

The advent of the modern corporate uniform: the case of Barclays bank, 1975 - 2010

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ABSTRACT

Civilisations have long since used specially designed uniforms, dress or costume to identify different groups and their beliefs or allegiances. Organizations have, by comparison, only begun to use this technique relatively recently. This article examines employee dress in Barclays bank after uniforms were first introduced in the 1970s. To explore the uniform and its meaning as a symbolic tool for communication, we use new archival sources, the original designs and interview the employees who wore it. We show that uniforms presented Barclays staff members as professional, friendly and approachable in an attempt to break down some of the reservations working class consumers had for the traditionally elitist banking industry. As the bank worked alongside those in the fashion industry, the bank's new identity was underpinned by a branded design.

Keywords: fashion, uniforms, culture, marketing, gender.