

# Morgan K. Ward, PhD

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## Professional Summary

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Dr. Morgan Ward is a court-qualified expert in consumer psychology and brand perception, with over 20 years of experience researching how consumers interpret brand cues, product design, and marketing claims. Her academic work forms the foundation of her expert witness practice, which focuses on trademark, trade dress, and consumer deception matters. She specializes in evaluating source confusion, false affiliation, and perceived credibility through perceptual analysis and litigation-focused consumer research, including large-scale confusion surveys. Dr. Ward has provided expert testimony under both Daubert and Frye standards.

## Court Qualifications

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- Qualified as an expert in consumer behavior and branding in U.S. District Court
- Testimony admitted under Daubert; no challenges to admissibility to date

## Expert Engagements

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### Confidential 2025 Branding Dispute

**Case No.:** 1:22-cv-23789, S.D. Fla.

**Role:** Rebuttal Expert

**Focus:** Luxury branding, exclusivity, and consumer perception

#### Key Issues:

- Alleged free-riding and brand dilution
- Consumer expectations in high-end multi-brand retail environments
- Impact of multi-brand retail formats on brand equity

#### Contributions:

Retained by plaintiffs in a trademark dispute involving luxury branding and retailer exclusivity. Rebutted the opinions of two defense experts, challenging assumptions about marketing strategy, service consistency, and brand positioning. Reviewed deposition transcripts and internal marketing materials to assess how exclusivity expectations were communicated and operationalized. Applied behavioral theory and industry data (e.g., J.D. Power CSI scores) to evaluate whether multi-brand retailing harms brand distinctiveness.

**Deposed in May 2025.** Case pending; trial scheduled for August. No Daubert challenge filed.

**Status:** Case pending

## M3 Girl Designs v. Blue Brownies LLC

**Case No.:** 09-CV-2390-F, N.D. Tex., 2010–2012

**Role:** Rebuttal and Testifying Expert

**Focus:** Trade dress infringement, brand distinctiveness, and survey methodology

### Key Issues:

- Alleged trade dress infringement in the children's jewelry market
- Secondary meaning and consumer recognition

### Contributions:

Retained by defendants in a trade dress infringement case involving children's jewelry. Designed and conducted a consumer perception survey with over 700 participants to assess recognition of the claimed trade dress and source attribution. Authored a declaration, expert report, and two rebuttal reports addressing survey validity and methodological flaws in the opposing expert's analysis. Applied consumer psychology theory and experimental design principles to evaluate whether the design functioned as a source-identifying cue. Deposed and testified at trial. Testimony was admitted. Court ruled in favor of the plaintiff; judgment affirmed on appeal.

**Deposed and testified at trial.** Testimony was admitted; court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, and the judgment was later affirmed on appeal.

**Outcome:** Case completed

## Expert Services

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- Expert reports, rebuttals, and declarations
- Consumer perception and brand confusion analysis
- Survey design, analysis, and methodological critique (Daubert-compliant)
- Deposition and trial testimony preparation

## Education

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- Ph.D. in Marketing, University of Texas, Austin
- MBA, University of Texas, Austin
- Graduate Fellowship – Harvard University
- B.S. Business Management (Textiles & Apparel), Cornell University

## Academic Appointments

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- Assistant Professor of Marketing, Emory University, Goizueta Business School
- Assistant Professor of Marketing, Southern Methodist University, Cox School of Business

# Industry Consulting

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## **InsightHive LLC – Cofounder**

Behavioral insights consultancy translating academic research into actionable strategy. Advises Fortune 500 companies, legal teams, and creative agencies on consumer behavior, brand perception, and symbolic meaning—especially in contexts involving brand positioning, pricing, and reputational risk.

## **McMillan|Doolittle LLP – Associate Consultant**

Retail strategy firm specializing in brand concept development. Supported private equity and retail clients with consumer insight generation, brand evaluation (luxury and mass-market), and venture assessments.

## **Abercrombie & Fitch (Hollister Co.) – Associate Merchandiser**

Member of the original launch team for Hollister. Conducted trend analysis, demographic targeting, brand positioning, and product development for a national retail rollout.

## Selected Publications

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- Lowe, M, Jo, W, Ward, M.K. and Vohs, K.D., (2025). The Sound of Status. *Journal of Marketing Research*.
- Ward, M.K. and Dahl, D.W. (2014). Should the Devil Sell Prada? *Journal of Consumer Research*.
- Ward, M.K. and Broniarczyk, S.M. (2016). Ask and You Shall (Not) Receive. *Journal of Marketing Research*.
- Berger, J and Ward, M.K, (2010). Subtle Signals of Inconspicuous Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*.