargo pants at Gap for $58.00, J.Crew’s cargo shorts for $48.00, wool dress cargo pants at Ralph Lauren for $565.00, slim low-rise cargo pants at Diesel for $100.00, and Old Navy’s cargo shorts for $19.50- make it clear that these pants are evolving into a cultural fashion icon. Target, the U.S.’s second top retailing giant featured the pants on their “Get A Jump on School…Go Cargo,”
August 17th, 2003 weekly newspaper circular (figure A.1). This demonstrates Target’s confidence in the significant market shares these pants have when it comes to consumer spending in their stores.

In 2003, *Gentlemen’s Quarterly* recognized cargo pants as a successful and “wonderful addition to the mass fashion business.” Even the ‘Lifestyle Monitor’ section of *Women’s Wear Daily* noted what they call “The New Cargo Pants” coming from fashion houses such as Prada and Jil Sander in luxury fabrics.  

*DSN Retailing Today,* in their December 15, 2003 issue projected cargo shorts would be the number one selling men’s bottom during the Spring/Summer 2004 season. And they were! Moreover, *Sportswear International* emphasized that cargo pants would be strong during the Fall 2006 back-to-school selling season. The J.Crew catalog made their cargo statements during Summer 2004 and 2005 by featuring cargo shorts on the cover of their summer catalogs. In Summer 2006, the J.Crew catalog accentuated the importance of the cargo styles by simply placing a referent cargo pocket on the cover of its catalog.

Cargo pants have continued to grow in popularity within both “fashion designer brand labels” and “specialty retailer brand labels (discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4).” In this study, *brand labels* and *brand names* are defined as trademarked and proprietary names of companies that promote fashion products through advertising, labeling, and other marketing initiatives. Branding is the process that allows a retailer

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and/or designer to personalize a garment making it a part of their product assortment. By placing symbols such as sewing patches, (figure A.2), screen printing (figure A.3) on, and inside the garment (figure A.4), or through the use of hang tags (figure A.5), retailers and designers brand and personalize cargo pants for their specific fashion line.

This allows them to create distinguishing names for their specific brands of cargo pants, like Abercrombie & Fitch’s (sometimes referred to as A&F) Paratroops (figure A.6-A.7- front and back of garment). These new names for cargo pants sometimes become the chosen retail industry identifier for the garment and can even obscure the original name. For example, the retailing industry has renamed the historically accurate “fatigues,” calling them “cargo pants” as a way of distinguishing them from the military uniforms worn by service men. Figure A.4 illustrates this point. In 2006, the Gap decided to combine both concepts in their summer cargo shorts by referring to them as “Fatigue Cargo Shorts” with an inside stamp that resembles a military marker used in traditional fatigues where soldiers could write their name, rank and division inside.

James Sherwood, one of the few scholars to write about cargos pants, also notes that elements of this pant have become part of mass fashion garment production and are being worn for various and diverse reasons. In “The Nineties Utility Movement: Prime Suspect in the Death of Designer Fashion,” Sherwood indicates that cargo pockets no
longer have the same use as originally intended, that is, for soldiers to carry supplies. Instead, these pockets now house such items as cell phones, palm pilots, and toiletries, and are sometimes utilized for smuggling liquor or illegal drugs into clubs. 

In his book, *By Design*, Ralph Caplan states:

Cargo pants, worn at the turn of the twenty-first century by the young and hip who had, however, no cargo to speak of, were approved in the summer of 2003 as patrol officer’s uniform for the NYPD. Renamed patrol tactical pants, they are comfortable and, more to the point in that line of work, easier to run in than previously mandatory straight-legged duty trousers, and they hold cop gear.

This suggests that cargo pants no longer mean what they have historically signified, but take on new meanings and messages assigned through each generation’s use of the pants. These pants have seen five different generations of consumers. The G.I. Generation (born 1943-1960); The Silent Generation (born 1925-1942); The Baby Boom Generation (born 1943-1960); The Thirteenth Generation, Generation X; or Babybusters (born 1961-1981) and the Millennial Generation, Generation Y or Echo Boomers (born 1982-present). Each generation has had cargo pants introduced to them with a different contextual presentation. The cargo pant design has become a cultural symbol associated with modern and postmodern fashion.

A Review of Fashion and Branding Literature

Cargo pants can be viewed as signs, whose meanings are consumed. As Roland Barthes discusses, fashion has written and visual agendas allowing its own language system to develop. According to Barthes, in the design process clothing garments are

created and stylized to suit current fashion. He believes that a garment is actually present in the fashion system at three distinct levels: the real garment or actual garment itself; the terminological garment that signifies the written word used to describe the object; and finally, the rhetorical written garment that includes how the clothing was described through words and photographed in images. While Barthes thinks the real garment is desired by the consumer, his studies help scholars to understand that it is the rhetorical written garment’s presentation (where the actual garment is either presented as real or manipulated to create a fantasy garment) in photos that is more important for stimulating consumption. However, his study never addresses how the context of a garment’s placement in an advertisement impacts a garment’s meaning, therefore manipulating the discourse of the garment in a cultural framework.

With the help of mass media, fashion diffuses through society. Mass market or simultaneous adoption theories suggest that a garment enters at all levels of a social hierarchy. With the growth of ready-to-wear and sportswear in the late 50s early 60s and with advanced technology, fashion diffused through each social class level. This allows consumers to use a garment according to his/her interests and financial means. Retailers who catered to the middle-classes were able to design and produce garments for more price-conscious consumers. Previous research has suggested how media was used to communicate fashion. Yet most studies have not focused on how meaning, as the primary objective is communicated to the consumer using the garment’s design and

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contextual placement. While, Marilyn Damhorst developed a contextual model of a clothing sign system that emphasizes the importance of a garment’s context in the social order, her model and study are broad in scope.  

Marcia Morgado, in her article, “Coming to Terms with Postmodern: Theories and Concepts of Contemporary Culture and Their Implications for Apparel Scholars” reveals the opportunities for textiles and clothing scholars to conduct research using the postmodernist perspective examining fashion in deconstructive and cultural critical methodologies. In her review of literature, Morgado emphasizes that meaning in garments have become ambivalent and new studies need to be conducted on how we study current fashion.  

Context, Consumers, and Macro Arbiters of Fashion

In a 1996 essay, “Fashioning Future Fashions,” Gwendolyn O’Neal suggested that after fashions are purchased their final use and worn interpretations are unique and created by each consumer. The garment meaning is ambivalent and each personal style is individualized and personalized by the consumer. Garment meaning is changed, shifted, manipulated, and even altered not only by each consumer during the same fashion season but over the generations. The garment itself almost becomes obsolete. What becomes important is the interpretation of the garment by the consumer who may or may not read the garment the same as another consumer. The reason consumer X adopts to wear cargo

pants may be completely different from consumer Y’s during a fashion season. One consumer may view the pants as a garment for casual dress Friday, while the other views the pants as club wear and an alternative to carrying a backpack. This reading is generated by marketing strategies and media influences from both retailers and other visual communications such as television, cinema or even fashion spreads in magazines.\textsuperscript{18} However, the consumer creates the personalized stylized branded look (figures A.8 and A.9). While O’Neal’s suggestions are not new, they do emphasize the importance of understanding individual interpretations of fashion garments like cargo pants, since cargo pants are often worn or fashioned in a \textit{pastiche} of style that suggests a new \textit{visual milieu} for the pant.

In 1997, Jean Hamilton’s article “The Macro-Micro Interface in the Construction of Individual Fashion Forms and Meaning,” addressed the transfer of the \textit{macro} (global) to the \textit{micro} (individual) interface in construction of individual fashion forms and their meanings. Her study is instrumental to our understanding how culture and fashion arbiters globally influence consumers’ interpretations of ideas associated with fashion goods. Issues surrounding how and why merchandise is made and distributed are discussed. However, Hamilton is innovative with her debate focusing on storytelling as a form for creating the brand concept of a need for continual consumption.\textsuperscript{19} Her


theoretical ideology suggests that storytelling creates context that entices consumers to repurchase mass produced items based on verbal and visual contextual placement in media.

In the narrative “Texture and Taboo: The Tyranny of Texture and Ease in the J.Crew Catalog,” Matthew Debord established that retail catalogs had become lifestyle magazines. According to Debord, the clothing presented in the catalog became second to photographs of models and “mini-narratives.” He demonstrated this by showing how J.Crew’s clothing assortment was, in his words, “inferior.” Yet its advertising conveyed the message that it was Ivy League, a misrepresentation of its quality. The visual context and “mini-narrative” or storytelling invited consumers to purchase basic fashion based upon J.Crew’s branding fantasy, rather than reality.

**Emotions, Storytelling and Cultural Branding**

Teri Agins reveals in her book, *The End of Fashion*, that the survival of designers and retailers is dependent on their proficiency in branding their products. Fashion, according to Agins, is not about products but how they are marketed and sold as a “brand image,” or what she calls, *lifestyle merchandising*. While garments such as T-shirts, khaki pants, underwear, and jeans are the staples of everyone’s closet, what makes them unique or special is meaning given to them during the marketing campaign used in selling

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items.\textsuperscript{21} This phenomenon suggests that while clothing is an essential component of popular culture, the actual garment itself has become second to the branding techniques used to sell it.

Marc Gobe in his book, \textit{Emotional Branding}, specifies that successful retailers will be those who can capture the emotions and personal convictions of their customers. Gobe states, “Corporations clearly need to fine tune their focus on the consumer psyche and understand the importance of the constantly evolving trends in their consumers’ lifestyles.”\textsuperscript{22} Gobe believes retailers will need to brand according to the needs of their specific target markets. He suggests that companies making emotional ties to consumers will rise to the top, while those who do not, will fail.

In 2002 Gobe’s book, \textit{Citizen Brand: 10 Commandments for Transforming Brands in a Consumer Democracy}, tells brand managers how to mold their brands successfully in a democratic society. Gobe’s commandments are:

1. From Consumers to People. \textit{Consumers buy. People live.}
2. From Honesty to Trust. \textit{Honesty is expected. Trust is engaging and intimate.}
3. From Product to Experience. \textit{Products fulfill needs. Experiences fulfill desires.}
4. From Quality to Preference. \textit{Quality for the right price is a given today. Preference creates the sale.}
5. From Notoriety to Aspiration. \textit{Being known does not mean that you are also loved!}
6. From Identity to Personality. \textit{Identity is recognition. Personality is about character and charisma!}
7. From Function to Feel. \textit{The functionality of a product is about practical or superficial qualities only. Sensorial design is about experiences.}
8. From Ubiquity to Presence. \textit{Ubiquity is seen. Emotional presence is felt.}

10. Evolve from Service to Relationship. *Service is selling. Relationship is acknowledgement.*

Gobe’s work focuses primarily with telling companies how to develop strong bonds with consumers. His desire is for companies to leave the tradition of “old school” thoughts and ideas and to become what he calls, “citizen brands.” Companies should now be socially responsible and treat consumers with respect. Gobe’s entire focus is on the importance of individual consumers and their emotions. According to Gobe, the emotional and physical attachment a consumer makes to a brand is key for the future of the consumer market.

The theme of “emotional attachment” typifies branding literature. Marc Gobe, Laurence Vincent, Douglas Holt, Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz, Baris Yakaboylu, Mark Tungate, and many others all agree that a consumer must build a personal emotional attachment to any product prior to purchasing it. Many feel that basic storytelling is one method that is used by brand managers in order to gain consumer attention. There are many methods of storytelling that explain how stories influence brands. One method is *brand mythology.*

Brand mythology uses both verbal and non-verbal narration and conveys a worldview that transcends the functional and epistemic product attributes. According to Laurence Vincent, the narrative used in brand mythology is an existential bond. The elements used to create the narrative are based upon recognizable shared cultural icons and symbols.\(^{24}\)

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In another method, brands are communicated to consumers through visual storytelling. According to Fog, Budtz, and Yakaboylu, visual storytelling communicates values in a way that we can all understand. These authors recognize that when telling visual non-verbal brand stories, it is essential to draw on easily understood social and cultural signs, symbols and icons. Stories speak to our emotions and help us understand social and cultural ideas. Visual branding follows the same format of storytelling with message, conflict, characters, and plot; however, each consumer individually reads the story sometimes without audio narration. This technique allows for each consumer to create a personal contextual story for the product in his/her mind. Moreover, because the visual narrative becomes personalized, the consumer develops an emotional attachment to the product that becomes key for market sales.  

Mark Tungate’s book, *Fashion Brands: Branding Style from Armani to Zara*, reveals how the elements of luxury fashion brands are created. By using the right model, the right celebrity, or right designs, fashion companies build their brands and target market. According to Tungate, branding is a game of creating the right image and having a good company ‘story’ to go along with it.  

Tungate explains how consumers have become addicted to maintaining personal style. According to Tungate, consumers want to keep up with the latest fashion and will repurchase perceived luxury items such as *premium denim* (today’s high-priced designer

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jeans) that retail for hundreds of dollars each season. He reveals how fashion advertisers market such small design details in order to create desire for their products. Status and other desired lifestyle associations are marketed with perceived luxury fashions such as premium denim through the process of fashion branding. Unlike essential consumer products such as food, the continual consumption of luxury fashion products such as high-priced denim is completely unnecessary. Tungate tells us how branding keeps sales soaring and a yearning for more luxury goods in tact.

The luxury market relies on brand strategy in order to build and maintain its consumer base. Jean-Noel Kapferer and Arianna Brioschi reveal how both brand managers and advertisers maintain the idea of luxury. The head designer of any fashion brand is also a key component for success. How well s/he presents him/herself is crucial in gaining luxury consumers. The designer becomes a personal icon for the company.

However, as the designer’s brand gains sales, merchandising and marketing become the key vehicles driving the retail strategy, allowing the designer brand to reach new markets. By associating luxury themes and icons with non-luxury items, traditional non-luxury products are perceived as new luxury. This process called mass-tige becomes a driving force to gaining market share.

Kapferer introduces two models of luxury branding. She feels both coexist based primarily upon opposing cultural assumptions about luxury products. One of the models

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27 Ibid., 8.
is rooted in history, item rarity and craftsmanship, which are usually associated with European luxury brands. The other is based upon story, image, and marketing of products, which is often linked to American success.

Brioschi’s study reinforces the ideas that advertising is dependent upon specific cultural themes to communicate luxury context. She lists the snob effect, the bandwagon effect, exclusivity, aesthetics and tradition as the key ingredients of success for a luxury brand. She demonstrates how to group luxury products according to a forced ranking of product classification. Individual couture garments sell based upon quality, fabrication and uniqueness, while other lesser luxury items such as T-shirts, denim, sunglasses and fragrance, rely heavily on marketing context in order to appear special and exclusive.

Douglas Holt’s book, *How Brands Become Icons*, introduces the idea of *cultural branding*. He develops his model of cultural branding based upon his ideas of axioms and strategic principles that guide building brands into icons. Holt reinforces the ideas that brands are involved at four distinct levels: the company, the culture, the intermediaries (retail salespeople), and customers (how they manipulate the product).  

**Branding and Meaning Management**

Another researcher who has continually focused on the meanings related to consumption is Grant McCracken. His research emphasizes that studying clothing is essential to understanding the cultural evolution of society. According to McCracken, meaning moves from the *culturally constituted world* to the gatekeepers of *consumer goods* to the *individual consumer* - all add *meanings* to each product as it passes through

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their domains. His theoretical models suggest that through social interaction, individuals, and eventually society assign status to fashion garments as well as types of consumer goods.  

Recently, in *Culture and Consumption II*, McCracken’s research connected meaning and brand management. He emphasizes the need for consumption to be studied from a meaning based model instead of the traditional information based model because of theoretical insufficiencies. For the development of the consumer market, meaning will become more effective in determining consumer patterns of consumption. According to McCracken, context is the key to the creation and generation of future consumer consumption.  

McCracken suggests that context creates meaning to the product or service. He identifies nine different types of meanings that are usually targeted by companies. These include: gender meanings, lifestyle meanings, decade meanings, age meanings, class and status meanings, occupation meaning, time and place meaning, value meanings, as well as fad, fashion and trend meanings. For McCracken, all of these meanings are determined by a company, competitors, collaborators, customers, marketing segmentation, product and service positioning, market mix, and price of each consumer item.  

His suggestion for future scholars is to study the various types of meanings used to create context around consumer goods.

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33 Ibid., 177.
34 Ibid., 178-91.
Rationale

Although, O'Neal, Hamilton, and Debord examined fashion diffusion, fashion marketing, media and meanings, their theoretical investigations did not focus on an application to a single consumer product. The branding concepts of Agins, Gobe, Vincent, Fog, Budtz, Yakaboylu, Tungate, Kapferer, Brioschi, Holt and McCracken open themselves to further investigation of context in the creation of meaning in products to appear unique to consumers.

In this study, fashion and brand ideologies are utilized in explaining how cargo pants (the fashion) are no longer the main attraction for the consumer when purchasing the pants. It appears that the consumer may identify with the branding concept used to contextualize cargo pants and to create a selling story; these branding channels sometimes create a hyperreality\(^3\) that entices the consumer to buy the garment thinking s/he is “purchasing” part of the fantasy. Understanding this phenomenon is key to this investigation of cargo pants that have been manipulated and changed through brand culture.

The goal of the study is to build upon these fashion studies synthesizing the theoretical foundations of branding by conducting an applied study of a cargo pants in fashion. By examining a single garment type, it was possible to comprehend how all elements of the fashion system are manipulated and systematically changed through branding, and how a garment’s meaning becomes context dependent. This is important

for understanding that during a particular fashion season a garment can have multiple meanings, thereby appealing to more consumers who may or may not purchase the garment for the same reasons.

In this study, I do not address the utilitarian and practical functions related to cargo pants, rather my investigation is concerned with the reinvention of cargo pants from practical to fashionable. The fashion side of the cargo pant is key in explaining how the branded cargo pant has evolved. Discussing the cargo pant function is not the primary focus of this study but leaves room for future research. By deconstructing changes in fabrications, garment labeling, design features, and contextual placement, the reader will begin to understand that cargo pants are no longer the same army uniform pants worn by their grandfathers.

As the American culture continues to become more diverse and multicultural, the goal of retailers becomes not only one of showing how a garment is multi-functional, but also how these companies must market a similar garment to a number of diverse target markets. The re-invention of cargo pants in brand advertising serves as a key to understanding change in American material and popular culture. While fashion advertising is referenced in many studies to depict fashion and its evolution, few fashion scholars discuss how the branding (context) of the garment is the actual vehicle that aids in changing the perception, meaning and “language” of fashion.

The consumers targeted in this study are male consumers who desire and purchase current trends and styles reflective of mass fashion. These companies include: Gap, J.Crew, Banana Republic, Abercrombie & Fitch, Diesel and other retailers who target consumers of moderate priced and mass produced clothing. This male consumer
identifies with lifestyle marketing advertising geniuses such as Ralph Lauren, or a brand like Abercrombie & Fitch that provides contemporary styles reflective in their branding. As both of these companies suggests, they are leaders in reinventing and reproducing quality products that reflect men’s lifestyles and current styles. Their male customers are conscious of mass fashion trends and styles, moreover they usually purchase products for themselves. They know style and fashion.36

This study is key for future designers, scholars and even retailers in understanding that fashion will continue to evolve and change, but the success of those individuals in the fashion business may depend on their ability to understand how brand culture will impact their success or failure. Moreover, as indicated, an investigation of cargo pants as a fashion-selling phenomenon has been neglected and needs to be addressed.

For fashion researchers, this study’s findings could suggest that future histories of mass fashion garments will need to include the branding concepts of retailers or designers to understand the changes in fashion. Also, the branded meaning of a garment will need to be considered for understanding why it was worn (during the time period) since practicality is usually no longer the reason consumers buy styles.

Methodology & Chapter Objectives

This study is broken down into four chapters each of which reflects an objective of this study. Each chapter explores the evolution of various brands and styles of cargo pants. My interpretive methodologies allow for the examination of cargo pants historically, contextually, visually, and aesthetically. The objectives of this study are to

introduce cargo pants as a popular culture icon and branded mass fashion phenomenon in various retail markets by: (1) analyzing the history and development of cargo pants; (2) providing a conceptual framework for branding cargo pants; (3) revealing how cargo pants moved into the luxury market; and finally (4) demonstrating how fashion branding of the actual- ‘cargo pants’- have evolved into a vehicle of brand storytelling.

This study required drawing upon the critical works in retail marketing, periodical magazines, promotional materials, popular literature, as well as actual garments. A discussion of methods and sources is presented according to each of the objectives in this study. One major source of information comes from a personal collection of contemporary cargo pants dating from 1999-2006. Since the primary purpose of this study is to reveal how branding creates stories surrounding cargo pants, by visually presenting pants used for this study, the reader will become aware of the importance of branding context when reading the chapters. Artifacts of contemporary cargo pants and shorts are shown throughout the entire study revealing how cargo styles have evolved in design, form and style through the process of branding.

Objective I: The Origins of Cargo Pants

In Chapter 2, contemporary and historical images of cargo pants (that are part of the author’s collection) are drawn on to show how the design has evolved. Photographs will be shown to depict the contextual evolution of cargo pants from their inception in the 1940s to the 21st century.

For a history of military uniforms, the sources include: photos of historical fatigues, two comprehensive periodicals titled *Uniforms of World War II* and *Modern Military Uniform*. Other sources include popular literature such as *Banana Republic*.
Guide to Travel and Safari Clothing, The Preppy Handbook, and The Hipster’s Handbook; also, information regarding the origin of fatigues was sought from the US Army Women’s Museum in Fort Lee, Virginia where the author conducted an interview with a leading curator of historical military uniforms. The Internet was also consulted for information regarding authentic military uniforms on such websites as www.vintagetrends.com. Also, this researcher conducted visits to army surplus stores like I.Goldberg in the Philadelphia metro area.

As stated, cargo pants have become a part of material popular fashion culture. As Celia Lury states, “One of the most important ways in which people relate to each other socially is through the mediation of things.” Material Culture is the name given to the study of things- or objects of use. Also, material culture must be examined and interpreted within the relationship of the object’s context. Objects of material culture are designed to be both communicative and representational.

In Chapter 2 and throughout the study, the framework for the investigation of social icons and material culture created by Jack Nachbar and Kevin Lause titled, “Living in a Material World,” will add in organizing the historical and contemporary evolution of the cargo. Their article, “Living in the Material World,” suggests a procedure for

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examining cultural icons like cargo pants. According to the authors, there are six types of icons: Pure Personal Icons; Functional Personal Icons; Pure Local Icons; Functional Local Icons; Pure Cultural Icons; and Functional Cultural Icons.\footnote{Ibid., 172-74.}

I focus on the functional cultural icon, cargo pants. Functional cultural icons are “objects” which have practical use for consumers and expression of emotional and/or intellectual meanings important to an entire culture and/or sign sub-groups within the culture. Examples include: cars, televisions, telephones, sunglasses, and blue jeans.

The authors state, “functional icons are objects which are developed for a purpose other than their iconic role, there is an element of unconscious resonance and choice invested in the growth of their meaning and significance.”\footnote{Ibid., 174.} Functional cultural icons are generally used for the same purposes through time, however they are dependent upon their context for additional suggested meanings.

There are five steps when examining an icon. These include:

1. The Appearance of the Icon. The shape, color, and size of the icon for clues to its significance.
2. The History of the Icon. Where did it come from and how did it develop?
3. Evolutionary Change in the Icon. Has the meaning of the icon changed over time?
4. Iconic Group. Who uses the icon? What are the demographic characteristics of this group?
5. Exploitation of the Icon. What do people who are trying to sell you the icon reveal about its meaning? What do these people do to make the icon significant? Do others borrow the icon and use it in different ways?\footnote{Ibid., 178-81.}

For my study, this outline will aid in explaining the appearance of cargo pants, the history of cargo pants, the changes in cargo pant design and fabrications, who has worn cargo pants, and so forth.
pants, how cargo pants have been exploited in fashion advertising, the movement of
cargo pants from street wear to the luxury market, and methods on how cargo pants are
sold to consumers. In the analysis of the actual cargo pants, this researcher utilized a
checklist similar to the table presented in Chapter 4. Although, there are many types of
cargo pants styles, this study is concerned with an introductory study of overall cargo
pants in general. While Chapter 2 really focuses on steps 1-3; Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will
focus on step 4- iconic groups and step 5- the exploitation of the icon cargo pants.

**Objective 2: A Conceptual Framework For Branding Cargo Pants**

In Chapter 3, a theoretical application demonstrating the branding and storytelling
techniques of Abercrombie & Fitch reveals new contextual connections to cargo pants.
The use of postmodern branding semantics exhibits how postmodern ideology is used in
brand marketing and merchandising. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks of Jean
Hamilton, Matthew Debord, Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz and Baris Yakaboylu aid in the
explanation of how context, meaning, and storytelling have significant roles in the
fashion branding process.

Using these theoretical concepts, the content of two Abercrombie & Fitch
magalogues from 1999 and 2003 are used to show how the retailer developed their brand
strategy around cargo pants. Photos of the retailer’s cargo assortment during this time
will be presented. Themes and associations to A&F’s cargo pant assortment will be
discussed to reveal how the retailer created meanings related to gender, sex, lifestyle, age,
class, value, as well as, fad, fashion and trend meanings. A&F’s magalogue was chosen
over any other retailer’s advertising for two reasons: first, this periodical received much controversial public attention and second, its use of postmodern terminology and storytelling through visual imagery made it a landmark ad campaign.

Primary samples of Abercrombie & Fitch cargo pants and shorts from my personal collection are presented to show the retailers’ interpretation of cargo style. Other secondary sources that strengthen interpretative method in this chapter include: Abercrombie and Fitch’s company website www.abercrombie.com; competitive strategic documentation recorded during the 1999-2000 (when I worked as Structure’s brand strategist); Mark Twain’s novel *The Innocents Abroad*; and Eve Sedgewick’s book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*.

In this chapter, I take an interpretive postmodernist perspective. In his book *The Portable Postmodernist*, Arthur Asa Berger describes the basic characteristics of postmodern theory that are applicable to this chapter. Moreover, this theoretical perspective complements the latest forms of consumer behavior. Postmodernism has marked transformation of visual aesthetics, architecture, cinema, popular culture and social theory that has rejected the traditional classic realist and modernist thoughts of theory. Finally, postmodernism references a form of theorizing and writing about social phenomena that is post-positivist, interpretive and critical.  

“Postmodernism criticism takes its starting point with the notion that meaning is constituted by the continual playfulness of the signifier, and the thrust of its critique is aimed at interpreting Western metanarratives of truth and the ethnocentrism implicit in

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the European view of history as the unilinear progress of universal reason,” according to Kincheloe and McLaren. The goal of this researcher was to critique and evaluate both the signifier and the signified of cargo pants presentation to suggest possible interpretations. However, these are not universal truths, they only offer implications that may suggest reasons for the construction of narratives used to convey a message to the viewer. What do they represent? What does it stand for? Visual and historic studies conducted using these methodologies rely on the established cultural codes and social order as frame of reference for the subject. In this chapter, cargo pants are looked upon as cargo pant brand (the signifier) and the lifestyle that each pant portrays (the signified). However, unlike traditional semiotic fashion studies, the iconographic context that surrounds the pants becomes part of the analysis that allows for a true understanding of what is being communicated with regards to cargo pants.

Moreover, iconic semiotic studies allow one to interpret meanings in advertising and associations created and established between consumer products with possible connections to material culture. The interpretative paradigm complements contemporary thought because it allows the researcher to challenge “universal myths” (the notions of binary opposition) evaluating social and cultural categories, while employing ideas that allow for meaning to form based on cultural background and experiences.

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46 Ibid.
Objective 3: “What's in a Name?” The Branding of Ralph Lauren Cargo Pants

For this objective, in Chapter 4, I examine how cargo styles have moved from mass retail into the designer luxury market. Cargo styles from Donna Karan, Giorgio Armani, Diesel, Nautica, Kenneth Cole, and Ralph Lauren are examined. The definition of luxury is explored presenting Arianna Brioschi’s empirical analysis on emergent themes in luxury and brand advertising.47 Next, how the luxury market has grown is illustrated by discussing two models of luxury branding from Jean Kapferer’s recent article, “The Two Business Cultures of Luxury Brands.” In this article, she suggests that retailers have the ability to create a desire for luxury goods through a process called mass-tige.48

According to Kapferer, the process of mass-tige allows luxury designers to expand their market share.49 Mass-tige includes: a luxury designer’s product development, merchandising, and marketing allowing them to reinvent traditional garments into newly branded luxury styles. I define the process of transforming non-luxury goods into luxury goods as luxurification. To illustrate luxurification, I relate Kapferer’s two models to Ralph Lauren’s merchandising techniques demonstrating how he has reinvented the utilitarian cargo pant into luxury fashion.

In his biography, Ralph Lauren: The Man, the Vision, the Style, Colin McDowell discusses Lauren’s rise into luxury status. McDowell divulges how Ralph Lauren is a true master of fashion visual merchandising. Teri Agins’ concept of lifestyle merchandising from her book, The End of Fashion, supports the reason why consumers

49 Ibid., 71.
continually buy into Ralph Lauren’s luxury fashionable image. It will be my intention to conceptually suggest that while Ralph Lauren’s fabrications, style details and cargo designs definitely reflect the designer’s brand conceptual image, the actual cargo pants are not that dissimilar from other retail styles.

**Objective 4: The Use of Popular Culture for the Detail Branding of Cargo Pants**

In Chapter 5 the branded markings applied and attached to cargo pants by retail companies are examined. Images of cargo pants from The Gap, Keanan Duffty, Energie, and Abercrombie & Fitch were used for this analysis. The researcher examined how designers, retailers and merchandisers brand details on and in their cargo pants creating an individualized and personal quality reflective of brand culture. These details customize the garment relating to a market niche that uses the product for creating a personal style. Branding details can include the use of: patches, hang tags, interior detailing and other markings that connect the cargo pant to a specific retailer. Sometimes these details can create stories and give the branded product another context that reflects historical frameworks and popular culture. Laurence Vincent and Douglas Holt’s notions on cultural branding support this concept.  

Grant McCracken’s ideas of brand meaning management and Gwendolyn O’Neal’s suggestions for fashioning future fashions demonstrate how individuals make connections to these branding details. This chapter demonstrates how retailers’ brand and

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product manipulations impact traditional modern garment designs (such as cargo pants) changing the traditional meanings of garments and possibly the way in which they are worn (figures A.8 and A.9).

**Conclusion: Findings & Future Research**

In the summary and conclusion, this researcher reviews the findings from each chapter in this study and suggests the next steps for investigation. Included in this chapter are suggestions on the future of cargo pants, as well as fashion branding. The researcher suggests the future of developing a theory and model for understanding how fashion branding influences consumer behavior in the retailing context.
CHAPTER 2
THE ORIGINS OF CARGO PANTS

Where did cargo pants come from? Was there some design genius in the armed forces that suddenly created the pants? Or did they evolve over time developing from other military garments? Actually, cargo pants do not have one history. In this chapter, I reveal some of the histories of cargo pants listing the military uniforms that have incorporated cargo pants into their regime. Then, I describe the social history of cargo pants and the generations since World War II that have incorporated these pants into their dress. Finally, I show current styles of cargo pants showing how mass retailers have developed and reinvented the pants into a branded mass fashion garment.

Identifying the Icon: Cargo Pants

For this study, cargo pants are examined from a social historical and popular culture perspective. As stated, the theoretical framework for the study of social icons and material culture created by Jack Nachbar and Kevin Lause will be used. These authors

state there are six types of icons: Pure Personal Icons; Functional Personal Icons; Pure Local Icons; Functional Local Icons; Pure Cultural Icons; and Functional Cultural Icons.

The authors define each icon type as follows:

1) *Pure Personal Icons*: Objects that have no function other than to symbolize meaning important to an individual and the smaller group immediately surrounding him. *Examples*: Tattoos (of a girlfriend/boyfriend’s name); family photograph.

2) *Functional Personal Icons*: Objects that have a function in addition to their symbolic meaning for an individual or small group. *Examples*: A baseball player’s special homerun bat; a child’s security blanket.

3) *Pure Local Icons*: Objects that have no function other than to symbolize a meaning or belief important to a small community or town. *Examples*: Statue of city founder; fraternity rocks.

4) *Functional Local Icons*: Objects that have a use in addition to their symbolic role of representing beliefs and values meaningful to a small community, group or town. *Examples*: Courthouses; community bars/tavern/nightclubs; Lover’s Lane; logos for local radio stations.

5) *Pure Cultural Icons*: Objects with no function other than to symbolize significant beliefs and values meaningful to important cultural groups and/or to the culture as a whole. *Examples*: American Flag; Mount Rushmore; Statue of Liberty; Democratic Donkey; and Republican Elephant; Uncle Sam.

6) *Functional Cultural Icons*: Objects that have use in addition to the expression of emotional and/or intellectual meanings important to entire culture and/or to sign sub-groups within the culture. *Examples*: Cars; televisions; telephones; sunglasses; blue jeans; (for this study) cargo pants.\(^5\)

According to the authors, functional cultural icons are most likely to be true indications of what a population of consumers actually *uses*. These icons reflect the actual mindset of the social order. Functional cultural icons are not fantasy, but reality; however, sometimes they can be contextualized and romanticized in order to persuade consumers to buy them.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 172-74.
Functional cultural icons are given their meaning and importance in the social order because they are used consistently over a period of time. They function as the leader in their product category and are associated with integrity and quality.\(^{53}\)

A cultural group understands the icon because they associate images with it and know that it is reliable. For example, in this study the functional cultural icon *cargo pants* could be associated with the military, history, travel, durability, ruggedness, camouflage, soldiers, hip-hop, traditional fashion, and democratized fashion. Because of this, consumers within a cultural group understand the icon *cargo pants* and have learned to accept the garment as a form of popular culture.

The steps for examining icons are as follows:

1. *The Appearance of the Icon.* The shape, color, and size of the icon for clues of its significance.
2. *The History of the Icon.* Where did it come from and how did it develop?
3. *Evolutionary Changes in the Icon.* Has the meaning of the icon changed over time?
4. *Iconic Group.* Who uses or has used the icon? What are the demographic characteristics of this group?
5. *Exploitation of the Icon.* What do people who are trying to sell you the icon reveal about its meaning? What do these people do to make the icon significant? Do others borrow the icon and use it in different ways?\(^{54}\)

In this chapter, the steps developed by Nachbar and Lause are used to examine cargo pants. While all their steps are summarized in this chapter, chapters 3, 4, and 5 are focus more on step 4- iconic groups and step 5- the exploitation of the icon cargo pants.

**What Are Cargo Pants & Where Did They Come From?**

This investigation began with the intention of discovering exactly where cargo pants originated. Were they the creative genius of someone like Levi Strauss who

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 174-75.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 178-81.
invented the first pair of blue jeans? History reveals that cargo pants evolved and were inspired by other garments already in existence in the military. Moreover, cargo style pants do not seem to have come from one specific country. Instead these pants must have sprouted across various locations and in different contexts perhaps simultaneously.

**What Are Cargo Pants?**

Cargo pants originated from a garment called *fatigues*. The pants were originally referred to as either: 2-pocket (figure B.1), 6-pocket (figure B.2), 7-pocket jungle fatigues (figure B.3) and field pants (B.4). Cargo pants were primarily worn for battle dress and not used as formal military regime (figures B.5-B.8). The pants have been constructed from fabrics such as wool, cotton, polyester, and nylon having such fabrications as twill, herringbone and brushed flannel. The oldest military documented pair of cargo pants were made from green herringbone cotton twill. They are similar to those shown in figure 2.9.

**The Military History-Cargo Story #1**

For the military history of cargo pants, I conducted research with the help of Sergeant Major Luther Hanson at Fort Lee in Virginia. Sergeant Major Hanson has been the curator of the Ft. Lee historic military uniform museum for over 25 years. He is the national authority on military uniforms and their uses. Sergeant Major Hanson has visitors come from every major fashion design house, while retailers from all over the world visit the large collection of military uniforms. He states that many fashion retail

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56 Sergeant Major Luther Hanson, personal communication, October 5, 2006.
companies come for design inspiration whether its military inspired or not. Almost every year, Ralph Lauren’s design team frequents the museum in order to get inspiration for their fashion collections.\(^{57}\)

According to Hanson, versions of cargo pants did not appear until 1942. The concept for fatigues came from the Paratrooper Jump Coat Model #1 (figure B.10) during World War II. He suggests that the design for cargo pants would have come from a Quarter Master Sergeant during the time of WW II. During this time, the Quarter Master regime designed uniforms at a rapid pace sending orders to various manufacturers. The Quarter Masters worked as a team specifically tailoring uniforms to each of the battle units. During the major world wars, military uniforms became a method for identifying specific units. During this time, there was quick design and production of uniforms for the world wars and many specifications concerning uniform details were lost. Unlike today, the contributions of each Quarter Master’s designs would not have been documented. The inventor of the first pair of cargo pants would not have been recorded; consequently, the credit would have gone to the Quarter Masters as a team.\(^{58}\)

**The Military History-Cargo Story #2**

In his story on cargo pants titled, “Cargo Pants,” Terry Sullivan credits the British for inventing cargo style pants. He suggests that British soldiers and paratroopers used the

\(^{57}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.
pants prior to Americans. His article identifies that the major reason for cargo pockets was for soldiers to carry ammunition when they were climbing or hiding in high places. He states that the pockets cushioned and reduced noise where utility belts did not.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{The Military History-Cargo Story #3}

There is still another story associated with the invention of cargo pants. Notorious during the 1980s for their well-written and designed catalog, the retailer Banana Republic suggests cargo pants were the invention of Generalissimo Francisco Franco. In their \textit{Banana Republic Guide to Travel & Safari Clothing}, the Spanish General Franco designed these pants and called them \textit{Franco Pants} during Spanish War.\textsuperscript{60}

According to the retailer, Franco would become enraged when he viewed his soldiers placing their hands in their pant-pockets. To remedy this problem, the Fascist general had the pockets of the pants moved to below the upper thigh. His new pants were very similar to the 2-pocket fatigue pants, however they had back pockets as well. Franco had the seat of the pants reinforced with a bulls-eye patterned patch very similar to those seen in contemporary styles of cargo pants.

\textit{The Military History –Cargo Story #4}

Finally, in Chris McNab’s text \textit{Modern Military Uniforms}, the leg pocket on military uniforms was not present prior to World War II. McNab credits the Air Force for developing leg pockets on the front of flight pants as the first sign of cargo styles

\textsuperscript{59} Terry Sullivan, “Cargo Pants,” in \textit{Gentlemen’s Quarterly}, (January 2003), 44.  
\textsuperscript{60} Mel & Patricia Ziegler, \textit{Banana Republic Guide to Travel & Safari Clothing} (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), 92-93.
(figures B.11-B.12). Since the cockpit of many fighter planes was so narrow, Air Force pilots required pockets on the front of their flight uniforms, allowing them access to supplies during flight. This allowed the pilots to feel more comfortable while cramped in the plane’s cockpit. McNab’s theory could be correct since figures B.11 and figure B.12 display pants produced during this time period.

**Summary of History**

Whether the invention of the Quarter Master regime, Great Britain, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, or the Air Force, there is a general consensus that cargo pants did not appear in military uniforms until WW II. Moreover, their origins are definitely related to the military uniform traditions whether it was the Army, Air Force, or Marines.

Throughout history, cargo style pants have been, and continue to be, worn by military troops across almost all countries. The traditional forms of 2-pocket, 6-pocket, and fatigue styles of cargo pants continue to be copied and reinvented by designers and retailers in fashionable silhouettes.

**The 20th Century Evolution of Cargo Pants**

As stated, during the 1940s and 1950s, cargo style pants were primarily used for military purposes. The military continued to reinvent these styles of pants for soldiers. Unique styles of cargo pants included: the wool khaki battledress pants of 1951 (figure B.13), the F-1 sage nylon air force pants of 1955 (figure B.14), and the green polyamide hot weather fire resistant pants of 1979 (figure B.15). Each of these military pants

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represents the evolution of cargo styles during the mid-20th century. While there were many styles of cargo pants developed by the military, most individuals associate the 1981 6-pocket camo brown style as the true cargo style (figure B.16).\textsuperscript{62} This pant seems to have become the iconic style most commonly replicated not only by the military, but designers and retailers as well.

**Iconic Groups and the Adoption of Cargo Pants**

The iconography of cargo pants changes with each decade. During the 1950s and 1960s, cargo styles are still mainly associated with military themes. However, they were soon adopted by Hollywood not only for movies related to war, but for movie themes exploring exotic travel and safari (figure B.17).

Who can forget Red Buttons as *Pockets* in the 1961 John Wayne classic movie *Hitari!* (*Danger!* in Swahili). In this film, John Wayne leads a group of highly qualified professional game hunters in the wilds of Africa. His group sets out to capture animals for zoos and circus attractions. Red Buttons plays his assistant *Pockets*, who wear green herringbone 2-pocket cargo pants similar to those in figure B.1. Throughout the entire film, *Pockets* keeps valuable items needed for the safari in his cargo pockets.\textsuperscript{63} In the movie, Wayne and other characters refer to the distinction of cargo pant pockets differentiating them from regular traditional pants pockets. This movie marks a direct reference to cargo pockets that I have not seen anywhere else.

\textsuperscript{62} Sergeant Major Luther Hanson, personal communication, October 5, 2006.
During the late 1960s and early 1970s, cargo pants become enculturated into the hippie movement. In protest of Western consumer culture and the Vietnam War, much of hippie clothing was self-made. Personalized and embroidered garments such as old military fatigues become part of the anti-fashion worn during this time. By re-stylizing traditional military dress, the hippie movement illustrated its counterculture attitudes towards the assimilation and strict codes of the soldier dress.\textsuperscript{64}

In his book, \textit{Don We Now Our Gay Apparel}, author Shaun Cole identifies garments such as military fatigues as part of sub-cultural dress in the mid-to-late 1970s. Gay men who wanted to identify as masculine and butch became obsessed with clothing that symbolized ruggedness.\textsuperscript{65} Cargo pants were one of these items since they had become associated with signifying the army soldier. These notions of being a “macho man” were reinforced by music bands such as the Village People (figure B.18). The group referenced hyper-masculine stereotypes such as Alex Briley, the army soldier (others such as the construction worker, the cowboy, the Indian, and the leather daddy are used) but gave him a “homo-stylized” look for singing such songs as \textit{In the Navy} and of course, \textit{Macho Man}.

Since cargo pants are a part of the military, therefore representing traditional American culture, it was not surprising that during the 1980s these pants became associated with the high social status \textit{preppy look}. With designers such as Ralph Lauren,


Izod, Liz Claiborne, and Calvin Klein, and retailers such as L.L. Bean, Eddie Bauer, Lands’ End, The Gap, and Banana Republic leading the preppy fashions of the 1980s, cargo pants became a part of the conservative style.\textsuperscript{66}

With the tremendous exposure of movies such as, Sixteen Candles (figure B.19), cargo pants were visually represented to both the teen and preppy markets. In this movie, heartthrob Jake lives the complete preppy lifestyle. As a teenager in high school, Jake drives a Porsche, has very successful parents, lives in a mansion, has lots of money, is the most popular senior, and dresses in conservative yet hip fashions.\textsuperscript{67}

Also, during the 1980s and early 1990s, cargo pants were also adopted by countercultures such as punks, new wavers, rappers, grunge and various other MTV generation icons. Groups such as The Clash, Bananarama, The Belle Stars, Thompson Twins, Sex Pistols, Nirvana, Beastie Boys, Run DMC, and The Fat Boys influenced fashion, wearing mass fashion garments such as cargo pants.

Retailers such as County Seat companies such as Bugle Boy gain popularity by copying MTV looks and selling their products in the teen market. Bugle Boy even created television ads that featured the 1980s iconic band, The Go-Go’s, to sell their products.\textsuperscript{68} Moreover, by producing trendy fashionable styles of cargo pants, retailers such as The Limited and Express gain popularity with their brands such as Outback Red and Forenza. It was not until the mid to late 1990s, that the entire retail fashion market promoted cargo pants as part of their assortments.

\textsuperscript{68} In the 80’s.com, http://www.inthe80s.com/adsmusic/b.html.
Cargo Pants in the 21st Century

During 1998-99, Structure, a division of The Limited Corporation, decided to investigate how many companies actually carried cargo pants in their assortment. The company wanted to decide if producing mass quantities of the pants would prove profitable. The retailer discovered that cargo pants were being sold at almost every specialty store retailer in the nation. Specialty retailers from high-end to low-end had the pants represented on their sales floors. The company also discovered that, not only did these retailers carry the pant, most had as many as five or six styles on their selling floors. Cargo pants had become a basic part of every mass fashion retailers’ basic assortment!\(^{69}\)

According to Leslie Wexner, C.E.O. of The Limited, the retailer Abercrombie & Fitch was leading the resurgence of cargo pants.\(^{70}\) Abercrombie & Fitch had gained the attention of the public with their controversial advertising campaign that featured half-naked coeds (figure B.20). With Bruce Weber as the creative genius behind the advertising campaign of the company, sales at Abercrombie & Fitch soared. Chapter 3 will emphasize the importance of Abercrombie & Fitch when I examine cargo pants and contextual marketing.

The Exploitation of the Icon Cargo Pants

Cargo pants have continued to grow in popularity with designers and retailers exploiting sales of the pants in the 21st century. Still being worn by hip, cool, and trendy teens, these pants have been given new meaning through contextual advertising

\(^{69}\) Structure, *Back-To-School Actual* (Columbus, OH: The Limited Corporation, 2000), Fall Pages.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., Fall Pages.
campaigns, design characteristics, colors, fabrications and branding details.\textsuperscript{71} In this study, I examine cargo pants that have been designed and produced for mass fashion consumption. These cargo pants represent the brands: Abercrombie & Fitch, Banana Republic, Gap, J.Crew, Ralph Lauren, Old Navy, Structure, Hollister, Ruehl, Abercrombie’s Ezra Fitch, 4 You, Armani Exchange, DKNY, Kenneth Cole, Nautica, Diesel, Energie, YMLA, H&M, and Target’s Keanan Duffy. Since 1999, I have noticed that the major distinguishing characteristics of these pants are not their fabrications, silhouettes and styles, but their branding details.

\textbf{What Distinguishes One Cargo From Another? Branding.}

Each retailer’s branding details gives the company ownership and a \textit{personal story} for their pants. How is this done? What strategies do retailers use in order to make their cargo pants better than the competition? The purpose of the next three chapters is to demonstrate how some retailers brand their cargo pants, but next I explain why branding is important.

Many mass garments are almost undistinguishable from each other without the help of branding. As stated in the Introduction, branding includes the merchandising, design details and the advertising that signifies a specific product such as cargo pants. Even if we compare authentic military fatigues to mass fashion cargo pants, they are almost identical without their context. For example, a comparison of the fatigues found in figures B.4, B.9, and B.14 with figures B.21, B.22 and B.23. Specifically by

comparing figure B.4 with B.22; figure B.9 with B.21; and figure B.14 with B.23, the reader will start to see by being placed on a blank white background all these pants seem very similar. Moreover, without the retailer or military unit information printed on the bottom of each of these images, identifying the pants becomes almost impossible. The M1951 OG 107 Field pant from 1952 (figure B.4) is almost indistinguishable in style from the Ralph Lauren $565.00 wool and cashmere model (figure B.22). While the color of each pant is different, the design features and garment’s integrity is very similar. The same is seen in the 1943 green herringbone M-43 pants (figure B.9) and the 2004 J.Crew 2-pocket herringbone (figure B.21). Without J.Crew’s contextual catalogue or in-store merchandising to distinguish their pants from the military, the two pants look as if they could have come from the same manufacturer.

In figure B.14 the F-1 sage nylon Air Force pants look as if they could have been inspiration for the polyester version from Old Navy (figure B.23) that were made in 2001. Without the Old Navy contextual advertising campaign to surround their pants, or the Air Force soldier wearing the 1955 pants, each of these garments looks as if they are utilized for combat.

As Evelyn Brannon suggests, “branding becomes the ability to assign a set of tangible and intangible characteristics to an object that identify it as a distinguishable brand to a specific audience.”\(^72\) These tangibles and intangibles can include various objects such as hangtags and markers on garments that give it a precise signifying identity. For example, in figure B.24 the pictured Old Navy hangtag was originally

attached to the garment in figure B.23. The reader will note the airplane on the tag along with the words, “Old Navy Brand Men’s Authentic Cargos Fit for Adventure.” By placing a tangible item such as a hangtag on their pants, Old Navy gave their polyester style cargo flight pants an association to the Air Force and the nostalgia of military history.

These historical signifying characteristics can strengthen the garment’s recognition amongst consumers. Because consumers are culturally imbedded with the importance of our military forces and are given constant visual reference to their markings, these visual signifiers become excellent methods for retailers to sell their products. For example, the internal manufacturing markings found in the military garments of figures B.2, B.3, B.12-B.15 is very similar to those by the Gap in figure B.25. By giving their pants a militaristic marking, the Gap references, and refers their products to, military history.

In this chapter, the social history of cargo pants was told. In the following chapters, the process of branding is discussed. I begin with contextual advertising followed by product labeling, and finally detail branding. In chapter 3, I begin with advertising and contextual placement of the garment cargo pants in the advertising of Abercrombie & Fitch. I feel that since context is crucial for the selling of products, advertising should be covered first. Next, I examine Ralph Lauren’s product labeling. In chapter 4, the reader will see how a designer name can command high prices for a mass fashion garment like cargo pants. And finally, in chapter 5, I examine how detail branding on the actual garment can create stories and give the garment new conceptual meanings.
CHAPTER 3

A CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR BRANDING:
CREATING CONTEXT AND MEANING FOR CARGO PANTS

In the prior chapter, the history, the iconic, and cultural meanings of cargo pants were discussed. This chapter considers the notions of advertising as a form of storytelling and its function to create contextual significance in order to sell products. However, the goal is not to measure sales, *per se*, but to demonstrate how what consumers see in advertising can impact their urge to buy. In this analysis, emphasis is placed on how advertisers reinvent postmodern terminology and their underlying concepts, to create marketing strategies. Several researchers have examined the interplay between postmodernism and fashion branding semantics. The theoretical texts of Jean Hamilton and Matthew Debord edify how context and advertising stories play a distinct role in developing associations to consumer products. Additionally, the theoretical concept of *brand storytelling* developed by Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz and

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73 Arthur Asa Berger, *The Portable Postmodernist* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), 4-5, 24, 78-79.
Baris Yakaboylu reinforces the notions that advertising and storytelling are normative methods for companies when creating ads. The marketing campaign of Abercrombie & Fitch serves as an example in depicting how creating a storyline establishes meaning for fashion garments. In this case, cargo shorts and pants are examined to demonstrate how meaning is developed and created around these particular mass fashions. An analysis of the visual presentation of cargo styles reveals associations to cultural critical theory and popular culture.

Postmodernism and Hyperreality in Advertising

During the 1960s, the era of postmodernism emerged and mass media began to influence consumer culture through various types of communicational outlets. Postmodern ideology and concepts are borrowed by these media outlets and presented to consumers in products such as motion pictures, television, and fashion advertising. Examples include: movies such as *Bladerunner*, televisions series *Twin Peaks*, and the shopping channel QVC. Reflecting current postmodern aesthetics and ideology, retail fashion marketers branded garments borrowing from postmodern semantics. For instance, QVC’s branding techniques contextualize fashion products through storytelling and meanings creating fantasies enticing consumers to buy more fashions.

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78 Ibid., 155.
79 Ibid., 400.
Jean Baudrillard, an influential postmodernism theorist, defines postmodernism as a time of simulation where the boundaries between what is real, and perceived as real, have been conflated. This conflation blurs the lines between what an individual knows as reality, and what is reality, thus causing confusion. An individual’s inability to distinguish between what is real and attainable versus fantasy, is what Baudrillard calls hyperreality. Those having social standing at the macro-levels of consumer culture create the distortions between reality and hyperreality. Baudrillard contends that the sign (the real), or the image, is distorted by moving through the following stages:

1. It is a reflection of basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum (simulation).

In the first stage, the object is shown in what Baudrillard calls the natural state; for example, a pair of cargo pants displayed alone without context, verbal, or visual presentation. In stage two, the cargo pants are aesthetically presented in a contextual state with verbal and visual cues that have been created by those of social standing (Baudrillard’s words for people of cultural and social power) who distort the object (cargo pants) and give it new meaning. Stage three represents the absence of all previous reality of the object (cargo pants). The origins, the use, histories, functions, and ideologies of a garment (cargo pants) are erased by those of social standing moreover,

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83 Ibid., 170.
the cargo pants are placed in a fantasy context. In stage four the object (cargo pants) is part of a whole new reality and has almost no relation to its origin. This is hyperreality.

Baudrillard believes hyperreality presents itself to consumers through media. Television, print advertising, computers, and other forms of communication create surreal life situations, but present them to consumers as real. Airbrushed fashion models in magazines, bogus Internet dating services, as well as distorted lenses on television cameras alter the real appearances of their subjects while alluding to the viewer that the subject is natural. For example, the phenomena of Internet dating on websites such as Match.com allow individuals to create hyperreal autobiographies. By posting an airbrushed photo and writing a colorful story about themselves, an individual tries to attain a mate. The person who views the ad may fantasize about the Match.com computerized image and autobiography, but then when the two individuals meet, the real person reveals himself. Person A (who posted the ad) may disappoint person B (who desired the hyperreal person) when the true image and personality are actually seen; instead, the hyperreal is fantasy.

Postmodern Branding Semantics

Baudrillard believes that ‘brands’ are the principal concepts of advertising culture and that they constitute a new discourse in the order of consumption. According to Baudrillard, those of social standing have repackaged consumer products in hyperreal scenarios in order to generate continuous consumption. Since those of social standing use media to create advertising and marketing to sell products, they are influenced by

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84 Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, Postmodern Theory York: The Guilford Press, 119.
86 Ibid., 19.
postmodern popular culture and consumer lifestyles. Also, with the development of postmodern brand culture, ideas continue to surface; postmodern ideological concepts such as *fragmentation, de-differentiation, chronology, and pastiche* have become applicable to current advertising campaigns. Postmodern theory and branding discourse assimilate into a contemporary vocabulary that is now considered everyday business semantics. Similarly, Asa Berger states in *The Portable Postmodernist*, retailers, marketers, and branding executives incorporate postmodern concepts to create their own definitions and meanings of these terms. Examples of how these words are used in current fashion marketing follows.

*Fragmentation* describes the separation of similar, mass-oriented groupings into smaller, specialized product ranges. Moreover, mass-produced items are tailored to specific consumer segments. In retailing, words such as *target market or market niche*, describe the end result of fragmentation. These notions of fragmentation reflect a diverse marketplace where the level of each consumer’s taste is unique and individualized.

*De-differentiation* suggests the blurring of high and low cultures. What have been previously notions of high or low art and culture have been altered in the minds of consumer culture. With regards to fashion, the fuzzy lines between fashion-as-art and art-as-fashion are perfect examples. Gap and Abercrombie & Fitch commissioned renowned photographic artists Bruce Weber or Herb Ritts, to shoot their pocket-Ts and

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88 Ibid., 87.
89 Ibid., 79.
Whereas advertising has not traditionally been viewed as *high art*, some critics may have needed to expand their understanding of art after seeing these high quality photos.

The idea of *chronology* explains a consumer’s pre-occupation with nostalgia and an interest in the past. A consumer may become enchanted with finding “real” or “authentic” products or what appears to be the original, but at the same time, because the phrases retailers use reflect images of *real, authentic*, and sometimes even *vintage*, to describe their products that, in fact, are knock-offs or brand new. For example, Old Navy’s use of the words, “*Care Instructions Provided, Authentic Genuine Detailing, Old Navy Vintage, Official Product Made to Uphold The Standards of Old Navy Authenticity*” in their fleece jackets for Fall 2005 is an excellent example. The Old Navy fleece jacket is, in fact, non-vintage, and so is Old Navy, which was founded in 1994. Also, while the word *authentic* is used, the consumer must be aware that the standards of *authenticity* are to Old Navy’s standard, not traditional standards. By using words such as *original, authentic, or real*, some consumers may become confused on the actual origins of products such as cargo pants. The branding campaign of a retailer can, figuratively erase the original origin of the garment.

*Pastiche* can almost be a synonym for the word collage. In postmodern consumer culture, pastiche relates to the use of mixing traditional and non-traditional items in order to create context. Actress Sharon Stone demonstrated postmodern fashion techniques

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91 Ibid., 5.
when she wore her Gap turtleneck with an Armani couture jacket to the 70th Annual Academy Awards. By mixing a mass fashion garment with couture, Stone created a postmodern look.

Advertising, Meanings and Storytelling

The major function of advertising is to provide a structure capable of transforming the language of objects, into meaningful retail products, for people to buy. Judith Williamson suggests that while an advertisers main goal is to sell to the products, good advertising requires the marketers to not only take into account the inherent qualities of the products, as well as to generate a meaning to the consumer. Williams believes that advertisements are selling more than just the consumer goods in the ads. By providing a structure, method and function for using a product, the connections between the consumer and product are made. These connections generate associations of both identity and forms of status in consumer culture.

Hamilton’s Micro-Macro Theory

In fashion, the goal of the advertiser becomes one of not only creating a use for the garment, but of creating scenarios or stories that set the garment in a selling context. Jean Hamilton demonstrates how the macro (outside) – micro (cognitive) association of fashion forms creates meanings. Hamilton revisits the works of previous clothing and textiles researchers, noting that their investigations focus on the cognitive sciences and how individuals attach meanings to their fashion forms and appearances.

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acknowledges a lack of research on how macro (outside) forces influence the micro (cognitive) forces of the purchasing of fashion goods, services and various products.

Hamilton’s primary goal is the development of a model based upon the notion that macro arbiters influence the micro level meanings that consumers associate with their personal products. Her theoretical framework illustrates the movement from (MICRO) micro negotiations with the self $\rightarrow$ to negotiations with others $\rightarrow$ to fashion system arbiters $\rightarrow$ to cultural system arbiters (MACRO).\textsuperscript{94} The following list includes the cultural and fashion system arbiters (MACRO) underlying this process:

1. Designers, product developers, and state planners in controlled economies.
2. Fashion forms and ideas created by designers and product developers.
3. The serendipitous (non-conspiratorial) interaction of the components on the delivery side (non-consuming side) of the fashion systems e.g.; designers, media, producers (including manufacturers), distribution (including retailers).
4. The conspiratorial interaction of components in the fashion system.
5. Major events/phenomena in the cultural system that influence fashion system participants and institutions as well as individual consumers, e.g., war, national elections, political revolution, economic recession/depression.
6. Trends in the cultural system (or in sub-cultural systems) that may influence all or some participants in the fashion system or some individual fashion consumers, e.g., Eastern Religions, avant garde music, art, films, literature.
7. Any or all of the above in combination with one other.\textsuperscript{95}

While Hamilton recognizes the ambivalence of fashion in the postmodern consumerist society, her article emphasizes the importance of decisions made by the cultural and fashion system arbiters that serve as persuasive devices for consumers when making their purchases. Since fashion garments, arguably, carry no meanings and are signifiers only of themselves, it is the arbiters who give them meaning through selling context and/or

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 167.
display. Moreover, the arbiters must always be aware of what will appeal to their consumer, to their niche of the market; otherwise they could suffer a loss in sales.

As Hamilton notes, a vehicle for retail sales is the television network QVC, which connects meaning to consumer goods by displaying the item and creating a ‘selling story’ about the product’s function and aesthetics. The consumer listens to the ‘selling story’ and begins to relate to the item. The item begins to have a meaning associated with it and the consumer feels the need to add the good to his/her collection. This collection of goods serves to establish an individual’s identity.\(^9\)

An example of how fashion system arbiters create contextual meaning to products would be Joan Rivers selling her jewelry on QVC. QVC and Joan Rivers are the fashion arbiters of her jewelry collection. QVC has a database of information about previous customers who have purchased her jewelry. The company also knows what previous scripted segments of their show sold the most jewelry. Therefore, when Joan Rivers is on QVC discussing her jewelry line, she may discuss the product referring to topics and the characteristics of her market niche. Also, when she is on the air, Joan Rivers listens and talks to callers who have previously bought her jewelry. These callers tell Rivers about their experiences with Joan River’s jewelry and how they wear it. The viewer who is watching may relate to Rivers, her jewelry, or the stories, as well as discussions she has had with the callers and other QVC employees on the air. The jewelry becomes signified through the selling context that is created around it. Without the context, the jewelry is less enticing for consumption.

\(^9\) Ibid., 168.
Debord’s Contextual Tyranny

In “Texture and Taboo: The Tyranny of Texture and Ease in the J.Crew Catalog,” Matthew Debord discusses the relevance of J.Crew’s re-invention of mail order catalog sales in the postmodern era. By creating retail catalogues that depict hyperreal lifestyles, J.Crew purposefully entices consumers to purchase basic products that they already probably own. According to Debord, the catalog has become a work of art that creates an aura of exclusiveness that allows consumers to shop from the privacy of their own home. The catalog has begun to create lifestyles that are fantasized and almost surreal. \(^97\)

While Debord’s study took place in 1997, the catalog continues to present models in fantasy settings creating a visually perceived relaxed attitude. What is significant about Debord’s contextual analysis is his ability to recognize a retailer’s talent to create meanings and fantasy associated with mass apparel for selling to consumers.

Debord takes an art critic’s view when discussing J.Crew’s contextual marketing techniques. He makes no qualms about his frustration with J.Crew’s manipulation of what he believes are disappointing and insignificant fashions. \(^98\) Moreover, he does not admire the company’s ability to generate revenue by creating total fantasy, lifestyle advertising.

Although Debord takes a negative view of J.Crew’s tactics, there are redeeming qualities. The clothing marketed in J.Crew’s catalog reflects mass fashion at its most practical. Reasonable prices and the classic styling and versatility of the garments means that they can virtually be worn until they wear out. The advertising strategy and lifestyle

\(^{97}\) Ibid., 263.
\(^{98}\) Matthew Debord, “Texture and Taboo,” 263.
stories within J.Crew’s catalogue most definitely reflect postmodern culture. The company creates meaning to their products through the branding technique of storytelling.

**Branding and Storytelling**

In their book, *Storytelling: Branding in Practice*, Klaus Fog, Christian Budtz and Baris Yakaboylu explain how advertising reflects the basic concept of storytelling. The authors state that branding is the goal of a company. Storytelling is the means for a company to create a brand through consumptions. The storytelling process relies on a company’s ability to emotionally brand products and build target markets. They believe a brand reaches full consumption potential when an emotional attachment to consumers is attained. These consumers (including employees of the brand) are able to understand the company’s values and messages. Storytelling is the vehicle that communicates these values in a process that is easy for the consumers to understand. Storytelling speaks to the emotions of the target market that in return, becomes loyal to the company.

According to the authors, storytelling is divided into four elements: the message, conflict, characters and plot. Advertising uses this same formula and is able to peak consumer interest while building associations to their products and creating emotional meaning. The authors use the example of the famous series of Nescafé Gold Blend commercials that aired for five years in London from 1987-1992! This ad campaign titled, *Love Over Gold*, features a young couple that never quite seems to be able to connect, meet, or be at the same place at the exact same time. However, they both have a

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100 Ibid., 23.
101 Ibid., 31.
love for Nescafé Gold Blend. The plot and sexual energy between the young man and woman suggest they are the perfect couple. Each commercial reveals a small part of the final plot. Eventually, the two bump into each other and sit down to enjoy a cup of Nescafé.

The Nescafé ad established an identity for the company, which propelled them toward a 60% market share increase in Nescafé Gold Blend coffee sales. The use of a storyline and association to the coffee gave the product context. This context creates a new meaning for the coffee that consumers could relate to and understand. Did the new context help to sell more coffee? My answer would be yes. By establishing a new framework, Nescafé was able to ascertain a place in the upscale coffee market. So storytelling created the brand recognition and desire; the new context allowed Nescafé to reinvent coffee, while the actual coffee itself was possibly indistinguishable from other brands.

**A Summary of Postmodern Advertising**

The concept of storytelling prevails in our current consumer society. The lines between reality and *hyperreality* are hard to distinguish as consumers are bombarded with *pastiche* of styles. The *fragmentation* of the market place and *de-differentiation* in culture creates confusion for consumers. Even time and *chronology* associated with products obscures the correct notions of a garment or products historical significance.

Retailers use these postmodern tactics in their advertisements in order to establish themselves as the *authentic* source of the product they are promoting. The brand strategy

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102 Ibid., 154-55.
103 Ibid., 155.
is one of building and surrounding products with a company’s own created context establishing these goods as part of their culture. The goal of the retailer is presenting products in a unique presentation. For the remainder of this chapter, I analyze Abercrombie & Fitch (A&F), a retailer notorious for using postmodern advertising techniques.

Reinventing Cargo Pants: Abercrombie & Fitch

Historically, Abercrombie and Fitch was known for its traditional outdoor, camping, and safari clothing for men and women. However, after being bought by The Limited Corporation in 1988, the company was reinvented reflecting a hyperreal image. The clothing was changed to target a younger and more fashion-oriented consumer. While the company continues to sell basic items such as cargo pants, khakis, T-shirts, sweaters, pea coats, baseball caps, and various other types of active wear, the ads selling these products after 1988 underwent a radical change from the “old” Abercrombie and Fitch image.

Youth obsessed marketing became a key vehicle for the new Abercrombie & Fitch to gain success in the retail market. In addition to a shift in their advertising campaign, the company redesigned the basic garments it sold. They re-designed them in worn and washed fabrications and refitted them in fashion silhouettes for a youth-oriented consumer. A T-shirt became, a muscle-fit T, while cargo pants were given the name, paratroops (which the company trademarks; figure C.1-C.2). Moreover, by attaching “A&F” patches on sweaters, pants, and denim garments, Abercrombie gained strong brand recognition.
In 1998 Abercrombie & Fitch separated from its parent company The Limited, to become an independent retailer. By 2006, the company was operating 356 stores, including its divisions: Abercrombie & Fitch, Abercrombie (kids), Hollister Co., and Ruehl (see their cargo shorts; C.3-C.4). In the company’s own words, they are the “Creator and Operator of Aspirational Lifestyle Brands.”\(^\text{104}\) The employees of the company pride themselves on having 100% control over stores, fashion design, sourcing, pricing and marketing. Abercrombie & Fitch believes it offers the consumer excellent quality, key trends, and it prides itself with the ability to sell products at full retail. The company continues to focus on first-rate price levels with its \textit{Ezra Fitch} line, which is a higher priced and better quality product reflecting Abercrombie’s “Casual Luxury” theme. The words “Casual Luxury” are new in the association to Abercrombie & Fitch’s brand and this phrase is employed in its current marketing campaign.\(^\text{105}\) The company has increased price points and has redefined its brand through its line of \textit{Ezra Fitch} A&F apparel (see their cargo shorts; figure C.5-C.6).

During the late 1990s, Abercrombie & Fitch’s marketing strategy gained momentum with promotions geared towards college coeds, the gay community, and other Abercrombie enthusiasts. The Abercrombie “\textit{magalog}” (as it was identified by the Wall  


\(^\text{105}\) Ibid.
Street Journal on July 29, 1997 the official word magalogue is used in all other publications) was popular and went beyond a mail order catalogue, evolving into a lifestyle guide for thousands of consumers.106

Although the publication was effective as a promotional device, many conservative activist groups protest the magalogue’s use of blatant group sex scenes and themes of homosexuality in order to sell Abercrombie items such as cargo pants and basic T’s. An article by David Reines titled, “All The Nudes That’s Fit to Print…”, cites A&F’s magalogue as sexually charged and reveals how the American Decency Association and other groups called for a national boycott of the retailer.107

Photography in the magalogue features largely hyperreal WASP youth posed in suggestive positions. The whiteness of the magalogue caused a stir in the national community. A book titled, Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch by Dwight A. McBride, the chair of the Department of African American Studies at Northwestern University, criticizes A&F for it’s mostly white models and horrible treatment of minority employees. His concerns focus on young African Americans whom he feels experience overall rejection by the brand because they lack the social “ideal” of whiteness.109

The A&F magalogue offers an excellent example of postmodern techniques applied to contemporary advertising: the pastiche style of the garments; the use of chronology to blur time and authenticity; and A&F’s ability to create fragmentation;

107 Dan Reines, All The Nudes That’s Fit to Print…, http://www.nerve.com.
tailoring their basic products to a specific market niche. The question of whether or not A&F purposely utilized postmodern marketing techniques is unquestionable. Marketing executives are educated on cultural eras and compose their campaigns to reflect contemporary ad strategies. Each advertising campaign is consciously constructed for maximum consumer impact. Moreover, companies similar to A&F hire established artists to create advertising masterpieces blurring the lines between fine art and applied or popular art.

A&F’s use of Bruce Weber to create a photographic work of art (de-differentiation) helped A&F to gain a casual luxury status in the retailing market. After all, by purchasing the magalogue, consumers were purchasing Bruce Weber artwork. Weber, the out and proud gay photographer, had shot ads for such luxury brands as Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein. Weber’s photos depicted sexy (usually half-naked) men. It must be recalled that it was Weber who photographed the controversial Calvin Klein denim ads in the 1980s.

During the late 1990s, the A&F magalogue was prominently displayed on bookshelves and coffee tables of homes in the gay community. Usually the magalogue was found among the other Bruce Weber or Robert Mapplethorpe homoerotic photography coffee table books.

From its first publication in 1995, until it ended 2003, the A&F magalogue featured cargo pants and shorts continuously in both photos and on models in layouts. The garments were stylized to a point beyond recognition through the application of tears and rips. Cargo styles were a staple in the A&F assortment, and the retailer was
identified as a key player and mass distributor of cargo pants.\textsuperscript{110} The overall style of each cargo pant and short was minimal, variations in color seemed to be the major difference; however, even those became repetitive (figures C.7-C.38). During the late 1990s owning a pair of A&F cargo pants or shorts was almost essential. As Greg Lindsay stated, “The Quarterly made Abercrombie’s name synonymous with a neo-preppy look found in its clothes and the all-American perfection of its models, but its edgy tone and imagery drove critics (and there were many) over the edge.”\textsuperscript{111} This suggests that it definitely was not the clothing that made A&F unique, but it’s advertising.

Interpreting Abercrombie & Fitch

Since Abercrombie is a key retailer responsible for the proliferation of cargo pants in mass fashion, two issues of the magalogue where chosen for analysis. These issues are “Back-to-School 1999” and “Summer of 2003.” In each periodical, I identify the number of cargo styles, or skus (stock keeping units that identify each cargo pant by color and style). By identifying these skus, the reader understands how crucial the sale of cargo garments was to A&F’s merchandise assortment. In addition, I interpret associations and meanings that illustrate how Abercrombie & Fitch builds its brand using the art of storytelling in order to create connections to their product. I critique both the visual presentation as well as the rhetorical usage. Semiotics allows for the analysis of

\textsuperscript{110} Structure, \textit{Back-To-School Actual} (Columbus, OH: The Limited Corporation, 2000), Fall Pages.
visual cues that are presented in each magalogue. By examining the visual stories of the magalogue and relationships to popular culture, a generalization about each magalogue’s themes can possibly be determined.

By examining themes that appear in each magalogue, I demonstrate how Abercrombie creates storytelling to reinvent a garment, in this case cargo pants. The company’s “selling” themes are developed for building associations to A&F’s cargo styled fashions, to generate sales, and increase the company’s brand recognition in the market. My listing of themes, both in figures and tables, allows the reader to see many of the possible links A&F uses to contextualize cargo pants. Major broad themes are given in order to give the reader a general idea of how context creates brand identity as it relates to cargo pants.

Magalogue I. Back-To-School 1999: “Innocents Abroad”

In the back-to-school magalogue, Abercrombie & Fitch builds connections to their product using the contextual themes of: Innocents Abroad, Curriculum/Academics and London Experiences. The number of cargo styles, connections to curriculum/academic lifestyle, and London are given in tables C.1-C.3. In each table, page numbers indicate where the visual story can be found in the magalogue. I follow a similar format when examining Magalogue II: Summer 2003.

There are thirty-one skus of cargo pants in this edition of the A&F magalogue. Each style and the number of color choices are listed in table C.1. There are nine styles for men and one style for women. The cargo pants are pictured throughout the magalogue. Also, each cargo pant is featured on a product information sheet dedicated to discussing the pant’s features, benefits and price (similarly to figures C.7-C.38). I have
noted the product information pages where the pants are located after each pant in the table. The average price of cargo pants during the 1999 selling season at A&F was approximately $59.50. Thirty-one cargo pant skus in one selling season reinforce my concept that A&F believed in the fashionability and marketability of this pant. And their successful sales in men’s pants that season reflect this notion.

The Innocents Abroad

While at first glance the reader may think this magalogue is a tribute to London. Abercrombie states their inspiration for the title was Mark Twain’s book, The Innocents Abroad. By making such claims, the marketers lay the groundwork for the magalogue’s satirical theme.

In the Introduction to the 2003 new edition of Twain’s book, Jane Jacobs stated that The Innocents Abroad was the most popular American travel book from 1869 until the 1960s. Anyone one who has read Twain’s book knows that instead of complimenting international travel, the book is sarcastic and humorous critique of Americans traveling abroad. Twain created satire on the ignorance of American travelers, who assume the United States is the only true sophisticated nation on the planet. If the reader of Twain’s book gets the satirical theme, they would realize Mark Twain was actually stating that not only are Americans innocent, but they are naive as well. This idea creates irony in Abercrombie & Fitch’s use of the title, Innocents Abroad. Does the company feel the British are inferior to Americans or is the company actually stating that their own American customers are truly the naive ones?

One only has to read the first paragraph of text that begins on page four to note A&F’s play on Mark Twain’s novel. It states:

In the grand American tradition of sticking our noses where they don’t belong, A&F’s taken a journey across the Atlantic to get to know our English cousins. With a population brimming with brain-hemorrhaged alcoholics and a culture more backwater than a Mississippi family reunion, there’s no better place to spend a semester. Where else can you score points with girls who are used to a life of kissing cavities, just by smiling?

Knowing that the only way to truly understand what it means to be an American is by spending time in another country, we’ve taken a cue from Mark Twain and done our own version of *The Innocents Abroad* to see if anything’s changed in the last 100 years. In a table-turning gesture of diplomacy rivaling a backstabbing royal cousin, we’ve done our best to counter the current “British invasion” that’s inundated our shores with such vital cultural signposts as uber-dork Robbie Williams and Tinky Winky, the first non-human fairy. We spent a little time in the city that never sees the sun and well, mostly partied. But we did come back with a clearer understanding of why the Puritans left in the first place.

What we learned was that ostensibly civilized U.K. suffers from a deep-seated inferiority complex rooted in the Revolutionary War loss of a couple of boxes Snapple. And that if being ignorant, uncultured Yankee means the best things we’ve got going for us are talk-show-fighting trailer trash and Colgate, well, call us proud to be American.

P.S. Remember, in England, not only are the drinks twice as strong, but they drive on the wrong side of the road, so be twice as careful and don’t drink and drive.113

The consumer who relates to A&F’s cleaver idea of using Mark Twain’s novel will delight in the company’s literary endeavor. However, I do not think the target market of many high school and college students that buy A&F brands products will comprehend the pun. Instead, the young target market will see themselves as *cool, hip and better than those* British people.

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Curriculum/Academics

The pages of the magalogue feature models wearing cargo pants in various areas of London (figure C.39). Placed between the fashion photos are articles and informational editorials discussing London, college life, historical, and current events. At the upper left and/or right hand corner on the first page of each editorial appear subject words such as: Anthropology, Advising, History, Biology, Physical Education, Literature, Economics, Urban Studies, Music, Athletics, Engineering, and Sociology. These thematic words suggest classes, majors and activities related to education, and the college curriculum. This list aided in the development of the second theme: curriculum/academics (table C.2).

In a section named, Biology, there is a short piece titled, “Doggy Style,” that describes different breeds of British dogs. Bulldogs, Rough Collies, English Setters, Pembroke Welsh Corgis, Greyhounds, Mastiffs, and Jack Russell Terriers are listed. However, the reference to doggy style in the context of A&F’s magalogue is suggestive of sexual positioning. Doggy style refers to a slang word for intercourse. This notion is reinforced at the end of this article where it states, “Writer Jeremy Johnson has been known to, on occasion, ‘give a dog a bone’. “114 Giving a dog a bone in contemporary slang semantics is again a reference to the idea of intercourse. To bone simply implies to fuck.

In an editorial given under the subject Anthropology, the author suggests the inferiority and unattractiveness of the British compared to Americans. The article titled,

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114 Ibid., 144-45.
“Rival Shores” (table C.2) compares *The American Student* to *The British Student*. Cartoon drawings depicting both students next to written descriptions of each character lay the groundwork for the critique. The American student has a great smile, blond hair, muscles, nice clothes, and rests his foot on a football. While, the British student has bucked-teeth, glasses, a lanky body, and sloppy clothes. His brief case appears disorganized with papers sticking out of it. Captions note that the American student has *minty* fresh smelling breath, while the British student has breath that smells like last week’s rubbish. The article regards American women as trimmed and shaved, while referring to British girls as *The Planet of the Apes*. Under the caption for bathing, readers are told that American’s bathe daily while the British bathe at most “once a fortnight.”

Also, in a themed subject title on *Sociology*, A&F invites readers to a garden party at Syon House, the estate home of the Duke of Northumberland. This Bruce Weber fashion spread features a Queen Elizabeth impersonator and shows most of the young models wearing cargo pants (figure C.39-C.40).

The pictorial story of the garden party evolves into *rave* (a wild party that frequently changes its location). Throughout this visual story, the photos feature young men and women drinking wine, dancing and partying. The Queen Elizabeth impersonator joins the party by holding a skateboard (figure C.40), dancing with the teens, and riding on the shoulders of young men. Her actions depict the icon of Queen Elizabeth behaving in a manner inappropriate of the *real* monarch. This depiction of the

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115 Ibid., 47.
116 Ibid., 316-35.
queen “letting it all hang out” suggests how, in reality, she is uptight. By portraying the impersonator in a manner that is in opposition to the real queen, A&F creates a hyperreality of her highness. This hyperreality creates a context and desire for both the lifestyle and the clothing pictured in the photo. These fantasies continue in other A&F pictorials in the magalogue that feature London.

The party at Syon House reflects storytelling and is an example of Hamilton’s cultural and fashion system arbiters at work. In this story we see “major events/phenomena in the cultural system that influence fashion system participants and institutions, as well as, individual consumers.” By displaying the icon, Queen Elizabeth, and making references to the current party trends, e.g., raves, A&F builds associations for their branded products in the photos.

London Experiences

Table C.3, outlines what I call London Experiences. Throughout this magalogue, A&F presents pictorial stories of events and things to do in London. The retailer gives all the events a title that is written across the photos in red letters. Figure C.41 shows a photo from the London Experience Trafalgar Square London 1999 with Fred, Stuart and Greg.

Other London Experiences relate to the three sporting events: a rugby game, a boxing tournament, and a regatta (table C.3). In each of these events, British and Americans are competing against each other. Besides the “us versus them” theme, A&F depicts the visual presentation of Americans in contrast to the British. For example, in

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the photos of the Rugby game, A&F presents the Americans with neat clothes, trimmed hair, and tanned bodies (figure C.42). They present the British with torn clothing, pale, and with messy hair (figure C.43).

Moreover, a light and dark contrast between the photos of the wholesome Americans and shabby British almost denotes a theme of good vs. bad. The American team’s brightness and the British team’s dim tattered look exhibit distinctiveness not easy to miss. The American team is pictured in brighter clothing as opposed to the darker garments of the British players. Historically, the good boys are shown in bright clean clothes, while bad boys have been shown in dark, dirty and torn clothes. This visual presentation of light/dark or good/bad enforces the theme of American’s (good) supremacy over the British (bad). By this contrast, A&F suggests wholesome qualities of Americans while portraying British as dark-sided. This portrays Americans as the good boys and the British as bad boys.

**Magalogue 2. A&F Quarterly Presents…Summer 2003**

The summer 2003 A&F quarterly titled, “A&F Quarterly Presents…” represents the company’s attempt to tie sex, cinema, and celebrities to their brand. Table C.4 denotes all the cargo items A&F chose to market in the Summer 2003 magalogue. By marketing four cargo short styles for men and twelve varied women’s bottoms with over seventy-four skus to choose from, it is clear the merchandise assortment was meant to have a cargo feel. This inventory investment for A&F with millions in net sales is truly an indication that the company forecasted cargo product as a volume driver.

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The three major themes that are clearly identified are: Cinema, Nudity, and Celebrities. By connecting their brand to these themes, A&F strategize to build consumers’ connections to their brand, thereby gaining revenue and sales.

**Cinema**

On the first inside page of the A&F Summer 2003 magalog, the reader views a small town movie theater with a neon kiosk that reads, “A&F Presents Summer 2003.” There are also movie titles indicating triple features of “How The West Went Wild,” “A Freshman’s Story,” and “Earth Women Wanted.” On the next page, the consumer views script similar to the opening sequence of a Star Wars movie:

A short time ago, at a mall near you…A&F Quarterly Episode Twenty-Four: Promising ‘more stars than there are in heaven,” Abercrombie & Fitch introduces our very own star-studded stable of contract players, shining bright in our unique brand of feature productions. Charge into battle with THE FORBIDDEN WARRIORS, discover THE SECRET OF THE LOST JUNGLE, and saddle up and learn HOW THE WEST WENT WILD, get caught in the WEB OF HORROR, feel the passion IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE, get abducted by MARTIANS IN HEAT, play with SUMMER BOYS, rock’n’roll with the YOUNG REBELS ON THE RUN, feel the chill of THE VAMPIRE’S KISS and unleash your raw libido in AMANDA NEEDS IT NOW! While you’re at it, take a look at our preview X2, bask in the powers of Stan Lee, give some respect to Rodney Dangerfield and let it all hang out with Robbie Williams…

By using a Star Wars themed entrance, A&F builds momentum for their brand. No one can argue the cultural significance of Star Wars in western-European culture. This approach allows A&F to make a connection not only to Generation Y but Generation X as well. Both generations appreciate the Star Wars sagas and identify with Paramount’s techniques for opening each episode. Moreover, the discourse in A&F’s Star Wars

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themed entrance features easily identifiable popular culture icons (Stan Lee, Rodney Dangerfield and Robbie Williams). A&F’s grandioso entrance into this issue of the magalogue prepares the consumer for the greatness of their products.

Following this theatrical entrance, the consumer is taken through the storyline of each A&F dramatic movie production. Table C.4 highlights all the various types of cinema genres as well as the A&F film titles. Each film storyline connects the A&F brand to a new selling story for each product. The photos reveal models half-clad in a combination of thematic clothing representative of the film type, as well as in A&F garments. A&F creates a pastiche by displaying their garments with various forms of other cinematic clothing and by mixing their brand amongst every type of film genre (figures C.44-C.46).

In nearly every cinematic genre utilized in the magalogue, either a male or female model displays cargo-shorts or pants. In the two genres suggestive of pornography titled, “Summer Boys2” and “Amanda Needs It Now,” models are nude. By connecting themes of action, horror, romance, science fiction, drama and pornography to their brand, A&F builds connections to various consumers target market niches that may relate to the selling scenarios.

**Nudity**

Nudity and sexual connotations are predominant throughout this entire magalogue. Table C.6 illustrates the various sexual contexts present in the magalogue. I separate them into the following categories: one nude male, one nude female, nude male/nude female, nude male/nude male, group of nude bodies, and nude human with
other. In this edition, there are no nude female/nude female photographic combinations. Most models are Caucasian with the exception of a few ethnic men in “The Forbidden Warriors” (Figure C.44) and alien beings in “Martians in Heat.”

A&F’s use of sex allows the publication to be read as a type of *kiddy porn*. The use of naked bodies in various situations with casual sexual partners suggests the company’s values towards sexual freedom. By tying these values to their cargo styled clothing, the garments gain sexual charge. The following serve as examples: a man topless while wearing cargo shorts (figure C.44); erotic vampire fantasy while shirtless wearing *camo*-cargos (figure C.45); or completely nude holding cargo shorts in hand (figure C.46).

**Celebrities**

The last third of A&F’s Summer 2003 Quarterly is dedicated to celebrity interviews. These interviews are in the same style as most magazine interviews. The questions are in bold type with responses by the interviewees’ afterwards. The interviews focus specifically on each celebrity’s achievements and do not endorse the A&F brand. However, because the interviews are in the A&F magalogue they become attached to the brand discourse. The interviewees include a list of high profile individuals (table C.7) working on big productions during the summer and fall of 2003. Each interview seems to be a “personal pitch” for the consumer to either go to a movie or buy a consumer product such as a book or CD.

Each of these interviewees becomes a spokes person for A&F’s target markets. All the interviewees relate to college coeds, gays or female shoppers. Since each celebrity represents their “personal brand”, for example, Megan Mullally as Karen
Walker on *Will and Grace* (a show that relates to gays and lesbians), A&F is able to indirectly position their brand within the context of each celebrity’s show. This aids A&F’s ability to extend its brand suggesting A&F is the “clothing of choice” most likely to appeal to people who enjoy the celebrities’ shows.

**Erotic Triangles, The Vampyre’s Kiss and The Male Objectified:**
**Interpreting A&F’s Visual Presentation of Cargo Styles**

It is important to indicate how the cargo assortment at A&F evolved from the 1999 selling season to summer 2003. The cargo skus in the 1999 issue of A&F’s magalogue are 31 skus (table C.1), where as the 2003 edition has 74 skus (table C.4). The increase of 238% in the number of cargo styles from 1999-2003 indicates that cargo pants and shorts *were* a crucial product category for company sales and that this pant was a key fashion component. Also, the reader will note that the emphasis of *cargo fashion* shifts from a predominant men’s in 1999 to a women’s category in 2003. This suggests that cargo styles became more important for women’s fashion during the spring 2003 selling season.

Each model in figures C.39, C.40, C.44, C.45, and C.46 demonstrates A&F’s ability to manipulate cargo pants and shorts into various ‘mini narratives’ and stories. Below, I focus on the visual presentation of cargo styles in each of these figures to show how each creates a meaning (signifier) for the cargo styles (signified).

**Figures C.39 and C.40: Erotic Triangles**

Figure C.39 features three individuals, two male and one female. One male and the female in the photo wear cargo pants. The female sports a dark fringe top with hip hugging cargo pants. Her stylized cargo pants with rips on the bottom seam,
complements her black flat shoes. The male figure displays his cargo pants with a long sleeve T-shirt under a military styled top. His accessories are a knit cap and court sneakers. The casual appearance of both figures suggests a relaxed, hip and casual lifestyle.

The props and setting of this photo allude to possible storylines. The props are: the non-cargo male figure, the dog, and the set of headphones on the cargo male figure. With a Welsh Corgis, the non-cargo male figure crouches on the ground. He appears to signify a traditional student - the studious type with a backpack and conservative appearance. The Welsh Corgis signifies commitment and the responsibility of pet ownership. He is the nice boy-scout guy; his counterpart wears a set of headphones. The headphones on the other male figure allude to music that represents fun, parties and DJ’ing. The female figure bridges the two male figures. She possibly denotes a neutral zone between a good student (male crouched on ground) and party student (male with headphones). This context displays a setting for cargo pants that implies how they can be worn in an individualized manner by both male and female consumers, as well as, by different types of students.

Figure C.40 features a Queen Elizabeth impersonator and 3 young male figures. In the photo, two of the male figures wear cargo pants. The other male figure hides behind the Elizabeth impersonator. The three male figures appear very casual, layered in A&F branded ensembles.

In this photo, the hyperreal Queen Elizabeth stands in the center of the photo with a formal dress, tiara, and sash. The queen holds a skateboard in her hand. There are two Welsh Corgis on each side of her that resemble two big hairy balls of fur. The spatial
placement of the queen and the two dogs suggests a visual phallic symbol. This visual phallus could also be viewed as homoerotic. The center of the phallus is a *queen*. The term *queen* refers to a royal leader but also suggest the slang term for a gay male. A pun usually understood by a homosexual and those who understand the signs of gay culture. This *double entendre* creates an ironic context, and yet, quite simple *to read*. The two male figures behind the *queen* who seem to be resting upon each other reinforce notions of homoeroticism.

Both photos (figure C.39 and C.40) present male and female models in a triangular type of relationship. Queer cultural theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, argues that visual presentation of bodies in a triangular shape lead the viewer to erotic thoughts. According to Sedgwick, “The triangle is useful as a figure by which our “commonsense” of intellectual tradition schematics erotic relations, allows us to condense into a juxtaposition with the folk-perception of several somewhat different streams of recent thought.”120 Sedgwick believes, culturally, we *look* at the triangulation of photographic images (male, female, etc…) and in viewing, create erotic relationships. This suggests that the triangulation of individuals in these A&F advertisements may have been carefully constructed to create a scenario in a viewer’s mind.

If we examine triangulation using Jean Hamilton’s study, these photos reflect her ideas of MACRO fashion context forming from the creative processes of designers and product developers. The MACRO system arbiters dictate and create the direction of the retail company’s fashion using collective data on advertising trends and the market niche.

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The leaders in advertising who know how to create fashion marketing using industry statistics create these ads. Moreover, these photographs are by Bruce Weber, therefore we can only assume that his intentions are deliberate. As an open homosexual, his photos come from the perspective the “gay’s gaze.” The eroticism of his photos naturally reflects his world-view and distinctive taste. While the photos are extremely tasteful and professional, allusions to homosexual eroticism are easily noted.

**Figure C.45: The Vampyre’s Kiss**

Figure C.45 glamorizes the eroticism of vampires. The shirtless male vampire wears his camouflage cargo shorts accessorized with a spike black belt. He appears to have been awakened from his coffin by the female character. He attacks a female dressed in a body suit, fishnet tights, cape and fingerless gloves. She seductively awaits the bite of the vampire while pressing her hands against his perfect airbrushed abs. While this photo emphasizes the traditional eroticism between men and women, it reinforces the ideals of male domination over female victims. The female’s passive body position in comparison to the male figure is recognizable. He overtakes her with his muscular body emphasized by his muscular abdominals.

However, this photo also suggests a *double entendre*. The vampire in the photo seems to be dominating his female victim, however, we (the viewers) are allowed to visually objectify the shirtless vampire. If this photo were targeted for a straight male

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audience, then the male vampire would appear completely clothed. Bruce Weber’s “gay’s gaze” focus on the male physique creates desire in some readers for this A&F image. This idea of male objectification continues with figures C.12 and C.14.

**Figures C.44 and C.46: The Male Objectified**

In figure C.44, we view a single male figure from the A&F Summer 2003 magalogue. He wears cargo shorts, a belt, and accessories suggestive of an ancient, primitive, gladiator and/or native context. This male is a forbidden warrior according to A&F, and wears leather cuffs, a shearling wrap and carries a spear.

*The Forbidden Warriors* is the only film genre where there is an ethnic male figure. Moreover, this ethnic male is presented as a forbidden warrior. This forbidden status suggests that ethnic men are less evolved than their white counterparts. This model only appears in one other photo in this entire magalogue. Another photo depicts him again as a forbidden warrior on page 24 with a hood covering his head. By placing him in the context of a forbidden warrior and dressing him in a native cargo context, A&F reinforces notions of white supremacy amongst their target niche.

E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson in their book *Black Queer Studies* reveal that when black men are presented visually in the media, they are usually stereotyped or given less visual importance than their white counterparts. These authors argue that even the gay communities that pride themselves on non-discriminatory attitudes, place visual priority on white male bodies.¹²² The A&F summer 2003 magalogue’s use of predominantly white models reinforces this idea.

Finally in figure C.46, we see more objectification of the male figure in fashion advertising. This photo again reinforces the homoerotic nature of A&F’s magalogue. The male is the central theme of this photo. He stands in the center completely naked holding a pair of camouflage cargo shorts.

A viewer may find his placement in the photo alluding to sexual deviance. This character is coming out of his closet. By showing a naked male literally “coming out of the closet,” the photograph reinforces the significance of coming out. As most people know, the phrase, coming out, is a common act among gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and queers when announcing their sexuality to family, friends and the community. While some consumers may not recognize the location of the male figure, others may understand this double entendre. Still others may just appreciate his body and appearance. However, those who understand, coming out, may relate to A&F, and decide to purchase their cargo shorts thinking that the company is cool and hip with sexual minorities.

Summary

As Hamilton, Debord, Fog, Budtz, and Yakaboylu discuss in their studies, fashion is about consumers viewing a retailer’s visual marketing presentation- relating to the product or the context and/or lifestyle presentation- and buying the product according to their own personal tastes. In this chapter, I have become the interpreter of signs, suggesting possible readings of A&F advertising, and relating these meanings to the product cargo pants.
A&F’s Quarterly signifies the icons cargo pants and shorts. They are contextually displayed in various scenarios, while the garments become ambivalent in each of these settings; the models and photography represent the primary points-of-interest. The garments seem to exist primarily as theatrical props.

It is imperative to examine how A&F’s positions garments in their marketing, primarily because the “marketing narratives” create perceptions of garments’ importance in the minds of consumers. These marketing campaigns create hyperreal histories, suggesting trends in popular culture, thus leading insight into ideas of how cargo pants are worn and used in the social world market.

The college coeds, gay men and other A&F enthusiasts will possibly connect their personal history of cargo shorts and pants to A&F for the rest of their lives. Also, these consumers’ view of cargo pants may be based on the experiences they had with the A&F product or the marketing strategies that inspired their purchasing decision.

While the primary interest of retailers such as Abercrombie & Fitch is to make money and have their brands worn by consumers, their fashion ads impact how consumers view and understand popular and mass fashion. The macro arbiters of fashion decide how consumers are going to see garments such as cargo pants from one selling season to the next. Since 1988, A&F has associated cargo style to youth culture and other areas of popular culture in the advertising campaigns. These ads could impact how youth and various other groups understand the origin or history of cargo pants, thus carrying these ideas with them for the rest of their lives. A&F has created a context associated with youthful imagery to sell cargo pants to their target markets.
In the next chapter, I examine how a designer name changes the target market of a cargo pant, allowing this pant to be sold in the luxury market. The major question asked is, how are cargo pants sold at luxury designer specialty boutiques commanding prices in the hundreds of dollars?
CHAPTER 4

“WHAT’S IN A NAME?”
THE BRANDING OF RALPH LAUREN’S CARGO PANTS

In Chapter 3, I examined the idea that A&F can manipulate and recreate a mass fashion garment through branding context. Now I ask, how does a garment such as a cargo pant not only change contextually, but also inherently through associations to the luxury fashion market? Can a designer name like Ralph Lauren take a functional garment that was once used for wartime, and reinvent it into a luxury garment worn for leisure? Moreover, how does this designer charge prices like $565.00 for a pair of his cargo pants? As stated, the hyperreal context dependency of cargo pants not only affects sales of the garment, but also the conceptual reality of the garment in the eyes of consumers. Therefore, a garment such as a cargo pant becomes dependent upon the designer’s name and image in order to reflect a new image.

In this chapter, I examine the definition of luxury by presenting Arianna Brioschi’s empirical analysis on emergent themes in luxury and brand advertising.123

Next, I relate these themes to show how Ralph Lauren has established himself as a luxury

designer. Then, I illustrate how the luxury market has grown by discussing two models of luxury branding from Jean Kapferer’s recent article, “The Two Business Cultures of Luxury Brands.” In her article, she suggests that retailers have the ability to create a desire for luxury goods through a process called mass-tige.124

According to Kapferer, the process of mass-tige allows luxury designers to expand their market share.125 Mass-tige includes: a luxury designer’s product development, merchandising, and marketing allowing them to reinvent traditional garments into newly branded luxury styles. I define the process of transforming non-luxury goods into luxury goods as luxurification. To illustrate luxurification, I relate Kapferer’s two models to Ralph Lauren’s merchandising techniques demonstrating how he has reinvented the utilitarian cargo pant into luxury fashion.

From a brand strategy perspective, I present photos of Lauren’s designer cargo pants discussing how the garments reflect a cargo style. I also demonstrate how Ralph Lauren’s cargo pants are dependent upon his designer status. Without his brand context each cargo pant loses its luxury status. This supports the idea that Ralph Lauren himself is the signifier of his brand. Since his brand exemplifies luxury, consumers who purchase cargo pants from Ralph Lauren may also be purchasing a perceived lifestyle image. As shown in the previous chapter, A&F’s advertising context is key for building new meanings for their cargo pants. In this chapter, a designer becomes the link for moving

125 Ibid., 71.
products into different social classes. Theoretical concepts surrounding the process of luxury branding are used to reinforce an actual brand analysis of cargo pants linking brand theory to an application of brand strategy.

The Construction of Luxury Branding

Luxury fashion brands are in demand and the competition between them is fierce! Consumers, both domestically and internationally cannot seem to get enough high-end products such as: designer handbags, fragrance, cosmetics, shoes, watches, accessories and clothing. With retailers competing for consumer dollars, product differentiation, design, and merchandising become crucial elements for building sales in the luxury market. Cargo pants have become a player in this field of luxury products that demand prices in the hundreds of dollars. With cargo styles from designer brands such as: Giorgio Armani’s AX at $88.00 (figures D.1-D.4), Donna Karan’s DKNY line at $125.00 (figures D.5-D.8), as well as, retail brands like Diesel at $100.00 (figures D.9-D.10), and Energie’s Men’s Capri Godzilla Cargo Shorts at $112.00 (figures D.11-D.12) all competing in the trend luxury market, product differentiation becomes crucial for sales and survival.

Defining Luxury

What is luxury? And how do these luxury products evolve? According to Jean

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Noel Kapferer, the term *luxury* needs to be defined through economic, semiotic, sociological and psychological terminology. This conceptual approach allows for a complete definition of how luxury impacts and evolves in our culture.

In economic terms, luxury items have the highest price/quality relationship in the market. The economic standards of luxury products have been enculturated into material culture. These are goods known for their reputation, superior workmanship, long lasting quality, and image. These items maintain market share because consumers feel that these products retain their worth and appreciate in value. Examples include: Faberge eggs, fur coats, Rolex watches, and family heirlooms.

When considering semiotic analysis, the origin of the word, *luxury*, comes from agriculture, *luxus*, which means growing apart, or in a non-straight manner. According to Kapferer, “a root of this word is found in *luxatio*: you catch an ankle *luxatio* if you step aside too briskly. *Luxus* is a difference, a step aside from the usual conventions, while *luxuriance* means something characterizing richness and extravagance, often tending to excess (*Webster’s Dictionary*).”

In this vein, the sociological definition of luxury stems from the aristocracy and the development of social classes. Rare objects belonging to the upper class are considered more desirable and fashionable. Fashions, jewelry, home furnishing and art

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128 Ibid., 68.
129 Ibid.
define wealth and class. Luxury becomes a product and something that is owned by the elite. According to this disciplinary approach, luxury means difference, uniqueness or rarity.

**Luxury Codes**

How we perceive luxury is cultural. Luxury brands are conceptual through recognition and product promotion. Whether it is high-end or low-end fashion, the goal is to create *desire* for items in order to sell them to consumers. According to Mark Tungate in his book, *Fashion Brands: Branding Style from Armani to Zara*, the fashion industry is completely built on its ability to generate *desire* for products, after all most consumers don’t *need* a new Armani jacket. We want to purchase based upon a desire to buy. The game of fashion branders is to create the desire for products. A game that is even tougher in the luxury market. Tungate suggests luxury goods require specific themes, models, advertisements, and a designer’s image to identify them as luxury products.  

The psychology of luxury brands relies on the individual’s interpretation of culturally identified codes and themes. In her article titled, *Selling Dreams: The Role of Advertising in Shaping Luxury Brand Meaning*, Arianna Brioschi identifies codes associated with luxury products from over 200 advertisements. Her descriptions of these codes is as follows:

1. *Veblen code* (conspicuous, display, showing off, comparison, status, jewelry, gems, gold, wealth, richness, abundance)

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130 Ibid., 69.
133 Arianna Brioschi, “Selling Dreams,” 199.
2. **Snob code** (scarcity, exclusivity, few distribution points, limited edition, different from the masses, standing out, distinction, dandy, aristocratic, elite sports, refinement, black tie)
3. **Quality/functionality code** (manufacturing, utility, functions, applications, workings, handmade, raw materials)
4. **Emotion/hedonism/experimental code** (feelings, pleasure, enjoyment, desire, satisfaction, relaxation, excitement, sentiments, love, magic, the five senses-taste, sight, smell, listening, touching)
5. **Aesthetic/artistic code** (elegance, attractiveness, beauty, refinement, harmony, design, artistic disciplines, show-biz, museums, paintings, art)
6. **Tradition code** (tradition, old times, mature men/women, time passing, history, classic, discretion, father and son)
7. **Modern/fashion code** (contemporary, up-to-date, trendy)
8. **Country-of-origin code** (made in, use of foreign languages).

Next, Brioschi developed themes associated to her codes. She suggests the location of the product in luxury marketing and merchandising represents a large portion of the appeal. She identifies the following locations or as she calls them, *settings*, as:

1. **Status references** (caviar, cigar, swimming pool, tuxedo, Martini cocktail, chaise lounge, pool table, coupe sportscar, sailing boats, finely dressed table, precious earrings, gala evening in the background, Sony Aibo, exotic landscape, oil paintings);
2. **Quality references** (mechanisms, craftsman in his workshop) that are almost exclusively used in watches advertisements;
3. **Art references** (Tamara Lempicka painting, Japanese garden background, Duca d’Urbino etching, Botticelli’s *Primavera* painting, Japanese dress, Art Deco interior);
4. **Famous Cities** (Venice Canal, New York skyline, Ville de Paris, Paris boulevard);
5. **Gift-giving references** (Christmas tree, gift box, perfume box);
6. **Racing/freedom references** (vintage racing car, F1 racing cars, Mille Miglia racing car, Biplane, navigation map, albatross, America’s Cup).

According to Brioschi, luxury designers can attribute their products to all of these thematic *settings* or use specific ones that reflect their brand. However, Brioschi states that the most important brand strategy for luxury fashion is the use of an established

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134 Ibid., 200-01.
135 Ibid., 201.
insignia as a method for setting or establishing the brand. The insignia is the cornerstone of the brand’s business. Both Brioschi and Kapferer reference historical and current settings of luxury fashions to create the culture of luxury products and associations to lifestyles.

Teri Agins in her book, *The End of Fashion*, also suggests that settings are very important for sales growth in the retail market. Although this strategy is being utilized extensively throughout the retail market, Teri Agins development of the term, *lifestyle merchandising*,\(^{137}\) reminds us that the concept is relatively new. Her notion of *lifestyle merchandising* suggests that products are connected to a way of living via visual presentation and in-store merchandising. Agins recognizes Ralph Lauren as the king of *lifestyle merchandising* due to the simple fact that Lauren has built his empire on in-store shops and image, not his ability to design. After all, Ralph Lauren is a merchant, not a designer; however, the archetype of his persona gives consumers a perception that he, in fact, actually is a fashion designer, not an image consultant or brand marketing manager.

Ralph Lauren merchandises his products by creating visual spectacle and lifestyle merchandising. Both Lauren and his design staff associate settings and props from material culture that historically have symbolized luxury to Lauren’s product lines in order to generate new luxury goods. Ralph Lauren’s use of the word *Polo* is ingenious because it associates his brand to a luxury sport. His establishment as a designer was

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 207.
through the name *Polo*. Because the name of his line was developed *prior* to the
clothing, this suggests that his brand’s marketing strategy had precedence to the actual
clothing.\[^{138}\]

A Business History of Ralph Lauren

The biography of Ralph Lauren almost seems like a component of his brand. His personal story reflects a young man who was both extremely fashionable and an excellent sportsman. There is only one authorized biography completely dedicated to the story of Ralph Lauren. Colin McDowell’s book, *Ralph Lauren: The Man, the Vision, the Style* makes his subject a hero. Ralph Lauren was born October 14, 1939. He was born the son of a Russian Jewish immigrant. His real name was Ralph Lifshitz, but he and his brothers had their names changed to Lauren. According to McDowell, Ralph Lauren had a normal childhood, with a modest upbringing. Ralph grew up in the Bronx, New York, and lived with his parents in a two room, one thousand square foot apartment.\[^{139}\]

Young Ralph Lauren wore the hand-me-down clothes of his two older brothers, Jerry and Lenny. He became accustomed to the worn look of the apparel and eventually enjoyed the style of the clothes. This form of dressing would become his signature look. He purchased clothes from Army-Navy surplus, Alexander’s Discount Store, and Discount of the Day.\[^{140}\] Ralph enjoyed these clothes because he knew no one else would own them. According to his friends, his personal appearance became his obsession.\[^{141}\]

\[^{138}\] Colin McDowell, *Ralph Lauren: The Man, the Vision, the Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003), 27.
\[^{139}\] Ibid., 9-13.
\[^{140}\] Ibid., 15.
\[^{141}\] Ibid., 17.
Ralph Lauren never finished college, however he did attend City College for two years. After attaining a position at Brooks Brothers in the late 1950s, he served in the army.\(^{142}\) In 1964, at age 25, Ralph Lauren took a position with the Boston-based tie manufacturer, Rivetz. While Lauren was an average salesman, his appearance management was extraordinary.\(^{143}\) He believed by dressing in a unique style, he would be remembered in the manufacturing business. He utilized self-projection as a way to stand above his peers and get attention from clients. And it worked!\(^{144}\)

In 1967, Beau Brummel, the Cincinnati based tie firm gave Ralph Lauren his first chance to launch his own line of ties. Lauren’s concept was to sell wider ties with a larger knot at the top. During a time when ties were only two-to-three inches, his ties were four inches. He also catered to a more expensive market, selling ties for $7.50-$15.00 when most ties were $2.00 to $5.00.\(^{145}\) Ralph Lauren wanted his line to have a sporty name. After deciding the image his ties should have, he decided on *Polo*.\(^{146}\)

Both *Daily News Record* and *Playboy* featured Ralph Lauren’s new ties. His luxury brand was born when the buyers from Bloomingdale’s, as well as other high-end retailers, bought his higher priced ties. In 1968 and 1969, Ralph Lauren expanded his Polo line to include menswear. He also opened the first shop-within-a-shop for his collection at Bloomingdale’s in New York City.\(^{147}\) Voila, a luxury product was born!

\(^{142}\) Ibid., 19.
\(^{143}\) Ibid., 20.
\(^{144}\) Ibid., 21.
\(^{145}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{146}\) Ibid., 27.
\(^{147}\) Ibid., 29.
In 1970, Ralph Lauren won the Coty Award for menswear. And in 1971, he established a line of tailored shirts for women, based on the cut of men’s suits. That same year, he debuted the Ralph Lauren women’s shop-within-a-shop in Bloomingdale’s and introduced the Polo player logo on his product lines. Also, Lauren opened his first freestanding Polo store in Beverly Hills. The logo Polo shirt was introduced in twenty-four colors in 1972. The marketing campaign stated, “Every team has its color-Polo has 24.”

Ralph Lauren hosted his first women’s fashion show during this campaign. During this time, Ralph Lauren was sold in exclusive stores such as Bloomingdale’s, Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue.

In 1974, Ralph Lauren’s design style went worldwide by being used in the movie *The Great Gatsby*, starring Robert Redford and Mia Farrow. With the exception of one pink suit, all of the garments came from the Polo line at that time. The next year Lauren received The American Fashion Award. In 1976, he received the Coty Award for womenswear as well as induction into the Coty Hall of Fame for menswear. Ralph Lauren then provided clothes for Diane Keaton in the movie *Annie Hall*. With the launch of this film, a trend for eclectic combinations such as classics with vintage styles, became popular with men and women’s clothing.

In 1978, Ralph Lauren launched Western wear that exemplified an authentic Western look. Colin McDowell states, it “hailed (Lauren) as the man who ‘recaptured’ America for America and it rebuffs the erroneous impression that Ralph Lauren’s fashion

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148 Ibid., 202.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
is too British."\textsuperscript{151} That same year Ralph Lauren launched his new fragrances- Lauren for women and Polo for men- and was noted as the first designer to introduce both a man and woman’s fragrance at the same time.

In 1979, Lauren redefined his image by sponsoring a unique 20-page marketing campaign that appeared in national magazines. “The ads featured little or no text, frequently using non-models, in which the clothes are seen as part of an over-all lifestyle. The results, almost cinematic in breadth, captured the public imagination and have been frequently recopied.”\textsuperscript{152}

From 1980-1985, Ralph Lauren released his Santa Fe collection that was recognized by the international community as a monumental contribution to the world of fashion. He opened his London based Polo shop on Bond Street becoming the first American designer to have his own European boutique. He also opened twenty-eight other retail stores internationally. During this time, Ralph Lauren became the first designer to create a home products line.\textsuperscript{153} In 1986, Ralph Lauren opened his flagship store in the old Rhinelander mansion located on Madison Avenue at 72\textsuperscript{nd} street. He also became recognized in Paris by opening the first Ralph Lauren boutique.

During the 1990s, his empire grew as Ralph launched his new fragrance, Safari, for both men and women. This fragrance won the coveted Fi Fi Fragrance Star of the Year for two years! It was the first fragrance that debuted with a range of accessories and

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
home furnishing to complement it. The next year, Ralph Lauren was given the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) Lifetime Achievement Award. Following this, Ralph Lauren opened the first Polo Sport Store at 888 Madison across the street from the Rhinelander store. Polo Sport appointed an official outfitter to the American team for the America’s Cup.\textsuperscript{154}

Ralph Lauren Purple Label debuted in 1994, with an exclusive range of men’s tailored clothing. It was the first advertising campaign where Ralph Lauren appeared as the featured model. During 1996, Ralph Lauren introduced Polo Sport line for women. Using the Polo Sport fragrance line, Ralph Lauren sponsored the Polo Sport \textit{Race to Deliver} that raised money for the charitable organization, God’s Love We Deliver, that provided hot meals for housebound people with AIDS/HIV.\textsuperscript{155}

That same year, Ralph Lauren introduced Polo Sport Women and won the Fi Fi Award for Best National Advertising Campaign. Also, Polo Jeans Co, a line of casual wear for the young, was launched. Ralph Lauren received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Brandeis University for his commitment to arts and education, and his support for breast cancer campaigns. Presented by Diana, Princess of Wales, Ralph Lauren received the first Humanitarian Award from the Nina Hyde Center for Breast Cancer.\textsuperscript{156}

In 1997, Ralph Lauren received the CDFA 1996 Menswear Designer of the Year Award. Polo Ralph Lauren became a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange that same year. And in 1998, Ralph Lauren fragrance, Romance, was launched.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Awarded Fi Fi Fragrance Star of the Year and Fi Fi for best National Advertising Campaign, Ralph Lauren announced a corporate gift of $13 million for the Save America’s Treasures Campaign to preserve the Star Spangled Banner.

Again in 1997, Polo Sport launched RLX range, authentic high-tech sports clothing. Polo Sport RLX sponsored the U.S. World Cup mountain bike team. In 1999, the Ralph Lauren Fragrance, Romance for Men, was launched and won the Fi Fi Fragrance Star of the Year and Fi Fi for the Best National Advertising Campaign. Ralph Lauren Restaurant opened adjacent to Lauren’s Chicago flagship store- currently the largest Polo store in the world. In 1999, Polo Ralph Lauren acquired Club Monaco.\textsuperscript{157}

Finally, in 2000 Polo.com was launched by Ralph Lauren Media- a Voluntary program to build connections between Polo Ralph Lauren employees and their local communities. It donated $6 million to establish The Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention at North General Hospital, Harlem. At the same time, Polo Ralph Lauren launched the Pink Pony campaign, which raised awareness of the need for cancer care. In 2001, Ralph Lauren was inducted into the first Fashion Walk of Fame. And in 2002, Ralph Lauren established The American Heroes Fund in the wake of the World Trade Center attack on September 11\textsuperscript{th} 2001.\textsuperscript{158} In 2003, Ralph Lauren launched the Create Your Own Polo line on his website as well as his own online magazine called, Polo.com Magazine.

Lately, Ralph Lauren co-authored a book entitled, \textit{Speed, Style, and Beauty: Cars from the Ralph Lauren Collection}, with Beverly R. Kimes, Winston Scott Goodfellow,
and Michael Furman. He continued his community relations with a $110,000 donation to the Abyssinian Church of Harlem. The church thanked Ralph Lauren with an award given by Vogue’s Andre Leon Talley who stated:

> What Michelangelo was to the Sistine chapel, what Carl Sandberg was to the American iambic pentameter, and what F. Scott Fitzgerald was to the grammar of the American romance story, Ralph Lauren is to American Style. His vision, his commitment to excellence, his incredible style and grace, his elegance, and his profound philanthropic spirit speaks volumes for this great leader and man.

His establishment as an authority in luxury and style is unquestionable. His history reads as the recipe for building a successful brand. By using the word *Polo* to define his total strategic brand concept, Ralph Lauren has associated his brand to status. The insignia of the Polo player easily identifies the Ralph Lauren brand. This embroidered polo player has become a signifier of Ralph Lauren worldwide. He has become his brand, *Polo*.

But how has Ralph Lauren gained so much market share in the luxury fashion business? How does a luxury brand grow and still maintain its reputation for being a luxury brand? In the next section, I discuss Kapferer’s two different model approaches to luxury brand building. Her models help to explain how a luxury fashion brand like Ralph Lauren maintains its competitive nature to expand in other markets. Moreover, these models support ideas on how luxury branding expands into traditional non-luxury items such as cargo pants thereby transforming them into luxury products.

**Two Luxury Brand Business Models**

There are two models representative of luxury brand building. These models explain how a designer such as Ralph Lauren can divest his collections at almost all price

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160 [http://about.polo.com/history.asp](http://about.polo.com/history.asp)
ranges while maintaining his luxury status. Currently, his men’s lines include: Purple Label, Polo Ralph Lauren, Create Your Own Polo, RLX, Polo Jeans Company, as well as, Polo Golf, Polo Tennis and Big & Tall sizes. Purple Label represents his most couture line for men, while Polo Jeans is the moderate line. Moreover, Ralph Lauren owns the web domain name, www. Polo.com, establishing his significance over the iconic word Polo. By attaching the phrase or associating Polo to any of his lines, he will continue to expand and grow in fashion markets.

Jean Kapferer’s development of two models suggests how Ralph Lauren has become a luxury brand conglomerate. The first model is Kapferer’s, Luxury Pyramid Model (figure D.13), while the second is her Constellation Model (figure D.14).

The following illustrate the positioning of luxury brands, which enables them to gain market share, build retail sales and continue to expand. Below, I describe both models and critique them, discussing their connections to luxury retailing.

**The Luxury Pyramid**

The first model is referred to as the *luxury pyramid* (figure D.13). According to Kapferer, this model assumes the top of the pyramid or the *griffe* (French word for claw, who is the person who created the fashion brand) who has notoriety as a fashion designer and has an established history in the community. For this study, Ralph Lauren is the *griffe* - the originator of the brand and the head designer. The *griffe* also represents the
origin of the company, its story, or history, encompassing the brand’s original culture and the predominant ideals of the company. The griffe symbolizes the perceived lifestyle image the consumer feels they are purchasing when buying from the company.\textsuperscript{161}

The second level of the pyramid indicates exclusive products conceptualized by the actual designer. These include couture garments, special orders for clients, runway shows, high-end samples, and other exclusive products. These are products that the actual designer has touched and physically knows exist.\textsuperscript{162}

The third level of the pyramid denotes sportswear or mass fashions for larger markets. These are products that are possibly designed by junior designers and the merchandisers. The original designer may lose control at this level and are usually not as involved with the execution of these fashion lines.\textsuperscript{163}

The bottom level of the pyramid, whose products have the least influence from the head designer (Ralph Lauren), represent licensed and least luxurious products of the design assortment such as fragrance, watches and sunglasses. This product line is sometimes sold at a variety of merchants and is usually associated to the designer by name only. Many times the head designer may not even know about particular styles in this line.\textsuperscript{164}

While, the third and bottom levels of the pyramid represent middle class markets and mass distribution of the designer products, these items are the \textit{bread and butter} for the designer. These products maintain high margin dollar and build the designer’s

\textsuperscript{161} Jean-Noel Kapferer, “The Two Business Cultures of Luxury Brands,” 72-73.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 73.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
company. They represent the least luxurious in the luxury market; however, they are the most frequently consumed items. They are how the *griffe* expands into the markets of mass fashion.

*The Constellation Model*

Kapferer’s constellation-like model (figure D.14) is similar to the pyramid model. However, she developed this model for luxury designers who are new. Unlike designers who have an established history such as Giorgio Armani, Donna Karan or Ralph Lauren, their products are new in the luxury market. Examples of new luxury designers include Juicy Couture, Keanan Duffty, and Marc Jacobs. Since these designers have not established themselves as luxury designers, they rely on locations from the fashion runway to stores in order to promote their luxury status. For example, in 1967 when Ralph Lauren began his career, he relied on retail stores like Bloomingdales and Neiman Marcus that sold his ties for creating his status. By association to these established luxury retailers, Ralph Lauren developed a brand identity to the luxury market.

Therefore, the difference between the pyramid and the constellation model is the inclusion of ‘places.’ Places, or *settings*, as Brioschi refers to them, signify the lifestyles and images associated with the designer because of the target market shopping in each store. For an established designer, core places include their premier fashion shows, high-end boutiques, flagship stores and product placement in major cinematography. Like the pyramid model, the head designer has influence over these locations and products. They maintain control with overall product appearance and merchandising of their business.

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In the constellation model, the closer the product or place is to the core, the more luxurious. Places and locations are important vehicles for brand prestige and distribution. For example when applying the model to Ralph Lauren, the New York City location of Ralph Lauren at 867 Madison Avenue (which stocks the entire brand range and various collections as well as limited product ranges), would be close to the center. These stores and locations carry exclusive products that may be hard to find.166

The second level of rings in the constellation model would include: mass product lines, moderate mall store locations such as major department stores like Macy’s, Bloomingdales, and designer boutiques located in suburban shopping centers. In these rings the designer loses some of the control, allowing junior buyers, merchandisers and marketers to maintain brand image. Product placement in retail outlets such as Macy’s Department Stores or Nordstrom’s is negotiated with the designer’s vendor representatives and store personnel.167

The outer areas from the core are maintained and developed by the designer’s staff and personnel. As stated above, the support serves as liaisons between the core designer and various merchants. Like the lower levels of the pyramid, the outer regions of the core include: license products, sunglasses, fragrance, accessories and other major mass-produced items. While these items are the least luxurious, they are bought and

167 Ibid., 73.
consumed most frequently. The margin dollar on these consumer goods is high. These products keep the core alive and prosperous. The outer rings give the core company profit and stability.\textsuperscript{168}

The locations of these products can include high-end boutiques, however these are usually the products that disseminate through the retailing system to locations such as TJ Maxx and designer factory stores. Shops such as Ralph Lauren’s Polo Factory Store would sell not only last year’s leftovers, but also lower market Ralph Lauren Polo products (such as T-Shirts and polo tops) designed especially for the Factory Store.

Similar to the pyramid model, the outer regions of the core require the most marketing and advertising for their success. Since the products located at the base of the pyramid and outer regions of the core reflect traditionally non-luxury items, they rely on meaning to create product differentiation. Also, these products endanger the designer’s luxury name at becoming too accessible. Since anyone can purchase these items at almost any class level, the designer must maintain prestige and distinction at the higher levels of their product assortments. These originalities are marked by: advertising, merchandising, and meaning amongst product categories. These traditionally non-luxury products rely on the designer’s name to maintain their luxury status. However, some consumers do purchase and perceive that because they have a designer label, these products have better quality and are luxury goods that are just “on sale.” These items make the process of licensing a designer’s name successful. This process, known as \textit{mass-tige}, gives mass fashions new status through the process of “guilt by association” to

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
the designer’s name. Anything with the name *Polo*, all the way from, Ralph Lauren Purple Label to Polo Sport, is perceived as luxury although the price points for Polo Sport are considerably less than those of Purple Label.

The *Luxurification* of Ralph Lauren Cargo Pants

Ralph Lauren reflects the places and *settings* that Arianna Brioschi mentions in her themes and associations to luxury brands. His book about cars and his stores located in posh neighborhoods worldwide coincides with Brioschi’s notions of *status references*, *famous cities*, and *race/freedom references*. Ralph Lauren’s cinematic credits of *The Great Gatsby* and *Annie Hall* connect him to Brioschi’s *art references* and Ralph Lauren situates ordinary garments in *settings* that exude wealth, style, status and luxury.

Through the strategy of *lifestyle merchandising*, Ralph Lauren can take surplus garments like cargo pants and turn them into a perceived luxury item. Each fashion season, Ralph Lauren carries more cargo styles than any other designer brand. During the summer and fall 2006 selling season, this designer featured over 40 styles of cargo pants and shorts. His dedication to continue the sales in this pant are quite clear on www.polo.com; with an area for *cargo* as a sub-heading under men’s pants.

Cargo pants are classified amongst those goods on Kapferer’s two models (figures D.13 and D.14) that fall amongst the mass fashion items that may be created by junior designers. In Ralph Lauren’s assortment his blue *Ralph Lauren Polo* label signifies his mass fashions. This line bridges between his *Ralph Lauren Purple Label* (high-end) and his *Polo Jeans* moderate line.

169 Ibid., 71.
Like most designers, *Ralph Lauren Polo* sells garments that will allow him to gain market share because more consumers can afford or will attempt to purchase these goods. Moreover, the *Ralph Lauren Polo* line is found in more retail outlets than Ralph Lauren’s other divisions. It represents the strongest brand strategy for the company.\(^{172}\) *Ralph Lauren Polo* can be found in Ralph Lauren boutiques, all moderate and upscale department stores, small scale boutiques, Ralph Lauren outlet centers, as well as, discount stores such as TJ Maxx, Burlington Coat Factory and Marshall’s. Many times, cargo pants can be found among Ralph Lauren’s assortment in these retail outlets.

As discussed in chapter 1, cargo pant sales have exploded in mass fashion, making them part of the basic assortments of most retailers. Therefore, retailers rely on the cargo style for building sales in their retail categories. Ralph Lauren’s men’s pant category relies on cargo styles for success in this classification. If the company did not believe in the pants they would not have invested in over 40 different skus (stock keeping units) during summer and fall 2006.

**Mass-tige**

How does Ralph Lauren create a mass product line and at the same time give it a feeling of luxury and high fashion? According to Kapferer, *mass-tige* is the method most designers like Ralph Lauren, use to create luxury status for their products is by giving them the impression of rarity and uniqueness. This is done in a variety of methods and they sometimes include:

1. The choice of a restricted selective and exclusive distribution.
2. Creating a permanent but non-lasting out-of-stock situation on specific items

\(^{172}\) [www.polo.com](http://www.polo.com). About Us.
3. Communicating by word of mouth that there will not be enough supply for all people.
4. Manufacturing the product after it has been ordered, to emphasize the impression of exclusivity created by this one-to-one apparent customization (example Ralph Lauren’s “Create Your Own Polo.”)
5. Creating a halo of exclusivity by the sponsorship of top stars, supermodels, fashion designers, and creators: this is how Polo maintains their images while becoming international brands.
6. Creating special and very rare products whose goal is only to stimulate the buzz and press fallouts.
7. Another strategy is to create a feeling of exclusivity in two parts: one will be made of actually very rare products, exceptional, promoted by event which themselves are unique and by creators or designers who master both art and the media. The second part is made of products far less expensive and mass produced, which will benefit from halo effect created by the exclusive part. This is mass-tige.¹⁷³

I believe it is through the two-part process of first creating exclusivity and then branching out that allows Ralph Lauren to sell his mass-produced cargo pants at higher margin prices. The images associated to Ralph Lauren, his website, the advertising campaigns and his exclusive locations in world markets allow him to mass produce cargo pants and at the same time sell them for hundreds of dollars. Ralph Lauren’s fashions are mass produced, however the exclusive image he creates through mass-tige gives his products a perception of rareness and high quality, when in reality they are not. He creates a halo effect that stems from him being the core of his company brand strategy.

As a previous fashion brand strategist, it was my goal to purchase clothing and describe each garment’s specific characteristics charting what made each one unique. The goal of fashion brand strategy is to remove the garment from the brand’s context (such as ads, stores, merchandising, and marketing) suggesting whether the garment still reflects the overall brand image of the original designer based upon the product’s characteristics.

While the first part of the analysis consists of describing the garment’s details, the second part aids in determining if the garment actually reflects the brand. Unless the garment carries the insignia of the designer on the outside, the conclusions are usually that it requires the *lifestyle merchandising* of the fashion designer to maintain status.

A Brand Analysis of Ralph Lauren Cargo Pants

For this brand analysis, I chart each style by Ralph Lauren with descriptions displaying the basic garment characteristics of each cargo pant (Table D.1). Like a brand strategy report, images of all cargo pants are given for a reader to examine (figures D.15-D.44). As stated, the goal of this analysis is to suggest that cargo pants require *settings* of the designer to signify a *perceived lifestyle image*. The question to answer when examining each cargo pant is: *Does the pant reflect the Ralph Lauren Brand?* My goal is to show how *luxurification* transforms a non-luxury good into a luxury product requiring *mass-tige* to create the perception of luxury.

**Cargo Pant Analysis**

1. The Cargo Pants/Fabrications: These pants represent an assortment of cargo pants and a short purchased in 2003 until 2006. All these pants where purchased by the researcher at Ralph Lauren boutiques both in U.S. and London, upscale department stores, and on polo.com, none of the styles were bought in outlet stores.
All of the cargo pants styles are manufactured from basic woven fabrications. They are either twill, canvas, brushed flannel, corduroy, or plain weave. Most of the silhouettes are classic fits, with the exception of the cargo pants in figures D.23-D.24, D.25-D.48, D.33-D.32, and D.35-D.38. These cargo styles have slim legs representing a more modern style. None of the styles are baggy or a relaxed fit.

2. Price and Country of Origin: All the pants are imported. They have been manufactured in non-Western-European countries with the exception of the cargo pants in figures D.39-D.40, which are Made in Italy. While the average price point for cargo pants is $50 and shorts $40 (this includes high/low prices averaged together) Ralph Lauren represents a higher price point at about $165.00.

The most expensive pairs of cargo pants are represented in figures D.21-D.22, D.29-D.30, and D.39-D.40. The price point of the cargo pants in figures D.29-D.30 is due to the heavy canvas fabric and the leather pull tabs on all the zipper closures. Figures D.21-D.22 picture a wool cargo pant with nylon blend, and figures D.39-D.40 feature a cargo style that is wool with cashmere blend. Moreover, the wool pants in figures D.21-D.22 are $225.00, while the cargo pants in figures D.39-D.40 are $565.00. The $225.00 cargo style is made with a nylon blend the $565.00 cargo is accented with 5% cashmere.

As a brand strategist, I would conclude the reason for the $565.00 price-point is twofold. First, these cargo pants are Made in Italy, as anyone with knowledge of quality knows Italy represents status. Italians are known for their fine wools and wonderful skills of manufacturing fine quality garments. Moreover, a customer at Ralph Lauren who is thinking about purchasing $565.00 cargo pants expects the garment to have been made by a quality manufacturer. Second, these cargo pants contain 5% cashmere,
another reference to quality and status, since cashmere is perceived as a luxury fabrication. Again, Italians are known for the quality of their cashmere products re-signifying the Made in Italy label.

3. Cargo Pockets: The average number of cargo pockets on each pair of pants is 12. Most of the cargo pockets contain detailing such as flaps, snaps, fasteners, and buttons. Figures D.28 and D.38 illustrate the detailing of cargo pockets. Figure D.28 displays that the cargo pockets are placed on top of each other and layered. For example, the snap pocket is in front of the flap pocket, which is sewn over the zip pocket. This same layering technique is featured in figure D.38 on the corduroy style.

Some cargo pants have pockets featured on the mid-section of the leg, at the top of the legs (figures D.17, D.21, D.25, D.27, D.33, D.35, D.41, and D.43) and also, close to the ankle (figures D.19-D.20, D.21-D.22, D.23-D.24, and D.43-D.44). These pockets represent brand detailing and fashion styles moreover they reflect the traditional uniform styles of military garments. The cargo pants I identify as classic styles, maintain the integrity styling of traditional 6 pocket fatigues. These pants are featured in figures D.15-D.16 and D.39-D.40.

unique styling of these cargo pants includes the use of pull cords on zipper flies (figures D.19, D.25, D.29, D.33, D.39, D.43), aged and rusted snaps and fasteners (figures D.33-D.38) and the use of bias strips for belt loops and accents (D.33-D.34 and D.43-D.44).

The cargo pants in figures D.41-D.44 reflect a change in Ralph Lauren detailing (table D.1). Previously all of Ralph Lauren Polo snaps on fashion cargos were plain, however, for the first time, these snaps contain the words Ralph Lauren Polo. Also, the zipper flies have a pull that is imprinted with the word Polo. The cream twill cargo pant in figure D.42 also has a polo patch on the top right pocket. Historically, Ralph Lauren has only used these patches on his basic khaki pants. The patch states, Ralph Lauren Original R.L. Quality Classic POLO Chino, Est. 1967. The zip fly on figure D.44 is quite large, even when zipped it stands out. The zipper has the word POLO in all capital letters. The designer definitely wants this feature to stand out.

**Do These Cargo Pants Reflect the Ralph Lauren Brand?**

After analyzing the thirteen cargo pants by Ralph Lauren, I suggest the following:

1. Ten of the cargo pants do not represent the image of Ralph Lauren. These cargo pants do not have distinguishing features that signify the luxury status and lifestyle image of the designer.

2. The cargo pants in figures D.39-D.44 do signify the Ralph Lauren brand. The cargo pants in figures D.41-D.44 have distinguishing written brand markings that are associated to the designer. The cargo pant in figures D.39-D.40 references the designer through fabrication, price, and manufacturers location.
3. The fabrication, the price and the *Made in Italy* characteristics of the cargo pant in figures D.30-D.40 reflects Brioschi’s ideas of luxury themes and places. Her notions of *status*, *quality*, and *famous cities* are clearly represented in these pants. As she states, these famous markers of quality give brands luxury characteristics in the eyes of the consumer. The $565.00 price of these cargo pants associates the pant to a level of status. This is reinforced by the quality reference of *Made in Italy* that represents a historical location for craftsmanship of wool garments.

4. While the garment itself does not blatantly signify the designer *Ralph Lauren*, its does stand alone as a quality garment that gives a *perceived level of status* to the person who wears it.

5. The *POLO* markings on the snaps of the cargo pants reflect Kapferer’s notions of *mass-тиге*. From Kapferer’s perspective through Ralph Lauren’s halo effect as the *griffe* (figure D.13) and core (figure D.14) of his business, by placing his name on the exterior of a garment where it will be noticeable, he reinforces her ideas of *mass-тиге* for his cargo pants. As stated, the garment cargo pant is a less expensive product in the Ralph Lauren assortment, however they are mass-produced and these pants benefit from the Ralph Lauren name.

**Summary**

In order for a garment to represent its brand, it must remain in the *settings* and context of the designer. The purpose of this chapter was to show how Ralph Lauren’s designer status influences mass produced garments such as cargo pants and elevates them

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to a level of luxury. While the purpose of Chapter 3 was to show how context creates brand stories about cargo pants, Chapter 4 demonstrates how an established name gives a garment a *perceived lifestyle image*. In this Chapter, no ads were shown of Ralph Lauren’s product lines for this very reason. Because he has an established history, his name alone carries the line.

Cargo pants, like any other mass-produced clothing require both context and a retailer or designer name to signify a new selling strategy. Without these associations, the garment loses its significance as fashion. Moreover, garments become lost in the accumulation of mass production international manufacturers. Retailers and designers search for methods to manufacture future fashions with unique detailing that gives the consumer a feeling of individuality. These details are usually only seen when a customer holds and examines the garment. Perhaps, consumers do not study these details until they are in the privacy of their own homes. Moreover, designer details are not seen until a wearer turns the garment inside out when washing. These details or *designer surprises* as I refer to them, tell stories and give the garment new individual meanings through the eyes of the consumer. In Chapter 5, while examining current cargo styles, I discuss these interior stories and how they reflect popular culture.
CHAPTER 5
USING POPULAR CULTURE FOR THE CULTURAL BRANDING OF CARGO PANTS

Recently, I received an email from J.Crew with the subject header “100% Cargo for Men” (figure E.1). I decided to examine the ad and look at the cargo pants on J.Crew’s Internet site. When I came to the webpage for their Vintage Corduroy Cargos, I was surprised. Not only did J.Crew feature pictures of the outside of their corduroy cotton cargo pant, but the inside details of the garment were shown as well. There were five photos displaying the outside of their cargo pants and four revealing the interior branding patches and logos inside the garment. It seemed that the company’s personal branding details are what gave J.Crew’s cargo pant distinction (figure E.2) over their competitors. What made J.Crew feel that they needed to brand the inside of their corduroy cargo pant with a patch that features a coat-of-arms and the words “Vintage Cord” (figure E.2)?

Does the interior patch in the cargo pant conjure in the mind of the consumer a cultural contextual meaning? In chapter 3, I examined the advertising strategy of
Abercrombie & Fitch to determine how an external selling context was used to entice a consumer to buy their products. In chapter 4, I demonstrated how, by association to Ralph Lauren, a cargo pant is branded and elevated to a luxury status.

In this chapter, I examine how designers, retailers and merchandisers brand details on and in their cargo pants creating an individualized and personal quality reflective of brand culture. These details customize the garment relating to a market niche that uses the product for creating a personal style. Branding details can include the use of: patches, hang tags, interior detailing and other markings that connect the cargo pant to a specific retailer. Sometimes these details can create stories and give the branded product another context that reflects historical frameworks and popular culture.

Moreover, with the advances in manufacturing, the details of garments have become just as important as the garment for what retailers call hanger appeal. Lisa Hayes, a former head fashion designer for major retail companies, suggested that with companies selling similar items such as cargo pants, T-shirts, jean jackets and polo shirts, retailers need detailing in the designs of their garments for market distinction. According to Hayes, retailers such as Old Navy, American Eagle and Gap have created expectations with consumers who now expect to find detailing on the products. She also indicated that in the men’s market, details are very important to generate sales revenue, especially since most men purchase fashion garments as replacements for worn out clothes. She
explained that men like quality clothing that will last over time, detailing gives men the impression that they are purchasing a better product. Fashion branding has become a key element in the fashion business.\textsuperscript{176}

In the following pages, I begin this investigation by discussing the concept of cultural branding in Douglas Holt’s, \textit{How Brands Become Icons}\textsuperscript{177} and Laurence Vincent’s, \textit{ Legendary Brands: Unleashing the Power of Storytelling to Create a Winning Market Strategy},\textsuperscript{178} which reinforce the ideas that brands must reflect the cultural context of popular culture.

Next, Grant McCracken in his book, \textit{Culture and Consumption II}, suggests that brands make connections to customers through the process of meaning management.\textsuperscript{179} Meaning management is the link between the product and the customer’s understanding of the branding process. After the brand has been purchased, the consumer customizes the brand for their personal consumption. This customization process occurs when the individual has identified specific product characteristics that personally relate to them.

This reflects Gwendolyn O’Neal’s notions of “Fashioning Future Fashions.”\textsuperscript{180} Her theoretical inquiry investigates how consumers build personal connections to post-

\textsuperscript{176} Lisa Hayes, personal communication, September 20, 2006.
\textsuperscript{179} Grant McCracken, \textit{Culture and Consumption II} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 175-91.
purchased fashions by creating a *visual milieu*\(^\text{181}\) that reflects the process of cultural branding. Consumers compose the cultural context and are archetypes within brand culture. Many times, a consumer will purchase a fashion garment once it has been given context on another person’s body. Moreover, consumers become reference points for branding leaders to generate new ideas of how to remerchandise and repackage branding concepts. The branding details that have been added to garments such as cargo pants reflect how other *bodies* have worn the cargo style.

Finally, cultural branding ideologies are applied to cargo pant styles from Keenan Duffty, Diesel, Energie, Rheul (a division of Abercrombie & Fitch), and Gap demonstrating how the detail branding of these pants reflect notions of the popular cultural context and *cargo culture*. *The brand detailing of the following cargo styles demonstrates how a retailer creates their own personal brand on a garment that generates a selling story that refers to popular culture and previous methods of wearing cargos as central themes to resell them* (figures E.2; E.3; E.6-E.7; E.9-E.10; E.14-E.15; E.17-E.18). Similar to the ideas of McCracken’s meaning management and O’Neal’s “Fashioning Future Fashions,” by attachments and markings found within and on, their cargo pant, a possible dialogue is created amongst consumers allowing for individual consumer enculturation and attachment to the branded cargo pants. These branding *designer surprises* can allow a consumer to form new personal attachment to their clothes, feeling they have discovered a new way to wear their cargo pants. The branding *details* also personalize the cargo pants giving more meaning to the garment rendering the actual cargo pant garment less significant than the design details. Simply stated, the

\(^{181}\) Ibid., 28.
garment may be so basic that the branding *details* are actually what distinguish the garment from similar and like items. The consumer may purchase a new pair of cargo shorts because the British flag is sewn on the seat (figure E.3), however he may already own a pair of tan cargo pants. It is the detailing story of the British flag that reflects an Anglomania theme that makes the customer want to purchase the pants.

In the following pages, cargo pants become a branded product that is encompassed into the cultural context of company brands. While Holt\textsuperscript{182} and Vincent\textsuperscript{183} examine branding from a “total company” worldview, a product such as a cargo pant becomes engulfed in the branding strategy of a company when it is presented to consumers for consumption. Each product within a merchandise assortment falls victim to the brand strategy. For example, the cargo styles of Diesel, Energie, Gap, Keanan Duffty and Rheul reflect each of these retailer’s brands. Each of these cargo pants is a *brand representative* for their company. These pants reflect a company cultural branding process. Therefore, in order to understand the cultural branding process and how it is developed, examination of a product category such as cargo pants is crucial for understanding the cultural branding process in popular culture.

**Cultural Branding**

**What is Cultural Branding?**

What is cultural branding? First and foremost cultural branding is about people feeling like individuals. According to Douglas Holt, cultural branding is the key for the


future of all businesses that sell products and services to consumers. Holt defines cultural branding as:

A plan that directs the brand toward a particular kind of myth and also specifies how the myth should be composed. A cultural branding strategy is, necessarily, quite different from conventional branding strategies, which are full of rational and emotional benefits, brand personalities and the like.\(^\text{184}\)

According to Holt, it is cultural activists and individuals who understand popular culture that develop successful brands. These brand leaders assemble cultural knowledge, rather than worry about traditional consumer research. Instead of a quantitative approach, these leaders brand to the needs of culture by understanding those individuals that live in the cultural context.\(^\text{185}\) This cultural knowledge is developed by:

1. Examining the role of major social categories of class, sex, gender, and ethnicity in identity construction rather than obscuring these categories by sorting people into “psychographic” groups.
2. Viewing the brand as a historical actor in society.
3. Viewing people holistically, seeking to understand what gives their lives meanings, rather than as customers of category benefits.
4. Seeking to understand the identity value of mass culture texts, rather than treating mass culture simply as trends and entertainment.\(^\text{186}\)

Cultural brands must reflect an appropriate market, develop an identity, and consistently reinvent themselves in the cultural context. This cultural context reflects popular culture and is what encompasses the brand and affects the future development of each brand. The cultural context determines what brand will be successful and those that will fail. Holt suggests the problem with many brands is ignorance with regards to popular culture and trends. He calls for a new focus on consumer research that examines individuals instead of target markets. By examining each person’s characteristics, a brand manager

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 209.
\(^{186}\) Ibid., 210.
can compose and evolve the brand along with changes in the cultural context.\textsuperscript{187} Brands can become attachments to lifestyle and give a perception of being personalized for each consumer. A consumer does not feel like a member of a mass population, instead they feel like an individual with personal attachment to the brand.

Successful branders will understand the products’ historic equities well enough to direct them toward the most advantageous future positioning. Brands that become \textit{iconic brands} develop a reputation for revealing a specific historic culturally contextual story. These are brands such as Ralph Lauren and Apple computers that have established reputations in our social order. Holt believes these brands accrue two complementary assets: cultural authority and political authority. Holt states:

\begin{quote}
When brands author myths that people find valuable, it earns the authority to tell similar kinds of myths (cultural authority) to address the identity desires of a smaller constituency (political authority) in the future. Specifying the brand’s cultural and political authority provides managers direction to develop myths for the brand, and allows them to rule out myths that are a poor fit.\textsuperscript{188}
\end{quote}

The brand myth becomes accepted in the cultural context. For example, Apple and Ralph Lauren are established as great brands in our cultural context. But are they really \textit{the best} brands for their particular product categories? The myths that have been created about these brands seem to emphasize that they are, however we may find consumers who feel these companies make inferior product lines. Nevertheless, Ralph Lauren and Apple computers’ brand myths and reputation of their products allows them to maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 218-19.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 211.
Laurence Vincent supports Douglas Holt’s notions of brand myths and narratives in order to create a positive brand culture. Vincent defines brand myths as:

A “traditional story of ostensibly historic events that serves to unfold part of the worldview of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomena. The occidental mythology of ancient civilizations served to explain the mysterious workings of the natural world through stories about the struggles and conquests of God and Heroes. Today, brand mythology serves a similar purpose. Scientific discovery answered many of the mysteries of the natural world, but it has not satisfactorily resolved the complex questions we have about our social existence, our sense of self, and our relationship to the world at large. Brand mythology has curiously interceded. Like ancient mythology, it works through narrative devices.\(^{189}\)

In his book, *Legendary Brands: Unleashing the Power of Storytelling to Create a Winning Market Strategy*, Vincent highlights the success of Levi’s, Starbucks Coffee, Absolut Vodka, and Nike by revealing how each company creates a brand culture, *myths* and *brand narratives* to give consumers the perception that these brands are superior in the market place. Also, each brand situates itself within popular culture in the hopes of becoming part of the social order and cultural context. It is almost impossible to picture life without Starbucks coffee or Nike sneakers.\(^{190}\)

Starbucks and Nike culturally integrate themselves within their environments wherever they have store locations by becoming part of the cultural context within each city location. For example, the Niketown in Manhattan is different from Niketown in Portland, Oregon. Moreover, when Nike displays its sneakers in Nordstrom, it is quite different from their own stores. In Niketown sneakers are scattered amongst product


\(^{190}\) Ibid.
categories for exercise, where at Nordstrom all the sneakers are featured in the shoe department. However, the product becomes enculturated into each city and retailer’s environment where appropriate.

Starbucks is notorious for designing their store locations to coincide in every city where they are located. A Starbucks in a Target store is different than a Starbucks in the King of Prussia Mall outside Philadelphia. Starbucks molds its store locations to become part of each neighborhood’s cultural context in order to give a personalized and individualized impression to their customers. While, there is always the branded Starbucks look at every location, and customers across the nation experience the same quality from Starbucks coffee, most consumers have their preferred Starbucks location because it has become part of their purchasing identity.\(^{191}\)

Most consumers relate to brand narratives on an individual basis. According to Vincent, there are four parts of brand narrative: plot, character, theme and aesthetics.\(^{192}\) Aesthetics includes any part of the brand that stimulates one of the five senses. Vincent states:

Spectacle (what you see), song (what you hear musically), and diction (how words are constructed to convey meaning) are important elements for visual and performing arts. Brands, however, can also stimulate taste and touch, and these can be powerful narrative devices.\(^{193}\)

\(^{191}\) Ibid.
\(^{192}\) Ibid., 123.
\(^{193}\) Ibid.
Making a connection to the consumer through the brand narrative is key to success. The narrative must relate to the consumer both culturally and personally and the consumer must develop a personal attachment to the brand based on the narrative.\textsuperscript{194}

Vincent argues that through brand narrative, a symbiotic relationship between the consumer and the brand must occur in order for the consumer to identify with the brand. The brand narrative gains attention when the audience can follow the characters used in the brand advertising and marketing.\textsuperscript{195} For example, the use of Audrey Hepburn in Gap’s September 2006 advertising campaign creates a narrative that most consumers may relate to in their own lives. The consumer may relate to Gap, Audrey Hepburn, her movies or just “her total black beatnik look” from the picture in the windows. Those consumers that don’t know Audrey Hepburn may go investigate the actress to discover her identity. Young hipsters connect historically to an age gone by era while reinventing hip to fit within their own cultural context and personal meanings. This connection to Hepburn builds brand recognition and creates narrative for Gap to perhaps build customer loyalty.\textsuperscript{196}

\textit{Influencing Meaning Management}

Grant McCracken’s research focuses on the connections between consumers and brands. McCracken’s notions of a \textit{culturally constituted world} reflect the same ideas of Douglas Holt’s cultural construct. McCracken was a pioneer in consumer research identifying \textit{gatekeepers of consumer goods} who added meaning to products in order for

\begin{footnotes}
\item[194] Ibid., 123-27.
\item[195] Ibid., 127.
\item[196] www.gap.com
\end{footnotes}
individual consumers to want to buy them. As stated, his models suggest that through social interaction, individuals, and eventually, society, assign status to fashion garments as well as types of consumer goods. ¹⁹⁷

In his latest book, Culture and Consumption II, McCracken takes an anthropological approach when connecting meanings to brand management creating what he calls meaning management. Like Holt, McCracken notes that branding must be studied from the perspective of what brands mean to consumers, instead of using traditional consumer behavior models. According to McCracken, traditional methodologies are outdated, especially in the postmodern cultural context. Currently, consumers must feel like they are individuals even when they are purchasing mass produced products. It becomes the job of the branding agents to create this individual and personalized meaning. ¹⁹⁸

McCracken notes that there are various levels of brand meanings. They include: gender meanings, lifestyle meanings, decade meanings, age meanings, class and status meanings, occupation meanings, time and place meanings, value meanings, and fashion, fad, and trend meanings. ¹⁹⁹ Branding agents use all of these various meanings to create brand myths and narrative to entice consumers to purchase their products. Grant McCracken’s figure on Meaning Sources and Delivery Devices reflects how the cultural context influences meaning sources and regenerates a product or service giving it new meaning (figure E.4). What McCracken neglects in his model, is an explanation of how

¹⁹⁷ Grant McCracken, Culture and Consumption (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 71-89.
¹⁹⁸ Grant McCracken, Culture and Consumption II, 162-70.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 177.
the individual consumer impacts the use of a product post-purchase. A consumers’ post-purchase behavior can create a new meaning of a product or service. While he notes that subcultures do impact consumer goods and products, he neglects how an individual, within the subcultural context, can originate the style and use of a product.

As Jean Hamilton suggests, fashion, like many other types of consumer goods, is influenced not only from the macro-level but the micro-individual level as well. Figure E.3 shows McCracken’s figure of *Meaning Sources and Delivery Devices*, with my addition of the individual consumer beneath the product or service as another influence to product and service category. While my intention is not to say that individuals alone create *fashions*, they do influence the assemblage and creation of *styles* that do become trends. The 1980’s fashion look of Madonna is a primary example. Many retailers copied Madonna’s personal style attempting to repackage it and sell it to consumers. Consumers flocked to the malls and purchased Madonna’s look hoping to emulate their favorite pop singer. While Madonna did not actually create the garments she wore, she did assemble and stylize the garments into a new look that became, *The Madonna Look*. Madonna’s assemblage of style became her *personal milieu* that signified her individuality. Madonna related to the garments she used to create her look that she felt reflected a new style. This style became fashion and was copied by the *gatekeepers* of fashion, who presented *The Madonna Look* to consumers.

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as a *packaged set*. Thus the superstar created a new branded look and a storyline for products such as hair wraps, fingerless gloves and lace tops. Like this look, cargo pants have been repackaged and remerchandised based upon individuals such as: hippies, punks, skateboarders and preppies (see Chapter 2). These individuals used cargo pants in their *personal milieu* for identity construction.

**Individual Influences: Fashioning Future Fashions**

Gwendolyn O’Neal\(^{202}\) builds on the notion of individual meanings in her article on “Fashioning Future Fashions.” While she notes that fashions (which include all body modifications and extensions) are restricted and pre-chosen for individuals, it is the individual who can decide how to create a *pastiche* of style to create fashion. She states, “fashion does not require the creative genius of an individual which then must be endorsed by the cultural gate keepers but rather is a process by which individuals continually form and present themselves.”\(^{203}\) She further explains, ‘While the body techniques and codes of conduct are imposed by external forces over which individuals have little control, the codes of conduct are “acquired abilities of collective and individual practical reason.”’ This does not remove the restrictions of the capitalist consumerist culture, but attaches fashion to a general technique of acculturation.\(^{204}\) In O’Neal’s view, the acculturation process is not localized but cross-cultural and global. The effects of the telecommunications infrastructure composed of telephones, televisions,

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\(^{203}\) Ibid., 27.
\(^{204}\) Ibid.
computers and consumer electronics has allowed us to see all the worldwide events as they unfold. \(^{205}\) We are no longer impacted by local news and events but by international news and world events.

O’Neal argues, the postmodern era will be noted for the commercialization of emotions. She borrows from Jensen when she states, ‘It will no longer be enough to produce a useful product. A story or legend must be built into it; a story that embodies values beyond utility.’\(^{206}\) Technology will be the key to the success of fashion business in the future. To build her theory, O’Neal borrows for the ideas of Appadurai:

…Five dimensions of global cultural flow should be considered: ethnoscapess produced by flows of people such as tourists, immigrants, exiles, and guest workers which affect politics of and between nations; technoscapess which move technology across various boundaries based on complex relationships between flow capital, political possibilities, and labor; finascapess produced by the rapid flow of monies through currency markets, national stock exchanges and commodity speculations; mediascapess which distribute images and information through various media throughout the world and, ideoscapess which are political images and ideologies of states and counter-ideologies comprised of Western Enlightenment world-view, e.g. freedom, welfare, rights, etc.\(^{207}\)

O’Neal believes future fashions will not be limited to objects conceived by a creative genius which are ‘manipulated artistically’ to create a look or mode for the masses. Instead, fashion will be constructed of a personal milieu in which the individual manipulates the dress-body complex to create a mini-narrative. She concludes:

‘…This personal milieu is constructed and reconstructed for identity, for hedonic and egocentric purposes. Objects of apparel will not in and of them be considered fashion; instead the narratives produced through constructing and reconstructing the dress-body complex will constitute the fashion. Change will continue to be a dominant characteristic, however the purpose of change will not be to maintain

\(^{205}\) Ibid.
\(^{206}\) Ibid.
\(^{207}\) Ibid., 28.
social distance but to produce distinctive images in order to attract attention and to receive aesthetic stimulation.\textsuperscript{208}

The body no longer is just a body but a \textit{dress-body complex}. In her arguments, O’Neal is instrumental in ideas of the integration of technologies (cosmetics, tattooing, piercing, cosmetic surgery) to introduce a future of fashion that not only involves the clothing and the body but fashions that will introduce computers as extensions of fashion.

O’Neal’s theoretical discussion is instrumental in suggesting a new methodology in the investigation of future fashion. As she reveals, history is not a unilinear single story but has multiple possibilities. Therefore, material objects such as fashion apparel have multiple histories based upon how they are used both by the fashion gatekeepers and those who wear them. While retailers, merchandisers and marketers print pictures of how they want their apparel brand to be worn (one history), consumers may choose to wear the garment in another fashion and even personalize the apparel in some fashion (another history). The consumers become agents of meaning and style for retailers and mass merchants to copy when reintroducing a basic garment such as a cargo pant.

\textbf{Applying the Popular Cultural Context to Cargo Pants}

How is the concept of cultural branding applied to cargo pants? The following cargo pants and shorts from Keanan Duffty for Target, Diesel, Energie, Rheul and Gap reflect the theoretical ideas of Holt, Vincent, MacCracken and O’Neal. For each pair of cargo pants I discuss how they reflect the current cultural context, topics such as art,
Asian culture, retro branding, Italian quality and war reflect not only how the global
economy has impacted new cargo culture, but how individual consumers have generated
new ideas and market strategies for retailers when selling their cargo pants as well.

**Reflecting Art: Keanan Duffty’s British Style for Target**

Keanan Duffty is a former British singer and songwriter who has become one of
Britain’s high-end designers who specialize in clothing that resemble garments from
other fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood. Duffty graduated from St. Martin’s
in London and has shown his clothing on the runways in Italy, London and the U.S.
Besides fashion design, Duffty produces and directs music videos. His personal mission
is to build a brand that is heavily influenced by both music and fashion.

In July of 2006, Target began to feature a special line of clothing that was
designed by Keanan Duffy. This line includes a pair of rip-stop khaki cargo pants that
have a large patch of the Union Jack flag sewn onto the seat of the garment (figure E.3)
and adjustable waistband and leg openings. Target’s description of the pants suggests
they are 80’s rocker-chic inspired- all for the Target price of $29.99.

Other brand detailing of the pants includes a red patch above the right pocket that
states: England’s Dreaming Keanan Duffy. This patch has a coat of arms with a large
KD in the center. Also, Target has attached a paper waistband tag above the left pocket
that mimics the previous said patch (figure E.3). There is a hangtag attached to the pants
(figure E.5) with the front featuring skull and crossbones, guitar, and a background of the

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Union Jack flag with the words, *England's Dreaming Keanan Duffty*. The backside of the hangtag features a biography of Duffty with his photo and the price of the cargo pants.

What makes these otherwise insignificant cargo pants unique is the Union Jack sewn onto the seat of the pants. The Union Jack is a blatant signifier to England since it is the official flag of the country. The red patches sewn above the British flag patch that has the words, *England’s Dreaming Keanan Duffty*, reinforce the connections to England and the Union Jack. What influenced Target to feature a male British designer this fall? What connections to culture and fashion was Target trying to make?

The Spring/Summer issue of *VMan* magazine predicted that *Anglomania* would be one of the hottest trends this fall. The magazine states:

> Perhaps in anticipation of the upcoming “Anglomania” show at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, British inspired menswear its flying flag high. At Burberry, Christopher Bailey continued to reference dandyism with sharply tailored suits and coats, now accessorized with silver chains. Dsquared went for an over-the-top investigation of landed gentry and their old-world accoutrements. With sharp tailoring and immaculate pinstripes, Ralph Lauren proved once more that he gives the Brits a lesson or two in traditional English dressing. Paul & Joe chipped in with an homage to John Steed, the iconic bowler-hat-wearing character of ‘60s cult TV show *The Avengers*. Emporio Armani also celebrated London’s swinging ‘60s by focusing on richly colored velvets and tartan trousers.\(^{210}\)

In their referral to *Anglomania* as a hot trend for fall fashions, *VMan* suggests that the art exhibit *Anglomania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* which had its run from May 3\(^{rd}\) until September 4\(^{th}\), 2006, was one of the inspirations for British fashion influence.

While many of the women’s fashions were historical references to the past, the room titled, *The Gentleman’s Club*, not only featured men’s clothing dated from 1938, but most of the men’s garments were brand new! The museum displayed over fifteen new styles of men’s garments with only three outfits consisting of historic costumes. Menswear designers were obviously influenced by the new designs.

Burberry and Conde Nast publications, both of which are major influences in current fashion and style, sponsored the exhibit. While I am unaware of conclusive evidence that *Anglomania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion* inspired Target to use British designer Keanan Duffty in their stores this year, the retailer did reflect this cultural trend in their branded fashion line. Target’s blatant referral to England through Keanan Duffty’s Union Jack flag allows the retailer to support a market niche in current high fashion. This is cultural branding.

*Just Another Culture: Diesel’s Asian Branding*

Last Spring, Diesel stores were selling cargo pants with a slim leg and a fashionable fit. While the new slim leg of the cargo pant reflected current modern fashion silhouettes, what made the pant truly unique were the Asian inspired embroidery, buttons and branded lining (figures E.6-E.8).

Diesel notes that its success is due, in past, because they brand globally. They feel they are obligated to reflect multiple cultures and want to be known as a worldwide brand. Moreover, Diesel knows that their consumers expect to see culture in their fashions. The company states in their book *Fifty*:

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With its network of more than 5,000 points of sale around the world, and advertising that effortlessly crosses borders, Diesel is today part of an elite group of global brands. Some people consider “globalization” a dirty word, but Renzo, the founder of Diesel, refers to a concept that he calls “new globalization.”

The company has continually branded its products to reflect diversity that ranges from: sexual orientation, gender, race and ethnicity. Moreover, the company brands their garments with patches, screen prints, and embroidery that reflect the characteristics of various market niches.

In 1995’s *Diesel Jeans and Workwear* campaign gay men were shown as the target market. In 2001, the entire campaign was focused on African culture, while in both 1997 and 2005 Asian culture was a key vehicle for driving the brand’s sales. What make the Diesel’s cargo pants unique are not really the pants alone, but how the company ties itself to various cultural boundaries. This allows the consumer of Diesel products to have an altruistic feeling while wearing the clothing. Because after purchasing from a fashion retailer that supports cultural awareness and all the growing connections to globalization, the consumer may feel they are representatives and support the cause as well.

Therefore, when purchasing a pair of cargo pants from Diesel, the design details of the garment are what *draw in* a customer. The customer of Diesel expects to see design details that reflect not only fashion style, but culture as well. The garments become cultural and political statements; however, a consumer is *forced* to buy them season after season because the Diesel altruistic causes change with every fashion season!

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213 Ibid., 138-41.
Help Godzilla! Energie’s True Pop Cultural Reference to War

At first glance, the Linwood long shorts by Energie seems to reflect fun popular culture, however the branding details of the shorts reveal a serious political statement. This garment is a capri style running longer than most other shorts. Very similar to original military style fabric, these shorts are made of 100% rip stop cotton (figures E.9-E.10). The major branding details visible on the outside of these shorts are the Energie label and Godzilla!

The Godzilla theme is reinforced on the inside pocket linings of the shorts. Each pocket is lined with a woven cotton fabric that has toy tanks, maps of countries and the phrase, We Want Only, Only Toy Tanks embedded in the cloth. The historical significance and cultural references of this garment are quite compelling. This garment makes references to anti-nuclear testing while reflecting current fashion style.

Godzilla first appeared in 1958 in the motion picture, Godzilla, King of the Monsters (figure E.13). Godzilla was resurrected from the relic Jurassic age due to a nuclear explosion off the coast of Japan. Godzilla begins to become angry after being disturbed and starts to destroy the city of Tokyo. The Japanese military fire weapons at Godzilla and begin to realize that the monster is more powerful than their most powerful tanks. After many attempts to destroy the monster, the military realize it is useless. The movie ends with Godzilla returning to his watery home of his own accord. However, the monster reappears consistently through the twentieth century in movies such as: Godzilla Vs. Monthra, Godzilla’s Revenge, Terror of Mechagodzilla, and Rodan.

The morale of the *Godzilla* story was based upon the negative affects of nuclear testing. The movie reflects the horrific happenings in Nagasaki, Japan in 1945, where millions were killed after an atomic bomb was dropped. Godzilla becomes the messenger of post nuclear blast destruction warning everyone that nuclear testing and war must stop.

While the *Godzilla* story can be taken seriously, it was also given a *camp*-like quality amongst other fans. The technical qualities of *Godzilla* relied on 1958’s special effects. Replicas of cityscapes and road vehicles were used in almost all movies. The tanks that *Godzilla* destroyed in his hands resembled toy tanks. This political statement references *Energie’s* pocket lining that, *We Want Only, Only Toy Tanks*, but keeps the shorts fun without becoming too serious at referencing the theme of war.

Like the cargo pants by Keanan Duffty and Diesel, the actual cargo shorts are fairly insignificant without the branding details. Without the references to *Godzilla*, these *Energie* shorts could not have possibly commanded the $112.00 price tag. While *Energie* has been identified as a luxury brand, what really appeals to individuals are these shorts pop cultural and political themes. Those whose *personal milieu* reflects a connection to *Godzilla* or a political stance on nuclear disarmament may think that these shorts represent their individualism.

*The Return to Cargo Origins: Rheul and Gap’s Military Reference*

Since cargo pants and cargo shorts have historically been associated to war, some consumers may think that this theme is permanently embedded in this garment. We have been at war with Afghanistan since October 2001. The nation has felt a stream of terror since the fall of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11th, 2001. The *War on Terrorism* is a battle that everyone can relate to because it affects every single one of
us. Since the 2001 attacks and the beginning of the war, cargo pants and shorts have maintained a relationship to their military theme by some fashion retailers. While some have taken the actual cargo garment and given it a modern silhouette in a luxury fabric, others have maintained military integrity and surplus quality with cargo pants and shorts. The following two styles of cargo shorts by Rheul and Gap suggest a return to cultural branded military themes for cargo shorts, but in a fashion style that is reflective of today’s style.

Ruehl’s Cargo Shorts: As stated in Chapter 3, Ruehl is the upscale division of the Abercrombie & Fitch corporation. As of 2006, Ruehl operates only a few stores across the nation, with expansion to occur over the next couple of years. The Ruehl cargo shorts (figures E.14-E.15) are a basic twill fabric. These shorts were featured in the store’s first assortment package in 2005. The shorts have no distinguishing features on the outside. However, on the inside of the shorts, the company has created branding and styling details reflective of a military theme (figure E.16).

The first photo in the upper left displays how Ruehl brands its waistbands of their cargo shorts with markings similar to that of a surplus look. What reinforces the surplus style is the patch sewn onto the pocket liner. This patch displays such information as garment size, fabrication, country of origin, a fake serial number, and washing instructions reflective of a traditional cargo military surplus patch. Even the Ruehl No. 925, Greenwich St., New York, NY., patch sewn inside the garment looks military surplus in appearance. The inside of these shorts have small traditional detailing such as
a pocket for a pocket-watch, however Generation Y refers to this pocket as the “condom pocket.” The shorts have a general look of sophistication that reflects Ruehl’s ability to culturally brand their shorts to reflect military themes.

**The Gap’s Cargo Short:** Gap’s cargo shorts, like Ruehl’s, have no distinguishing brand markings on the outside. However, Gap does reference military surplus with a twill tape strip located above the back right pocket of the shorts. This strip is similar to the bias strips found above the pockets of military shirts and jackets where soldiers print their names in permanent magic marker.

The blatant reference to military surplus pants can be seen on the inside left pocket (figure E.19) of these shorts. The Gap has branded these shorts with a stamp. This stamp features a coat-of-arms and the phrase, *Fatigue Cargo Shorts.* It also states the Composition of the shorts (100% Cotton), the Stock No., the Name, Rank, and Division- with the word Gap printed at the bottom. This stamp resembles those stamps found on the inside of traditional military fatigues. Moreover, by reading the following stamp, the reader would get the impression that Gap is a division of the military suggesting that those who purchase these cargo shorts become soldiers of Gap’s fashion military.

Were the designers at Ruehl and Gap influenced by the cultural phenomena of the Afghanistan war, or by traditional military styles? With the *War on Terrorism* prevalent in our national consciousness, has it also become enculturated into the world of fashion? Yes! Cargo pants and shorts have become *vehicles of communication* either by placement in an ad, a designer label sewn into the garment or through patches, hang tags, screen prints and new buttons. The cargo pant and short have become insignificant in the
process of fashion. What has become more important, are the cultural messages attached to each cargo style. These cultural messages create meaning in order for the individual consumer to have a personal attachment to the garment based upon cultural and personal identification. Consumers buy the cargo pants, wear them and create their own *personal milieu* that other consumers and *gatekeepers* of fashion see. Whether or not the fashion *gatekeepers* are influenced by consumers off the street for future fashions or the latest art movement depends on the culture of brands. But what is true is that the context of popular culture does impact garments such as cargo pants, reinventing an otherwise basic garment into new fashions season after season.

Summary

In this chapter, this researcher analyzed how designers, retailers and merchandisers create fashion distinctive branding details on and in their cargo pants and shorts. Each brand detail is suggestive of an individualized and/or social phenomenon reflective of popular culture. These details not only customize the garment in order to relate to a market niche but also allow a consumer to create a personal style. This chapter has shown how branding details can include the use of: patches, hang tags, interior detailing and other markings that connect the cargo pant or short to a specific retailer. Moreover, these branding details create nostalgic associations or stories giving the branded product another *context* that reflects historical frameworks and popular culture.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a summary of research findings is presented. The chapter also includes a discussion of the potential for future research on cargo pants, as well as suggestions for fashion branding studies. The objectives of this study were to: (1) analyze the true origins of cargo pants; (2) provide a conceptual framework for branding cargo pants; (3) suggest how cargo pants have moved into the luxury market; and finally (4) demonstrate how the detail fashion branding of the actual-‘cargo pants’-have evolved into a vehicle of brand storytelling.

In this study, fashion and brand ideologies were used to explain how a garment like cargo pants (the fashion) are no longer the main attraction for the consumer when making a purchase. Instead, a consumer may identify with the fashion branding via the selling story created to contextualize and market the cargo pants. According to Jean Baudrillard, these branding channels sometimes create a hyperreality that entices the consumer to buy the garment thinking s/he is “purchasing” part of the fantasy of a...
story. While cargo pants are the only mass fashion item discussed in this study, other garments such as T-shirts, denim, polo shirts, khakis, as well as many other mass produced consumer products (both hardlines and softlines) are branded using similar strategies.

Another aspect of this study was to analyze cargo pants in the market place from the perspective of theoretical foundations of branding. This demonstrated how a retailer and/or designer systematically manipulates the meaning of a single garment-type, such as cargo pants through the process of fashion branding. Moreover, this research illustrates that during a particular fashion season a garment can have multiple applied branded meanings.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 (Objective 1: The Origins of Cargo Pants)

The analysis of the historical sources suggests that there is more than one actual origin for cargo pants. Investigation of the pants reveals that during the 1940s, the pants were simultaneously developed across the various divisions of the military in more than one country. During the 1950s, and even today, cargo pants have not only been worn in the military, but are also staged as key garments in film, worn by sub-cultural groups, and have even been developed as a mass fashion garment across many retail markets. Moreover, the influence of original military style currently inspires cargo pant design that is worn as fashion.

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Chapter 3 (Objective 2: A Conceptual Framework for Branding: Creating Context and Meaning for Cargo Pants

Fashion studies by Jean Hamilton\textsuperscript{216}, Matthew Debord\textsuperscript{217}, Fog Klaus, Christian Dudtz, and Baris Yaka\textsuperscript{218} reveal how fashion is really about “storytelling.” The analysis of Abercrombie & Fitch’s visual marketing and use of cargo pants and shorts in their ads suggest how contextual placement of a garment creates new meaning for mass fashion garments to appeal to a specific market niche. In conclusion, this chapter suggests how a retailer can strategize the market position of a garment by utilizing print advertising that includes: visual aesthetics, historical frameworks, and popular culture.

Chapter 4 (Objective 3: “What’s in a Name?” The Branding of Ralph Lauren’s Cargo Pants

In “What’s In A Name? The Branding of Ralph Lauren’s Cargo Pants,” the theoretical examination of the designer name Ralph Lauren explains how cargo pants have been adopted and reinvented into perceived luxury garments. Ralph Lauren cargo pants were shown without the use of his advertising to demonstrate how the name Ralph Lauren has become enculturated internationally, thus signifying luxury status in the mind of consumers. However, an analysis of the cargo pants’ design features alone suggests they do not truly reflect luxury without using the designer’s name. The analysis reveals how an association to a designer name or retail company can elevate a historically non-luxury garment to a perceived luxury status.


Chapter 5 (Objective 4): Popular Culture and the Detailed Branding of Cargo Pants

This chapter analyzes the integration of branding techniques directly on and into the garment and demonstrates how garments are becoming part of the “storytelling” process for designers and retailers. While, direct marketing with hangtags, application of logos, and exterior embroidered objects like Ralph Lauren’s polo pony have been used for fashion branding, this researcher points out that fashion branding now includes more unusual design details such as fabrics for interior linings printed with historical signifying icons such as Godzilla (figure 5.10). Moreover, direct references to culture are affirmed by embroidered applications such as the Union Jack flag on Keanan Duffty’s cargo pants (figure 5.3). These associations imply that designers and retailers are now drawing on both direct (brand referents such as logos) and indirect icons from popular culture (Godzilla) to create a market niche for cargo pants.

Implications for Future Research

The conclusions of this study lead to further questions and suggestions for future research by fashion branding scholars, costume historians, and others interested in consumer, popular, and material culture.

1. This study was limited to an examination of cargo pants as a fashion garment only touching on its historical utilitarian functions. Future studies of the pant and its historical uses need to be conducted. Also, exhibiting both authentic cargo pants and mass fashion cargo pants together in a gallery or museum would allow the public to see how current styles still borrow from the historical military pant.

2. Future research could focus on how modern advertising and consumption impact historical studies of fashion. Questions to consider are: How will media outlets
(each retailers’ Internet site, catalog, television, and print advertising), technology, and consumer’s use impact researchers interpretation of future studies in fashion history? Will fashion and costume historians be able to truly tell the history of a garment in the twenty-first century without considering branding? Will these historians need to consider each garment from the perspective of retail or designer branding techniques?

3. There are many theories that suggest why consumers purchase fashion merchandise. Yet, there are no theories that connect how the fashion branded meaning transmitted to the consumer affects their decision to purchase. In his book *Culture and Consumption II*, Grant McCracken also suggests a need for more theories of consumer behavior based upon meaning-management. While this researcher’s study has investigated possible meanings associated with cargo pants, it does not give definitive reasons for meaning in consumer behavior. Therefore, a theory, or themes of fashion branding and meaning need to be developed.

4. This study was limited and only builds upon the possibilities of how a mass fashion garment can become personalized, however it does not provide the needed research on what happens to a garment post-purchase. A model of fashion branding not only demonstrates the steps of the fashion branding process, but post- consumer purchases of the fashion branded item needs to be developed.

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How did s/he use it? How did it become part of a personal consumer brand in the home?

5. While this researcher has shown that print advertising, labeling and applied branding techniques can influence a consumer’s purchasing decision process, the study did not consider how various media outlets such as television, Internet, catalog, retail in-store presentation, and retail in-store marketing could all possibly require processes when trying to brand the same fashion product. For example, can you market the same pair of cargo pants across all media for a retailer using the same methodology? Or does each media outlet require special contextual placement and style for the garment to look appealing to the consumer market? And does the use of various media outlets allow a retailer to reach more than one market niche?

While some of the concepts behind fashion branding are not new. The branding phenomenon is the latest in a field of research that is being continually investigated by both scholars and marketing practitioners. No one is able to unlock how branding influences a consumer’s decision to buy, however there is certainty that without branding products lose their distinctiveness and perceptions of quality. This obstruction suggests additional questions: What is the future of branding research? How will branding be measured? How does the retail store context influence the consumer’s perception of the brand?
Finally, what is the future of cargo pants and shorts? Will they become classic styles that are enculturated into mass fashion, forever becoming a new basic khaki style or a replacement for denim? As one of my personal heroes, Jack McFarland, states on the last season of *Will & Grace*, “Cargo pants were in and cargo pants were out, now they are in again. I don’t know what it means but I own thirty-four pairs of them.”

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APPENDIX A

FIGURES FOR CHAPTER 1
Figure A.1: Cover of Target Sunday Circular August 17, 2003. © Target, All Rights Reserved
Figure A.2: Keanan Duffty Cotton Cargo Pants for Target Fall 2006.
Figure A.3: Energie Men’s Cotton Capri Short Back Right Pocket Summer 2006.
Figure A.4: Inside Gap Cargo Short Pocket Summer 2006.
Figure A.5: Various Hang Tags from Abercrombie & Fitch, Old Navy, Banana Republic, and Kenneth Cole.
Figure A.6: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop 2000.
Figure A.7: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop 2000.
Figure A.8: Individual Wearing Cargo Pants, © Joe Hancock, All Rights Reserved.
Figure A.9: Individual Wearing Cargo Shorts © Joe Hancock, All Rights Reserved.
APPENDIX B

FIGURES FOR CHAPTER 2
Figure B.1: 1944, 2-Pocket Field Pants, Herringbone Cotton Fabric, $85.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.2: 1994, 6-Pocket Desert Camo, Cotton Nylon Fabric, $35.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.3: 1967, 7-Pocket Jungle Fatigues, Cotton Poplin, $60.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.4: 1952, M1951 OG 107 Field, Cotton Fabric, $58.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.5: Battle Dress of United States Army Soldier During World War II. Courtesy of United States Military.
Figure B.6: Eisenhower leading the troops during WWII. Note the fatigues of the soldiers in this photo. Courtesy of United States Military.
Figure B.7: Eisenhower leading the troops during WWII. Note the fatigues of the soldiers in this photo. Courtesy of United States Military.
Figure B.8: United States soldiers during WWII. Courtesy of United States Military.
Figure B.9: 1943, Green Herringbone M-43 Combat pants, $145.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.10: American soldiers capturing Germans during WW II. Although the American soldiers in this photo are wearing cargo pants, the inspiration for the pants came from the short pocketed coats being worn by Germans in this photo. Courtesy of the United States Military.
Figure B.11: 1945, Green Twill, Flying Type A-8 Air Force, $125.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.12: 1945, A-11 Cotton, Alpaca lining Air Force pants, $125.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.13: 1951 Khaki Wool Battledress Pants, $95.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.14: 1955, F-1 Sage Nylon Air Force pants, $95.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.15: 1979, Green Polyamide Hot Weather Fire Resistant pants, $85.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.16: 1981, 6-Pocket Camo Brown Dominant, $45.00. Courtesy of Vintage Trends.
Figure B.17: Gary Cooper wearing cargo pants in one of his films. Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLP.
Figure B.18: The 1979 Village People’s *Live and Sleazy* album cover featured cargo pants. Courtesy of Casablanca Records.
Figure B.19: 1984 Movie *Sixteen Candles*’ main heartthrob Jake (on right) wore cargo pants throughout the entire film. Courtesy of Universal Studios.
Figure B.20: Abercrombie & Fitch is one retailer responsible for the resurgence of cargo pants in mass fashion. © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved
Figure B.21: J.Crew Cotton Herringbone 2-Pocket Cargo 2004.
Figure B.22: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Gray Flannel Wool and Cashmere $565.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure B.23: Old Navy Nylon T-Shirt Lined Active Cargo $19.99 Winter 2001.
Figure B.24: Hangtags from Various Retailers. The Old Navy tag is from the pants in figure B.23. Notice how the tag tells a story with just words and the image of the plane.
Figure B.25: Inside Gap Cargo Short Pocket Summer 2006.
APPENDIX C

FIGURES FOR CHAPTER 3
Figure C.1: Abercrombie & Fitch  Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.2: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.3: Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts Summer 2005.
Figure C.4: Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts Summer 2005.
Figure C.5: Ezra Fitch “Casual Luxury” By Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Summer 2005.
Figure C.6: Ezra Fitch “Casual Luxury” By Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Summer 2005.
Figure C.7: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Twill Cargo $54.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.8: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Twill Cargo $54.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.9: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Sand Lake Zip Off $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.10: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Sand Lake Zip Off $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.11: Abercrombie & Fitch Gray Bedford Cotton Corduroy Red Velcro Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.12: Abercrombie & Fitch Gray Bedford Cotton Corduroy Red Velcro Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.13: Abercrombie & Fitch Green Bedford Cotton Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.14: Abercrombie & Fitch Green Bedford Cotton Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.15: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Stone Bedford Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.16: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Stone Bedford Corduroy Cargo $59.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.17: Abercrombie & Fitch Button Front Zip Pocket Cotton Utility Cargo $39.98 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.18: Abercrombie & Fitch Button Front Zip Pocket Cotton Utility Cargo $39.98 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.19: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $69.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.20: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $69.50 Fall/Winter 2000.
Figure C.21: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Longer Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.22: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Longer Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.23: Abercrombie & Fitch Side Zip Cotton Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.24: Abercrombie & Fitch Side Zip Cotton Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.25: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring Summer 2001.
Figure C.26: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon Paratroop $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.27: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon North Basin Roll-Up $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.28: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton and Nylon North Basin Roll-Up $49.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.29: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Tie Bottom Cargo $59.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.30: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Tie Bottom Cargo $59.50 Spring/Summer 2001.
Figure C.31: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Camo Cargo Short $44.50 Spring/Summer 2002.
Figure C.32: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Camo Cargo Short $44.50 Spring/Summer 2002.
Figure C.33: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Long Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2002.
Figure C.34: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Long Cargo Short $49.50 Spring/Summer 2002.
Figure C.35: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Corduroy Cargo Pant $49.50 Holiday 2002.
Figure C.36: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Corduroy Cargo Pant $49.50 Holiday 2002.
Figure C.37: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Recon Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2003.
Figure C.38: Abercrombie & Fitch Cotton Recon Cargo $49.50 Spring/Summer 2003.
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<td>Cargo</td>
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<td>Men’s</td>
<td>Zip-Off</td>
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<td>121</td>
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<td>Men’s</td>
<td>Commando</td>
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<td>122</td>
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<td>Roll-Up</td>
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Table C.1: Back-to-School 1999 “Innocents Abroad” Cargo Pants.
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<td>Rival Shores: The American Student Vs. The British Student</td>
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<td>When London Woke Up</td>
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<td>Rugby: What’s Up With That?</td>
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<td>Lifeguard</td>
<td>114</td>
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<td>Diving Around</td>
<td>117</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<td>Doggy Style</td>
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<td>Urban Studies</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Missing the Boat/CDs to Own</td>
<td>170-171</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Lil Kim</td>
<td>173</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Back to the Beat Again</td>
<td>174-175</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Dork Zone</td>
<td>176</td>
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<td>Video</td>
<td>Culture to Rent</td>
<td>204</td>
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<td>Video</td>
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Table C.2: Back-to-School 1999 “Innocents Abroad” Curriculum/Academics.
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<td>Dylan in Hyde Park</td>
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<td>Rugby Game: American Team Vs. British Team</td>
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<td>History in Syon House</td>
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<td>Playing Hookey in Battersea Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boxing Tournament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitzboy Lodge Boxing Team South London</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central School For Speech and Drama Play Practice</td>
<td>218-219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Weekend Holiday in Prague</td>
<td>242-246</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking 1st Place at the London Rowing Club</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Good Stable in London</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing on Eaton Square</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Cinderella Story</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord Chamberlain’s Invitation</td>
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<td>Sculpting the Future at St. Martin’s College of Art and Design</td>
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Table C.3: Back-to-School 1999 London Experiences.
Figure C.39: “London Garden Party” p. 320. © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
Figure C.40: “London Garden Party” p. 316. © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
Figure C.41: Trafalgar Square p. 3 © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
Figure C.42: The American Rugby Team p. 77© Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
Figure C.43: The British Team p. 79 © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
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<td>Men’s</td>
<td>81 Year Island Salvaged Drawstring Cargo</td>
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<td>Petra Cropped Flight Pant</td>
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<td>Laurel Ripstop Scrub Pant</td>
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<td>Caroline Cargo Short</td>
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Table C.4: Summer 2003 “A&F Quarterly Presents…”
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<td>Action/Gladiator</td>
<td>The Forbidden Warriors</td>
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<td>Action/Jungle</td>
<td>The Secret of the Lost Jungle</td>
<td>25-38</td>
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<td>Action/Western</td>
<td>How The West Went Wild</td>
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<td>Horror</td>
<td>Web of Horror</td>
<td>51-62</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Romance</td>
<td>House of Love</td>
<td>63-74</td>
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<td>Science Fiction</td>
<td>Martians in Heat</td>
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<td>Pornography/Homosexual</td>
<td>Summer Boys2</td>
<td>85-90</td>
<td>Models Nude</td>
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<td>Drama</td>
<td>Young Rebels</td>
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<td>Horror</td>
<td>The Vampyre’s Kiss</td>
<td>99-110</td>
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<td>Pornography/Heterosexual</td>
<td>Amanda Needs It Now</td>
<td>111-119</td>
<td>Models Nude</td>
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Table C.5: Cinema Genre and Film Titles in A&F Summer 2003 Magazine.

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<th>One Nude Female</th>
<th>Nude Male/Nude Female</th>
<th>Nude Male/Nude Male</th>
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<th>Nude Human and Other</th>
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Table C.6: Erotic Scenes and Nudity.
Figure C.44: Gladiator from A&F’s “The Forbidden Warriors” p. 12 © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
Figure C.45: Vampire Attack from A&F’s “The Vampyre’s Kiss” p. 109 © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.
Figure C.46: Nude from “House of Love” p.69 © Bruce Weber, All Rights Reserved.

227
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodney Dangerfield</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>234-235</td>
<td>Back to School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan Mullally</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>236-237</td>
<td>Will and Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Poehler</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>238-239</td>
<td>Saturday Night Live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horatio Sanz</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>240-241</td>
<td>Boat Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey Feldman</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>242-243</td>
<td>Gremlins/Goonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindy Sterling</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>244-245</td>
<td>Austin Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ren &amp; Stimpy</td>
<td>Cartoon Actors</td>
<td>246-247</td>
<td>Ren &amp; Stimpy Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeet Ulrich</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>248-249</td>
<td>As Good As It Gets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina Hall</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>250-251</td>
<td>Scary Movie Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Renner</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>252-253</td>
<td>S.W.A.T.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbie Williams</td>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>258-259</td>
<td>Escapology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Knipfel</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>262-263</td>
<td>Slackjaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Singer</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Stanford</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>270-271</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famke Janssen</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>272-273</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Marsden</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>274-275</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Cudmore</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kea Wong</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Kirk</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keely Purvis</td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>X-Men 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan Lee</td>
<td>Cartoonist</td>
<td>278-279</td>
<td>Marvel Comics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table C.7: Celebrities and Their Credits.
APPENDIX D

FIGURES FOR CHAPTER 4
Figure D.1: Armani Exchange Cotton Front Pocket Cargo Pants $88.00 Summer 2004.
Figure D.2: Armani Exchange Cotton Front Pocket Cargo Pants $88.00 Summer 2004.
Figure D.3: Armani Exchange Sateen Cotton Cargo Pant $88.00 Fall 2004.
Figure D.4: Armani Exchange Sateen Cotton Cargo Pant $88.00 Fall 2004.
Figure D.5: DKNY Sateen Low Pocket Cotton Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004.
Figure D.6: DKNY Sateen Low Pocket Cotton Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004.
Figure D.7: DKNY Cotton Twill Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004.
Figure D.8: DKNY Cotton Twill Cargo Pant $125.00 Fall 2004.
Figure D.9: Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006.
Figure D.10: Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006.
Figure D.11: Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006.
Figure D.12: Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006.
The *Griffe/Original Designer*

Exclusive Product Lines and
Original Fashions Made by Head Designer

Mass Fashions and Designs created
by Junior Designers

License Products and Lesser Quality Fashions

Figure D.13: Kapferer’s Luxury Pyramid Model.
Outer Rings: License Products and Less Quality Fashions
Locations: Designer Factory Outlets and Discount Stores

Middle Rings: Mass Fashions and Designs Created by Junior Designers
Locations: Department Stores and The Designer’s Specialty Stores

Inner Area: Exclusive Product Lines and Original Fashions
Locations: Designer Flagship Stores and Posh Locations

The Core: The Designer

Inner Area: Exclusive Product Lines and Original Fashions
Locations: Designer Flagship Stores and Posh Locations

Middle Rings: Mass Fashions and Designs Created by Junior Designers
Locations: Department Stores and The Designer’s Specialty Stores

Outer Rings: License Products and Less Quality Fashions
Locations: Designer Factory Outlets and Discount Stores

Figure D.14: Kapferer’s Constellation Model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cargo Pant</th>
<th>Year/ Price/ Country of Origin</th>
<th>Fabrication</th>
<th>Number of Pockets &amp; Details*</th>
<th>Other Detailing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.15-4.16 Black Basic Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2003/ $89.50/ Made in Dominican Republic</td>
<td>100% Cotton Poplin Pant</td>
<td>6 Pockets- Button Closures on all Pockets/ Cargo Pockets are on Interior of Pant</td>
<td>Adjustable Buttons on Pant Leg to taper pants if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.17- Figure 4.18 Tan Canvas Cargo Field Pants</td>
<td>2004/ $125.00/ Made in Thailand</td>
<td>100% Cotton Canvas Pant</td>
<td>9 Pockets-Snaps on Cargo Pockets/ Zipper on 1Pocket</td>
<td>Reinforced Seat/Bias Tape Fly Zipper/Adjustable Waistband/ Inside Locker Loops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.19-4.20 Tan Corduroy Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2004 / $125.00/ Made in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>100 % Cotton 12 Wale Corduroy Pant</td>
<td>9 Pockets- Snap Closures on all pockets/ Zip Pocket Side Left Leg/ Pocket on Lower Left Leg</td>
<td>Pull Cord Fly Zipper/2 inch pant hem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.21-4.22 Grey Flannel Wool Blend Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2004/ $225.00/ Made in Malaysia</td>
<td>68% Wool/ 31% Nylon/ 1% Elastane Brushed Wool</td>
<td>12 Pockets-1 Pocket Upper Left Leg/ 1Pocket Upper Right Leg/ 3 Pockets Left Leg/ 2 Pockets on both lower Right and Left Leg</td>
<td>Button Fly/ 3 Leather Pull Tabs on Pockets/Snap Closure on all Other Pockets/Contrast Twill Tan Pocket Flaps on All Pockets/Pants are not lined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.23-4.24 Navy Twill Slim Leg Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2005/ $165.00/ Made in Thailand</td>
<td>66% Cotton/ 34% Ramie Twill</td>
<td>8 Pockets- 2 Pockets on both upper right and left leg/ 2 pockets on both lower right and left legs</td>
<td>Silver Snap Closures on all Pockets/ Bias Tape Leg Snaps on Upper Right and on Right and Left Calves to Adjust Pant Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.25-4.28 Green Slim Leg Linen Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2005/ $165.00/ Made in China</td>
<td>59% Linen/ 41% Silk Plain Weave</td>
<td>14 Pockets- Coin Pocket on Right Leg/ 2 Pockets Upper Right/1 Pocket Upper Left/ 3 Pockets Lower Right Leg/4 Pockets lower left leg.</td>
<td>Copper Snaps and Zippers on Pockets/Reinforced Knees and Seat/Ties at Bottoms of Legs/Pull Tab Zip Fly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table D.1: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Styles
Table D.1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cargo Pant</th>
<th>Year/ Price/ Country of Origin</th>
<th>Fabrication</th>
<th>Number of Pockets &amp; Details*</th>
<th>Other Detailing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.29-4.30 Brown Heather Canvas Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2005/ $225.00/ Made in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>100% Cotton Canvas</td>
<td>8 Pockets- 2 Upper Pockets on both legs/ 2 Side Zip Pockets on both legs</td>
<td>Articulate Knees, Zippers and Leather Pull Taps on all pockets/Contrast twill flaps on upper pockets/ detailing on bottom of pants/Interior Zippers on Inside Leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.31-4.32 Corduroy Cargo Short</td>
<td>2005/ $85.00/ Made in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>100% Cotton 12 wale corduroy</td>
<td>12 Pockets- 3 on Right Leg, 5 Left Leg</td>
<td>Zippers Pull Tabs on 3 Pockets/ Snaps on 4 Pockets/Reinforced Seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.33-4.34 Chocolate Canvas Slim Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2005/ 2005/ Made in Macau</td>
<td>100% Cotton Overdyed Canvas</td>
<td>11 Pockets- 1 Flap Pocket Upper Right Leg/ 3 Mid-Right Leg/3 Mid-Left Leg</td>
<td>Pull Tab Zipper/Tie Waist/ Bias Tape Belt Loops/Metal Fasteners on 3 Upper Front Pockets/1 Zipper Pocket/7 Snap Pockets/Leg Adjusters/Reinforced Knees and Seat/Bottom Leg Ties/Total Pant Look is Worn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.35-4.38 Tan Corduroy Slim Leg Cargo</td>
<td>2005/ $165.00/ Made in Macau</td>
<td>100% Cotton 12 Wale Corduroy</td>
<td>12 Pockets- 1 Upper Right and 2 Upper Left Legs/ 3 Right Side Leg/2 Left Side Leg/</td>
<td>Button Belt Loops/Button Closure on Top 3 Pockets/Fastener on Back Right/5 Snap Closures on Pockets/2 Upper Left with Leather Trim/Reinforced Knees/Side Zips and Snaps on Outer Legs of Pant/Overall Look is Worn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.39-4.40 Gray Flannel Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2005/ $565.00/ Made in Italy</td>
<td>95% Wool/ 5% Cashmere Brushed Flannel</td>
<td>6 Pockets-2 Pockets or both sides of each leg</td>
<td>Leather Pull Tab Zip Fly/Tie Waist/ Flap Pocket Closures/Articulate Knees/Tie Bottoms/ Not Lined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.41-4.42 Cream Twill Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2006/ $89.50/ Made in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>100% Cotton Twill</td>
<td>12 Pockets- 1 Upper Right/ 2 Upper Left/ 3 Mid-Right Leg/ 2 Mid-Left Leg/</td>
<td>Metal Pull Zip Fly/ 3 Zip Pockets/ 7 Branded Ralph Lauren Snap Pockets/ Tie waist/ Locker Loop/ Articulate Knees/ Orange Contrast Stitching on Button Fly and Side Zippers/Ralph Lauren Brand Patch Above Right Back Pocket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.43-4.44 Canvas Dark Tan Cargo Pant</td>
<td>2006/ $165.00/ Made in Macau</td>
<td>100% Cotton Canvas</td>
<td>12 Pockets- 3 Mid Left Leg/ 3 Mid Right Leg/ 2 Lower Right Leg</td>
<td>Metal Pull Zip Fly/ Bias Tape Belt Loops/ Reinforced Crotch and Back End Seat Area/1 Zip Fly Pocket/ 9 Branded Silver Ralph Lauren Snaps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 4 standard pant pockets assumed unless noted.
Figure D.15: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Black Poplin Cotton $89.50 Spring/Summer 2003.
Figure D.16: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Black Poplin/Cotton/$89.50 Spring/Summer 2003.
Figure D.17: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.
Figure D.18: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.
Figure D.19: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Khaki Corduroy Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.
Figure D.20: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Khaki Corduroy Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2004.
Figure D.21 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Grey Flannel Wool Blend $225.00 Fall/Winter 2004.
Figure D.22: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Grey Flannel Wool Blend $225.00 Fall/Winter 2004.
Figure D.23: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Navy Twill Ramie and Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005. Author’s note: Purchased in London.
Figure D.24: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Navy Twill Ramie and Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005. Author’s note: Purchased in London.
Figure D.25: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005.
Figure D.26: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005.
Figure D.27: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005.
Figure D.28: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Olive Green Silk and Linen $165.00 Spring/Summer 2005.
Figure D.29: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Brown Heather Canvas Cotton $225.00 Spring/Summer 2005. Author’s note: Purchased in London.
Figure D.30: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Brown Heather Canvas Cotton $225.00 Spring/Summer 2005. Author’s note: Purchased in London.
Figure D.31: Ralph Lauren Cargo Short Tan Corduroy Cotton $85.00 Spring/Summer 2005.
Figure D.32: Ralph Lauren Cargo Short Tan Corduroy Cotton $85.00 Spring/Summer 2005.
Figure D.33: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Brown Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.34 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Brown Canvas Cotton $125.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.35: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.36 Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.37: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.38: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Tan Corduroy Cotton $165.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.39: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Gray Flannel Wool and Cashmere $565.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.40: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Gray Flannel Wool and Cashmere $565.00 Fall/Winter 2005.
Figure D.41: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Cream Twill Cotton $89.50 Spring/Summer 2006.
Figure D.42: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Cream Twill Cotton $89.50 Spring/Summer 2006.
Figure D.43: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Tan Canvas Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2006.
Figure D.44: Ralph Lauren Cargo Pant Dark Tan Canvas Cotton $165.00 Spring/Summer 2006.
APPENDIX E

FIGURES FOR CHAPTER 5
Figure E.1: Email from J.Crew for 100% Cargo for Men.
Figure E.2: Patch inside J.Crew’s *Vintage Corduroy Cargos*, September 2006.
Figure E.3: Keanan Duffty For Target Cotton Cargo Pant $29.99 Fall 2006
**Meaning Sources:**
- Advertising,
- Packaging,
- Event Marketing,
- Promotions,
- Product Placement,
- Public Relations,
- Point-of-Sale,
- Store Design,
- Store Display,
- Catalogues,
- Endorsements,
- Websites,
- Buzz Campaigns,
- Experimental Marketing

**Delivery Devices:**
- Movies,
- Television,
- Radio,
- Magazines,
- Blogs, Cultural Zines,
- Novels,
- Comic Strips,
- Trends,
- Fads and Fashions,
- Historical Events

**Cultural Context**
- Product
- And/Or
- Service

**Individual Consumer**

Figure E.4: Meaning Sources and Deliver Devices - Grant McCracken with additional by author.

Figure E.5: Keanan Duffty hangtag on Target cargo pant.
Figure E.6: Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006.
Figure E.7: Diesel Asian Inspired Cotton Slim Cargo Pant $100.00 Spring 2006.
Figure E.8: The Inside Asian characters of Diesel’s Cargo Pants.
Figure E.9: Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006.
Figure E.10: Energie Rip-Stop Cotton Capri Cargo Short $112.00 Summer 2006.
Figure E.11: Energie Men’s Cotton Capri Short Back Right Pocket Summer 2006.
Figure E.12: Energie Short Inside Detailing of “We Want Only, Only Toy Tank.”

Figure E.13: Still from the original 1956 Godzilla, King of the Monsters, Sony Wonder Video release, 2002. © Sony Wonder, All Rights Reserved
Figure E.14: Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts $58.00 Summer 2005.
Figure E.15: Ruehl Cotton Cargo Shorts $58.00 Summer 2005.
Figure E.16: Rheul details for their cargo shorts.
Figure E.17: Gap Rip-Stop Cotton Cargo Short $38.00 Summer 2006.
Figure E.18: Gap Rip-Stop Cotton Cargo Short $38.00 Summer 2006.
Figure E.19: Inside Gap’s Rip-Stop Cargo Short.
GLOSSARY

**benchmarking**: In competitive analysis, comparing a company with other firms considered best in terms of efficient operations (Brannon 2005: 405).

**brand image**: A distinct set of tangible and intangible characteristics that identify a brand to a target customer (Brannon 2005: 405).

**branding**: A competitive strategy that targets customers with products, advertising, and promotion organized around a coherent message as a way to encourage purchase and repurchase of products from the same company (Brannon 2005: 406)

**cargo pants**: Utility style pants first developed by the military for uniforms. For this study, it includes pants having two-six large side pockets on both sides of the legs. Other names for the pants include: fatigues, cargo, side cargo, utility pants, two-pocket, six-pocket, and double pocket cargo pants.

**chronology**: This refers to a consumer’s search for the authentic and a preoccupation with the past (Berger 2003: 78).

**context**: “The circumstance or situation in which a message is transmitted and received. Context is one of the six most basic factors in any process of communication. The other factors are addresser, addressee, contact (or channel), code, and the message itself (Colapietro 1993: 73).”

**critical theory**: “The key to understanding critical theory is the recognition that it not a unified body of thought. Each researcher is best understood in his/her relation to other thinkers (Baldwin, Longhurst, McCracken, Ogborn, and Smith 1999: 109).” “Critical researchers maintain that the meaning of an experience or an observation is not self-evident. The meaning of any experience will depend on the struggle over the interpretation and definition of that experience (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 144).” “A postmodernized critical theory accepts the presence of its own fallibility as well as its contingent relation to progressive social change. In this light of reflective humility, critical researchers do not search for some magic
method of inquiry that will guarantee the validity of their findings. “As Henry Giroux (1983: 17) maintains, “methodological correctness” will never guarantee valid data, nor does it reveal power interests within a body of information (Denzin and Lincoln 1999: 151).”

cultural branding: “The set of axioms and strategic principles that guide the building of brands into cultural icons (Holt 2004: 11).”

de-differentiation: The blurring between what was once considered high culture and low culture in the minds of consumers. An example is the mass reproduction of artwork that was once considered rare (Berger 2003: 78).

designer brand label: A retail brand that is represented by person who is the originator of the brand name. Examples include: Chanel, Calvin Klein, Giorgio Armani and Ralph Lauren.

emotional branding: This term as been coined by Marc Gobe. He suggests that a brand must engage the consumer on the level of the senses and emotions. How a brand ‘comes to life’ for consumers will forge a deeper lasting relationship (Gobe 2001: XIV).

fragmentation: The splitting of similar or mass groupings into smaller categories and product ranges for diverse target markets (Berger 2003: 78).

hyyprreal: A term coined by Jean Baudrillard. Hypperality represents the inability of a consumer to distinguish between what is attainable and real versus what is unattainable and/or fantasy (Baudrillard 1988: 17).

icon: “In iconic signs, the signifier represents the signified by apparently having a likeness to it. This type of sign is often very important in visual images, especially photographic ones. Thus a photograph of a baby is an iconic sign for that baby. Diagrams are also iconic signs, since they show the relations between the parts of their object (Rose 2005: 78).”

iconography: The study of an image and its production, circulation and how and why cultural meanings and their visual expressions come about historically (Leeuwen: 92).

index: “In indexical signs, there is an inherent relationship between the signifier and signifier. ‘Inherent’ is often culturally specific, so a current example familiar to Western readers might be the way that a schematic picture of a baby soother is often used to denote a room in public places were there are baby-changing facilities (Rose 2005: 78).”
**lifestyle merchandising:** Strategy used by merchandisers to display and create context for selling consumer products. A lifestyle or suggestions on “how to live” is attached to a garment to create customer interests in the product (Agins 1999).

**material culture:** “The name given to the study of person-thing relationships; it is the study of things- or objects-in-use (Lury 1996: 1).”

**pastiche:** The artful and ironic mixing of traditional categories and styles into new presentations. Creating new style from established consumer products (Berger 2003: 78).

**props:** “Objects in adverts can be used in a way unique to a particular advert, but many ads rely on objects that have a particular cultural significance. For example, spectacles often connote intelligence, golden light indicates tranquility, and so on (Rose 2005: 77).”

**postmodernism:** Postmodernism it to denote a specific period in Western culture. “This culture, according to theorists like Jean Baudrillard, is composed of disparate fragmentary experiences and images that constantly bombard the individual in music, video, television, advertising and other forms of electronic media (Childers and Hentzi 1995: 235).

**referent:** What a sign (a word, a symbol, a drawing, etc.) stands for (a thing, an idea, an event, etc.). Example: A cargo pocket can represent the idea of cargo pants (Dansei 2000: 192).

**retail brand label:** A retail brand that is represented by company or store that is the originator of the brand name. Examples include: Banana Republic, Gap, Club Monaco, and The Limited.

**setting:** “Settings range from the apparently ‘normal’ to the supposedly ‘exotic’, and can also seem to be fantasies (Rose 2005: 77).” These create context for your product.

**semiotics:** The analysis of signs or the study of the functioning of sign systems (Cobley and Jansz 1999: 4).

**sign:** Something that stands for something else (Colapietro 1993: 179).

**signified:** The signifier calls attention to something other than itself; the signified is the recipient of that attention (Colapietro 1993: 181).

**signifier:** The context of the signified (Colapietro 1993: 181).
symbol: “Symbol signs have a conventionalized buy clearly arbitrary relation between signifier and signified. Thus pictures of babies are often used to represent notions of the future (Rose 2005: 78).”

target market: “An approach that focuses on attracting a specific potential purchaser, one whose lifestyle, preferences, and aspirations that are predisposed to see a match with the offer (Brannon 2005: 404).”

visual culture: “Is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. By visual technology, I mean any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil painting to television and the internet...visual culture is a tactic with which to study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer (Mirzoeff 1999: 3).”
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