

Heritage and children's fashion: case-study of the rebranding of the French Jacadi (2006-2010)

Aude Le Guennec

Heriot-Watt University, UK

A.Le_Guennec@hw.ac.uk

Abstract

Statement and Theory: Time and history in contemporary childrenswear.

Perusing childrenswear of the late 1970's onwards seems like scrolling a timeline which, since the middle of the 19th century, plays around the repetition of similar shapes, features and patterns. This timeless repertoire recurs from decade to decade and contributes to the connection between the generations sharing common memories of pristine white dresses and preppy breeches (Le Guennec, 2013). This sense of history and connection to the past, as a core element of children's fashion, echoes the position of children as a link between the past and the future (Quentel, 1997; Balut, 2014). This nostalgia, "facilitating the continuity of identity" (Sedikides et al., 2008) between the older generations and their heirs, embeds children's material culture, bonds the generations mirroring each other through their styles and allows children's socialisation by the appropriation of this past in fashion (Levy, 2013). Therefore, for children's fashion brands evolving in a contemporary market where the past is valued and a centennial heritage treasured as a guarantee of reputation, emphasizing timeless inspirations and a long-lasting history is a continuous quest.

Case Study: Created in 1976, Jacadi is a French brand dedicated to children aged 0-12 years, supplying fashion, childcare and furniture products. From its creation, Jacadi has been inspired by the nostalgic and preppy style of upper class children in the early 20th century Europe and incarnated a timeless "Chic à la française" which has contributed to its reputation. In 2005, Jacadi joined the holding IDKids.Community, and undertook a thorough reflection on its branding, including the need to rethink the narrative of the collections, the communication and retail style. At this point in its history, this heritage brand was struggling to find an identity, lost in a melting-pot of inspirations, diverse interpretations of the notion of tradition and nostalgia in fashion, and unfocused creative directions. For IDKids.Community, the education and socialisation process of a child aware of her role in the society, considered as a "being and a

becoming” is key (Prout 2005). The respect of children as consumers but more importantly as users and future adults is a priority in the definition of the brand promises of the group. Therefore, defined by its nostalgic approach of childhood and the sense of transmission, Jacadi aimed to be anchored in a reinvented past. As an expert of European children’s fashion history, and the keeper of a textile and fashion museum dedicated to children’s clothing (Cholet, France), I was invited to contribute to the rebranding of the range (Le Guennec 2018). If the notion of heritage brand was blooming at this time, such an appetite to secure the legacy and positioning of a range dedicated to the overlooked Children’s ready-to-wear was unusual. Undertaken between 2006 and 2010, the project that I coordinated in close partnership with the senior management of the company and the creative teams, aimed to identify an original methodology to create a branding tool. The aims of this research focused on the needs to identify consistent inspirations for the design of the products as well as the communication and the retail style. It addressed the necessity to gather together a repertoire of inspirations and traditional features supporting the renewal of the creative direction. This collaborative research has contributed to the definition of a pretend centennial heritage for an only forty years old children’s fashion brand, who was looking at establishing its reputation and gaining more visibility. It has allowed the creation of a common brand culture for all the collaborators of the brand, accessible to the customers and reinforcing the position of Jacadi as a premium high-street heritage brand for children.

Objectives:

To respond to the concept of nostalgia in childhood and to connect with the customers through the development of a childrenswear brand based on the notion of transmission and heritage.

To establish Jacadi as a heritage brand, with a consistent story-telling inspiring the collections, retail and communication.

To create a heritage-based brand culture for Jacadi, spread through the brand promise to all collaborators and understandable by the clients.

To identify the appropriate methodology to create a branding tool and story-telling inspired by the heritage of children’s fashion and clothing.

Methodology: This project started with the definition of the core values of the brand and their contextualisation in history. Based on the object-based analysis of children’s material culture through the collections of European fashion museums; the visual analysis of the representations of childhood in the arts, literature and family archives and the cultural environment of the time; this corpus was analysed using an original coding defined in conjunction with the strategy of the

brand. This corpus was interpreted and combined in a functional way, to form the grounding of the story-telling of the brand and to establish its creative signature. This original semiotic approach combined visual analysis (Van Leeweun, Jewitt, 2010) and object-based research in fashion and textile heritage collections (Kim, Mida, 2015), with elements of design anthropology and story-telling. This presentation will communicate this methodology in the light of the objectives to address, in more depth.

Results and conclusions: This database has developed into a consistent repertoire digitalised and designed for the teams in charge of the creation of the collections, the communication and the retail. As the root of a solid corporate culture, this heritage platform has been used upstream to secure a consistent approach to the narrative of the collections, and downstream to communicate this story to the customers, to the children as users and their parents as buyers (Cook, 2004).

Finally, reflecting on the model established thanks to this experience, this paper will present the techniques of dissemination of this research to the collaborators of the brand, in order to create a participative corporate culture fed by a strong sense of transmission and heritage and contributing to the perpetuation of the concept of nostalgia in childhood outside the sole consideration for the needs of the market.

This contextualised case study has since then allowed the creation of a branding and creative tool, avoiding the sole copy and paste of the heritage and allowing further in-depth interpretation and connection with the customers of heritage brands.

References

- Balut, P.-Y. (2014), *Théorie du vêtement*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- Barrère, C. (2013), « Heritage as a basis for creativity in creative industries : the case of taste industries », *Mind & Society: Cognitive Studies in Economics and Social Sciences*, Springer;Fondazione Rosselli, vol. 12(1), 167-176.
- Cook, D. T. (2004), *The commodification of Childhood and the rise of the child consumer*, Duke University Press.
- <https://corporate.idkids.com/en/group/our-vision/>
- <https://www.jacadi.co.uk/brand>
- Graham, B., Howard, P. (eds.) (2008), *The ashgate research companion to heritage and identity*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing,.

Jin et al., (2017) Fashion Branding and Communication 1st ed. 2017., New York : Palgrave Macmillan.

Le Guennec, A. (2013), « Enfance vintage : quand le passe inspire », in Villelongue, M. (ed.) Défier le temps, une affaire de mode, Lyon : Editions Lyonnaises d'Art et d'Histoire.

Kim, A., Mida, I. (2015) The dress detective: a practical guide to object-based research in Fashion, London : Bloomsbury.

Le Guennec, A. (2018), « Du musée à la thèse : vers un modèle d'étude du vêtement d'enfant », Tétralogiques, n°23, 115-142.

Lévy, P. (2013), "Beyond kansei engineering: The emancipation of kansei design", International Journal of Design, vol. 7(2), 83-94.

Prout, A. (2005), The future of childhood, Oxon: Routledge.

Quentel, J.-C. (1997), L'enfant, problème de genèse et d'histoire, Paris-Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.

Sedikides, C. et al., (2008) "Nostalgia as an enabler of self continuity", in Sani F. (ed.) Self-continuity: individual and collective perspectives, New-York: Psychology Press, 227-237.

Van Leeuwen, T., Jewitt, C. (ed.) (2010), The handbook of visual analysis, London: SAGE.

Keywords: Children's fashion; story-telling; nostalgia; branding; fashion history.

ISBN: 978-989-54263-1-7