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Isabella Vicente Perrotta¹ 

Fashion! It has an ambivalent relationship with the creative economy. It generates jobs, moves large sums of money, is a vector of technological development, manifests style, evokes culture, stimulates artisans, creates hubs and productive chains, generates local identity. And it produces hundreds of thousands of tons of waste and discards.

With a critical sense about their own fashion consumption, Carolina Aranha, Lucas Tadeu and Nicolle Felix, young designers in training — now in their 7th period at the Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing — opened their drawers and started cutting those ugly and uncomfortable tags, usually attached to the side seam of the clothes: “Dry clean, dry in the shade, do not iron, wash with similar colors, use only fabric detergent; polyamide, polyester, elastane, cotton; *fabriqué au Vietnam*, made in China, *hecho en Brasil*.” Pictograms, instructions, materials, origins and languages take us through a kaleidoscopic Tower of Babel that reminds us of questions posed by Naomi Klein (2002) in *Sem logo: a tirania das marcas em um planeta vendido*, such as the problem of export processing zones, in which the cheap labor force produces goods for the big consumption centers of the world.

The process of creating our cover began then with the production of a photographic image with such (multicultural) tags of information and instructions, taken from the drawers (Figure 1). A second image (and then others) with the brand labels superimposed was tested (Figure 2). But the initial photograph, reworked, turned into a print that could have been on a street wear look, and a clean, original and impressive cover was made. According to Klein (2002), if brands are replacing personal and cultural identities, becoming our main form of individual and collective identification, our designers managed to call attention to this universe without exposing any of them.

Using fashion jargon, we can say that Carolina, Lucas and Nicolle are “looking for their own style” instead of “following trends”.

The group is working on its end-of-course project, in which a creative studio is established oriented towards authorial design that is activist and committed to causes. Success to them!

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Figure 1. First photographic experiment.



Figure 2. Second photographic experiment.

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Fashion and Creative Economy Editorial

Editorial Moda e Economia Criativa

Joana Martins Contino¹ 

Fashion is a phenomenon with many facets and that can be approached by various biases. As a symbolic consumer good, clothing is a vehicle for the expression of subjectivities, demarcation of social position, and belonging or differentiation. In this regard, Diana Crane (2006), in her book *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*, highlights that clothes and accessories are the most evident marks of social status and gender and, therefore, fashion plays an important role in the maintenance and subversion of symbolic borders. According to the author, “clothing is an indication of how people, at different times, perceive their position in social structures and negotiate the boundaries of status” (CRANE, 2006, p. 21, free translation). Moreover, as an element of material culture, clothing and personal adornments express collective identities, tell stories of social groups, and tell us about the “spirit of the time.”

As a productive sector, the long chain of fashion — which begins in agriculture, goes through the production of fibers, yarns, and fabrics until reaching the apparel industry and, finally, retail — represents an important sector of the economy, responsible for great generation of income and jobs. According to the most recent data made available by the Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association (ABIT, 2023), in 2021, the textile and apparel chain had 22,5 thousand formal production units throughout Brazil and its revenue was BRL 190 billion. In the same year, the sector was responsible for 6% of the total value of the production of the Brazilian manufacturing industry and generated 1.34 million formal jobs and 8 million indirect jobs, allocating 19.5% of the total workers of industrial production. In the classic fashion industry, among these professionals, there is a wide variety of functions: couturiers, patternmakers, assistants, managers, entrepreneurs, and creatives. The latter, according to the Mapping of the Creative Industry in Brazil (*Mapeamento da indústria criativa no Brasil*, an annual statistical survey of the creative industry in the country) (FIRJAN, 2022, p. 60), add up to almost 27 thousand employment relationships.

If, on the one hand, the fashion industry is a vector of socioeconomic development, on the other hand, it causes great socio-environmental impacts. High rates of informality and precariousness of work are quite common. In addition, clothing goods are the second class of products at greater risk of having been produced by workers in contemporary slavery, only behind the category “computers, laptops and smartphones” (WALK FREE, 2018). Furthermore, the United Nations (2019) estimates that the production of clothing and footwear is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions and that,

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every second, the equivalent of a truck of textile garbage is disposed of in landfills or burned. Another concern is its harmful consequences for water resources and oceans, as this sector accounts for 20% of wastewater, and textiles account for 9% of annual microplastic losses to the ocean. These facts have generated propositions for a more sustainable dynamic of fashion production and consumption.

By this brief exposition on some of the various aspects that permeate fashion, it is possible to notice that it entails reflection by multiple perspectives. Throughout the seven years of the journal *Diálogo com a Economia Criativa*, in many of the 21 editions that precede this one, topics related to fashion have been addressed in different ways; but, up to now, an issue entirely dedicated to it had not been published. Thus, in order to highlight its relevance, complexity, and close relationship with creative economy, of which it is part as an important productive sector, we began the eighth year of *Diálogo* with the Fashion and Creative Economy Thematic Report.

The first article, "Fashion and the Crossroads: a Theoretical-methodological Essay," discusses fashion as a field of knowledge in the Brazilian context and its relationship with the coloniality of power. The researchers Carla Costa, Carolina Casarin, Heloisa Santos, João Dalla Rosa Júnior, and Michelle Medrado propose concepts for the confrontation of the colonial fashion matrix, seeking to broaden the thinking about its gears and, thus, operate the decolonial turn.

Subsequently, two articles address the relationship between fashion and craftsmanship. "Ecomoda and Rio de Janeiro as a background for design initiatives in contemporary handicraft and sewing groups," by Bárbara de Oliveira e Cruz, Rita Maria de Souza Couto, and Roberta Portas, reflects on the development of the urban space of Rio de Janeiro to understand it as a background for design initiatives in groups of artisans and seamstresses. The authors suggest that the valorization of local production, in addition to the characteristic of cultural valorization, can promote the social and economic development not only of favelas, but also of the entire city, in addition to assisting in environmental preservation, which they demonstrate by describing the Ecomoda case study.

Conversely, the text "Craftwork in authorial fashion of Pernambuco: a case study about the production of leather shoes" presents the results of a case study about the existing artisanal production in an authorial fashion brand of the metropolitan region of Recife (state of Pernambuco), whose main products are animal leather shoes. The main result of the study was the observation of the creator as an artist-craftsperson, whose manual dexterity and creative freedom are key elements in the construction of the brand. The article by Manuela Correia and Virgínia Pereira Cavalcanti was originally presented at the 14th Congress of Research and Development in Design (*Congresso de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento em Design – P&D Design*), held in 2022 and organized in a partnership between Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing do Rio de Janeiro and Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, and it was selected among the articles of the thematic axis Design and New Economies for publication in the journal *Diálogo com a Economia Criativa*.

Likewise, the article “Circular economy and industrial symbiosis as strategy for the management of textile waste of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement” integrated the presentations of P&D Design 2022 in the same thematic axis and was selected for publication in the journal, both of which were included in the Fashion and Creative Economy Thematic Report due to their themes. Maria Eloisa Conceição, Cláudio Freitas de Magalhães, and Jorge Roberto Lopes dos Santos are the authors of the study that presents the preliminary result of the exploratory field research on the local productive arrangement Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ, which aims to investigate the flow of textile waste from the production of local factories, to analyze the feasibility of reinserting these residues in the production cycle of origin or transforming them into raw material for other production cycles.

Glauber Soares Junior and Claudia Schemes also address aspects related to sustainability, but from another perspective. In “Fashion and creative economy — possible dialogues: consumption, sustainability, and female entrepreneurship in the *Girlboss* series,” the authors carry out a film analysis fostered by theoretical concepts and highlight that the TV series focuses on the development of a creative venture in the field of fashion thrift stores, in which discussions on female entrepreneurship and the importance of having collaboration networks and notions of sustainability in this type of business take place, which is based on the cultural and creative capital of the main character of the series.

Still within the scope of sustainable fashion, but now dealing with the emergence of companies with this proposal, Maicon Douglas Livramento Nishimura, Leila Amaral Gontijo, and Ricardo Triska, in the article “Sprouting factors for sustainable fashion businesses,” observe that aspects, such as culture, education, media, coworking, and other collaborative movements, in addition to the Municipal Plan of Creative Economy of Porto Alegre and the Fashion Revolution, were fundamental for the emergence of the businesses surveyed by a qualitative-quantitative approach and analyzed in the study.

In “Creative informality: a quantitative investigation on fashion businesses in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil,” Cristiano Max Pereira Pinheiro, Thomás Czrnhak, and Carolina Blum Vorpapel address the economic informality in the fashion industry of the state of Rio Grande do Sul with the purpose of investigating the degree of informality that surrounds economic transactions, labor relations, and the creative output of fashion companies in the region.

In the article “Approaching the creative process as a complex adaptive system,” Lenice Eli Lunkes Scapato, Dusan Schreiber, and Vanessa Theis aim to understand the approach of the creative process, from the perception of professionals from creative areas who work in companies of the leather-footwear sector located in the Vale do Rio dos Sinos region, as a complex adaptive system. The authors identify that there are opportunities for the surveyed environments to explore, in a more in-depth way, the contributions of complex adaptive systems, which find similar characteristics in creative and innovative organizations.

Maria Paula Guimarães and Rita Ribeiro propose a reflection on the conformation of the fashion market, from its origin to the present day, from *haute couture*

to fast fashion, from its articulations with the media in the dissemination of trends and the influence on consumption patterns. In the article “Social identification processes in fashion: from luxury to fast fashion,” the authors discuss the changes in the fashion market, such as the emergence of fast fashion and the permanence of a luxury market of global dimensions, based on the understanding of fashion as a social phenomenon and its importance as an industry and cultural product.

Still regarding consumption, this edition ends with the study conducted by Rosana Dias Guedes de Moraes and Ana Christina Celano Teixeira, entitled “Women’s consumption relations with luxury handbags.” Inspired by the Itinerary Method, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with owners of genuine handbags of international luxury brands, addressing the stages of purchase, use, and disposal, and investigated the consumer relations of Brazilian women with high purchasing power to these objects.

We hope, with the Fashion and Creative Economy Thematic Report, to contribute to the debate on this very fascinating phenomenon — namely, fashion. Enjoy the reading!

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Fashion and the Crossroads: a Theoretical-methodological Essay

A moda e as encruzilhadas: um ensaio teórico-metodológico

Carla Costa^I , Carolina Casarin^{II} , Heloisa Santos^{III} ,
João Dalla Rosa Júnior^{IV} , Michelle Medrado^V 

ABSTRACT

The article proposes a theoretical and methodological essay to undertake the decolonial turn on fashion research. Coming from a multidisciplinary approach, the essay explores two concepts: a social back stitch in fashion and tear up in fashion to demonstrate the first steps that the practice of the cross method requires in the context of fashion research. The crossroads, as a concept, is used in its political and epistemological function, guiding the theoretical-methodological proposal to the transgression of western canons and colonies that still operate in fashion studies. The crossroads is associated with the metaphor of the drawing and the sewing machine bobbin, which broadens the thinking of fashion gears and, therefore, operates the decolonial turn.

Keywords: Fashion. Crossroads. Theory. Method.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar um ensaio sobre os passos teórico-metodológicos para compreender o giro decolonial nas pesquisas de moda. Com base em abordagens pluridisciplinares, o texto explora dois conceitos: retrocesso social em moda e rasgo em moda, para demonstrar as primeiras etapas que a prática do método do cruzo exige no âmbito da pesquisa. Como conceito, a encruzilhada é empregada em suas funções política e epistemológica, direcionando a proposta teórico-metodológica à transgressão dos cânones ocidentais e coloniais que ainda operam nos estudos de moda. À encruzilhada, é associada a metáfora do desenho e da bobina da máquina de costura, o que permite ampliar o pensamento das engrenagens da moda e, assim, operar o giro decolonial.

Palavras-chave: Moda. Encruzilhadas. Teoria. Método.

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THEORETICAL TACKS

In studies on fashion, postcolonial and decolonial references are currently perceived that promote a debate through the epistemological review of the field itself. The postcolonial debate dialogues with the decolonizations of Africa and Asia that took place in the mid-twentieth century. Intellectuals such as Edward Said (2007) and Frantz Fanon (2008), from these continents, present a fruitful debate on the need to: decolonize scientific production; analyze the impacts of colonization and imperialism on the lives of the colonized, including knowledge production and intellectual work; listen to the voices of Africans and Asians about themselves, as well as their analytical perspectives on the world; to question the traditionally held approaches — and all their theoretical apparatus — by European intellectuals regarding colonized societies.

The decolonial discussion, on the other hand, has Latin American roots and was initiated in the mid-1970s. Later, in the break with coloniality, decolonial authors, especially Aníbal Quijano, and the modernity/coloniality group, as well as Walter D. Mignolo, bet on a break with European knowledge references, opting to use concepts developed based on local knowledge references.

Given this context, since June 2020, the research and work group Coletivo Moda e Decolonialidade: Encruzilhadas do Sul Global (Comode) has been systematically dedicated to the study of fashion based on postcolonial and decolonial approaches. In the meetings, we generally develop¹ theoretical debates that are guided by readings of multidisciplinary authors, and we dedicate ourselves to applying the discussed concepts to the context of Brazil. Our gaze is guided by the construction of epistemological tools that allow for a decolonial turn in studies on fashion, that is, “inverting the look of analyses provincializing Europe and locating in the ‘discovery’ of the Americas the very possibility of the existence of European modernity” (SANTOS, 2020). Thus, we have methodologically thought about how to define the steps and techniques for the decolonial turn. The crossroads corresponds to the reference for the methodological understanding that decoloniality demands, and in view of this, we feel the need to textually record the method that we propose as a research and work group.

Our understanding of the term decolonial is in line with the meaning defined by the translators Jamille Pinheiro Dias and Raquel Camargo, of the book *Um feminismo decolonial, (A Decolonial Feminism)* by Françoise Vergès (2020), when they mention that the term refers to “the continuous movement of turning thoughts and practices increasingly free from coloniality” (DIAS; CAMARGO, 2020, p. 8), that is, discourses that overcome colonial logic. The crossroads, for us, corresponds to a symbol that “crosses any and all knowledge that claims to be unique” (RUFINO, 2019, p. 86). The crossroads takes place through the art of crossing, and this practice

1 The text uses the first person plural in order to break with the false notion of neutrality that the hidden subject presupposes in academic norms. Its use is a condition for registering a collective thought, the result of exchanges between the members of the group and which also welcomes the dialogue with the person who reads it.

corresponds to the movement “of erasure, disauthorization, necessary transgressions, resilience, possibilities, reinventions and transformations” (RUFINO, 2019, p. 86). This thought is based on what Simas and Rufino (2018) call crossroads pedagogy.

Thus, as a working method, we articulate our proposals with these assumptions to hold a debate on fashion as a field of knowledge in the Brazilian context and its relationship with the coloniality of power. We propose concepts for facing the colonial matrix and record them throughout this article. Accordingly, our objective is to present the theoretical developments listed by the group, proposing a description of the methodological steps to undertake the decolonial turn.

Since we are an multidisciplinary group of researchers, the intention is to help us think about the ways in which fashion has been reflected in recent years. We believe that this essay has pedagogical value, as we do not segregate the reality of the teaching experience from the reality experienced by students, as a two-way street; we want to instigate and expand the debate and reflection about the very practice of fashion at the crossroads.

The essay is divided into two phases. In the first, we present our two methodological concepts: *social back stitch in fashion* and *tear up in fashion*, both developed by the research group in our meetings. The terms created by us represent the paths necessary to define the methodological steps to undertake decolonial thinking *in* fashion and also in some expressions of clothing production practices. In the second, we bring our discussion and proposal to look at the field of fashion. Although the concept of field refers to the theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2005), the definition used by Comode refers to the space through which clothing circulates and in which it demarcates the relationships between people and objects, including the academic sphere, in the which clothing becomes an object of research. Thus, our proposal and discussion encompass the ideas resulting from the application of the concept of crossroads and the possible metaphors with the making of fashion and its instruments.

UPDATING CONCEPTS

For us at Comode, reflecting on fashion involves analyzing the impact of colonial/modern concepts of race, gender and class, even if not in isolation from other fields of social life. This process of reassessment through postcolonial and decolonial conceptual keys of the social oppression schemes applied to fashion is called by us as *social back stitch in fashion*.

Our use of the word *back stitch* is not random. Immediately, it bypasses the common sense meanings associated with it, that is, delay or ruin. Moving away from this definition, for professionals who work in the day-to-day production of clothing, the word back stitch is known and recognized as the movement of a sewing stitch, skillfully performed from the bobbin to the sewing machine, which is applied in clothes where, once the seam line has been passed over the fabric, this line is inverted/backwards over the first seam, demarcating new stitches and, subsequently, moving forward once more. This procedure reinforces the seam at the point where

the process is applied, so that the union made by the seam between the parts of the garment does not easily break.

With the use of the notion of *social back stitch in fashion*, we propose to reconsider what has been formulated to date. As notions aligned with the production of the coloniality of power, with regard to practices and theories about the field of fashion, it is necessary to invert the traditional meaning of scientific production, based on the idea of evolution and to return to certain concepts to next submit them to analysis so that we can continue with a reflection that overlaps the first ones. Thus, contrary to denying it, we recognize the importance of what has been developed so far, but we emphasize the urgency and the need to reassess the concepts. The notion of *social back stitch in fashion* for us, as the stitch in the seam suggests, represents reinforcing and making more consistent the seams of meaning that are made about fashion.

We can say that the concept of *social back stitch in fashion*, in methodological terms, makes an effort similar to that undertaken by postcolonial authors. These, from Africa and Asia, graduated from European universities and, with the tools of authors from the North, criticized the traditional ideas conceived about the South, as well as developed new concepts to think about themselves, their societies of origin and the global economic-political logic that promoted colonialism and imperialism, in addition to the value structure that enlists modernity itself.

We also consider that, at times, a conceptual break will be necessary to assess the extent to which we reproduce the colonial logic in our productive, teaching and research practices, and get away from such approaches. In this case, we present the concept of *tear up in fashion*. Unlike the cutting process, in which a fabric is, with the use of an instrument such as scissors, divided into two or more parts. When we tear a fabric, we break, in a rough way and often with our own hands, the interweaving that characterizes it. The *tear up in fashion*, therefore, is understood by the group, based on some readings carried out on the practices, theories, teaching methods and other actions that reproduce the colonial, hegemonic and imperialist logic in the field of fashion, as the extreme breaking process.

The concept of *tear up in fashion* dialogues with the work of Latin American decolonial researchers, as we approach what these authors from the modernity/coloniality group called the decolonial turn (QUIJANO, 2005; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2017). The movement consists of abandoning concepts and pointing out the structures of domination that underlie them to rethink and reinvent local notions and texts *with them* and *based on them*. It is about founding and substantiating epistemologies according to the South Axis, researching, disseminating about what we are, considering concepts created in the favelas/shantytowns, suburbs, samba schools, funk dances, Umbanda and Candomblé houses, prostitution spots, on corners, at crossroads. Consider everything that neoliberal, political and intellectual logic based on Northern grammar has discarded as legitimate.

It is, in this sense, to carry out what Luiz Rufino (2019) called the epistemological stroll in Pedagogy of Crossroads, that is, "through the refusal of the condition

of immobility propagated by these effects that we must transgress its parameters” (RUFINO, 2019, p. 17). Thus, we believe that analytical examples can contribute to the reader’s understanding. We will use the notion of copying for both analyses, demonstrating how the theme can be approached in the face of the two methodological concepts and how they contribute to a different understanding of a theme according to the methodology used in the research..

- *Social back stitch in fashion*: the notion of copying is frequently used by fashion studies to assess the type of relationship established between local ways of dressing and European references. When we go back, we understand that it is first necessary to locate in which intellectual context such reflections took place. Considering that a good part of the debate about fashion is inserted in a logic of authorization, we understand that the authors who used the concept of copying perceived, as authorized to have a relationship with fashion, only one social group: the elite. Restricted to this group, perhaps the concept of copying makes sense, as can be seen in the *trickle down* theory applied to fashion. However, for us to move forward in our reflections, we have to move forward and think that copying is *one of the ways in which Brazilian society relates to fashion*. After all, there was a whole local knowledge about the care of clothes, in addition to a local production of clothes for the colonized (free poor men), catechized natives and subjected to compulsory and slave labor, which cannot be disregarded. With this understanding, retrogression works as we do not abandon the concept of copying but strive to locate it socially to expand our gaze to other productions of local clothing. It is known that the authors who researched local clothing are aware that they are analyzing the elites, but we understand that a step back is necessary so that we stop seeing copying and the elites as the only legitimate way of relating to clothing and so that we can also look at these elites as capable of producing some kind of resignification. We can even look at copying as an integral part of the creation of producers from the North Axis. Otherwise, we would pejoratively designate as copies the “inspirations” made by European creators based on non-European references, whose examples are countless, and some of them are found in the studies of Jennifer Craik (2003). As a mimetic gesture, the act of copying is part of all creation. Therefore, what Europeans defend as an original creation, focused on value and the concept of originality, is always a copy;
- *Tear up in fashion*: here, we take a different approach. We abandon the idea of copying as a historical-analytical reference, and consider that such a perception is consistent with a perspective that understands only the West as a fashion producer. In this way, the colonial logic of knowledge production is inverted, and the idea is constructed that local clothing production dialogues with world fashion, *just as all fashions in the world dialogue with each other*. Therefore, there is no copying, because copying is impossible in societies characterized by crosses/transits. What we have here is a relationship, that is, an exchange.

Given the above, it is worth mentioning that both concepts indicate steps that reach different levels on the subject of copying and, therefore, on the way in which the subject will be considered in research and studies in fashion. While the *social back stitch in fashion* corresponds to a stage that allows the verification of predefined standards and judgments for approaching a given theme, the *tear up in fashion* represents the break with these standards and the indication of other definitions that provide new forms of knowledge construction. We can summarize that the concept of *social back stitch in fashion* seeks to revise the theme, as exemplified in the case of copying, in order to reinforce the understanding of the colonial tradition of construction of thought itself and to criticize the definitions. With that, the *tear up in fashion* operates the split with certain approaches, concepts and meanings that still remain, evidencing the inadequacy of its permanence and the opening of spaces for other terms and concepts. As the meaning of copy does not hold up because of the colonial meaning of its definition in the context of cultural research, we are left with the exclusion of the term.

CROSSING THEORIES AND METHODS

In this section, we expose a theoretical-methodological approach through a textual description, in view of the discussions we are developing about the world of fashion. To this end, we interweave theoretical discussions about the field with concrete examples from the world of fashion, so that our ideas gain materiality for us to think about the validity of the approach.

In the first place, it is important to remember the considerations pointed out by Sandra Niessen, Ann-Marie Leshkovich and Carla Jones (2003) and other authors who highlight the power dynamics of the field of fashion, highlighting the way in which a field of disputes was constituted in that the West develops for itself the exclusiveness of fashion and, more importantly, provides itself with the authority to judge what is fashion and what is not, as well as who is capable of turning objects and ideas into fashion and who is only capable of copying them.

This structure that defines the West as modern and innovative dialogues with the colonial spectrum itself: immersed in an evolutionary logic permeated by the scientific racism that still lingers among us, the production of the peoples of the North is always perceived as superior. Even if elements appropriated from other societies are evident, the contemporary colonizer, or neo-colonizer, is provided with the presumption of innocence. Its appropriation is not copying, but inspiration or rereading. In a metaphor, we can think of the scene of a trial. The Court, being the manifestations and producers of European fashion and responsible for the sentence, is assembled, and its decision, already defined *a priori*, after all the jury, the prosecution and the judge were bought, since they share the same ideology.

The strategy is more violent, however: the judge also has the power to evaluate and decide which foreign players will be able to play on his team, that is, which among them are competent to do so. And they do it in two ways: on the one hand, they give power to the judges of the local courts, those more to the

south, so that the local *criollo* agents, who receive these micropowers, can also decide who is fashionable and who is not. within their republic. What do these local agents get in return? Prestige and economic capital, even if in the global North they continue to be considered Latin doormats, that is, evaluated by the grammar of subalternity, hierarchies of knowledge and discourses that enlist the inequalities defined by the North.

The other way that the judge does this job of defining fashion is directly, when he raises a local producer by giving him the endorsement of “with fashion”. However, as pointed out by Rabine (2002), Craik (2003), Niessen, Leshkovich and Jones (2003) and Almann (2004), among others, this *status* is always accompanied by a process of exoticization, a kind of inferiority mark. In general terms, Western fashion is *The Fashion*, and the rest are fashions with reservations, Latin, African, Asian and/or anything that might mark them as different. Exotic, hot, wild, colorful, sexy: any resemblance to colonial discourse of racialization or ethnicization is no mere coincidence.

For this type of logic of looking and thinking about fashion, we can imagine the visual representation of a triangle. This form is structured through levels, and at the top are those identified with Western fashion. Just below, there are those selected by the first and who are outside the West, and, below them, those without fashion. These levels are not closed structures, that is, there are several possible configurations between these poles, since society is much more complex than any ideal type (WEBER, 1992) can try to apprehend, however imagining this form helps us to understand the proposed here, that is, a hierarchical structure of fashion.

After a series of readings and discussions, the group proposed a reading of fashion that faced this traditional hierarchical perspective. It is important to highlight that the idea is methodological. It’s about turning around, moving our gaze and analyzing European production like other world productions and on the same level as them. To do so, we adopt two assumptions. We move from *fashion* to *fashions*, in the sense that all forms relating to clothing are now understood as *fashion*. Here, we propose a theoretical-methodological reading based on the idea of *social back stitch in fashion*. Then, we gave up the term fashion to try to define another concept that represented the idea that all relationships with clothing are possible, equal and on the same level, and can only be evaluated from itself (local development of a given society) in its relations with global production, relations that are of permanent contact, crossing, transit, exchange and resignification and that inevitably include change.

This discussion led us to a circular perception of fashion and to a vision that did not reproduce fashion in a vertical, uncritical way, with the West as the universal and defining point of binarism. Thus, fashion here it is understood as horizontal, because it is also a geopolitical relationship in which colonial cartography has always inserted Europe at the top of the maps. In this way, we will understand horizontality as an axis so that we can look at all productions and relationships with clothing on the same level. Circularity, in turn, lies in the fact that all relationships with fashion

will be perceived as circular structures whose contour lines, however, are not closed to the outside (exchanges, contacts, resignifications), but close in on themselves same, in the sense that they are individual units of varying sizes and complexities.

The analysis, however, was improved, through the counterattacks versed in the notion of pedagogy of the crossroads, by Simas and Rufino (2018, p. 22): "A political/epistemological/educational project whose main purpose is to disobey the burdens of racism/colonialism through the transgression of the Western canon". For the group, the type of relationship that we propose to be established between the fashions, in addition to contact, exchange and resignification, is a true crossroads of stories. In this way, we propose that each manifestation or phenomenon of fashion and clothing be considered as a macro representation, crossed by lines that cut the entire world system of fashion, as this is how relations were actually established since the first contacts between humans: in the encounters, in the crossings, in the knowledge that touches each other and that makes each part follow its path, transformed by what touched them, that is, renewed and reborn.

The definition of crossroads proposed by Simas and Rufino (2018, p. 18) allows us to align the theoretical-methodological assumptions of fashion research work. To do so, we rely on the metaphor of drawing. As the crossroads presupposes the notion of a path, we can associate the path with the definition of a line that traditionally corresponds to the element that allows any stroke in a drawing. If the crossroads refers to the crossing of paths, then its representation can be stated in the form of a crossing of lines.

In drawing theory, a line is formed by countless points. However, when we think of the practical action of traversing graphic material on a support, as is the case with a pencil on paper, we can say that the line is the trace, the path, the movement that a point makes on the plane of the surface. When touching the pencil to the paper, the slightest contact generates a unit that is configured as a point. This is the smallest and first visual element (LUPTON; PHILLIPS, 2008, p. 14), but any displacement that the point performs will form a line, which may be curved, straight, continuous or dashed; that is, its characteristics will depend on the movement and the direction the point takes.

Observing the format of the crossroads, what happens is that it is formed by the crossing of lines that correspond to different paths. The crossing itself demarcates a specific point which is the one through which the two lines cross. In the language of geometry, this point alludes to the pair of coordinates x and y and can be taken, for our theoretical-methodological metaphor, as the place of the point of view that we want to emphasize and highlight in the perspectives on fashion.

Based on the notion that the entire epistemological understanding of the crossroads takes place in a space, to apply it to our theoretical-methodological research proposal in fashion, we need to imagine the planar representation of the globe, such as a map, to thus visualize the world system. Unlike the recurrent images of continents and their countries, we are going to abstract the divisions and adopt the notion that spaces are formed by countless points and that these, by

themselves, already represent crossroads, since culture is not immobile, and this qualification corresponds to a colonial canon attributed to non-European cultures. On the various points arranged on the surface, the fashion paths to be traced can be drawn by innumerable lines that highlight the cultural intersections of clothing systems. In this way, the points of different spaces are connected by the lines that generate the intersections. The crossroads of fashion are formed by the paths of the different points of the clothing systems that meet through movement in space. In the words of Rufino (2019, p. 18), “the cross is the becoming, the unfinished, salient, unordered and elusive movement. The cross is seen as crossing, erasure, slit, contamination, catalysis, bricolage — exusiac effects”.

From a methodological point of view, thinking about fashion in view of the crossroads means facing the tactical action that the cross represents.

The crosses cross and demarcate border areas. These crossed zones, borders, are the places of emptiness that will be filled by bodies, sounds and words. From these fillings, other possibilities for the invention of life will emerge, based on the tones of the diversity of knowledge, radical transformations and cognitive justice (SIMAS; RUFINO, 2018, p. 22, our translation).

Working with the cross is “erasing the alleged universality of the Western canon” (SIMAS; RUFINO, 2018, p. 19, our translation), that is, transgressing it through a cross from other perspectives. This transgression, for us, must be accomplished by a turn in the understanding of lines and the movements of points. For this, let’s adopt another metaphor: the sewing machine bobbin.

As we well understand, the heavy work of clothing production takes place on the factory floor, sometimes unhealthy places that configure neo-slavery relationships and subhuman conditions. There is the place where the masses are allocated, where men and women are exploited to maintain the capitalist individualism of fashion for some and bodies of the sacrifice zone for others. As proposed by Sandra Niessen (2020, p. 7), “the vicinities/cultures classified as having “non-fashion,” a construct of colonial and capitalist fashion should be recognized as ‘fashion sacrifice zones’”. Metaphorically, we are going to expose our perceptions about this relationship that we have just mentioned and, for that, we are going to use examples extracted from sewing machines and their accessories, as well as their purpose in the process of making clothes.

Among fabrics, threads and needles, there is the figure of the seamstress, a fundamental piece in the making of clothing. To be able to produce her clothes on a daily basis, she needs to have at least one straight machine model. This is one of the oldest machines, and it was in the Industrial Revolution that its first gears were developed. It is not by chance that the most significant transformations took place in the production of clothing. Well, how these gears work and how this reflects on the final product is what we are going to think about. Furthermore, our reflection not only brings these gears to the center of the debate, but also makes use of brief associations with the subjects that keep these gears turning.

With new technologies in the textile industry, the industrial straight sewing machine has gained new devices to meet the demands of productivity in garment

manufacturing. Modern machines work through various mechanisms and accessories, many of which are indispensable for making a garment. Among them are needles, presser feet, spools..., accessories that speed up and enhance the quality of the finished product. We want to bring to our essay two fundamental parts of this gear, the bobbin case and the bobbin.

The function of the bobbin is to support the thread that sustains the upper seam, the one that is exposed in the pieces and is appreciated by admirers of a good finish, that is, backstitching. The topstitches are part of the requirements that define a well-made, valuable piece. What almost nobody sees is that behind all the beauty of a well-finished garment are the invisible stitches fed by the bobbin. How does the gearing of this bobbin work and what is the bobbin case in the sewing machine frame?

We can say that the bobbin case is the heart of the machine, which generates the rotation that keeps the vertical and horizontal axis working. It is the mesh of the gears, as it is at the crossroads of an operating system that ignores its existence. The stitches launched by the bobbin are regulated, adjusted and controlled by the upper mechanism of the machine. The coil does not operate by itself, but the instant it stops turning, the whole system is paralyzed. It is impossible to rotate the shaft without what we understand as the heart of the machine. Even in the oldest machines, if the bobbin is not in its proper place, there will be no clothes, there will be no production. And if you are wondering "what about the motor? Wouldn't it be the heart of the machine?" Motors came into existence at the end of the 19th century. Before, the machines operated on the system of cranks and pedals, but they always needed what we now understand as bobbin case and bobbin.

As you can see from the description of how the machine and the role of the bobbin work, the threads cross each other during sewing, and there is tension caused by the stitches as one thread is positioned above and another below. In our view, the sewing threads can symbolize the asymmetry that exists between North and South in fashion practices: the bobbin thread, as is visible, would be contained in the underside of the sewn fabric, thus representing the whole part that sustains the fashion system itself. Although the North part is delimited by the equator line, we believe that the division is even more asymmetrical, since what is considered North is not restricted to the geographic notion of the hemispheres. Different places that are above the equator are considered south on the world system power scale and, at the crossroads of fashion, are made invisible by the upper seams.

Given this metaphor, it is worth noting that the role of the seamstress as an agent that feeds the entire clothing production chain can also be understood by the function of the bobbin mechanism in the sewing machine. According to the group, these professionals correspond to those who support the fashion system and who are made invisible by the lines that sew the topstitching of the clothes' finishes. This image is also parallel to the one that Françoise Vergès (2020) describes about racialized women who carry out cleaning work in companies in French society. For the group, the proposal of a decolonial turn through a cross method implies making these professionals research agents, that is, dimensioning the approach to fashion

beyond that visible image, to all relations between agents of clothing production. Therefore, the sense of going beyond corresponds to not observing the seams and crossroads of fashion only on the right side of the fabric, that is, seeing only the result of the upper lines of the seams.

For the group, turning requires looking at the reverse side of the fabric: that side where the bobbin thread is visualized and perceived as fundamental for sewing to take place. The rotation causes the image to be seen in reverse, and the perception, similar to the provocation undertaken by Joaquín Torres García, in 1943, when he drew the map of South America inverted, stating “our North is the South”. Seeing the inside out corresponds to changing the poles and highlighting the lines made invisible by the crossroads of fashion. With this, the crossroads method presupposes contact with the place of tension. Within the scope of research, he indicates the way in which the paths cross, or, as in sewing, the way in which the lines intertwine. Analyzing the pressure on the line, the strength of the lines, the type of line and its links on the mechanisms of fashion indicates opening the observation by the paths of the crossroads.

FINAL TOUCHES

The cross method has challenges because

humanity has always faced the crossed paths with fear and enchantment. The crossroads, after all, is the place of uncertainties, paths and the astonishment of realizing that living presupposes the risk of choices. Where to walk? The crossroads is uncomfortable; that’s your fascination. What we can say about this whole story is that we enchanted our lives ourselves. The rite must be practiced; we asked the invisible for permission and continued on as tiny heirs of the human spirit, making astonishment the common thread of luck. We who are from the crossroads are suspicious of those on the straight path (SIMAS; RUFINO, 2018, p. 23-24, our translation).

For the group, this theoretical-methodological proposition of doing research on/in fashion is to denote the emergence of connections and correlations, which only in the face of crosses and transits will paths be opened to unload colonial stains that have regulated the ethical, aesthetic, imagery senses and subjective aspects of producing, circulating and researching in the field of fashion.

We believe that, in this way, we will be able to leave “epistemological sofas and launch ourselves at the crossroads of alterity” (SIMAS; RUFINO, 2018, p. 19, our translation). In this action of launching oneself, we consider that the *social back stitch in fashion* and the *tear up in fashion*, addressed in the first section of this article, correspond to strategies that allow research agents to carry out their movements and twirls. Carrying out the exercise of determining what should be reconsidered and what should be discarded is part of an action that seeks to deconstruct the rigidity and immobility of theories and methods still applied in fashion studies. When we talk about fashion, we are taking into account the fashion system, which corresponds to an institutionalized system that presupposes agents and diffusion mechanisms that operate the systematic production of change and legitimize the figure of the creator/designer (CASARIN et al., 2022, p. 9).

Furthermore, the dedication to the tensions of the sewing stitches at the crossroads of fashion is configured as an orientation to the work of the subject-researcher-creator who undertakes research in the field. Recognizing that the place from which the research emerges already corresponds to a crossroads makes the opposite of fashion become visible. That is, that North and South, as well as inside in and inside out of the seam, are understood as directions of the paths of the same world.

Accordingly, we believe that the considerations pointed out in this theoretical-methodological essay are fundamental for researchers who focus on fashion, considering its creative aspect in an economic and symbolic logic. The perception of the development of creative practices cannot remain associated with canons that reproduce epistemological models that subjugate or even refute the invention produced in countries such as Brazil. It is through these strategies described here that we will untie ourselves from the modernity and coloniality binarism, and we will then be able to “weaves genealogies that have remained disjointed” (VÁZQUEZ, 2020, p.18), to face what has been systematically silenced and actively planned to be and remain invisible. According to Comode, by recognizing historical processes, their formation, celebration and contemporary violence, we will be able to contribute to a practical and methodological decolonial critique *about* and *in* fashion.

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Ecomoda and Rio de Janeiro as a background for design initiatives in contemporary handicraft and sewing groups

Ecomoda e o Rio de Janeiro (RJ) como cenário para ações de design em grupos de artesanato e costura na contemporaneidade

Bárbara de Oliveira e Cruz¹ , Rita Maria de Souza Couto¹ , Roberta Portas¹ 

ABSTRACT

In the search for alternative and local productions of fashion articles with social engagement, this article proposes a reflection on the development of the urban space of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to understand it as a scenario for design initiatives in groups of artisans and seamstresses. The development of Rio de Janeiro's urban space and its peculiarities, such as the growth of favelas in more valued places like the central and southern region of the city, in addition to the integration difficulties of these territories and their residents, were of great relevance for the analysis. The valorization of the social production of these territories represents the solution for integration, favoring the development not only of the favelas, but also of the city as a whole. Local production, in addition to the characteristic of cultural valorization, can promote social and economic development, as well as assist in environmental preservation, which was demonstrated with the description of the case study, namely the Ecomoda project. The project features a socio-environmental pedagogical initiative in which there had been design interference in groups of artisans and seamstresses.

Keywords: Rio de Janeiro. Ecomoda. Design. Handicrafts. Sewing.

RESUMO

Na busca de produções alternativas e locais para artigos de moda com engajamento social, o presente artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre o desenvolvimento do espaço urbano do Rio de Janeiro (RJ), a fim de entendê-lo como cenário para ações de design em grupos de artesãos e costureiras. O desenvolvimento do espaço urbano carioca e suas peculiaridades, como o crescimento das favelas em locais mais valorizados, como as regiões central e sul da cidade, além das dificuldades de integração desses territórios e seus moradores, foram de grande relevância para a reflexão. A valorização da produção social desses territórios representa a solução para a integração, favorecendo o desenvolvimento não apenas das favelas, mas de toda a cidade. A produção local, além da característica de valorização cultural, é capaz de promover desenvolvimento social e econômico, bem como auxiliar na preservação ambiental, o que foi demonstrado com a descrição do estudo de caso Ecomoda. O projeto caracteriza uma ação pedagógica socioambiental em que houve interferência de design em grupos de artesãos e costureiras.

Palavras-chave: Rio de Janeiro. Ecomoda. Design. Artesanato. Costura.

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INTRODUCTION

This article results from reflections of the PhD research of one of the authors. The research was guided by the following question: do socially responsible design initiatives, in partnership with groups of artisans and seamstresses, indicate ways towards a new model for the production of fashion goods? Based on this question, the research sought to understand how the role of designers in groups of seamstresses and artisans could contribute to the valorization of local production and dissociate it from mass production, which nowadays represents the predominant fashion production model in the sector.

The term *fashion* is open to many interpretations, and many of them have been presented by researchers in the field. To define it, we follow the precepts of Lipovetsky (2011), who identifies fashion as a modern phenomenon characterized by the diffusion and repetition of habits expressed by society. According to the author, fashion also refers to the act of dressing, directly related to change and to the new. In the conceptualization of the term, we emphasize the importance of the new and the change in the understanding of its dynamics.

The author of the PhD research and one of the authors of the present article, with considerable experience in the fashion retail market, have closely witnessed the great transformation that the sector underwent in the last years of the 20th century. Driven by profit, large domestic fashion retail companies began to concentrate their productions in the East, mainly in China. This production model, called *fast fashion*, seeks to accelerate capital turnover by reducing the cost of production and increasing profits. According to Contino (2019), fast fashion represents a new productive system created by changes in cultural, political, and economic practices in post-modernism. This quest for greater profits causes the devaluation of all components of production, including (especially) the labor force.

Conceptualizing fashion based on the valorization of change and the new helps us to understand how the fast fashion production model was formed, stimulated by the logic of capitalism.

Although fast fashion is currently the predominant production model in the fashion industry, the valorization of local production and the use of pre-industrial activities, such as handicraft, may point to more sustainable practices. Throughout the research, we realized that a possible more sustainable production path can be followed through the use and promotion of sewing and handicraft activities, but unfortunately this connection with local fashion retail companies has not been established yet.

Although the design activity is linked to industrial production, the connection as an artisanal production process has always existed. Handicraft practices¹ have supported design as a methodological teaching tool, for example (CRUZ; COUTO; PORTAS, 2021). The union between both practices also contributes as a form of

1 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines handicrafts as handmade products using tools or even mechanical means. For it to be considered an artisanal product, it is important that the artisan's manual interference is the main component of the production.

cultural valorization. Thus, the handcraft activity may represent an alternative path, dissociating itself from mass industrial models imposed by globalization as from the end of the 20th century.

In the case of the production of fashion goods, we also highlight the activity of domestic sewing. According to Caires and Morais (2018), “another important contribution is the recovery of the cultural identity of artisanal groups, whose knowledge and practices have been recognized and incorporated into this new way of thinking about and producing fashion” (free translation). According to the authors, fashion goods produced in workshops, cooperative businesses, and small workshops help in the development of traditional locations that did not participate in the dominant production process.

The exploration of the labor force present in the fashion sector motivated the researcher to seek alternative production paths through groups of local seamstresses and artisans and to carry out the research that resulted in this article. As a native of Rio de Janeiro, living and working in Rio de Janeiro (state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) for decades, the researcher wondered why fashion retail companies rarely used the local workforce in their productions. There are thousands of seamstresses and artisans in the state who could have more opportunities if there were the interest of local companies and effective public policies to stimulate local production.

According to Cippola and Bartholo (2014), designers work in their local context, facilitating changes and dialoguing with people. A common characteristic of human beings is to establish bonds with the place where they were born and live as well as their subsequent professional action to improve those places.

Following the same precept, the anthropologist Gilberto Velho (1999) advocates the choice of a place known to the researcher, which he calls family culture. We observe the characters and dynamics of our territory on a daily basis. In big cities, the dynamics are intense and the characters are anonymous. The research of a family society supports social encounters between the researcher and well-known people and also provides a debate with other researchers, enriching the result.

From this perspective, Reis and Urani (2011) argue that the geographical map of the city is juxtaposed with the affective map of its inhabitants. Hence, the population is involved with the problems of the place they live. “By loving your city, your population appropriates it and begins to participate and demand transformations. For this reason, expanding individual maps — mental and affective — is also fundamental to reduce social inequalities in the urban context” (REIS; URANI, 2011, p. 35, free translation).

The objective of this article is to reflect on the development of urban space in Rio de Janeiro and how local peculiarities — such as the formation of favelas in urban centers — present themselves as a background for design initiatives in groups of artisans and seamstresses. As a complement, we also present the description of a case study. With this example, the local creative and productive potential becomes clear, which can be facilitated by design interference — although, unfortunately, this potential is still little explored.

The issue was qualitatively addressed, and the article sought to achieve its objective by a descriptive and exploratory research. The researcher's direct contact with the situation was paramount to understand and interpret the phenomenon.

A broader contextualization is the starting point of the study, based on bibliographic research conducted with analytical reading of books, articles, documents, and websites. In the case of the article, only part of this broader research was presented, regarding the development of urban space in Rio de Janeiro and the presentation of concepts relevant to the context.

In the research from which the article originated, four cases were surveyed in Rio de Janeiro, in which there was design interference with handicraft and sewing groups. As not all cases would fit this article, the authors decided to describe the one that was most relevant to the proposal. In addition to bibliographic research, semi-structured interviews were conducted for this case study and also a systematic analysis in social networks. This methodology stage will be further explained in the corresponding section.

The article was divided into three parts. The first presents, based on the interdisciplinarity between geography and design, important concepts for the design research that show territorial valorization. Following this path of territorial valorization, the second part describes the formation of urban space in Rio de Janeiro as a background for design initiatives in groups of artisans and seamstresses. Finally, the third part of the article includes a case study, called Ecomoda, which exemplified the generation of socio-environmental development in communities in Rio de Janeiro.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY BETWEEN DESIGN AND GEOGRAPHY AND TERRITORIAL VALORIZATION

According to Sommerman (2008), interdisciplinarity takes place when two or more disciplines establish links with each other, producing broader knowledge. In the suggested interdisciplinarity, there is no intention of creating a discipline, but rather developing a practice that relies on knowledge of both areas.

Due to its contemporary origin, compared with other fields of knowledge, design education in Brazil began in the 1960s. Design has developed and strengthened as an interdisciplinary area represented by a set of disciplines through dialogue and interaction.

In the present analysis, geography has strengthened the area of design by encouraging the understanding of urban spaces in Rio de Janeiro, where design initiatives were identified in groups that practice handicrafts and sewing. The analysis of urban spaces is connected to the actions of designers by the methodological practices of the design field.

In view of the interdisciplinarity between design and geography, some concepts were developed by researchers and have greatly contributed to design research. Design and territory, for example, according to Krucken (2017), consist in the valorization of products and processes by encouraging the use of local resources, practicing the "exercise of making a place." According to the author, some

characteristics of design and territory are: “Valuing products and processes located in the territory; promoting the political and aesthetic potential of the place; dealing with convergences and divergences: new business models, new paths for artisanal production” (KRUCKEN, 2017, p. 327, free translation).

Another concept that also demonstrates this interdisciplinarity is placemaking, defended by Manzini (2017) as a new direction from design to social innovation that places the designer as an agent who will assist in the social construction of places. According to the author, for a place to exist, it is essential that the individuals who inhabit it speak about and act on it, for example, in residents’ associations. The meaning of a place emerges from local dialogues and discourses. In this sense, placemaking provides the search for well-being related to the construction and reconstruction of places from the point of view of their inhabitants.

The concept of creative cities, which was popularized by the precepts of the British city planner Charles Landry, also portrays this interdisciplinary condition between design and geography. It represents a new development perspective for cities and was of great importance in presenting the ideas in the present article.

Accordingly, Ferreira (2017) describes that the urban space primarily represents a place that brings together cultural manifestations of the inhabitants. Thus, he defends the retrieval of the city as a work, and not as a commodity. According to the author, “the city is meant to be fully experienced by all citizens, so it is necessary to articulate art, culture, communication, and political direction to carry out the true transformation of urban space” (FERREIRA, 2017, p. 101, free translation). Ribeiro (2005, p. 418, free translation) adds: “It is necessary to go further, considering the very social production of social reality, which includes ‘being together’ and also the entanglements allowed by the urban experience.”

Therefore, the concept of creative cities is presented as strategic. Landry (2011) shows that the creative city encourages public participation, promoting an open source of co-creation and also communication and collaboration in the urban context, considering residents as protagonists and agents of change. Within this context, it is worth highlighting the history of places and their culture and, based on local potential and interests, to project their future.

The concept of creative cities originated in economically developed countries, when the displacement of industries from these locations to other countries changed the scenario, which created the need to transform it (LANDRY, 2011).

Culture may suggest one of the forms of urban regeneration, revealing creative industry as a catalyst for local transformation. Thus, the creative industry assumes this important role as an economic axis, enriching the creation of an urban identity (LANDRY, 2011).

According to Figueiredo (2015), creative economy, represented by activities such as art, fashion, design, cinema, music, and architecture, for example, is not a new field of activity. The novelty lies in the focus given to it in recent years.

For Reis and Urani (2011), the essence of the concept of creative cities is the need to recreate public space, areas where there is a connection between people

and spaces in local communities. In addition to the local community, the action of other agents, such as institutions and organizations, companies, governments, and civil society, is paramount. One of the faced problems is the alternation of governance, an issue that can be minimized with the involvement of civil society.

Figueiredo (2015) explains the relationship between creative economy and its characteristics of incentive to the production and consumption of cultural and entertainment activities, valuing local culture with creative cities, as it helps to promote alternative development for cities.

According to Reis and Urani (2011), three circumstances are fundamental to the conceptualization of creative cities: innovations, connections, and culture. The authors also highlight two threats to the development of creative cities: gentrification and socioeconomic polarization.

It should be noted that the concepts of creative economy and creative cities focus on valuing local production and culture organized in a network, a relevant characteristic in the current context of globalization.

The concepts of creative cities and creative economy are still under transformation and construction, adapting to the locations and their cultural, economic, political, and social characteristics. As aforementioned, the concept of creative cities began in economically developed countries.

In Europe, there is the example of the study coordinated by the Milan Polytechnic, the Emerging User Demands for Sustainable Solutions (EMUDE). The research supports actions that promote scenarios of creative places in several locations on the continent. The European territory underwent major changes with the vacancy of industries during the transition from an industrial period to a post-industrial period. The reuse of industrial ruins welcomed new experiences and interpretations that occurred with the change. By analyzing the results of the EMUDE study, we can observe the renewal and revitalization of the community, of social and cultural life (FRANQUEIRA, 2010).

Santos (2007) warns that most of the theories of social sciences were produced in countries of the Northern Hemisphere and that, when transported to countries of the South, these theories do not apply to the local reality, being misplaced.

To illustrate the analysis, we present the example of Medellín, a city in Colombia, a developing country that in the mid-20th century was a reference for commerce, leisure, and fashion. In the 1990s, as a consequence of violence, the city lost this position and became directly associated with drug trafficking, and came to be considered one of the most violent cities in the world. Nowadays, Medellín regained the position it had lost and offers opportunities for inclusion, a transformation achieved by culture, education, and transparency (MELGUIZO, 2011).

Melguizo (2011), who was Secretary of Culture and Social Development of the Colombian city, explains that the transformation was only possible due to changes in the way of governing the city and in politics. The government relied on the support and collaboration of civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, private companies, and universities,

strengthening an independent civic movement. Focusing on culture and education, self-esteem was restored and citizenship was consolidated. The city was discredited after so many years of violence, but in recent years, after social transformations, Medellín has become a tourist hub again. Tourism assumed the role of vector for the development of the local economic sector. Melguizo (2011, p. 48, free translation) concludes:

The words opportunities, inclusion, and equality are the core of our compass and the essence of everything we do in education, culture, social urbanism, job creation, etc. We are not working according to a model for transforming the image of the city. The ongoing transformation in Medellín is based on changing the object, not its image. Everything we do in Medellín, from a public perspective, must generate results in terms of coexistence and inclusion. These are our two biggest challenges.

Gentrification and socioeconomic polarization, which hinder the evolution towards creative cities, as highlighted by Reis and Urani (2011), are present in the public administration and society of Rio de Janeiro.

As our focus is to reflect on the development of urban space in Rio de Janeiro as a background for design initiatives in handicraft and sewing groups, following the development of creative economy and the creative city, we will complement the text with a local example.

It was in the city of Rio de Janeiro, more specifically in the Maré favela, that the Italian designer Chiara Del Gaudio (2014) conducted her PhD research. The researcher deemed that it would be appropriate for designers to take action in places with fragile, conflicting, and marginalized social contexts, due to the need for improvement and transformation. Designers could contribute participatory experiences by the design strategy to promote social innovation, but this situation had been little investigated (DEL GAUDIO, 2014).

Del Gaudio (2014) perceived the need and a desire for territorial inclusion between the favela and the city, and saw the designer as an agent that could promote this inclusion. The design strategy in participatory and collaborative experiences with local partners could assist in the process of social improvement. She explains: "The favelas seemed to me to be an adequate territory for developing a project aimed at improving the local social fabric: the rights of citizens were violated and their attitude of active citizenship was almost non-existent" (DEL GAUDIO, 2014, p. 79, free translation).

However, based on this excerpt, the challenges faced by the researcher to work in places where democracy is fragile or non-existent, such as Rio de Janeiro's favelas, are clear, "a territory where people have no right to express themselves, to fight for their own rights, where their affirmation is linked to threats to their own lives" (DEL GAUDIO, 2014, p. 250, free translation).

Our premises corroborate the ideas of Del Gaudio (2014), envisioning the potential for design to act in collaborative community groups favored by the peculiar geographical organization of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

RIO DE JANEIRO AS A BACKGROUND FOR DESIGN INITIATIVES IN HANDICRAFT AND SEWING GROUPS

The term *favela* denotes a social category in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and its integration with the urban context is a fundamental factor for the development of the city, but this integration will only be possible by the valorization of local social productions.

The nature of the city is quite diverse, with forests, mangroves, massifs, coastline, and rivers, and the spatial occupation took place in a very particular way. In most metropolises, neighborhoods and peripheral municipalities develop, such as those of Baixada Fluminense, for example. In Rio de Janeiro, the population in situations of social vulnerability also inhabits the most valued neighborhoods. This is due to its peculiar geography, with the formation of favelas in the hills of the central and southern regions of the city.

The development of Rio de Janeiro's society and urban landscape demonstrates the relevance of favelas in the city's economic, urban, political, cultural, and social structure.

According to Barbosa and Silva (2013), the occupation of hills and mangroves, the least valued places, highlights a remarkable landscape in Rio de Janeiro, composing a typical contemporary dwelling called favela.

Initially, the city's official documents used the nomenclature "low-income agglomerations" — which, in 1982, was replaced by favela, a more popular name among its inhabitants. The term "favela" affirms an identity, although it often carries a derogatory and prejudiced stigma.

Cavallieri (2009) points out that the concept of favela became nationalized with the structuring of Rio's hills. Burgos (2009) adds that the polysemy of the term denotes the social category connected to the meaning of the idea of city. Different aspects of the term are highlighted by Silva et al. (2009, p. 96-97, free translation):

[Considering the] sociopolitical profile: [...] the favela is a territory without guarantees of the exercise of social rights, a fact that has implied the low expectation of those same rights on the part of its residents [...].

[Considering the] socioeconomic profile: [...] the favela is a territory where formal market investments are precarious, especially in real estate, finance, and services [...].

[Considering the] socio-urban profile: [...] the favela means an urban dwelling that synthesizes the unequal conditions of Brazilian urbanization and, at the same time, the struggle of citizens for the legitimate right to inhabit the city [...].

[Considering the] sociocultural profile: [...] overcoming the stigmas of violent and miserable territories, the favela presents itself with the richness of its plurality of consciousness of social subjects in terms of their cultural, symbolic, and human differences.

As a consequence of disorganized urban growth, favelas present major problems such as unsafe buildings constructed in places subject to landslides

and floods, lack of basic sanitation services, in addition to the dominance exercised by criminal groups in some places. Considered the antithesis of order, favelas have established themselves as components of the urban landscape (BARBOSA; SILVA, 2013).

The importance of the social representation of favelas was demonstrated in the work of some intellectuals as from the second half of the last century. Until that period, governments acted to exclude those places and their residents from society, taking actions such as building walls to contain growth and hide buildings, or even transferring residents to other regions. These attitudes were widely questioned, and society began to demand a change in position from the government.

The recognition and valorization of the cultural strength of favelas have been intensified in this century. The Favela Observatory (*Observatório de Favelas*), a public-interest civil society organization, was inaugurated in 2001 with the purpose of reflecting on the representations of the favela in a critical and broadened manner. The State and the population must realize that the favela is a fundamental territory that belongs to the city, the state, and the country. The stereotypical idea must be deconstructed, and a new image must be reconstructed based on the heterogeneities that exist between favelas, reflecting their contexts, diversity, histories, and culture. Historically, favelas are represented by their absence and, despite their differences, they are treated in a homogeneous manner.

Silva et al. (2009) also point out the importance of appropriating and using urban space in its entirety as a social right, reflecting the right to the city. Actions in favelas favor what the authorities call the fight against violence, thus favoring those who do not live in the favelas, but the main beneficiaries should be their residents, with the guarantee of their rights.

Favelas began to transform this segregated historical condition and to seek recognition as a place for living and producing identities. The socio-biodiversity of the favelas represents part of the solution to the problems faced by the city, and the solution will come from its recognition (DUARTE, 2009).

It is noteworthy that residents of the favelas, as a means of protecting themselves from imposed exclusion, developed their own forms of sociability. Specific rules are created aiming at solidarity, acceptance, resistance, and cultural preservation.

All territories and all residents must be considered when making decisions to build a more inclusive city that provides opportunities for everyone. Urban space is a place where differences meet, produced by different ways of life and experiences.

And, contradictorily, favelas are expressions of the daily affirmation of living and inventing the city, as a shared human work.

However, far from representing chaotic, lawless, and uncontrolled territories that threaten the city — as stated in the most conservative speeches —, favelas constitute valuable experiences for rethinking and remaking the city as a whole. The favelas are, in fact, one of the most vital expressions of the daily experience of the poor, in a permanent process of redefining the city (BARBOSA; SILVA, 2013, p. 124, free translation).

We completed the analysis of the issue of the integration of favelas with urban space in Rio de Janeiro with the precepts of Councilwoman Marielle Franco set out in her master's dissertation, entitled *UPP – A redução da favela a três letras: uma análise da política de segurança pública do estado do Rio de Janeiro* [Pacifying Police Unit (UPP) — The reduction of favela to three letters: an analysis of the public security policy of the state of Rio de Janeiro]. Marielle Franco is an example of an intellectual who grew up in a favela and used her personal experience and efforts as a form of resistance, disseminating urgent and fundamental ideas for the desired resignification of the city's favelas. In 2018, her life and her term as city councilwoman were interrupted when she was assassinated.

According to her, the model of Pacifying Police Units (*Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora* – UPPs) was inspired by the city of Medellín; however, as aforementioned, the Colombian model prioritized investments in the social area, and not just in the security forces. The Rio de Janeiro's model was unable to follow the same path; the social actions called *UPP Social* (Social UPP) were implemented only two or three years after the installation of the police and did not remain for long (FRANCO, 2014).

The UPP program was implemented by the government of Rio de Janeiro in 2008 with the main purpose of acting in public security, seeking to dismantle organized crime and drug trafficking in the favelas. The action was a strategy coordinated by the municipal, state, and federal governments, also supported by NGOs and organized civil entities. UPPs were installed in areas with high levels of poverty, low infrastructure, low average level of education, and where armed and organized criminal groups existed.

The author's question concerning the real intention of the UPPs is based on the concept of a "commodity city," mentioned by Ferreira (2017), reinforced by the model of the UPPs, which intended to prepare the city for major events, responding to the wishes of private sector investors who interfered with local public administration. According to Franco (2014), the UPPs thus resumed concepts of the exclusion of the residents of favelas that were being overcome. The State relinquishes its duty as a citizen agent and favors the market, forgetting the legal city project.

Franco (2014) intended, with her research, to value the production power of favelas and their residents, who develop forms of resistance and regulation through culture, of alternative housing solutions, in addition to social encounters. Organized sectors that collaborate with relevant projects in social relations pointing to models of society that differ from the current one are paramount, as they are capable of providing conditions for major changes, reducing inequalities. Nevertheless, this approach began to be overlooked, and police actions were reinforced as a central issue.

Nonetheless, regardless of the strong socio-spatial stigmatization, the favela is also marked by characteristics that place it in contradiction with the dominant ideology. In its core, a group of social movements and institutions from the third sector is formed, involving thousands of residents, whether around educational, cultural, political, sports, or other projects,

or around political and demanding actions. This process creates contradictions and problems. Although marked by high levels of underemployment and informality in labor relations, a low degree of sovereignty over the city as a whole, low social investment, and other similar problems, the favela ends up presenting a life, actions, and perspectives that place it, at certain times or circumstances, as one of the protagonists in the development of the city itself (FRANCO, 2014, p. 63, free translation).

The author criticizes the fragility of the project, but highlights the “important contributions to new projects of human and social relations” (FRANCO, 2014, p. 47, free translation). According to her, the Social UPPs had a very short period of duration and were closed between the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013, on the grounds of insecurity among outsourced workers and of not functioning properly.

Integrating favelas with the urban context of the city, as advocated by the Favela Observatory, would be a fundamental movement for transforming Rio de Janeiro into a creative city, but this connection is still far from being achieved. The initial idea of the UPP project, implemented in the city in 2008 with the creation of Social UPPs, represented an attempt and a hope, but unfortunately it did not promote the desired citizenship for this population.

We will complement the article with a description of the Ecomoda case. We chose this example because it demonstrates important arguments that were described in this text: it was originated in Social UPPs and represented the design initiative in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas through activities, such as sewing and handicrafts, aimed at socio-environmental development.

ECOMODA: ALMIR FRANÇA²

In the last decades of the last century, the designer and pedagogue Almir França stood out as an important figure in the alternative fashion scene in Rio de Janeiro. The information described in this section was obtained from a semi-structured interview conducted with him in 2019. The initial idea of the research was to begin a face-to-face immersion in the Ecomoda project in 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic the study was completed by exchanging messages via the WhatsApp application and systematic monitoring via the social network Instagram. We also carried out an in-depth study using reports researched on the internet.

One afternoon, França welcomed one of the authors of the article in his studio, located in a townhouse, a typical building in the region, in Praça da Bandeira, in the northern part of Rio de Janeiro. Inside, a dense decoration full of details: mannequins and racks with extremely elaborate garments, retro-style objects and furniture, handmade techniques, such as decoupage and mosaic mixing unusual materials and covering furniture, walls, the floor, and the ceiling. One cannot fail to

² It is worth emphasizing the scope of the term *ecomoda*. When searching it on the social network Instagram, we can find dozens of projects that include it. The Ecomoda project referred to in this article is always linked to Almir França.

become aware of a setting filled with information, symbology, and meaning such as an art installation. As described by França (2019a, free translation), “an unfinished *parangolé*”. He also expressed his admiration for the references to Bispo do Rosário (Brazilian plastic artist) and the greater valorization, in his work, for the creative process than the final result.

França (2019) began the interview by explaining the first model of the Ecomoda project, which took place in 2010 in the Mangueira favela, enabled by the UPP program. The initial proposal of the UPPs project, as previously explained, was to address the structural problems of Rio de Janeiro’s communities, and not just focus on the security aspect. Ecomoda was born from this program, encouraged by the Department of the Environment. The overall objective was to work on environmental education in communities, and the broader objective was to teach fashion classes by reusing garbage, often generated by the fashion industry itself. Hence, the project would generate work and income for that population, in addition to helping to reduce waste. The Mangueira project was funded by resources from the State Fund for Environmental Conservation and Urban Development (FRANÇA, 2019a).

The Ecomoda course in the Mangueira favela lasted one year and counted on trained teachers who were experts in the field. Almir França’s idea was to replicate the model in other communities (FRANÇA, 2019a).

The project needed to overcome obstacles and adapt to various situations such as internal community disputes. Disagreements within the classroom involving students from rival families and factions were common (FRANÇA, 2019a).

Political issues, such as the change of state governor and internal disputes within the favela, brought the project to an end at that location, but some women continue with a sewing collective and are still in contact with Almir França (FRANÇA, 2019a).

After this first year in Mangueira, França began to be sought after by companies and institutions seeking solutions to the problem of textile waste. At the time, for example, the then Secretary of the Environment offered him a ton of uniforms of law enforcement officers working on the Brazilian Prohibition Law (Law No. 11,705) that needed to be discarded. From then on, Almir realized the dimension that the Ecomoda project was taking on and the impact it was causing both on the environment and the society. He used these data and numbers as a tool to seek new partners and incentives to multiply the project elsewhere.

After the Mangueira’s model, Ecomoda was extended to other communities in other neighborhoods of the city, in Baixada Fluminense and other municipalities in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Teresópolis, a mountainous municipality in the metropolitan region; Santa Maria Madalena and Trajano de Morais, in the central region of the state; and São João da Barra, located in the northern region, were some municipalities where Ecomoda operated. França (2019a) points out that Ecomoda’s main concern is the empowerment of the local population. The broader objective of the project continued to be to teach fashion through waste, but the incentives, approaches, developed products, and the benefiting audience varied according to the locations where it was implemented.

In Santa Maria Madalena and Trajano de Morais, for example, the State Department of the Environment and Sustainability and the State Environmental Institute (*Instituto Estadual do Ambiente – Inea*) promoted, through Ecomoda, an environmental education project aimed at young people aged 15 to 29 years. The intention was for young people to develop a local intervention action plan for monitoring and controlling the environment, aimed at implementing social and environmental public policies (FRANÇA, 2019a).

Ecomoda was also present in the Rocinha favela, in partnership with the waste pickers cooperative *De Olho no Lixo* (Be aware of the trash). Other institutions were also involved in this project, such as the State Department of the Environment and Sustainability, Inea, and Viva Rio SocioAmbiental, with resources from the Rio de Janeiro State Supermarket Association. Ecomoda used the material collected by waste pickers to educate and develop products. The reused materials were banners, CDs, fabrics, and even plastic bags. Ecomoda students developed crochet techniques using discarded plastic bags (FRANÇA, 2019a).

According to Grinberg (2018, free translation), “at the Rocinha unit, where students produced purses containing plastic bags from supermarkets, the concern is to prevent more waste from ending up in São Conrado’s *língua negra* [pollution spot crossing the beach]”. In Rocinha, the raw material was not only textile waste, but encompassed garbage more broadly, according to the material collected by the waste pickers cooperative. The crochet technique was used because this is a very common artisanal technique among residents of the favela, composed mostly of Northeastern Brazil immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

Another partnership between Ecomoda and the *De Olho no Lixo* project was in the Roquete Pinto community, in the Maré complex. Because of the proximity to Guanabara Bay, the raw material most used in this region were fishing nets that would be discarded. Ecomoda also operated in the Jacarezinho favela (FRANÇA, 2019a).

In the Salgueiro community, located in São Gonçalo, Almir França was approached by a group of women victims of domestic violence with the intention of developing a project involving sewing and handicrafts. They carried out a work with fish scales, an abundant raw material in the region, which houses fishing cooperatives (FRANÇA, 2019a).

Other centers of operation of Ecomoda were communities and municipalities in the Baixada Fluminense region such as Ana Clara, Bom Retiro, Imbariê, Magé, and Guapimirim. Ana Clara and Bom Retiro are located on the edge of Guanabara Bay, between oil refineries. The incentive for the project in these communities came from resources from environmental fines imposed on these companies. In the south of the state, Ecomoda operated in the municipalities of Angra dos Reis and Itaguaí.

At the studio, Almir França stores materials that he receives from donations; the place works as a laboratory where he and his team experiment with the materials. He explains how the process takes place: before receiving

a material donation, he requests a sample to learn about and assess its possibilities of use. After receiving the donation, it is cleaned and separated in the studio before use. França (2019a) defends the importance of circularity in the chain, demonstrating to his students that it is necessary to think broadly about the fashion chain.

It is worth highlighting the local particularities valued and respected in the development of the project. Despite the intention of multiplying the model of the first project at Mangueira favela, it was replicated in different ways, adapting to the characteristics, the population, the raw material, the partners, and the incentives that varied according to each territory, never losing focus of teaching fashion by valuing environmental practices.

To this end, it is essential, as França (2019a) highlights, to live and know the local reality. According to him, it is necessary to make a local diagnosis that shows, for example, whether there is industry, commerce, fashion, and waste. What is the origin of this waste? What are the local environmental impacts? And above all: what is the expectation of that community?

Almir França's coexistence with these communities was fundamental to the development of the projects. It was necessary to know their habits, values, ways of life, beliefs, kinship relations, and other dimensions of social life. According to França (2019a, free translation), "in each place we discover the potential for creative production. Hence, it is possible to create a network."

"The scraps, the gossips, the memories, and the stories of the women who built the world," as França (2019b) reveals in an Instagram post.

Ecomoda goes beyond the pedagogical area, intertwining and sewing together things, people, and entities encouraged by ecological ethics and the valorization of human diversity. The common thread is waste, whether it originated in the fashion market itself or not. This thread interweaves and sews together institutions, things, and people, stimulating an educational process and socio-environmental development. In this process, waste is capable of promoting the transformation of people.

According to França (2019a, free translation), it is very difficult to assess the impacts caused by the project: "The work is collective, but the struggle and the changes are individual." He points out that the impact is greater at the level of citizenship than financial. A woman becoming a seamstress is not transformative. The transformation becomes clear when this woman decides to return to school to become literate. That is citizenship.

França (2019a) emphasizes that the main cause of the environmental impacts caused by fashion is not due to industrial waste, but rather to post-consumption. Accelerated consumerism, characteristic of the fast fashion production and consumption model, causes the large disposal of ready-made garments by consumers, and this garbage generated by the disposal of clothes becomes the protagonist in socio-environmental pedagogical action and in local development.

CONCLUSION

The search for new alternatives for the production of fashion goods with social engagement, through local production, motivated the development of this article. Local production separated from mass production, in addition to cultural valorization, is capable of promoting social and economic development and also assisting in environment preservation.

To understand Rio de Janeiro's vocation to form groups of seamstresses and artisans who can promote this alternative production of fashion goods, we reflected on the development of urban space and concluded the text with the description of a case study.

The analysis of Rio de Janeiro's urban space and its peculiarities highlighted the importance of the social, cultural, and economic integration of favelas and their residents for the development of the city. Integration will only be possible by the involvement of residents and the valorization of local social productions. From this perspective, creative economy presents itself as a catalyst, favoring development.

Almir França's Ecomoda project exemplified a socio-environmental pedagogical design initiative involving groups with sewing and handicraft activities in Rio de Janeiro's communities. Despite the fact that the first model of the project lasted only one year, Ecomoda continued seeking new partnerships, new incentives, and new places of operation. Thanks to the activism of Almir França, the project continues to teach fashion and environmental awareness and promote citizenship in Rio de Janeiro's favelas and communities.

There is still a long way to go before alternative production models with social engagement, represented in this article by the Ecomoda project, are incorporated into the Brazilian fashion production process. Fashion retail companies seek these initiatives only to dispose of textile waste, and not as potential producers/suppliers. Therefore, this alternative production model still has very little representation in the sector.

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Craftwork in authorial fashion of Pernambuco: a case study about the production of leather shoes

O trabalho artesanal na moda autoral de Pernambuco: um estudo de caso sobre produção de sapatos de couro

Manuela Correia¹ , Virgínia Pereira Cavalcanti¹ 

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the state of Pernambuco has presented an increasing number of small businesses focused on authorial fashion, with the majority of them concentrated in the Metropolitan Region of Recife. Many of these companies have craftwork as the major feature of their brand identity. This article presented the results of a case study about the artisanal production present in an authorial fashion brand whose main products are leather shoes. The main result of this study was the observation of the creator as an artist-craftsman, whose manual skills and creative freedom are central elements for the construction of the brand.

Keywords: Authorial fashion. Artisanal production. Creative process.

RESUMO

Nos últimos anos, o estado de Pernambuco tem apresentado um número crescente de pequenos negócios voltados à moda autoral, com maior concentração na região metropolitana do Recife. Muitas dessas empresas possuem o fazer artesanal como um forte traço de sua identidade de marca. O presente artigo expõe os resultados de um estudo de caso acerca da produção artesanal existente em uma marca de moda autoral cujos principais produtos são sapatos de couro animal. O principal resultado do estudo foi a observação do criador como um artista-artífice, cujas destrezas manual e liberdade criativa são elementos centrais na construção da marca.

Palavras-chave: Moda autoral. Produção artesanal. Processo criativo.

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INTRODUCTION

Clothing is one of the artifacts that have been part of human material culture since the dawn of civilizations, however fashion, as a social phenomenon of worship of constant novelties (LIPOVETSKY, 2009), was born only at the end of the Middle Ages, in a Europe still governed by craftwork.

Even with all the technological advances since the first Industrial Revolution, it can be seen that craftsmanship still permeates part of clothing production in some territories. Artisanal and industrial production are not mutually exclusive when Borges (2011, p. 206) highlights the fact that, today, craftsman's work includes processes in which machines are used, while in luxury segment industries the finishing of products is handcrafted by highly skilled craftsmen.

It is important to emphasize the difference between craftwork and artisanal production, for a better understanding of this article. According to the Brazilian Craftwork Program (*Programa do Artesanato Brasileiro*) (BRASIL, 2018), crafts are understood as all production that results from the transformation of raw materials, through the use of knowledge and practices, and that expresses creativity, skill, quality, and artistic, historical and cultural values. The craftsman's manual dexterity gives the object its unique characteristics.

However, when talking about craftsmanship, this article refers to artisanal production, that is, a way of making products following a manual logic that can also be inserted in a context of serial production and division of labor. This logic makes room for the rescue of crafts and manual skills of creators, who work as craftsmen, in direct contact with materials and processes, seeking to meet not only the needs of the consumer, but also their own creative needs.

All this can be observed in the authorial fashion market in the metropolitan region of Recife. In addition to the use of manual techniques in the manufacture of pieces, authorial fashion brands are also characterized by production on a smaller scale, at a slower pace, in addition to not usually following fashion trends.

The purpose of this article was to present an excerpt from the master's research entitled *O fazer artesanal no design de moda pernambucana: uma investigação sobre o processo de produção em marcas autorais* (Craftsmanship in Pernambuco fashion design: an investigation into the production process in authorial brands), as a requirement for completion of the Graduate Program in Design at *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco*. Such research consists of a study of multiple cases, and this article is an extract of one of the cases studied, aimed to understand how artisanal work influences the process of creation and production of authorial fashion products.

This article is founded on the theories of Mills (2009) and Sennett (2009) regarding artisanal work. As for authorial fashion, Valle Noronha (2017) and Sohn, Laste and Rios (2017) were cited, in addition to Crane's (2011) notions about stylists as artists and artisans.

This article is basically divided into: explanation of the theoretical foundation, in addition to a brief contextualization of the field of study; description of the methodology used in the case study; and report of the investigated case, parallel to the analysis and followed by the conclusions.

THE CRAFTSMAN

To begin to understand this article, it is important to know what crafts it refers to. For this, the views of sociologists Mills (2009)¹ and Sennett (2009)² are used. The first considers craftwork to be not only a work model, but also a lifestyle and a way of acting and thinking in the world, which should serve as a reference for the designers' work. For the author, craftsmanship is the "common denominator of art, science, and knowledge and also the very root of human development" (MILLS, 2009, p. 76).

As an ideal, craftsmanship represents the creative nature of work, and the central place of that work in human development as a whole. As a practice, handicrafts play the classic role of the independent craftsman who does his work in close interaction with the public, who in turn takes part in it (MILLS, 2009, p. 76).

Following a similar line of thought, Sennett (2009) brings the figure of the craftsman, who for him "represents a broader category than the artisan; it symbolizes in each one of us the desire to do a job well, concretely, for the pleasure of a job well done" (SENNETT, 2009, p. 164). The craftsman is a curious worker interested in what can be improved in his craft, his tools, and his work.

Sennett (2016) also raises the discussion about the opposition craftsman *versus* artist. According to him, the 19th century thought of worshiping the artist as someone who creates something on their own comes from a context in which the artist is the craftsman who has moved away from the workshop. Today this translates into the cult of innovation, which must be constant, fast-paced and of quick disposal, as happens in the logic of fast fashion³.

THE FASHION CREATOR AS ARTIST-ARTISAN

According to Valle Noronha (2017), the term authorial fashion (as well as authorial design) is restricted to Latin languages, being increasingly used in Portuguese and Spanish, and is still not so explored in the academic literature. Despite this, it is possible to raise a reflection based on the concepts of Sohn, Laste and Rios (2017) and Valle Noronha (2017):

An authorial fashion has its main foundation in the image of the authors who dialogue with the created piece. Author and user write, in co-authorship, new meanings for bodies and objects through the experience of dressing. [...] In this way of doing things, there is no intention of produc-

1 Charles W. Mills was an American sociologist of the 20th century, creator of the concept of sociological imagination. His ideas are still current and raise questions that remain in the practice of designers until today. This can be observed in the text of his lecture *O homem no centro: o designer*, from 1958.

2 Richard Sennett's theories revolve around the configurations of contemporary work. In his book *O artifice* (2009), he discusses how manual work influences intellectual work and the dialectical relationship between the material world and the craftsman.

3 The authors Fletcher and Grose (2011) state that the predominant business model in current fashion is fast fashion, a model based on speed, which focuses on the production and sale of cheap and homogenized clothes, in ever-increasing quantities, generating several negative socio-environmental impacts.

tion on large scales and trends in shapes, colors, and styles do not direct the work of the creator. Instead, small scales are prioritized and productions are motivated by expressive questions that reflect the author's own individuality (VALLE NORONHA, 2017, p. 69).

It can be said that authorial design meets a more innovative and sustainable perspective in relation to the supply and consumption of products and services. Being linked to exclusive production, close to the characteristics of artistic work. The authorial designer can be considered an artist who constantly seeks innovation and usually produces in small quantities, focusing on a specific market niche (SOHN; LASTE; RIOS, 2017, p. 102).

That is, the authorial quality that is conferred on the fashion brand is directly related to the creative expression of its author and its sustainability actions. With this, it is possible to extract two important characteristics of authorial fashion: the operation in slow fashion, as opposed to the consumption of mass-produced clothing; and the appreciation of the creator, who is elevated to the status of an artist.

Regarding the first aspect, Fletcher and Grose (2011) define slow fashion as a movement in the fashion world that is not just about slowing down production; it is about a different worldview, about various activities across the fashion chain that promote cultural diversity and ethical values in fashion. Since this desire for a more conscious, democratic, and small-scale fashion tries to rescue artisanal production models, manuality becomes an important factor of differentiation of the authorial fashion product.

Regarding the second aspect, when considering the theories of Mills (2009) and Sennett (2009; 2016), would it be possible for the creator artist to also be a craftsman? Crane (2011), based on Howard Becker's 1982 book entitled *Art Worlds*, brings some contributions to this reflection. The author relates the concepts of artist and craftsman with the different types of fashion creation professionals. According to her, the craftsman and the artist-craftsman produce on demand for clients or employers, while the artist produces unique works, with greater creative freedom. She also states that "Artists-craftsmen are likely to maintain small businesses that serve an elite clientele" (CRANE, 2011, p. 212).

Another important aspect of this category is the close relationship with the clientele. Crane (2011) states that the success of these creators depends on being "especially adept at establishing and maintaining relationships with their upper-class clients, understanding their lifestyle and social environment" (CRANE, 2011, p. 213).

CONTEXTUALIZING THE FIELD OF STUDY

According to data from the Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association, in 2021 Brazil had 24,600 formal companies in the textile and apparel chain. In the state of Pernambuco there are about a thousand manufacturing units, mostly micro and small enterprises operating in various segments, especially in the manufacture of jeans, which represents more than 10% of national production in volume (ROCHA; BARROCAS; MARINHO, 2018, p. 4).

Currently, the textile and apparel chain in Pernambuco is made up of two poles: the Agreste pole and the metropolitan region of Recife. The former emerged

in the 1970s and is consisted of the cities of Toritama, Caruaru, and Santa Cruz do Capibaribe, in addition to neighboring municipalities. It is where most of the state's clothing production is concentrated.

The latter, according to the Brazilian Support Service for Micro and Small Companies (*Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio a Micro e Pequenas Empresas – SEBRAE, 2014*), is characterized by micro and small companies, including authorial fashion brands led by creative professionals trained in Fashion or Design courses at the universities of Recife. This is due to the lack of medium and large clothing companies in the metropolitan region, which makes many fashion professionals see entrepreneurship as their best alternative, according to studies by Sebrae (2014). In this context, this pole emerges as one of the centers of innovation and creativity in the state, bringing together urban and contemporary references with traditional aspects of popular culture.

Among the cities in the metropolitan region of Recife, two of them stand out for hosting two initiatives to promote Pernambuco's authorial fashion, with state incentives: Recife, which now has the Pernambuco Author's Fashion Store (*Loja de Moda Autoral de Pernambuco – Mape*); and its neighbor Olinda, where *Marco Pernambucano da Moda* is located.

Mape was inaugurated in 2021 and is located in the Recife neighborhood, next to the *Centro de Artesanato de Pernambuco*, being a strategic space for tourists to discover the products of authorial fashion creators in the state. The store sells pieces from 50 brands from different locations in the state, most of which are in the metropolitan area of Recife.

Marco Pernambucano da Moda proposes to be an environment for strengthening the identity of local fashion. In addition to events and courses, it offers an incubation program aimed at new businesses in the sector. According to Leite and Rocha (2019), among those incubated in the program between 2017 and 2018, more than half have the artisanal practice of products as their brand identity, an indication that crafts are in fact an alternative way to the construction of fashion in the state.

THE CASE STUDY

This study seeks to shed light on the processes of an authorial fashion brand, in view of its relationship with craft work. Because it is a qualitative research, the case study strategy was chosen, whose objective, according to Yin (2001), is to understand contemporary and complex social phenomena inserted in a real-life context.

First, an exploratory research was carried out on theories about craftsmanship and authorial fashion, theories that served as the basis for the development of the research protocol and data analysis.

A field survey was also carried out and, consequently, an exploratory research on the authorial fashion scene in the metropolitan region of Recife, in order to discover fashion brands that have the artisanal production process as part of their identity. This survey was carried out in catalogues, websites, and social networks, in addition to a visit to Mape, located in the Recife neighborhood. 14 brands were found, distributed in the cities of Olinda and Recife.

Initially, the search was focused on brands that had designers and artisans, in order to observe the relationship between them and the work of each one. It was also decided not to stick to the idea of a formal design professional, since many of the observed creators are “designers, not specialists”, coming from other areas of training, but who have mastery of both the project and the making.

Based on this survey, ten brands were contacted, in order to apply a preliminary survey, whose objective was to acquire more information about the companies, in order to define the sample for this case study. Data were collected through a short and simple questionnaire, applied via email, text messages or phone calls.

The questions sought to gather information such as: company size and number of employees; who participates in creation and who participates in production; where creation takes place; where and in what kind of environment production takes place; training and possible craft skills of the designer or creator.

It was not possible to obtain a response from all ten contacted brands, but this preliminary mapping allowed the researcher to know a little about the profile of each representative of the sample group and to verify that:

- not all brands have a formally trained designer;
- not all brands have both designer and craftsman working in the same space, as some have outsourced production to other locations.

Through the initial observation of the samples, it was then possible to identify a particular characteristic in authorial fashion in the metropolitan region of Recife, a characteristic that appears as an alternative to the fashion scene in the region: the presence of the creator-craftsman at the head of the brand. In authorial brands where conception and production take place in the same space, there is no clear separation between the two processes, and the designer or stylist is also an artisan, as pointed out by Sennett (2009). In some brands, this creator-craftsman works individually in their home/studio. In others, they have the help of employees who can also be craftsmen.

A research pilot was then carried out with one of the mapped brands, which was chosen taking into account the following criteria: the person at the head of the company is also responsible for creation and production, what we call here creator-craftsman; this person has employees, craftsmen who help in production; the entire creation and production process takes place in the same workshop; and, finally, the ease of communication with the brand.

A visit was made to the workshop of the company selected as a case, in order to carry out data collection in person. Adapting to the context of this study, semi-structured interview and direct observation techniques were chosen. Observing the space and the agents in their work environment facilitated the collection and recording of information, as well as a better understanding of the context of the studied phenomena.

To guide data collection, a research protocol was developed (Chart 1), in which four thematic axes and the respective question topics related to them are distinguished. Such categories were elaborated based on the exploratory research of the

Chart 1. Protocol for data collection and processing.

Axis	Topics
The brand	Technical data Company history Product mix Target audience
The craftsman	Professionals responsible for creation Professionals responsible for production Creators' craft skills
The product	Seasonality of collections Materials Relationship with fashion trends Audience influence
The workshop	Workspace Creation process Production process Tools and machinery

universe of copyright brands. Based on the studied theory and on the preliminary research with the brands, it was possible to observe some intersections that allowed reaching such categories.

The axis "The brand" seeks to draw an overview of the brand, with regard to the identity and nature of the company, since first of all it is necessary to understand its position in the market, its history, and its elements of authenticity.

"The Craftsman" axis, on the other hand, seeks to outline a profile of who is behind the brand, as a creator and producer. This is the central figure in the work of Sennett (2009), which also discusses craftsmanship, the expertise. Also, according to Valle Noronha (2017), the individuality of the creator is one of the characteristics of authorial fashion. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the cultural and historical background, as well as the skills of creators, in order to understand their creative process.

The axis "The product" deals with the elements that guide craftsmen in the conception of their pieces, including materials, sources of inspiration, and even the public itself. That is, the language of the product and what distinguishes it from mass products.

Finally, the axis "The workshop" seeks to understand the work environment and organization, which for Sennett (2009) interfere not only with the performance of the work activity, but also with the feelings related to it.

After data collection, it was possible to carry out the analysis of the case and the crossing of the obtained data. According to Yin (2001), data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating or recombining evidence in order to draw conclusions regarding the research objectives and problem. In this sense, in order to expose the collected information in a more structured way, they were organized in the four axes formulated in the research protocol: the brand, the craftsman, the product, and the workshop.

The Fernando Viana case

The brand

The Fernando Viana brand, named after its creator, has its atelier in Bairro Novo, in the city of Olinda, and makes shoes from animal leather (Figure 1). The product mix includes shoes for men and women in different models, such as flats, clogs, and boots (Figure 2). Prices for the final consumer vary between R\$ 130 and R\$ 200.



Source: Guimarães (2019).

Figure 1. Fernando Viana in his workshop.

The company's customers are retailers and individual consumers, who buy through the Instagram and WhatsApp apps. It has already sold to several states in Brazil, but with the Covid-19 pandemic, customers have decreased, and today the company focuses its sales on Pernambuco. It has also already had a point of sale in a collaborative store in a mall in the region. Currently, its products can also be found at Mape.

The brand does not have a very defined public profile, but Fernando Viana (2022) describes its public as "alternative and who value craftsmanship". Still according to him, this clientele is quite varied in terms of age range.

The craftsman

Fernando's story with shoes began in 1988, when he received a pair of moccasin shoes that he liked so much that he decided to take them apart to make a replica. He has no training in design, nor has he ever taken a technical course in



Source: available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGNhXD1neK6/>. Accessed on: Feb. 22, 2022.
Figure 2. Fernando Viana sandals.

shoe production. Therefore, his training as a shoemaker is completely self-taught, having perfected the technique over the years and also having passed it on to other people: he has trained several young people in social projects, a way of giving back to society by generating opportunities within the community itself. Some ended up becoming his helpers at certain times (Figure 3).

Fernando knows how to make a shoe from start to finish: from creating the model, going through cutting and assembly, to finishing. Despite this, he is not responsible for the entire process, and today he has two helpers, who he himself trained in workshops given through the city hall of Olinda. One of the helpers has been working with him for 18 years and is already able to do the entire sewing process. The tasks are divided between the three of them "to have a greater production, and one helps the other", says Fernando (VIANA, 2022).

In addition, Fernando is responsible for purchasing materials and tools, as well as selling products and negotiating with shopkeepers. There is also a fourth person, who does not work in production, but in promoting the products on Instagram and WhatsApp.

The product

The company does not work with individual orders, as it follows a production line. Two or three collections are produced per year, with an average of ten to 15 models per collection. The main materials worked on the pieces are animal leather, which comes from Caruaru, in the wild of Pernambuco, and mulungu wood, which comes from Timbaúba, also in the interior of the state.



Figure 3. Collage with photos from Fernando Viana's workshop.

At first, Fernando (VIANA, 2022) states that his creative process does not include research on trends to develop products, that he follows his own taste and thus has managed to please his clientele. There are models that are better accepted than others and, therefore, are produced in greater quantity. He also says that he is not interested in fashion, in what is in fashion. So, he does not research trends and manufactures what he likes, what he thinks will work. However, in a second moment, he says that he conducts research on sites like Pinterest, to look for things from outside and get inspiration and ideas for new models, but he does not look at the trends of the moment, the fads.

The workshop

The studio works only as a production space; sales take place over the internet or at third-party physical points of sale. Upon arriving at the site, it is possible to observe a backyard and a large, covered space, where most of the tools and machines are located, as well as a room where more materials and some sewing machines are stored.

The product development process takes place as follows: first, Fernando creates a prototype by visualizing the product in his mind. He does not have the ability to draw, so he cuts and molds paper into shoe shapes, until he reaches the desired shape for the model. After that, he cuts the pattern into the leather. In his own

words, he does it “from the mind straight to the leather” (VIANA, 2022). This is a clear example of what Sennett (2009) calls material consciousness, how the material world and the world of ideas are interconnected and influence each other.

After making the prototype, Fernando shows it to some people he trusts and then gives the go-ahead for the production of a pair of each new model in the collection, increasing production or not according to public reception. So, although market research is not part of the creative process, consumer feedback becomes important, which is endorsed by Mills’ (2009) theory: the independent craftsman needs the support of an audience that defines what excellence is.

The production process is basically divided into six stages: molding, cutting, sewing, assembly, application of the sole, and finishing. Tasks are divided between three artisans, including Fernando, following a small production line scheme. When asked about production time, he states that it would take one hour for one person to produce a single pair of single-model shoes from start to finish.

The workshop has several machines that help and accelerate production. The machines observed in the workshop are: industrial sewing machines, logo stamping machine, insole pouring machine, hydraulic press (rocker), seven instrument sander, strip cutting machine, and eyelet machine, among many other tools, such as, for example, wooden and metal shoe molds for cutting insoles and soles.

Fernando explains that when he started making shoes, he did not have so much machinery and he did everything by hand. The cut, for example, was done with scissors. Today, he has a hydraulic press, which cuts the insole and outsole molds in seconds. “The time it takes to make 10, 20 pairs, the machine makes 60”, says Fernando (VIANA, 2022), but the presence of machines does not mean automated production. More meticulous processes, finishing and gluing, for example, are still done by hand. Therefore, even with serial and optimized production, know-how and technical quality, both characteristics of artisanal production, are preserved.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, it was observed how some aspects of artisanal work are present in the creative and productive process of an authorial fashion brand in the metropolitan region of Recife. The methodology for data collection sought to investigate relevant aspects for an authorial fashion brand of handmade production. The case study made it possible to understand how the work environment, materials and tools, the organization of tasks and even the brand’s audience influence the development of its products.

In the analysis of the interview, it became clear that a strong element of the brand resides in its author, who, following the concept of Crane (2011), can be called an artist-artisan, or even, relating to Sennett’s theory (2009), artist-craftsman. An artist, because there is a certain creative freedom and the adoption of one’s own taste and method, even if at the mercy of the market. A craftsman, because the expertise and material awareness of tools and raw materials guide the creation and production processes, and plan and execution are unified.

Unlike fashion companies that rely on the work of designers, the studied brand does not follow the methodology of researching trends or public research. By working on a slow fashion model, on a small scale and without a defined collection calendar, it is noted that the creator has greater freedom to develop products based solely on his artistic taste. For him, it is possible to create something new without taking too many risks, as his relationship with the public through social networks makes it possible to predict, to a certain extent, the success of a new product.

Other important issues observed concern the organization of work in the workshop and the presence of machines in artisanal production. Although the brand has a production line model and machines that streamline the process, both aspects linked to industrial logic, it can be said that this does not mischaracterize it as hand-crafted. This is due to the integration between hand and mind being still present. Everyone who works in the atelier has a deep understanding of the product and the ways to make it. Manual dexterity can be replaced by the machine at times, but it is still necessary in order to arrive at the end result of a well-made product.

Although the academy still does not have a vast literature on authorial fashion, this article is expected to contribute to the construction of more knowledge about this field, by shedding light on the points of intersection with artisanal work, since this has great economic and cultural value for the state of Pernambuco. It is also expected to open up new study possibilities to enhance these small businesses, whose production style has high sustainable potential.

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Circular economy and industrial symbiosis as strategy for the management of textile waste of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement

Economia circular e simbiose industrial como estratégia para a gestão de resíduos têxteis do Arranjo Produtivo Local Polo Moda Praia de Cabo Frio (RJ)

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the preliminary results of an exploratory field research on the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement, which aims to investigate the flow of textile waste from the production of local factories, analyze the feasibility of transforming this waste into raw material to be reintroduced into production itself or to supply other production cycles. To this end, we conducted unstructured interviews to understand how companies manage this waste. We partially conclude that there is no textile waste management system. In most cases, textile waste is disposed of as common waste. Moreover, companies donate part of the amount to nongovernmental organizations and individuals, and, until the completion of this article, we found that only two out of the 40 companies that are part of the cluster perform the separation and storage of the material to negotiate the sale with a textile recycling company located in São Paulo state.

Keywords: Local Productive Arrangement. Circular economy. Industrial symbiosis.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta o resultado preliminar de pesquisa de campo exploratória do Arranjo Produtivo Local Polo Moda Praia de Cabo Frio (RJ), que teve como objetivo investigar o fluxo de resíduos têxteis da produção das fábricas locais, para analisar a viabilidade de reinseri-los no próprio ciclo produtivo de origem ou transformá-los em matéria-prima para outros ciclos produtivos. Para esse fim, realizamos entrevistas não estruturadas focalizadas com atores sociais do arranjo para entender como as empresas administram esses resíduos. Parcialmente, concluímos que não há um sistema de gestão e gerenciamento de resíduos têxteis no aglomerado. Na maioria dos casos, os resíduos têxteis são descartados como lixo comum. Em segundo lugar, as empresas doam parte do montante para organizações não governamentais e pessoas físicas, e somente duas das 40 empresas que fazem parte do aglomerado realizam a separação e o armazenamento do material para negociar a venda com uma empresa de reciclagem têxtil localizada no estado de São Paulo.

Palavras-chave: Arranjo Produtivo Local. Economia circular. Simbiose industrial.

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INTRODUCTION

Local Productive Arrangements (LPA) are clusters of companies from the same sector or related companies located in the same geographical space with the presence of economic, political, and social agents with ties and interdependence in an environment of productive specialization (CASSIOLATO; LASTRES, 2003). These clusters enable and privilege the analysis of interactions, particularly those that lead to the introduction of new products and processes (LASTRES; CASSIOLATO, 2000).

LPAs are created by an endogenous system, that is, from inside out, as a consequence of a territorial logic that encompasses local specificities such as the past, culture, and relations between companies (MENDONÇA, 2008; OLIVEIRA; FRANÇA; RANGEL, 2019). There are several actors that stand out in an LPA, among which:

- economic actors (customers, partners and competitors; suppliers of inputs, components or equipment; suppliers of technical services);
- knowledge actors (consultants, universities and research institutes);
- regulatory actors (the governing body of the LPA, governments at its various levels);
- social actors (unions, business associations, support organizations, the so-called third-sector organizations, among others) (CASSIOLATO; LASTRES, 2003 *apud* SIMONETTI; KAMIMURA, 2017).

The Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement is located in the Coastal Lowlands of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This cluster forms a LPA in the form of *geographical arrangements* (random), which is characterized by occasional interfirm links, scarce cooperation experience, and weakly-developed local institutions. The arrangement has a high degree of productive specialization in the beachwear segment and governance is *somewhat* formalized by the Commercial and Industrial Association of Rua dos Biquínis (*Associação Comercial e Industrial da Rua dos Biquínis – Acirb*), currently without representation and activity.

In the process of cutting beachwear garments, about 30% of raw material is wasted, in the form of scraps of various sizes, and most of this waste ends up in irregular landfills, causing a great negative impact on the environment. The National Solid Waste Policy (BRASIL, 2010), regulated by Law No. 12.305 of August 2, 2010, provides for principles, objectives, and instruments as well as guidelines related to the integrated management of solid waste. Among the principles established by the law is “the recognition of reusable and recyclable solid waste as an economic asset with social value, generating work and income and promoting citizenship” (BRASIL, 2010, free translation).

In nature, an ecosystem can be understood as the set formed by the interactions between living communities and the nonliving factors of the environment. It is a set of physical, chemical, and biological characteristics that influence the existence of species that interact with each other, forming a stable system. The interrelations that exist between the various types of consumers in the ecosystem form a food chain, in which the primary consumers feed on the producers; the secondary, on

the primary; the tertiary are at the top of the chain; and the decomposers are responsible for the decomposition of matter, transforming it into nutrients that will be available again.

When talking about a circular production model, this type of correspondence helps to think about how to change the way in which natural resources are produced and used. If a tertiary company connects with other secondary companies whose activities have an affinity, as well as the fungi that help trees to multiply their root surface and capture much more water and nutrients, it expands its capacity to make better use of resources compared with another that operates in isolation, with only its own roots. As long as the established relationship is beneficial to all stakeholders, this ecosystem can live in partnership for a long time, typifying an industrial symbiosis.

The expression “industrial symbiosis” represents cooperation between a group of companies that optimize waste flows to reuse raw materials in other production processes (WEETMAN, 2019). This practice is a way of minimizing the impacts caused by the generation of waste and, when performed in a structured manner, among different actors (academia, industry, and public authority), it broadens economic, social, and environmental advantages. This collective and simultaneous effort can result in benefits such as reducing material, logistics, and waste management costs.

Industrial symbiosis is an application of industrial ecology that aims to help companies understand how they use resources, how they monitor material, energy and water flows, and also how they are responsible for the product throughout its life cycle (WEETMAN, 2019). It consists of an approach that aims at the creation of open- or closed-loop production processes, in which waste is transformed and return to the value chain. The different industrial cooperation mechanisms that may be established are flexible and are subject to location, the types of industry involved, raw materials, and other aspects, and each circumstance will result in groups with specific characteristics (FERRÃO; JORDÃO; MENDES, 2003).

In order to increase cooperation between the companies that are part of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ LPA, the general objective of this article was to analyze the flow of textile waste from the process of exiting the fabric cutting sector, to consider formulating strategies for recovering the value of this material. To this end, we use the concepts of LPA, circular economy, and industrial symbiosis as a theoretical framework.

LOCAL PRODUCTIVE ARRANGEMENT

Based on Fuini (2013), Queiroz and Souza (2017) explain that the concept of LPA was initially systematized in Brazil by a group of researchers brought together in the Research Network on Local Productive and Innovative Systems and Arrangements of the Institute of Economics of Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, based on research from the 1990s on innovative media and national and local innovation systems.

The main objective of a LPA is to unify the production chain with common activities, seeking the development of companies through joint and cooperative actions (CARDOSO, 2014). With the potential to generate an increase in internal capacity for innovation, competitiveness, and local development, the arrangements promote consistent articulations and ties that result in interaction, cooperation, and learning (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2017).

The general meaning of the word “cooperation” is to work together, involving relations of mutual trust and coordination at different levels. In a LPA, two types of cooperation are identified: *productive cooperation*, aimed at achieving economies of scale and scope, as well as the improvement of quality and productivity indices; and *innovative cooperation*, which results in the reduction of risks, costs, time and, especially, in interactive learning, boosting innovation potential (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2017).

Each arrangement presents its own characteristics in relation to origin, economic context, sociocultural environment, level of complexity of the production chain, among other aspects. According to Cardoso (2014), with regard to the degree or stage of development, arrangements can be classified into three levels:

- incipient arrangements, disjointed and lacking legitimate leadership;
- developing arrangements, which attract new companies and encourage entrepreneurs to invest in competitiveness;
- developed arrangements, which enable innovations in products, processes and organizational formats, generating greater competitiveness.

The main characteristics of each level of arrangement are listed in Chart 1.

In addition to the evolution of the development stage, the LPAs have distinct characteristics that differentiate them from other types of local clusters, such as the territorial dimension; the space where productive, innovative, and cooperative processes take place; the diversity of activities and of economic, political, and social actors; the participation and interaction of companies, class entities, public and private institutions, and the community; tacit knowledge, sharing and socialization of knowledge by generations; innovation and learning assets, fundamental to the exchange of knowledge and expansion of productive and innovation capacity; and governance, which is the mode of coordination between agents (CARDOSO, 2014).

According to Cardoso (2014), other characteristics contribute to defining the degree of maturity of the arrangement, such as local development, leadership, level of cooperation between actors, financial incentives, process and development management, investment in innovation and technology, market and competitiveness.

Addressing LPA means, above all, to address cooperation, and this joint association, as we shall see next, intersects the purposes of the circular economy and industrial symbiosis. The articulation of these concepts promotes sustainable actions in the arrangements, reducing the impact of production processes on the environment.

Chart 1. Classification and profile of local productive arrangements according to the stage of development.

Classification of the local productive arrangement	Profile
Incipient arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual focus; • low business performance; • isolation between companies; • lack of interaction from public authority; • lack of support/presence of a class entity; • restricted trading market; • simpler productive base.
Developing arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sectoral focus; • possible narrowing of the links in the production chain; • difficulty accessing services; • interaction with class entities; • local/state/national market.
Developed arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • territorial focus; • narrowing of collective commercial demands; • interaction with the community; • state/national/international market; • more advanced proximity finance; • diversified and comprehensive local institutional base; • broad and complex productive structure.

Source: developed by the authors based on Cardoso (2014) and Simonetti and Kamimura (2017).

CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND THE RECYCLING OF TEXTILE WASTE

Circular economy (CE) is an economic model based on separating growth and development from the extraction, production, and consumption of finite resources (KIRCHHERR; REIKE; HEKKERT, 2017; MODEFICA; FGVCS; REGENERATE, 2020). Resulting from the evolution of the concept of various schools of thought — service/performance economy, natural capitalism, blue economy, cradle to cradle, and industrial ecology —, it consists of “a restorative and regenerative system based on intention and design, which seeks to maintain products, components, and materials at their greatest utility and value for as long as possible” (ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION, 2017, free translation).

The CE-based approach broadens the value chain perspective to cover all stages of supply, manufacturing, distribution, sales, and final destination of what is produced (WEETMAN, 2019). The transition from the linear model of production to a circular model involves reinventing the design and processes (WRIGHT, 2019).

CE has a system-level perspective (GHOSH; GHOSH, 2021) and is based on some basic principles (ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION, 2013; MUTHU, 2018; WEETMAN, 2019):

- Designing waste: there is no waste when a product is designed, intentionally, for dismantling, renovation, and remanufacturing;

- Resilience through diversity: modularity, versatility, and adaptability are resources that must be prioritized. Natural systems must serve as a model in the search for sustainable solutions;
- Renewable energy: every circular process must analyze the energy involved in the production process, and all elements must prioritize renewable energy sources;
- Thinking about systems: understanding how the parts influence each other on the whole is crucial. Systems thinking emphasizes flow and connection over time and has the potential to comprise regenerative conditions;
- Waste as a nutrient: the ability to reintroduce products and materials into technical or biological cycles through nontoxic restorative loopings.

A holistic perspective of the project is essential to consider possible innovations and strategies for redesigning business models, based on shared value. Based on Michael Porter and Mark Kramer, Weetman (2019) explains that this shared value must be understood as “a management strategy to create measurable business value, by identifying and addressing social problems that entangle the business” (WEETMAN, 2019, p. 431, free translation).

CE proposes that waste from one industry serve as raw material for itself, returning to the production cycle, or to another industry, even if not from the same sector (MURRAY; SKENE; HAYNES, 2017). Many researches on materials development have investigated, for example, the transformation of agroindustrial waste, which would be discarded or incinerated after harvest, and post-consumer food waste into a high value-added raw material for the textile industry, such as the Orange Fiber, an Italian company that patented and produces sustainable citrus-fruit by-product fabrics; Piñatex, from the United Kingdom, which developed a natural textile made from pineapple leaf fiber waste; and Desserto, a vegan leather made of Mexican nopal cactus.

CE focuses on creating continuous cycles, technical or biological, to maintain the maximum value of materials, products, and services. These cycles consider the design of the product, the process, and circular flows (WEETMAN, 2019). At each stage of the cycle, it is possible to think of ways to recover all materials so that they are not destined for the landfill.

In a survey conducted by the Brazilian Association of Special Waste and Public Cleaning Companies (ABRELPE, 2020), it was found that 5.6% of the urban solid waste generated at the national level falls under the *textile, leather and rubber* group, which includes scraps of fabric in general, clothing, shoes, backpacks, and sneakers.

According to the National Solid Waste Policy, “recycling is defined as the process of transforming waste, involving the alteration of its physical, physicochemical, or biological properties, with a view to transforming it into inputs or new products” (BRASIL, 2010, free translation). The study conducted by Amaral (2016) highlights that the logistics of the collection and transportation of waste, as well as obtaining

waste separated by composition, in an organized manner, are common difficulties faced by textile recycling companies, which end up opting to import this type of waste to guarantee the quality of the input. Solid waste management is the set of regulatory, operational, financial, and planning actions by organizations to optimize the handling of solid waste, non-generation, reduction, reuse, recycling, treatment, and adequate final disposal of waste, in this respective order of priority (BRASIL, 2010; FLETCHER; GROSE, 2011).

In living systems, there is no waste, i.e., what is not good for one becomes a nutrient for another, and it is at this point that CE is inspired by nature. Garbage began to be considered a design error (BRAUNGART; MCDONOUGH, 2009). According to Stahel (2019), CE is the last possible solution to the problem of garbage and waste, as it expands the value chain and the sustainability of production processes, in addition to keeping materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible, minimizing waste generation. According to Weetman (2019, p. 154), cooperation between companies and suppliers, between companies from the same sector or from different sectors, between companies and organizations and other articulations is considered an external factor that provides conditions for the progress of circular economy models.

INDUSTRIAL SYMBIOSIS

The process of trading or exchanging waste and other resources from one company to another is increasingly common and is based on the concept of industrial ecology. It is a way of assigning value to what would be discarded by identifying untapped opportunities, allowing companies to generate new revenues with alternative businesses and reduce costs by improving processes (FERRÃO, 2009).

The new innovation paradigm, in addition to the use of new technologies, is related to new forms of interaction, and this is one of the main agendas related to the transition to a circular production model. The steps necessary to promote initiatives of this type include raising awareness, analyzing resources and possible synergies to create forms of cooperation that can positively influence both the growth of the actors involved and the increase in the innovation capacities of each company (WEETMAN, 2019).

Cooperation can strengthen purchasing power by making it possible to share resources; enabling the convergence of skills, gathering different competencies; and guaranteeing investment in research and innovation, with the division of costs between the parties (CHERTOW; PARK, 2016). The benefits of this articulation can be observed in three dimensions: economic, with the increase in efficiency in the use of resources; social, with the creation of jobs in sectors such as recycling; and environmental, with the reduction of the use of untapped raw materials.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation defines industrial symbiosis “as the exchange of materials or waste flows between companies, so that the waste from one company becomes another company’s raw material” (WEETMAN, 2019, p. 97, free

translation). In other words, it is a productive arrangement in which different industries, not necessarily close, mutually exchange products, waste, and inputs, improving their environmental, social, and economic performance in the face of their individual actions (VEIGA, 2007 *apud* BORSCHIVER *et al.*, 2018).

The origin of the nomenclature “symbiosis” lies in ecology, in which it is used to describe the beneficial and reciprocal association between two or more living beings from different species (BORSCHIVER *et al.*, 2018). As in nature, industrial symbiosis can result in favorable interactions between companies from different industrial sectors, by CE practices that help closing cycles and that disconnect the growth of companies from the consumption of resources (STARLANDER, 2003).

The main premises associated with industrial symbiosis focus on mutualism, cooperation, and sharing, and the obtained benefits include the reduction of the ecological footprint, the optimization of resources, and the use of clean energy sources (SEHNEM; PEREIRA, 2019). Starlander (2003) classifies industrial symbiosis into two types: *co-located*, when industries are located in the same cluster; and *virtual*, when they are distributed in different areas, municipalities, or countries. In both cases, gains can be shared between all links in the chain, generating results for companies, society, and the environment (MIRATA, 2004). Hence, the notion of value is expanded with the idea of shared value, whose level of delivery will depend on the connections that are established between the actors.

The Brazilian Industrial Symbiosis Program, represented by the Industrial Symbiosis Program of the state of Minas Gerais, is an example of virtual symbiosis and is motivated by the reduction of costs for companies and the improvement of environmental performance (correct waste disposal and resolution of environmental problems) (PAULA; ABREU; SOUSA, 2015). Borschiver *et al.* (2018) report that, from 2009 to 2015, the Industrial Symbiosis Program of the state of Minas Gerais enabled the recovery of 140 thousand tons of waste; 200 thousand tons of natural resources ceased to be used; carbon emissions decreased by 90 thousand tons; over 13 million m³ of water were reused; and the costs of recycling materials from participating companies were reduced by BRL 8.7 million.

According to Weetman (2019), traditional linear-based industry models must be transformed into industrial ecosystems to optimize energy and material consumption, minimize waste generation, and ensure that the leftovers from one process become the raw material of another. Industrial symbiosis, as an application of industrial ecology, is a way to face sustainability challenges and achieve CE, through responsible processes.

FIELD RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: BEACHWEAR CABO FRIO/RJ LOCAL PRODUCTIVE ARRANGEMENT

To recognize, map, and understand the dynamics of the arrangement; diagnose the textile waste; and investigate the current flow, the identification of the origin, volume, characterization, and forms of destination adopted, an exploratory

field research was conducted to obtain qualitative information on the destination of textile waste when exiting the fabric cutting sector.

As a data collection procedure, in addition to direct non-participant observation, focused unstructured interviews were conducted via telephone in the month of March 2022 and in person in April of the same year, with three actors from the arrangement:

- an *economic actor* (A), represented by the person responsible for the production of one of the factories;
- a *regulatory actor* (B), responsible for the Board of Urban Services of the Cabo Frio Services Company (*Companhia de Serviços de Cabo Frio – Comsercaf*);
- a *social actor* (C), the vice chairwoman of Acirb and also entrepreneur from the group.

To define the actors participating in this first stage of the research, the authors considered the importance of obtaining statements from people with different points of view about the textile waste generated by the arrangement.

Based on experimental manipulation studies (LAKATOS; MARCONI, 2003), the aim was to understand the activities of the arrangement with the purpose of formulating strategies for recovering the value of textile waste based on CE principles and the industrial symbiosis model.

The choice of this LPA as a research sample was mainly due to the type of raw material used in the production of this segment, considering the impact that synthetic textile waste causes when improperly disposed of. Another relevant fact was that, although there was much research on the dynamics of this arrangement, the authors found none that focused on the issue of waste generated by the manufacture of this cluster.

Characterization of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement

Cabo Frio is a Brazilian municipality located in the east of the state of Rio de Janeiro. It is the seventh oldest city in Brazil (CARDOSO, 2006), with a territorial extension of 410,415 km² and a population density of 453.75 inhabitants/km² and, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020), an estimated population of 234,077 inhabitants for 2021.

The city's main economic activities are tourism, fishing, beachwear, oil extraction, agriculture, livestock, and handicrafts; but, currently, tourism and, consequently, beachwear are the most significant activities according to the City Hall of Cabo Frio (Prefeitura de Cabo Frio, 2022). The production of beachwear is of great economic relevance — with a strong contribution to the city's gross domestic product — and social relevance — as it employs a large part of the female population of Cabo Frio (CARDOSO, 2006).

The manufacture of beachwear garments in the city began in 1953 with the seamstress Nilza Rodrigues Lisboa, who later became an entrepreneur and supporter

of other seamstresses in the region. Her work in the Gamboa neighborhood, where she lived, was decisive for the formation of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ LPA (CARDOSO, 2006). Located in Gamboa Mall, on the traditional Rua dos Biquínis (which could be translated into “Street of Bikinis”), formerly Rua José Rodrigues Povoas (Figure 1), the LPA consists, for the most part, of micro and small enterprises (PEIXOTO, 2005).



Source: Google Earth (2022).

Figure 1 – Overview of the Gamboa neighborhood (highlighted in yellow) and Rua dos Biquínis (highlighted in red).

Built in 2002, the Gamboa Mall is the largest beachwear chain in the Americas, with over one hundred stores specialized in the segment (MOURA, 2012). Cooperation and associations, the market and entrepreneurship are the factors that most influence this LPA (VALLE, 2007).

Brazil is a world reference in the production of beachwear, and the city of Cabo Frio is one of the largest producers in the country. According to Prado (2021), 221 million garments from this segment were sold throughout the Brazilian territory in 2020, a reduction of 50 million compared with the previous year. According to the statement of the vice chairwoman of Acirb¹, Fabrícia da Costa, about five million garments are manufactured annually, generating thousands of permanent and temporary jobs. However, it is worth highlighting that seasonality has a strong influence on job creation, causing high employee turnover between high and low seasons (PEIXOTO, 2005; CARDOSO, 2006).

1 Verbal information provided in March 2022.

The strengthening of Acirb, which was the main social actor in the cluster, has already resulted in some desired advances in the arrangement, such as the revitalization of Rua dos Bikinis, the inauguration of its own headquarters, and the launch of the book entitled *Biquíni: duas peças que mudaram a rua e o mundo* (“Bikinis: two pieces that changed the street and the world”), which tells the story of the street and the development of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ LPA, published in 2015. Nevertheless, the association is currently inactive, and the headquarters was deactivated due to the lack of engagement of the entrepreneurs that compose the cluster.

Challenges and potentialities of the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement

Considering the attributes of Cardoso (2014) and Simonetti and Kamimura (2017), we can classify the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ LPA as a *developing arrangement*. The potential for the formation of an industrial symbiosis in the cluster for the management of textile waste is evidenced by the identification of technical, political, economic, informational, organizational, and motivational aspects.

The LPA major challenge is to encourage the engagement of entrepreneurs to enhance the search for solutions to improve the arrangement. The group of about 40 retailers communicates entirely by a messaging application. Face-to-face meetings have low attendance, which makes it difficult to make decisions.

Textile waste management in the Beachwear Cabo Frio/RJ Local Productive Arrangement

We first spoke with C, who gave us an overview of the textile waste flow from the LPA. We found that only two out of the 40 companies that are part of the cluster properly dispose of most of the textile waste they produce. According to C, most entrepreneurs are not responsible for the textile waste from their productions: *“The majority leave the garbage on the street as if it were ordinary waste.”* This fact was confirmed by B, who points out that textile waste is discarded mixed with common waste, making the recovery process of this material unfeasible. As there is no selective collection program aimed at this type of waste, it ends up in the city’s landfill.

A is responsible for production and has been working for nine years at one of the companies in the arrangement that uses a process for discarding part of the textile waste generated during production. One of the most interesting points in her statement is the fact that the textile waste management initiative did not come from managers (*top-down*), but from the head of the cutting sector (*bottom-up*). Bothered by the large volume of unused raw materials discarded every day, the employee decided to research alternatives for reusing the material and found a textile recycling company located in the state of São Paulo that offers compensation for the waste of unused mesh fabric. The condition for such negotiation is that the scraps must be separated by composition (100% polyamide, of higher value, separated from other proportions, for example, 90% polyamide/10% elastane, 98% polyamide/2% elastane, etc., of lower value) and in disposable bags. The waste is stored

for a period of six months to one year (depending on the accumulated volume), to justify the logistics costs of the recycling company.

It is estimated that the volume accumulated in the last year was around seven tons, considered by her to be a reduced volume, due to the drop in production during the last biennium. The amount received for the sale of the waste is divided by the team responsible for the initiative (manager, cutter, and cutting assistant) and, in the words of A, "it represents a good extra income." The practice has been carried out by the company for six years, which is equivalent to saying that at least over 43 tons of synthetic textile waste destined for the landfill were forwarded to the recycling process.

Despite the relevance of the LPA, there is no textile waste management program or any guidance on how to properly dispose of this type of material.

PROPOSAL AND DISCUSSION: CIRCULAR FLOWS AS A STRATEGY FOR MANAGING TEXTILE WASTE FROM THE BEACHWEAR CABO FRIO/RJ LOCAL PRODUCTIVE ARRANGEMENT

In the CE structure proposed by Weetman (2019), circular flows are at the end of the process. The scope of this stage involves the requirements to reuse, remanufacture, and recycle. In this research, we sought strategies to incorporate the open-loop recycling into the second stage of product development, namely the production.

In identifying the gap in textile waste management in the LPA, we seek to outline a design model for the waste management process based on the experience identified in the arrangement, to expand the scale of the existing initiative through the formation of an industrial, cross-sectoral, virtual symbiosis (Figure 2). Even with the objective of considering only the textile waste in the arrangement, we deemed necessary to consider alternatives for the paper and plastic that are used on the cutting table.

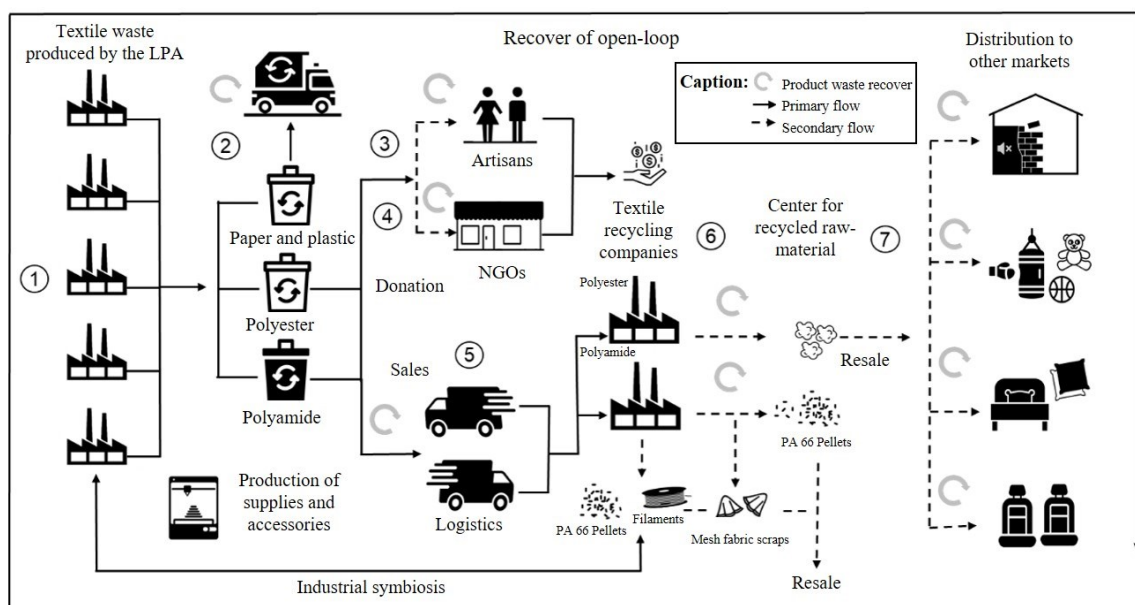


Figure 2 – Proposal for a circular, cross-sectoral, open-loop flow for the local productive arrangement.

Thus, we propose that the factories in the arrangement separate the generated waste, paper and plastic, polyester and polyamide; paper and plastic be collected by Comsercaf, through the current selective collection program; polyester, due to its low sales value, should be sent for donation to artisans and to the nongovernmental organization Comunidade dos Sinos, which maintains a social project with the local community; polyamide is collected by reverse logistics service companies and distributed between two textile recycling companies, the company A (city of São Paulo, state of São Paulo), which transforms textile waste into shredded textile waste, and company B (city of Londrina, state of Paraná), which recycles the material by converting it into pellets to be used as engineering plastic and filament for three-dimensional (3D) printers and other markets, which purchase the by-products of the recycling process from company A. Part of company B's production must be re-forwarded to the companies in the arrangement, so that they can produce the supplies and accessories used in production using additive manufacturing technology (3D printing).

After the implementation stage, it will be possible to obtain performance indicators that can:

- demonstrate the results obtained from the industrial symbiosis proposal for the arrangement;
- verify and understand limiting factors of the process;
- estimate the costs of operationalizing this system.

Considering that environmental preservation is not a motivating objective in the current economic model, Weetman (2019), based on Stahel, encourages that the focus of the proposal for a circular economy model in companies should be on the concept of total income instead of zero waste, considering that the expectations of entrepreneurs are always linked to profit.

As aforementioned, the destination of textile waste for artisans alone, which is carried out by some companies in a disorganized and unregular manner, is not enough to dispose of the waste generated by the arrangement. Thus, we identify the great difficulty reusing this material in the arrangement itself and, therefore, we propose the industrial symbiosis model.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Industrial ecology proposes industrial systems that work as natural ecosystems. The symbiotic relations provided between companies involve the creation of a culture of cooperation between different social actors.

CE is an instrument in this change and can act as an integrator of actions through practices based on its principles, to grasp the opportunities that arise from this context. There are numerous challenges, but collective practices can implement innovative links through the coordination of actions to create an environment conducive to symbiosis and the advancement of the CE.

In the second stage of the research, we intend to develop initiatives to engage entrepreneurs in workshops and lectures that clarify how cooperation between

companies, based on CE principles and on the concept of industrial symbiosis, can generate value in the management of textile waste in the arrangement.

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Fashion and creative economy — possible dialogues: consumption, sustainability, and female entrepreneurship in the *Girlboss* series

Moda e economia criativa — diálogos possíveis: consumo, sustentabilidade e empreendedorismo feminino na série Girlboss

Glauber Soares Junior¹ , Claudia Schemes¹ 

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the theme of creative economy has been the setting for fruitful discussions, especially regarding fashion and its relationship with consumption. From this perspective, this article was developed with the objective of analyzing a cultural object, in this specific case, the TV series *Girlboss*, relating it to the field of creative economy, fashion, and consumption. Regarding methodology, this is an exploratory-descriptive research with a qualitative approach. As far as the technical procedures are concerned, this is a filmic analysis fostered by theoretical concepts. As main results, it is highlighted that the series focuses on the development of a creative venture in the business of fashion thrift stores, in which, among other issues, discussions are held involving female entrepreneurship, the importance of having collaborative networks, and notions of sustainability in this type of business, which is based on the cultural and creative capital of the central character.

Keywords: Fashion. Creative economy. Consumption. Sustainability. *Girlboss*.

RESUMO

*Nas últimas décadas, a temática da economia criativa vem sendo cenário para profícuas discussões, especialmente no que tange às áreas da moda e à sua relação com o consumo. Nessa perspectiva, este artigo foi desenvolvido com o objetivo de analisar um objeto cultural, o seriado *Girlboss*, relacionando-o ao campo da economia criativa, da moda e do consumo. No que se refere à metodologia, trata-se de uma pesquisa exploratório-descritiva com abordagem qualitativa. No que toca aos procedimentos técnicos, trata-se de uma análise filmica fomentada por conceitos teóricos. Como principais resultados, destaca-se que a série focaliza o desenvolvimento de um empreendimento criativo no ramo dos brechós de moda, em que, entre outras questões, são tencionadas discussões que envolvem o empreendedorismo feminino, a importância de se ter redes de colaboração e noções de sustentabilidade nesse tipo de negócio, que é baseado no capital cultural e criativo da personagem central.*

Palavras-chave: Moda. Economia criativa. Consumo. Sustentabilidade. *Girlboss*.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, debates about creative economy have intensified, especially with regard to the field of fashion, one of the segments of the creative industry. In this sense, fashion has been represented in media vehicles, especially in cinema, in which issues — such as entrepreneurship, consumption, sustainability, among others — are addressed.

From this perspective, we developed this article aiming at analyzing the *Girlboss* TV series, relating it mainly to the fields of creative economy, fashion, and consumption. Our purpose was not to focus on all the themes addressed in this cultural product, but rather on the relationships established within the fashion environment. Researches such as this are justified because, when using films as sources of analysis, it is possible to investigate the society, considering that films are historical by representing temporalities, sociocultural contexts, and spatialities. In particular, we can interpret the sociocultural views and perspectives of the agents involved in the production of such cultural objects, contributing to demonstrate the power dynamics involved in these productions. Who can produce and what this agent wishes to highlight are some of the relevant issues in this type of analysis, especially regarding female entrepreneurship.

With regard to the methodology, this is an exploratory-descriptive research, providing greater familiarity with the theme, while describing the characteristics of the studied object. Regarding the approach to the problem, it is a qualitative study for interpreting a phenomenon and attribute meanings to it (PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013).

As for technical procedures, we developed this article by a filmic analysis (in this case, a TV series), as proposed by Penafria (2009), whose main purpose is to clarify a given film, proposing an interpretation, in a process of identification of elements, perceiving the articulations existing between them. In the case of the present study, the focus was on the filmic content, considering the film as an account, the theme of the work chosen for analysis. Thus, the theme of the film was identified, establishing a summary of the story, decomposing it. Subsequently, an analysis was performed based on previously selected bibliographic references that referred to the theme of the cinematographic work under study.

With regard to the structure of this article, in addition to this introduction and the final considerations, a single section was compiled, establishing a correlation between the topics that permeate the field of fashion in the TV series (and the discussions stimulated by the theme) and the aforementioned theoretical concepts.

BETWEEN THEORY AND FICTION: CREATIVE ECONOMY AND THRIFT STORES FASHION

The *Girlboss* TV series takes place in San Francisco, United States of America, in 2006. In its 13 episodes, it tells the story of Sophia¹, a 23-year-old who had not yet

¹ Played by the North American actress Britt Robertson (age 32). It is a TV show freely based on the life of Sophia Amoruso (38 years old), an American fashion entrepreneur.

found where she belongs (from the perspective of having the job of her dreams), but who from the beginning is represented as a woman who likes fashion and who works in this field as a saleswoman in a shoe store.

Already in the first images, which focus on clothing stores, including the photograph of the TV series opening (Figure 1), there is the realization that the theme permeates the field of fashion. The series dialogues with the current sociocultural context — in relation to creative economy — specifically because of three main aspects:



Source: *Girlboss* (2017).

Figure 1. Image of the TV series opening.

- for elucidating issues associated with the production and consumption of sustainable fashion through thrift stores;
- for addressing the theme of female entrepreneurship in the fashion industry; and
- for exposing the use of digital platforms for selling products.

The centrality of the discussions fostered by the show is actually initiated when the main character begins to face financial difficulties after being fired from her former job, which was an occupation she did not take seriously. It was a work deemed as temporary, a job that Sophia made no point of keeping. Meanwhile, the young woman receives an order for eviction from the place where she lived. In the midst of these financial difficulties, when entering a thrift store and coming across a jacket of a famous brand (Figure 2) that would be quite expensive if bought new, Sophia has an idea: to undertake by buying secondhand clothes, customizing them, and reselling them, thus embarking on a creative venture. This is the central premise of the narrative.



Source: *Girlboss* (2017).

Figure 2. Sophia finds a famous brand jacket in the thrift store.

This first part presented by the filmic narrative dialogues with the principles of the creative industry. According to Newbigin (2010), the need and desire to create things goes hand in hand with humanity and are associated. Accordingly, creative industries would be as old as humanity itself. In this logic, it is understood that the assumption of this industry has always existed: some people idealize and produce artifacts, while others buy them, and this is the basis of the creative economy. In this process, the creative industry would have originated from the approximation between traditional occupations and the industrial field, especially when this relationship uses digital technologies and spreads through them. In this sense, creative economy would result from the amalgam between cultural and creative values and economic values.

Concerning the TV series, in association with this concept, the plot identifies Sophia as a young adult who has a certain predisposition and vision for fashion entrepreneurship, especially in a scene still from the first episode: when the young woman improvises a fashion photography scenario in her apartment, with everyday utensils (a carpet, a lamp, and a mannequin), as observed in Figure 3, photographing the jacket she had bought at the thrift store. Subsequently, she advertises the product on a sales website that had an auction mechanism, receiving successive bids for the object almost immediately.

This creative development, according to Klamer (2016), is associated with creative economy, because this field concerns ideas, meanings, and images. Hence, the sector encompasses areas such as music, design, architecture, and fashion, among many others. Creative economy is about carrying out activities originated from intellectual capital. In the case of the TV series, creative economy takes place through the creation of clothing products based on existing ones. This industry is understood



Source: *Girlboss* (2017).

Figure 3. Sophia improvising a fashion photography scenario in her apartment.

by many individuals and societies as a way to generate income, ascend economically, create jobs, and foster development (COSTA; SOUZA-SANTOS, 2011). In these areas, goods that reach value by economic negotiations are produced. Thus, the creative industry generates economic value; however, creative values are originated in its core (KLAMER, 2016).

Based on this assumption, in discovering the possibility of something that could be a source of income, Sophia thinks of continuing this business the way it started: by searching for secondhand clothes in thrift stores and reselling them on the auction website when she says: "My next step is I need to find more cool things to sell." The young woman begins to frequent numerous thrift stores in the city, but faces difficulties in finding good garments at low prices. Thus, she begins to look for clothes in more unusual places: in theaters that were closing down, clothes of deceased women who, in her view, dressed nicely, starting to buy pieces that would be distinct and unique.

It should be noted that, even though she believes that her idea for the venture would be effective, Sophia begins to read about business and marketing, aiming to understand the basic concepts to actually create her store. Therefore, the show portrays the difficulties of embarking on a venture, highlighting that moments of instability are faced at the beginning.

Then, taking this into consideration, the show dialogues with creative economy, as it is the representation of a creative work, which has as a driving force the occupation of creative individuals. It is noteworthy that, with the dissemination of the term *creative economy*, this industry began to be segmented into categories that, according to the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV, 2020), are divided into four major groups: technology, media, culture, and consumption. In this division,

fashion would be associated with the consumption subsegment. According to Scoz and Lostada (2022), the term *creative economy of fashion* is related to the establishment of productive and creative relationship networks, in a place where products are thought of and created based on the cultural capital of individuals linked to them.

By the logic of the categories of creative industry and also of the analyzed TV series, consumption and fashion are associated. When it comes to fashion consumption, another issue is latent: sustainability. In short, the fashion product is derived from natural raw material. As Zeitune (2019) ponders, natural resources are finite, and their unbridled use causes degradation to the environment, considering that the textile and fashion industry is one of the most polluting and degrading in the world. For the author, the fashion market can work through sustainable practices, considering all stages of the production process. Thus, it is possible to reduce the impacts caused to the environment. This process can be carried out both on a microscale, by the use of handmade raw material and natural pigments and reuse of parts, and on a macroscale, by the application of technologies that help in the recycling and reuse of tissues, for example.

By highlighting fashion according to the logic of sustainability, there is the emergence of the term *slow fashion*. This type of production has as one of the main premises the manufacture of products focusing on the respect that must exist in the socio-environmental connection. Hence, in this logic, the production and trade of clothing encompass practices such as buying and selling in places like trade fairs and thrift stores — supporting the consumption of secondhand clothing, in which there is the incentive to reuse and the customization of pieces, postponing their life cycle (BERLIM, 2021). This practice makes slow fashion accessible to various social layers and also elucidates the opportunity to create individual and collective ventures.

It is worth highlighting that the slow fashion movement has emerged as a response to the exacerbated production and consumption derived from the fast fashion model. As Contino (2015) and Contino and Cipiniuk (2017) point out, the fast fashion transformed the fashion industry in the 1990s by major fashion retail chains. The model has as an essential characteristic the mass production of products through several launches of collections per year. Thus, there is a change in the circulation flow of these products, stimulating the increase of consumption, which becomes faster and in the molds of ephemerality, as pointed out by Lipovetsky (2009). For Contino (2015), fast fashion is a model that corroborates one of the moments of development of the capitalist system (late capitalism), in which there is the search for the increase of the production of the fashion product, at the same time that the work becomes more precarious, decentered, whose capital is concentrated in specific nuclei.

It is in this logic that slow fashion seeks to cause changes in the way of producing and consuming fashion, also using concepts such as innovation, creativity, ethics and, especially, sustainability. By understanding the slow fashion from the perspective of creative economy, there is an “exchange of symbolic

capital for financial capital and a predominance of the symbolic capital, linked to ethics and socio-environmental activism” (BERLIM, 2021, p. 147, free translation). In this circumstance:

The sphere of the need for transforming the fashion system is immense and, before reaching personal consciousnesses (where transformation is actually achieved), it requires a profound ethical questioning about the human dimension of fashion and the speed with which the textile industry and the fashion market work, as well as the negative effects of this system on workers, consumers, the culture, and the environment (BERLIM, 2021, p. 149, free translation).

From this perspective, still according to Berlim (2021), the slow fashion movement consists of elements that compose the market and that have at its core the logic of capital — but which, at the same time, question this system. Therefore, with the slow fashion, paradoxes of contemporaneity are represented regarding the field of fashion by developing products of this segment, but considering a more responsible way.

With the rise and development of the slow fashion movement, the way of consuming secondhand fashion has been growing in recent years, as Martins (2019) points out. For the author, the thrift stores fashion began to be resignified, and this is mostly due to the diffusion of this practice of marketing and consumption in social networks and blogs (in the case of the show, a trading platform). Therefore, we can understand that these platforms resignify the purchase of secondhand clothing, transforming this action into a sustainable trend. According to Martins and Valentim (2021), this growing behavioral trend of consuming secondhand clothing is intrinsically related to the need for sustainability in fashion.

This trend mainly rethinks the issue of the social cycle of clothing and, in this regard, there is the aspect of customization, as users' identity can be expressed in the customized clothing, which makes it a unique piece, representing personal styles and philosophies. Concomitantly, there is a perspective associated with memory, as Pontin, Waismann and Bem (2022) ponder when elucidating that thrift stores can represent memorial traces, connecting past, present, and future through garments, which is related to consumers and also one of the great differentials of this type of business. From this perspective, there is a dichotomy in the consumption of this type of clothing: some consumers buy an outfit in order to have a unique piece, which can be customized, while others seek to preserve memories in the materiality of these products.

The issue of female entrepreneurship is related to sustainable fashion, both in the TV series and in reality, especially by the fuss of thrift stores. Drawing a parallel with the reality of the Brazilian context, this practice is quite important, because it is based on a more sustainable way of production — by postponing the life cycle of products. *Bella Mais* magazine, in an article published in 2020, points out that purchases in thrift stores have become a behavioral trend, causing the number of stores in this segment to increase. Based on data produced by the Brazilian Micro

and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae), the magazine states that by the year 2027 more than 50% of the clothes of individuals will be secondhand. These numbers are significant and, according to Hortelã (2022), there are more than 118 thousand active thrift stores in the country, with a 30.97% growth in the creation of business in this segment in the last five years. Martins (2018) carried out a research in thrift stores that corroborates this discussion. According to her results, the researcher highlights that:

The low prices charged in these stores, the growth of the sustainable consumption mentality, the search for exclusivity in dressing, greater scope in the dissemination of thrift stores through the media, and the growth of vintage fashion were some of the main factors responsible for the growth of the secondhand fashion market (MARTINS, 2018, p. 6, free translation).

This aspect is particularly relevant because, even though in the TV series the term is not used, the essence of this concept is presented. This sustainability trend was approached as a background by some blogs focused on fashion and that mentioned the series as a reference to discuss the difficult relationship between fashion and sustainability. Within this context, Xavier, Sbrissia and Rodrigues (2017), when approaching the topic of resignification of thrift stores, state that the *Girlboss* TV show brought upcycling² to the debate when the main character starts buying secondhand clothes and turning them into new pieces. Another fashion blog that approached this issue was *Lápis de Noiva* [Bride's Pencil], which in 2020 published a text highlighting the use of upcycling for purchase and/or production of wedding dresses. It is noteworthy that, in one of the scenes of the show, Sophia sells a wedding dress that was recreated by her based on another dress.

Nishida (2017), in an article for *Maximus Tecidos* [Maximus Fabrics] blog, said that the series is totally associated with slow fashion, because for her, in addition to being based on a real story, this filmic product promoted discussions by addressing, in the background, the idea of clothing not being disposable. Moreover, the author reflects on the relevance of this TV series when addressing topics such as female empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Still in this regard, when developing the brand, the choice of the name that the company will have is an important process. In Sophia's words, "this is the most important decision of my young life. When you sell stuff, you're asking people to buy into you. And I need a name that reflects who I am." In this development, the young woman seeks vintage-like thrift stores³, performing a market analysis in order to understand where her brand would fit, so she could define its name. After many questions and thoughts, the character decides to walk around the city to awaken her creative process, passing through some sights of the place. Thus, after thinking of several names for the brand, Sophia decides that the store

² The upcycling technique is used in the field of fashion.

³ According to Martins and Valentim (2021), it is emphasized that a vintage thrift store consists of a business where clothes from past decades are sold, whether new or not.

would be called Nasty Gal Vintage, a name that, from her perspective, represented her personality.

Based on this creative premise, the first eight episodes of the series focus on developing the idea of the venture: from brand creation to online sales. Meanwhile, Sophia's apartment is used as a warehouse, having no separation between her workplace and her place to rest. In the TV show, this venture conceived and produced by a woman is an important reference that represents a case of success.

In this regard, it is worth noting that there is significant female participation in the sectors of creative economy. It should be noted that the process of entrepreneurship is difficult, because the maintenance of a company can be complex, especially for women. This is due to the fact that women still face specific difficulties related to gender discrimination, such as lack of trust, less opportunities and, especially, family conflicts — to the extent that the domestic sphere has been historically (and still is up to date) linked to women, who were restricted to works considered reproductive and unpaid in the development of the capitalist system (ALPERSTEDT; FERREIRA; SERAFIM, 2014). Thus, it is worth highlighting another important issue: many people try to undertake because of the need for generating income, which is also observed in the analyzed series.

Drawing a parallel with the reality experienced in the field of small businesses, it should be noted that the neoliberal thinking, which reached its peak in the 1980s, primarily in the European continent, guides policies associated with the capitalist system and has been a model that assists in the destabilization and flexibilization of work when it transfers to human beings all responsibilities and risks for their actions/occupations. In this process, there is the dissolution of labor policies and the extenuation of the State action in this scope. In this context, creative economy is situated in a center of disputes, as there is the marketization of culture in the logic of capital (BECK, 2011; SILVA et al., 2018).

Individual entrepreneurship has been disseminated by the logic of the neoliberal system, in which, according to Carmo et al. (2021), there is a process of camouflaging the reality. In this system, the success or failure of the enterprise would be a responsibility entirely attributed to individuals. Thus, entrepreneurship would be something of easy access and guaranteed success; however, this could be interpreted as one of the facets of neoliberalism, to the extent that many people cannot sustain nor manage their own businesses, especially when they are constituted out of necessity. In this regard, Black, Miller and Leslie (2019) emphasize that works originating in the creative economy can be performed from home, and this issue causes specific problems such as accumulation of functions, lack of separation between workplace and place for rest, among other difficulties. In the case of women, particularly, when undertaking at home, the creation and structuring of their businesses are usually associated with the need to work and be at home simultaneously.

These notes allow discussing one of the aspects that relates the TV series to reality: the representation of female entrepreneurship, especially in the field of

fashion. Drawing a parallel with the Brazilian reality, according to data from Sebrae (2021), in a study conducted based on the Continuous National Household Sample Survey, in 2018, 9.3 million women were owners of their businesses. In 2021, this number reached 10.1 million, corresponding to 34% of the country's entrepreneurs. The Sebrae (2021) research evidences difficulties faced by female entrepreneurs — prejudices, long workdays, among other issues —; however, it highlights the socio-economic and cultural importance of this action, because female entrepreneurship modifies social relations.

Accordingly, it is worth highlighting the context of female entrepreneurship in Brazil. According to data from the Woman Entrepreneur Network Institute (*Instituto Rede Mulher Empreendedora – IRME, 2022*), when interviewing 3,386 women entrepreneurs, 60% of them were black, 50% belonged to social class C, most were married and had children, and only 28% hold a higher education degree. The main activity observed was the sale of products: 55% of the interviewees sold clothes, shoes, food, among others. These data, in addition to establishing the profile of Brazilian women entrepreneurs, assist in the discussion raised about motivations that lead women to own their business. In this context, the research highlights that women undertake mainly for three reasons: to achieve a lifelong dream, to achieve financial independence, and the need for generating income, an issue accentuated by the lack of formal jobs.

Then, we can establish a connection between these data and the TV show, to the extent that Sophia embarked on her venture based on the sale of clothes out of necessity and for being unemployed. Thus, the story presented in the series can be understood as an inspirational source and, at the same time, a representation of women entrepreneurs.

In an article for *Cenarium* magazine, Peixoto (2021) highlights the issue of women undertaking in times of need, with thrift stores being alternatives for income generation. The columnist gathered data from women who own thrift stores and also used Sebrae reports, previously presented, to contextualize female entrepreneurship in Brazil.

In this context, both in the reality of women entrepreneurs and in some aspects of the show, according to Almeida, Dias and Santos (2021), we can highlight that the main difficulties faced by entrepreneurs from creative economy sectors concern financial management, accumulation of working hours, difficulty using technologies, and business context, which can be peripheral — informal, family, rural enterprises, among others. Thus, strategies, such as the creation and strengthening of collaboration networks, are effective as a form of resistance and social transformation (BECK, 2011; SILVA et al., 2018).

Throughout the episodes, Sophia's venture becomes quite famous in the online sphere, which leads the character to have a large inventory of clothing. In this sense, from the ninth episode onwards, the young woman begins to realize the need to separate her personal life from work. Thus, she has the idea to expand the enterprise and open a physical store/office. For this next step, with the aid of a

friend administrator (starting the creation of a collaboration network), Sophia develops a business plan to be able to rent a property for her office.

The tensions and problems that involve the business field are presented in the filmic narrative. It is noteworthy to address the issue of gender, considering that the plot — which portrays a woman starting an enterprise —, the very title of the series, *Girlboss*, and many scenes focus on elements that surround and subvert the social roles of gender that were historically and socioculturally constructed. To this end, we consider the conceptions of Scott (1995, p. 86, free translation), who understands that “(1) gender is a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between sexes and (2) gender is a primary way of giving meaning to power relations.” These conceptions of social roles divided by gender — according to Badinter (1985) and Engels (2020), men should work in the productive and economic fields, and women were left with reproductive functions associated with the maintenance of the domestic space — are somewhat subverted in the TV show, when a woman becomes a great businesswoman, through her creative work.

Nevertheless, in some moments, Sophia, for being a woman, is not considered a successful entrepreneur, which is evident in scenes such as when the businesswoman tries to rent a room in a shopping center to open her office/store. Right away, when she tells the broker that she needs to rent an office, he treats her with disdain and says “I have nothing for you,” stating that the spaces were expensive and that they had nothing to do with the businesswoman.

In this dialogue, Sophia asks the broker if he thought she could not afford the rent because she was a woman. In response, the landlord says Sophia was not a woman, but rather a girl. Sophia shows the landlord a pile of money that would be enough to pay three months of rent in advance and only then manages to be taken to see the space. For contractual reasons, the businesswoman would need a guarantor. Then, she talks to her father — even though he was a successful businessman, he did not keep close contact with his daughter. Her father agrees to be guarantor, however requests that the lease be drafted on his behalf: “We decided the best way to handle this thing would be to put the lease in my name. I just need to protect myself in case you get bored with this, you know, clothes thing.” Sophia does not accept it and seeks a new location, finding, in a suburban neighborhood, an old warehouse whose lease would be negotiated directly with the owner, who agreed to receive rents in advance only.

These elements of the narrative allow gender and power issues to be discussed. For a long time, the field of entrepreneurship positioned men as the usual entrepreneurs, which was followed as a rule. These positions place women as the other, replicating aspects that determine who can be a successful entrepreneur, establishing an unequal relationship between men and women. Gender inequalities are disseminated by power relations sustained in discourses about entrepreneurship (FERRETTI; SOUZA, 2022). In this sense, Sophia would not have the profile of an entrepreneur and, therefore, was not taken seriously by the first landlord, nor by her father.

Still drawing a parallel with the real world, it should be noted that the TV series is based on the life story of Sophia Amoruso, an American businesswoman. In an article for *Época* magazine, Astutu (2015) showed that Amoruso had a difficult beginning when she decided to become a businesswoman. At the age of 22, Sophia dropped out of school and decided to live alone. During this period, the girl even scavenged trash on the streets and worked in jobs that did not require qualification. At that same time, she sought to explore her interest in vintage fashion and, on that occasion, decided to create a virtual thrift store. Focusing on the trade of garments on virtual platforms, Sophia managed to become a successful case: in 2012, she earned the sum of US\$100 million. In 2014, she opened her first physical store. The businesswoman, who achieved success through social networks, currently has more than 630 thousand followers on her personal Instagram account. The *Nasty Gal* brand, created by Amoruso, has 4.8 million followers on the same network.

Following the steps narrated by the series plots an approximation with the very concept of entrepreneurship. According to Baggio and Baggio (2014), it is about carrying out projects, whether personal or organizational, accomplished with creativity and motivation. For the authors, when undertaking, an individual fully enhances capacities, such as intuition and rationality, seeking self-knowledge, always needing to be open to the possibility of learning and going through different experiences. In this process, four steps must be considered:

- identification and evaluation of the opportunity;
- development of a business plan;
- determination and fundraising; and
- management and organization of the enterprise.

It is noteworthy that these steps were evidenced in the analyzed show.

Accordingly, the show also focuses on the need to work as a team, highlighting that only one person cannot manage and run a company, especially in the field of creative industry. A team is composed of specific professionals responsible for specific sectors. The show also mentions the effective concern about the consumer market; the focus should be associated with the needs of the clients, after all, as shown in one of the statements displayed in the series: "You can't tell the market what it wants. The market tells you." In this regard, when addressing the relevance of identifying sociocultural trends for the production of future memories, Visoná (2017) understands that trends arise from ideas. The identification of trends is an important step in the creative industry, especially in the field of fashion, the specific case of this article, as the needs and desires of individuals are understood through it, being possible to assimilate the transformations that occur in the consumer world.

These points demonstrate that, even if a business starts organically, it will need to be structured, organized, and based on market analysis, trends, among other aspects. Following these steps, Sophia rents a location, transforms it into her office (Figure 4) and then, with the help of her team, creates a specific



Source: *Girlboss* (2017).

Figure 4. Sophia's office/store.

website for her brand. Thus, we can observe that collaboration networks are important in creative economy for maintaining the enterprise, but they also influence the creative process itself. Hence, Pinheiro et al. (2020) understand that collaboration networks can be essential for small entrepreneurs, because they have the ability to mediate relationships with other brands and suppliers, assist in dissemination, among other aspects. Furthermore, collaboration can be a strategy that drives the aggregation of value to products, as partnership relationships can be established with consumers themselves, an issue observed in *Girlboss*.

The TV series ends with the launch of Sophia's online store on the Internet. At this point, we can establish a relationship with the significant growth that fashion e-commerce has undergone in recent years. In this context, we can state that all major brands in this segment sell online, and many thrift stores take advantage of these locations, especially because they provide some facilities (especially the fact that there is no need to go to a physical place to shop). Thus, as supported by Sebrae (2020) and noted in the show, when selling online, one has the possibilities to suggest looks and sell clothes combined with accessories; create discussion forums about the store, but also about points of view and trends, by sharing opinions; sell the style and personality of both the brand's owner and the consumer.

It is understood that, in dissimilar ways, the world undergoes constant transformations, which are associated with political-economic, environmental and sanitary crises, and also the development of technologies. This last issue is noteworthy for this article, because, by technological diffusion, the forms of production and

marketing and the way products are sold and delivered to consumers are automated. Life is digitized, and e-commerce, in addition to a trend, becomes an everyday practice (CRUZ, 2021).

Therefore, in the relationship present in the TV show between online trading and the context of Brazil, according to Cruz (2021), as well as technological development, information traffic and freight transport have intensified. Thus, social networks have the power to restructure social dynamics. In this sense, e-commerce increasingly becomes a mechanism that easily disseminates, markets, and distributes goods for consumers. The author points out that, in the country, the COVID-19 pandemic context led to the expansion of trade, highlighting three facilitating elements for this dissemination: popularization of social networks, popularization of the use of smartphones, and the impacts of the pandemic itself. According to data from the e-commerce index MCC-ENET (2022), online sales in the country grew 20% in January 2022, and during this period, in the fashion field, there was circulation of BRL 63.7 million. From this data, it is possible to verify the current economic relevance of both e-commerce and the fashion sector in the country.

These issues are latent in the analyzed TV series, because the main character trades her products in online platforms and all contact with customers is made via these platforms, including the delivery of products, which is outsourced, carried out in partnership with platformed delivery professionals — who are part of a company. Moreover, fashion has become a fruitful place for undertaking a venture, to the extent that the young woman manages to enrich by this segment. These issues are perceived both in the TV show and in the life story of Sophia Amoruso, a reference businesswoman for the creation of the series.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Overall, we can conclude that we live in a context in which the environmental sphere is attacked in favor of production and the disposal of everyday products. Within this context, the fashion industry is one of the most responsible for these hardships, especially by manufacturing quickly and in a mass-like way, through fast fashion, fostering a fast flow and the consumption of products that come from natural resources, but which now have ephemeral characteristics.

Girlboss is inserted in this context, although the premise of the narrative does not focus on these concerns. However, as aforementioned, the series dialogues with the current context of female entrepreneurs. The show can be analyzed as an inspiring and representative product, by representing a female entrepreneur who started her business out of the need for generating income and because she was unemployed. The plot of the TV series presents the idealization of a creative venture through the creation of a clothing thrift store, a consumption trend encouraged by the slow movement, seeking the achievement of a production and the slower consumption of fashion.

Although the series presents the topic of female entrepreneurship (specifically concerning the creative industry in the field of fashion) from an optimistic and sometimes glamorized perspective, as discussed throughout the article, to undertake can be difficult, especially for women, who still face specific problems engendered in sociocultural and historical gender tensions, and these aspects are also considered in the analyzed product. In this context, the creative industry can be strengthened, above all, by the creation of collaborative networks.

Finally, we verified that the show promotes important discussions fostered by and arising from the establishment of a venture that is part of the creative industry, emphasizing that this type of business can be effective mainly in the field of fashion and secondhand clothing, reflecting the way these products are produced and consumed.

Debates arising from creative economy are in vogue. From this perspective, we suggest future studies that investigate other cultural products and evidence other contexts, spaces, and temporalities, seeking to discuss the ways in which this important social, economic, and scientific field has been presented and represented. All in all, it is noteworthy that ethnographic and sociological research can be carried out, based on interviews, enabling to evidence examples of real women entrepreneurs in the field of creative industry.

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Sprouting factors for sustainable fashion businesses

Fatores germinativos para negócios de moda sustentável

Maicon Douglas Livramento Nishimura¹ , Leila Amaral Gontijo¹ , Ricardo Triska¹ 

ABSTRACT

Contemporary unsustainability related to production and consumption awakens multidisciplinary discussions. From a more sustainable fashion vision by the creative economy approach, the objective of this paper was to identify which aspects contribute to the sprouting of sustainable fashion businesses from the fashion designer's perspective in the context of the city of Porto Alegre. To this end, research is carried out in an exploratory-descriptive, quality-quantitative approach, performed in three phases: (1) narrative literature review; (2) data collection; and (3) comparative analysis. Thus, it is observed that aspects such as culture, education, media, coworking and other collaborative movements, in addition to the Municipal Plan of Creative Economy of Porto Alegre and Fashion Revolution, were fundamental for the emergence of the researched businesses, which allows the conclusion that a set of elements — individuals motivated by sustainability, government, leaderships, and institutions — collaborate for the sprouting of sustainable fashion businesses.

Keywords: Fashion. Creative industry. Sustainability.

RESUMO

A insustentabilidade contemporânea relacionada à produção e ao consumo desperta discussões multidisciplinares. Conforme uma visão de moda mais sustentável e uma abordagem pela economia criativa, objetiva-se identificar quais aspectos contribuem para a germinação de negócios de moda sustentável na perspectiva do designer de moda no contexto da cidade de Porto Alegre (RS). Para tanto, procede-se à pesquisa de caráter exploratório-descritivo, de abordagem qualiquantitativa, executada em três fases: revisão narrativa de literatura, levantamento de dados e análise comparativa. Desse modo, observa-se que aspectos como cultura, educação, mídia, coworking e outros movimentos colaborativos, além do Plano Municipal de Economia Criativa de Porto Alegre e do Fashion Revolution, foram fundamentais para o surgimento dos negócios pesquisados, o que permite considerar que um conjunto de elementos — indivíduos motivados pela sustentabilidade, governo, lideranças e instituições — colaboram para a germinação de negócios de moda sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Moda. Indústria criativa. Sustentabilidade.

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INTRODUCTION

The consolidation of fast fashion as a fashion business model represents the limits of the ephemerality of consumption. The unsustainable way society deals with this exaggerated consumption and, consequently, production has raised multi-disciplinary discussions about solutions to these problems (TODESCHINI et al., 2017; NIINIMÄKI et al., 2020). An example of this is the relationship between the fashion industry and the creative economy (CEGLIA, 2020).

It is important to define that this research is based on the notion that sustainable development is understood by society that “meets the needs of present society without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (COMISSÃO MUNDIAL SOBRE MEIO AMBIENTE E DESENVOLVIMENTO, 1991, p. 41), in its various dimensions, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, territorial, economic, political (SACHS, 2009). However, this study adopts the premise of Queiroz (2014), that it is fairer and more ethical to reduce unsustainability in search of a sustainability utopia, because, even if the concept of sustainability is unattainable, this premise adheres to the objective of reaching it.

To understand the unsustainability of consumption in fashion, it is necessary to know the trajectory of the product. From the beginning, Gwilt (2014) and Salcedo (2014) delineate that the fashion clothing product, where it specifically arises with the cultivation of the textile fiber, which gives rise to the fabric. Generally speaking, while the raw material is being produced, all the aesthetics of the product are planned to then produce a pilot piece through modeling, and once the project is approved, it moves on to scale production. Some products have peculiarities, such as jeans, which go through washes, or prints, which are interfered with for the print application. Once the production phase is complete, the product is sent to retail, which then goes on to consumption. It should be noted that in the use phase, which consists of the period in which the product is purchased by the consumer until its disposal, product maintenance is carried out, such as washing for cleaning. Finally, the product goes to the post-consumer phase, which implies its disposal or reuse through recycling techniques.

Although the fashion industry is one of the largest employers in Brazil and in the world and is representative in terms of economic turnover (ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION, 2017; ABIT, 2022), it is also one of the most polluting industries due to the generation and poor management of waste, in addition to the waste itself (ELLEN MACARTHUR FOUNDATION, 2017). On the other hand, in recent decades, there has been the spread of movements that point to more sustainable fashion. A prominent example is Kate Fletcher, creator of slow fashion, who created a business model based on sustainable development (FLETCHER, 2022).

Slow fashion is based on a slow production proposal and reviews the values of the contemporary fashion system — mass production, globalization, image, novelty, dependence, lack of awareness of impacts, costs based on labor and materials, large scale — for a slow fashion system — diversity, global-local, self-awareness, making and maintenance, mutual trust, science of impacts, cost with incorporating

social and ecological impacts, small and medium scales (FLETCHER; GROSE, 2011). This slow fashion system aims to arouse awareness of the vocation for quality, by offering a durable, ecological, ethical product, based on the appreciation of human beings, nature, community, culture and traditional techniques (SALCEDO, 2014; FERRONATO; FRANZATO, 2015).

Thus, the fashion product limited to the creative economy — which results from a creative process but which has added economic value (HOWKINS, 2002) — can contribute to a reinterpretation of the circular economy, because as Ceglia (2020) suggests, this approach can bring sustainable, practical and viable solutions to the scarcity of creativity in circularity.

In this regard, one of the Brazilian cities that stands out for the creative economy sector, especially in the more sustainable fashion scenario, is the city of Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. It houses several fashion businesses, in the clothing, footwear and accessories segments, with a focus on sustainable development through conscious consumption (POA: SUSTAINABLE FASHION, 2017), in addition to educational institutions that operate in the provision of teaching, research and/or extension in the fashion area.

According to the understanding of the creative economy and the movements towards a more sustainable fashion, the aspects that lead, in practice, to the development of sustainable fashion businesses by fashion designers are questioned. Thus, the aim is to identify which aspects contribute to the sprouting of sustainable fashion businesses from the perspective of the fashion designer in the context of the city of Porto Alegre.

The article is structured in six sections, with the inclusion of this introduction and the references, presented at the end. The next section provides the theoretical framework that deals with sustainable fashion, the creative economy and the role of the fashion designer. The third section describes the methodological procedures adopted in the research. The fourth section presents the results of the data collection. In the fifth section, the final considerations are organized based on a comparative analysis.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The creative economy, an evolving concept, is based on the idea of creative assets that have potential for economic growth and development, aimed at stimulating income and jobs, with social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development, covering economic, cultural and social dimensions, interacting with technology, intellectual property and tourism, through economic activities based on knowledge, with demands for innovative and multidisciplinary policies for the creative industry (UNCTAD, 2010).

In an approach referring to the Brazilian reality, Calado and Perdigão (2020) comment that the creative economy is characterized by different sectors, spraying political and financial priorities and efforts. It results in variable income, lack of inclusion and diversity. Despite this, the authors highlight the fashion sector, which,

due to the interest of users and entrepreneurs, is aligned with sustainable development through more conscious products and has generated jobs and income for peripheral groups of the creative economy.

In the city of Porto Alegre, the second most creative capital in the country (FECOMÉRCIO SP, 2012), for example, city hall recognized the innovative and transforming potential of the creative economy through a work and incentive agenda regulated by the Innovation Law and supported by the Innovation Fund (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013). The objective of this agenda is “to develop the creative economy in the municipality of Porto Alegre, providing education for skills, as well as the logistics of creation, production, circulation, consumption and enjoyment of creative goods and services” (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013). It is guided by four principles:

- cultural diversity: “constituting a dynamic for valuing, protecting and promoting the diversity of national cultural expressions as a way of guaranteeing their originality, strength and potential for growth” (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013);
- sustainability: “defining what type of development is desired, what are the bases of this development and how can it be built to guarantee social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability under similar conditions of choice for future generations” (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013);
- social inclusion: “in addition to a process of productive inclusion, essential for social inclusion, access to creative goods and services also emerges as a premise for citizenship” (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013);
- innovation: “assuming the creative economy as a development vector, as a cultural process that generates innovation” (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013).

Among the results of the implementation of this agenda is the incubator Tecendo Ideias, which develops projects such as: Connect: Everything in one Place and Delivered at Home, Products Aimed at Income Generation, Sustainable Furniture, Trama District, Intelligent Vehicle System, Firefighting, My Pet Sofa, Talk is Cheap and Illustration and Printing Studio (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013). Other important results are the holding of the international seminar to deal with creative territories as an alternative for revitalizing the region of the 4th District of Porto Alegre and the creation of the Porto Alegre Creative Economy Network (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013).

Creative fashion, derived from the concept of creative economy, placed in the panorama of more sustainable fashion, represents potential for change in the sector. According to Cietta (2017), despite the hybrid character of fashion in terms of the creative industry, given that its creativity stage is linked to the styling stage, it is important to emphasize that the (de)(im)materialization inherent in the fashion product builds relationships between the user and the subjective and intangible attributes of the product. Accordingly, the potential lies in proposing creative style

ideas aimed at sustainable development in the production processes of the fashion system (CEGLIA, 2020).

However, the ephemeral nature of fashion raises the question that perhaps the movement towards more sustainable fashion is just a passing trend of the contemporary and unsustainable fashion system (LEE, 2009).

The unsustainability of the fashion system comes from several factors, including the habits of users, current legislation and business models (LEE, 2009; FLETCHER, 2010; GWILT, 2014; SALCEDO, 2014). According to Lee (2009), the fashion system establishes a relationship of desire for novelty that reflects in companies an accelerated pace of production, with a reduction in price and quality, and in users, an increase in consumption, due to the shortening of the product's life cycle.

To build a sustainability utopia, it is essential to balance the needs and desires of society and the natural limits of planet Earth. Regarding the user, it is necessary to change cultural patterns that encourage excessive consumption. After all, they lead to the depletion of terrestrial ecosystems, which can deprive a large part of society of consumption in the future (ASSADOURIAN, 2013).

To understand the sustainable fashion scenario, or as Salcedo (2014) calls it, "more" sustainable fashion — "initiatives that promote good social and environmental practices, including reducing the pace of production and consumption" (SALCEDO, 2014, p. 33) —, Lee and Mendes (2021) raise contemporary business models that deal with this proposal. They are: "more" sustainable fashion, slow fashion, ethical fashion, eco-fashion, fair trade, zero waste, circular economy, upcycling, recycling, sharing economy and collaborative consumption (Chart 1).

Also noteworthy is the Fashion Revolution movement, which is growing in number of participants, both companies and users, and, in addition to involving educational institutions, students and researchers, aims to unite individuals and organizations with the purpose of promoting real change in the mode of production and consumption of the fashion product (CAMARGO; FREIRE, 2017). The movement originated in 2013 after the collapse of the Rana Plaza building, located in Bangladesh, where several garment factories operated precariously, which resulted in the death of 1,138 women and left another 2,500 injured (FASHION REVOLUTION, 2022). According to information on the movement's page, Fashion Revolution is a global movement whose mission is to bring together people and organizations around the world.

In this context of more sustainable fashion, there is a need to consider businesses that improperly and irresponsibly appropriate the concept of sustainability, carrying out what is called greenwashing, without creating a true relationship of value aggregated through the sustainability utopia but only in the interest of increasing financial results (KOTLER; KELLER, 2012; GWILT, 2014).

"The Design Council says that 80% of a product's environmental impact is decided at the design stage" (LEE, 2009, p. 83). Based on this, another important consideration is the strategic role of the (fashion) designer in this conjuncture. This professional is a mediator in the production and consumption relationship, as

Chart 1. Sustainable fashion business models.

Business	Description
"More" sustainable fashion	"More" sustainable fashion deals with initiatives that promote better environmental and social practices in the fashion sector, including eco-fashion, ethical fashion and slow fashion (SALCEDO, 2014).
Slow fashion	Slow fashion is a proposal to revise the values of the fashion sector through a slow production mode (FLETCHER, 2010).
Ethical fashion	Ethical fashion is mainly concerned with the environment and people, whether due to working conditions or health (SALCEDO, 2014), through choices that encourage sustainable development (SCHULTE, 2015).
Eco-fashion	Eco-fashion, or green fashion, brings an ecological approach from product planning, with the use of materials and practices with low environmental impact (SALCEDO, 2014)
Fair trade	Fair trade, or fair commerce, is focused on decent work practices and wages and with attention to local communities
Zero waste	Zero waste, or zero waste, is characterized by the use of techniques in product development, from fabric planning, to avoid wasting materials (GWILT, 2014).
Circular economy	Circular fashion, based on the circular economy, presents itself as an alternative to linear models of production, through the development of a resilient production system (TODESCHINI et al., 2017; PAL; GANDER, 2018).
Upcycling	Upcycling consists of reusing discarded materials, without loss of quality of the original material in the production process, generating a value-added product (SALCEDO, 2014).
Recycling	Recycling techniques also consist of reusing discarded materials, but with loss of quality of the original material in the production process, and can occur mechanically or chemically (GWILT, 2014; SALCEDO, 2014).
Sharing economy	The sharing economy deals with sharing a product, without creating a relationship of ownership (TODESCHINI et al., 2017).
Collaborative consumption	Collaborative consumption is related to alternative means of meeting individual and collective desires and needs based on available resources, that is, sharing, exchanging or maintaining the product (TODESCHINI et al., 2017).

they manage the company's demands and the users' desires, in addition to having the responsibility of commanding the choices involved in the production process (FLETCHER; GROSE, 2011; KOTLER; KELLER, 2012; GWILT, 2014; PERINI, 2016; CEGLIA, 2020).

Niinimäki et al. (2011) argue that sustainable products should be designed with a focus on minimizing impacts and providing benefits to the user, exploring dimensions beyond the environmental one, with the purpose of achieving market requirements for equivalent conventional products. Accordingly, designers need to explore new possibilities to bring innovation to the fashion system in response to economic, environmental and sociocultural issues (HETHORN; ULASEWICZ, 2008; FLETCHER; GROSE, 2011).

In this sense, Freire and Araujo (2017) comment that the designer, permeated with sustainable values, will develop projects aligned with their way of thinking, which makes social relations and the environment paramount. Therefore, the role of the designer is decisive in promoting strategic design for consumer awareness and loyalty (ANICET; RÜTHSCHILLING, 2012; FREIRE; ARAUJO, 2017).

However, Fletcher e Grose (2011) point out that the still present passivity of the fashion designer in the face of industry transformations is explained by the (technical) complexity of the textile chain, causing these professionals to give in to formatted industry solutions, which are often unsustainable.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Based on the objective of identifying which aspects contribute to the sprouting of sustainable fashion businesses from the perspective of the fashion designer, this research is classified as exploratory-descriptive in nature, as it helped in the construction of the panorama about the subject studied and established relationships among the variables raised (GIL, 2021). The approach of this research was quali-quantitative, or mixed, by using content analysis as a data analysis method (VERGARA, 2008).

The study was divided into three phases. The first phase, narrative literature review, consisted of characterizing the themes: circular economy, sustainable fashion and fashion designer. In the second phase, data collection was carried out with the group of interest to the research, that is, sustainable fashion designers. The third phase, comparative analysis, was characterized by the comparison of the data obtained by the survey with that from the literature review.

In the first phase, the narrative literature review, relevant studies on sustainable fashion and creative economy were raised. The starting point was the article "Slow fashion: an invitation for systems change", by Kate Fletcher (2010), a world reference in the field of fashion and sustainability, which addresses the contemporary fashion system and brings possibilities to a slow fashion system. Another source of data was the annals of the Colóquio de Moda, the main Brazilian academic event in the field of fashion, with articles related to the research topic available on the event's website during the five years prior to the data collection.

In the second phase, data collection, it was decided to conduct an interview using the semi-structured face-to-face interview technique, because of the possibility of conducting a line of reasoning with flexibility to explore gaps that could arise during the dialogue (GIL, 2021). The field study took place after defining the research interest group, preparing and testing the interview script, and the project by Nishimura (2018) submitted and approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, under Approval No. 2.345.889 and Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Appraisal 73330217.7.0000.0121.

The research interest group was defined by product designers who work with sustainable fashion clothing, without necessarily having formal education in the area. The definition was based on the mentions in the literature review of this type

of professional, since they are responsible for applying sustainable practices to the product, and the choice of clothing was made with the intention of restricting the research object. Initially, groups, associations, bodies or entities that brought together companies in the segment in Florianópolis (SC), the city where the research was carried out, were surveyed, but without success. Thus, it was decided to collect data in a capital with representativeness for more sustainable fashion. Thus, it was established via Facebook, the Núcleo de Moda Sustentável, a research group from the Department of Design at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, which pointed to a study of mapping sustainable fashion brands and initiatives in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, POA: Sustainable Fashion (2017), directed by Cariane Camargo, member of the group and responsible for the Fashion Revolution movement in that same city.

In the mapping obtained, 38 sustainable fashion businesses were found, of which only 19 operate with fashion clothing. The other 19 businesses sell footwear and/or accessories. Of the 19 businesses qualified for the research interest group, only one of them was not found. All the other 18 responded to the contact; however, three businesses had ended their activities and did not want to participate in the interview; two businesses were located outside the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre and it was not possible to conduct an interview with them; and three businesses were participating in a fair in Rio de Janeiro during the week of the interviews. Thus, 10 designers of sustainable fashion clothing products were interviewed in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre. These designers were in town the week the field study was carried out.

The interviews were scheduled with the fashion designers according to their availability of place and time and took place as a conversation based on a script, which addressed: the interviewee's profile; the motivations for working in the area; and to what aspects do they credit Porto Alegre's prominence in the sustainable fashion scene. To enable the next phase, analysis and comparison, all interviews were sound recorded with the consent of the interviewee and later transcribed into a text document.

With the transcribed interviews, data analysis was performed based on the content analysis methodology. According to Bardin (2009), the method consists of three fundamental steps:

- the pre-analysis, phase that plans the definition of objectives, choice of material and preparation of references that serve as a support for the interpretation;
- exploration of the material, a phase that consists of categorizing the data according to rules previously determined in the preceding phase;
- the phase of the treatment of results, inference and interpretation, which deals with data analysis, either using statistical tools or interpreting texts, for example.

In the third phase of comparative analysis, parallels were drawn between the information collected in the literature review and in the data collection. Based on excerpts from the interviewees' remarks, correspondences of equal value were

found in the literature that corroborated the actions taken in practice. As for the divergent questions, they led to the detailed deepening of the subject, through more research, to allow the solid construction of considerations on the subject.

RESULTS

In this section, the results of the data collection are presented, which consist of the description of the interviews in relation to the motivations for working in sustainable fashion businesses and the sprouting factors for sustainable fashion businesses.

From the more sustainable fashion scene, it is important to emphasize that eight of the interviewees claimed that their business is guided by the slow fashion model and two of them by ethical fashion, in addition to the fact that all of them knew about the Fashion Revolution movement and/or interacted with it.

Motivation

The interviewees, when asked about their motivation to work in sustainable fashion businesses, supported their preferences on two issues, personal or professional. The four interviewees who chose to undertake a business of this nature for personal preference pointed out that they had a previous negative experience with the fast fashion industry and sought to resignify their relationship with fashion, given a slow fashion proposal. In the same direction, the seven interviewees who mentioned professional preference also commented that more sustainable practices in fashion are a prerequisite, due to consumer demands, or a differential in this competitive market.

To exemplify personal preference, arising from a previous negative experience, two of the interviewees said that they did not identify with the fast fashion production chain and wanted to do fair and meaningful work, in line with their personal values.

I have worked my whole life in industry, in the factory and in production. And I was very worried about being able to do something that would give more personal fulfillment, you know? [...]. So, the collective inside a factory was not cool, because we had exploitation of our work and also working alone was something that was very unsettling (E1).

I started to get more involved with fashion, but at the same time I started to see that it wasn't what I wanted, I was working on something I didn't believe in, I was working a lot with always the same return and that frustrated me a lot, like that. And then I started to develop the idea and project of opening my own business, I was still thinking about what I wanted, I wasn't sure if it was going to be fashion, but I wanted to work with something awesome or a social project or something sustainable (E7).

Another interviewee explained that, due to the dissatisfaction of working with fast fashion, he reached the point of wanting to change professions, but after a sabbatical period abroad, he had contact with more sustainable fashion companies and saw an opportunity to carry out a more ethical work:

My last formal job was at a fast fashion chain, so I got to the point, so, faster, let's say, right? [...] I reached the limit of what I thought [...] could be done with fashion. [...] When I left that last job, I went traveling, because I was no longer interested in working that way and I was questioning whether I was really going to continue working with fashion. [...]. And that's when I started to have contact with some brands and other ideas and other ways of making clothing products that had more to do with what I believed in (E9).

In terms of professional preference, one of the interviewees reported that involvement with more sustainable fashion businesses was casual, because he dreamed of developing a successful business, but did not believe in the fast fashion business model.

Initially, it was based on, of course, wanting to be a big chain, you know, a giant brand, and when researching the market, it came across this situation, which is one of the most polluting industries in the world, the whole environmental issue of fabrics, pollutants, dyeing, in short, soil, water and air pollution. And also the social issue, you know, the use of slave labor, a matter of benefiting big brands and a few people, right? Rather than strengthening an entire chain. And it she moved onto sustainable fashion. (E8).

In addition, another interviewee said that he already had a life purpose aligned with sustainability, so it was a natural process.

We already had some life choices, which was not to use anything of animal origin and everything, so we brought this to the brand, and I already had several fights with the college in the sense of, bah, having to create a collection, because I'm going to have to create it six months in advance, and then I'd go crazy, then it launches, then it has six months to sell and then it launches another one, then it's at this frenetic pace. Then I said: "Okay, if we are going to launch the company, we will not have a collection". So, little by little, we sort of unwittingly fit into the sustainable universe, like that, right? (E10).

One of the interviewees commented that he believes in the need for a business to develop a responsible and conscious role in its essence, both in the mission and in the product's identity.

And then, when we started talking later about the brand concept, what did we think? That had to..., well, sustainable was..., zero requirement, you know? Primordial today because of everything we know about where humanity is heading (E5).

Still, another interviewee explained their motivation for the differential that sustainability represents in contemporary times, through the added value.

Sprouting factors

Two important factors that were drivers for the establishment of a more sustainable fashion scene in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre was the implementation of the Plan Municipal of Creative Economy (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013), in 2013, which recognizes fashion as an integral part of the municipality's

creative industry, and the emergence of the Fashion Revolution in 2016. In addition, the interviewees approached the municipality's potential for aspects such as culture (E4), education (E3), media (E1) and coworking (E1), in addition to collaborative movements (E5).

For some interviewees, the gaúcho state has a vocation for slow (fashion) culture. This is justified by the agricultural potential of Rio Grande do Sul in a national context, where this slow culture develops, either by getting closer to nature, or through manual production, or through the reuse of materials.

I imagine that one issue is that, as we come from the countryside, you know, we have a lot of this connection with origins, we come from Italian migration and German migration, Santa Catarina too, right? [...] We always want to do everything right, you know? And we take care of our things, we always want to do the right thing, the thing within the standard of what you imagine, what you idealize. [...] And I don't know, it's funny because here there are many sustainable fashion initiatives, but I sell a lot more to Rio and São Paulo than here, because I think that the gaúcho consumer is still very closed, very reserved, he still prefers to go for the traditional one, for the brand he trusts than for the dubious one. And this is something that I hope that maybe the people, they will open up more like this, the gaúcho consumers, they will open their mind more to these new proposals, right? And I'm curious to see why... maybe entrepreneurship, maybe people want this more..., the pursuit of satisfaction with something that generates much more value and meaning for you (E8).

In this sense, there is an expectation of the interviewees for the highlight of Rio Grande do Sul in relation to more sustainable fashion in Brazil, after all other states of the country already had/have their exponent in fashion market segments and now it is the turn of the extreme south. Despite agreeing with all the previous statements, one of the interviewees did not consider the gaúcho market as having potential for more sustainable fashion, as its largest audience is found in the Rio-São Paulo axis.

It's really a phenomenon, because we're betting everything that now it's Rio Grande do Sul's turn, for God's sake. [...] Because in fashion it has always been there in the triangle Rio, São Paulo, Minas, in the Southeast, and Santa Catarina providing service to others, which is a very strong pole, but creators, brands, it is a pole that works, that even make for brands outside, right? From Brazil. [...] Let's say, Rio Grande do Sul is an agricultural state. So we are already slow by birth, you know? [...] So we more or less detect, let's say, Rio de Janeiro beachwear, São Paulo street wear, Minas is party fashion, Santa Catarina is clique and Rio Grande do Sul will now be slow fashion, it will be sustainable fashion (E2).

Other outstanding aspects of the capital of Rio Grande do Sul are formal education and the representativeness of fashion courses. The interviewees highlighted the entrepreneurial profile of the students and the direct involvement of institutions and professors with movements, initiatives, projects and research in favor of sustainable development in fashion: *"But we have a lot of demand here for people who graduated, want to launch a brand and come here to get it, they buy the fabric, they make the new pieces"* (E1).

I don't know if it's a function of training, because, well, the question that the universities themselves are with this... They are working a lot with this, with sustainability, right? So I don't see if this public, you know, these students who graduated and went to industries didn't take this knowledge with them, right? Or are the industry owners themselves aware of this... This new theme that is so in vogue, right? (E6).

And then I think the sweetest thing is that the following year, like, in 2016, it was the first Fashion Revolution that we actually had something physical here, so I think that also moved a lot, and all the professors that I know from faculties at the UN003 university, at the UN002 university, at the UN007 university, at the UN006 university, are very engaged in this issue of wanting to change the student's mindset and make them look at sustainability (E10).

Furthermore, local media is also an important aspect. In addition to establishing partnerships with educational institutions, there are several fashion sections in newspapers that are interested in the region's more sustainable fashion scene. For example, one of the interviewees reported frequently receiving an invitation to talk about the subject and his brand.

It's just that the media here in Rio Grande do Sul favors new creators a lot, they are always very open to showing the work of those who are doing it. [...] It's called RE003 magazine, it's a very important vehicle for gaucho fashion, I've been out there a few times and they really have a very big opening for those..., for those who are doing their own fashion (E3).

Coworking spaces, or collaborative spaces, as well as collaborative movements, promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences, in addition to creating and boosting a network between individuals who develop similar and also different works. With that, there is a growth of the creative fashion industry that mobilizes the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, such as the Fashion Revolution and its calendar of events. One interviewee reported that in the past, the gaucho music scene had this collaborative profile and today it is the most sustainable fashion scene.

We consider ourselves part of a generation of brands that came very strong precisely because we started a series of movements in the capital like this, you know, like... There started to be a movement in relation... The relationship with public space, with alternative transport, a series of movements that were allied like this, right? [...] My generation, it was maturing from there, in fact, and as the city began to concentrate a lot of street events, a lot of occupation of buildings and many old buildings, right? A lot of relationships between colleges, as they are now, with the brands that were opening and many people who did work with us and with other brands opened their brands as well. [...] So, like, they are a junction of a series of trends, like that, and that what enhances the city is precisely that it is a capital, things get here, but it is not big. [...] It's just like a music scene like that, in Porto Alegre it's not anymore, but for a long time it was like that, all the bands knew each other, they played in the same places [he-he-he] (E4).

The presence of the company EM001 here, I think it gave leverage, you know? [...] They wouldn't have done so much alone, I think there was a desire on the part of people, which I also can't explain where that desire came from here in Porto Alegre, it was so fervent. [...] I also think that the Fashion Revolution here had a very strong movement (E9).

In 2015, which was when we started planning the company, it was kind of a boom, so, we looked around, there were a lot of companies, we were like, "wow, what do you mean?". So I can't explain why, I'm still trying to understand, but I think it's wonderful (E10).

Many of those interviewed also credit the presence of a textile cooperative guided by principles of more sustainable fashion as a lever for the development of the sector in the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, as it brought the production of raw materials closer to the fashion designer, as well as to clothing.

We looked for that too, to know why. When we started the company EM001 we thought that the last place in the world that would be successful would be in Porto Alegre. I think, and the answers that we've found so far and also that we've asked, is because the people here are very critical. So I think that sometimes it starts here, because what happens here, you happen in the rest of Brazil. [...] Here, too, you have a very diverse audience. I also think it's a public that has a little more purchasing power, so you can also do that, you know? It ends up being more..., more demanding, and then I think people do it here as a test, you know? (E1).

Some interviewees were impressed with the revelation of the Porto Alegre metropolitan area for more sustainable fashion businesses, which go beyond clothing and include accessories, footwear and even other business models, such as thrift stores, due to the fact that they are not familiar with or involved with the Municipal Plan of Creative Economy and the network established in the region.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study aimed to identify which aspects contribute to the sprouting of sustainable fashion businesses from the perspective of the fashion designer. It was noticed that the creative economy, represented by the Municipal Plan of Creative Economy (PREFEITURA DE PORTO ALEGRE, 2013), the Fashion Revolution movement and the integration of teaching institutions of fashion and design are key factors for the sprouting of sustainable fashion businesses in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre. Concomitantly, culture, education, media, coworking and other collaborative movements were also brought up as aspects that boosted the businesses analyzed.

Based on the narrative review of the literature and data collection, a relationship between theory and practice was found where it was possible to observe a change in the fashion scenario in the region studied. Conventional businesses began to coexist with more sustainable fashion businesses, which are generally motivated by the sustainability utopia and make change happen through creativity, collaboration and activism, thus fostering the creative economy.

The fact that the interviewees had experienced fast fashion and were aware of its consequences, thereby reframing the value of fashion in their lives and seeking to do the same in the lives of other individuals, reinforces their commitment to the pillars of sustainability in an ethical manner. However, it is necessary to consider that many of the analyzed businesses were recent and facing the same difficulties

as a conventional business. Added to this are the difficulties imposed by sustainable development itself. Therefore, monitoring more sustainable fashion businesses and determining their motivations and actions in favor of the sustainability utopia over time are essential for not cultivating a greenwashing.

It should be noted that this research was delimited by the data collection region and by the fashion designer's vision. With this, it is considered that the data may present particularities of a region, and not represent the reality of other sustainable fashion businesses in the country or in the world. In the same way that the fashion designer's point of view can be limited according to the context in which he is inserted.

Thus, it is suggested for future studies to use the elements of this research to instrumentalize a quantitative study to expand its perimeter and reach other players involved in the sustainable fashion scenario. In addition, deeper relationships between fashion, creative economy and circular economy will also be an important contribution to the area.

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Creative informality: a quantitative investigation on fashion businesses in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Informalidade criativa: uma investigação quantitativa acerca de negócios de moda no Rio Grande do Sul

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ABSTRACT

The informal economy concept has been assigned a myriad of meanings throughout history since its first definition. Among the main schools of thought that study this economic phenomenon, the legalist school takes the interventionist ineffectiveness as a causative element of informality. Thus, this study aims to identify the phenomenon of informality present in fashion production ventures, located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. An online questionnaire was used on economic agents in such production activities, quantitatively verifying the degree of informality that surrounds economic transactions, labor relations, and the creative output of such entities.

Keywords: Informality. Fashion businesses. Creative industries. Creative economy.

RESUMO

O conceito de informalidade econômica perpassou por uma amplitude de significados no decorrer da história, desde sua primeira percepção. Entre as principais escolas que estudam tal fenômeno econômico, a escola chamada de legalista discorre sobre a ineficácia intervencionista como elemento causador da informalidade. Assim, o presente artigo toma como objetivo identificar o fenômeno da informalidade presente no setor de produtos de moda produzidos por uma miríade de entidades radicadas no estado do Rio Grande do Sul. Usufruiu-se o aparato metodológico questionário **online** com agentes econômicos de tais atividades, conferindo, de maneira quantitativa, o grau de informalidade que rodeia as transações econômicas, as relações trabalhistas e o **output** criativo de tais entidades.

Palavras-chave: Informalidade. Negócios de moda. Indústria criativa. Economia criativa.

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INTRODUCTION

Once understood as a perishable economic phenomenon, informality has penetrated economies in a mainstream way throughout the world (BECKER, 2004). Indeed, sectors of the creative economy were no exception, classified by their inherent condition of flexible, noncontractual, and temporary work practices (MERKEL, 2019).

Taking this into consideration, in the present study we carried out a quantitative investigation on the degree of informality in the creative fashion sector, comprising agents related to ventures such as: stores, manufacturing establishments, ateliers, fashion designers, or textile industry. It is worth highlighting the use of the term *degree* because, as Gasparini and Tornarolli (2009) point out, an entity can be partly formal and partly informal in its activities. The research is characterized by an applied nature and with a quantitative methodology, carried out by the online questionnaire methodology, via Google Forms, adopting the quantitative approach to encompass opinions and information in a quantifiable manner (PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013).

We sent the questionnaire to our contacts by e-mail, via Instagram, or telephone. Subsequently, we conducted an active search to boost the number of respondents, considering that less than 20% of the invitations sent resulted in responses, given the sensitivity of the subject.

The instrument was aimed at individuals who work in the fashion marketing network in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, for the purpose of submitting the sample of responses to analysis based on the theoretical framework, which considered authors such as De Soto (1989), Becker (2004) and Coletto (2010) regarding informality; Hayek (1945; 1985) and Rothbard (1990) regarding economy; and Barthes (2001), Bourdieu (2007) and Pinheiro and Conti (2019) regarding the creative economy and its content.

The quantitative sample had 31 responding units. The number *per se* is relatively small, but we faced barriers to obtaining respondents, considering the possible judicial exposure that the matter may cause, as justified in the methodological section. The obtained sample was submitted to statistical testing.

Therefore, the article is divided into reference sections concerning informality, followed by creative economy and symbolic capital; methodology, data collection, and subsequent analysis; and final considerations, encompassing the main findings, contributions, and next steps.

INFORMALITY

Informality is consistent with an economic phenomenon inherent in both the macroeconomic and microeconomic spheres of nations around the world. It is an abstract and complex concept. Taking this into consideration, the vision and definition of informality are based on three different schools of thought: the dualist, the structuralist, and the legalist schools (DE SOTO, 1989; BECKER, 2004; GASPARINI; TORNAROLLI, 2009; COLETTI, 2010; RAM *et al.*, 2017; SKAVRONSKA, 2020).

As a pioneer (and once deemed as unique) and in the early stages of the perception of the phenomenon, the dualist approach corresponds to the name of the division between the informal and formal facets of the mainstream economy, whose informal facet was understood as productions (outputs) and labor infrastructures under poor conditions, with very low-income earning opportunities for workers, and absence of capital goods (HART, 1973), used to add links to the production chain aiming at ensuring greater value to the outputs (BÖHM-BAWERK, 2004).

The dualist view separated the formal facet, perceived as paid and modernized activities through adequate infrastructure, from and at the expense of the informal facet, classified by irregular working conditions, low or no income, and primitive — the real term to define informality according to this approach —, focusing on basic survival conditions. Coletto (2010) mentions that, given the “primitive” traits attributed to informality, the prevailing view included the tendency for such activities to disappear, through advances in modern capitalism.

In the face of the credit crises and major state interference in the Latin American economies of the 1980s (GHERSI, 1997), informality — which was expected to disappear — not only remained in modern capitalism, but it dramatically increased, with a special focus on Latin America, which formerly had more than 60% informal workforce (DE SOTO, 1989; BECKER, 2004; GASPARINI; TORNAROLLI, 2009). This countertrend caused the emergence of new schools of thought, socioeconomically nullifying the dualist view.

On this regard, Portes and Castells (1989) clarified the subsequent school of thought regarding informality: the structuralist approach, which is defined by correlating the phenomenon with the transition to “neoliberal” capitalism, allowing for flexible labor relations that were deemed as exploratory, claiming the existence of incentives for the maximum possible reduction in productive costs, in which the labor unprotected neither by law nor by social security was preferred because it represented lower costs for the employer.

In view of this approach, we can understand the relentless search of the structuralist school for the institution and intervention of the State in economic relations, seeking to intervene and mediate through legislation, bureaucracy, and regulation such wealth-generating activities, as well as the contracts that enable these activities to be carried out, with the purpose of protecting workers and the welfare state, by authoritarian control and welfare policies, deemed by Hoppe (2014) and Mises (2018) as dangerous because of their counterproductive consequences.

Conversely, the legalist school, with greater development in De Soto (1989), responds directly to the structuralist bias by stating that the figure of the State — referred to as what Rothbard (1990) and Hoppe (2014) call a compulsory territorial monopolist (with involuntary membership) —, through its regulations, bureaucratic steps, and coercive interference, ends up pushing workers and entrepreneurs toward the informal facet, especially those of the lower economic and social classes, by, for example, undermining the economic growth of emerging businesses.

Another fact worth mentioning is related to the costs of informality. The penetration into the informal facet is carried out by a simple mathematical calculation on the part of the economic agent and, despite the high costs of compliance with the formal facet, entities belonging to informality are unable to have easy access to credit (due to the lack of formal documents to assist in obtaining it), in addition to having growth limits (to avoid detection) and, perhaps the most serious of issues, the lack of legal insurance regarding contracts, as they either do not exist or cannot be applied due to the scarcity of a legal system that may impose them (DE SOTO, 1989). The lack of insurance of contractual applicability violates voluntary negotiation possibilities considered to be mutually advantageous (HOPPE, 2014).

Still according to De Soto (1989), unlike the costs of informality, the costs of formality are consistent with access to the formal market (licenses, permits, bureaucratic steps involving monetary and temporal costs), taxes and fees, minimum wage payments, and other labor requirements (social security, Christmas bonus, vacation, etc.). Particularly, it should be noted that an entity has degrees of informality and may be totally formal in some aspects and be external to formality in others (GASPARINI; TORNAROLLI, 2009).

It should be noted that informality and illegality are not necessarily synonymous. Informal products and services could be freely marketed if the relations surrounding them were in accordance with the law, whereas illegal goods — such as piracy — are objectively prohibited and subject to greater enforcement (SKAVRONSKA, 2020).

Based on a heterodox economic view (such as the one adopted by the Austrian School of Economics), we conducted an apriorist research on the subject, on which the present article was based. The findings include informal activities such as: non-contractual labor relations, payments outside the legal document (Work Permit and Social Security [*Carteira de Trabalho e Previdência Social*] — CTPS), lack of social security insurance, partial or total tax evasion, sale of counterfeit products (piracy), non-issuance of tax documents (invoices) (PINHEIRO; CZRNHAK; VORPAGEL, 2022), and distribution on illegal channels, such as the occupation of streets as a “façade” for products, for instance, as verified in Coletto (2010), with a large presence in the fashion market of the South region of Brazil, shopping centers that are called *camelódromos* (in which piracy products are marketed by street vendors, somewhat resembling hawker markets).

Considering the legalist view, the survival aspect of economic agents is promoted by what the structuralist approach sees as a panacea: the figure of the State. This is due to the fact that interference and welfare policies, even if intentional, are counterproductive (MISES, 2018), misrepresent the natural and voluntary order of economic exchanges (HOPPE, 2014), and leverage monetary value as the only recognized and valid form of wealth and social well-being (ROTHBARD, 1990). This conclusively ends up allowing for hyperinflationary attitudes that will result in the devaluation of the national currency and the creation of unsustainable jobs in a prosper economy (HAYEK, 1985) and which ultimately disrupt the information on

microeconomic preferences, use and allocation of social agents (HAYEK, 1945), a fact that will impact the price of goods and services, deemed as information dispersed among economic agents regarding the availability of payment, knowledge of the good (scarcity or abundance), and its usefulness (MENGER, 1976).

Flexibilization and free agreement between the voluntary parties are not seen by the legalist school as “demonized,” as proposed by the structuralist school. Interference with spontaneous relations is faced as a major issue leading to informality. As observed in the case of creative businesses in Ram *et al.* (2001), the establishment of previously-agreed and compulsory measures for the declared maximum number of working hours and the minimum wage preestablished by law were complaint for the destruction of two observed micro-enterprises, affecting the creation of wealth and the generation of employment.

Not only in the aforementioned authors, but also in Andersen and Muriel (2017), responsible for the study on fashion product factories in Bolivia, more harmful effects can be observed: the achievement of maximum working hours by women and the prohibition of night shifts and specific time for maternity leave caused decreases in the income of these workers, who began to work informally in shifts prohibited by law to supplement the small income paid in inflated fiat currency with lower purchasing power caused by, according to Hayek (1985), the printing of paper money without the demand necessary to do so.

To delve deeper into the case of fashion *versus* informality, it is first necessary to establish fundamental concepts about its superior economic sector, the creative economy.

CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

According to Madeira (2014), the creative economy is consistent with the economic block based on creativity and ideas (intellectual capital) to generate the value of products and services, gathering manufacturing sectors in the form of creative industries, with most entities in this sector considered to be micro or small enterprises (MERKEL, 2019).

The creative industry operates through cultural products and services that carry intangible meanings (HOWKINS, 2002), whose predominant capital is symbolic, due to their inherent representations (BOURDIEU, 2007).

There are different micro-enterprise models. An individual micro-entrepreneur (*microempreendedor individual* – MEI) is considered to be an entity whose products or services do not exceed an annual revenue of BRL 81 thousand. Complementary Law No. 123/2006 declares micro-enterprise (ME) as one that does not exceed an annual revenue of BRL 360 thousand. The last type belonging to the micro and small enterprises category is the small business (*empresa de pequeno porte* – EPP), which comprises gross revenue exceeding BRL 360 thousand up to a ceiling of BRL 4.8 million (BRASIL, 2006).

Valiati and Wink Junior (2013) attribute the concept of creative economy to productive economic activities whose capacity to create wealth derives from assets

of creative origin, thus based on the input of creativity and resulting, as the output, in intangible (PINHEIRO; CONTI, 2019) or hybrid goods or services, as in the case of fashion, which combines intangible meanings with textile tangibility (CIETTA, 2017).

In 2021, the Brazilian labor population belonging to the creative economy accounted for 6,857,688 people. Of these, 37.86% (2,537,344) belong to the informal sphere, as surveyed by the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (*apud* OBSERVATÓRIO ITAÚ CULTURAL, 2021). According to Observatório Itaú Cultural (2021), an organic space for research and reflection on the cultural sector in Brazil, in 2020 the state of Rio Grande do Sul encompassed 2,378 micro-enterprises, 220 small businesses, 39 medium-sized enterprises, and no large enterprises, totaling 2,637 businesses in to the fashion segment.

Flexible labor relations, as well as noncontractual and temporary, project-oriented freelance work, are particularly characteristic of creative industries — belonging to the creative economy bloc (MERKEL, 2019). The case of fashion may either fit into such characteristics as an ephemeral profession for event production, promotion of collections, fashion photography, catwalking, among others, as well as represent the fixed working perspective such as the brand's main designer, creative direction, and atelier production.

Thus, there are different professions divided between production and/or fashion services. Due to its singular nature, authors must observe the phenomenon of informality in a form of production, mainly because it involves different chains, policies, organizations, and stakeholders that require a new observational perspective.

As aforementioned, given the hybrid nature of fashion goods (CIETTA, 2017), clothing is the receptacle of the intangible part, corresponding to the meanings perceived by the observer, carrying particular representations and meanings (BARTHES, 2001). This significant meaning constitutes an imagetic representation in the observer's mind, called image (AUMONT, 2012), which frequents an intangible space — called by Malrieu (1996) the imagery domain.

The nature of the output, therefore, takes place by the transformation of the immaterial input (creativity, idea) through the consumption of symbols and meanings that stand out at the expense of the material property of the asset (BLYTHE, 2001; BOLIN, 2005; HARTLEY, 2005), metamorphosing the meaning of the intellectual and intangible output into perceived value (BENDASSOLLI *et al.*, 2009).

The transformation of meaning into perceived value occurs through symbolic capital, that is, material or immaterial capital whose meaning enforces an image of predominant, valuable, and prestigious value (BOURDIEU, 2007), deemed by the observer as a particular meaning (BARTHES, 2001).

In view of the inherent presence of symbolic capital for the construction of the perceived value of the fashion product (and creative products, from a broader perspective), we can draw a negative inference from this factor, considering that the consumption of an illegal pirated product that mimics the logo of a famous brand without its permission and the granting of reproduction and copyright rights, because it represents a lower price than the original (and textile quality), may be

preferred by the consumer. The commercialization of the “pirated” product leads not only to informality, but also to illegality.

In order to quantitatively understand data about informality in Rio Grande do Sul, considering the aforementioned definition of non-correspondence with legal bases and the omission of formal costs, the economic activities of the fashion economic sector are, according to the Department of Planning, Management and Governance of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (*Secretaria de Planejamento, Gestão e Governança do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul – SEPLAG, 2021*): manufacture of underwear, garments, clothing accessories, socks, clothing items produced in knitting mills, travel items, bags and similar products, leather shoes, manufacture of footwear from unspecified materials, textile sales representatives, clothing and footwear, wholesale of clothing and accessories, wholesale of footwear and travel goods, secondhand clothing, accessories, and goods. The definition of Seplag (2021) delimited the activities to be analyzed in the present research.

With both theoretical bases established, the methodology is presented next.

METHODOLOGY

In order to verify the degree of informality within the fashion industry in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, an online questionnaire was prepared using the Google Forms platform, which was sent via mailing list, telephone contact, and active search for agents involved in ventures related to fashion products: stores, manufacturing establishments, ateliers, fashion designers, or textile industry. The questionnaire was available between June 29 and September 5, 2022, gathering 31 responses — 11.3% of the 272 submissions.

A statistical test was performed to obtain the margin of error when faced with a small sample. The study population comprised 2,598 entities, totaling micro and small enterprises according to the aforementioned data from Observatório Itaú Cultural (2021). Responses from managers of 31 entities were collected, with a 90% confidence interval, resulting in a margin of error of 14.64%.

A high margin of error may be justified by the small sample. Furthermore, the authors point out that they faced, both via remote contacts and in the active search, great resistance to answering the questionnaire, considering the fragility of the issue and the exposure to legal environments.

Despite the 14.64% margin of error metric, the idea of an analysis of the gathered reports is not disregarded. In addition, it is possible that, based on this analysis, new studies may be submitted, capable of methodologically overcoming the faced barrier, achieving greater engagement from respondents.

All entities from the textile class chose not to answer the questionnaire, but did not cite any specific reason for declining the invitation, breaking off contact with the researchers. Eleven entities from this class were contacted, included in the yarn production stage, fur goods, or textile processing. Considering that there were no respondents, there is no concrete data on the company’s revenue. Moreover, considering the perceived costs of infrastructure necessary for textile

production, it can be hypothesized that the act of declining participation in the research is a protective measure in the face of possible legal penalties inherent in the matter.

In order to verify the degree of informality in different entities, the authors created specific classes, which include the activities defined by Seplag (2021): stores, manufacturing establishments, ateliers, fashion designers, and textile industry. A store is understood as a commercial establishment where products are presented and sold in the form of wholesales or retails. Manufacturing is considered the establishment that produces, develops, and concludes products on medium and large scales, mainly through outsourcing, while the atelier is the space where tailor-made products or products on a smaller scale are developed, outsourced or not. The designers do not necessarily have a fixed space for creating and producing their products and may develop them in their own homes, but take over the design of the product and its production. Finally, the textile industry is classified as the space dedicated to the transformation of fibers into yarns, of yarns into fabrics, and also to the production of garments on a large scale.

The methodological instrument — the questionnaire — consisted of objective closed-ended questions, investigating the type of venture and business size (measured by annual income), to correlate with:

- presence of formality (accompanied by a text containing the adopted definition of formality);
- time for opening and formalizing the venture (whenever formalized);
- presence of a labor relations contract;
- partial or total tax evasion;
- marketing of counterfeit products (piracy);
- failure to issue an invoice for the product or service;
- offer of products in informal venues (public roads, streets, street vendors' hawker markets);
- assessment of the impact of costs for maintaining the business formal, all founded on previous research by Pinheiro, Czrnhak and Vorpapel (2022) and based on De Soto (1989).

The use of such methodological instrument is a quantitative approach, as it gathers quantifiable variables such as numbers, opinions, and information for submission to the analysis of observers (PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013).

DATA COLLECTION

Regarding the type of venture, among the 31 responding entities, 38.7% are classified as stores; 38.7%, as ateliers; 16.1%, as manufacturing establishments; and 6.5%, as designers. There were no respondents from textile industries. These businesses represented 16 cities in Rio Grande do Sul, with the highest number of occurrences in Novo Hamburgo (7), known for its footwear cluster, followed by Porto Alegre (5), the state capital, and São Leopoldo (3).

Of the 31 ventures, 84.2% were classified as formal, which is contrary to the average of almost 40% of the Brazilian creative market. Reproducing the majority of creative businesses, the MEI classification predominated in business size, with 67.7%, followed by the tie between ME and EPP, each with 16.1%.

Among the 12 stores, seven were classified as MEI, two as ME, and three as EPP. Manufacturing establishments accounted for three MEIs and two MEs. Conversely, ateliers confirmed the highest number of MEI, with nine units, followed by one ME and two EPPs. Finally, as there were no textile industry respondents, the two fashion designers reported to be MEI.

In the reported cases, 29% stated that the formal opening of the business took just one week, followed by reports of four to six months in 25.8% of the cases; one to three months in 16.1%; two to four weeks in 12.9%; and over six months in 6.5% of the cases. Almost 10% were unable to answer the question because they were classified as informal. There was heterogeneity in the formalization period: eight MEI companies took up to one week; however, three entities reported two to four weeks; one to three months; and four to six months, followed by a single entity taking over six months for the formalized opening of the business. In the ME format, the predominance was four to six months, with four responses; while in EPP, two entities claimed opening time between one and three months, followed by up to one week and four to six months, each with one occurrence.

Regarding labor relations, 41.9% of the respondents still have or have already had noncontractual relations such as not complying with social security and/or performing work outside the legal document (CTPS). Furthermore, total or partial tax evasion accounted for only 16.1% of the responses. We verified no responses as for the sale of counterfeit and/or illegal goods, and only one case (3.2%) reported to market and provide their products or services on an informal location (public road, for example), but the majority (54.8%) have already abstained from issuing legal documents such as invoices.

Four of the five entities that claimed partial or total tax evasion — three stores, one atelier, and one fashion designer — fall into the MEI category. Conversely, non-contractual labor relations were more common in MEI ateliers, with three occurrences, followed by stores and manufacturing establishments — also classified as MEI —, with two occurrences each. Only one fashion designer has had such relations. Among ME, store-type entities maintained the number of two occurrences, while ateliers decreased from three to two. In EPP, only two ateliers reported that they have had (or still have) noncontractual labor relations.

Responses regarding the non-issuance of tax documents, especially the invoice, registered five atelier-type occurrences in the MEI formality, followed by four in stores, three in manufacturing establishments, and one in fashion designer. In the ME and EPP modalities, there was only one store registration and one atelier registration, respectively.

The costs of remaining formal impacted the ventures in a heterogeneous way. Of these, 35.5% reported that costs, such as taxes, fees, and agreement with

agencies such as Social Security, impacted their revenues between 11 and 30%; 32.3% reported impact of up to 10%; and another 16.1% reported impact between 31 and 50%. Two cases (6.5%) confirmed impact of over 50%. Almost 10% were also unable to answer accurately because they represented the informal facet.

Faced with these answers, 35.5% of the interviewees claimed that such formalization costs “partially” affect their real income, followed by 35.5% who claimed that it “greatly” affected it, and 22.6% who claimed that it “slightly” affected it, while 6.5% did not comment on it.

The companies that reported being greatly affected are three stores (one ME and two EPP), two ateliers (two MEI and two ME), and four manufacturing establishments (two MEI and two ME). Among those partially affected are four stores (three MEI and one EPP), followed by seven ateliers (five MEI and two EPP). Stores, ateliers, and fashion designers registered two occurrences each for the classification “slightly” affected, regarding income, by the costs of remaining formalized.

ANALYSIS

Despite the response of 87.1% of ventures classifying themselves as formalized, with almost half (41.9%) still having or having had noncontractual labor relations in the past, 16.1% with tax evasion, and 45.2% having stopped issuing tax documents in the past, the sample corroborates the argument of Gasparini and Tornarolli (2009) of varying degrees of informality from enterprise to enterprise, considering that no economic entity is entirely formal or informal, as informality is not an absolute and exact concept.

The concern of De Soto (1989) with bureaucracy can be observed from the data that in 29% of the cases the formal opening of the company took just one week, which initially does not seem to be a worrying interval, but the responses of two to four weeks (12.9%), one to three months (16.1%), four to six months (25.8%), and over six months (6.5%) show a late period in 67.8% of the cases altogether. The delay may harm the entity, as it is inserted in an extremely competitive market. Nevertheless, the second case with the highest number of respondents (four to six months, with 25.8%) highlights the threat of timing.

Although the MEI modality was created for facilitating bureaucratic aspects and providing access to legal and simpler economic activities — tackling the issue of informality —, with eight entities that only took up to two weeks to open the business, the three occurrences in each of the time variables (two to four weeks, one to three months, and four to six months) reinforce the concern about time. Furthermore, the business opening system proved to be ineffective with regard to bureaucratic deadlines, as verified in the occurrences: a standard period of four to six months for micro-enterprises and two entities claiming one to three months for EPP. These data indicate disparity and the lack of a standard for formalized business opening.

Noncontractual labor relations were mostly verified in companies of the MEI type, with the majority of responses belonging to the atelier class. Regarding this

fact, we can point out that one of the possible reasons corresponds to the lower amount of financial resources to be allocated by small companies. For the economic activity and carrying out productive activities that require the support of hired workforce, there is little left for individual micro-entrepreneurs to maintain such relations, paying amounts lower or other than those established by compulsory labor laws — classified as one of the maintenance costs in the formal facet (DE SOTO, 1989).

Simultaneously, at the center of the variable concerning how financially affected entities are (negatively speaking) by formality costs, we observed a significant harmful effect, as two EPP-type companies reported being greatly affected as well as four MEIs and five MEs.

Hypothetically, the lack of EPP companies greatly affected is expected (as most EPPs were classified as “partially” affected by the costs of remaining formal), due to the fact that they have a larger business size, as well as possible consolidated networks and larger financial resources available, even though most EPPs have indicated the option of 30 to 50% of income destined for complying with formality costs. However, the majority that selected the “greatly” affected option (MEI and ME) are affected to a greater extent, preventing business growth and the creation of wealth and employment opportunities.

The non-supply of illegal products, such as counterfeit goods (100% of the cases), may indicate the removal of such products due to legal, ethical, reputational, or cultural reasons of the entity and/or because these ventures produce their own products, whether for the brand representing the atelier or for a third party (client). Furthermore, this distance from illegal products — despite the presence of a certain degree of informality even in formalized businesses — highlights what Skavronska (2020) states: informality and illegality are not necessarily interconnected, nor do they share the same meaning.

In addition, considering the impact of formality costs proposed by De Soto (1989), that is, complying with legal measures regulated and applied by the State, understood by Rothbard (1990) as a compulsory monopolist agency, it should be noted that 35.5% of the interviewees claimed that between 10 and 30% of their revenues are compulsorily collected. When added to 16.1% interviewees who reported an impact on their revenues from 31 to 50%, 68.4% of the projects showed an effective shortfall in their income, which may hinder their growth.

Revenue despoilment may inhibit business growth, preventing it from adding links to its production chain, reducing its added value — according to the concept of roundaboutness proposed by Böhm-Bawerk (2004) —, and the creation of job openings marked by real free necessity — *id est*, without state interference to generate jobs, based on real market needs, according to Hayek (1985). Thus, it does not affect the perception (or lack) of scarcity or abundance of goods, services, or skilled labor, which predominantly reflects the perception of utility and valorization (MENGER, 1976).

Nevertheless, the perception of such an impact by the entities is considered negative. With regard to the negative effects on their real income, altogether, there are 79% (35.5% respondents who claimed their real income was “partially” affected and 35.5% respondents who claimed it was “greatly” affected) negative answers regarding the costs of formality — compliance with state legal measures that prevent the free negotiation of contracts between employer and employee. When measuring the costs, the result is considered harmful and negative — which reflects an interventional and, consequently, welfare failure. In light of this fact, it is not surprising that the findings of Ram *et al.* (2001) and Andersen and Muriel (2007) regarding state interference resulted in mutual harm for employees and employers, as these agents are connected and interdependent.

Such nonconformities are extremely negative, as they not only cause the shrinkage of micro-sized businesses — most of them not only in the surveyed responses, but rather in the entire creative economy (MERKEL, 2019) —, but also because, as they do not have as many financial resources as large companies, they may not survive low-income situations in the market. Thus, any cost may represent an inherent threat to the financial sustainability of the business.

Therefore, the negative aspect may be further aggravated by the fact that the intervention, observed as significant under the negative weight of the interviewees’ responses, hinders the real income of micro and small businesses and is a counterproductive paradigm, according to Hoppe (2014) and Mises (2018).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Taking this into consideration, our study analyzed informality present in the ventures of fashion designers, manufacturing, textile industry and factory, ateliers and retail and wholesale stores in the fashion sector in Rio Grande do Sul, taking advantage of the quantitative questionnaire instrument, based on the legalist thought.

The number of 31 entities is significantly small compared with the ideal, and it may be justified by the concern (which we commented on in the active search) of market agents about the possible consequences of responses with regard to appropriate measures as for informality and illegality. An approach that emphasizes the security of protecting responses in the face of something capable of legally compromising the entity can be improved seeking to enhance the collection — with the use of active search and *vis-à-vis* contact between authors and entities, the number increased by nine responses.

Furthermore, a moderate quantitative degree of informality can be confirmed in the different types of fashion ventures: even when asked whether “yes” or “not” to be a formalized business (and most entities indicated “yes”), there were answers such as the non-issuance of tax documents and noncontractual relations.

Considering that these arguments could be deemed as belonging to the legalist school, we emphasize the concern resulting from evidence regarding a large idle period for (formally) opening a business: 61.3% of the cases took between two

weeks and six months to do so. The opening of a business of up to one week, reported by 29% of the cases, should reach higher numbers, facilitating the entry for the formal execution of economic activities.

Not only the temporal factor, but also the formality costs — compliance with social security and other costs resulting from the state agency — corroborate the legalist approach, taking into account that 35.5% of interviewees considered that these costs “partially” impacted the business, and another 35.5% claimed that they “greatly” impacted their business in a negative way — accounting for a negative perception of 71%. Furthermore, in 35.5% of the cases, these costs represent between 10 and 30% of income, and in 16.1% this metric reaches between 30 and 50% of revenues.

Such negative facts are sufficient to tarnish the microeconomic agents of fashion ventures in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Considering that the vast majority of creative businesses are classified as micro-enterprises, significant formality costs and excessive bureaucracy can represent constant threats to the social and economic development of the sector.

Our results can serve as a basis for visualizing the informality issue inherent in fashion micro-entrepreneurs and small entrepreneurs in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Based on a heterodox economic view, the results can guide public policies towards possible corrections to the problem identified here.

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Approaching the creative process as a complex adaptive system

A abordagem do processo criativo como um sistema adaptativo complexo

Lenice Eli Lunkes Scapato¹ , Dusan Schreiber¹ , Vanessa Theis¹ 

ABSTRACT

This article proposed as a general objective to understand whether creativity, in a process approach, can be understood as a complex adaptive system, in the perception of professionals in creative areas, regarding the processes inherent in the management of fashion products, who work in companies in the leather-footwear sector located in the region of Vale dos Sinos. Seven semi-structured interviews were carried out with the target audience, from five companies, as detailed in section three. Regarding the approaches brought by the contributions of complex adaptive systems (CAS), which find similar characteristics in creative and innovative organizations, it was possible to conclude that there are opportunities for the researched environments to explore, in more depth, such approaches, which understand that the Organizations are not just the sum of their components (agents), but also the result of the intricate relationship between these components. Recognizing the complexity inherent to the creative process of organizations, understanding the interrelationships, and the interdependence between the subjects and elements involved in these interactions, can contribute to rethinking new alternatives and management strategies.

Keywords: Footwear design. Complex adaptive systems. Creative process. Creative industry.

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe como objetivo geral compreender se a criatividade, numa abordagem de processo, pode ser entendida como um sistema adaptativo complexo quanto aos processos inerentes à gerência de produtos de moda, na percepção dos profissionais de áreas criativas que atuam em empresas do setor coureiro-calçadista localizadas na região do Vale do Rio dos Sinos. Foram realizadas sete entrevistas semiestruturadas com o público-alvo de cinco empresas. No tocante às abordagens trazidas pelas contribuições dos sistemas adaptativos complexos, que encontram características semelhantes em organizações criativas e inovadoras, foi possível concluir que há oportunidades para os ambientes pesquisados explorarem, de forma mais aprofundada, tais abordagens, as quais entendem que as organizações não são apenas a soma de seus componentes (agentes), mas também resultado do intrincado relacionamento entre esses componentes. Reconhecer a complexidade inerente ao processo criativo das organizações, compreendendo as inter-relações, interdependência entre os sujeitos e elementos envolvidos nessas interações, pode contribuir para repensar novas alternativas e estratégias de gestão.

Palavras-chave: Design de calçado. Sistemas adaptativos complexos. Processo criativo. Indústria criativa.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges for organizations has always been and still are to seek ways to boost performance and, thereby, their competitiveness in the market. For Drucker (1999), as we advanced further in the knowledge economy, most of the basic assumptions about economics, business, and technologies have become outdated. In this sense, Stacey (1996) states that it is important to recognize this complex context in the studies of organizations.

Complexity occurs when the components that constitute a whole, economic, political, sociological, psychological, affective, or mythological aspects, are inseparable and there is an interdependent, interactive, and inter-retroactive fabric between the parts and the whole and between that whole and its parts (MORIN, 2000). For Stacey (1996), there are consistent explanations that relate both creativity and innovation to the complexity theory. Understanding the new paradigm within organizations in the light of these theories is a proposal that can assist in the studies on organizations (STACEY, 1996; MORIN; LISBOA, 2007; PONCHIROLLI, 2007).

In the creative industry, creativity is the main raw material. From an economic perspective, the fashion sector seeks differentiation in its performance in relation to the market, with more frequent product launches and new proposals for use and characteristics, including demands to serve specific niche markets (TREPTOW, 2013). Taking this into consideration, the overall objective of this article is to understand the approach to the creative process as a complex adaptive system, from the perspective of creative professionals who work in companies in the leather-footwear sector located in the Vale do Rio dos Sinos region (state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil).

The Vale do Rio dos Sinos region is a strong regional hub for the leather-footwear sector (SCHNEIDER, 2004), but the region has suffered from exports and competition from countries, such as China, since the 1990s, losing space in the market and going through a delicate crisis (CONSINOS, 2017).

After this introduction, the article presents the conceptual bases related to the influence of complexity on organizations and types of creativity and its interpretation as a process. Next, the methodological procedures are detailed, and in the following subtitle, the analyses and discussion of the results. After presenting the researched corpus, the final considerations regarding the objective, contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future investigations are described.

THE INFLUENCE OF COMPLEXITY ON ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations and people are open and complex systems. They are, therefore, dynamic systems that are related to and influenced by one another (KATZ; KAHN, 1975; STACEY, 1996; MORIN; LISBOA, 2007). According to Palmberg (2009), a complex adaptive system is a set of interdependent agents that form an integrated whole in which an agent can be a person or an organization. It is a system in which many elements or agents interact, leading to emergent results that are often difficult to predict when simply observing the individual interactions present.

For the author, the characteristics of complex adaptive systems are:

- interdependence of agents, because each part of the system can affect the behavior and priorities of the other;
- self-organization, which arises from chaos and from which the capacity to create order emerges;
- nonlinearity, considering that there are varied dynamics, connections, and interactions that are nonlinear;
- adaptability, which deals with the ability to learn from your own experience and adapt to new and unexpected conditions.

In addition, evolutionary systems are considered to be:

- emergent, in the sense of a process whereby the properties of the whole emerge from the parts of that whole;
- not predictable in detail, as there is no predictability in things, because of the interdependence and nonlinearity of the agents in the system.

However, it is possible to find order amid the chaos. A system is still coevolutionary, because the actions of the agents affect others, and the organizations act and react in cooperation and competition with other agents — that is, the agents do not act on their own; and finally, in a system there is distributed control, in the sense that there is no hierarchical central authority in one agent. In other words, there is control, but there is no one in control.

Regarding complex adaptive systems approaches, Palmberg (2009), seeking to assist with management, defined seven approaches:

- Vision: to create a shared vision that provides minimum specifications for the future use of organizations, encouraging them in terms of flexibility, adaptability, and creativity and allowing agents to be more active;
- Simple rules: to establish and communicate simple and clear objectives and principles that will generate complex and intelligent behaviors. Many rules and regulations make things more complex, but behaviors become more limited and expected;
- Attractors: to include in the system any component that is stronger than the existing ones, in order to allow further evolution of the system;
- Diversity and tension: to create an environment of healthy tension, using management skills to maintain balance between this tension, instability, and the created stress. Both tension and diversity (different profiles of individuals) are necessary ingredients of creativity;
- Experimentation and reflection: to act and learn from experience, instead of planning, getting the feeling that what is most planned will bring more certainty for the future;
- Pieces or parts: to begin with complex problems, analyzing their parts, identifying what works. Based on this, to link other parts and discard what does not work;
- Feedback: to feed information to agents that carry out the actions, so that they have the opportunity to improve and gain greater autonomy.

In the approaches proposed by Palmberg (2009), there are great similarities with management practices adopted by companies that have more open, creative, emerging, and less traditional management.

Stacey (1996), at the organizational level, makes contributions with regard to creativity, explaining the interaction between people within a group in a nonlinear feedback system. This individuation-conformity dynamic allows the person to be oneself and also to feel part of the group. As this is the operating condition of the group, all members become highly conformists, and the group enters a stable zone. Conversely, if all members abandon conformity for their own individuality, the group disintegrates and moves to the unstable zone. It is at this moment that the group opens space to be creative, but the tension between these two states (conformity and individuality) must be contained. Thus, in a group, creativity takes place in a space of transition between the stability and the instability of the system. This notion corroborates that of Maturana and Varela (2001), when stating that the moment when a system becomes disorganized is when it has reached its limits. In other words, this moment concerns how much the system tolerates before a structural change occurs.

CREATIVITY AS A PROCESS

Although it is not possible, in addition to being pretentious, to delimit a single perspective of what creativity is, for its use, it should be noted that this article aims to investigate the influence of the organizational environment on the creativity of individuals. Amabile et al. (2005) emphasize that creativity can be encouraged, in working groups, through autonomy, openness to ideas, and stimulus to creativity, in addition to sharing objectives and the possibility of challenges, which generate collective commitment.

According to Caniëls and Rietzschel (2015), organizational creativity results from the individual creative behavior, which comprises a complex interaction between the individual and the environment. Manenti (2013) highlights that creativity is related to the generation of new ideas and has a useful nature, which generates value. Group creativity derives from individual creative behaviors, the interaction between individuals, the characteristics of the group, and processes, in addition to contextual influences.

Stacey and Griffin (2005) add that an individual can impact collective creativity. Creativity, therefore, can never be considered an individual process, as it involves interaction with other people in a group. Thus, it can be analyzed from the perspective of a process.

From the perspective of using creativity for solving problems and with a process perception, Amabile (1988) explains, based on the individual conceptual model, the stages from the initial presentation of ideas to the solution. Fabun (1969) proposes similar stages of the creative process, understanding creativity as a process in juxtaposition, something that is reversible when applied to knowledge. In terms of representation, it is like a concept established in the mind (and all the things that

influence it, which is why there is a complex relationship), which, combined with another concept already established in the mind (similarly complex), will form something different, the new idea.

In this sense, Amabile (1988), Baxter (1998), Amabile et al. (2005), and Sternberg (2006) corroborate this notion: in order to generate new ideas, prior knowledge is necessary. The creative process is explained by several authors (FABUN, 1969; AMABILE, 1988; BAXTER, 1998; GOMES, 2001; AMABILE et al., 2005) from different lines of thought.

Overall, some formulations have more stages than others or have different names; some address the subject by considering more artistic contexts; and others are more focused on organizational contexts. In general terms, however, the process takes place in a similar way for these authors. According to Ostrower (2014), regardless of the field of knowledge, whether science or art, creativity, as a potential, and creation, as the achievement of the potential, are manifested in human beings in an identical way, in a way that is unrelated to the specific paths they will follow in the fields of knowledge.

The process takes place in stages, the first of which is the identification of the problem. The second consists of preparation, in which the individual seeks information to solve the problem. In the third, called idea generation, the level of originality of the product or response is determined. At this stage, the individual creates several response possibilities, making use of the relevant creative processes and their intrinsic motivation. Subsequently, there is the validation of the idea, the moment to present the idea or product. The last stage, the analysis of the results, is decision-making regarding the response, based on the evaluation of the previous stage. In the end, if the idea has solved the problem, the process is ended. The same occurs with a negative result. Nonetheless, if the result is partial, the process returns to the previous stages, using experience as learning, representing progress towards the solution.

The qualitative approach and field research strategy were chosen, considering their exploratory nature. Data were collected by semi-structured interviews and were analyzed using discursive textual analysis.

METHOD

To carry out the research, the authors chose the qualitative approach and the field research strategy, considering their exploratory nature. Bauer and Gaskell (2002) define qualitative research as a strategy that generates data for a more in-depth development and understanding of beliefs, attitudes, and values, in terms of people's behavior in social contexts. Gil (2002) corroborates this classification, stating that this type of research brings researchers closer to a given problem, aiming at analyzing the phenomenon in a more explicit way.

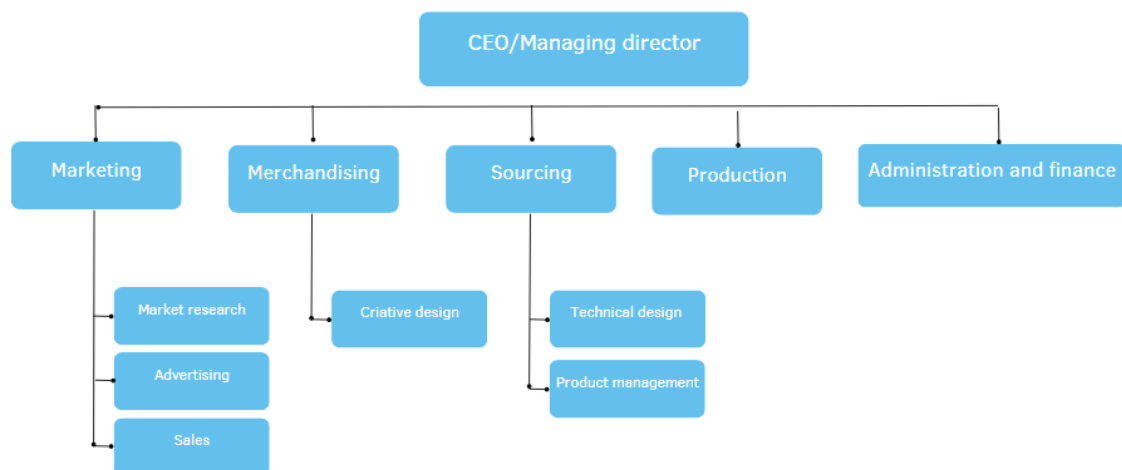
Data were collected by semi-structured interviews, with questions such as follows: how does the product creation process take place in the company? If you had to establish stages for the creative process in the company, what would they be and

what would occur at each stage? How do you perceive the participation of other sectors in the organization’s creative process? How does this interaction take place and with whom? What do you suggest that could be done in the sector or organization that could facilitate/stimulate the creativity process?

For the interviews, the authors selected professionals from five different companies in the leather-footwear sector in Vale do Rio dos Sinos region, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, by non-probability, intentional, and convenience sampling, using criteria of accessibility and availability of time of the interviewees.

Companies in this segment, medium and large, in the researched region, are similar in their organizational structure, in the areas called creative, which here are directly linked to the creative process for developing fashion footwear. For this research, the authors sought for the perception of two audiences in this context. One of them are managers (product, style, or innovation manager or coordinator), who are responsible for the entire process of developing and preparing collections, according to trend research, definition of fabrics, color and material chart, and briefings. They also approve the stages of the process and maintain contact with suppliers until final approval. In addition, the authors sought for the perception of what we have adopted as a category called “creative,” namely a professional with expertise in the creative field of footwear development process, who may be a stylist, a fashion designer, or a product designer.

According to the organizational structure, represented in Figure 1, proposed by Costa (2013), the target audience is among the areas of merchandising and sourcing.



Source: adapted from Costa (2013).

Figure 1. Organizational structure in the apparel industry.

In total, three managers and four creative professionals were interviewed, from a total of five companies in the segment.

E1 is the style manager of one of the brands of company A, which serves several female audiences with a focus on the creation of footwear and bags. She currently

coordinates three stylists and one assistant. E2 is a stylist of footwear, bags, and belts for one of the brands of company B. E3 is the person in charge and product designer, and carries out administrative activities due to the limited structure of company C. Based on E3's 20-year experience in the footwear market, the professional answered the questionnaire aimed at creative professionals. E4 is a product manager at company D and has worked in relevant companies in the fashion footwear segment, whose functions ranged from product design to technical functions such as engineering and production. E5 is a stylist of E1 at company A, that is, she is an employee of E1. E6 is the innovation manager at company E, which focuses on technology in leather, footwear, and products. E7 is a stylist in the same organization (company A) as E5, with E1 as manager.

The scenarios and the distribution by categories to differentiate the target audience are shown in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Interviewees' profile.

Interviewee	Job	Time working at the company	Career time (year)	Category for research
E1 (company A)	Style coordinator	2.5 years	18	Management
E2 (company B)	Stylist	5 years	35	Creative
E3 (company C)	Product designer	6 years	20	Creative
E4 (company D)	Product manager	4 months	35	Management
E5 (company A)	Stylist	1 year	9	Creative
E6 (company E)	Innovation manager	1.2 year	10	Management
E7 (company A)	Stylist	1.1 year	15	Creative

Regarding the data analysis strategy, textual discursive analysis proposed by Moraes (2003) was chosen, as it disregards the neutrality of the discourse and considers the subjectivity of the environment. In this sense, based on the interviews, according to Moraes (1999), the discourses were decomposed into units of meaning, which was concluded with the deconstruction of the texts. This process resulted in the analysis unit "the creative process," which formed two categories of analysis: "the role of professionals in creative fields" and "complex adaptive system."

DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the analysis of the discourses, we identified the way in which the creative process takes place in fashion footwear companies in the researched region and, therefore, we highlighted the theory proposed by Rech (2002), who states that fashion, in terms of performance, is characterized as industrial design, considering the commercial and industrial implications in its activities and also because this process, in the end, generates the fashion product, in this case the footwear collections. However, in addition to this perspective, there is the fact that this process is neither

linear nor constant, but rather presents characteristics of complex adaptive systems, according to analyses and evidence that will be better investigated next.

The role of professionals in creative fields

The segment uses a process with very similar methods to transform ideas into products, but some companies focus more on the creative process itself, with creative personnel not involved in the development of competition studies and other marketing studies, as there are specific areas for this purpose. As highlighted by E1: *"I say: look, it's started, each of you do your research and there will be a day when everyone will show it, develop it, and point out to me what each one wants, and then we will consider the best from each one, ok? But together, you know?"*.

Conversely, other companies demand greater breadth of their duties from designers (SAYEG, 2015). In addition to creative production, they must be very involved in the sales/pricing process, engineering and/or prototyping of future footwear, as highlighted by E3:

I have to present a very well-structured framework collection, in which there will be the investment that the factory will have to make in this collection, how much will it spend to create this collection. If you have a new sole, you must have an entire mold made, it's costly. The existing sole is another cost. I have to consider all that cost, the average price of the collection.

This statement is corroborated by Sayeg (2015), who states that the creative team works with cost limits and predefined production capacity.

Throughout the next category, it is possible to identify the relationship between the complex adaptive system, in the result of the work carried out by professionals in the creative fields, and a summary chart at the end of the section.

The complex adaptive system

Regarding the creative process, we can observe that it presents characteristics of a complex adaptive system (STACEY, 1996; PALMBERG, 2009) in some aspects. However, it was identified that organizations can further explore, in their organizational systems, the approaches from Stacey (1996) and Palmberg (2009) as a way of enhancing creativity, providing greater fluidity and autonomy to people and, consequently, to the process itself and its surroundings, whether internal or external.

However, by understanding the organization as a system, it is necessary to create greater destabilization to provide greater creative space. Such analyses could be identified in the speech of E2: *"It's not a creative universe with extreme, you know, freedom to have all the ideas, it isn't, right? We have to be within one [context], encompassed within the context of a brand."* This was further reinforced by what E3 highlights:

It's quite challenging, because we really have [to do it], we can't just be daydreaming. We have to propose new things. We have to dream. We have to innovate, but at the same time we cannot be completely excluded

from the possibility of providing a good financial return to the factory and to all employees, you know?

We identified that the creative process — while a smaller open system — in the organization — while a larger open system — does not present constant balance as a characteristic. This is evident because, with each interaction experienced in this system, the process takes another direction and creative intensity. The interdependence between all areas and the specialists that compose each part of this system may affect the behavior and functional priorities of the other, influencing the phenomenon of creativity, as stated by E6:

When there's too much interaction, the productive sectors tend to give too much opinion on creation and simplify too much or limit the creative capacity and innovation. Why? The creative area, I mean, the production area, always focuses on productivity, on the production volume, in such a way it tends to reject all creative ideas that differ from this pattern.

There are several components of this system that influence behaviors, such as the desire of the final consumer, as identified by E7 — *"The projects came through marketing needs... Not so much of a spontaneous type, so it always came from a market need"* — and E4 — *"Brazil has the capacity to do so, but it doesn't, because consumers themselves expect to see what everyone is using, a famous person in the USA, what everyone is using in Europe to copy it and use it the same way. Consumers are already like that, ok?"*.

Fashion cycles, called sell-in, place a lot of pressure on work, as can be identified in the statements of several interviewees, summarized in E5's speech:

This sell-in calendar, which is the sales calendar, is what rules the life of the company, and this calendar is very... you know, fast, right? So, it's this calendar that allows us to have one collection per month, sometimes more, here we have 14, 15 collections/year... It's really quite fast. It makes us have to work very quickly and at the expense of the creative process.

Furthermore, there are the industrial characteristics of the leather-footwear sector in the researched region. The footwear crisis is mentioned by several interviewees, especially managers, as a strong indicator that keeps companies stuck to a more traditional industrial mentality. They are unable to get out of this process, which was summarized by E6 as the company that develops by looking at store windows, producing, selling, and earning. For him, there is a need for companies in the region to change their mindset, to stimulate innovative processes (TIDD; BESSANT; PAVITT, 2015), to think ahead, reformulating their work structures and their way of managing business (SOUZA; PAULA; FUCK, 2012; ABICALÇADOS, 2018).

Thus, the interference of the external environment in relation to the organization is identified, in addition to all the internal interferences inherent in the organizational culture, which present both elements that help promote creativity and elements that hinder this promotion.

Nonlinearity, presented in characteristics of the complex system, evidenced in this dynamic by constant interactions, as explained by Stacey (1996), Morin (2000), and Palmberg (2009), generates specific results that are not predictable. This does not mean that the more creativity attributed to a product or process, the more chances of results it will have. This statement can be noticed when identifying the filters in the organizational structure according to which ideas must be considered to become products, as highlighted by E1:

A shoe factory is a business that depends on many people. So, triggering this is a very complex process... And we depend a lot on third-party suppliers, who deliver the raw material for the upper, the raw material for making an ornament. So, there's all that, it has to be coordinated, right, to work on schedule.

E3 also mentions the various sectors involved in creation, demonstrating a nonlinear process: *"Participation takes place through a product committee, ok? [It is] Composed of key people from each area and department. So, there are several people who listen to and also contribute to the development of the collection with the new products."*

It should be noted that, at each stage of the development of new products, even though there is no linearity in this dynamic, it is still possible to find ordered patterns and, more than that, these must exist. Ordered patterns exist, for example, at each new stage of the process, in which it is necessary to carry out a kind of inspection to ensure that things are as expected. Apparently, these moments are incorporated as standard practices adopted by companies to monitor the progress of the collections, which results in a process of self-organization (PALMBERG, 2009), which is established in an initial disorder, inherent in the early stages of the creation process. At the end of the creative process, there is a new order, which is the final collection to be produced.

Adaptability is presented as a characteristic of the complex system, that is, the ability to learn from experience (PALMBERG, 2009). Making intelligent use of it aiming at flexibility and adaptation to new and unexpected conditions is evident in E2's speech: *"To be able to assess what is possible or not and how far we can go without making mistakes, or making as little mistakes as possible. We'll always make mistakes, but something more grounded at last."* E7 also mentions: *"The briefing includes several analyses, mainly concerning the sales revenue values of previous collections, what sold the most and what didn't sell."*

The constant exchange of ideas and suggestions arise from past experiences that organizations have already gone through or from previously acquired knowledge. This characteristic corroborates the individuation-conformity dynamic proposed by Stacey (1996), in which the person is oneself and still feels part of the group, in addition to making the organization learn through double-loop learning, which concerns the moment when the members of an organization alter part or all of the shared paradigm.

Among the characteristics of complex adaptive systems proposed by Palmberg (2009), there are coevolution and distributed control. Coevolution is related to the

collaboration of agents; they act and react in cooperation and, at the same time, compete with each other, generating collective evolution. This aspect can be observed from the data gathered with E7: *"We have a stage that is not that creative... It's the review [stage], I think it's very important to analyze [it]. So, we... review [it] with the engineer... Sometimes a lot of new ideas emerge from this exchange."*

Finally, distributed control was the least identified characteristic in the analyses, which can be evidenced by the statements of several interviewees who report that, at various stages of the process, they need the validation of committees (composed of managers from various sectors) to move forward, reinforcing more hierarchical work models, in which there is a lot of control and the decision is in the hands of a few people.

The practice highlighted in organizations shows a hierarchical decision-making process based on traditional management system models. In this context, organizations of the creative fashion industry, as in the case of our study, in the fashion footwear segment, could make use of adaptations in their management models to further enhance the creativity already explored in organizational environments. Organizations that aim to boost creativity still have a long way to go, especially in the sense of revisiting their assumptions regarding current management paradigms, in the development of management approaches that are more widespread among members and not centered on a few people with decision-making power and, furthermore, on the creation of organizational structures that recognize complexity as an inherent part of the business (KATZ; KAHN, 1975; STACEY, 1996; MORIN; LISBOA, 2007).

In the aspects involving management models and practices, Palmberg (2009) defined seven approaches to complex adaptive systems. Some of them could be identified in the research analyses, in the statements of some of the respondents. One of them is vision, which deals with management that creates a shared vision with minimum specifications for the future and also simple rules. Regarding this aspect, it was evident that, in the organization where E1 (manager), E5 (stylist), and E7 (stylist) work, this approach is widely adopted, as the company's chief executive officer (CEO) (who could be represented by the manager/managing director, in the organization chart in Figure 1, that is, the highest level of the organization) openly and transparently communicates the intentions of the corporation action and its goals. Hence, the group creates intelligent and collective behavior, which makes this professional to act in favor of these objectives. Thus, we verified that there is an effective contribution from several areas to the development of the collections, and not just to the execution of a project designed and validated by one sector.

One approach that was not visibly identified was the attractor, that is, a component more powerful than the others and that is inserted in the middle of the system, serving as a lever for creativity. It is believed that E6 behaves in a way that may be similar to the inclusion of attractors, as he is implementing in his organization a program of ideas and workshops to encourage creativity, with the participation of external guests who bring reflections and make people leave their comfort zone.

E2 and E5, in particular, attribute the challenge of new projects as the driving force behind their work and are motivated and encouraged by new challenges in which they may be involved.

Another important aspect when it comes to organizational environments and creativity concerns what Palmberg (2009) calls diversity and tension, one of the seven approaches to the complex adaptive system. There is a healthy tension between stability and instability, which must prevail in the system, in order to have sufficient elements to generate creativity in groups and organizations. Overall, in this sense, we observed that interviewees brought many external and internal elements to the organization that cause imbalance.

In general, it is believed that the process takes place and creativity is exercised at all levels, but it is observed, through elements — such as consumer desire, sell-ins, and the current situation of footwear companies in the researched region —, that there are more elements, especially external ones, that influence the assumptions of organizations and have effects that cause certain entropy in the system. This entropy can be verified in the fact that it is not possible to take risks in this market and end up following market patterns, considering that this is a predominantly industrial segment of the creative industry, which operates in a larger system with great competitiveness and which is embedded in a scenario of financial difficulties, which may result in stagnation and homeostasis of the system (MORIN, 2000).

Fashion footwear companies in the region, due to the constant crisis they are undergoing, do not have time to stop, create solutions, innovate business models, and thus open up possibilities with new markets. E6 (style manager) states that if companies were able to do so, they would enter into a virtuous and prosperous cycle. What E6 says is, for Maturana (1999), the concept of an autopoietic system, that is, it refers to the capacity to self-organize and self-produce, to sustain oneself (MATURANA, 1999; MORIN, 2000).

An approach to complex adaptive systems that has become quite evident, in general, is the ability to learn from experience, whether positive or negative. All interviewees state that much of what they do today comes from learning and knowledge acquired throughout their journey, and it is also noteworthy that organizations absorb much of this knowledge, constantly feeding them back.

Finally, feedback concerns the action of providing constant returns to agents who execute actions in the system. The evident constant interactions of creative professionals with many fronts of the organization, who always show openness to suggestions and possibilities for improvement, demonstrate that this approach is a common practice in all organizations, according to the interviewees.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

All complex, social, cognitive, and biological systems move towards uniqueness; however, at the same time, they seek integration aiming at maintaining the continuity and stability of the system in question. This cyclical and continuous movement of differentiation and integration promotes the maintenance of a

healthy system and its growth. For the present study, regarding the approaches brought by the contributions of complex adaptive systems, which find similar characteristics in creative and innovative organizations, we concluded that, in the studied object — namely the creative process for developing fashion footwear —, there are opportunities for the researched environments to explore, in more depth, such approaches, understanding that the organizations are not just the sum of their components (agents), but also the result of the intricate relationship between these components.

We identified that the system exhibits, in its core, the approaches of not presenting constant balance, interdependence of agents, nonlinearity, non-identification of ordered patterns, feedback, and adaptability. It is noteworthy that the latter characteristic of the complex adaptive system was found in the system, but at the same time it is not evidenced. Adaptability, which relates to learning from experience, is verified quite clearly, but when analyzed in association with a contingent characteristic, we noticed that the researched organizations, in the perception of creative professionals, could advance management models and practices to generate more creative potential.

In the light of the theories about complexity present in this study, we could also reflect on making a contribution to the research region. The systemic notion is attributed to thinking about the focus of creativity through, for example, the creative process, assuming it as a system, which means that the referred process is part of a system that is greater than the sum of the parts of the smaller system and integrated with it. Again, it is not about accumulating creativity as if it were possible to increase creativity at each stage, but rather understanding that interactions, throughout the process, result in something greater.

From the beginning, individuals and organizations suffer interference from the external environment, modifying the parts. Moreover, in this interaction, aspects of organizational culture (the social system), which will stimulate or discourage creativity, can be integrated and articulated. In the other environment organizations, as parts of the same system in the region where the research was carried out as another, broader part, it was possible to recognize the existence of an interdependent, interactive, and inter-retroactive fabric between the parts and the whole and between the whole and its parts, which constitute economic, political, sociological, and psychological aspects in an inseparable way.

At the end of these considerations, it should be noted that the main contribution of the present study is to propose the exercise of a multidisciplinary, diverse, and cross-cutting perspective of creativity in organizations. It is noteworthy that our real challenges, within and outside organizations, are increasingly based on multidisciplinary, cross-cutting, and multidimensional problems. Thus, the study may encourage more researchers to investigate the complex bias inherent in organizations as for the topics of organizational management, seeking to assist business managers by indicating some practices that can be rethought in order to enhance creativity, interactions, and feedback between the parts and the environment.

Although achieving the proposed objective and following the methodological rigor, the existence of limitations cannot be disregarded, which in this case concerns the greater rigor of the sample of the interviewees, which was affected due to the global circumstances experienced by the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that the interviewees were busy reorganizing their work routines according to social isolation measures. As a suggestion for future research, we recommend to deepen the topic that encompasses the triad organizational culture, creativity, and complexity, aiming at organizations as a study object, through case studies.

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Social identification processes in fashion: from luxury to fast fashion

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

Maria Paula Guimarães¹ , Rita Ribeiro¹ 

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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Women's consumption relations with luxury handbags

Relações de consumo de mulheres com as bolsas de luxo

Rosana Dias Guedes de Moraes¹ , Ana Christina Celano Teixeira^{II} 

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the consumption relations of high-income Brazilian women with genuine handbags from international luxury brands. Inspired by the Itinerary Method, in-depth interviews were conducted with the owners of these objects, addressing the purchase, use, and disposal stages. The analysis of these reports was conducted based on the five main motivations pointed out by the literature for the consumption of luxury items — perceived quality, perceived uniqueness, perceived conspicuity, perceived hedonism, and perceived self-expression. The results show the presence of these personal and nonpersonal factors in the respondents' views on the concept of luxury and on the brands in this category and in the various stages of their relations to these objects.

Keywords: Luxury. Luxury handbags. Consumption. Luxury brands. Consumer behavior.

RESUMO

Este estudo exploratório investigou as relações de consumo de mulheres brasileiras de alto poder aquisitivo com bolsas genuínas de marcas de luxo internacionais. Usando como inspiração o método dos itinerários, foram conduzidas entrevistas em profundidade com possuidoras desses objetos, abordando as fases de compra, uso e descarte. A análise dos relatos foi conduzida com base nas cinco principais motivações apontadas pela literatura para o consumo de itens de luxo — a qualidade percebida, a singularidade percebida, a conspicuidade percebida, o hedonismo percebido e a autoexpressão percebida. Os resultados revelam a presença desses fatores de natureza pessoal e não pessoal nas visões das respondentes sobre o conceito de luxo e sobre as marcas dessa categoria e nas diversas fases de sua relação com esses objetos.

Palavras-chave: Luxo. Bolsas de luxo. Consumo. Marcas de luxo. Comportamento do consumidor.

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INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the consumer relations between a group of Brazilian women and genuine handbags from international luxury brands, through in-depth individual interviews, addressing the stages of purchase, use, and disposal and also their perceptions about luxury and luxury brands.

The definition of these objectives results from the growing interest that luxury consumption has received, largely because of the instigating subjective issues that it involves. Overall, contemporary consumers attribute symbolic values and meanings to goods and services — even the most simple and mundane —, which often exceed their practical uses (LEVY, 1959; ROCHA, 2012; DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 2013; MORAES, 2019). These subjective aspects are especially relevant in luxury consumption, whose goods involve, in an even more intense way, meanings filled with intangible factors, making their acquisition more for what they mean than for what they actually are (AAKER; KELLER, 1990).

The interest is also stimulated by the sector's representation in the economy. The global revenue of the ten main luxury products and services segments exceeded 1.3 trillion euros in 2021, of which products classified as personal use alone totaled more than 288 billion euros (BAIN & COMPANY, 2022). In Brazil, in 2018, the various categories in the sector totaled BRL 26 billion (RIVEIRA, 2019).

For the present research, we adopted an eminently qualitative approach, which enables to “explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem” (CRESWELL, 2010, p. 26, free translation). The 11 participants were from social class A (ABEP, 2019) and lived in the cities of Rio de Janeiro (RJ) or São Paulo (SP), and information was collected using a semi-structured script. Subsequently, we compared the obtained data with the bibliography and analyzed them in an interpretive and inductive manner (CRESWELL, 2010).

The research results contribute to the academic environment by addressing a specific theoretical and methodological approach in the universe of consumer phenomena. In the corporate environment, they can also assist companies dedicated to offering luxury products and services in their understanding of their consumers to better direct their strategies.

In addition, the findings may benefit society by stimulating reflection and discussion on a specific type of consumption in the context of social behavior. After all, according to Canclini (1999), consumption can be considered as a “space for thinking and in which a large part of the economic, sociopolitical, and psychological rationality is organized in societies” (CANCLINI, 1999, p. 14, free translation). In this context, if on the one hand social relations are one of the sources of influence on consumption (BOURDIEU, 2007) and help to understand it, on the other, consumption contributes to the understanding of a society (DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Luxury goods

Although subjective, the concept of luxury seems to be somewhat stable and has been present since the oldest human societies linked to ideas such as

ostentation, pleasure, superfluity, sumptuousness, splendor, abundance, and refinement (FERREIRA, 1999; CASTARÈDE, 2005; PASSARELLI, 2010). However, people's perception of its representations may change according to time, place, culture, and individual variables (CASTARÈDE, 2005; STREHLAU, 2008; GHOSH; VARSHNEY, 2013).

Despite these variations, academic bibliography usually associates luxury goods with terms such as exclusivity, scarcity, rarity, superfluity, high prices (BERRY, 1994; NUENO; QUELCH, 1998; CASTARÈDE, 2005), superior quality, high aesthetic level, production focused on craftsmanship, and history (NUENO; QUELCH, 1998; VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004; PASSARELLI, 2010). Moreover, Kapferer and Michaut (2015) point out that these products present the image of being timeless, which differentiates them from those goods perceived as fashionable, as ephemeral.

Consumers commonly associate these goods with terms such as class, high prices, good taste, uniqueness, quality, attractiveness, aesthetics, scarcity or limited accessibility, self-pleasure, history, and superfluity (DUBOIS; LAURENT, 1994; DUBOIS; PATERNAULT, 1995; DUBOIS; LAURENT; CZELLAR, 2001; DE BARNIER; RODINA; VALETTE-FLORENCE, 2006). Consumers demonstrate that they find, in these products, meanings full of intangible components linked to feelings and sensations, which makes the dynamics of their consumption marked with social, cultural, and individual aspects, in choices driven more by subjectivity than objectivity (DUBOIS; PATERNAULT, 1995; KAPFERER; MICHAUT, 2015).

Motivations for the consumption of luxury goods

According to the literature, the behavior of each consumer results from the arrangement of a set of factors, in varying proportions of importance (STREHLAU, 2008). In addition, two people may have different motivations for purchasing luxury goods, and even a single individual may have different reasons for consumption, depending on the category of the product in question (GHOSH; VARSHNEY, 2013).

Vigneron and Johnson (2004) listed the five most recurring dimensions to explain this type of consumption. Three of them reflect nonpersonal aspects: perceived conspicuity, perceived uniqueness, and perceived quality. The other two have a personal character: perceived extended-self and perceived hedonism.

Among the dimensions of nonpersonal character, perceived conspicuity is based on the search for social distinction and the demonstration of high status by display and ostentation of objects (MASON, 1981; BEARDEN; ETZEL, 1982; VELEN, 1988; BOURDIEU, 2007). The "conspicuous consumption," a term coined by Veblen (1988) at the end of the 19th century, aims to display one's wealth and thus give them prestige and social recognition, bringing them closer to the higher classes and distinguishing them from the lower classes. Conspicuous consumption is, therefore, guided by the effect on others, and the high price of luxury goods reinforces the appearance of high status by indicating wealth (STREHLAU, 2008).

Perceived uniqueness is related to the need of individuals to feel unique and to differentiate themselves from others (FROMKIN; SNYDER, 1980), which also leads them to the desire to own or do something before others. Driven by this desire, the person who acquires new objects or adopts new customs leaves them aside when they become more common.

Still on this subject, Brock (1968) states that “any commodity will be valued to the extent that it is not available” (free translation), an idea supported by Lynn (1991), when he says that scarcity emphasizes the value of anything that may be owned, especially among consumers who demonstrate a greater need for exclusivity (LYNN, 1991). In this context, the perception of scarcity, of rarity, makes the sumptuous good more attractive and reinforces its identification as a luxury (BEARDEN; ETZEL, 1982; DUBOIS; PATERNAULT, 1995; VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004), and the reduction of this perception may cause this status to be lowered (KAPFERER, 2012). As individuals’ possessions contribute to the creation of their identities and reflect them, a product that is hardly available can also be perceived as a metaphorical representation of individual uniqueness (TUAN, 1980; BELK, 1988).

Conversely, the dimension of perceived quality is based on the belief that a sumptuous object must have, in addition to its subjective meanings, superiority over others in terms of its use value (VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004; LIPOVETSKY, 2009). Therefore, prestigious brands and high prices often provide greater certainty for the choices of those consumers who are more inclined to rationality, acting as another indicator of superior quality (VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004). Some authors categorize the quality of luxury goods into two perspectives: the objective, practical, utilitarian, functional; and the subjective, represented by aesthetics (FLOCH, 1990; ALLÉRÈS, 1999; LIPOVETSKY, 2009; VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004).

Among the dimensions of personal character, the perceived extended-self takes into account the desire of consumers to use luxury objects in the creation of their identity (BELK, 1988; SPROTT; CZELLAR; SPANGENBERG, 2009). According to this idea, these goods play an important role in consumers’ self-understanding, self-concept, and self-expression (HEMETSBERGER; VON WALLPACH; BAUER, 2012). The term *extended-self* was first introduced by Belk (1988), who considers that, in modern life, individuals know themselves, define themselves, and remember who they are through all their possessions, often seen as parts of their own bodies. According to the author, “our belongings are among the most important factors when reflecting on our identities” (BELK, 1988, p. 139, free translation).

Leibenstein (1950) added two effects to the study of motivations for consumption, which Ghosh and Varshney (2013) relate to the search for self-expression. One of them is the bandwagon effect; and the other, the snob effect. The first would encourage consumers to buy a product because other people also own it, as part of the effort to belong to a particular group (LEIBENSTEIN, 1950). In this case, the brand would serve as a “certificate of credibility and support of the personal image” (STREHLAU, 2008, p. 84, free translation) to adapt the individual to the social or professional environment. In contrast, the snob effect refers to the aforementioned individual’s desire to be unique and exclusive. However, it differs from the conspicuousness described by Veblen (1988), because it is based on the fact that other people do not own a particular asset, while conspicuousness occurs according to the price of the asset (LEIBENSTEIN, 1950).

Conversely, perceived hedonism moves consumers’ choices toward their own pleasure, reward, and personal fulfillment. Such choices are, therefore, less subject to the external influences and functional attributes of the objects, and more subject to their own desire (VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004). Consumption is deemed

here as one of the forms of seeking pleasure through relations to material objects (PASSARELLI, 2010). One of the forms of hedonic consumption is self-gifting, which expresses the search for pleasure through feelings of fulfillment, security, enthusiasm, youth, beauty, among others, and attributes meaning of merit to personal purchases (MICK; DEMOSS, 1990). In the choices dictated by hedonism, luxury brands usually have the function of stimulating emotional states (STREHLAU, 2008).

Still regarding hedonism as a motivation for the consumption of luxury nowadays, Lipovetsky (2007) sees changes in luxury consumption toward the search for emotional and physical satisfaction, of a private nature. The author believes that this type of consumption would be increasingly connected to the search for experiences, sensations, and well-being, in parallel with differential social satisfaction. Consumption "for the other" would thus be superseded by consumption "for oneself."

Women's luxury handbags

Women's luxury handbags are objects visibly used by their consumers to express self-image and self-reward, in addition to being highly related to high quality, exclusivity, high price, and social status (KASUMA et al., 2016; CHEN; ISA; YANG, 2022).

Liu, Richard and Wong (2011) state that, in post-modernity, the handbag is not just an object for carrying belongings or a fashion accessory, but rather one of the most personal items of women's clothing. For many consumers, it represents an extension of their own identity and can reveal who they are or would like to be (KING, 2016).

When analyzing the consumption of luxury handbags by middle-class Brazilian women, Hor-Meyll, Schorr and Pessoa (2012) considered that the possession and ostentation of these objects give their consumers status and prestige in their reference groups, in addition to the feeling of being accepted in their aspiration groups, raising their self-esteem, and contributing to their perceived professional success.

On the part of luxury brands, women's handbags have assumed great importance in their international market positioning strategies, considering that they are used as differentiating factors in the face of competition (SOLCA; WING, 2009) and as ways to enter new markets (CHEVALIER; MAZZALOVO, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Considering that consumer relations in the luxury universe depend on characteristics specific to the culture of each place (TIDWELL; DUBOIS, 1996), that different categories of products and services impact purchasing decisions and the meanings of their consumption in various ways (DUBOIS; PATERNAULT, 1995), and also that the socioeconomic class occupied by the person also impacts their view of luxury (MORAES, 2019), this study aimed to investigate the consumer relations of a specific group — Brazilian women with high purchasing power — to a particular object — genuine handbags from international luxury brands.

For the present research, the authors adopted an eminently qualitative approach, which enables "to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem" (CRESWELL, 2010, p. 26, free translation). Qualitative research methods provide the possibility of generating insights about a new or emerging

phenomenon based on the participants' views and perceptions (WOODSIDE; WILSON, 2003; CRESWELL, 2013), as is the case of this study. In addition, qualitative studies can generate rich narratives by addressing real-world configurations and allowing researchers to draw meaningful and relevant conclusions from the data (PATTON, 2002; FOROUDI *et al.*, 2017). Hence, the adopted methodology seems appropriate for the development of a theory based on qualitative data on a social reality that has not yet been investigated, and which therefore has no theoretical explanation (GEHMAN *et al.*, 2018).

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative literature review was first carried out regarding the characteristics of luxury goods and the motivations for their consumption and luxury handbags specifically. In a second stage, interviews were conducted with Brazilian consumers of these objects.

In order to compare the information contained in the literature with the reports of the social group in question and to investigate aspects that may not have been reported before, data were collected from the participants by in-depth individual interviews, using a semi-structured script, which allowed us to map and explore the participants' world and to better understand the beliefs, attitudes, values, and motivations behind their behavior (GASKELL, 2004). The material resulting from these reports was then analyzed and interpreted in the light of the bibliography.

As luxury may or may not be associated with brands and products, and it is also possible to be related to more subjective dimensions, such as experiences and attitudes (LIPOVETSKY; ROUX, 2005), the interviewees were initially encouraged to talk about their perceptions of the term *luxury* in a more comprehensive manner.

Luxury products are now predominantly represented by brands that gather sets of meanings with which consumers identify themselves and which they acquire together with the products (PINHO, 1996; STREHLAU, 2008). Taking this into consideration, the participants were also asked to discuss the characteristics they attribute to the brands they consider luxurious and their feelings toward them.

Finally, the respondents were encouraged to talk about their relations to luxury handbags. Douglas and Isherwood (2013) consider that the essential function of consuming products lies in their ability to make sense, which makes it essential to research "how they are used" (DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 2013, p. 108, free translation). To this end, inspiration was sought from the itinerary method (DESJEUX, 2004), which understands consumption as a system of interconnected actions that precede and follow the moment when the product or service is purchased and which are worthy of investigation (CASOTTI; SUAREZ; CAMPOS, 2008, p. 114).

The itinerary method presupposes the real observation of consumer practices over the participant's discourse and "favors the universe of objects and practices, at the expense, for example, of the symbolic dimension of brands and representations" (CASOTTI; SUAREZ; CAMPOS, 2008, p. 113, free translation). However, due to the nature of the object of this study — luxury handbags —, whose consumption process takes place in different locations which the researcher cannot access, and also because of the relevance of brands in this context, the authors considered the respondents' discourse as well as the importance they attribute to brands.

Nevertheless, the scope suggested by Desjeux (2004) with regard to consumption stages was maintained, here summarized as purchase, use, and disposal.

The analysis group consisted of 11 self-reported class A consumers based on the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (*Associação Brasileira de Empresas de Pesquisa – ABEP*) criterion (ABEP, 2019), residents in the two cities with the highest consumption of luxury products and services in Brazil — São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (GFK; MCF CONSULTORIA, 2013) — and who purchased at least one handbag with the aforementioned characteristics in the 24 months prior to the interviews. Chart 1 consolidates

Chart 1. Profile of the interviewees (coded names).

Name	Age	Marital status	Children	Residence	Occupation	Education
CB	40	Divorced	1 B	Laranjeiras, Rio de Janeiro	Businesswoman	Marketing Technologist
C	51	Married	3 G	São Conrado, Rio de Janeiro	Not currently working	Graduate Degree in Mathematics
E	45	Single	-	Arpoador, Rio de Janeiro	Employee at Petrobras enterprise	Graduate Degree in Business Administration
K	50	Divorced	-	Leblon, Rio de Janeiro	International pharmaceutical laboratory representative	Graduate Degree in Administration
L	48	Married	1 B	Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro	Employee at BNDES enterprise	Master's Degree in Business Administration
MG	65	Married	2 B 1 G	Higienópolis, São Paulo	Not currently working	Graduate Degree in Business Administration
M	49	Married	1 G	Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro	Not currently working	Graduate Degree in Business Administration and Interior Decoration
N	49	Divorced	1 B	Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro	Psychologist	PhD student in Psychology
RQ	49	Married	1 B 1 G	Higienópolis, São Paulo	Not currently working	Graduate Degree in Nutrition
R	50	Married	2 B	Barra da Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro	Retired	Graduate Degree in Business Administration
S	39	Married	2 G	Moema, São Paulo	Businesswoman	Graduate Degree in Advertising

B: boy; G: girl; BNDES: Brazilian Development Bank.

the profile of the participants, whose characteristics were also described along with the first quote of each of them, seeking to facilitate the personification of the reports during the reading. The sample was defined by convenience, as indicated by acquaintances of the authors, and dimensioned by saturation. Before the interviews, the participants were informed about the objectives of the study and gave consent to the use of their answers, keeping their names confidential.

The interviews, which lasted approximately one hour each, and which exceeded 11 hours in total, were conducted by one of the authors between November and December 2016, at the respondents' homes or in quiet commercial establishments, according to the participants' convenience, and through a semi-structured script.

The reports were recorded and later transcribed over 93 pages. Subsequently, the answers were grouped by topics to compare the different perspectives presented, and compared with the literature, based on the main motivations identified for the consumption of luxury goods, listed in the theoretical framework.

The collected data were analyzed in an interpretive and inductive manner, in which case the researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from their origins, history, contexts, and previous understandings. Therefore, the researcher's role should not be assumed to be totally neutral (CRESWELL, 2010). In addition, when collecting qualitative data, "the researcher's presence may influence the answers." Therefore, it was up to the authors to "interpret the broader meaning of the data" that were collected (CRESWELL, 2010, p. 217, free translation).

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section, we present the analysis of the participants' responses in the light of the literature. In order to facilitate the investigation, we considered as reference points the main dimensions of the consumption of luxury goods, listed in the theoretical framework.

Dimensions of nonpersonal character

Perceived conspicuity

The association between the consumption of luxury handbags and perceived conspicuity can be observed with great frequency in the speeches of the respondents, who showed that the display and ostentation of a luxury handbag can be a symbol of social distinction and a demonstration of high status, bringing individuals closer to the higher social classes and distinguishing them from the lower ones (MASON, 1981; BEARDEN; ETZEL, 1982; VEBLEN, 1988; BOURDIEU, 2007). In this sense, the consumption of a luxury handbag would have as one of its objectives the effect it has on other individuals by indicating wealth (STREHLAU, 2008), as demonstrated in the following excerpts from the account of respondent CB, 40 years old, divorced, marketing technologist, businesswoman, and resident in the Laranjeiras neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro:

For example, the Michael Kors [brand]. I can't identify with this brand, because it actually targets a wider audience and I like exclusivity. [...] But it's not about social class, it's social status, which are completely different things.

Louis Vuitton was very concerned about what happened with Neverfull, which are those larger, lower-priced bags. I believe that because of a marketing strategy they launched this product. I had it. I bought it, I was over the moon, and all of a sudden you start noticing that the copy, counterfeiting industry started to strongly pressure these bags, 'cause it reached a more humble audience, who can afford to buy a bag worth BRL 4,000. And I started to feel bad, not because it was a cheaper bag, I don't wanna seem shallow (CB).

Regarding the purchase stage, participant M, 49 years old, married, business administrator and interior designer, who was not working at the time of the interview and lives in the Barra da Tijuca neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro, also indirectly demonstrates a conspicuous attitude when commenting on her satisfaction when leaving a luxury boutique with the packaging of the handbag she has just purchased: *"I wanna go out with that huge packaging bag, hang out in the mall, everyone looking at the bag and thinking 'what did she buy?'" (M).*

However, overall, the respondents referred to conspicuous behaviors related to luxury handbags always attributed to third parties, disregarding this attitude on their part. The following excerpts illustrate this situation: *"Most people use it to symbolize a status, they want to show it off. Not me" (L).* *"I realize that, in Brazil, there's the use as an ostentation move. [...] What I see among friends is that they buy mostly because of social status and ostentation. Not me" (CB).* And also in the excerpts:

But I don't want that handbag status thing. I want the quality, the tradition, the beauty of the handbag. 'Cause, nowadays, I see status a lot in people. It's about how much you have, what you are by the handbag status. This even made me stop buying it for a while, in addition to the prices, which exponentially increased. [...] For my stepdaughter, it's about status. [...] She's 43 years old, she's already mature. But she has another vision of luxury, she wants attention, she wants more (M).

'Cause if you buy a designer handbag just to display it, it's not my case, that's not why I buy it. [...] Some people, if they buy an expensive handbag, want it to draw attention, it's the power of the brand. As I see it, it's different, I'm more of a classic person, I buy something that draws less attention. [...] I don't use it to display it to people. I choose [the handbag] according to the way I'm dressed (N, 49 years old, divorced, psychologist and PhD student in Psychology, resident in the neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca, in Rio de Janeiro).

It should be considered that it may be delicate for some of the participants to assume a conspicuous consumption behavior on their part or, possibly, that the desire for differential social satisfaction takes place unconsciously. This could explain the fact that, although the subject has come up very frequently in the reports, it has always occurred in relation to other people.

Perceived uniqueness

The association of perceived uniqueness (most mentioned by the respondents as exclusivity) was very present in the interviewees' statements about luxury brands, in line with what has already been pointed out by several authors (BERRY, 1994; NUENO; QUELCH, 1998; CASTARÈDE, 2005).

The desire for differentiation through the use of luxury handbags was also present in the respondents' reports about their consumer relations to these objects during the purchase (choice) and use stages. Respondents showed that they prefer exclusive brands and models, as if they wanted the scarcer availability of handbags to reflect their own uniqueness (TUAN, 1980; BELK, 1988).

Thus, reinforcing the idea that, when wanting to feel unique, different, and exclusive a person tends to abandon objects and customs that they consider luxurious when they become more common, there were answers such as: *"If I notice that everyone is using it, I avoid it. I don't want something that everyone has, I discard it"* (S, 39 years old, married, publicist, businesswoman, resident in the Moema neighborhood, in São Paulo).

It should be noted that the desire for uniqueness is present even in some situations in which the objects in question belong to renowned and expensive brands, in a movement of differentiation even in relation to other women with purchasing power similar to that of the respondents, as suggested by the excerpt:

The other day, I was lunching with some women and, at the entrance, there was a table with handbags. There were only Birkin bags, of all colors and patterns. The richest [woman] had crocodile pattern, the poorest [woman] had the usual one. So, you don't quite understand what kind of luxury this is, it's kind of weird. 'Cause, that way, it shows that you paid well, but there are 20 others there (MG, 65 years old, married, business administrator, who was not working at the time of the interview, resident in the neighborhood of Higienópolis, in São Paulo).

Conspicuous components can also be perceived in some cases related to the desire for uniqueness, when the object becomes more common and its perception of luxury — and thus of its status — decreases (KAPFERER, 2012). This is what the following excerpt seems to point out: *"I identify with Prada handbags, I've always liked them. A bit because it's not exactly the handbag that everyone buys"* (C, 51 years old, married, mathematician, who was not working at the time of the interview, resident in the São Conrado neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro).

Perceived quality

The importance attached to quality emerged in the respondents' speeches, both associated with the broad concept of luxury and with their views on brands in the sector and also about the consumer relations they develop with their luxury bags. These women seem to show the expectation that these goods will be endowed with superiority over those of brands that they do not consider luxurious, as anticipated by the literature (VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004; LIPOVETSKY, 2009).

Mentions of quality appear in the respondents' statements both from the objective perspective, represented by functionality, and from the subjective perspective, represented by aesthetics (FLOCH, 1990; ALLÉRÈS, 1999; LIPOVETSKY, 1999 and 2009; VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004).

It is noteworthy that the aspect of objective quality related to durability recursively appears in the participants' responses as a prerequisite for goods that they consider luxurious, a characteristic that is part of their expectations even before purchase, and not a differential affecting their choices among goods in this category. The idea can be illustrated by the statement: *"Quality is a premise. If I'm buying at these stores, it's because I know that the quality is indisputable"* (E, 45 years old, single, business administrator, civil servant, resident in the Arpoador neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro).

Conversely, other objective aspects of quality, such as functionality, usefulness, practicality and versatility, seem decisive in the stages of purchasing (choosing) the bag, among others also considered luxury, according to the participants' speeches, such as in the statement: *"I think about a few things. For instance, I don't like handbags, just shoulder bags, it has to do with functionality"* (C). And also in the following excerpt:

The first thing I think about is whether it will suit me in terms of functionality, depending on the occasion. And, of course, in its beauty. But I always think about practice, about a color that won't clash with much. 'Cause I also don't change bags much, I spend some time using it. [...] This Hermès is very practical for traveling. It has two compartments, it's open, and leaves our hands free (K, 50 years old, divorced, business administrator, international pharmaceutical laboratory representative, resident in the Leblon neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro).

When discussing the stage of use of the already-purchased handbag, the objective quality is resumed by the respondents when they deny establishing restrictions on the use of their handbags, using them interchangeably for work, leisure, travel, or social events, as is the case in the following excerpts, related to versatility: *"I use it every day, I even take it to the gym"* (C); *"The same handbag that I use for work, I use for the office, where I have to dress up [to go], to have dinner with friends, when attending a conference, a lecture, I make no distinction"* (N).

Subjective quality, linked to aesthetics, also seems to be a factor of great importance when choosing the luxury handbag model, which can be exemplified in the statement: *"Design. You just have to look at it"* (M); and also in: *"It's always the aesthetic that attracts me, the beauty. It's always the visual aspect first. I buy it because it's beautiful. The brand is important, but not as important. It's not to say it's a Chanel, it's because I like the handbag, because it's beautiful"* (MG).

Although it was not directly mentioned as a consequence of quality, the way in which the respondents described disposing of their luxury handbags seems to be a consequence of this issue. Donating it to relatives or close people, who they consider that will value them, or to charity, is the form of disposal most frequently mentioned by the participants, and there were mentions of the possibility of selling it. The

answers seem to point to the assessment that these objects are considered special in some way, “unusual” goods, as Castarède (2005, p. 24, free translation) points out. Apparently, the high objective (functionality, durability) and subjective (beauty) qualities, in addition to their high prices, make that, even when they decide not to use the handbags anymore, the interviewees do not dispose of them as they do with any object; they give them suitable destinations for valuable goods, as the excerpt suggests: “I prefer to give it, generally to those closest to me” (C); and also in:

I give it as a gift to people who would like to have it and cannot, and also to an association that cares for children with cancer and has charity shop. There are people who sell it, but I think that, since I'm in a different position, I can do something for someone (MG).

Dimensions of personal character

Perceived extended-self

The desire for self-expression and the creation or reinforcement of identity through the consumption of luxury handbags could be observed in the participants' statements. Apparently, they consider that the handbag is capable of transferring symbolic meanings from the brands with which they identify themselves, helping them to bring them closer to what they are or want to be (KLEINE; KLEINE, 2000; HEMETSBERGER; VON WALLPACH; BAUER, 2012; DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 2013). The following excerpt portrays this perspective: “The designer handbag must have your personality. It widely varies depending on taste, more classic, more modern. But it defines your personality, it defines you, it helps to express [your] personality” (S). And also:

When you identify with the brand, you incorporate that elegance displayed by it. For example, a Birkin bag, my consumer dream. I see elegant women going to meetings in movies. [...] I identify with the brand because it expresses my personality (CB).

The participants see the luxury handbag as a way of expressing the personality of its user to some extent, as Belk (1988) points out, also when observing other people. Several of the respondents reported that they tend to infer a lot about other women by looking at their handbags. The following excerpts illustrate the idea: “Yes, absolutely. More pretentious, more boring, more practical... [...] And as I look, I also look at the bag” (K); and “The handbag speaks for the person” (L, 48 years old, married, master in business administration, civil servant, resident in the Jardim Botânico neighborhood, in Rio de Janeiro).

The bandwagon effect, described by Leibenstein (1950) as part of the effort to belong to a particular group, is suggested in the following excerpt:

The handbag has a lot to do with society, with the other. Since everyone you interact with uses that, you end up fitting somehow. And when you say “now I'm only going to buy handbags from Brazil” you get a little left out, you don't fit in (C).

Perceived hedonism

In the interviewees' statements regarding the concept of luxury, as well as in the consumption stages of purchase and use of handbags, the reference to feelings of pleasure, characteristic of hedonic consumer behavior, was recurring (VIGNERON; JOHNSON, 2004; STREHLAU, 2008).

When discussing what they considered luxury, broadly speaking, the participants repeatedly used terms such as "living well," "comfort," "time," "travels," "culture," "quality of life," "executive travel," "meeting cool people," and "eating well." The idea can be exemplified by the excerpt:

Luxury has a lot to do with comfort. You may be staying at a hotel in the same location as another, but there are differences in the type of mattress, duvet, quality of the sheet, the towel. It's completely different (C).

When mentioning her consumer dream in her vision of luxury, one of the respondents even mentioned traveling in the first place: "I even prefer not to have the handbag if I can travel more. I'd even let go of the bag, which is something I like" (M).

These views seem to reinforce the idea of Lipovetsky (2007) that contemporary luxury is increasingly related to the search for sensations and experiences, to the appreciation of "living," of "experimenting," more focused on private satisfaction, often at the expense of distinctive purposes.

Hedonistic consumer behavior also emerged in reports of feelings of pleasure and fulfillment resulting from the purchase of handbags, including the self-gifting situation (MICK; DEMOSS, 1990), as shown in the excerpt: "I give myself a gift every two years. And it's usually a handbag, like this Hermès. But it doesn't have to be my birthday. It's more like, I'm worth it!" (K).

When reporting the purchase stage, one of the respondents indicated the search for pleasure, not only by purchasing an asset she wants, but also including the stages before and after the purchase and the service received at luxury brand boutiques: "It's nice to buy, to browse, to observe it, see if the price is good, if you have the money, it's an achievement, you know? It's very nice" (M).

The same respondent adds, when asked about the possibility of purchasing a luxury handbag online:

I didn't buy it and I wouldn't buy it. I'm going to spend a fortune, I want to sit down, to drink champagne, I enjoy every bit! [I want] To have a moment of luxury, of wealth, madam-like. Not because of trust, but purely because of the feeling. I buy other things. But the handbag, I wanna go out with that huge packaging bag, hang out in the mall, everyone looking at the bag and thinking 'what did she buy?'" (M).

Mentions of pleasure could also be observed in the participants' reports about the stage of using their luxury handbags. Several of them described positive feelings when using them such as happiness and fulfillment.

In line with the findings of Livramento, Hor-Meyll and Pessôa (2011), there were respondents who consider that luxury handbags are capable of bringing positive

feelings and sensations in relation to themselves. Sirgy (1982) defines self-concept as the set of beliefs that an individual has in relation to oneself and self-esteem as the positive form of this assessment. The participants listed feelings, such as self-confidence, power, beauty, and sensuality, when using their luxury handbags, which indicates that these objects can contribute to raising their self-esteem (SIRGY, 1982). This is the case with the excerpt: *"My husband asks 'who are you dressing like this for?' And I answer: 'For myself!'. There's also the thing that if you have a better handbag, better clothes, you feel sexier, better"* (L).

CONCLUSION

In this study we investigated the consumer relations between a group of Brazilian women with high-purchasing power and genuine handbags from international luxury brands and their perceptions about luxury and luxury brands.

Our results indicate that the expectations indicated by the main motivations according to the literature for the luxury consumption — perceived conspicuity, uniqueness, quality, extended-self, and hedonism — are somewhat reflected in the various stages of the consumption of luxury handbags, in the reports of the investigated group. It should be noted that these factors are arranged in varying proportions of importance for each consumer (STREHLAU, 2008) and may vary according to individual characteristics (GHOSH; VARSHNEY, 2013).

Apparently, for these women, from a nonpersonal point of view, a luxury handbag would be able, to some extent, to symbolize high status in the face of the social groups to which they belong or wish to belong, to express their uniqueness, to offer quality — objective and subjective — higher than that perceived in objects not considered luxurious. From a personal point of view, this object would contribute to their self-expression and create or reinforce their identity, in addition to providing pleasure and raising their self-esteem.

We suggest other research possibilities. One of them is the opportunity to investigate other consumer groups and relevant segments in the luxury sector, considering the variations that can be observed in different cultures, socioeconomic classes, individuals' age and stage of life, and product categories (BERRY, 1994; CASTARÈDE, 2005; MORAES, 2019).

There also seem to be opportunities for further research on the activities of selling and renting secondhand luxury handbags, a phenomenon mentioned by some of the interviewees in this research and which has been increasingly observed in consumer relations.

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