

How Canada Goose Brand Marketing Utilizes "Cold Imagery" to Achieve Global Communication

Huining Liu *

Amberson High School, 7100 Birchmount Rd, Markham, Canada

* Corresponding Author Email: huining.liu24@ambersonhighschool.ca

Abstract. Canada Goose is a Canadian company that specializes in the manufacture of parkas and winter coats. Initially, it was a small firm that produced coats for scientists and workers, but over the last two decades, it has become synonymous with luxury. This article seeks to understand how imagery like this operates. It examines three broad areas. Firstly, the numerous ways coldness itself is symbolized. First, the marketing strategies that allow consumers to feel and perform coldness. And third, how this strategy has contributed to the global growth of the brand. The conversation also refers to the risks. Canada Goose benefits from its cold story, but also faces the accusation of greenwashing, cultural adaptation issues, and the forever luxury challenge: how to remain elite while expanding sales. Overall, the case illustrates that cold imagery can be a powerful branding device but is by no means an easy one.

Keywords: cold imagery, luxury branding, symbolic consumption, experiential marketing, globalization.

1. Introduction

Fashion luxury has evolved over the past two decades in ways that even insiders are surprised. The global markets have expanded, new technology has accelerated shopping, and shoppers now demand more than pleasant fabric. People still mention craftsmanship, but what frequently means more is what the item signifies. A bag or a coat is never just material and thread; it is a story, a sign and sometimes a tool to announce identity. That is why branding came to be so important.

Canada Goose is one such example to take. Canada Goose began in Toronto in 1957 and for years made practical winter clothing. Its parkas were used by explorers, by film crews working outside, and by people in cold environments. It was a survival company, not a fashion company. But things changed around the early 2000s. The company started to be seen as not only working but also cool. It committed itself fully to what it already had—its connection to cold. Instead of aping European luxury fashion, it told its own story, one of ice, Arctic maps and blizzards.

This shift makes sense when reading the theories of consumption. Scholars have argued that luxury products are not necessarily needed by most of their consumers. Roy (2025) describes the phenomenon of "masstige consumption," i.e., the luxury product that is available to some extent but still conveys prestige. People buy them because they don't need the product but to show who they are. Canada Goose is a good example. The jackets are warm, sure, but they do more than that, they make you look tough, adventurous, and part of a worldwide elite.

In this paper, it will discuss three interrelated themes. First, describing the different forms of cold imagery and how they operate as symbols. Second, turning to marketing practices, especially those that make the consumer feel cold as part of the shopping experience. Third, examining globalization, asking how this story of cold works in places that are not cold at all. These themes will show how Canada Goose has managed to turn a simple coat into a complex cultural object.

It is also important to note the challenges. Telling a story is not the same as being free of criticism. Canada Goose has been accused of greenwashing, meaning its sustainability claims do not match its practices (Alizadeh, 2024). It has also faced backlash in China for refund policies (Jhaveri, 2023). Like all luxury brands, it must balance between exclusivity and wider sales. These issues will not be solved by imagery alone. They show the fragile nature of symbolic branding: powerful but unstable.

The goal of this paper is not only to describe what Canada Goose has done but to think about the larger lesson. Cold imagery works because it mixes function and meaning, but it also shows how easily meaning can be questioned. If luxury is about stories, then brands must keep rewriting those stories in ways that feel authentic. Canada Goose demonstrates both the potential and the risk of relying on symbols.

2. Diverse Forms of “Cold Imagery”

Cold imagery in Canada Goose is not just a single thing; it shows up in different ways, sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle. Here to divide it into some forms, although they run into each other. What is important is that together they create a feeling of coherence. Even when people do not even think consciously about it, the brand becomes "cold." Coldness is then built into what people buy.

2.1. Visual Symbolism and Semiotics

The most obvious form is visual. Almost everyone who has heard of the brand will recall the circular badge of the map of the north and the maple leaves. The logo itself is simple, but there's a whole world of meaning in it. It's Canada, it's the north, it's survival. Semiotics instructs us that symbols are effective because they are pointing to something beyond themselves. Here, the Arctic is less of a place; it is a notion, an idea, a symbol of ruggedness and purity.

There is also a strong visual dependency in advertising. Models pose in front of glaciers, white backgrounds, or sometimes storms. These images aren't just of the jacket; they're about the context in which the jacket "fits." It is not a city fashion product above all, although most of them put it on in the city. Instead, it is presented in brutal cold, and this makes the city user belong to something larger. Togawa (2023) has shown that “vision-induced perceptions of coldness enhance product newness evaluations”. Canada Goose has something to benefit from this psychological effect.

Sometimes the visual relation is less overt. Even the pristine, streamlined store interiors-with pale colours and clean lines-transmit a feeling of chill distinctness. That may not be as openly visible as ice and snow, but it's within the same semiotic field.

2.2. Experiential Coldness in Stores

Visuals are powerful, but the brand persists. Canada Goose is famous for having "cold rooms." These are cold rooms in flagship stores where the temperature is much lower than freezing. Customers can go in dressed in a jacket, with artificial snow falling all over them. This is beyond product testing. It is almost theatrical and acting out.

Das (2022) argues that “sensory consumption values play a critical role in perceived brand authenticity and masstige purchase intention”. It would be good, but especially, that the cold room makes the buying process ritualistic. To go in is to go through a small test. They will feel the cold, but they feel safe too. It is as if the brand is saying to them: if these people are strong enough to withstand this, because these people are one of them.

What is so remarkable is how not-luxurious this is for a high-end retailer. Normally, high-end brands do soft lighting, mirrors, and maybe champagne. Canada Goose instead chooses discomfort—cold. But it is precisely that discomfort which makes the experience memorable. It is not just shopping; it is a story you can tell others.

2.3. Comparative Positioning

Cold imagery also helps differentiate Canada Goose from its main competition. Compare a side-by-side comparison to Moncler as an example that Moncler will present itself through fashion shows and high-gloss photography. The emphasis is on elegance and European chic. Patagonia emphasizes sustainability and activism. The North Face emphasizes exploration and accessibility, with a tendency to place itself for outdoor adventure without the luxury emphasis.

Canada Goose takes a middle position. It leverages real survival credibility, the type of credibility gained through decades of equipping explorers and workers. But it positions this in luxury branding, high prices, and scarcity. This combination is rare. It allows the brand to speak to multiple segments at once: individuals who hunger for performance, individuals who hunger for status, and individuals who hunger for both.

Such comparisons between different brand positioning and the concept to target consumers between Canada Goose and its competing brands demonstrate that "coldness" is not decoration but a whole positioning strategy. Without cold imagery, Canada Goose would be nearly indistinguishable from its competitors. With it, the company can occupy a unique space.

2.4. Psychological Associations

And last but not least, there is the psychological dimension. Cold has meanings in everyday language far removed from temperature. To be "cool" is to be cool-headed and stylish. To have a "cold mind" is to be self-controlled even in adversity. These connotations inform how people perceive the brand. Wearing a Canada Goose jacket is not only about being warm; it can signal composure, independence, and even superiority.

These meanings matter even in countries without extreme winters. In a warm climate, a parka is not necessary. Yet some people still buy it because it represents strength and resilience. As Suzuki and Kanno (2022) remark, "brand coolness is co-created by companies and consumers in ways that link symbolic value to personal identity". The psychological weight of coldness gives the product symbolic power where practical need is absent.

2.5. Reflections on the Different Forms

Looking across these forms—visual, experiential, comparative, and psychological—cold imagery works on several levels at once. It shows up in logos and ads, but it also lives in the store environment and in the consumer's imagination. This layering is important. A single symbol could be ignored, but a network of symbols is harder to escape.

What the author finds interesting is that consumers may not always notice the cold theme directly. Someone who is attracted by the cold theme might just say, "I like the logo" or "the store was different." But the repetition across different channels builds a shared feeling. Semiotics scholars sometimes call this the "myth" of a brand: not myth as in falsehood, but as in a deep, repeated story that becomes part of culture. For Canada Goose, the myth is that of the Arctic: pure, cold, and tough.

Of course, symbols are never stable. The same coldness that looks pure in one context might look unfriendly in another. A logo that seems authentic today may seem cliché tomorrow. For this reason, the brand must repeatedly refresh its imagery. The one thing that does not change is the overall use of cold as the central metaphor.

3. Marketing Practices of "Cold Imagery"

Cold imagery would not be powerful if it were just an abstract idea. What makes it strong is how Canada Goose applies it to a series of different marketing practices. If one looks closely, one can certainly tell that the brand has developed a whole system where coldness is not only implied but sensed and shared as well. The author will walk through four key areas: retail environments, cultural positioning in media, online engagement, and use of the logo.

3.1. Experiential Retailing and Ritual Consumption

The flagship cold rooms are perhaps the most evocative example. They are sub-zero temperature rooms where clients can try coats on as snow falls around them. At first sight, this seems like a gimmick, but in practice it works as both demonstration and performance. The moment of stepping inside is slightly uncomfortable, yet the discomfort is what makes it memorable. When the jacket keeps you warm in that artificial blizzard, the product claim is proven.

Das (2022) has argued that sensory involvement increases trust in a brand. Actually, the cold room illustrates this well. It turns shopping into a ritual, almost like a trial that the customer passes. People may feel the chill, but they will also feel included in a community that can handle it. That experience changes how ownership feels afterward. Buying the coat is no longer a transaction but a kind of initiation.

It is worth noting how unusual this is for luxury stores. High-end shops often focus on comfort, soft music, and polished displays. Canada Goose does the opposite: it adds difficulty. That choice signals authenticity. It says the brand is about real survival, not just glossy surfaces. At the same time, the space is still sleek and carefully designed, which keeps the luxury aura intact.

3.2. Cultural Placement in Media and Popular Culture

The brand has also used film and popular culture to extend its imagery. Jackets appear in survival-themed movies such as *The Day After Tomorrow*. These films are watched by large audiences and leave strong impressions. The parka, when seen in that setting, is not only clothing but a form of protective armor. Quamina, Xue, and Chawdhary (2023) explain that “cultural placement strategies influence symbolic value by embedding products within broader narratives”.

Festivals add another layer. At Sundance or the Toronto International Film Festival, both held in cold climates, celebrities have often been photographed in Canada Goose jackets. Such events naturally connect the brand with prestige figures. Shukla et al. (2024) argue that luxury brands gain desirability when linked with recognition and status. Here the symbolism of cold is reinforced by the symbolism of celebrity.

The interesting point is that these placements often feel organic. A film crew really does need warm clothing, and an actor really does need a jacket at a snowy festival. That authenticity makes the marketing less obvious but more effective.

3.3. Digital Engagement and Co-Construction of Coolness

In recent years, digital platforms have become the key stage for spreading cold imagery. Canada Goose posts on Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, and Xiaohongshu, showing icy landscapes, expedition stories, or clips of the cold rooms. But the more important element is user content. Customers post their own photos in Canada Goose gear, often with hashtags that link them to a wider community.

Suzuki and Kanno (2022) emphasize that “brand coolness is often co-created by companies and consumers, who jointly construct symbolic associations”. This is visible here. Canada Goose is literally “cool” because of coldness, but also metaphorically cool because of style. The play on the two meanings gives the brand extra flexibility. For young users, posting a snowy picture in a Canada Goose parka signals both toughness and trendiness.

Interestingly, even people in warmer countries participate. They might wear the jacket on a short ski trip, or even pose in artificial environments like ice bars. The temperature may not match the product, but the symbolic effect still works. Cold imagery becomes portable, turning into a prop for self-presentation online.

3.4. The Logo: Visibility with Subtlety

The logo plays a special role. Luxury branding often debates how visible a logo should be. If too large, it may appear vulgar; if too small, it loses recognition. Canada Goose places its Arctic patch on the left sleeve, where it is easy to notice but not overwhelming.

Shukla et al. (2024) note that “conspicuous logos may reduce perceived authenticity by emphasizing status over substance”. The Canada Goose patch avoids this problem by balancing visibility and restraint. It carries multiple messages at once: Canadian origin, Arctic cold, and reliability. Consumers recognize it instantly, yet it does not dominate the garment.

Another important point is stability. The logo has not changed significantly for decades. That consistency reassures buyers. It tells them the brand is not chasing every passing trend. The patch itself becomes a symbolic code: owning it signals both functionality and prestige.

3.5. Integration of Practices

If looking at these practices together, a pattern emerges. The cold rooms create an embodied experience. Media and festivals give cultural exposure. Social platforms extend the imagery into everyday life. The logo provides a constant, unifying sign. Each element alone would be effective, but together they form a symbolic system that is stronger than the sum of its parts.

What stands out is that the system does not rely on one channel. Cold imagery is reinforced across different spaces—physical, cultural and digital. Consumers encounter it again and again, until it becomes part of how they think about the brand. Even critics often admit that Canada Goose has a distinct identity, one that is not easily confused with rivals. That identity is rooted in how cold imagery has been taken up as lived marketing practice.

4. “Cold Imagery” Facilitating Globalization

4.1. Transcending Climatic Boundaries

One of the most shocking aspects of Canada Goose's expansion is that it has gained such popularity in places where the climate is not especially cold. At first sight, this seems paradoxical. Why would a person who lives in Hong Kong or Dubai buy a big, puffy parka intended for use in the Arctic? The answer lies in the symbolic side of the brand. As Roy (2025) describes “masstige consumption as a framework where consumers pursue luxury not for utility but for symbolic accessibility and prestige”.

In tropical or subtropical regions, a Canada Goose jacket may only be worn a few times a year, often during ski trips or travel to colder countries. Sometimes it is worn even when the weather does not really demand it. In these contexts, the coat functions as a marker of taste and global identity rather than warmth. The act of owning one becomes a way of participating in a wider cultural story. Cold imagery here is detached from its practical base but remains effective as a metaphor for resilience and prestige.

This shows how adaptable symbolic branding can be. Coldness, as a lived experience, may not apply everywhere, but coldness as an idea—strength, composure, exclusivity—can be appealing in almost any cultural setting.

4.2. Cultural Adaptation and Market Dynamics

Expansion globally is also sensitive to cultural negotiation. The Chinese example is especially useful. Chinese affluent consumers have been very eager to own luxury products that symbolize global sophistication. Canada Goose has heavily invested in digital advertising on sites like Xiaohongshu and WeChat, often using experiential content and partnering with influencers.

Yet issues have ensued. In 2021, Canada Goose was widely criticized for strict refunding policies. Jhaveri (2023) notes that “brand crises on social media in China unfold rapidly, with antecedents escalating into consumer backlash within days”.

The lesson is that symbolic storytelling must be complemented with actual practice. Cool imagery can grab attention, but if day-to-day operations do not deliver, the customers pick up on the lack of congruence. Global branding therefore requires not only good storytelling but also operations integrity.

4.3. Sustainability and Greenwashing

Sustainability is another central issue of globalization. Luxury consumers increasingly expect their brands to be responsible. Canada Goose has promoted its "Humanature" platform, claiming that it employs recycled materials and emphasizes ethical sourcing. Critics are less than thrilled, however. Alizadeh (2024) has argued that “a large proportion of fashion companies engage in some form of greenwashing, where stated environmental commitments exceed actual practices”. Gacek (2020) similarly criticized Canada Goose for “continuing reliance on animal-derived materials despite sustainability claims”.

The risk is that symbolic coldness, accompanied by purity and truth, can be lost if the brand appears to be insincere. Consumers want not only the image of resilience but also evidence of responsibility. If sustainability promises appear hollow, then the symbolic story loses credibility.

4.4. Exclusivity Versus Accessibility

Global growth also creates the tension between exclusivity and accessibility. Luxury brands rely on scarcity to maintain prestige, but selling more worldwide makes scarcity harder to preserve. Quamina et al. (2023) caution that “greater accessibility in luxury can dilute symbolic distinctiveness and weaken brand equity”.

Canada Goose has tried to manage this by shifting to direct-to-consumer sales, reducing wholesale distribution and focusing on flagship stores. Snelling (2023) notes that this approach increases profitability while keeping tighter control over branding. But the visibility of the product has grown, especially in urban markets where it has become a common status symbol. Berg (2025) observes that while this visibility strengthens recognition, it also risks making the brand too ordinary. The paradox is clear: to stay exclusive while also expanding is not easy.

4.5. Digital Futures

Looking ahead, globalization will likely intersect with digital technologies in new ways. Virtual reality and metaverse platforms may offer opportunities for Canada Goose to extend its cold imagery. Imagine consumers entering a virtual snowstorm to test a coat, or attending an exclusive online event where celebrities appear in digital Arctic landscapes. These experiences could reproduce coldness in symbolic rather than physical form.

At the same time, it is uncertain whether symbolic authenticity can survive in purely digital contexts. Virtual cold may not feel as convincing as the physical cold rooms. The future challenge will be to balance innovation with credibility, ensuring that digital initiatives still feel consistent with the brand’s story.

5. Conclusions

The case of Canada Goose illustrates how a functional product can be transformed into cultural capital through symbolic branding. By embedding cold imagery across advertising, retail design, film, digital platforms, and even psychological associations, the brand has created an identity that goes beyond climate. Its coats are not just garments; they are symbols of resilience, exclusivity and participation in a global narrative.

At the same time, the analysis has shown the fragile nature of symbolic branding. Cold imagery is powerful but not indestructible. Accusations of greenwashing, cultural backlash, and overexposure all reveal the risks. Symbolic stories are only effective as long as consumers continue to believe in them.

The larger lesson is that luxury branding now depends less on materials and more on meaning. Semiotics, experiential marketing, and globalization together create value, but they also require constant maintenance. For Canada Goose, the task ahead is to keep renewing its cold imagery, making it feel authentic in new cultural and technological contexts. Only then can the brand continue to turn literal coldness into symbolic warmth and prestige.

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