**A Case Study for Innovation in Contemporary Tweed**

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**Heritage, Innovation, Tweed, Menswear, Luxury, Function**

Dashing Tweeds is a woven textile and menswear brand set up in 2006; its philosophy based on the reinvention of tweeds, suitings and traditional luxury woollen fabrics for fashion. Fabrics are sold by the metre or bespoke designed. The company takes inspiration from the functional and aesthetic heritage of traditional British wool whilst embracing innovation in luxury textiles. Early Burberry and McIntosh are inspirational in their adoption of fabric innovation in conjunction with classic British design. The company is dedicated to the evolution of traditional aesthetics and production methods. It embraces the links between heritage and contemporary design innovation in the form of hardwearing, functional, luxury products. This paper will focus on international client case studies that have chosen to work with Dashing Tweeds, exploring the market demand and desire for UK produced heritage inspired, innovative products in luxury menswear.

Tweed is a traditional British woollen fabric woven in variations of a twill structure from rough spun blended wool, traditionally used for outdoor activities such as fishing and hunting due to its moisture resistance and durability. Harris Tweed has been hand woven in the Western Isles for many years and is synonymous with British textiles. This method of hand production, high quality materials and durability seals its status as a luxury fabric in the context of the current fast moving fashion cycle. It is imbued with the emotive notion of the landscape and culture which inspires it. It evokes a response in menswear that appeals to memory and nostalgia of less ephemeral and disposable fashion. Much of its appeal is bound up in its association with home spun production, ‘authenticity’, melange of colour and functionality.

Dashing tweeds combines the heritage of tweed and the use of technical yarn to produce fabrics which have a sense of tradition with an innovative function. Fine reflective filaments are woven into woollen suiting using a variety of new and traditional structures that allude to the tweed aesthetic. A current project is exploring the use of carbon nanotube/polymer composites imbedded in wool textiles with a view to creating fabrics that are recognisable as tweed but possesses hidden function. Designs are based around traditional checks, twills and herringbones. Colour inspiration comes from the surrounding changing environment, much in the same way as traditional tweeds were inspired by the landscape of rural Scotland and Ireland. Dashing Tweeds colour comes from the urban environment of double yellow lines, wet pavements and the parks and architecture of London.

Dashing Tweeds appeals to a menswear market that doesn’t want an obviously innovative looking aesthetic but enjoys the technical aspect through hidden innovation in a heritage inspired textile. Through analysing the relationship between Dashing Tweeds and their client base, the paper will address market demand and relevance of such a company and discuss the importance of heritage inspired cloth, innovation in materials and sustainable production to the brand strategy and future of Dashing Tweeds and their clients.

**Introduction**

Through *Dashing* Tweeds and their clients and peers, this paper will analyse the relevance of heritage and design innovation in today’s menswear and woven textiles market, and will explore the themes of tweed and authenticity,hidden technology in textiles within the specific context of bespoke design.

Re-colouring and re-scaling existing designs have become staple methods of fabric design for large companies. There is increased consumer interest in buying into ‘heritage and authenticity’, possibly as a response to economic uncertainty and a certain cultural anxiety existing concurrently with that.

“...in an increasingly unreal world-consumers choose to buy or not

buy based on how *real* they perceive an offering to be. Business

today, therefore is all about being real. Original. Genuine. Sincere.

*Authentic.*”[[1]](#footnote-1)

This paper questions whether it is sufficiently satisfactory to advance design innovation to keep proposing modern ‘takes’ on existing brands. A set of sub-questions concern whether application of new textile and material technologies to heritage textile design serves to either devalue or enhance their cultural provenance; whether functional and innovative textiles have developed with regard to their particular technological properties but at the expense of evolution of a more sophisticated set of fabric aesthetics; and what design potential there is in combining material (and immaterial) elements of textile heritage with new developments in textiles technology.

**Context/ Literature Review**

*Dashing Tweeds* is a design company and seller of heritage based menswear luxury fabrics, and is aware of a growing UK niche smart and technical textiles sector. The current climate sees luxury fashion companies being rebranded and rejuvenated and high value being put on brand heritage. Such companies have ready-made and well-formed brand power and identities that are ripe for modernisation while importantly retaining their core brand values. A good example of this is Burberry: the company appointed Rose Marie Bravo in 1997, who initiated a radical reform of the British classic brand and improvements to the company structure. After difficulties during the early 1990s the company rebranded and significantly turned round its fortunes.[[2]](#footnote-2) The re-branding built heavily on the re-design of classic fabrics and fashion apparel, such as the Burberry check and the Burberry trench coat. Many fashion houses have followed suit, buying the name of a defunct brand and rejuvenating it based on the brand’s heritage, for example, Givenchy and Vionnet.

Brands such as Heritage Research (<http://www.heritageresearch.co.uk/>) make modern facsimiles of historic functional garments with a contemporary cut and aesthetic including the ‘alpine jacket’ and ‘British airborne trousers’. These are carefully chosen to appeal to a contemporary menswear market and are promoted on their website:

“The nostalgia behind these styles is what makes them attractive.... they have become timeless fashion items, appealing to a rugged utilitarian image. Attention to authenticity, quality and history is the HR ethos”[[3]](#footnote-3)

In terms of fabric production in the UK, there is evidence of a revival in traditional wool textiles with the fall and rise of Harris Tweed as documented in the BBC 4 documentary ‘Tweed’ (September 2009). Likewise, Fox Flannels in Somerset have been taken over by new owners and rejuvenated the development of collections based on their extensive archive. The ‘Campaign for Wool’ launched in 2010 has “created a campaign to promote the wonderful properties that wool offers to textiles and in doing so, help to support sheep farming as an industry and the textile community internationally” (http://www.campaignforwool.org/). Wool is being promoted by the campaign as a sustainable fibre with considerable potential for technical development, while bespoke tailoring in Savile Row, London, has re-branded and is enjoying an increase in exposure and sales.

In parallel to this is a growing development in the use of innovative technology for fashion textiles, as promoted at event ‘Made in Future: a vision of things to come, showcasing fashion & clothing incorporating UK based smart materials technology’ at the House of Commons in 2010.This included a number of companies such as Cute Circuit and Finisterre who work within the area of fashion and integrate elements of new technology to fashion and textiles.

**Methodology**

A series of interviews was carried out to inform this study. Interviewing clients, peers and stockists of *Dashing Tweeds* was considered an appropriate and focused method to obtain information required, although the method adopted could be readily applied across a range of other exemplars. Interviews included those with:

* Guy Hills, co-founder of *Dashing Tweeds*
* Colin Heywood, of Savile Row tailor *Anderson and Sheppard*, a company stocking and commissioning designs from *Dashing Tweeds*
* Sian Emmison, owner of bicycle retailer *Bobbin Bicycles*, and stockist of *Dashing Tweeds* designs
* Patrick Grant of *Norton and Sons*, Savile Row, who has rejuvenated two ‘heritage’ brands

**Findings and Discussion: Heritage, Tweed and Authenticity**

“Authenticity is linked to traditional methods passed down from father to son,

which privileges manual versus mechanised production and guarantee goods made on the premises”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In response to questions relating notions of heritage, tweed and authenticity, Guy Hills (co-founder of *Dashing Tweeds*) described the company as a weave-based menswear fabric and clothing label, and articulated clearly his company ethos that menswear “is all about heritage and the evolution of it”.(Hills, 10/12/10). Hills was of the opinion that, due to various commercial pressures, the ready to wear market, and competition from big brands the variety in design within the menswear market had diminished. The name *Dashing Tweeds* implies speedy forward movement, a certain kind of style and panache, and undoubtedly a sense of pride and value in cultural and textile heritage. Hills references the “history, substance and mythology” of tweed fabric, noting that tweed “is the original sporting cloth, it’s the original way that men wore colour” And seeking to capture those complex characteristics and signifiers in the clothing of urban tweed-wearing contemporary dandies.

As well as the connection of tweed’s textile heritage with contemporary male urbanwear, Hills also cites that tweed is imbued with authenticity; it is a “very honest material” in that it is – traditionally - woven from 100% wool, a natural fibre. It therefore has – for Hills – an innate authenticity that provides a considerable opportunity for translation as a set of attractive values at this point in the 21st century. By novel application of textile technology to tweed, *Dashing Tweeds* seeks to update the idea of tweed, using all the properties, characteristics, associations and cultural values of the original sportswear fabric, which Hills maintains “has somehow been neglected by modern inventions”, but with an innovative contemporary twist. In Hills’ view, “the 70s was all about the brand new – all those new technical fibres; nylon, polyester”, and just as that period was a moment of design renaissance and excitement, so too is the current time. Hills points to the Work of wool producers in Australia, who are developing exciting technical products out of wool such as Merino Cool and Merino Fresh (www.wool.com).

Hills has a very particular, potent and fresh perspective on the use of archival fabrics to create designs which reflect the *Dashing Tweeds* ethos of updating and re-thinking:

“We are starting with a clean slate using new structures and materials but with traditional tweed as a starting point. We are making a fabric for our time. It isn’t just a case of re-colouring an existing design. I’m really bored of nostalgia; it weighs heavily on brands and bogs people down. There is no point in brands trying to re-create imagined hay days of the 1930s, 40s– it doesn’t free them up to think innovatively’.

Interestingly, this perspective is not a romantic one, concerned with hearkening backwards to times that are no longer relevant and certainly not reproducible. This is a modern, pragmatic and authoritative stance: one concerned with the practicalities and imperatives of the now, but with a firm sense of what *can* be utilised and adapted through confident and visionary design methodology construction and implementation.

Patrick Grant is the owner of *Norton and Sons* in Savile Row and the new brand E.Tautz|House of Tautz. He was announced as Menswear Designer of the Year at the British Fashion Awards 2010. Bo**t**h his brands were previously existing menswear labels, rejuvenated by Grant in 2006. Grant is cautious in regards to how his brands use their heritage references:

“...we treat our heritage as something that is fundamental to what we do and what we are but there is always a danger of overusing heritage- and we are very careful to treat it fairly lightly...

…the way we think about the people we have tailored to and the way we think about how we talk about our brand is very much influenced by its heritage. But what we try to avoid dong is being heritage driven in the way we market ourselves...

…so we are trying to present a modern face to the world, we are trying to be relevant in terms the clothing we make and the presentation of the physical incarnation of the brand. With Norton’s it was a very interesting process trying to take elements from our history and heritage and weaving them into a modern incarnation of the brand in such a way that customers get the feeling they are coming to store that is rooted in 200 years of history but they are coming to a store that is has an understanding of the modern world…”. (Grant, 25/11/10).

Detailed analysis of Grant’s assertions is revealing. If we consider the range of meanings captured under the word ‘heritage’, then a system of meanings comprising inheritance from the past in the form of physical artifacts and legacies; intangible societal attributes; monuments of human industry and culture; ancestral traditions, customs and practices; and a notion coupling birthright and genealogical origin is conjured. Grant alludes to much of this complexity in his discussion of company product, appearance, ethos, history, clientele and new customers, but is careful to seek lightness of touch in how this is handled as a tool for marketing a company facing both towards its historical roots and its modern opportunities.

Grant’s use of the word ‘incarnation’ twice is important: a term that literally means *embodied*, it refers to the making material and manifest that which is originally immaterial, if not divine. So, the embodiment of the Nortons’ brand, with its complex references to heritage, is via its subtle appeal to its customers rather than through an explicit marketing message. The Norton client is “educated, mature, well travelled, well informed”, capable too of understanding that the Norton heritage design content “is there without pushing it into people’s faces”. Interestingly, Grant sees his relationship with these clients as that of a ‘caretaker’ responding to a sense that Norton customers seek the assurances of being “looked after by someone who has all that history but is engaged with the modern clothing world...” and the embodiments cited are those of a young Winston Churchill or Carry Grant” – with all that those associations imply about masculinity, authority, capability and certainty – “but today”.

Grant’s remarks on the alternative approaches of some brands are that are “wholesale building everything on their heritage”. He cites Ralph Lauren as someone has been very successful in branding heritage with a relatively new business: “he started in the late 60s but his brand feels very nostalgic”. Nevertheless, Grant is of the opinion that there is a lack of complexity in creating facsimiles of the past in clothing, accessorising and branding. For his company, the design challenge lies in taking brand heritage forward towards greater modernity, and evolutionary and additive approach rather than one of reproduction. In this sense there is a strong echo with Guy Hills’ expressed position on the design philosophy of *Dashing Tweeds*.

Grant’s use of ‘authentic’ British produced tweed is important to both his brands, in which, for example tweeds developed from very slightly reworked 40 year old patterns that are included. Again, a sense of heritage ‘handing down’ an intergenerational physical manifestation of something intangible comes to the fore in Grant’s description:

“We had another cloth in that same collection that I had in a suit in that was given to me by a customer who had outgrown it. We made the suit for him 35-40 years ago”.

Grant describes that particular cloth as having a Harris tweed’s heavy character. Wanting to hold onto its other characteristics, but allow it to be more wearable by a contemporary client, Grant had it reproduced in lamb’s wool yarn but hand woven by Breanish Tweed:

“It was made in the same way but with a yarn which was more adaptable and suitable for the way people are used to buying clothes today”.

It is clear from Grant’s sales that his consumer is interested in how fabrics are produced but are used to a softer handle and quality. He consciously allows a considerable influence both from the aesthetic of historic cloth and the tradition means of production, which he describes as trying to “keep true” to the way those heritage fabrics were made, how they look and their handle. Concurrently, he is very aware that the customers upon which he relies to do this are also customers of, for example, Harrods and Barneys in New York, and are “used to feeling cloth that behaves in particular way”. For Grant, the key to balancing these demands is the choice of yarn as well as the unique and traditional manufacture:

“We want to use those weavers as we want that feel and looseness of that hand woven cloth, but we need to make sure it’s actually going sell to a broader audience. There are a lot of people who enjoy the roughness of Harris Tweed but that market is very small. I think the guys on Harris need to think how applicable to mass market or the luxury end of the menswear spectrum. And it’s not a big mass market, a couple of billion pounds per year. It needs to be adaptable”.

Grant is a businessman, and it is correct that the market imperatives drive the critical design decisions he makes for his company. But in tandem with the economic drivers, he is also keenly aware of the romantic and emotional sensibilities that surround tweed and the production of it. It is something he is careful to promote through his brands, and again his language reflects the multiple nuances caught up in the word ‘heritage’:

“There is genuinely a personal attachment in this country, the USA, and Japan …people feel in some way that there is a tangible value of a cloth being made in a stone built Victorian mill with clunky old metal machinery, that there is absolutely no way you can replicate in a modern industrial park, purpose built, shiny steel factory....

People want to feel attached to the process of how what they buy is made. I think it’s a really important phenomenon. It’s something that because a lot of British industry has spent so long not changing the way they do things, actually the world has come right back around to them and they are really brilliantly positioned to take advantage of their uniqueness and oldness...”

Grant explains this phenomenon through society having to cope with the speed at which technology is developing, with increasing dependence on computers, digital communication and habitation of a virtual unreal electronic space. He is convinced that this has resulted in a growing consumer desire to fill leisure and purchasing time with activities which root us back into to a ‘real world’. There is a certain romance in thinking how people would have shopped in an establishment where the people serving them would know them personally, but there is also a growing reality in that discerning consumers understand (and want to understand) where their food comes from, and therefore where the fabric comes from that their tailor uses. Where this type of consumer desire and knowledge has been heavily impacted by the phenomenon of shopping on line, Grant sees a very small but critically important market at the top end where “people they want to feel an association with the process in which their purchases are made”. And significantly for British industry, Grant is also noting this phenomenon spreading down the consumer chain to high street brands like Jigsaw and Hobbs. These companies are now looking carefully at the sourcing of their cloths and realising that there are consumers willing to pay £200 for a UK-made item that could be made in China for £100.

Colin Heywood of *Anderson and Sheppard* in Savile Row shares Grant’s view that the consumer is more interested than ever in the idea of ‘heritage’ within their menswear purchases:

“I think it’s the whole ‘Britishness’ that people are buying into. They like the idea that we are sourcing English locally made. I think British across the world has that mark of quality that people appreciate”. (Heywood 25/11/10)

Like *Norton and Sons* and *E. Tautz*, *Anderson and Sheppard* was recently bought and re-branded based on its heritage and tradition. Heywood states that customers are still more interested in what he refers to as “classic patterns” such as herringbone or pinstripe but notes that many of the woollen merchants he uses tend to maintain a classic range while occasionally designing a fabric that is a bit more flamboyant like “coloured stripes”. On this basis, Savile Row has enjoyed a renaissance recently. According to Heywood:

“It has the strongest bespoke suit making heritage in the world. I’m convinced that anyone looking for the best comes to Savile Row.”

It is clear from interviews that the notion of ‘heritage’, mobilised carefully and with great consideration for its nuanced meanings, has considerable consumer value at present. It is argued by both Guy Hills and Patrick Grant that this is not enough on its own, and that the heritage concept needs to be combined with innovative design and contemporary presentation that reflects our times in order to maintain and strengthen its relevance and to advance its potential to both sustain and re-position remaining British mills and traditional materials once considered en route to extinction.

**Hidden Technology in Menswear Textile Design**

This section of the paper will explore how the application of technology affects the heritage value and ‘authenticity’ of menswear textiles. According to Guy Hills, of *Dashing Tweeds*:

“The whole idea of a heritage brand is a modern concept. The Victorians were all about innovations and invention. Science fiction made people worry about the future, the idea of technology taking over which had people craving the comfort of heritage. Technology doesn’t dilute authenticity at all.

The idea of ‘heritage’ for some brands is a false concept and is manufactured. It’s imperative to combine modern technology with tradition”.

To prove this point, *Dashing Tweeds* is currently working with nanotechnology, implanting technology into traditional fabrics in order to create menswear fabrics with novel functions. Hills explains that tweed provides an excellent weave matrix to hold technologies in, as well as helping people to embrace and feel confident about technology through it being embedded in a recognisable heritage fabric. *Dashing Tweed*’s ‘Lumatwill’ fabric uses reflective yarn within a woollen substrate already, but the company is looking at using smart and other technologies in an even more sophisticated fabric enhancement.

Functionality *and* humour are significant elements of the *Dashing Tweed* brand, as is the desire to widen the choice of exciting forward-looking brand design for modern menswear. The company is, however, certain that its brand look is an alternative to innovative textiles that have a ‘technology aesthetic’. In Hills’ experience, while the economic down turn seems to have resulted in a tendency on the part of many companies to play safe with their designs, some ‘early adopters’ are managing to begin to use the opportunity to take some risks with new companies. This expansive thinking is an interesting counter to the attrition of the current moment, and Hills cites his experience of spinners, dyers and weaving mills seeming to be “more ready to help us out with things that aren’t the norm”.

Not all parties are sympathetic to this approach. Directed at *Dashing Tweeds*’ approach, there have been comments on menswear blogs such as “it’s tweed for cappuccino drinking Londoners”, “you deserve to be run over wearing a dashing tweeds suit” and “they are taking away work from real authentic tweed weavers” (thefedoralounge.com). Patrick Grant recognises that there is an aspect of purism in menswear, even with something as seemingly small as changing a type of wool:

“There will always be extremists who will find it distasteful. But that’s what they are: extremists. The thought of putting a lamb’s wool in Harris Tweed would have all sorts of people freaking out. But actually it would mean that the tweed would go from being worn by 0.001% of the population to 0.1% of the population.”

Grant argues that in order to preserve heritage brands there needs to be both an open attitude to new materials and a design responsibility to make textiles that people want to buy. He is adamant that, while it is attractive to be romantic about Harris Tweed using only wool from the island, that attitude guarantees a rapid and irrecoverable shrinkage of that fabric’s market. For example, *E.Tautz* gloves are sold in Harrods in both organic sheep wool and in alpaca. The former have barely sold, while the alpaca versions have sold out of two ranges. Both sets of gloves are hand knitted on the same needles and in the same style, but clearly the consumer choice has been for the *E.Tautz* aesthetic, but in the much softer yarn. Such British-made products are always going to be expensive and will therefore only be sold in top end department stores or boutiques, but those consumers are used to a certain quality and feel. Grant is clear that fundamentally a business is about selling product, “and there is no point in surrounding it in a romantic bubble and having nobody buy or it will die out.”

Sian Emmison, owner of *Bobbin Bicycles* in London, stocks *Dashing Tweeds* products and recognises the need for a cycling textile that covers both heritage and technological aspects of this particular market niche. She describes why tweed has become a recent trend in cycling:

“It’s definitely to do with urban cyclists and the fact that your bike is part of your whole look. You don’t have to wear sports clothes. You are constantly looking at your own reflection in the windows of other vehicles in an urban environment – how your silhouette looks. Tweed fits in with the urban cycle chic tribe. Fashion tribalism has been transplanted onto bicycles in London.”(Emmison 02/12/10)

Emmison cites the fact that *Dashing Tweeds*’ ‘Lumatwill’ provides an exciting alternative to reflective wear for city cyclists, acknowledging that traditional technology-driven reflective wear is “generally horrible” in terms of aesthetic and feel. She maintains that be providing a stylish alternative – woven in reflective yearns in tweed cycling wear – there is a greater likelihood of style-conscious urban cyclists embracing the safety element of reflection while enjoying the fun and style embodied in this fabric. Emmison is convinced that having technology or a safety element that manages not to look like technology or a safety element is good design, but she also acknowledges the potency of heritage in design echoing Hills and Grant above:

“The heritage element has to exist as you have to move in small increments in fashion, there is so much knowledge and skill that has gone before and you can’t exist in a bubble ignoring what has gone before. A massive part of British design is humour and being directional with that heritage”.

*Anderson and Sheppard*’s stocking and commissioning of *Dashing Tweeds* fabric reiterates the vitality of imaginations captured and humour to be enjoyed. There appears to have been a real gap filled by fabrics that are enjoyable to look at, pleasurable to feel, and intelligent in their approach to advancing function. The ‘Lumatwill’ fabric has been very popular, with a range of commercially attractive patterns, and Heywood sees this line in the same vein as the more unusual designs occasionally developed by conservative, traditional and highly successful businesses:

“We’ve noticed a lot of the woollen merchants will have their target area and they will do their safe tweeds that you see over and over again. It’s always nice to have a fresh look. Although we are seen as traditional and we follow a set routine, as far as fabric choice goes, that evolves.”

There is a fine line with regards to how far design can push the conventions of menswear. *Dashing Tweeds* approaches technology by ‘hiding’ it in a heritage inspired textile. This appears to make it more acceptable to a conventional menswear market, and it has certainly proven to be a winning formula.

**Bespoke Design – Savile Row, Bespoke and Innovation**

*Dashing Tweeds* also caters for the growing bespoke market. Guy Hills explains the context for the fall of bespoke in recent years:

“The 1st world war was the first time men’s sizing was introduced for uniforms so bespoke started to disappear. The conventions started with the beginning of uniform. Big companies began to impose on men conventions of dressing which were hammered home by advertising. In order for the economics to work people had to fall into line. The money for magazines came from multinational companies. Advertising has shoe horned people into strict conventions. It’s very hard for men to break out of this. There used to be a cheap tailor on every high street and men would get clothes made and a much larger variety of cloths were made locally. The British are very good at expressing themselves with fashion and men could easily do this with tailoring”.

Hill’s perspective is augmented in the scholarly work of University of Brighton academic, Dr Paul Jobling[[5]](#footnote-5), as well as through a range of texts by other authors dealing with various aspects of men’s fashion in the 1950s and 1960s (Breward 2002; Cole 2000; O’Neill 2000), style culture and new man in the 1980s (Mort 1996; Nixon 1996), and the advertising profession in the 1960s (Nixon 2003). Interestingly, Jobling notes class (im)permeability and the ‘habitus’ of readers in relation to their age, profession and geography (Bourdieu 1994) as critical to this scholarship, and arguably this is a key part in understanding how heritage and an idea of authenticity is mobilized in this paper.

According to Colin Heywood of *Anderson and Sheppard*:

“We’ve been very busy over the past couple of years. The only thing we can put our finger on is the quality of product. In attracting new business, the exposure that is out there for bespoke, we’ve found people are moving away from fashion houses. Most people would think of getting a good suit from a recognised label. Now I think they know they can get good quality, there’s a certain element of service and it’s made for them.”

He describes the longevity of a Savile Row suit as an investment, and talks about how customers bring in suits made by *Anderson and Sheppard* 25 years ago with fabric still holding up in terms of quality and aesthetic. Adjustments needed for the aging body of the long-term wearer are understandable, but a mark of quality is there in the commitment of customers to decades of ordering their suits “As last. Exactly the same - no changes!”

It appears that menswear works with small changes and slow evolutions, a slight change in trouser shape, a hidden function, a more modern colour. With these increments and considerable design optimism, Patrick Grant predicts a bright future for bespoke:

“I can’t help think that it will grow and grow. There has been a big surge in interest in Savile Row and that’s led to a small uptake in business, which in percentage terms is quite big but in real terms is small. The whole idea of bespoke is clearly a very big trend. It is a large and growing part of the menswear world because people want things that fit and to have choice. Savile Row bespoke has a great future as it continues to be at the top of everyone’s expectations of the ultimate suit. This perception has re-established itself.”

**Conclusion**

The consumer of luxury menswear products such as those at *Dashing Tweeds* puts great value on notions of ‘heritage’ and ‘authenticity’ within the products that they consume. There is an attraction, nostalgia and romance attached to the authentic production of a heritage fabric. Its kudos lies in its allusion to a seemingly less complicated time. We are in the midst of the largest technological revolution since the industrial revolution of the late 18th century. There is evidence that these times evoke movements that look to the past for inspiration. Fabrics that are a facsimile of fabrics gone by, however, can only ever be ‘real fakes reflective of a different time’ if they are not transformed and transitioned by contemporary design innovation, however subtle.

According to the interviewees for this paper, fabrics should be reflective of our time. *Dashing Tweeds* consumers and clients indicate that technology and functionality is desirable in the products they seek, but that these do not have to drive the aesthetic of a fabric. The tactile, beautiful, imaginative and emotional qualities of textiles as we know them can combine with material innovation to create new aesthetics and functions, connecting cultures of heritage and technology towards a textile reflective of our time.

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