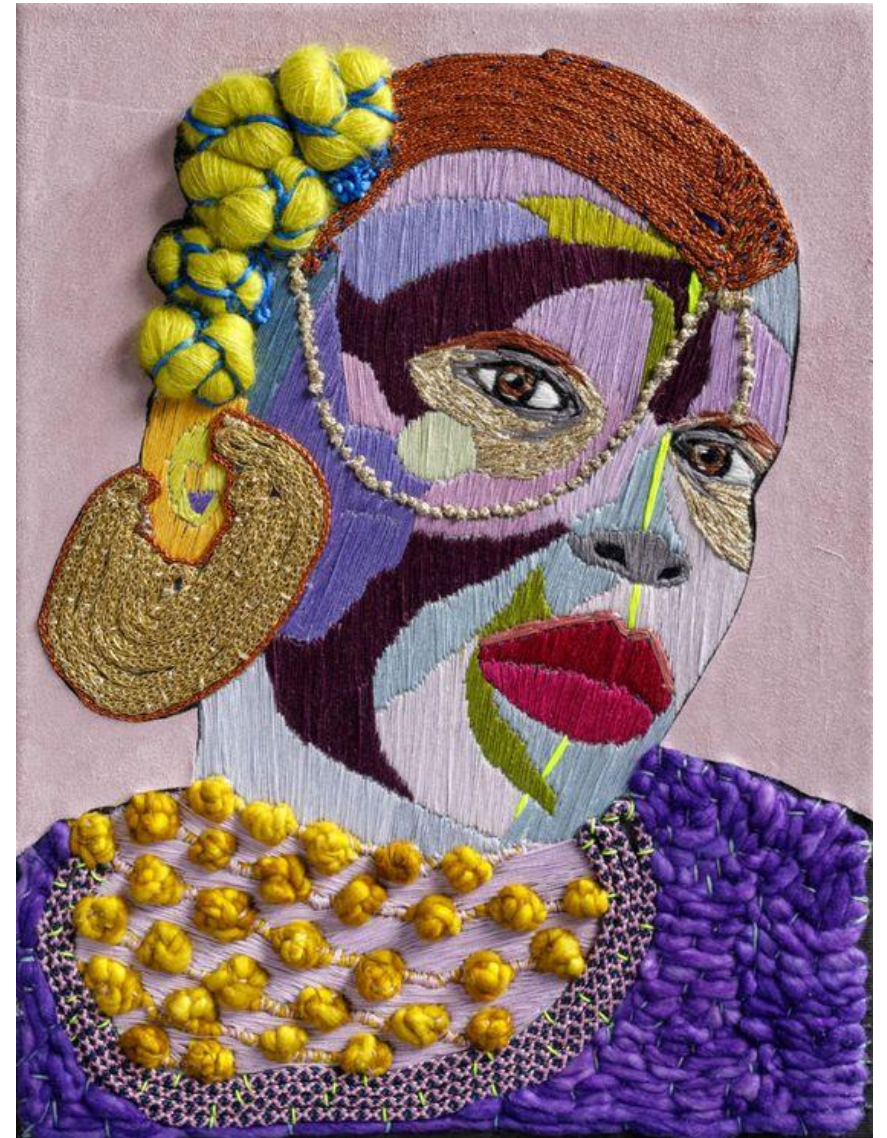

ACTION RESEARCH

CSM FASHION PLACEMENTS: BREAKING THE MOULD OF THE ELITE EURO-CENTRIC FASHION INDUSTRY

Wande Awoniyi



Petra Wolzak

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research question reads more like a statement of intent!

However, before this undertaking comes many questions.

1. Namely, why do so many of our student placements take place in Europe?
2. Why do so many students aspire to work within the same geographical location and within a small pool of high-profile luxury brands.
3. What are our students' goals, aspirations, and motivations for their placement year?
4. What do our students know about global fashion brands & businesses outside of Europe and fashions global emerging markets?

In this action research I intend to explore the realities of our student placement journeys and the part the DPS team take in supporting these journeys.





POSITIONALITY

- **Position:** Course leader and senior lecturer on Diploma In Professional studies, fashion Programme at CSM.
 - **Teaching:** Employability, industry specialist skills, personal and professional development.
 - **Positionality:** 46, Black British, Working-class immigrant background. fashion professional with 18 years industry experience. Undergraduate degree in fashion design, completed a placement year.
 - **Challenges:** Bias towards importance and benefits of completing a placement year which could inhibit understanding of current social and economic barriers that prevent student participation.
 - **Aims:** To better understand and learn about student experiences and realities of the placement year, with a focus on their career aspirations, motivations and goals.
-

RESEARCH CYCLE



Multiple types of data, researcher viewpoints, theoretical frames, and methods of analysis allow different facets of problems to be explored, increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent (re) interpretation.

METHOD 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

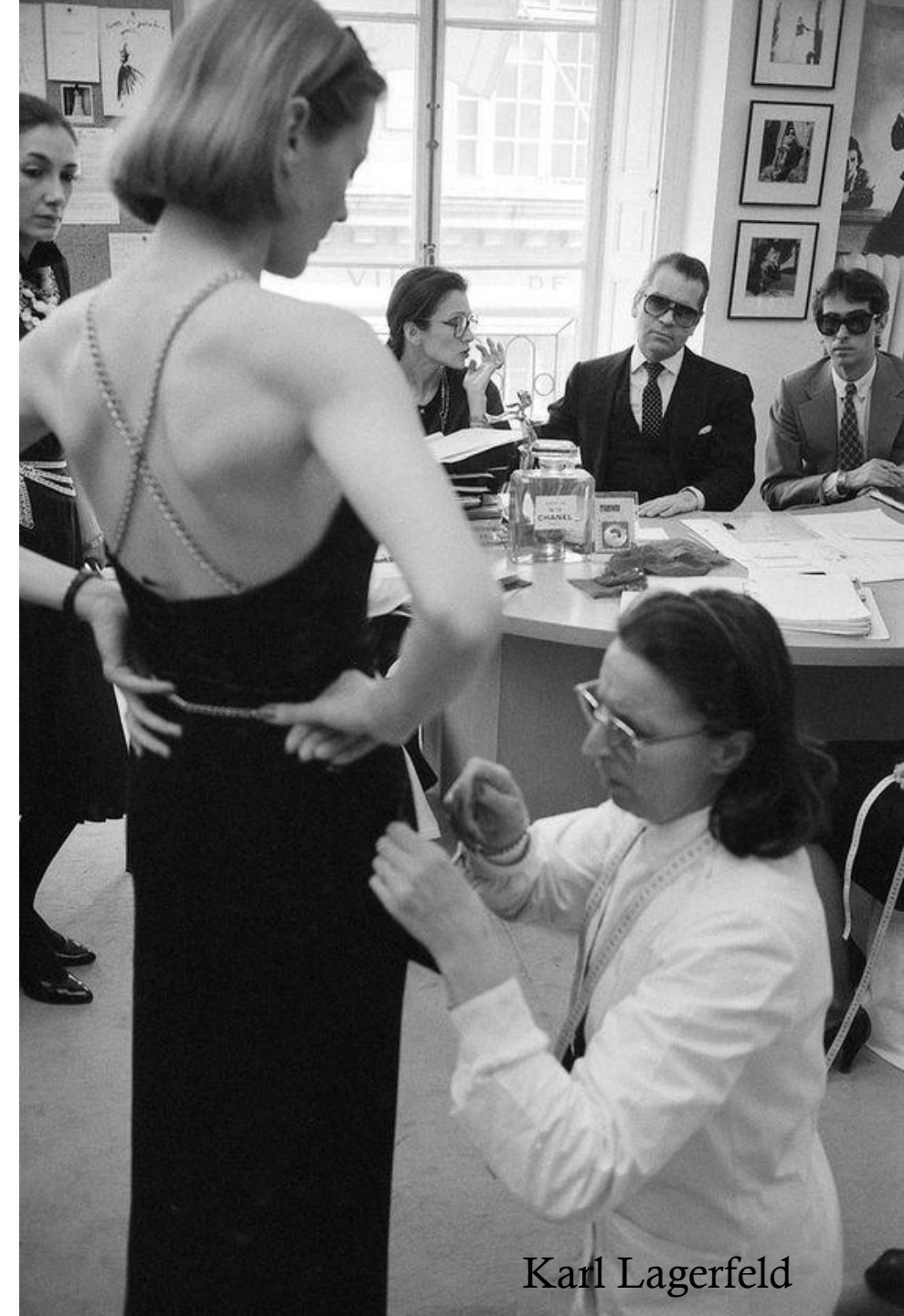
- **Why:** Understand the current landscape and scope of placements and careers in the fashion industry.
 - **How:** Review of current UAL policies and practices in professional development, careers and employability. Current sources of information from specialist industry practitioners and organisations in global fashion, luxury fashion and global emergent markets.
-



METHOD 1- KEY FINDINGS LITERATURE REVIEW

Key learning and observations:

1. Make better use of UAL career initiatives and programmes in my practice.
2. Disconnect with own knowledge of initiatives such as creative shift, what it was about and what it offers students.
3. Lack of new and current literature by researchers and practitioners in the field of emergent global fashion markets. Subject not widely written about. Some of the “emergent markets” have been in a state of emergence for decades!
4. Reviews of emergent markets focused on luxury brands branching into emergent markets but not based on talent coming out of these markets.



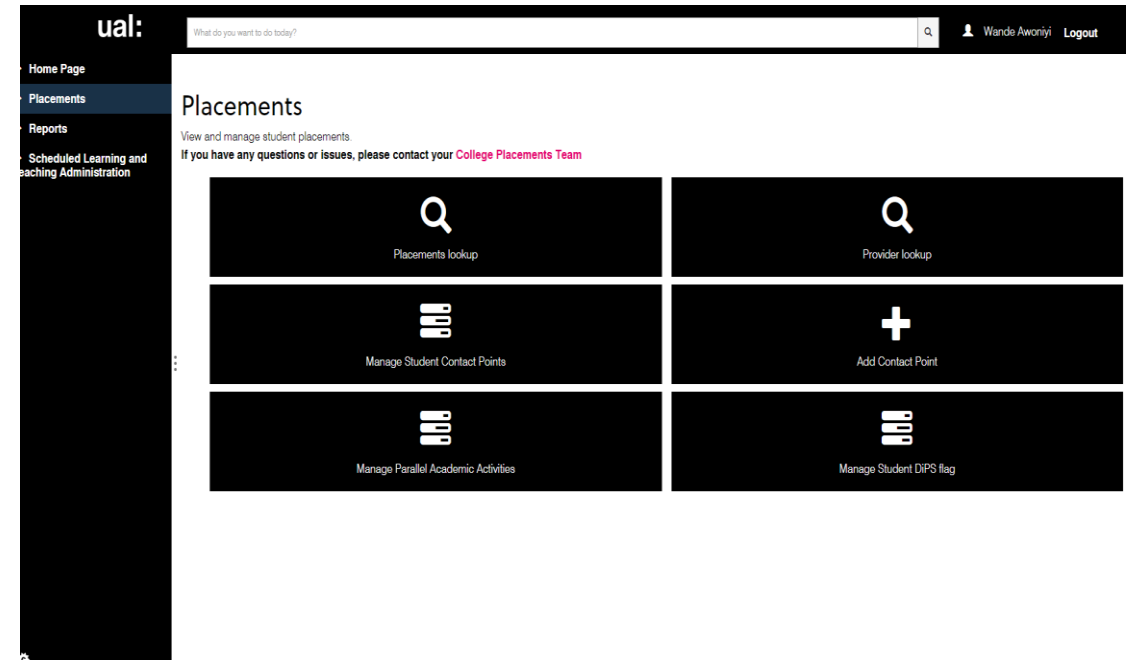
Karl Lagerfeld

METHOD 2 SECONDARY DATA FOR QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

What: UAL /SITS Portal

Why: Add factual relevance and context to research topic in support of rationale with quantitative data on current student placement locations.

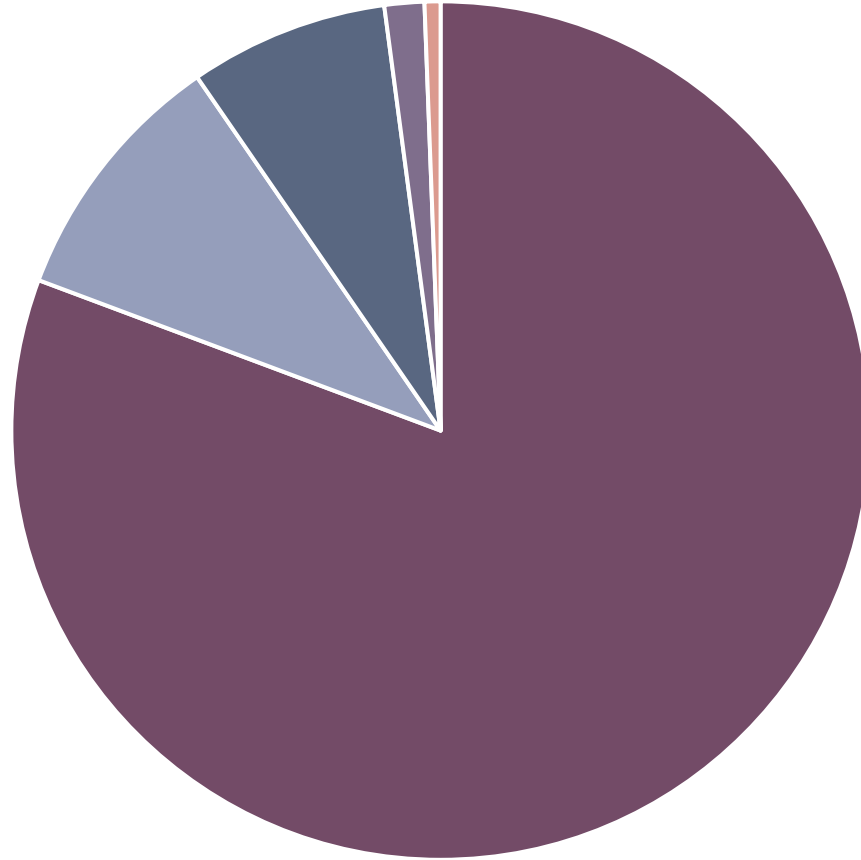
How: Used my gatekeeper access to collect data on current student placement locations.



DPS 23/24 PLACEMENT LOCATIONS

METHOD 2

166 Students enrolled on
DPS 23/24 across 8 BA
fashion design and
fashion communication
courses



■ EUROPE 80.7%

■ ASIA 9.7%

■ AMERICA 7.5%

■ SOUTH AMERICA 1.5%

■ MIDDLE EAST 0.6%

METHOD 2- KEY FINDINGS SECONDARY DATA FOR QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

Key learning and observations:

Research method findings:

Quantitative data collection proved to be a reliable and factual source of information.

Key learning and observations:

- Quantitative data collected supported my initial hypothesis regarding placement locations.
- Benefits of using a variation of research methods to broaden scope and provide relevance and context to initial research question.



METHOD 3.1

QUALITATIVE DATA

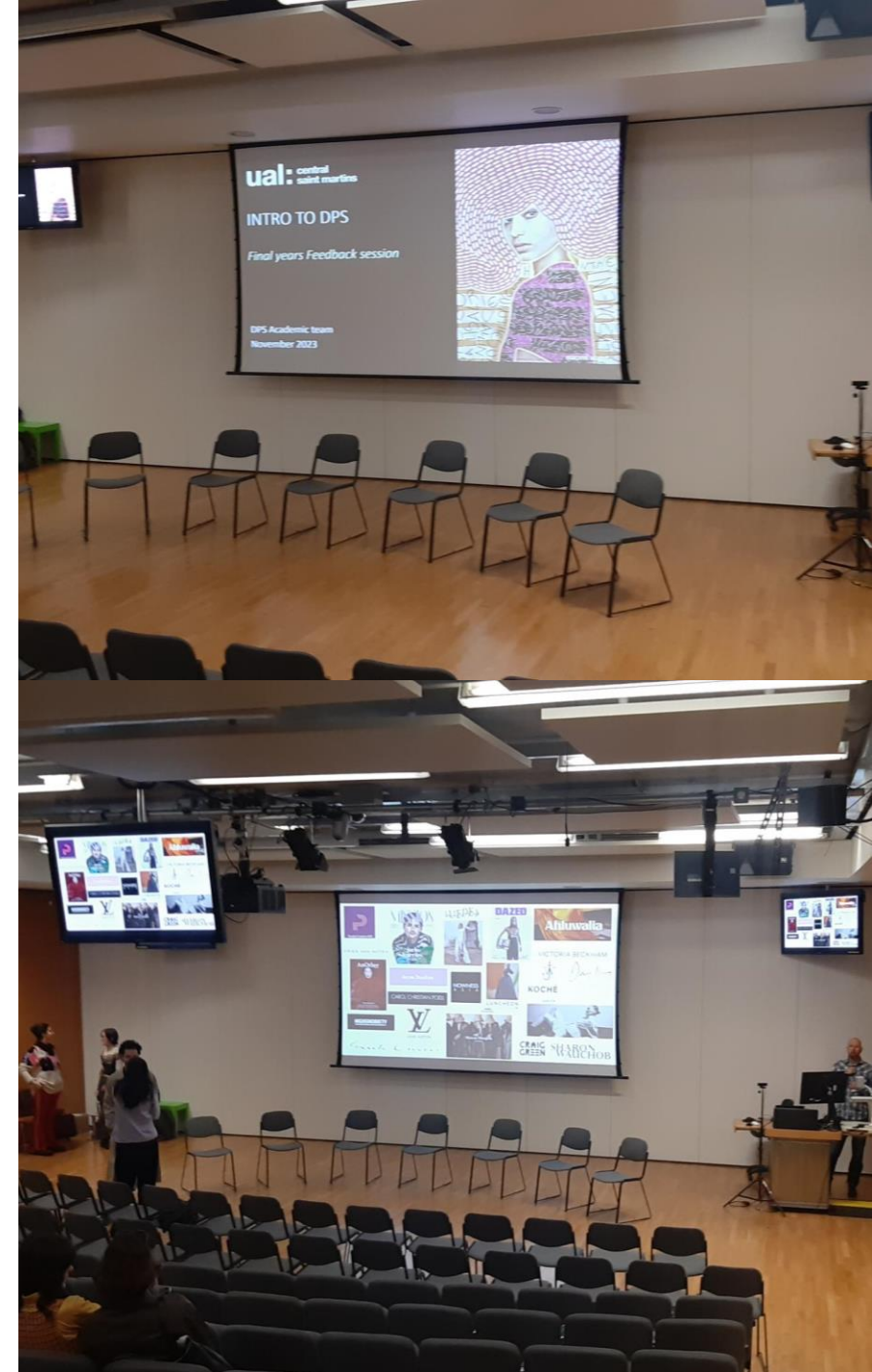
FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

What: DPS 2nd year, “**Into to DPS**” preparation lecture. Q&A Final years feedback session. Observational focus group.

Why: Understand the realities of student experiences on placement from returning final year students.

How: Audio record Q&A session delivered by DPS tutors to final year and 2nd year students. Observe peer to peer interactions during Q&A. **All students gave consent to be recorded.**

Where: CSM LVMH theater- Attendance- 121 2nd year students, 7 final year student panelists.



METHOD 3.1

QUALITATIVE DATA

FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Example question and answers



DPS TUTOR

Did any of
you consider
going out of
Europe or
US for
placement?

I feel like there are
less things in place.
As it is, I feel like the
fashion network is
very centralised to
Europe and America.
But I think its
unfortunate.

I wanted to stay in
London because of
money & it was
easier. Trying to find
out how to survive
in these places felt
like too much to
think about.



Final year students

METHOD 3.1 KEY FINDINGS QUALITATIVE DATA FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Research method findings:

1. **OVERALL EXPERIENCE:** DPS year is a transformational experience both professionally and personally. Future proofing: Building confidence, making connections.
 2. **SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE:** Students articulated a greater awareness and relevance of skills gained in the workplace and an appreciation of existing skills.
 3. **CHALLENGES:** Rejections, Living away from home, Money, applying for work- how and when. Placements out of Europe and America. Lack of know how.
 4. **AFFORDABILITY:** Feasibility of doing DPS, challenges of unpaid work, how to survive, how to negotiate pay, working PT along placement,
- ## Key learning and observations:
1. **Consent:** Protection of students right to refusal when participating in audio recorded session without prior warning. Notify students beforehand that session would be recorded.
 2. **Thinking creatively** of ways to gain consent from large group whilst promoting whole group participation. Avoiding exclusion on non-consenting participants.
 3. **Technical issues-** quality of audio recording. Record on a more suitable device.
 4. **High level of participation.** Sense of community- Greater impact made when peers share their experiences of placement.
 5. **Students happy to share experiences** with others and 2nd years keen to ask questions.

METHOD 3.2

QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE DATA FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

What: DPS 2nd year, “into to DPS” preparation lecture. In lecture activity.

Why: Review students current placement aspirations and motivations and “dream placements”

How: Student participate in mind-mapping activity. Students create two mind maps.

1 map highlights global brands or businesses located outside of Europe and the US.

1 mind map to highlight ideal placement brand/business and its location geographically.

Only students who gave consent handed in their activity sheets after the session.

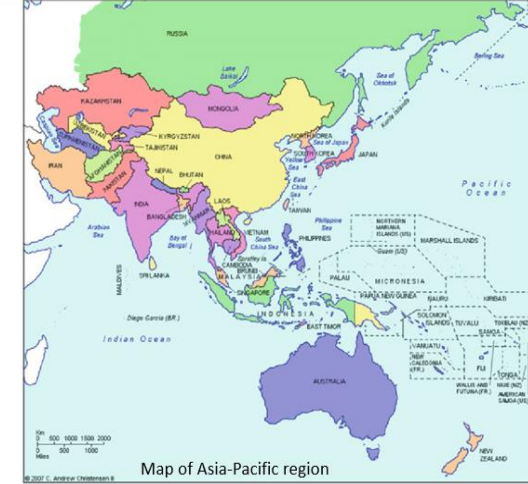
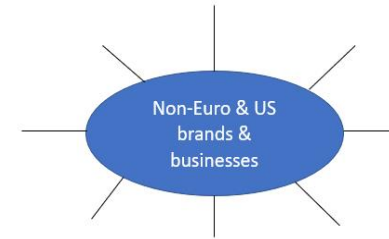
Where: CSM LVMH theater- Attendance- 140 2nd year students.

Activity: Global Brands & Businesses

Create a mind map:

In 2 minutes list as many Non European or US brands, businesses, creatives.

Think emergent markets such as South America, Asia Pacific region, Africa, The Middle east.... **Do not use Google!**



ual: central
saint martins

Preparing for your DPS journey Part II November 2023

Activity: My brands & Businesses

Create your own mind map:

In 2 minutes list as many brands, businesses or creatives you would like to work with during your placement year.

Write on the map where they are located geographically.



ual: central
saint martins

Preparing for your DPS journey Part II November 2023

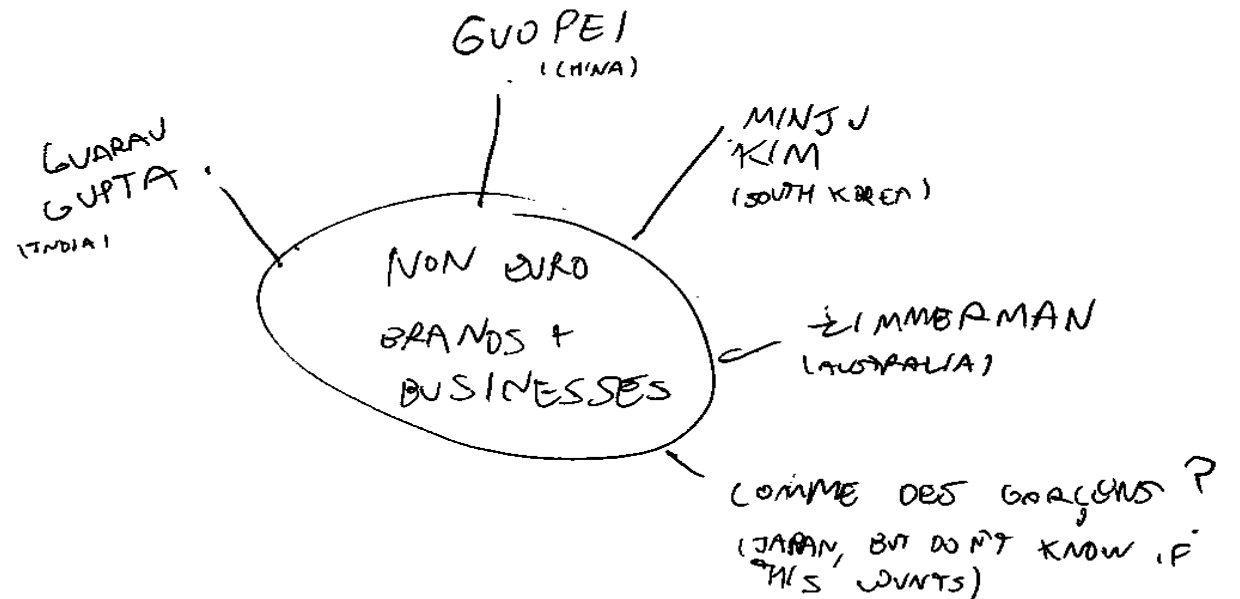
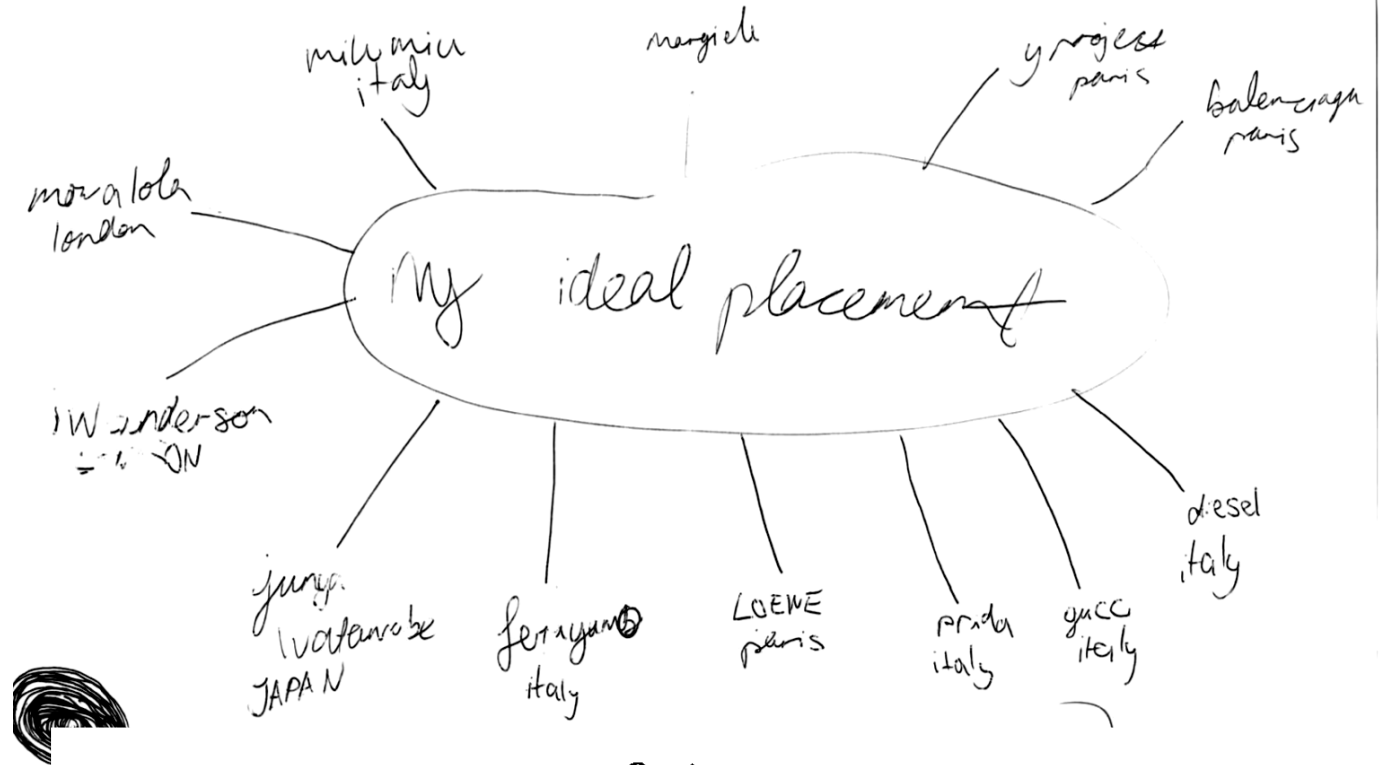
METHOD 3.2

QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE DATA FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Example mind maps

Sample

- 13 students submitted placement location map
- 16 students submitted ideal placement map



METHOD 3.2 KEY FINDINGS

QUALITATIVE DATA

FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Research method findings:

Quantitative analyses:

1. **100%** of students identified brands within Europe & America as their **ideal** placement and placement location.
2. **37%** of students identified countries outside of Europe & America as their **ideal** placement location. Namely: Japan/ Australia/ Canada
3. **92%** of students identified between 1-5 brands outside of Europe & America. 1 student was able to identify more than 5 brands.
4. **100%** of students identified high profile, luxury brands as their ideal placement.



Qualitative & Thematic analyses:

1. Students have limited knowledge of brands & businesses that exist outside of Europe & America.
2. Student desire to work in, or knowledge of small niche & independent brands is limited.
3. High profile, luxury brands identified as **ideal** placement brand.

METHOD 3.2 KEY FINDINGS

QUALITATIVE DATA

FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Key learning and observations:

1. Thinking creatively of ways to gain consent.
2. **Benefit of using both qualitative and quantitative research methods** which offered a clear indication of student knowledge and preferences.
3. **Student enjoyed the activity** as it offered an opportunity for them to think about their aspirations and goals for placement.
4. **Students were stretched and challenged** regarding their knowledge of Non-European and American brands. Students saw this as an exercise in highlighting a potential need to broaden their existing knowledge of global brands and businesses.



METHOD 4

QUALITATIVE DATA

FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

What: Semi-Structured interviews with 2ND Year DPS students and Fashion programme tutors/ pathway leaders.

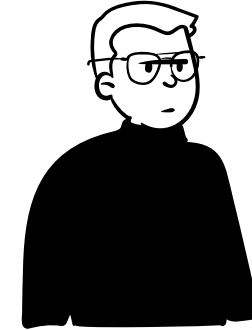
Why: Ascertain student and tutors views, opinions, expectations, knowledge, motivations and aspirations in regards to placements.

How: Audio recorded face to face semi structured interviews student.

Tutor selection: 3 tutors from 3 of the 8 fashion courses. Selected to account for representation of course size and specialism, gender, age.

Student selection: 3 students from 3 of the 8 fashion courses. Selected at random to account for representation of ethnicity, gender, age.

Where: In-person in CSM and online on MS teams.



2nd year BA Fashion pathway leaders



2nd year BA Fashion DPS students

brands

students

lack

knowledge

programme

big

industry

outside

limited

diverse

within

ambition

career

experiences-market

acknowledgment

varied

big

levels

america

varied

determined

look

acceptance

small

vs

aspirations

popularity

relationships

leaders

placement

success

aim

fear

find

europe

develop

place

focused

bias's

going

elitist

trend

connect

gone

focus

motivations

skills

working

relationships

METHOD 4 KEY FINDINGS QUALITATIVE DATA FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Research method findings:

Student interviews

Motivations:

- Foster profession relations / Make industry connections.
- Work in a real-life environment / Develop skills & knowledge.

Ideal placement location:

- Specific ideas & focused desires/Ambitious/Solely Europe & America

Interest in working outside of Europe & America:

- Open to the idea & curious/ A lot of effort/ Need to feel prepared & informed/ Impression that it's too expensive/"Different & scary", "never considered it", "could be fun"

Knowledge of diverse global brands & markets:

- Limited knowledge/ Not considered/ Not promoted widely in industry or uni/ Not discussed, taught or showcased at uni/ Perception of "un-coolness"/ lack of personal interest
- Acknowledgement of their own responsibilities to create awareness

Tutor interviews

Motivations:

- Students very ambition, determined & focused/ Connect who they are with what they do/Find their place in the industry/ Develop relationships, skills & knowledge/
- **Big brands -Acknowledgment & Acceptance**

What does placement success look like:

- **Aim for a variety of experiences-Market levels /big vs small brands /Elitist perceptions & bias's/Focus on industry leaders & popularity/Varied career aspirations within programme**

Interest in working outside of Europe & America:

- Following the trend / going where other students have gone before / **Lack of curiosity to seek opportunities & inspiration from outside their cultural sphere /Needing direction /Lack of diverse opportunities-contacts/student & tutor limited knowledge/Need for change in fashion programme**

METHOD 3.2 KEY FINDINGS QUALITATIVE DATA FOR THEMATIC ANALYSES

Key learning and observations:

- Interviews were very useful and productive source of information.
- Students keen and willing to participate in conversation around careers.
- Two students consented to be video recorded, however, I later decided to only use the audio recording and create a transcript for all interviews for consistency as not everyone agreed to be filmed.
- Challenges on how to compose the right interview question that were not leading and would not prejudice responses. However, I think I succeed in asking open questions that allowed the conversation to flow.



PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Issue	Intervention	Action
1. Student lack of knowledge in regards to brands and businesses that exist outside of Europe and America.	Preparation for DPS workshop. Profile and introduce students to more global and culturally diverse brands and businesses. Group discussions and research activities.	2024/2025 DPS academic year as part of DPS preparation lectures. Spring term.
2. Student uncertainty, psychological and practical barriers in regard to feasibility of placements outside of Europe.	Student final year feedback sessions to include students who have done placements outside of Europe to share their experiences and give advice and suggestions	2024/2025 DPS academic year as part of DPS preparation lectures. Autumn term

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Issue	Intervention	Action
3. DPS Tutor Availability of placements outside of Europe. Costs of visa's and travel/Security and safety/ language/secure accommodation /Cost of living and pay	Research and connect with brands and businesses outside of Europe for possible DPS placements. Address issues and concerns with businesses. Draft a broader aspirational list of global brands and business. Share with fashion programme tutors. Research and connect with college teams to review funding/ grants/ visas/accommodation	2024/2025 DPS academic year preparation. Autumn term
4. Student uncertainty, psychological and practical barriers in regard to feasibility of placements outside of Europe.	DPS guest speaker session with new and existing placements providers outside of Europe to share experiences and realities of living and working outside of Europe.	2024/2025 DPS academic year as part of DPS preparation lectures. Autumn term

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THANK YOU

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