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Lund University

Master of Science in International Development and Management

May 2026

The Tale of Fashion Brands and Ethical Consumption

A Case Study of Vivienne Westwood's Brand Identity and Ethical Communication with
Chinese Consumers

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Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Catia Gregoratti, for her guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the adventure of writing this Master's. Thank you for all the African snacks that you have shared with us during thesis discussions.

Then, I would like to thank every interviewee who participated in this research. Without your time, knowledge, and discussions, I would never have come this far. And I wish you all to stay cool like Westwood herself.

Thank you, my parents, who have unconditionally supported me over the past years and encouraged me to pursue further studies in development.

Thank you to all the friends who accompanied me through my Bachelor's and Master's studies at Lund University; your presence, support, and encouragement mean more to me than anything and have made the last 5 years a wonderful journey. I hope that we can meet again soon.

Finally, I would also pay tribute to the late Vivienne Westwood, whose legacy of punk spirit and her care for the environment, humans, and animals has inspired this paper. May she rest in peace.

Abstract

The fashion industry has been criticized for its significant negative environmental and labor rights impacts. In response, some fashion brands are now seeking to address these concerns by integrating ethical values into their operations and forming alliances with consumers to promote ethical consumption. While they have constructed ethical values and aim to communicate them to their consumers, the effectiveness of such efforts, especially in a cross-cultural context, is less understood. This research takes the fashion brand Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers as a case study to examine how Vivienne Westwood has constructed its ethical values as part of its brand identity, and to investigate the factors that have limited the effectiveness of communicating these messages to their Chinese consumers.

By analyzing Vivienne Westwood's official discourses and conducting semi-structured interviews with its Chinese consumers, the findings show that Vivienne Westwood's identity myth is established around the founder's life story and then partially reinterpreted by the cultural values embedded in Chinese consumers' cultural contexts, such as their distinct heroes, symbols, and rituals. This, combined with the brand's limited communication of these values, has led to the marginalization of ethical meanings, thereby forming a negotiated reading among the Chinese consumers.

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Key Abbreviations

MIK: Made in Kenya

EFI: Ethical Fashion Initiative

ODA: Official Development Aid

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

CRM: Cause-Related Marketing

CCCB: Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior

BCM: Buy Less, Choose Well, Make it Last

1. Introduction

The fashion industry has made vogue clothing and jewelry designs more available to customers worldwide. However, discussions and research regarding environmental sustainability and labor rights suggest that the industry no longer seems as glamorous as the commodities it brings to consumers: the fashion industry has been placed in a controversial position due to development challenges, such as environmental degradation and labor rights challenges stemming from the textile and clothing production value chain (European Parliament, 2020; Clarke & Holt, 2015). Due to the conjunction of these issues with trade regulations and emerging awareness of fashion brands and their consumers, some brands are now claiming to aim to “do good” throughout their operations, including tactics such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or being involved in Cause-related marketing (CRM)¹ to make their business operations have positive development outcomes. Such phenomena have led the private sector to be recognized as a new actor in the field of development (Richey & Ponte, 2014), where brands, consumers, and celebrities collaborate to approach development goals by brands and celebrities promoting ethical consumption, and consumers consuming ethically. As the case study for this research, Vivienne Westwood, the British fashion brand, has claimed to reduce its negative social impacts during production, and to raise consumers' awareness of better consumption mindsets through slogans and storytelling within its brand operations. Also, the launch of the “Made in Kenya” collection reflects the brand's CRM aims to support marginalized artisans in Kenya. Based on the cultural branding definitions presented by Holt (2004), this research considers Vivienne Westwood an iconic brand because its characteristics align with the theory of cultural branding, making it a brand that consumers can express their self-identity.

On the other hand, China, as an emerging economy with growing purchasing power, is now the country that generates the second-highest revenue for Vivienne Westwood, after the United Kingdom (Rocco, 2026). If ethical consumption values are evoked among Chinese consumers, the country could become a powerhouse in helping to readdress development challenges such as environmental sustainability and labor rights in the fashion/clothing industry.

¹ Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) means the marketing practice to tie a product to a cause, while proportion of the profit is contributed to the linked cause (Richey & Ponte, 2014)

This research aims to use the fashion brand Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers as a case study to investigate how Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages are constructed to be delivered to its Chinese consumers, while examining the effectiveness and potential asymmetries that can arise between Vivienne Westwood's original ethical meanings and the Chinese consumers' differentiated perceptions and opinions, especially in a cross-cultural context. To do so, this research will use Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model to bridge Vivienne Westwood's encoded messages and their decoding among Chinese consumers. While Holt's (2004) theory of cultural branding and Ponte & Richey's (2014) model of Brand Aid will be integrated in the encoding side to understand how Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages are constructed within its brand narratives. And on the consumer side, Luna & Gupta's (2001) Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior (CCCB) model will be used to understand how cross-cultural values can reinterpret the encoded messages with new meanings, leading to a different understanding of the decoded messages.

1.1 Research Background

1.1.1 All That Glitters is Not Gold

The fashion industry is often associated with the textile industry, as fashion garments are primarily made from textiles. Within the textile industry, several development challenges emerge throughout the value chain. From the perspective of the environment, the textile industry is considered one of the most water-contaminating and draining industries due to cotton farming and dyeing techniques (Oeko-Tex, 2020), where challenges such as water scarcity and pollution emerge along the production process. On the other hand, labor rights challenges are also associated with such a labor-intensive industry; incidents such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza complex also underscore that the working conditions within the textile and clothing industry require urgent change (Ashraf & Prentice, 2019; Takedomi, 2023). Furthermore, fast-fashion brands are commonly associated with low quality, low prices, and mass production, at the expense of labor abuse and environmental degradation (Takedomi, 2023; Ross, 2021). And in the cycle of such consumption comes a tremendous waste, where alone in the United Kingdom, 1 billion kilograms of textile waste are produced annually (Clarke & Holt, 2015). These development challenges have led to the rise of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Fashion Revolution, which aims to address these problems by advocating for better practices within the fashion industry (Fashion

Revolution, n.d.). And for private actors, such as brands, have elevated their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) beyond merely mitigating their negative environmental and labor impacts to proactively “do good” throughout their operations (Blowfield, 2005), and participating in CRM campaigns demonstrates their dedication to addressing these critical problems (Ponte & Richey, 2014).

1.1.2 Vivienne Westwood: the Punk Grandmother, the Activist, and the Brand

The term “Vivienne Westwood” can refer either to herself or to her eponymous fashion brand. This section conceives “Vivienne Westwood” as a floating signifier that can embed multiple layers of meaning depending on context. On the one hand, Vivienne Westwood can be seen as the clothing brand with punk values embedded at its core. From another perspective comes Vivienne Westwood herself, whose different identities become additional layers: the punk-grandmother, the fashion designer, and the activist. This research emphasizes the importance of these multiple meanings, which, in the later text, will be discussed as the foundation for constructing an identity myth from a cultural branding perspective.

From the perspective of Vivienne Westwood herself, her early life has constructed the layers of “the Punk Grandmother” and “Designer”. She was first influenced by the punk rock culture under the relationship with Malcolm McLaren, the former manager of the highly influential punk rock band Sex Pistols. During the relationship, she designed and sold garments influenced by punk culture in a store on King Road in London, where the aim was to deliver political statements through fashion (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.a). In the present, her designer garments are sold under her eponymous brand Vivienne Westwood in stores around the world. While being known as a famous designer and the “Punk Grandmother”, the second layer of meaning comes from her identity as an activist; her role as an activist has been considered to be equally impactful as her career as a designer (Westwood & Kelly, 2015).

“Vivienne cares a lot about the planet, but she cares a lot about human rights as well.”
(Westwood & Kelly, 2015)

Throughout her life as an activist, she has been engaged in environmental activism and campaigns, supporting hundreds of NGOs, grassroots charities, and other relevant development-related organizations, while also launching the “Climate Revolution” campaign and serving as an ambassador for Greenpeace (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.b).

The last layer among these signifiers is Vivienne Westwood as a brand. As previously stated, her designs are to a great extent influenced by the punk rock culture, while her experiences and values from her life as an activist have also been infused into the ideologies of her eponymous brand. On Vivienne Westwood's official website, a rolling quote is shown as follows:

“I am a fashion designer and activist, you all know what I'm up to, I use fashion as a vehicle for activism to stop climate change.” (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.b)

The brand's promotional material ostensibly reflects its ethical values. On their website, the slogan “Buy less, choose well, make it last (BCM)” (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.e), reflects their ideology of consumption, which they aim to promote to their customers. Regarding the use of sustainable materials, the brand claims to continuously increase its use of recycled materials and to substitute lower-impact materials (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.c). The “Made in Kenya” collection exemplifies Vivienne Westwood's CRM efforts. The Made in Kenya collection was launched in the early 2010s in collaboration with the United Nations' subsidiary, Ethical Fashion Initiatives, and the Kenyan social enterprise, Artisan Fashions. The aim of the “Made in Kenya” collection is claimed to be beyond being a charity project, aiming to put tier-1 production in Nairobi to provide adequate job opportunities for local artisans with fair incomes (Vivienne Westwood, 2022). Fair income has provided marginalized artisans with extra budget to invest in aspects such as housing, education, savings, etc. (EFI & Vivienne Westwood, 2016; 2021)

As discussed above, “Vivienne Westwood” itself can convey multilayered meaning, given that this research conceived of Vivienne Westwood as an iconic brand based on the given definitions by Holt (2004). The experiences and spirits of Vivienne Westwood's lifetime, merged with her designed products, can be expressed as an identity myth, where the

storytelling of such a myth can provide customers with a sense of self-identity. In the analysis section, how this “signifier” helps construct the identity myth will be discussed in depth.

1.2 Research Problem & Question

As previously discussed, the fashion industry is riddled with development challenges throughout the value chain. While these problems persist, brands have adopted different approaches to mitigate their negative impacts. While consumers are deemed important because they act as collaborators with the “new development actors” such as businesses in the private sector, they can support a development cause by purchasing what they support (Richey & Ponte, 2014). Moreover, their consumption choices determine the brand's sustainability practices. Such relations reflect how businesses and consumers, as “new development actors”, come together to bring ethical consumption into practice. Brands such as Vivienne Westwood, which have integrated ethical values into their brand identity, have shown attempts to deliver ethical consumption values to their consumers through CRM initiatives and to imply that these values are part of the brand culture. On the other hand, as shown in Rocco's (2026) statistics, China is one of the largest markets for Vivienne Westwood products and a consumption powerhouse; if the resonance is successfully established between the brand's value and its Chinese consumers, it can show a potential way that businesses can raise the ethical consumer awareness of ethical consumption, thereby promoting better practices among the consumers to achieve improvements within the consumer market in terms of its environmental and social impacts. However, according to Hall's (1980) theory of communication and the cross-cultural consumer behavior model by Luna & Gupta (2001), encoded messages can be decoded and understood differently by different audiences in cross-cultural settings, where consumers may have different interpretations of meanings and symbols. In the case of Vivienne Westwood, whether the brand has successfully delivered the ethical consumption values to its foreign customers requires a deeper investigation. Hence, the research will examine how Vivienne Westwood's cultural branding and Brand Aid strategies influence its Chinese customers, and, if their efforts have proven ineffective, the potential cross-cultural factors that have led to asymmetries between Vivienne Westwood's brand messages and consumers' perceptions will be analyzed. Hence, the research questions are designed as shown below:

RQ1 How is Vivienne Westwood's identity and ethical values encoded and then decoded by Chinese consumers?

RQ2 What factors shape Chinese consumers' decoding of the brand's intended ethical values?

1.3 Thesis Structure

In the following section, this paper will first present a literature review of relevant research to understand the research background and research gaps. Then, the theoretical framework will be presented and explained regarding how it can help to conduct this research, and its correlation with the case study will be discussed. After that, the methodology and analysis of the findings will be presented, and the study will conclude with recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review

The literature reviewed is categorized into the following sections: It will first start with the role of consumers, businesses, and other relevant actors, such as celebrities, to understand each of their roles within ethical consumption, and how they interact to achieve sustainable development within the business sector. Then, a set of papers on the challenges of ethical consumption will be reviewed to understand which factors can hinder consumers from consuming ethically, beyond cultural factors. Last but not least, to acquire a better understanding of the case, research regarding Vivienne Westwood's ethical values and how consumer ethics are practiced and reflected in China will also be discussed.

2.1 New Development Actors

In a traditional lens of Development, the primary actors are usually considered to be official or public actors, such as governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (Richey & Ponte, 2014). Richey & Ponte (2014) argue that the roles and responsibilities for development are diffusing to new actors within the private sector, as the economic stresses have led to a shrinkage of official development aid (ODA) outputs.

Whereas in 2007, public ODA investment in development accounted for only 17% of total development investment, compared to 83% from the private sector, assembled through flows such as remittances and private investment (Richey & Ponte, 2014). Within the private sector, the authors have identified three “new” development actors: private businesses, consumers, and celebrities, each of whom can advance development aid in their respective roles.

2.1.1 Ethical Consumption

With ethical consumption in mind, consumers can, to a greater extent, advance sustainable aims that intersect with the private sector. Richey & Ponte (2014) state that their role in development is manifested when they act as ethical consumers and accompany businesses’ involvement in development, as consumers who make decisions shaped by their moral evaluation of ethics. Beyond ethical consumption, Schiaroli (2024) argues that consumers also play an important role in advancing a sustainable model of production and consumption. In the systematic literature review by Carrington et al. (2020), the authors first consider that the concept of “ethical” can vary across individuals, collectives and socio-spatial contexts, but the common idea of ethical consumption is consumption that is not self-benefit oriented, the consumption takes others’ benefits into consideration, which can be either human or non-human, an individual’s or a collective’s benefits. In the work by R & Meppurath (2024), Ethical consumption can be categorized into 5 dimensions, including consumer ethical concerns related to environmental concerns, organic demands, Fair Trade, animal welfare, and anti-consumption, such as boycotting brands or products they disagree with. Such a consumption style is deemed important, as the current rate of consumption and production can lead to resource shortages before 2050 (R & Meppurath, 2024). By practicing ethical consumption, Carrington et al. (2020) claim that trade-offs can accompany such consumption, with costs such as price, performance, status, or identity enhancement for consumers when they choose to be ethical. From the perspective of the fashion industry, ethical consumption can manifest in various values and practices. From a practice perspective, Schiaroli (2024) suggests that consumers’ ethical practices can be achieved by choosing sustainable products, taking extra care of products during use, reducing consumption, and adopting recycling/ reuse practices. CSR and ethical consumption have each reflected the commitment of companies/brands/corporations, as well as consumers, to social and environmental issues, and there is an explicit correlation between them. Kagaba

(2025) argues that, because supply is driven by market demand, when individuals are urged and committed to consume fair-trade or environmentally friendly products, companies will respond by changing their corporate behavior to meet such demand. Similar arguments have also been made in the fashion market, where Shaw et al. (2006) argue that consumers can act as voters, with their purchases reflecting their beliefs and opinions. Hence, if consumers in the fashion industry demand more ethically produced clothing, the industry could theoretically undergo a transformation toward greater environmental and social concerns.

2.1.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and Cause-Related Marketing

As mentioned, ethical consumers play an important role in pushing forward the sustainability within production, as they can act as voters in the market and express what they support by purchasing relevant commodities. From the business side, to either cope with such demand, to do good, or to enhance their business image. Businesses can adapt strategies such as implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Cause-Related Marketing (CRM) initiatives into their business operations. As shown in the literature, these two strategies can both embed development-oriented values into private businesses, but with different approaches. From the perspective of CSR, Hamidu et al. (2015) and Blowfield (2005) have both claimed that the definition of CSR has changed over time, where it initially emerged as a way to incorporate philanthropic values into operations, until the present, being a strategic instrument for both committing to good business and sustainable development. In Carroll's (1991) work, a pyramid of CSR has been presented, showcasing the multilayers of CSR values that a business can embed. From being fundamental to being additions, a business should first prioritize profitability, then comply with the law and rules, be ethical, avoid causing harm, and eventually do good and contribute to the community. According to Castro-Gonzalez et al. (2019), the incentives that companies implement CSR into their business can be strong, as such efforts can serve as an adequate showcase to their consumers and eventually benefit a company's image and operations.

From the perspective of cause-related marketing (CRM), it is, according to Richey & Ponte (2014), a contradictory strategy to CSR, in which the link between a business's operations and production and social and environmental conditions is dissolved (p.6). Instead of making one brand's production chain have less social impact, its aim is to link a cause to products or services, with a proportion of the profit from the sale of these commodities used to support

the mentioned causes. As previously mentioned, under the responsibilities and role of businesses in development, the engagement of consumers is deemed important; similarly, as seen in McCracken (1989) and Ponte & Richey's (2014) work, the role of celebrities is further emphasized. McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model suggests that a celebrity, as an endorser, can assign meanings to a brand or product that the celebrity personally endows. In business-consumer relations, one celebrity, according to Ponte & Richey (2014), functions as a mediator and an ambassador who helps brands and companies advertise cause-related commodities. By linking celebrity to development causes, Ponte & Richey (2014) claim that this makes CRM initiatives marketable. Similarly, with a cause, a branded CRM product, and a celebrity, the combination forms a new alliance for international development in the private sector and is developed into the Brand Aid model. The Brand Aid model describes how a branded product is sold as one with ethical values, with a celebrity as a mediator that links a cause to the product itself (Ponte & Richey, 2014). The model the authors have developed shows how branded products, causes, and celebrities interact and the forms they take when combined with a branded product. For instance, merging causes into branded products becomes the previously mentioned CRM initiative, while the celebrity drives campaigns for the related cause, and markets for the branded products; these interactions altogether form the Brand Aid model, where those branded products are delivered to their Western consumers by a constructed story that delivers stories along the branded products (Ponte & Richey, 2014). Worth mentioning, Richey & Ponte (2014) address the importance of "brand" in the model, noting that it is vulnerable to ethical challenges and thus aim to minimize this vulnerability through CRM campaigns.

2.2 What Hinders Ethical Consumption

As this study focuses on consumers and brands, a body of literature on why ethical consumption can fail among consumers in consuming fashion will also be reviewed. Firstly, Portway (2019) claims that, despite efforts by sustainable brands and NGOs to advocate for sustainability within fashion, it has not yet become as mainstream as other consumer products, such as sustainable food products or electric cars. In the fundamentals of the fashion industry, Clarke & Holt (2015) argue that the industry is driven by cycles of stimulated consumption and waste. Schiaroli's (2024) work has identified 5 reasons

consumers may fail to consume ethically, despite having the will and understanding of its importance.

According to Schiaroli (2024), the first reason is the generally higher prices of ethical fashion alternatives. Shaw et al. (2006) claim that ethical fashion alternatives are often sold at higher prices to ensure fair wages throughout the production chain, which becomes a barrier for consumers on tight budgets. On the other hand, the rise of fast fashion, which offers short-term access to current luxury fashion trends at lower cost, has made sustainable fashion alternatives less feasible.

Secondly, there is consumer skepticism. Schiaroli (2024) claims that one company's insufficient transparency and overly complicated use of words and jargon in sustainable reports and discourses can lead consumers into confusion and skepticism, eventually failing to understand one company's sustainable commitments.

Then, limited knowledge and access to information become another reason. Beard (2008) argues that the fashion industry currently lacks a unified standard or certification for ethical fashion; instead, various buzzwords such as “vintage”, “recycled”, and “fair trade” have emerged, leading consumers to believe that their choices are ethical. Also, Beard (2008) argues that although there are now relevant trade associations that attempt to set up monitoring and promotions for companies to ensure their corporate practices are sustainable, they lack a standardization to regulate these situations, eventually leaving consumers to figure out the “sustainability puzzles”. Shaw et al. (2006) also note that consumers have intentions to purchase sweatshop-free garments, but the lack of information about whether a brand is ethical limits their ability to do so. In a way to approach these challenges, Arrigo (2018) argues that one brand's flagship store can become a decent communication channel for sustainability issues, as the flagship store can most reflect the brand's identity, and can function as a place that consumers can experience the brand, and therefore deliver sustainable values to the consumers.

Another reason is the availability of these products, since some customers consider these products to be hard to find in stores. Shaw et al. 's (2006) research shows that 55% of interviewees have reflected that the accessibility of these products is the reason they have the intention to engage in ethical fashion consumption, but fail.

Last but not least, according to Schiaroli (2024), customers can be restricted by their habits and inertia during shopping, where they can be used to shop at stores that they are used to, instead of seeking newer alternatives.

Additionally, while brands can implement CSR to give their businesses an ethical image among audiences, Lee et al. (2012) argue that a business's CSR values may still fail to be delivered effectively to consumers if the brand's ideology does not align with consumers' lifestyles or values. In other words, resonance between a brand and its consumers is necessary to deliver ethical messages effectively.

2.3 Vivienne Westwood and its Ethical Consumers.

Despite the limited attention to Vivienne Westwood and ethical consumption in previous research, the case study by Clarke & Holt (2015) provides sufficient background on the relationship between Vivienne Westwood and its consumers within the ethical consumption discourse. Clarke & Holt (2015) argue that the fashion industry has encouraged wasteful consumerism, along with the implications of fashion as a symbol of a good life, and criticize the negative social and environmental impacts arising from the fashion supply chain. Under such circumstances, the authors present Vivienne Westwood and their consumer as a case study to explore the ethical potentials of fashion consumption. The authors find that Vivienne Westwood consumers have deep knowledge and understanding of the brand and have established symbolic resonance with it, leading them to view themselves as curators of the brand's story and to embed the brand's ethical values into their fashion consumption practices. Along with the study, Clarke & Holt (2015) emphasize the critical role of consumers, where, from the case of Vivienne Westwood's consumers and their practices influenced by Vivienne Westwood, they argue that the consumers are not in a passive position, but they can also actively push forward ethics within the fashion industry, such as by reflecting the values and meanings of commodities and being aware of the ethical aspects of the producers and their products (p. 211).

2.4 Consumer Ethics in China

In the context of consumer ethics in China, Chen et al. (2019) argue that China's context of consumer ethics is not only shaped by its cultural values, such as Confucian cultural roots,

and individual variations, but the political reforms and demographic changes that are occurring under China's emerging economic developments have also shaped the uniqueness of China's consumer ethics (p.635), they further suggest that Western ethical consumption standards can fail to evaluate the local contexts in emerging economies such as China. Using China's emerging middle class as an example, Chen et al. (2019) suggest that a new middle class is forming in urban areas amid China's rapid economic development, and that rising middle-class disposable incomes are shaping consumer tastes similar to those in the West. However, the authors then argue that the change in consumer ethics does not accompany such a change due to political contradictions and cultural roots, where China's state-driven politics can lead to the new middle class's disagreements with free market ideologies, such as ethical consumption, which are embedded in liberal political stances (p.630), and the roots of cultural values such as Confucianism are still embedded among them, leading different rationales for consumption (p.630).

Similarly, Huo & Kristjánsson (2020) emphasized the core influence of Confucianism, which has formed a virtue-based ethical value and has shown distinctiveness from Western right-based ethical values in light of consumer ethics. Under such a distinction, the author argues that the Chinese consumer would consider factors such as “family as the core”, trustworthiness, patriotism, harmony, and virtues such as necessity, modesty, and thrift as a reflection of ethical consumption (pp.112-114).

Although China's consumers have been argued to have a different understanding of ethical consumption, Wang et al.'s (2021) case study reveals that Chinese consumers also exhibit rights-based ethical consumption awareness, as evidenced by the premiums they are willing to pay for poverty-alleviation apples during online shopping. In Wang et al.'s (2021) study, the authors argue that the reasons for buying ethical products in China can be categorized into ethical and private attributes, which respectively represent buying ethical consumption for their own benefits, such as believing these products are better in quality, etc., or purely due to ethical concerns. However, given that these ethical apples have the same quality and taste as regular apples, the author then claims that most of the interviewees are still willing to pay a premium for the poverty-alleviating apples, as long as the quality of the products is not worse, showing that right-based ethical consumption is embedded in some Chinese consumers' consumption motives. Also, similar to Huo & Kristjánsson's (2020) argument, Wang et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of trust, arguing that consumers' ethical

consumption motives are built on their trust in government supervision of online shopping (p. 1016).

Linking back to section 2.2, where the reasons that form consumers' attitude-behavior gaps were presented, Deng (2015) has presented a more specific research on such a gap in the context of China, which has shown some extent of overlapping of reasons that create an attitude-behavior gap that Schiaroli (2024) has argued, which are respectively the Chinese consumer's buying economic rationality, inertia, cynicism, and ethical cognitive efforts (p.211), which corresponds to Schiaroli's (2024) Price factors, inertia, skepticism, and the lack of knowledge, showing that the factors that shape attitude-behavior gaps to consume ethically are mostly homogenous, even in China, despite having a different cognition of consumer ethics.

2.5 Literature Gaps

From the studies reviewed above, several research gaps have been identified. Firstly, Richey & Ponte's work (2014) has argued the potential roles of businesses as new development actors by adopting CSR into their business operations or by forming development alliances with consumers and celebrities in CRM initiatives, such as the Brand Aid model (Ponte & Richey, 2014), which was initially developed under the assumption that the involved consumers are "Western" (p.65). Under such assumptions, results for consumers in other regions, especially in China, which is considered to have a distinct understanding of ethical consumption due to its cultural context, still require further investigation. A similar gap also exists for Vivienne Westwood's case, where Clarke & Holt (2015) argue that Vivienne Westwood consumers should be considered ethical fashion consumers, as they are sticky consumers with sufficient knowledge, understand the meanings of the brand, and have symbolic resonance for the brand (p. 200), if such resonance is the key factor for Vivienne Westwood to evoke its consumers' ethical values, examining whether such resonances are established between Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers, can provide further insights of whether brand resonances can be constructed cross-culturally, thereby evoking ethical consumption in a broader context. Also, as seen in the case presented by Wang et al. (2021), Chinese consumers have shown to have ethical consumption awareness, but it is also necessary to note that the cause of the case is linked to China's poverty areas, which can possibly establish stronger resonance among the Chinese consumers, and supported by the

trust of the government, while Vivienne Westwood, as a Western brand, was established under frameworks of knowledge from the West, and lacks the same governance supervision that the case of ethical apples had, leading to more uncertainties of whether Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages will be effectively delivered and be transformed into practices such as consuming ethically in cross-cultural communications. Hence, using Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers as the case, this research aims to further investigate how Vivienne Westwood's identity myth and ethical values are communicated to the Chinese audience, while examining how this information is perceived by Chinese consumers in a cross-cultural setting. Doing so helps us understand whether brands can effectively deliver ethical consumption values to consumers through narratives such as identity myths and Brand Aid when encoded into messages and delivered to consumers with different cultural values.

3. Theoretical framework

In this section, relevant theories and models will be presented and explained in relation to their adoption in this research. The encoding/decoding theory by Hall (1980) will serve as the bridge of this model, connecting communication between the brand and consumers. On the brand side, the cultural branding theory by Holt (2004) will be integrated to understand how brand identity messages are constructed, while the Brand Aid model by Ponte & Richey (2014) will be integrated as part of the identity myth from the cultural branding theory. On the consumer side, the CCCB model by Luna & Gupta (2001) is integrated to understand how these messages are negotiated among audiences with diverse cultural backgrounds.

3.1 Theory of Communication

To understand the relation between brands and consumers in light of brand value communication, this research adopts Hall's (1980) theory of communication. Hall criticizes the notion of viewing communication as a linear sender-message process, which overlooks the complex dynamics within it. Hall (1980) argues that the process of communication is articulated by individual processes with their own modalities; despite their connection, these processes cannot guarantee the outcomes of their articulation. Among these processes, production encodes information into messages; circulation bridges the sender and the receiver, delivering the message to the receiver; consumption is the decoding of the encoded

information; and the reproduction phase takes these meanings into social practices. The inner complexity of this system, according to Hall (1980), can be reflected in the communicative exchange, where the lack of equivalence can lead to asymmetrical results between the encoded and decoded messages, resulting in distortions and misunderstandings of the intended messages. These asymmetries in information transmission are, according to Hall (1980), due to structural differences between the sender and the receivers, such as their respective relations and positions. By adopting this theory, we can bridge the gap between the brand and consumers in communication and underscore the potential asymmetries and complexities in the sender-receiver relationship. On the receiver side, the decoded message, according to Hall (1980), can result in three different degrees of outcomes. When the audience has decoded the meanings according to the intended encoded messages, the outcome is defined by Hall (1980) to be the dominant reading (p.125); if the encoded messages are decoded partially symmetrical, it forms the second outcome as negotiated reading (p.126), while in contrast to dominant, if the audience decoded it in a completely contrary way, then the position is seen as oppositional reading (p.127).

3.2 Encoding: Cultural Branding theory

Normally, the Cultural Branding theory presented by Holt (2004) is more commonly used in studies of marketing or brand management, where it aims to explain how brands become iconic in the market. This paper applies this theory with an interdisciplinary ambition to examine whether a brand can deliver messages about ethical consumption to its consumers as a part of its identity myth. Holt (2004) argues that some brands can become iconic and successful because of their construction and storytelling of identity myths, which, in a consumer market filled with cultural anxieties and aspirations for identity expression, have made cultural icons essential for people to express their identities. Consumers will rely on brand symbols and purchase products from brands they resonate with, in which the brand and its products become tools or symbols for the consumers to construct or align their identities, or to express the “persona” they pursue. In such a situation, a brand itself has gone beyond being a brand that sells a plain product or service; it has become a symbol embedded with a system of cultural meaning, selling a myth or cultural symbol into a market filled with identity stress, while its consumers rely on these symbols to express who they are. While iconic brands function as symbolic resources, they also serve as channels for communicating

cultural meanings. A symbol, such as a name, mascot, brand logo, or discourse, associated with a brand can be charged with cultural meanings by the brand to convey to consumers. By applying cultural branding theory to the encoding-decoding model, this research considers that the practice of brands constructing myths and symbols is the encoding phase of communication between brands and consumers, where the brand charges their product, the symbols associated with the brand with cultural meanings, and is then delivered to the consumers for them to decode, and to find resonance and identity expression from these meanings. Along this process, ethical values and meanings can come as part of this identity, where the Brand Aid model will be integrated to understand how these messages are delivered to the consumers as a part of a brand's identity.

3.3 Encoding Sustainability: Brand Aid Model

As mentioned, private businesses can become development actors if they aim to “do good” through their business operations, while CSR and CRM initiatives can be among the approaches they adopt (Richey & Ponte, 2014). Within the CRM aspect, the Brand Aid model has been presented, where it shows how three variables: Cause, Celebrity, and Branded Products interact: Brand presents a product associated with a development cause, while a celebrity who has relevance to the cause endorses the branded product with consumers as the audience. Such interaction also grants consumers the role of development actors, whereby, when they purchase these brand-aid products, a proportion of the profits is contributed to the linked cause. This research posits that one brand's Brand Aid model provides ethical narratives, which are subsequently transformed into consumable cultural meanings through the process of cultural branding. These meanings become part of the brand's identity myth, enabling consumers to construct identities along the brand's other cultural meanings. Hence, in the theoretical framework of this research paper, Brand Aid is considered part of the brand's constructed identity, where it conveys the ethical consumption values as a part of one brand's identity myth.

3.4 Decoding in Context: Cross-Cultural Consumer Behaviors

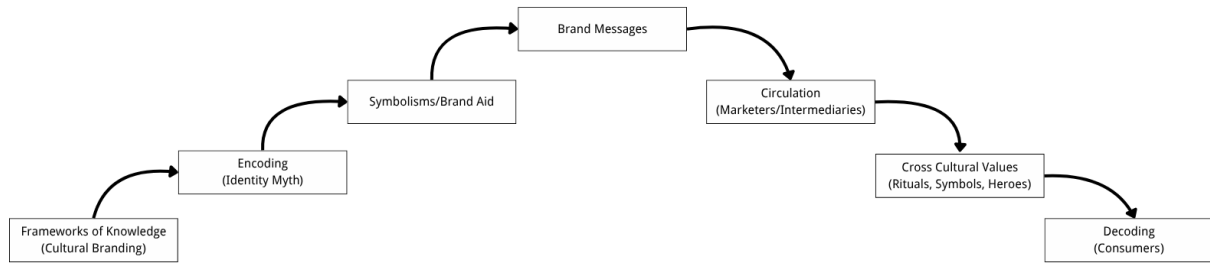
The Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior (CCCB) model presented by Luna & Gupta (2001) aims to explain how cultural value systems can shape consumer behaviors. In the model, the

authors argue that cultural values are constructed by one culture's symbols, heroes, and rituals, while these factors shape each cultural group's consumption behaviors: a hero is a highly influential person or any character within a culture. In their work, they argue that a hero can shape a culture's market behaviors and practices when the hero is associated with a brand or product (p.49); rituals are described as scripts and cognitive schemata that are performed repeatedly, while ritual practice mostly involves the use of goods or services that have symbolic significance (p. 50); while symbols as the unique meanings that a group of people carries in objects and processes, which can include forms such as language, objects, and gestures (p.50), while the authors argue that meanings can be absent in objects, such as products in default, advertising, and similar strategies can imbue them with cultural meanings and thereby make them carriers of cultural symbols. In the work, the authors have further emphasized the role of symbols, where it is defined as processes or objects that are embedded with unique meanings to different groups of people, the symbols can be viewed differently from one culture to another, while a product itself does not possess meaning, with mechanisms such as advertising by intermediaries such as marketers, the products can be charged with cultural meanings, and then seen as carriers of symbols. Additionally, the CCCB model suggests that consumer behavior can also further reinforce the manifestation of culture (Luna & Gupta, 2001).

The discussion of the asymmetries between the encoded and decoded messages in Hall's (1980) work shows that the encoded messages cannot always be delivered intact to receivers, as the decoding process is also influenced by the receiver's different relations and positions. Considering the potential asymmetries that arise in cross-cultural settings, the CCCB model will be integrated into this research to understand how different cultural values, such as symbols, rituals, and heroes, play a role in such dynamics. Applying the CCCB model to the decoding end of the encoding/decoding model can help us understand the potential cultural factors that shape the incentives and reasons of consumers purchasing products from a brand in cross-cultural contexts, particularly when the brand is set as constant.

3.5 The Interplay Between the Theory and Models

By merging the models and theories listed above, the eventual theoretical framework will be set as shown below:



In the relation presented above, the models and theories interplay to enable this research to investigate how fashion brands construct their ethical consumption values and convey them to their consumers as part of the brand's identity, while examining how these messages can be decoded differently among consumers in different cultural contexts. Hence, with Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding model as a bridge, Holt's (2004) Cultural branding theory, and Ponte & Richey's (2014) Brand Aid model establish the identity myths and Brand Aid as a part of one brand's encoded messages, where it will be delivered to the consumers in forms of symbols and Brand Aid initiatives. While in the decoding phase, considering Hall's (1980) argument that asymmetries can emerge between the encoded and decoded messages, Luna & Gupta's (2001) CCCB model will be integrated to understand how such asymmetries form, depending on values and in a specific cross-cultural setting.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

To investigate the research question, this study is conducted as a qualitative case study of Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers. The reason for choosing a case study as the main approach is its suitability for explaining “how” or “why” questions about contemporary phenomena in depth (Yin, 2018). Vivienne Westwood, as a brand with a well-constructed identity myth that has adopted ethical consumption values, is chosen as the case to understand how brands' ethical values are integrated into their brand identity and then encoded for delivery to consumers. Having Chinese consumers as the other perspective of the case helps us reveal how, in a cross-cultural setting, Vivienne Westwood's encoded values and messages, established in Western contexts, are decoded by other cultures, and whether the delivery of ethical values remains effective. When the results show misalignment in consumers' brand perceptions, this paper will integrate the CCCB framework to explain why such a gap has occurred due to cross-cultural friction.

The reason Vivienne Westwood is a suitable case for this study is that it is first due to the previously mentioned identity and symbolism constructed by the multilayered story and background of the brand, and by Vivienne herself. The combination of her ethical consumption and sustainable development values, and their integration into the brand, has made the brand worthy of study through a development lens, without this research being constrained as marketing research. This helps us reveal how identity myths can be used for social impact, especially in cross-cultural settings, rather than being a tool solely for commercial interests. Another reason is due to Vivienne Westwood's extreme characteristics (Clarke & Holt, 2015). An extreme case is considered unusual relative to daily occurrences (Yin, 2018), but it can be beneficial to reveal more basic information and the actors in a study, thereby providing more valuable insights into the normal cases (Flyvbjerg, 2005; Yin, 2018). The extreme perspective of Vivienne Westwood is evident in the rebellious and punk slogans in her designs and in her activism in environmental campaigns (Clarke & Holt, 2015). And as stated, the claim of “deliver political statement by fashion” and “Using fashion to stop climate change” (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.a; n.d.b) further emphasized the extreme nature of Vivienne Westwood as a case to study fashion brands’ ethical message delivery by cultural branding and Brand Aid.

And for the case of consumers, the choice of Chinese consumers is due to the recognition of Vivienne Westwood as a brand with a Western background, and as the CCCB framework is presented, the choice of Chinese consumers makes the research go beyond understanding how cultural branding can deliver ethical values to the consumers, but also to understand how these cultural symbols can be “lost in translation” and form perception gaps under different cultural settings. Also, as mentioned in the introduction, China, as an increasingly consumer-driven market with a large population, can have a significant social impact if ethical consumption values are more widely adopted across the region. Also, as there are approximately 70 Vivienne Westwood stores in China (see Appendix 1), statistics from Rocco (2026) indicate that China is one of the largest Vivienne Westwood markets globally, making the combination of these two cases adequate, with few geographical restrictions and fewer data-collection issues.

4.2 Data Collections Around Encoding and Decoding, and Sampling

The data collection is done separately for the encoding and decoding sides. For data collection on the encoding side, online materials/discourses from Vivienne Westwood's International and Chinese official webpages, as well as secondary literature, were reviewed to understand how Vivienne Westwood's identity and ethical values are constructed, and then encoded into the brand's communication. Having Vivienne Westwood's official webpages as the main source enables us to understand how the brand's identity and ethical values are officially presented, as they are likely to reflect the brand's intended discourses most accurately. Secondary literature was used as supplementary material to contextualize and support the analysis of official discourses, thereby constructing a more nuanced image of Vivienne Westwood's history, identity, and ethical values.

On the decoding side, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted using a set of pre-designed thematic interview questions (see Appendix 2). These questions are designed around themes such as the interviewee's opinions on fashion and ethical consumption, their relationship with the brand, how they perceive the brand's identity and ethical values, and their interaction with the brand's messages. Given that semi-structured interviews have an open nature that can adapt forms and sequences based on the interviewee's answers and stories (Kvale, 2011), and with the recognition that new themes and topics can emerge during the interview process, setting these interviews as semi-structured helps the interviewer engage with the interview process with flexibility, which can prevent overlooking important or relevant discussions that were not pre-considered. 15 of Vivienne Westwood's Chinese consumers were invited to participate in this research. Invitations have been sent on social media platforms such as WeChat and RedNote after not being granted permissions in-store, with the selection criterion that they must have purchased Vivienne Westwood products more than once for their own use. This criterion was designed to ensure that participants have some familiarity with the brand and to allow the sample to include a consumer spectrum ranging from fairly to highly loyal. This criterion has not been made stricter, as doing so could exclude relatively casual Vivienne Westwood consumers, who may represent the vast majority of Vivienne Westwood's Chinese consumers. The interviews were recorded with the interviewee's consent and then transcribed into raw verbatim data for later analysis. By the end of the data collection, the 15 participants had formed a sample of Vivienne Westwood's consumers. This sample comprises 15 female participants from diverse backgrounds, including university students, office workers, pre-fashion students, professional buyers, and

collectors, each of whom has shared distinguished stories about their relationships with the brand Vivienne Westwood.

To acquire sufficient knowledge of China's Vivienne Westwood consumer shopping experiences, 6 stores in China were visited: 3 in Beijing, 1 in Shanghai, and 2 in Suzhou, where the accessibility of Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages and MIK collection was empirically observed. Whether the stores have provided sufficient information regarding Vivienne Westwood's ethics will not be judged by the researcher, as the researcher conducted the visits with the intention of gathering this information and may overlook the experiences and perspectives of ordinary consumers. Hence, it will be determined by the participants' answers to ensure a more objective result.

4.3 Data analysis

Drawing on Hall's (1980) model, the analysis has a bilateral aim. The first is to examine Vivienne Westwood's official discourses and to acquire an understanding of how brand identity and ethical values are constructed and then encoded for consumer communication under the Cultural Branding theory and Brand Aid model (Holt, 2004; Ponte & Richey, 2014). Secondly, it is to understand how these encoded messages are decoded among Chinese consumers under the influence of cultural values, by integrating Luna & Gupta's (2001) CCCB model.

Both the encoding and decoding sides of this research followed an abductive process to approach the research aims, as this research starts from theoretical groundings and involves an ongoing interplay between the theoretical framework and the empirical findings, rather than being a linear process of testing or generating theories that are embedded in the deductive and inductive processes (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018).

Coding has been the main analytical method, following the procedures presented by Hammett et al. (2015), in which the textual data and interviews are assigned meanings and themes throughout the coding process. This process can help us assign thematic meaning to the data in relation to the aims of this research (Kvale, 2011), while new themes and information can emerge throughout (Hammett et al., 2015), thereby unveiling new insights for the analysis and results. The first themes for coding are set as follows:

Encoding of Vivienne Westwood's identity and ethical values

Theme	Meaning
Statements about Westwood	How the brand values are constructed around Vivienne Westwood herself.
Ethical discourses	How the brand's ethical values are constructed.
Brand identity discourses	How the brand's identity myth is constructed.
Brand Aid	How Brand Aid initiatives are presented.

As an eponymous brand of Vivienne Westwood herself, the theme “Statements about Westwood” is designed to understand to what extent Vivienne Westwood, as a brand, has taken in the values and ideologies of the designer herself. while “Ethical discourses”, “Brand identity discourses”, and “Brand Aid” are to understand how the brand values, especially in light of the ethical values, are constructed and presented by the brand.

Decoding of the Chinese consumer's understanding.

Theme	Meaning
Brand Recognition	How the consumer perceives the brand.
Symbolism	What brand symbols mean to them.
Ethical Consumption	Consumers' ethical consumption patterns. Why and why not consume ethically?
Purchase Factors	What determines their choices

Message	How are brand messages delivered?
Heroes, Rituals, Symbols.	What shapes the consumers' behaviors

The themes Brand Recognition, Symbolism, and Messages aim to understand how Vivienne Westwood's brand values, including its ethical campaigns, are perceived by consumers, and whether they have a different understanding of the brand. The themes Ethical Consumption and Purchase Factors aim to understand how they are aware of ethical consumption practices and choices, and if they are aware of Vivienne Westwood's ethical consumption promotions, and what determines their final decisions. Based on Luna & Gupta's (2001) work, patterns of the participants' Heroes, Rituals, and Symbols will also be coded, to understand what potential cross-cultural factors can shape asymmetries between Vivienne Westwood's ethical values and their eventual perceptions.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

To respect and protect the rights of all interviewees, this research strictly adheres to a set of codes of conduct (see Appendix 3) based on Lund University's ethical principles (2024) and adapted to the circumstances of this research. The codes of conduct are either presented to the interviewees or read by the interviewer prior to the start of the interview recording. Mandarin, as the native language of both the interviewer and the interviewees, is used throughout the interviews to prevent any misunderstanding and misinterpretations caused by language barriers. Additionally, the interviewees' identities will be fully protected, while they will be referred to as participants 1-15.

4.5 Reflexivity and Positionality

Following Sultana (2007), it is critical to note that power relations between the researcher and the participants can significantly affect the research's perception and perspectives. Hence, this section aims to identify the positionality issues that can both create opportunities and impose constraints on the analysis and results.

The researcher for this study has a Chinese family background and an educational and academic background in development studies. Such a position grants the researcher proximity to the interviewees while bringing an interdisciplinary lens to this study between marketing and development studies. With cultural and linguistic resonances and as a Vivienne Westwood consumer, he can understand the potential cultural impacts that may shape the results.

Regarding the challenges, it is important to note that, given the researcher's academic background in such fields, biases and presumptions might affect the accuracy of the results. To prevent such problems, the interviews are set to be open-ended, with no single correct answer. Misleading questions and attempts to argue, distort, and twist the interviewee's opinions are avoided as much as possible. Also, due to insufficient academic training in marketing and brand management, the mindset when proceeding with this research will incline towards development, and lack sufficient analysis of the marketing-relevant aspects.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

During the method design phase, several limitations have been realized. Firstly, given that this is a case study of Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers, the results may not be generalizable to similar cases in which the brand or the targeted consumers are the variables. Although the study has chosen Vivienne Westwood as the case study due to its extreme case characteristics, each brand has a different narrative for its brand story or identity myth, which can be encoded differently within the same cultural context. While the adoption of the CCCB model in this research suggests that each country can exhibit different cultural impacts, meaning the results are not applicable to other countries. Another perspective is the sample size and method adopted: with 15 participants, the sample may not provide a representative view of China's Vivienne Westwood consumers; it can, however, provide in-depth qualitative insights into how Vivienne Westwood's Chinese consumers interpret the brand's identity and ethical values.

5. Analysis

Drawing on the 15 semi-structured interviews conducted with Chinese Vivienne Westwood consumers, each interviewee has shared their distinct experience with the Brand and their

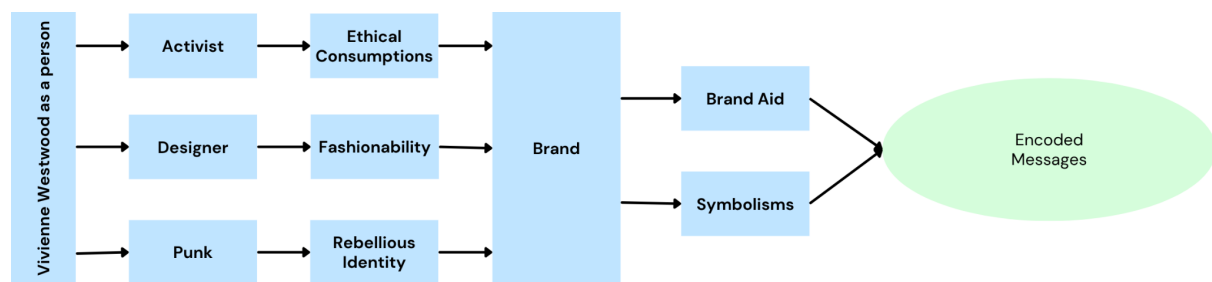
opinions on ethical consumption in general and from the Brand, while some common patterns among the interviewees have emerged. Among the participants, their perceptions of the brand's messages are mostly shown as negotiated reading within Hall's (1980) outcomes of communication. The participants' understanding of the brand has, to some extent, overlapped with Vivienne Westwood's values and meanings. Such resonance comes from the participant's aesthetic recognition of Vivienne Westwood. From other perspectives, they have also constructed new understandings of the brand's symbols and meanings, leading to some degree of asymmetry relative to the initially encoded messages. Such asymmetry is especially evident in perspectives on ethical consumption values. Results show that these values do not align with Vivienne Westwood's ethical values, and that most participants were unaware of Vivienne Westwood's ethical values, indicating that the brand's ethical message delivery has been ineffective in China. This section presents the analysis of both sides of the encoding/decoding and transmission processes: firstly, how Vivienne Westwood's Ethical Brand Values are constructed through its identity myths and Brand Aid, and the ineffective communication resulting from either the absence or reinterpretation of Vivienne Westwood's ethical identity and messages.

5.1 Encoding of Messages: Construction of Vivienne Westwood's Brand Identity

As previously discussed, this research has considered the name “Vivienne Westwood” as a floating signifier with multilayered meanings and representations, with evidence from several sources on Vivienne Westwood's official website showing that, as a brand, its core identity myth is constructed around Westwood herself. Westwood, as an iconic representative of punk culture, has narrated a story about herself and the punk culture and rebellious values with Malcolm McLaren and The Sex Pistols (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.a). Meanwhile, as seen on Vivienne Westwood's homepage, Activism, Materials, and Sustainability page (n.d.b; n.d.c; n.d.d; n.d.e), the “Buy Less, Choose Well, Make it Last” slogan, the statements of her role as an activist, and how she uses fashion as a vehicle to address these challenges, not only demonstrate her ethical values and views, and also imply to the consumers that her eponymous brand has additionally integrated ethical values such as care for the environment, human and animal rights along the punk and rebellion ideologies, and has made the brand's products a sustainable choice. Additionally, Vivienne Westwood's (2022) presentation of the “MIK” collection further manifests the brand's ethical approach through a CRM initiative.

Based on the cultural branding theory by Holt (2004), as Westwood brought such ideologies into her fashion designs, the brand is constructed with identity-myth while charged the ideologies and cultures into her clothing brand, this research considers that Vivienne Westwood, as a brand, has borne the responsibilities as a media for the consumers with the same ideology and culture-identity for self-expression of their identities, while they consume the products charged with symbolic meanings, and purchase the Brand Aid product to express their resonance with the brand. Under such constructions, this study argues that the identity myths of Vivienne Westwood are based on these multilayered meanings derived from herself as the core, and with the conjunction of the fashion style, her activist career, and values, and the representation of the punk culture with rebellious values, while these meanings are then charged into the brand's symbol carriers, and Brand Aid products.

A visualization is shown below:



Identity Encoding of Vivienne Westwood

5.1.1 Symbols

As indicated above, the construction of an identity myth assigns meanings to a product of meanings, which can be expressed through symbols. This research considers its brand logo and name to be symbolic media that represent its identity and can be used by consumers to express cultural resonances. The logo of Vivienne Westwood features a globus cruciger orb with a Saturn ring on its outer surface (Vivienne Westwood, 2013), and is also commonly referred to as the Saturn (土星) among participants and on social media. The logo appears in designs for Vivienne Westwood's jewelry, bags, and garments. This study considers that this logo, or design, functions as a unique visual symbol, and its uniqueness can express their values and identities by wearing products bearing such a symbol. And for the verbal symbol,

Vivienne Westwood, along with the Chinese colloquial name, is seen as the verbal communicational symbol, and is embedded with the meanings and identity of the brand.

5.1.2 Brand Aid

In the case of Vivienne Westwood, this research argues that the Brand Aid initiatives are highly intertwined with its cultural branding and identity myths, as the Brand Aid components of the brand have formed a closed loop within the brand, and both its Brand Aid and its identity construction all come from Westwood herself as the core. As seen in Ponte & Richey's (2014) work, the essential trinity of the Brand Aid model comprises a celebrity, a case connected to the celebrity, and a branded product endorsed by the celebrity and linked to the case. When the Brand Aid model is applied to Vivienne Westwood, the celebrity is Westwood herself, given her active engagement with environmental issues (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.b) and her concerns for Africa (ITC, 2011). For the relevant cases, issues relevant to Westwood's activist career and to supporting Kenyan marginalized artisans were applied (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.b; 2022). Lastly, the branded products are set to be Vivienne Westwood's products in general, while having more notable cases such as the MIK collection, as she has claimed to reduce the brand's product adverse impacts through the use of more ethical materials (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.c), while the MIK collection manifests a more concrete case connected to development. The formation of such a closed loop makes the Brand Aid model of Vivienne Westwood tightly linked to the Brand's identity myth, as both showcase to the audience the values and stories that Vivienne Westwood herself portrayed and have integrated into the brand.

5.2 Chinese Consumers' Perception of Ethics

Before discussing Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages, a brief conversation on ethics in fashion was held with the participants. 10 of the participants expressed a positive attitude towards the necessity of ethical consumption. While the term ethical consumption can encompass a wide range of goals and practices, 5 participants with a positive attitude explain that they are more sensitive to animal-protection consumption than to other ethical topics, meaning they refuse to purchase animal-based or tested products when shopping. Despite having positive attitudes, the participants claim that they do not prioritize ethical factors when

choosing a product, because more feasible options in the market, on price or design, have made ethical factors a lower priority in their decisions. Or, more simply, they consider that fashion products' priorities remain their fashionability.

“If I really like a product [...] I will buy it, and then, knowing its story, (the story) will endow it with meaning, or think it's meaningful. But I would not buy it just because of its story, since I think that's what all brands are doing now [...] If I buy clothes and jewelry, it's about material and design, and if the price is under my affordability” (Participant 3).

While one product's ethical features do not become the reason for participants to purchase the product, 6 of the participants claim that they will, however, boycott brands or products if they have been reported to engage in unethical behavior during their operations. One example that has been brought up is Dolce & Gabbana, as a demonstration of the practice of boycotting. In 2018, Dolce & Gabbana released a marketing video that was accused of racism towards Asians, resulting in the brand losing 98% of its Chinese consumers (Li, 2022).

“Such as Dolce & Gabbana, it has insulted China, I would then not choose their stuff [...] Regarding the environment, I do not consider that much, unless a brand is reported on the news negatively, then I would not (buy it).” (Participant 11)

5.3 Communication Analysis: Why Ethical Messages Fail to Deliver.

As mentioned, Vivienne Westwood's aesthetic cognitions are decoded by the consumers according to its originally embedded values and definitions; the vast majority of the 15 interviewees have associated the brand with terms such as Punk, Rebellious, Rock, Elegance, and Avant-Garde. These words have, to some extent, overlapped with the initial idea and style that Vivienne Westwood has repeatedly aimed to convey on its websites. This indicates that the brand has, to a large extent, successfully delivered its aesthetic ideas and values to consumers, as evidenced by the alignment in the visual communications between Vivienne Westwood and consumers. However, in light of the communication of ethical values integrated in the brand, the participants were shown not to be aware of the ethical

consumption values and practices that Vivienne Westwood aims to convey, only 3 participants expressed sufficient knowledge of Westwood's activism, the integration of her ethical values into the brand, and the aims of the Made in Kenya collection. This shows that the brand's ethical communication with its Chinese consumers has been ineffective. After presenting the relevant information extracted from Vivienne Westwood's websites, such as the MIK collection and the BCM slogan, the participants have shown mixed understandings and opinions regarding the respective cases. Based on Hall's (1980) theory, this research suggests that the transmission process can lead to the formation of such asymmetries in the transition of Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages, as he argues that message transmission can be a complex process and that several factors within it can lead to different interpretations of meaning. The modality of the process consists of breaks and interruptions that exist throughout the process and affect the effectiveness of message delivery (p.118). Also, meanings circulate discursively, and transformations can occur during the process, which can be framed by factors such as assumptions about the audience (p.118). Also, Luna & Gupta (2001) have emphasized the role of marketers in the CCCB model, where they can advertise certain products based on the context of a culture, implying that the marketers, or similar intermediaries, can potentially transform the original brand messages by localizing them for a more suitable context.

In the process of message delivery, this research identifies several intermediate actors who deliver encoded messages to consumers: the brand itself through its stores and website, social media, sales and fashion buyers, and other celebrities, but they each can have potential factors that undermine the effectiveness of delivering Vivienne Westwood's ethical messages.

5.3.1 The Stores and Websites

As the most official channels for delivering the products, services, and values of Vivienne Westwood, the official stores and websites reveal the first potential failures in delivering ethical messages to consumers. During the interviews, the “Buy less, Choose Well, Make it last (BCM)” slogan from Vivienne Westwood's official website and the “MIK” collection were cited as examples of Vivienne Westwood's ethical values and efforts. For both the slogan and the collection, most of the consumers stated that they were not aware of their existence.

Regarding the discussion of Vivienne Westwood's "BCM" slogan, the vast majority of participants have claimed never to have been aware of it, while expressing different attitudes towards it. For the positive attitudes, the consumers consider that the brand has presented timeless designs for multiple occasions, giving a sense that the brand can provide its consumers a choice of "buying less" by "choosing well", thereby achieving a more ethical consumer practice. On the other hand, 6 participants consider that Vivienne Westwood is to some extent contradictory to the values that the slogan aims to convey. For the first reason, the quality of some Vivienne Westwood products has raised the participant's skepticism about whether they can provide long-lasting use. Secondly, in contrast to the positive attitudes, some consumers consider the designs inconsistent, and the ever-changing styles have failed to signal that the brand is encouraging ethical values by changing consumerist habits.

"But when I am visiting their physical stores, or to say, when I am browsing information of this brand [...], but I haven't seen any statements of long-lasting nor choosing well. And in their physical boutiques, they have a lot of products, which doesn't give consumers the sense that buying one is enough. Do you understand? I don't sense that they are trying to encourage that." (Participant 10)

Additionally, one participant has criticized the Chinese version of the slogan, where she thinks that the "BCM" values have been lost in translation, and failed to deliver its ethical messages to the Chinese consumers successfully. The slogan on the Chinese Website has been translated as "精挑细选, 恒久珍藏," meaning "Choose carefully, Cherish long lastingly" in a literal sense. While the brand translated the slogan into Chinese in an elegant and culturally resonant way, it has, however, blurred the "buy less" part of the original meaning.

"I don't think it's well translated [...] At least in the Chinese version, I don't think it expresses the sustainable meanings, or it is very shallow [...] But to be honest, if you never told me, I didn't even know that this slogan exists on their official website." (Participant 9)

Regarding the "MIK" collection, participants have shown polarized results in their knowledge and understanding of it. Only a few participants were aware of the existence of

this collection, while they all shared sufficient knowledge of it. For the other participants, further discussions continued after the brief introduction to the "MIK" series. Most participants have expressed a supportive and positive attitude towards the initiatives of the "MIK" collection, and in light of whether they would be interested in or purchase from this collection in the future, the participants with a positive answer are mainly due to their fascination with the supports and involvement of local artisans, while some others have expressed a liking for the relatively exotic designs. On the other hand, some other participants with negative attitudes mainly come from the suitability of designs in their daily uses and likings, then claim that fashion should still prioritize factors such as suitability, affordability, and likings, and the integration of ethics should be an add-on for fashion products, not being a tool for "guilt-tripping" consumers into buying ethical products that they do not like.

From the perspective of in-store shopping experiences, Arrigo (2018) argues that a brand's flagship stores can function as a platform for ethical consumption communications, where the values can be delivered to consumers as they experience the products. However, according to participants' experiences in the store, the ethical information is largely absent during their visits. Decorations, verbal information, and other relevant physical media were either absent or insufficiently presented, leaving consumers unaware of Vivienne Westwood's ethical values.

"Except for (Made in) Kenya and World's End² products, and some photos of Vivienne herself have mentioned some ethical values, otherwise it's truly absent, the sales won't proactively introduce the back stories of the MIK collection. If I am a regular shopper who has even bought a lot of their products, I still wouldn't know that this brand is doing sustainable practices [...] I feel like it's only her (Vivienne) that really cares about it" (Participant 5)

Regarding interactions with staff in the stores, some participants have stated that communication between consumers and staff is mostly absent or limited to the practicalities

² Vivienne Westwood collection made by leftover fabrics from previous seasons (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.k).

of the products, and that it commonly does not reach the deeper dimensions of values and meanings.

“It is not that easy for them to have close communication with you; instead, they aren't so willing to[...] It's (the communications) more about “This has a minimalistic design, this one is versatile for matching clothes [...] and about the value for money, but about the meaning of the brand is not so much expressed.” (Participant 11)

“That store gave me a really bad impression, every item is just there altogether, and no one really cared about my existence [...] no one at all talked to me” (Participant 14)

During discussions of the MIK collections, some participants questioned whether they are available in the Beijing stores. Based on empirical observations in stores (See Appendix 4), all stores except one Suzhou outlet have offered MIK products, but due to a lack of relevant information, consumers have been unaware of the existence of this collection. Additionally, recognizing that the bag's hang tag attached relevant information regarding the Made in Kenya collection (See Appendix 4), the information is, however, written in English, which can still create message delivery barriers due to language differences.

5.3.2 Celebrities

In the interview discussions, numerous participants have mentioned that celebrities and fictional characters have influenced their fashion shopping decisions, especially for Vivienne Westwood. The analysis will focus on the most notable figures from the interviews, including celebrities Nana Ouyang and Shuxin Yu, as well as the fictional character Nana Osaki. Among these public appearances, this research argues that their endorsement or adornment of Vivienne Westwood products has undermined the brand's ethical values.

Among celebrities, Nana Ouyang and Shuxin Yu were frequently mentioned, and their adornment with Vivienne Westwood products has been shared and discussed on social media (see Appendix 5), which some participants claim has increased their interest in Vivienne Westwood. However, with Nana Ouyang as an example, they have shown potential

misalignment of ethical values. Although Nana Ouyang has served as an Earth Day ambassador in 2020 (CIIC, 2020) and has participated in CRM initiatives for Casetify, where she endorsed Re/Casetify products aimed at upcycling phone cases for environmental protection (Casetify, 2024). Such endorsement may provide her with an environmental persona, but as her association with Vivienne Westwood does not manifest in environmental correlation, her audience may fail to correlate the environmental meanings she is charged with to Vivienne Westwood, leaving the correlation at an aesthetic level.

And for the fictional “celebrity”, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the participants have directly or indirectly mentioned the influence of the Japanese Shōjo³ Series *NANA* by Ai Yazawa (Wikipedia, n.d.a). With adequate storytelling and attractive visuals (Lončar, 2025), it portrayed the protagonist, Nana Osaki, as a punk band vocalist whose visual appearance was heavily influenced by Vivienne Westwood's aesthetics and was mostly portrayed wearing Vivienne Westwood's designs (see Appendix 6).

“Vivienne Westwood, the Pistols, Seven Stars, coffee with milk, strawberry cake, and lotus flowers. Nana’s favorite things never changed, and to someone as fickle as me, that always seemed incredibly cool.” - From *NANA* ep. 8 (2006a, 00:01) translated.

Nana Osaki, who serves as another “spokesperson” for Vivienne Westwood. The manga and anime series portray the “coolness” of a virtual person, such as Vivienne Westwood, The Sex Pistols, and Seven Star Cigarettes, in the series, which are all commercial and cultural products from real life, and have been associated with her visual aesthetic and likings under the portrayal of her stylish punk persona, which can visually convey to the audience the aesthetics that brands such as Vivienne Westwood can offer. However, the message delivery from Nana Osaki, or by *NANA* in general, can still restrict the brand's meaning delivery to the audience at an aesthetic level. As the deeper meanings of Vivienne Westwood's ethical values are not taken into account in the series, possibly because they are not valuable for constructing the protagonist's image or the narrative, consumers eventually become unaware of them.

³ Shōjo refers to girl in Japanese, while Shōjo Manga/Anime refers to Manga and Anime series targeting girl audiences (Wikipedia, n.d.b)

5.3.3 Social Media and Other Intermediaries

For how the participants first got to know Vivienne Westwood has varied; approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the participants state that they have known this brand from social media such as RedNote (小红书) or Douyin (抖音), where celebrities' adornment, promotion videos by sales, and proactively searching were the common media that have made them become interested in Vivienne Westwood. Social media as a platform can involve different actors for brand promotion, such as celebrities previously discussed, while another notable case has shown that actors such as fashion buyers, sales, and influencers can transform Vivienne Westwood's original encoded messages during circulation. One notable discussion comes from one participant's experience in the early stages of the brand's promotion in China, where the logo has been associated with metaphysics and astrology. On social media apps such as RedNote (小红书), similar posts have shown similar promotion for the brand. Due to the Saturn-like ring around the orb, it has been associated with the astrological belief that the Saturn planet will bring the carrier fortune in studies and careers (See Appendix 7).

“(Vivienne Westwood) It is a niche culture-adoring brand, so why did it become popular domestically (China)? It is actually an interesting point. Previously, plenty of fashion buyers and sales would publicize Vivienne Westwood as a brand that brings you fortune in studies. And also, its jewelry collections are relatively affordable.” (Participant 5)

The astrological experience shared by the participant shows that these actors, as intermediaries in delivering a brand's message, can, to some extent, transform the brand's original encoded messages during circulation. Presumably, the positionality of these intermediaries is to enhance their sales of the products or the brand's public image among wider audiences. As argued by Hall (1980), communication will have no effect if the meanings are not taken and understood by the audience. Hence, in the case of Vivienne Westwood, if the original messages fail to reach the audience effectively, their product promotion will fail. The creation of the astrological myth can be a strategy adopted by intermediaries, such as Sales, Fashion Buyers, and Social Media Influencers, as a way to catch the audience's eyes under their assumption of the interests of the audience, which then became a part of Vivienne Westwood's unofficial identity myth, that are tailored under beliefs and practices of the Chinese market. Such reconstruction can give the Chinese audience a

new understanding of the brand, while undermining the original values, including the ethical consumption messages that Vivienne Westwood aimed to convey, due to the asymmetries created by such transformations.

5.4 Decoding: Why Does CCCB Matter?

In the CCCB model, the main factors that distinguish between cultures and thereby generate differences are the values, heroes, symbols, and rituals that are manifested in every culture. Among these factors, values hold a central position, while the rest serve as an expressive form to manifest them. The values of one culture, according to Luna & Gupta (2001), shape the expression of its rituals, heroes, and symbols, while these factors can also be reinforced in opposite ways to reshape the values. During the interviews, a common pattern regarding Heroes, Rituals, and Symbols has emerged, which has shaped their purchase behavior of Vivienne Westwood products. This section aims to identify the common patterns that have potentially led to the failure of ethical consumption delivery.

5.4.1 Heroes

The role of a celebrity has been deemed important in both Ponte & Richey's (2014) Brand Aid model and McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model, where the endorsement person will charge one product with the meaning that they endow. Similar dynamics have also been seen in the CCCB model by Luna & Gupta (2001). The CCCB model notes the role of heroes in shaping consumers' consumption behaviors within cultures. Looking back to the Brand Aid model, the model should theoretically only work when a celebrity, a branded product, and a case are all interconnected to each other in order to make the model work, especially within the role of celebrity, where the model's functionality relies on the person's relevance to both a case and a branded product that is linked to the case. In an ideal model for Vivienne Westwood's CRM, an ideal person would possibly be Vivienne herself, due to her public image as an activist and her connection to Kenya, while linking her products to her ethical values and presenting the MIK collection. However, due to cultural differences, Chinese consumers have other heroes or celebrities they seek out and associate with the Vivienne Westwood brand, such as Nana Ouyang, Shuxin Yu, and Nana Osaki from *NANA*.

“My interest (of Vivienne Westwood) formed from watching *NANA*[...] When you get into *NANA* deep, you will be irresistibly drawn to purchase (Vivienne Westwood). This is me most of the time, which then became a habit to pay attention to their new products and such” (Participant 8)

These characters, as heroes associated with Vivienne Westwood, may have greater fame and public exposure than Vivienne Westwood herself in Chinese culture, where, through their endorsement of the brand, they can indeed provide sufficient exposure and popularity for Vivienne Westwood as a brand and its designs, but can fail to embed Westwood's ideologies during the endorsement. In other words, the mismatch between them and Vivienne Westwood's Brand Aid model, or their non-relevance to ethical discourses, has disrupted the functionalities of Vivienne Westwood's Brand Aid model in China.

5.4.2 Rituals

Rituals, according to Luna & Gupta (2001), are another important factor shaping consumer behavior. In their work, in the idealistic setting this research aims to uncover, the ritual of consuming Vivienne Westwood products serves to express the consumer's dedication to and awareness of ethical consumption, as well as the brand's punk, rebellious, and fashionable identities. However, the findings show that the participants' consumption of Vivienne Westwood is more associated with other rituals, such as expressing their liking of a celebrity's style, *NANA*, and its aesthetic association with punk and rock. Or some have given that they do not have any specific reason, but purely purchase it due to their liking of Vivienne Westwood as a brand. This marginalizes or undermines the ritual of ethical consumption by purchasing and adorning oneself with Vivienne Westwood products. Additionally, based on the findings, if we define ethical consumption practices, such as purchasing, consuming, or supporting ethical products or brands as an ethical ritual, then the sample of the Chinese consumers implies that such ethical rituals are instead reflected in the form of boycotting, where they will instead reject any brands that are considered unethical under their criterion.

5.4.3 Symbols

Based on the meanings of the cultural symbol presented by Luna & Gupta (2001), the interviews have taken Vivienne Westwood's logo and the name, along with the Chinese colloquial name ‘西太后’, translated as ‘Queen Mother West’ or ‘Dowager Empress of the West (西太后)’ in English, which alludes to the Empress Dowager Cixi (Westwood & Kelly, 2015), meant to them in symbolic terms. Some participants understand and associate it with the punk and rebellious values that Vivienne Westwood wants to convey; others, instead, have charged the symbols with other meanings based on their likes and ideas, most notably associated with *NANA* or Metaphysics.

“I think the characteristics of the orb have carried Lady Westwood’s idea to challenge the British imperial powers [...] freedom, independence, and unrestrained” (Participant 4)

“The orb inside is probably a metaphor for the British imperials, the ring in the surface is like its restraint, to express the brand's rebel and non-mainstream attitudes.” (Participant 12)

“Metaphysics, I feel that elements such as crosses and Saturns are sacred” (Participant 2)

“(I) only will think about NANA” (Participant 8)

Such correlations further support the argument of Luna & Gupta (2001), in which symbols are not naturally embedded in products but can be charged with meanings and symbolism by a “vehicle”, where, as seen among the participants, some results have shown that they have understood the carriers of meanings with some common intermediaries in the Chinese context.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Key Findings

In response to research question 1, this research concludes that Vivienne Westwood has established an identity myth narrated around her ideologies, derived from her life story. Evidence from Vivienne Westwood's official websites shows that her identity as a fashion designer, relevance to the punk culture, and participation in development activism in the later years have been integrated into a part of the brand's values, which is then embedded in the brand's symbols and Brand Aid initiatives, such as the “MIK” collection to be delivered to the consumers. On the consumer side, Vivienne Westwood's Chinese consumers formed a negotiated reading of the brand message, in line with Hall's (1980) definitions. The sample shows that the punk and rebellious style and aesthetics are well-received by Chinese consumers, while the ethical values, which could potentially evoke ethical consumption, were less successfully delivered to them.

To answer research question 2, this research suggests that the formation of the negotiated reading among Chinese consumers occurs amid communication inefficiencies and cross-cultural influences. In light of communications, evidence from the participants shows that the absence of ethical consumption-related information in stores and the inadequate translation of the “BCM” slogan both indicate that the communication of ethical values from official channels is not sufficiently conveyed to the Chinese consumers. This, combined with mismatches in celebrity endorsements and message reinterpretations, such as the astrological myth disseminated by sales and fashion buyers, has led to further overlooking of the ethical values embedded in Vivienne Westwood's brand messages. From a cultural values perspective, this research identified the potential impacts of the cultural values of Vivienne Westwood's Chinese consumers, which had led to a reinterpretation of Vivienne Westwood's brand messages shaped by heroes, rituals, and symbols in their own cultural contexts.

Also worth mentioning: although Vivienne Westwood's brand communication of ethical values has been shown to be ineffective in this research, it does not necessarily mean that Vivienne Westwood's Chinese consumers lack ethical consumption values. As shown in the analysis, they have expressed their own understanding of ethical consumption, in which topics such as animal welfare can become relevant factors shaping their consumption decisions. And instead of buying ethical products, their manifestation comes from boycotting unethical brands.

6.2 Contributions

This research makes contributions in three dimensions: firstly, in a theoretical dimension, this research brings an interdisciplinary lens to the cultural branding theory, to understand whether the resonance and identity constructed by identity myths of a brand can become a tool to deliver ethical values to the consumers, and integrate it with the Brand Aid model to explore how one brand can deliver ethical consumption values and practices to the consumers by constructing an identity myth.

Secondly, from an empirical perspective, this research contributes to discussions of the Brand Aid model and ethical consumption beyond a Western context. While the Brand Aid model by Richey & Ponte (2014) was based on Western consumer contexts, the case study of Vivienne Westwood enabled this research to examine how Brand Aid initiatives developed under Western contexts are received in emerging economies such as China. Doing so provides insights into how Chinese consumers have interpreted ethical narratives and CRM initiatives from Western fashion brands such as Vivienne Westwood.

Last but not least, integrating the cross-cultural consumer behavior framework by Luna & Gupta (2001) has created opportunities to understand how cultural meanings of brands can be reinterpreted across regions, thereby leading to different brand understandings and purchase behaviors. Vivienne Westwood, as a brand with a background rooted in European culture and values, has been reinterpreted by Chinese consumers under the influence of the heroes, symbols, and rituals embedded in their own cultural contexts. Such reinterpretation has charged the brand with new symbolic meanings that are adapted to the Chinese consumers' cultural contexts. Such reinterpretation of messages indicates that fashion brands such as Vivienne Westwood should adapt different encoding strategies to the differentiated cultural contexts to ensure their messages are well-received, and thereby communicate their ethical values and efforts more effectively.

Therefore, the general contribution of this thesis is shifting the discussion from whether Vivienne Westwood's consumers can be considered as ethical consumers to how its ethical meanings are translated, reinterpreted, and marginalized among Chinese consumers.

6.3 Limitations

The Case of Vivienne Westwood and its Chinese consumers has revealed plenty of information regarding one brand's ethical value construction as a part of its brand identity, how it is communicated, and then reinterpreted in cross-cultural contexts, and also how ethical awareness is constructed among its Chinese consumers. This research further identified some case-specific limitations. The first limitation stems from the sample's gender composition. Although this research did not purposely exclude male consumers, all recruited participants were female. Such gender imbalance might, to some extent, be due to the feminized visibility of Vivienne Westwood in China, with female celebrities such as Nana Ouyang and Shuxin Yu's adornment on social media, and *NANA* being a Shōjo anime/manga, despite the fact that Vivienne Westwood does have a male collection (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.f). This sample can, to some extent, provide insights into Vivienne Westwood's female consumers in China, but it can fail to capture the male consumers' understanding or interpretation of the brand's identity and ethical messages.

Secondly, the author considers that Vivienne Westwood's affordability in China can become a threshold for many Chinese consumers, especially when prices are set higher than in European countries (See Appendix 8). Such a price threshold for Vivienne Westwood implies that its Chinese consumers have adequate purchasing power, which means the findings reflect only the brand's consumers or those with adequate disposable income, but not a fuller image of China's consumers.

6.4 Recommendations and Future Research

Based on the findings, this research provides several recommendations to Vivienne Westwood and other similar fashion brands to communicate ethical values more efficiently in cross-cultural contexts, such as China. Firstly, it is to present and communicate a brand's ethical values more visibly and proactively across stores and official websites. This can be done by providing more of the brand's ethics information presented in local languages, and staff's communications with the consumers to achieve an effective dissemination of ethical consumption messages and values, thereby increasing the consumers' ethical awareness.

Also, as Luna & Gupta's (2001) CCCB model shows, the heroes, rituals, and symbols among Chinese consumers have led to different understandings and reasons for purchasing Vivienne

Westwood products. Hence, to make the delivery of ethical consumption values effective, the second suggestion is that fashion brands can create new brand messages based on these differentiated values when marketing across cultural contexts, and thereby integrating the brand's ethical values into a fitting context of the heroes, symbols, and rituals of different cultures to make these values more spreadable and visible to the consumers. For instance, in the context of heroes and celebrities, this can be done by launching new Brand Aid initiatives in collaboration with local heroes or celebrities who are already meaningful to consumers, and then translating their ethical values into culturally recognizable narratives.

As discussed in section 6.3, using Vivienne Westwood as a single case study introduces limitations that may fail to capture a more comprehensive picture of how fashion brands communicate their ethical values to consumers. This research suggests that further research could include more male Vivienne Westwood consumers in interviews to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the communication between the brand and its Chinese consumers, and how decoding differs between gender groups. On the other hand, as this case study involves an interaction between a brand and its consumers in a cross-cultural context, future research on similar dynamics, but with brands and consumers formed within a shared cultural context, can help to understand whether the encoding/decoding gaps between brands and their consumers are formed by cross-cultural differences, or due to the communication limitations that are found in the case of Vivienne Westwood, or that these ethical messages themselves, are essentially challenging to be translated into consumers' ethical values.

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In comparison to other brands, what are the highlights of VW that have attracted you?	
When you shop, what are the most important factors that will shape your decisions?	To understand whether ethical consumption values are embedded in the interviewee's fashion consumption, and to what extent these factors are relevant to their purchase decisions.
In these factors, do environmental sustainability or labor ethics shape your decisions	
Do you personally feel responsible for supporting ethical brands?	To understand their opinion on ethical brands
What is your current impression of Vivienne Westwood?	To understand their image of Vivienne Westwood, and whether they align with the identity myths.
On the official webpage of Vivienne Westwood, there is a slogan of Buy Less, Choose Well, Make it Last. Do you have any comments on this slogan? And do you think the brand practices align with this slogan?	Merging Vivienne Westwood with the previously discussed ethical consumption topics, and to understand whether they consider the brand to practice what they claim.
Have you heard about the Made in Kenya Collection by Vivienne Westwood?	To understand if they have investigated the “ethical” part of the brand before. If not, a brief introduction to the MIK collection is made.

What is your first impression of the Made in Kenya collection?	To understand the attitude of the interviewee towards the ethical aspect of the brand.
With the development factors infused into the collection, would you become interested in the series by any chance? Why or why not?	To understand the preferences of the interviewees in balancing the previously mentioned factors.
By getting to know the Made in Kenya collection and the involvement of marginalized Kenyan Artisans, will it change your impression of the brand image of Vivienne Westwood?	To understand if the ethical aspect is previously constructed within their minds, or if it's after the introduction to the MIK case.
Do you think it should be the consumer's responsibility to push forward such a change?	Discussing their opinions on the role of responsibilities within the private sectors
Do you consider such projects to be a real impact on society, or is it more of a method to enhance their commercial image?	
Do you consider the birth of this collection to be relevant to Vivienne Westwood's (both the person and the brand) values and spirits?	To understand whether they think the ethical values emerge from the brand.
If you have ever visited a physical shop of VW, do you feel that the store is communicating ethical values to you in its decorations or by its staff?	Later add up. To understand how VW's ethical values and culture are communicated. And also to understand whether VW's stores are communicating ethical values, as seen in the argument by Arrigo (2018)
What does the VW orb, and Vivienne	To answer the topic of symbolism.

Westwood/西太后 mean to you in a cultural sense?	
Do you have any further questions or anything further to state?	To ensure that the interviewee has expressed all their thoughts.

3. Code of Conduct

Chinese Version, Presented to the interviewees.

1. 访谈者须在访谈开始前向受访者说明研究目的、流程及益处。访谈完全基于自愿，受访者有权随时退出且无需承担任何后果。受访者有权拒绝回答任何不愿回答的问题，且无需说明理由。
2. 所有信息将安全存储于访谈者的个人电脑中，所有文字记录均将进行匿名化处理。
3. 在最终研究成果中，受访者身份将被匿名化处理，任何个人信息(包括姓名、年龄、微信账号信息、家庭住址等)均不会公开，受访者将以化名被引用。
4. 访谈者将尊重受访者的时间、观点与经历进行访谈，不得意图曲解、灌输、争论或强迫改变受访者的观点。
5. 受访者有权审阅其访谈记录，澄清其陈述，并可要求将特定部分从分析用的记录中删除。
6. 本次访谈没有对错答案之分。访谈者应珍视每一个独特的见解与经历。
7. 访谈录音仅在获得受访者事先明确同意后进行，录音仅用于文字转录与分析，不作其他用途。
8. 访谈者将遵守约定访谈时长(约30-60分钟)。若受访者希望延长以便进一步阐述，可延长约定时间。
9. 访谈方式将基于受访者意愿进行，但优先考虑通过微信、腾讯会议或电话方式进行。
10. 访谈结束后，录音将在完成文字转录后永久删除。匿名化处理的文字记录将保存在安全的个人电脑设备中。
11. 若经受访者同意，访谈者可联系受访者就转录文本中的某些要点进行澄清。

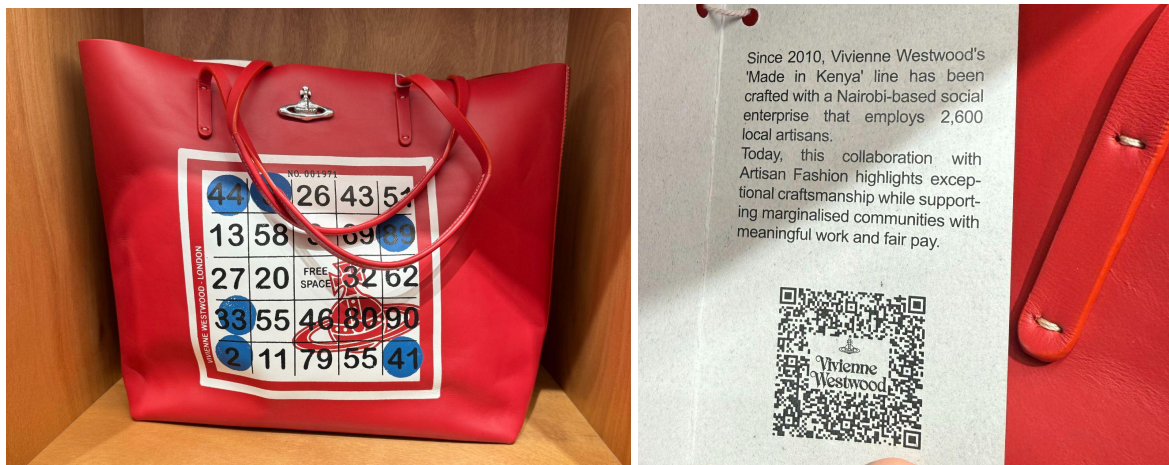
12. 论文及研究结果在完成后, 可根据受访者请求提供查阅。

13. 受访者提供的任何照片或图像, 将安全存储于访谈者的个人电脑设备中。若需在研究成果中公开使用任何图像, 访谈者必须事先征得受访者的明确许可。

English, Translated.

1. The interviewer must explain the purpose of the study, the procedures, and the benefits before the interview. The interview itself is fully voluntary, and the interviewee may withdraw at any time without any penalty. The interviewee has the right to refuse to answer any questions that they are not willing to without any reason.
2. All information will be stored securely in the interviewer's personal computer, and all transcripts will be anonymized
3. In the final publication, the interviewee's identity will be anonymized, any personal information (Name, age, WeChat account information, home address) will not be published, and the interviewee will be referred to by a pseudonym.
4. The interviewer will conduct the interviews with respect to the interviewee's time, perspective, and experiences, and should not aim to distort, instill, debate, or coerce the interviewee's perspectives
5. The interviewee has the right to review their transcripts, clarify their statements, and request that certain parts be removed from the transcripts for the analysis.
6. For this interview, there are no right or wrong answers. The interviewer should value every unique insight and experience.
7. The interview will be audio-recorded only with the interviewee's prior explicit consent, and will be used solely for transcription and analysis, with no further use.
8. The interviewer will respect the agreed-upon time frame (approx. 30-60 min.). If the interviewee wishes, the agreed-upon time can be extended for the interviewee to explain further.
9. For the interview methods. They will be done based on the interviewees' will; however, WeChat, Tencent meeting, and phone calls will be preferred.
10. After the interview, the recording will be permanently deleted after transcription. The transcriptions will be anonymized and will be kept in a secure personal computer device.
11. The interviewer can contact the interviewee to clarify some points from the transcript if the interviewee gives their consent.

12. The thesis and findings can be made available for the interviewee upon completion and request.
 13. Any sent photo/image by the interviewee will be stored safely in the interviewer's computer device. If the images are needed for publishing, the interviewer must ask for the interviewee's consent to do so.
4. Bingo-print Made in Kenya bag from Vivienne Westwood, with a Made in Kenya hang tag attached, photographed January 26th, 2026, in Vivienne Westwood, TaiKoo Li Store, Beijing.



5. Celebrity adornment post on RedNote

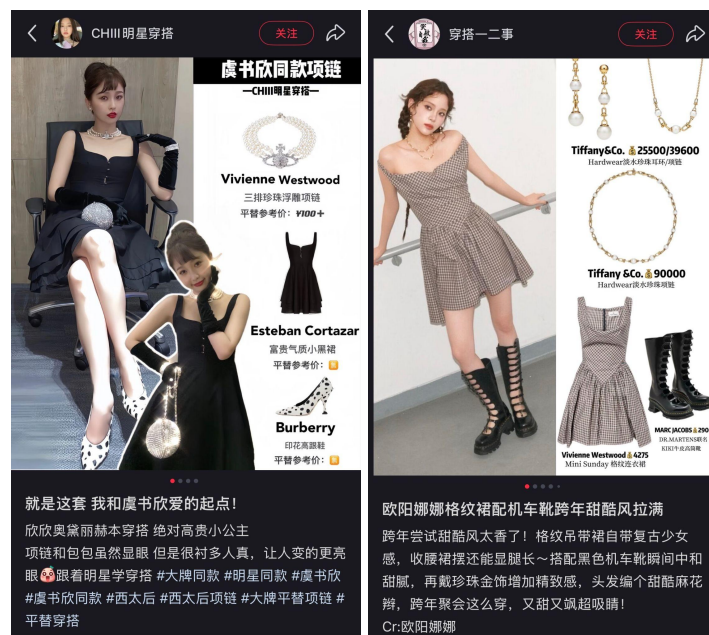
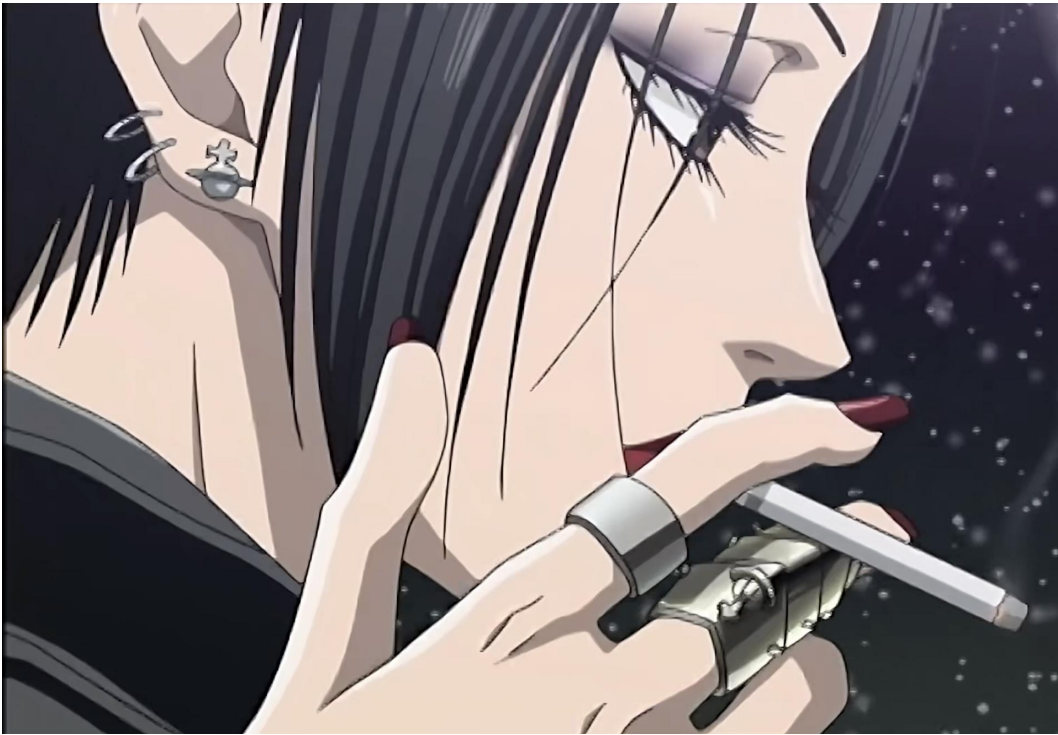


Image 1: Shuxin Yu, also known as Esther Yu (CHIII明星穿搭, 2024)

Image 2: Nana Ouyang (穿搭一二事, 2025)

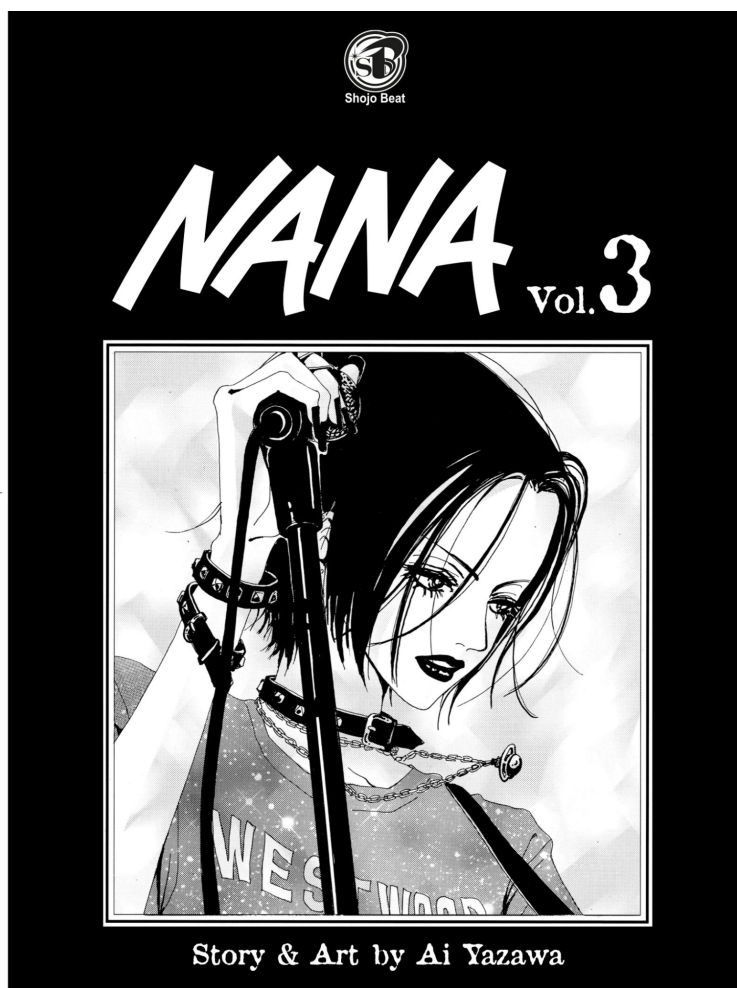
6. Nana Osaki, Protagonist of Anime/Manga series *NANA*



NANA Episode 1 (NANA, 2006b)



Official Images of Vivienne Westwood × NANA collaboration (Vivienne Westwood, 2025)



Artwork from *NANA* (Vivienne Westwood, 2025)

7. Astrological promotion of Vivienne Westwood



8. Price Comparison of Vivienne Westwood's Mini Bas Relief Pearl Choker (Price on 12th of May, 2026)



Mini Bas Relief Pearl Choker 

£155

Color: PLATINUM / CRYSTAL Crystal /



Size: ONE SIZE

ONE SIZE

Add to Bag

DESCRIPTION —



Mini Bas Relief Pearl Choker 

€170

Color: PLATINUM / CRYSTAL Crystal /



Size: ONE SIZE

ONE SIZE

Add to Bag

DESCRIPTION —



Mini Bas Relief Pearl Choker 

€265

颜色：铂金色/水晶/



尺寸：均码

均码

添加至购物袋

描述 —

Image 1. Price shipped to the United Kingdom (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.g)

Image 2. Price shipped to Sweden (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.h)

Image 3. Price shipped to China (Vivienne Westwood, n.d.i)

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