



Jonathan is a Global Client Director based at Added Value's London offices.

He has spent his entire career in brand strategy development and innovation, helping to build brands for products, services, companies and places around the world.

His strategic brand development experience ranges from multi-national financial services, technology and utilities groups such as AXA, HBOS, Lloyds TSB, Motorola, NCR United Utilities and BG, through government departments, the Britain tourism brand, the Law Society, universities and charity organisations to leisure players and retailers such as Marriott, TGI Friday's, Travel Inn, David Lloyd Leisure, Boots and New Look

With iconic British shoe brand, Clarks, recording its first sales drop in 10 years – journalist Gemma Charles of Marketing asked Jonathan for his views on what the brand needs to do to return to growth?

Scene-Setting

Two words: fast fashion, embracing a business model that has revolutionised an industry and radically shifted the way consumers think about and shop the category. Major brands that have fallen foul of fast fashion include no lesser institutions than Levi's, Marks & Spencer ... and Clarks. The problem with institutions is that they find it difficult to accept the need to re-invent, but re-invent they must.

Clarks began producing its 'foot-friendly' shoes in the 19th century in sleepy Street in Somerset, but it started to take off internationally after World War Two. A stream of innovation led to opening retail outlets, launching iconic products such as the Desert Boot and building the kids franchise. Clarks is now the number one shoe retailer in the UK and part of the fabric of society.

More recently, Clarks rode the trend towards vintage and authenticity, opening up the strong possibility of becoming a wannabe brand. But how do you keep up with a consumer that has been educated to expect designs to migrate from catwalk to high street in a matter of weeks?



Remedies

Go back to basics:

- know who you are and act accordingly: where's the consistency between 'Preston is my Paris' and 'shoes designed for living'?
- to counter fast fashion brands, adopt a faster approach to innovation: fire, aim, re-load!
- do things that force re-appraisal: what's Clarks' version of Engineered Jeans?
- leverage Clarks' ethical heritage: is there a fairtrade opportunity?
- bring Clarks' product design expertise to life in store to create retail wow: a growing feet experience, a comfort treadmill, the fitter service