

## **IFFTI Faculty Exchange Initiative 2019 Report**

September 15, 2019

By

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Hosting institution

FIDM Los Angeles

Dates of visit

August 30th, 2019 to September 5th, 2019

## **1. Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to express my greatest gratitude to IFFTI for giving me the chance to conduct this teaching exchange at a hosting institution, which allowed me to teach and discuss research at FIDM in Los Angeles. This allowed bringing my teaching and research background acquired at The University of Manchester, as part of my doctoral research, and at the London College of Fashion, as part of my role as a lecturer and researcher as well as industry coach.

I would then like to express my gratitude to FIDM in Los Angeles for making this extraordinary experience happen, and for taking care of all the planning and arrangements of my teaching and meetings with faculties at their Institution. Finally, I would like to thank the London College of Fashion for their constant support for teaching exchanges, and for fully embracing their value for the students, their staff, and for fostering relationships across institutions.

As I have terminated this exchange and I am leaving Los Angeles, I feel extremely happy with the outcomes achieved. This exchange has allowed conferring pedagogical value to the students at the host institution, by having an international guest lecturer bringing in a different perspective and some latest research outcomes. From my perspective, this exchange has been a great experience, experiencing the hosting institution's teaching and working culture and how students would perceive my sessions.

The exchange has also contributed to research by sharing and discussing topics of common research areas.

Finally, this exchange has contributed to foster relationships and collaborations across the participating institutions.

## **2. Objectives of the exchange**

The objectives and expected outcomes of the exchange according to the application were as follows:

From an **education and pedagogical perspective**, the proposed exchange is intended to contribute to knowledge transfer, informing and promoting the work and teaching approaches of the applicant and with a key focus on different approaches across different cultures and institutions. The applicant has expertise and experience teaching across international cohorts, at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and across universities in Europe and Asia. Moreover, the exchange could contribute to spreading cutting edge research pursued by the applicant on business innovation in retailing being taught to the students, thus fostering knowledge exchange and offering different and critical perspective on cutting edge research topics. Francesca is a PhD researcher in business innovation, consumer-facing technology and retailing at The University of Manchester (UK), School of Materials, Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences. Her research interests focus on the digital transformation of businesses and retailing, and her PhD explores the adoption of consumer-facing technologies in retail settings from a managerial perspective. Overall the applicant envisages gaining experience at teaching at the proposed host institution, with students from different backgrounds and used to another Institution's methods of teaching and learning, as well as sharing Francesca's most current research with the students through taught sessions and workshops.

Added value of the mobility for the applicant Institution would be to enhance the member of staff's teaching skills, by teaching to students from different backgrounds and used to another Institution's methods of teaching and learning.

The teaching would revolve around Francesca's area of research – innovation in fashion retailing through consumer-facing in-store technology. This might include the applicant conducting a lecture on retail store environment & shopping experience in fashion retailing; Store environment online & ways to engage with consumers online; Rapid growth of consumer-facing technology (various types of technology including AR and VR evolution; what works/ what doesn't); Multi- and omni-channel retailing; The challenge: channel integration; Future trends in retail & what to observe; the digital revolution in fashion retailing: examining managerial processes and challenges in the adoption of consumer-facing in- store technology.

The lecture might be followed by smaller group workshops in which students can put into practice what they've learnt and some research that they'll be asked to conduct prior to the workshops on real case study organisations. This would allow the students to analyse the situation during the workshops with the tutor's support.

Another key purpose of the proposed exchange is to maintain and foster **relationships and collaboration across institutions**. In particular, the applicant works at the London College of Fashion as Lecturer in Marketing and Business Innovation, as she is a PhD Researcher at The University of Manchester in Retail Innovation and Technology Adoption. Anticipated levels of faculty, staff and student contact – once in touch with institution

The proposed exchange also has a considerable value from a **research exchange perspective**. This project can in fact contribute to the applicant and academics at the proposed research Institution sharing and being up to date with key business research topics, of international relevance, to foster potential research exchange and collaboration. This could therefore contribute to knowledge transfer especially in such a cutting edge research area of business innovation. Overall therefore with this project the applicant envisages to help foster international research collaborations across the IFFTI member institutions.

Furthermore, for the applicant added value would consist of enhancing and broadening her research skills by discussing research with relevant members of the proposed host Institution and possibly set up research collaborations, and to observe the phenomenon she is investigating (innovative consumer-facing technologies in fashion retailing) in a very relevant market, as well as obtaining the host Institution students' views on the area investigated.

### **3. Accomplishment of the objectives**

The aim of this section of the report is to discuss and reflect on the activities conducted during the exchange with the partner institution, and how the objectives were achieved.

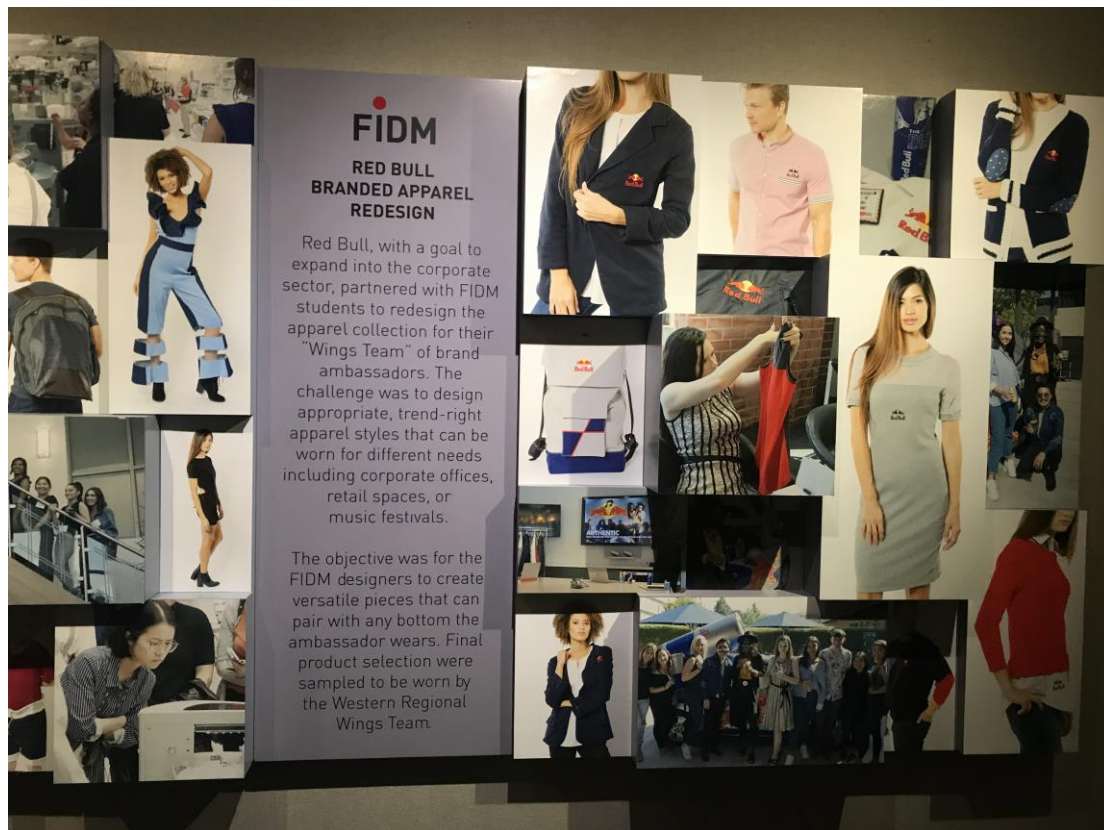
### 3.1 Education and pedagogical perspective: teaching and meeting students and staff

August 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

On my first day at FIDM in Los Angeles, on August 30<sup>th</sup> 2019, I met with Anne Bennion the Department Chair of Design and Merchandising, and she gave me a tour of the institute and introduced me to relevant people there. The students seem to deal a lot with industry-centered collaborations for design and marketing, as in the cases below (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1, 2, Examples of FIDM students' industry projects





I had an interesting conversation with Anne and Tom Selinke, one of the key Instructors at FIDM dealing with National Retail Federation (NRF) Students' Competition, about different students' approaches and grades. For instance, in the US they seem to be focusing on providing critical feedback to the students, who seem to be open to accept it. This was key to help me familiarize with the hosting institution's working culture and how they relate to the students, and prior to meeting with the students the following week.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019

On September 3<sup>rd</sup> I had my first full day of guest lecturing at FIDM, with three sessions in total.

The first session was with the Instructor Patricia Turner, who had informed me on what she was expecting, and she had communicated that to her students. This session was in the form of a workshop, with a small group of students and highly interactive. The session was on Consumer Behaviour, and it revolved around my background and how I got to my position and role now as a lecturer, researcher and consultant, and on my role in the industry and research methodology, with a focus on consumer trends as the key theme. The instructor and I interacted multiple times within the session, and she often related my content to what the students are covering in her course (e.g. consumer trends, methodology, etc.) so that the students would stay engaged and link my content to the course.

The second session was composed of multiple courses together ranging from Brand Management Strategies to Retail Environment to Contemporary Business Strategies. This consisted of a big group of around 100 students coming from different backgrounds. This session consisted of a big room lecture type focusing on 'Current Recent Research on New Innovations in Consumer Facing Technologies Across Formats'. Here I covered my research area on retail innovation and technology adoption by organizations from a managerial perspective.

The last session of the day was also a lecture-style session including two groups of students, for around 40 students in total. The topic was 'Recent Research Focus on Technology' so similar to the mid-day session's topic, although in this case the students were more advanced in their studies and therefore I targeted the session style and content to this end.

September 4<sup>th</sup> 2019

I had a short teaching session in the form of a workshop and Q&A session with students from Marketing and Merchandising. The topic covered was around strategies of standardization and adaptation in the Asian Market. Considering the small size of the group and the short length of the session, I kept this session very interactive and with a lot of concrete examples from the industry, rather than covering much theory. A good Q&A session took place in the second part of the session.

September 5<sup>th</sup> 2019

This last teaching day at FIDM was composed of a morning session with a student group on Merchandising Strategies. The topic of the session was 'Current Recent Research on New Innovations', and I was asked to keep this lecture session at entry level and to bring in several examples of technologies in retail spaces, to make sure this group of students would benefit from the session due to their focus and level. So this is how I delivered the session, and some examples of the slides with concrete current examples of retail digital innovation are shown in Figure 3 below.

*Figure 3*, Examples of current consumer-facing technologies in retail spaces as discussed in the lecture at FIDM

## CFIT & BACK-END TECHNOLOGY

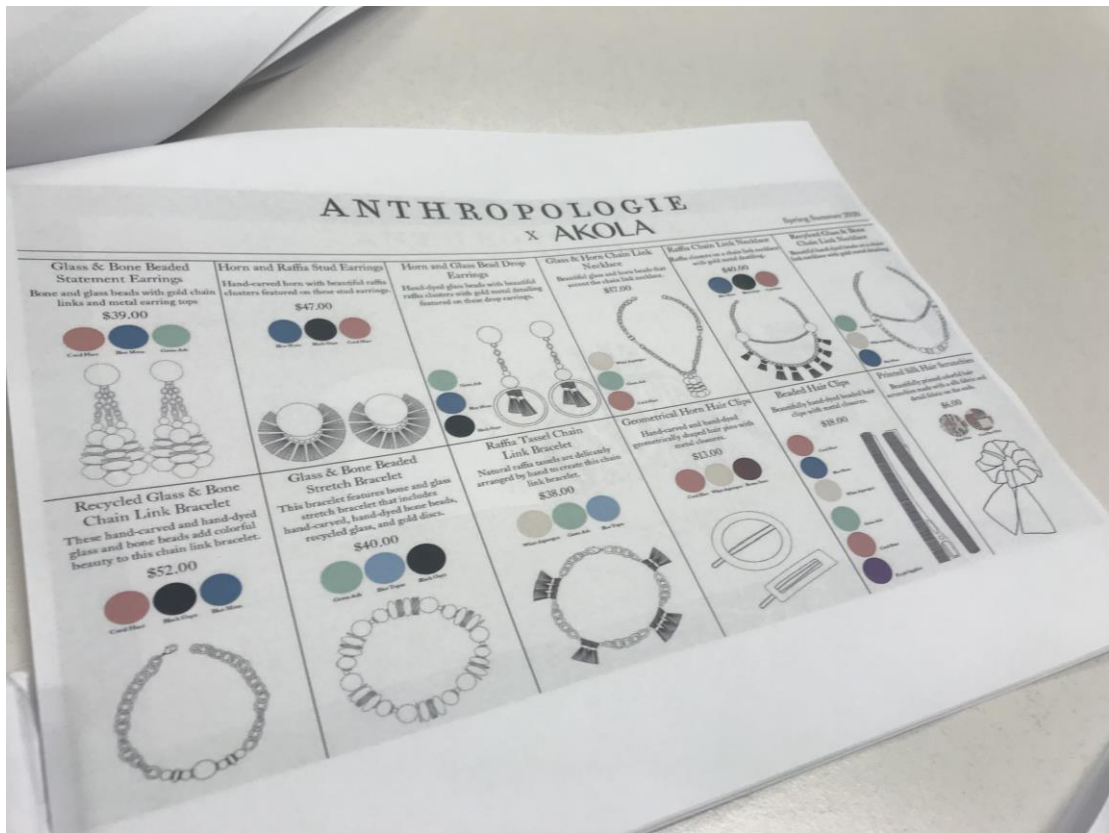
E.g. Tommy Hilfiger Regent Street store

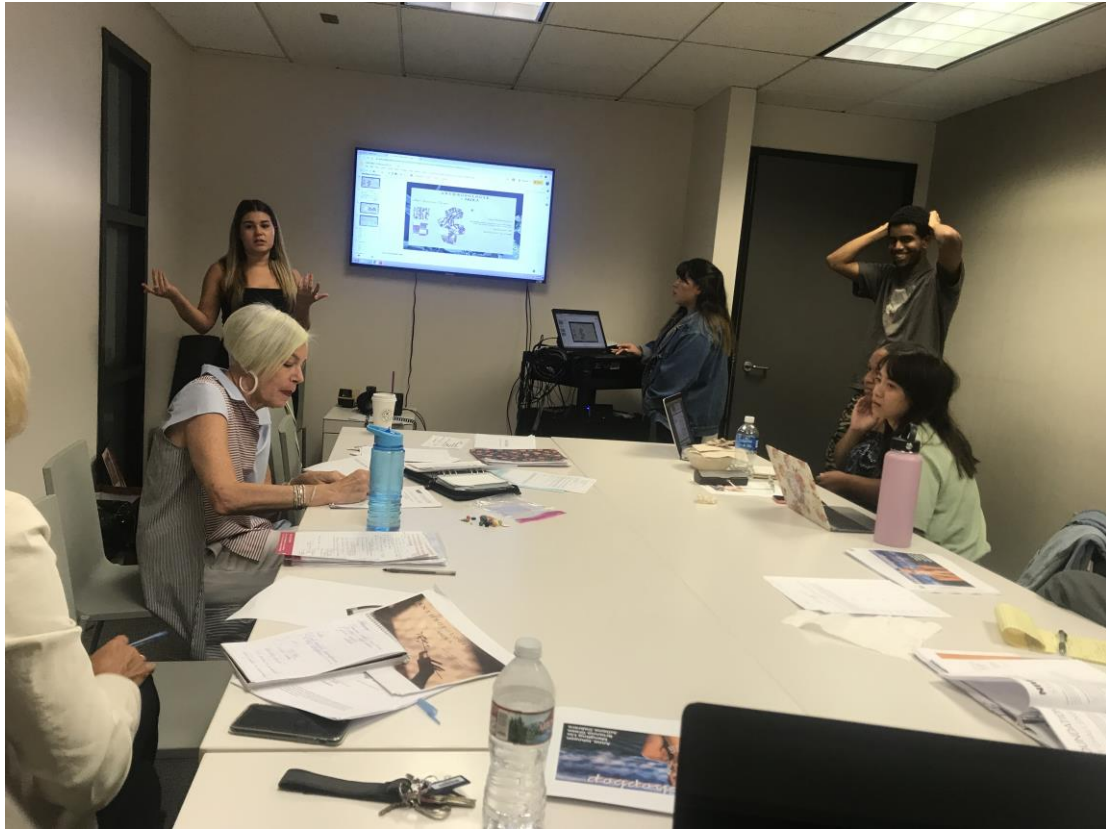


The midday session revolved around a venture challenge on the students' projects on NRF (National Retail Federation) for the Student Challenge. Three instructors and myself provided feedback to the students presenting. In particular, the session consisted in students having to pitch their ideas regarding a collaboration between a brand Akola (a mid-tier brand from Uganda, handmade products by women to redesign their story) and a retailer of their choice, concerning product and retail, justifying the WHYs based on a strategy and analysis. Two groups of students presented, and some content is in Figures 4, 5, and 6 below.

*Figures 4, 5, 6 students pitching their project ideas and content*







The two groups of students had to pitch their ideas to their instructors and myself. All students had been made aware of me and what I'd be bringing to class, my background and expertise, and what was expected from me. This session was therefore very tailored around the NRF student competition, to receive feedback from an external faculty and industry consultant. Both groups presented, where the other instructors and myself gave feedback and shared our thoughts.

My last session at FIDM consisted of a lecture with MBA students, where the topic had been pre-arranged into detail with the Instructor. Here, I presented my research with a focus on the methodology adopted, the justification for my perspective, and a detailed overview of some key findings. This was a different target compared to the other classes, with several students coming from the industry and some having their own businesses.

Overall, different teaching approaches have been conducted to address several session types, ranging from lectures to workshops to feedback sessions. Across the sessions, my areas of research and expertise combining industry and academic research contributed to knowledge transfer to the students and to the hosting institution's instructors, as well as informing and promoting different teaching and working styles.

From my perspective as the hosted faculty, I feel I have learnt a lot in terms of different teaching and student learning methods, as well as learning the different working culture and way of relating to the students at the hosting institution. This consisted, for instance, of the student-instructor relationship

through the way of providing and receiving feedback, where a lot of constructive feedback and direct interaction took place, consisting of very a straightforward way of providing feedback and from the students' side to accept and receive it. This was achieved while teaching my sessions, when taking active part to providing feedback to students (e.g. in NRF competition session), being involved in student-staff meetings, and when meeting with the instructors of the hosting institution.

I feel all this was all possible thanks to the diversity of sessions I taught, the students' level of advancement in their studies and different ways of interacting, and also differences in the instructors.

### **3.2 Maintain and foster relationships and collaboration across institutions**

Through the sessions taught and the meeting help at the hosting institution, relationships and potential for collaboration across the institutions in question were fostered. Meetings took place with key faculties including:

- Barbara Bundy, Vice President, Education at FIDM;
- Anne Bennion, Department Chair, Bachelors of Arts in Design, Fashion Knitwear Design, Textile Design at FIDM;
- Instructors including Patricia Turner, Tim Christiansen, Tom Selinske and others.

This helped fostering the relationships across the involved institutions in terms of teaching and research exchanges, and possible future student exchange initiatives.

I look forward to maintaining a relationship with the hosting institution and to have further exchanges in the future.

### **3.3 Research**

From a research perspective, this exchange also contributed to the sharing of current and relevant research in mutual areas of interest, in particular concerning marketing and retail innovation, consumer trends and research methods.

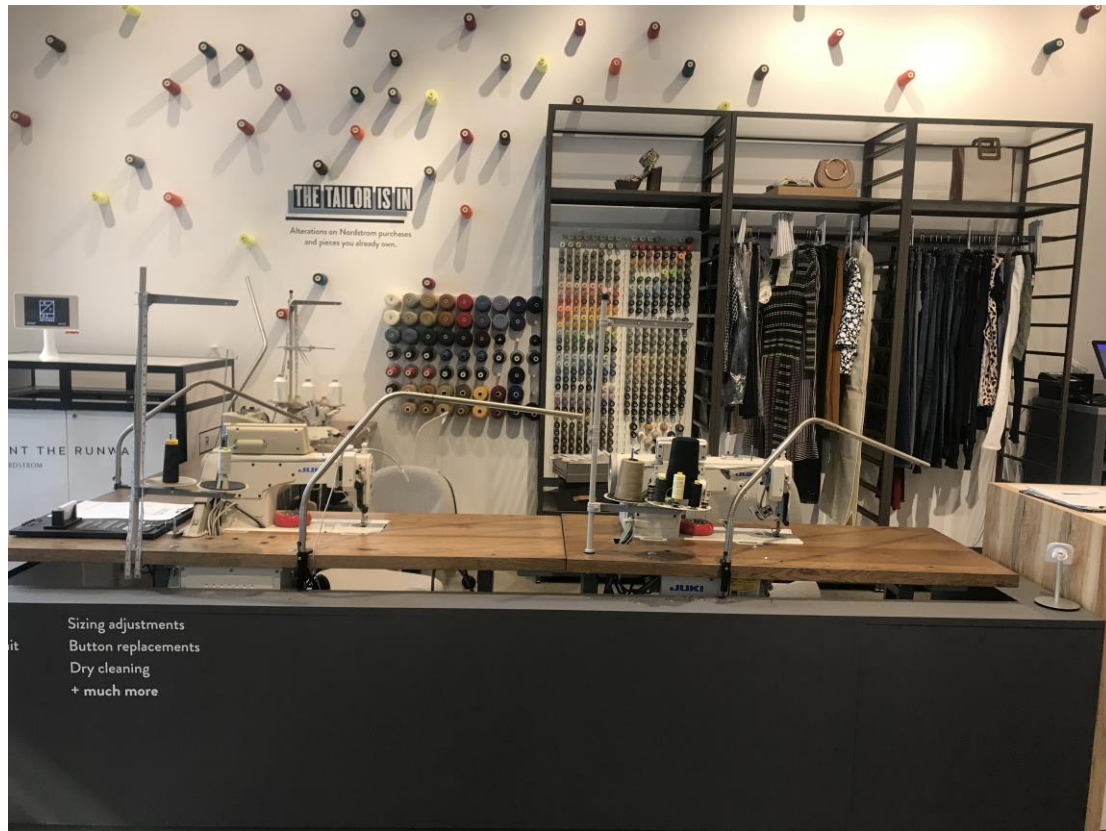
Through the sessions taught and the meetings with individual faculties from the hosting institution, research has been discussed and this may open doors for future research collaborations.

Moreover, the exposure to hands-on projects that the students at the hosting institution get the chance to work on has the potential to represent valuable sources of empirical data and key contacts for future research collaborations. This concerns both the projects the students are exposed to throughout the year, as well as NRF competition related projects, and finally the instructors' continuous involvement in industry collaborations and working on current industry challenges.

Finally, during this teaching exchange I also had the chance to explore top retail destinations and areas of interest for retail customer experience, as indicated by FIDM members. This allowed me to update my knowledge in the fashion retail industry and environment in the US and particularly in Los Angeles, by

visiting and conducting observations of key locations, as shown in Figures 7 and 8 below.

*Figures 7, 8 innovative retail experiences in Los Angeles*





#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the objectives of the teaching exchange have been successfully achieved, and I am very pleased with the outcomes for all involved parties. I will share the knowledge that I gained from this trip with my home institution to benefit student learning and research opportunities.

I would like to extend a warm thank you to IFFTI and the committee for this great opportunity and for their support. I also would like to thank all the people involved at FIDM, and in particular Barbara and Anne for making this happen and for making this a wonderful experience.

Thank you,  
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