

Social identification processes in fashion: from luxury to fast fashion

Os processos de identificação social na moda: do luxo ao fast fashion

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ABSTRACT

The dynamic of capitalism intensified the fashion market around the 19th century with the creation of haute couture. Since then, several factors have been relevant in shaping this dynamic by consumption bias, such as the distinction of social classes, mass culture and the media. This article proposes, through a bibliographic review, a reflection on the conformation of this market, from its origin to the present day, from haute couture to fast fashion, its articulations with the media in the dissemination of trends and its influence on consumption patterns. In this approach, changes in the fashion market, such as, the emergence of fast fashion and the permanence of a luxury market with global dimensions were evaluated, based on the understanding of fashion as a social phenomenon and its importance as an industry and cultural product.

Keywords: Fashion theories. Trends. Media. Society.

RESUMO

A dinâmica capitalista promoveu a intensificação do mercado de moda em meados do século XIX com a criação da alta costura. Desde então, diversos fatores têm sido relevantes na conformação dessa dinâmica pelo viés do consumo, como a distinção das classes sociais, a cultura de massas e a mídia. Este artigo propõe, por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica, uma reflexão sobre a conformação desse mercado, da sua origem aos dias de hoje, da alta costura ao fast fashion, das suas articulações com a mídia na disseminação de tendências e na influência nos padrões de consumo. Nessa abordagem, avaliaram-se as mudanças no mercado de moda, como o surgimento do fast fashion e a permanência de um mercado de luxo de dimensões globais, com base no entendimento de moda como fenômeno social e de sua importância como indústria e produto cultural.

Palavras-chave: Teorias de moda. Tendências. Mídia. Sociedade.

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INTRODUCTION

Since Prehistory, the need to dress provides an intense exchange of artifacts. As a raw material, fabric has boosted not only the economy but also several technological developments, the establishment of important trade routes and, in its wake, the development of cities and cultures in our history.

For Gilda Chataignier (2006, p. 21), “weaving is considered a great milestone in the evolution of human beings and their social inclusion”. Traces of fabrics and their origins add information that reveal ways of life and sociocultural aspects of peoples since antiquity. The use of fibers, patterns, and aesthetic aspects of clothing build the cultural identity of peoples and reveal their historical and cultural roots.

Since the end of the Middle Ages, the idea of fashion diffusion has been paramount in the onset of fashion itself. The first to spread fashion, or more precisely to play the role of creators of fashions or fads (both in clothing and behavior) were the nobles. As dominant classes, they were constantly observed and, consequently, imitated by aspirants to higher positions in the social scale. It is also noted that social mobility is a characteristic of post-Middle Age societies. Thus, assimilating tastes and everything that the upper classes used became a form of belonging, or at least the illusion of belonging, to the desired group. In turn, the ruling class created other fads in order to distance itself from its imitators. This dynamic long-fueled fashion for the so-called trickle down, or leaky system.

The production of clothing, with the emergence of the fashion system in the 15th Century, absorbed a large amount of labor and established a direct connection with the capitalism that was being established. The need to dress the growing population gave rise to the important industry of weaving and clothing production, with its technological developments.

Weaving techniques were often secrets kept for centuries and passed down from generation to generation until the beginning of the first Industrial Revolution, at the end of the 18th Century, when the development of less artisanal techniques took over textile production, mainly in Europe (CHATAIGNIER, 2006).

The Industrial Revolution triggered the self-sustaining production and retail cycle. As more goods were produced, more products were available to sell, which increased commercial activity and gave the expanding middle class more money to spend, creating a demand for more products. This growing demand for the variety of goods produced was the basis for the development of retail. Retail stores expanded in cities, close to production and population centers. As more people flocked to urban centers to work, stores opened in areas convenient for customers (FRINGS, 2012, p. 11).

The mechanization of work and large-scale production began in the textile sector in England, thus configuring the first Industrial Revolution, which, according to Trinca (2004), provided material substrate for the strengthening of the fashion system. On the other hand, the ideas spread by the French Revolution of equality, freedom, and fraternity and the bourgeois aspirations made possible the freedom of consumption in an egalitarian way, mainly with regard to the consumption of

clothing. Sumptuary laws and the exclusivity of use of certain products imposed by an aristocratic elite could no longer prevail in societies where Enlightenment and democratic ideals prevailed (ROCHE, 2007).

Crane (2006) states that the consumption of fashion products increases the social capital of the individual, which, at the end of the 19th Century, with the development of the industrial production of fashion clothes, meant that consumption was no longer a prerogative of the upper social classes.

The nobility, until the middle of the 20th Century, fed the aspirations of commoners, in the dream of social ascension. Until the mid-19th Century, the figure of the fashion designer was still incipient and rare (LIPOVETSKY, 2009). Consumers were the creators, when ordering their clothes and making their own taste and creativity evident in the clothes, with few exceptions, such as the case of Rose Bertin, seamstress at the court of Louis XVI, who dressed the whims of Marie Antoinette.

With the prominent industrialization, the forms of commercialization needed to accompany such transformations. The amount of fabric available, due to the mechanization of the sector, increased considerably and, with the invention of the sewing machine in the mid-19th Century, led to the emergence of a new market: that of ready-to-wear clothes. According to Lipovetsky (2009, p. 79-81), “a hitherto unknown production and distribution system appeared, and which would continue with great regularity for a century”.

Initially, ready-to-wear clothes were aimed at a low-income public. Since 1820, long before the sewing machine (1860), ready-to-wear clothes were offered in large quantities and at low prices in both England and France. As the large department stores were established at the end of the 19th Century¹, the production of ready-to-wear clothes began to target a slightly more demanding public, and the small and medium bourgeoisie began to consume such products.

Technological advances with more improved machines and the division of labor led to an improvement in the quality of the product offered. Thus, the fashion market emerged, with its democratic possibility of access, its own system of creation and dissemination, and “obligatorily associates two antagonistic poles: the will to create and the need to produce” (BAUDOT, 2008, p. 11). For Lipovetsky (2009, p. 13), fashion consists of a product of modern societies, and what defines it is the taste for permanent and cyclical change, the ephemeral in its essence that feeds capitalism, being, therefore, one of the organizing principles of modern collective life.

The fashion market, in the 20th Century and even today, was constituted through an organization primarily due to a stylist established in Paris in the mid-19th Century, Charles Frederick Worth.

Worth has navigated French hegemony with regard to the “arts of fashion — fabrics, trinkets, all kinds of women’s accessories, since the end of the seventeenth

1 It is observed that the sale of clothing products was carried out through mail order catalogs, before the appearance of large department stores (CRANE, 2006).

century. This hegemony offered a considerable supply of specialized and qualified labor” (BAUDOT, 2008, p. 30). Fueled by French government incentives, fashion was already an important source of foreign exchange in France. Thus, its worldwide influence in shaping luxury taste and commerce was notable in the 19th Century. At the beginning of the 20th Century, Paris was building what Lipovetsky and Serroy (2015, p. 152) called the “globalization of elegance”, that is, the globalization of taste and luxury with the French reference.

Charles Frederick Worth, born in England in 1825, began his training in trade in London and in 1847 moved to Paris. He worked as a salesman in several women’s variety stores but revealed his innovative talent for creation at the universal expositions in Paris². In 1858, he established his own business on Rue de La Paix and gradually won over influential women from the nobility and bourgeoisie of the time.

Several innovations in the world of fashion are credited to Worth, such as the creation of seasonal collections, unpublished models prepared in advance and changed frequently, the presentation of dresses by live models called look-alikes in luxurious salons, and, for the first time, women’s fashion was made by men. “By raising the status of the couturier, Worth also revolutionized dressing habits” (BAUDOT, 2008, p. 22). The creator then went from being a mere supplier of luxury items to the high circles of society, to being part of it, being invited to parties and events. Lipovetsky (2009, p. 82) adds that, “under Worth’s initiative, fashion reaches the modern era; it became a creative company, but also an advertising show”. Such bases of creation, production, and sales were instantly copied by other creators, such as Redfern, Doucet, Paquin, Lanvin, among others, which triggered the founding of the Chamber of Commerce for *Haute Couture*, a regulatory body for *haute couture* that was then created and in effect until the nowadays.

In this aegis, the production of clothes began to be divided into two categories: *haute couture* and the making of ready-to-wear clothes. This division in the fashion market remained clearly distinct until the 1960s, when the social impacts generated by a younger population began to influence fashion creation.

Since Worth and with the creation of the *Haute Couture* Union Chamber³, the fashion market has been governed by a well-articulated and defined system. According to Lipovetsky (2009), over 100 years fashion has established itself in a bipolar system, “but which do not lack to form a unitary configuration” (LIPOVETSKY, 2009, p. 80).

Thus, on the one hand, *haute couture*, with its renowned creators, produces prestige clothing, with high prices, tailored, aimed at a limited number of consumers: “*Haute couture* is an original institution that combines art and craftsmanship,

2 The universal expositions were the great fairs in which the industries of different sectors showed their products, in a period of great innovations, as it happened with the machines of the cinema.

3 Known as *Chambre Syndicale or Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter, des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode*, it is a French institution that aims to organize and lead the French fashion industry, with an international reach, and represents the fashion in its most creative aspects. Since 2017, the denomination has officially changed to *Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode*.

vanguardism and crafts tradition, the demiurgic power of the creator and the magic of appearances, creative modernity and 'aristocratic' culture" (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015, p. 153).

On the other hand, there is the industry of ready-made clothes at accessible prices, produced in series, for different purchasing power ranges and with varied quality standards. What unifies them is the imitation of the models created in *haute couture* by the clothing industries, thus marking a contrast of social classes, ways of life and aspirations reflected in the consumer market and in its forms of commercialization, not excluding from this system the intermediary organizations that aim to serve a stratified consumer market that developed over the course of the 20th Century.

However, beyond a matter of purchasing power, fashion is also increasingly a mechanism of social identification, as will be seen below.

FASHION AS SOCIAL DISTINCTION

The consumption of fashion objects, that is, a product or service that combines the properties of creation (design and fashion trends), quality (conceptual and physical), wearability, appearance (presentation), and price through the wishes and desires of the market segment for which the product is intended (RECH, 2002, p. 37), according to McCracken (2007), provides materiality to the cultural world experienced by consumers. Cultural reality is now represented by consumer goods that produce different meanings according to the cultural background of the individual receiver and reflect issues such as distinction of class, status, gender, age, and occupation.

In this way, one can return to Veblen's theories (1980) regarding the emulation of social classes and the force that fashion consumption can represent for the establishment of different social stratifications. For the author, clothing, in its most expensive and uncomfortable conception, associates its user with idleness and denial of productive activities, non-verbally declaring the position that the individual or group occupies in a social network.

However, for Campbell (2001), the protagonism of the dissemination of modern consumerism is in the middle class, where the population is not so poor that they can afford above basic needs, nor so rich to disregard the consumption of novelties. The author reports that, in England, at the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th, there was a considerable increase in the circulation of money associated with the availability of goods due to the improvement of production processes. To accompany this process of demand and supply of goods, sales techniques, forms of advertising and circulation of goods emerged, leading to a revolution in the consumer market. The visible technique of consumerism began to be practiced, fueled less by the materiality of the merchandise and more by the illusion of the pleasure of the new, of those objects that are different from those commonly consumed. The author argues that hedonism is at the root of modern consumerism, as well as of contemporary Western societies.

The desire-acquisition-disillusionment-renewed desire cycle is a general aspect of modern hedonism and applies both to romantic interpersonal relationships and to the consumption of cultural products such as clothing and records. It is, therefore, an aspect of consumption that is either 'invisible' or conspicuous and needs no assumptions concerning attitudes to status and prestige, although it may well be true that the activities and attitudes of others exert an influence on one's consumption, when new products become the focus of desire (CAMPBELL, 2001, p. 132-133).

Thus, Lipovetsky and Serroy (2015, p. 181) observe that modern society is "the society of desire" and its main characteristic is the appreciation of leisure, youth, freedom of enjoyment and consumption, an opinion corroborated by Campbell (2001) and driven, from the 1950s onward, by the dissemination of the American way of life.

Until the 1950s, fashion was unquestionably dictated by *haute couture* and widely disseminated by the media, as will be seen later. The creator-stylist had the power to transform the universe of fashion with each collection, which led to more copies of their creations, both authorized and unauthorized. *Prêt-à-porter*, mass production, was then installed in the fashion industry, but with a concern for style, beauty, and quality. For the first time, the clothing production industry offered refined and elegant fashion for women of all ages, at reasonable prices and at sophisticated points of sale (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015, p. 182). The figure of the stylist linked to the style industries, signed clothes, and a new concept of consumption of ready-to-wear clothes emerged.

In addition to department stores, in the 1960s, boutiques, spaces for the sale of clothing from various brands, had great projection. This change occurred along with the important changes in the fashion scene. French supremacy in fashion was undermined by a proliferation of innovative English designers. This new generation sought to conquer an expanding consumer market, the result of the baby boom generation and the libertarian ideals of cultural movements that were established among this young population.

Driven by youth culture, specialized boutiques proliferated in Swinging London offering clothes for both genders and "satiated the appetite for the latest fads, with a quick turnaround of merchandise" (MENDES; HAYE, 2003, p. 181). The boutiques embodied the spirit of the times. Relaxed, often managed by young people, decorated with a mix of styles in vivid and striking colors, mixing what was new with thrift store pieces to the sound of a lot of rock 'n roll. They performed a new way of selling fashion clothes and became a world reference.

The changes in the constitution of the fashion creation process that took effect in the 1960s significantly impacted the fashion market. French *haute couture* gave way to *prêt-à-porter*, and many designers aligned themselves with this new scenario and created two distinct collections. Thus, fashion that came from the streets and social and cultural movements began to influence fashion creators, and the media actively participated in the dissemination of novelties on a world scale.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION AND CONSUMPTION

Caldas (2013, p. 75) addresses the issue of fashion as a form of non-verbal communication. The author considers that all points of contact with the consumer contribute to the dissemination of trends, such as advertising campaigns and appearances in the media.

By media, it may be understood as the production, storage and circulation of information and also its symbolic content (THOMPSON, 1998). From the 15th Century to the present day, due to constant technological advances, communication processes and technical means of storage and production underwent significant development, increasing the scale of information distribution. Modernity brought with it the concept of a mass product based on the commercial exploitation of the means of communication. The media began to assume the role of cultural agent in social configurations, modeling socialization that was previously guided by traditions, morals, and religion (SCHMITZ; WAJNMAN, 2018).

For Thompson (1998, p. 51), the mass cultural product is “one that is available to a large number of recipients”, taking into account the multiple specificities and preferences of consumers and their social contexts. For Morin (2018), mass culture emerged in the Second World War, with the norms of large-scale industrial production, propagated by mass diffusion techniques and destined for a huge group of people below and beyond the society that produced it. The author also points out that social boundaries were abolished from the mass culture market in the 20th Century: “industrial culture is the only great terrain of communication between social classes”, and “new stratifications are reconstructed within the new culture” (MORIN, 2018, p. 31). This configuration pointed out by Morin (2018) is characteristic of the 20th Century.

For Schmitz and Wajnman (2018), when fashion began to be disseminated through the mass media, via newspapers and magazines, social realities still created very different barriers. Access to fashion information does not necessarily imply its adoption by a large part of society. The democratization of fashion is a relatively new phenomenon, typical of societies in the second half of the 20th Century, in its consumption, whether material or symbolic.

In this sense, fashion appropriates the mass media, enabling its diffusion both in terms of content transfer and in the hegemonic influence exercised by fashion centers throughout the 20th Century.

Lipovetsky (2009) disconnects the concept of fashion from the differentiation of social classes. For the author, the synthesis of fashion is in everything that is considered new, denying what was done in the near past. It appropriates the idea of valuing the individual, the pleasure, the enjoyment and experiencing of the moment, the hedonism. Fashion constitutes contemporary capitalist society itself, based on three main aspects: obsolescence, seduction, and diversification. The author argues that the model created by *haute couture* is still central to the logic of the dissemination of fashion today in the renewal, diversification, and stylization of

models. Thus, for the author, the diffusion and legitimation conferred by the media assume central roles in the concept of fashion.

For Schmitz and Wajnman (2018), media and fashion logic intersect and feed-back. Fashion uses the media to reach the masses, just as the media appropriates fashion in the pursuit of content production, actions orchestrated by capitalist dynamics and economic interests on both sides. Other points of intersection between the media logic and the logic of fashion pointed out by Lipovetsky (2009) are: time-fashion, that is, the acceleration of processes based on profit and immediate success; the importance of building images and celebrities; the existence constructed for the present; and the diversity of offers that meet different tastes.

With the media as a support and, above all, cinema as a disseminator of trends and behaviors, figures such as Wally Simpson, an American married to the King of England, or the actress who became a princess, Grace Kelly, and even more recently, Princess Diana, were examples of a process of influences that celebrities exerted on fashion throughout the 20th Century. Even before this intense dissemination of fashion information through mass communication vehicles established in the second half of the 20th Century, the dissemination of trends and the study of the phenomenon of fashion became the subject of studies by theorists of sociology and philosophy, as will be presented below.

STUDIES ON FASHION AND TREND CREATION

The turn of the 19th to the 20th Century marked the beginning of a more scientific formulation of theories about fashion based on sociological studies. Authors such as Gabriel da Tarde, Georg Simmel, and Thorstein Veblen, who published works in 1890, 1895, and 1896 respectively, considered that fashion was intrinsically related to the process of imitation, as well as to the individual's need to differentiate oneself from the group and, at the same time, to belong in it. Thus, the dissemination of information related to fashion has an important meaning in this dynamic, as it allows the individual, when identifying with what is being presented, to feel part of that group. The dissemination of fashion trends began to acquire a fundamental character for the success of fashion brands and the clothing industry.

By trend, according to Erner (2015, p. 104), "any phenomenon of polarization by which the same object — in the broadest sense of the word — simultaneously seduces a large number of people". In this sense, a trend also involves changing taste and style, whether individual or collective. According to Lipovetsky and Serroy (2015), trends are less imposed by fashion designers and rather a result of choices made by the public or the press that publicizes them. Trends do not impose, but seduce everyone who is, in some way, subject to the media. Thus, it is up to the various forms of media to disseminate fashion trends (RECH, 2008). Therefore, the success of a trend is always related to the consumer's attractiveness and whether the market is prepared to receive such a trend, permeated by the media that disseminates it. For Gomes (2015, p. 26-27):

A trend is a process that registers a behavioral change that is based on emerging mentalities and that is later supported by interpretations that can generate strategic clues. In other words, all trends involve a profound change and development in the taste and style that permeate our daily lives. However, care is needed when defining the word and its meaning in today's world, especially with regard to the business environment and Trend Studies.

To define the word, Caldas (2013) presents definitions related to its etymology that encompass the ideas of movement, change, representation of the future, and evolution and states that trends are part of a cultural construction and of its time. In addition, the author adds the meanings of propensity and predisposition and even concludes the subject with the ideas of finitude (of the movement that exhausts itself) and uncertainty as to the result to be achieved. Here is a summary, prepared by Caldas (2013), which defines the main bases of his studies on trends:

The phenomenon is always defined in terms of an objective or purpose, which exerts a force of attraction on the one who suffers the tendency; expresses movement and scope; it is something finite (in the sense that it goes toward an end) and, at the same time, it is not 100% certain that it will reach its objective; it is a drive that seeks to satisfy needs (originated by desires) and, finally, it is something that can take on partial and pejorative airs Caldas (2013, p. 11).

For a better understanding of the term, it is important to highlight the studies of sociology and social anthropology cited by Caldas (2013) in relation to trends and sociological studies of fashion itself.

Gabriel da Tarde, in 1890, was the forerunner of this sociological look at fashion. He pointed to imitation in relation to the upper classes as the driving force of the fashion phenomenon, which, even before the Middle Ages (a consensual period established as a time frame for the appearance of fashion, according to authors such as Lipovetsky, Laver, and Boucher), was already part of social relations. He also added that women would be more prone to adopting new forms, as well as more susceptible to influences external to their social class.

Georg Simmel (1858-1918) in his book *Philosophy of fashion and other writings* (2008) points out the dualistic character that fashion assumes before the individual: individual distinction and belonging to a social group and identification with it. Hellmann (2009, p. 53) states that, for Simmel, "fashion satisfies both the need for social support, insofar as it is imitation, and the need for difference, by contrasting yesterday's fashion with tomorrow's, as well as like that of the upper class with that of the lower class. Thus, for the author, the class dispute, and the position of the individual within the group are the main points of his theory. The theory rests on the fact that the lower class imitates the upper class, which in turn invents a new fashion when the lower class appropriates it.

Veblen (1857-1929), in turn, discusses fashion as the expression of the individual's pecuniary culture. In his book *The theory of the leisure class* (1899), he dedicates a chapter to fashion and establishes a relationship between ostensive leisure,

conspicuous consumption, and fashion among the dominant classes and which serves as a model for the working classes, who mirror themselves in the classes immediately higher.

It is important to observe that the sociological theories of fashion by these three authors were based on the establishment of the concepts of social class division and possible social mobility, bearing in mind the values consistent with the historical moment to which these authors belonged, but one can verify that such theories are still in force, in one way or another, in the most current studies on fashion (HELLMAN, 2009). During the 20th Century and currently, many authors, such as Flügel, Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Lipovetsky, among others, have focused on the subject, in search of theories that explain the phenomenon of fashion, increasingly present in contemporary times.

THE NEED FOR CONSTANT RENEWAL: FROM FAST FASHION TO THE LUXURY MARKET

With a growing market demand and eagerness for novelties, the fashion industries began to occupy a significant share of the production of consumer goods worldwide. In the early 2000s, a worldwide phenomenon took over the fashion market: fast fashion. It is an aggressive model of mass production that offers the trends presented in the shows of the big brands a few days after the shows, at competitive prices. In this way, the speed of the fashion production chain underwent major changes. According to Cietta (2017), fast fashion, as a business model, is a combination of strategies already known by fashion companies but applied in an innovative way and adapted specifically to the profile of each brand. Its main focuses are: price proportional to the product, high fashion content, low level of service at points of sale, and attractive stores in the main streets and malls of large cities.

Currently, fashion production transcends territorial barriers in the quest to reduce production costs. In general, creation is still concentrated in European countries and the United States⁴, however the production of both parts and raw materials is the responsibility of Asian and Central American countries, where labor costs are lower and distribution, globally, covers most countries (RECH, 2008; STEELE; MAJOR, 2023). The points of sale, distributed around the world, are standardized with products at affordable prices and distributed systematically, providing news to the major fast fashion brands, such as Zara, H&M, Mango, among others.

The global fashion market encompasses not only women's, men's, and children's fashion, but also a whole chain of accessories, products, cosmetics, shoes, and bags.

The fashion industry occupies millions of people around the world around the task of producing and selling clothing: clothes, shoes, and accessories. It encompasses the design, manufacture, distribution, marketing, retail,

⁴ In 2018, fast fashion in the United States was estimated to be worth \$35 billion (GUIMARÃES, 2019).

advertising, and promotion activities of all types of clothing for men, women and children — from the simplest to the most sophisticated models (STEELE; MAJOR, 2023).

The profile of the contemporary and hypermodern consumer, connected to the constant renewal and innovation of their self-image, has significantly absorbed such principles without questioning the possible ethical and environmental consequences that such a commercial practice brings in its wake.

On the other hand, the luxury fashion market operates in growth, showing great figures, gathered in large groups and distributed in the main commercial centers of the world. For Lipovetsky and Roux (2005), the contemporary expression of luxury is divided into two concomitant trends: "One trivializes access to luxury and demystifies it, the other reproduces its power of dream and attraction through price and image" (LIPOVETSKY; ROUX, 2005, p. 16). Thus, the new forms of mass dissemination and the ease of access to luxury products promote a type of right to superfluous things.

Less favored portions of the population now have access to such products, even occasionally. Adoration of luxury products was created, an affective relationship with prestigious brands, especially those related to clothing. The structuring and distinctive role that luxury brands offered to a few in the past has been lost. The luxury that seemed outdated for a more traditional layer of the population is now seen as absolutely modern by invading television programs and the internet with transgressive advertising campaigns linked to artists and influencers (LIPOVETSKY; ROUX, 2005, p. 17).

In the age of information and the internet, the dissemination of fashion began to rely on digital influencers, those who create and maintain a network of followers for a constant period and gradually establish themselves as a public figure, endowed with the aura of celebrity with a touch of reality and, above all, a lot of credibility regarding their opinions in a specific community (LUZ, 2019).

The visibility provided by social media, with its influencers, brings consumers closer to goods they would hardly be aware of. Nowadays, the digital influencer represents an equal who stood out in a certain group in the digital world. For fashion, beauty and other segments, betting on digital influencers has been an excellent option to promote their products. Thus, the influencer becomes an individual who endorses the product and contributes to the transfer of cultural meanings, through the prominent position obtained by the presence in the digital environment (KARHAWI, 2016).

Increasingly, the symbolic content of luxury brands takes precedence over the true value of the object. Fetish as a way of valuing merchandise defended by Marx is increasingly present in hypermodern consumer relations. More is bought than the merchandise represents, and its transitory character is exposed in the satisfaction of the intimate desires of consumers (SVENDSEN, 2010).

According to data from the Bain & Company website (2023), the luxury personal goods market moved in 2019 around three trillion reais (281 billion euros),

considering personal goods such as jewelry, leather items, clothing (men's and women), perfumes, watches, and cosmetics. Its expressive growth in recent years, with the protagonism of Asian markets, confirms the tendency of perpetuation of traditional brands, even in markets aimed at younger audiences, such as the millennial and Z generations. Such forecasts conclude that these generations will be the future of the market luxury, where values such as creativity, social responsibility, and personal interactivity are important points in establishing an affective relationship between consumers and brands. Generations change, values change, but fashion consumption still remains firm.

In any case, fashion, through the accelerated paths of either fast fashion or the imposing luxury industry, feeds what Campbell (2001, p. 131-132) defines as the key to understanding modern consumerism: the dynamic interaction between illusion and reality, the determination to look for new products that serve as objects of desire to be replaced.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to commercialization processes, fashion as a social phenomenon is capable of influencing behaviors that are disseminated on a large scale by the media. The constitution of trends has undergone changes over the years as a result of new sources of dissemination such as influencers, which spread at a rapid speed with the advent of the internet.

In addition to the media, the various social movements have been promoting changes in the processes of creation and dissemination of trends that, despite being influenced by *haute couture*, have been incorporated into everyday practices. Today, the streets are the major influence in a process that feeds back: from the streets to the stores and from there to the streets.

It is understood that this market, which moves billions all over the world, is changing at a dizzying speed today, due to the need to sell products. If, on the one hand, it generates large profits, on the other hand it is one of the industries that most contribute to environmental pollution, both in manufacturing processes and in their disposal.

Thinking about trends is also discussing how these can be active ways of building a mentality in the field of fashion that avoids exacerbated consumption and irresponsible disposal. A big challenge ahead.

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