ASOS is a large-scale app using sleek User Interface design to present as many products as possible to a user in the shortest possible time. While there are a near uncountable number of products held in the app in various categories and menus, the app itself is based entirely around 3 or 4 designed screens which can interchangeably have products placed within this. This simplicity of design, coupled with an almost noticeable lack of branding synonymous with ASOS as a company causes the user to almost intuitively find themselves parting with money in exchange for products.

Therefore, this ‘project’, itself likely created through the iterative process of user and product testing in collaboration with a digital design team, is less a product of visual and brand design, and more a digital tool with which the brand engages consumers and communicates what is expected from them: whether this be to engage with a new trend or sale, or to spend an increased amount of time on the app itself via articles and moodboards.

In order to subvert this study via studio practice, I will aim to remake the central ‘purchase loop’ a number of times, each time removing an element that makes the interaction as intuitive as it is: for example, how does increased visual business change the experience? How does removing the products themselves change it?

*The Medium is the Massage* is a 1967 book and documentary film discussing the impact of contemporary mediums of communication on the human reception of messages. The key theme from this work, that ‘Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication,’ (McLuhan, M, 1967) is directly applicable to the field of UI design as an evolution of traditional print design: where graphics in print format were once the medium itself (see the fashion adverts and catalogues in print once used to encourage commercial consumption of clothing) their digital formats have now become the content of the new medium – digital commerce applications.

ASOS as an app contains traditional graphic design, primarily in the form of promotional banners, logos, and article headers. As predicted by McLuhan, the medium of the past has become the content of the medium of the future: graphic design, in its most traditionalist form, primarily concerned with typographical expression and strict layout grids, has become the decorative element to a graphic medium concerned with interaction over visual expression, manipulation over suggestion.

Through graphic analysis of the ASOS app via iterative and experimental studio practice, I came to the understanding that the necessity of graphic design within this medium is to be as clear and unobstructive as possible. The cliché is that ‘good design is invisible,’ which, while not entirely applicable here as we must have visuals to interact with, is entirely correct in terms of the invisibility of interaction that UI design products such as ASOS strive for when developing streamlined interaction chains such as ‘purchase loops’, designed to direct and manipulate the user into the desired action through invisible design.

In this case study, pure graphic design has become more akin to decoration than a necessity of communication – a phenomenon predicted in *The Medium is the Massage* with McLuhan’s study of the transition from radio to television. In order to advance my studio enquiry in keeping with this theoretical basis, I aimed to once again subvert the expectations of a commerce-based fashion app, by exploring maximalism within interaction design, and exploring to what extent visual excess can be used in coalition with the interactions found in the ASOS app. By recentring graphic design as a core element of UI, rather than a secondary factor slotted around interaction, I hoped to further understand the implications of this transition between mediums.