Trend Research and Fashion Branding in the Modern Hyperconsumption Society

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ABSTRACT

Modern society is characterized by the generalization of fashion, which is the appreciation of the new. Fashion brands, therefore, are those whose products renew cyclically, constantly changing. In what sense these changes tend to occur is what trends researches, carried out professionally by style 'bureaux', try to predict. Contemporary society is also marked by hyperconsumption, in which individuals acquire much more than the functionality of products: they seek to experience sensations, feelings, share values, lifestyles, and personalities. In this sense, brands attribute much more than a signature to the products, but their management, or branding, aims to associate to their names a series of intangible attributes with which a group of consumers identifies. The purpose of this study, in this scenario, is to describe and analyze the relationships between fashion, hyperconsumption, branding, and trends research in modern society.

Keywords: fashion trends, branding, modern society.

A Pesquisa De Tendências E A Gestão De Marcas De Moda Na Sociedade De Hiperconsumo Moderna

RESUMO

A sociedade moderna caracteriza-se pela generalização da moda, que é a valorização do novo. Marcas de moda, portanto, são aquelas cujos produtos renovam-se ciclicamente, apresentando modificações constantemente. Em que sentido essas mudanças tendem a ocorrer é o que buscam prever as pesquisas de tendências, realizadas de maneira profissional pelos bureaux de estilo. A sociedade contemporânea é marcada também pelo hiperconsumo, em que os indivíduos adquirem muito mais que a funcionalidade dos produtos: eles buscam "experenciar" sensações, sentimentos, compartilhar valores, estilos de vida e personalidades. Nesse sentido, as marcas atribuem muito mais que uma assinatura aos produtos, mas sua gestão, ou branding, visa associar a seus nomes uma série de atributos intangíveis com os quais se identifique um grupo de consumidores. O objetivo deste estudo, nesse cenário, é descrever e analisar as relações entre a moda, o hiperconsumo, a gestão de marcas e a pesquisa de tendências na sociedade moderna.

Palavras-chave*: tendências de moda, branding, sociedade moderna.*

1. INTRODUCTION

"Fashion is made to become unfashionable" (Coco Chanel).

Although they are related, fashion and clothing are separate concepts. Clothing allows for the practice of fashion, that is, it allows for the construction of discourse about the clothed body. Fashion, on the other hand, is set as an ethos, an intrinsic value to society, especially modern, on a level beyond tactile objects, unlike clothing: "fashion, while a dimension of communication in modern society, is a privileged field of the aesthetic experience, for it is ethos set on the pleasure of seeing and being seen" (LIPOVETSKY, 1989). It is explicitly devoted to the aesthetic initiative, the fantasy, the human originality, and implies, beyond that, an order of values that emphasizes the new 'now' as opposed [...] to the collective past. There is no system of fashion if not when the taste for novelty becomes a constant and regular principle, [...] when it works as an autonomous cultural exigence (idem, p.29).

Fashion, knowing that, was treated here as the behavioral expression of individuals, as a domain through which they can translate their desires for novelty and differentiation, not as a product or a trend market. Clothing constitutes itself as fashion's most pure manifestation, for it is constantly renewed, translating on the body the speech saying "I dress that which is new". However, in this work, fashion represents much more than clothing: any product whose design is regularly renewed.

Fashion is, however, a privileged field of aesthetic experience, and allows, especially on the appropriation of clothing objects, the enjoyment of a

plethora of signs that operate on the subjectivity of each individual, daily (SANT'ANNA, 2003). "The ways of dressing, of decorating, of interfering in one's body, are elements that combine with other vectors, producing the ways of being, the ways of relating to oneself: the subjectivities" (MESQUITA, 2004, p.15). Much more than translating the soul of fashion, clothing translates personalities.

"Fashion is composed on the 'spirit of time' of each society. Each period weaves its own shapes, and it is mainly on the skin, 'a subjectivity' that got the privilege of being both on the body and in the world" (SANT'ANNA, 1995) that they present themselves in a more clear and direct manner. Therefore appearance and clothing are fundamental aspects of the mediation between individuals in modern society. Accordingly, "clothes, being signs that carry in themselves a number of significances entangled to beauty, youth, wealth, masculinity or femininity, happiness or sadness, impress on their bearer a daily choice of positioning itself on culture's bigger set of complex meanings webs" (SANT'ANNA, 2003).

Knowing this, and due to the great importance of fashion as behavior, and of clothing as a constituent of appearance, as well as their influence in contemporary social relations, clothing brands are entrusted with the difficult task of translating into products the yearnings and personality of their target audience, in addition to incorporating the 'new', to present design elements in line with the ephemeral trends of fashion.

Of course, in a society in which brands are gaining increased importance in the relationship between individual and product, brands, especially in the clothing sector and other cyclically renovated products, such as decorative objects, automobiles, appliances, and electronics, among others; have been investing heavily in the development of innovations, and consumption and behavior trends research, that would allow them to add intangible values aligned with society's wishes for their products, as a means of overcoming competition.

For this purpose, we use the results of trend surveys, carried out professionally by the style *bureaux*, which seek to predict in what sense changes in behavior and design tend to occur. Therefore, in this work, the fashion trend represents more than the trends that influence the ephemeral transformations in clothing - even if the *bureaux* focus their results on this sector - but the sense in which changes in consumption, social relations, personal tastes, technologies, materials, designs, and aesthetics tend to happen and influence changes in several different areas and products.

Seeing as contemporary society is also marked by *hyperconsumption*, in which individuals acquire much more than product functionality, seeking to "experience" sensations, emotions, values, lifestyles and personalities, brands attribute much more than a signature to products, but their management, or branding, aims at associating to their names this series of intangible attributes with which a group of consumers identifies. In this context, it is fundamental to understand the relationships between fashion, *hyperconsumption*, brand management and trend research in modern society. This work seeks, therefore, to describe and analyze how these concepts are related in modern society.

2. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this work is to perform an analysis of consumption in modern society considering the dynamics of fashion trends and their implication in brand management. Especially in clothing brands, which are characterized by the commercialization not only of products, but also values such as change and novelty. To carry out such an analysis, the research relies on a bibliographical research that covers publications from the areas of philosophy - dealing with consumer society - fashion, trends and brand management. The proposal is to make a qualitative research, aiming

to analyze the cultural characteristics of modern society with implications on consumption.

> While quantitative studies generally seek to rigorously follow a plan previously established (based on clearly indicated hypotheses and variables that are the object of an operational definition), qualitative research tends to be directed throughout its development; in addition, it does not seek to enumerate or measure events and, generally, does not use statistical instruments for analysis of data; its focus of interest is broad and part of a perspective different from the one adopted by quantitative methods. It is part of the collection of descriptive data through direct and interactive contact of the researcher with the situation under study (NEVES, 1996, p.01).

According to Lopes (1990), "the use of statistical methods usually generates descriptive research, while qualitative methods produce interpretive research". In this case, a descriptive and subsequently interpretive research of the data is developed. "The description bridges the phases of data observation and interpretation" (idem, p.129).

Thus, the interpretation follows the description of the collected data, in the light of the bibliography researched. According to Lopes (1990), "interpretation is the second stage of the analysis, and with it, the research becomes properly scientific". In this work, therefore, bibliographical data collected on the modern consumer society is described and later interpreted under the bias of brand management and trend theory, aiming to analyze the relationship between the phenomena of fashion and *hyperconsumption* and their implications on trends and brands.

A brand, in this context, is considered here to be "a name, term, sign, symbol or combination thereof which are intended to identify goods or services of a seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors" (KOTLER, 1998, p.393). According to Strunk (2003, p.18), the brand can be considered the intangible sum of the attributes of a product: its name, packaging and price, its history, reputation, and the way it is promoted. "It is something that marks us, on

which we have an opinion and let, or not, ourselves be seduced by its charms to the point of accepting a relationship that, usually, involves money" (COELHO, 2007).

According to Gobé (2002, p.20), it is crucial that to be relevant, "brands understand the big changes by acting and competing differently. Today we are clearly operating with a completely different set of values than we knew five years ago. Speed replaces stability; intangible values become more valuable than tangible ones." Knowing this, professionals responsible for brand management have benefited increasingly from branding and trend research as informational areas for creating and maintaining successful brands in modern society.

3. THE HYPERCONSUMPTION IN MODERN SOCIETY

It is not recent that we hear of the consumer society, which emerged from the industrial revolution, around the eighties of the nineteenth century. According to Lipovetsky (2007, p.24), it is first characterized by the mass consumption, made possible by the expansion of the markets through the improvement of modern transport and communication infrastructures, as well as the refinement of manufacturing machines. These improvements have allowed for increased productivity at lower costs and regular outflow of large quantities of products.

But not only that, "consumer capitalism [...] was also a cultural and social construction that demanded the 'education' of consumers and needed the visionary spirit of creative entrepreneurs, the 'hand of managers'" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.24-25). A greater number of products have become accessible to a greater number of consumers. It is the era of mass marketing, department stores, national brands, packaging and national advertising: "standardized, wrapped in small packages distributed by the national

markets, the products have a name, attributed by the manufacturer: the brand. "(idem, p.26)

From the second half of the twentieth century, we see the birth of a new modernity. According to Lipovetsky (2007, p.07), it is at this time that "the fever of comfort has taken the place of nationalistic passions and leisure has replaced revolution." "If 'Phase I' started by democratizing the purchase of durable goods, 'Phase II' concluded this process by making available to all, or almost all, the emblematic products of the affluent society: the automobile, the television, household appliances." (idem, p.28).

Performing the 'miracle of consumption', 'Phase II' gives rise to a discretionary purchasing power in increasingly broad social strata, who can aspire, confident, to the constant improvement of their resources; spreading the credit and enabling most people to free themselves from the urgency of immediate needs. For the first time, the masses go to a more psychological and more individualized material search, to a way of life (durable goods, leisure activities, vacations, fashion) until then exclusive to social elites. (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.29).

This is the time of the differentiation of markets, of fashion, seduction, the ephemeral, of targeted marketing, focusing on age and socio-cultural factors. "The whole of society is mobilized around the project of creating a comfortable and easygoing everyday life, synonymous with happiness" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.30): "there is also a whole environment of stimulation of desires, advertising euphoria, the luxuriant image of vacations, the sexualization of symbols and bodies" (idem, p.30-31). The exaltation of momentary pleasures triumphs. Lipovetsky also defends a second revolution in the consumer society in the last decades of the twentieth century:

> Relying on the new religion of continuous improvement of living conditions, better-living became a passion for the masses, the supreme goal of democratic societies, an exalted ideal in every corner. [...] Apparently, nothing or

almost nothing has changed: we continue to evolve in the society of the supermarket and advertising, the automobile and the television. However, in the last two decades, [...] a new phase of consumer capitalism has begun: it is precisely the hyperconsumption society (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.07-08).

Consumers become more demanding about quality of life, communication, health, the environment and social issues: "we want objects 'to live', rather than objects to display; we buy this or that not so much as to show off, to show a social position, but as to meet emotional and bodily, sensorial and aesthetic, relational and sanitary, playful and recreational satisfaction" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.36). "The apogee of consumption no longer has to do with the differential sign, but with the experimental value, the 'pure' consumption that functions not as a social indicator, but as a great range of services aimed at the individual" (idem, p.37).

The consumer stops consuming only products, and proceeds to seek much more than that: "the hyperconsumer no longer seeks so much the possession of things for themselves, but, above all, the multiplication of experiences, the pleasure of experience for the sake of experiencing, the drunkenness of new sensations and emotions" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.54). These phenomena, by not abdicating anything from the spirit, privilege experience, interactivity, the human senses (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.149).

For Solomon (2011, p.43-44), "people often buy products not for what they do, but for what they mean". This does not imply that the basic function of a product does not matter, but rather that the role it plays in our lives goes far beyond. "The object loses the objective purpose and its function, becoming a term in a much greater combinatory" (BAUDRILLARD, 2008, p.146).

"When products are similar, for example, we usually choose the brand that has an image (or even a personality) that matches ours." Currently, defends Solomon (2011, p.44), we (hyper)modern consumers, on the one hand, want increasingly disproportionate

spectacles, on the other, long for an intimate or 'true' world that identifies us (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.57). Such is the characteristic figure of the contemporary object-merchandise: to be made in our image and likeness, as a decal which is also a portrait (VOLLI, 2006, p.220). The truth is that consumption is increasingly justified by the proportion of happiness to the individual: they seek positive, motivating, relaxing, affective experiences. "The hyper-consumer is not limited to buying high-tech products to communicate in real time: they also buy affective products" (LIPOVETSKY 2007, p.63).

Today, during what Maffesoli (2004, p.125) calls the "re-enchantment of the world," objects are imbued with signs that are not themselves, but which refer to other meanings. According to Jean Baudrillard (2008, p.26), "we live in this way under the signs and in refusal of reality. A miraculous security: when we look at the images of the world, who can distinguish this brief irruption of reality from the profound pleasure of not being there?" For the author (idem), "the image, the sign, the message, everything we 'consume', is the tranquility itself sealed by distance from the world and that eludes, rather than compromises, the violent allusion to the real." Consumption "tends to happiness by default, eliminating tensions". (BAUDRILLARD, 2008, p.27) According to Ugo Volli (2006, p.214), "consumer behavior towards commodities is no longer of a technical, neutral, objective fact; not only the benefits and the cost of goods, the relation between price and quality". It is clear that, currently, "the affective level is central in every relation of consumption" (idem).

> The civilization of consumer welfare was the great historical gravedigger of the glorious ideology of duty. Throughout the second half of the century, the logic of mass consumption dissolved the universe of moralizing homilies, eradicated rigorous imperatives, and engendered a culture where happiness imposes itself as a moral commandment, the pleasures to the forbidden, seduction to obligation. [...] The cult of happiness in mass has generalized the legitimacy of pleasures and contributed to

the promotion of the fever of individual autonomy. (LIPOVETSKY, 2004, p.60).

According to Lipovetsky (2007, p.36), "we do not expect so much that things rank us against others, but that they allow us to be more independent and have more mobility, to enjoy sensations, to live experiences, to improve our quality of life, preserve youth and health". It is the age of individualistic consumption: "the consumption of the individual 'for himself' supplanted consumption 'for the other'".

People seek to exalt their individuality by consuming, and the products come to meet their expectations: "today, nothing is consumed in a pure and simple way, that is, nothing is bought, owned and used for a certain purpose" (BAUDRILLARD, 2008, p.213), objects cease to serve only their functions, but "above all, they are destined to serve Your Excellency [...] without the total ideology of personal service, consumption would not be what it is" (Idem). It is this "materialistic and hedonistic culture, based on the exaltation of the self," which Lipovetsky (2004, p.60) discusses: "a new civilization has been built, which no longer aims at strangling desire, but which exacerbates and forgives it: the enjoyment of the present, the temple of the self, of the body and of comfort, became the new Jerusalem of post-moralists times".

According to the author (2007, p.98), "the fragmentation of class feelings and impositions created the possibility of particular choices and paved the way for the free expression of personal pleasures and tastes". At first, it may seem that this capacity is of the product, but it is we who impregnate them with meanings: "objects seduce us because they need us to exist. Without 'postmodern' consumers there are no seductive commodities" (VOLLI, 2006, p.217).

> In this respect, Nietzsche was right: illusion, fiction, representations are necessary to life because it is necessary for life to inspire confidence. Thus, it is wrong to view the promises of the hyperconsumption society as a system of intimidation and blame when these are, first of all, a complex of myths, dreams,

imaginary meanings that, by creating goals and fostering trust in the future, favor reoxygenation of a gift often worn (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.290).

Lipovetsky This means that the object ends up being a "'passive' subject that they [the individual] will use to support their own identity. [...] Man recognizes himself in the goods" (VOLLI, 2006, p.215), and the purpose of them is not only "direct mechanically or psychologically a consumer reduced to the role of object, but to establish a relationship of collusion, playing with the public, make them share a value system, create an emotional closeness or a bond of complicity" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.156).

The products came not to seduce the man and force him to consume but came to offer themselves for consumption to a man who wants to be seduced. Man seeks happiness, and objects are not only "aimed at stimulating conditioned needs and reflexes, but also at creating emotional links with the brand, making the promotion of the image more important than that of the product" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.151). That is, culturally we have sought an emotional proximity to the world that allows us to exercise our own individuality, and brands have come to meet this demand.

"At first glance, value seems to reside in things, but as soon as we fix the look a little closer, it also appears to us as a derivative of our own desire, socially realized" (VOLLI, 2006, p.185). Boorstin expresses the idea that advertisers must be excused: persuasion and mystification do not come as much from their lack of scruples as from the pleasure of being deceived: they proceed less from their desire to seduce than from our desire to be seduced (BAUDRILLARD, 2008, p.166).

4. FASHION IN THE HYPERCONSUMPTION INDUSTRY

According to Lipovetsky (2007, p.38), we entered the universe of hyperconsumption when the taste for change spread universally, when the desire for

'fashion' surpassed the sphere of clothing, when the passion for renewal acquired a kind of autonomy that makes status struggles secondary.

According to the author (2007, p.37), "the taste for novelties has changed in meaning": the cult of the new is not at all recent since it was established in the late Middle Ages, namely through the emergence of fashion. But "for centuries, however, the rule of adopting novelty did not go beyond the restricted circles of the privileged, relying largely on its distinctive value" (Idem).

Lipovetsky (1989, p.29) states that there have always been differences in clothing as a form of social distinction, but that "there is no fashion system but when the taste for novelty becomes a constant and regular principle." According to Lang (2001, p.159), "if clothing distinguishes man from animal, fashion defines him as a citizen." Meaning that fashion is not just clothing: "clothing provides the exercise of fashion, and that acts in the field of the imaginary, of signifiers, it is an integral part of the culture" (SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.74).

"The fashion system would be the very dynamics that produced modernity" (SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.85), characterized by: 1. The disqualification of the past, and prestige to the new and the modern; 2. Belief in the power of men to create their own world, seeking to dominate rationality as an affirmation of human sovereignty; 3. Adopt change as a permanent rule of life; 4. Definition of the present as the temporal axis of life; 5. Acceptance of aesthetic variability, refinement of taste and aesthetic sensibility; 6. Consecration of aesthetic initiatives, fantasy, and originality as a positive differential between the subjects (LIPOVETSKY, 1989 *apud* SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.85-87).

Thus, we can conceptualize fashion as: "ethos of modern societies and individuals, that, significantly constituted, articulates the relations between social subjects based on the appearance and establishes the new as a category in the hierarchy of meanings" (SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.88):

> The 'consumer society' can be empirically characterized by different traits: rise in the standard of living, an abundance of goods and services, worship of objects and leisure, hedonistic and materialistic moral, etc. But, structurally, it is the generalization of the fashion process that defines it properly. The society centered on expanding needs is, above all, the one that reorders production and mass consumption under the law of obsolescence, seduction, and diversification (LIPOVETSKY, 1989, p.159).

"This is the fundamental point for the definition of consumption", according to Baudrillard (2008, p.113): "1. No longer as a functional practice of objects, possession, etc.; 2. No longer as a simple function of individual or group prestige; 3. But as a system of communication and exchange, as a code of signs continually emitted, received and invented, as language". In this way, thinking about consumption in hypermodern society, "the brand is the central apex of the constitution and preservation of the imaginary that is associated with a product" (SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.91). "Thus the new subjective functions of consumption arise" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.38), and the role of brands in this society of *hyperconsumption* is "to attribute to objects a symbolic value that, adequate to the cultural references of society, will allow the consumer to affirm their personality [...] as a factor of identity, cultural code, social message" (SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.91).

5. BRANDING AND THE FASHION BRANDS

A fashion brand, active in the *hyperconsumption* society, is one in constant evolution, accompanying the changes of its time proposed by the logic of fashion. The fashion brand renews itself to keep pace with consumer trends. And to do so, it immerses itself in values that are congruent with modern society and its consuming public, conveying principles of novelty, change, beauty and pleasure to those who are eager to consume them.

Fashion, by allowing the exacerbation of individual identities, impregnated objects of consumption with values and personalities. This process occurred when the fashion ethos, searching for a "brand psychologization", began to explore "the impact, the mini-transgressions, the spectacular theatricality that seduces" (SANT'ANNA, 2007, p.90-91). Brands become the instruments through which products come to impregnate the logic of fashion.

The logic of "emotional consumption" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.39) is strengthened through brands, "which boast the merits of the initiatives that provide consumers with affective, imaginary and sensory experiences," in which, according to the author (idem), "it is no longer the cold functionality that is on the agenda, but the sensitive and emotional attractiveness."

Brand management - also called branding - is the 'corporate philosophy', as it were, which endows the offerings of values and personalities, which will allow the creation of emotional links between product and consumer. According to Kotler (*apud* Tybout & Calkins, 2006), "branding is much more than naming an offer. It means making a promise to customers about how to live an experience at a complete performance level, that is, it means 'living the brand'". As Gobé (2010) states, "brands need to connect with culture and reach people's hearts."

So branding, or brand management, is more than just making sure customers recognize the logo or name of a product; it means creating an emotional association between the customer and the product, service or company. According to Gobé (2010, p.15), "brands must change from 'communications' and 'commodities' to emotion and inspiration." So, branding is:

> The set of actions related to the management of brands. They are actions that, taken with knowledge and competence, take the brands beyond their economic nature, becoming part of culture, and influencing people's lives. Actions capable of simplifying and enriching

our lives in an increasingly confusing and complex world. (MARTINS, 2006, p.08).

According to Martins (2006, p.279), branding describes "all actions related to projects of brand creation or management". It is not a specific methodology, but a work philosophy that uses concepts from a range of disciplines, among them the main ones are marketing, advertising and design (Gomez et al., 2010), to endow the products with values and sensations inspired by culture.

In this context, in accord with the culture of modern society, brand management has made the sensitive and the emotional investigation items, aimed at "differentiating brands within a hypercompetitive universe and, on the other hand, promising a 'sensory and emotional adventure' to the hyperconsumer who seeks varied sensations and improvement on a sensorial level" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.39). Today, we live in the era of 'emotional consumption', which designates, aside from the effects of a marketing trend, the general form of consumption when the buying act, no longer commanded by the conformist concern of comparing with others, acquires a deinstitutionalized and internalized logic, based on the search for sensations and subjective betterment (idem).

Today, brand management, in accordance with the aspirations of individuals, "has achieved the post-moralistic feat of combining heart and marketing, seriousness and jingle, integrity and spectacle, ideal and seduction" (LIPOVETSKY, 2004, p.303). In the hyperconsumption society, "it is no longer so much the social image and being noticed that matters, but the imaginary of the brand" (idem, p.40)

In a nod to the logic of fashion, "what is sold is no longer a product, but a vision, a 'concept', a lifestyle associated with the brand" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.40), which will allow individuals to express their own individualities and worldviews, which have in the new and the change a worldly pleasure: "name, logo, design, slogan, patronage, store, everything must be mobilized, redefined, endowed with a new look, with the goal of renewing the image profile, giving a soul or

a style to the brand" (idem). "All these contents are reduced to overlapping signs, culminating in the super-sign that is the brand: that is, the true and only message" (BAUDRILLARD, 2008, p.197).

The brand in the "post-moralist period coincides with that of the generalized fashion, which has managed to phagocyte the moral dimension itself, transforming values into objects" (LIPOVETSKY, 2004, p.286). In our day, enthusiasm for brands feeds on the narcissistic desire to enjoy the intimate feeling of being a 'quality person', comparing ourselves to others and feeling we are ahead, being better than the masses, not caring about the approval of others or the desire to provoke envy. The contemporary cult of brands translates a new relationship with luxury and quality of life (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.41).

Brand management, therefore, transforms products into identity objects, at the moment it encompasses them with the logic of fashion. This will allow consumers to use them as signs of their personalities, as fetish objects that represent more than themselves, but meanings linked to the new, to the desire for particular change of the individuals themselves, which, as asserts Lipovetsky (2007, p.41), now give themselves "to luxury, to superfluous, to quality brands."

"It is in this sense that consumption is playful and that the playfulness of consumption has gradually taken the place of the tragedy of identity" (BAUDRILLARD, 2008, p.263). "What is it that seduces in the act of buying non-current products, if not, at least in part, the new emotion, however small, accompanying the acquisition of something?" (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.57).

> Firstly, the appreciation for the incessant change in consumption no longer exhibits social boundaries, having reached all strata and all age groups; secondly, we want new products for themselves, for the subjective, functional, and emotional benefits they provide us. [...] Curiosity has become a passion of the masses and changing for the sake of change is now an experience with which the individual

intends to test themselves. The love for the new is no longer as determined by the conformist passions as it is by the experimental appetites of the subjects (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p.38).

Through the branding processes, the fashion brand takes on the character of the new, of change, giving its consumers the right of saying that they are 'fashionable' individuals at the time they consume, rather than objects, values, feelings, and ideals of modern culture. But how to stay current? How to recognize what are the novelties, the innovations, the consumers' wishes in the most immediate modernity? How can we predict the characteristics, values, and sensations that will express the distinctive quality of being new, of 'being fashionable' in the near future?

6. FASHION TRENDS AND THE STYLE BUREAUX

Since the concept of fashion is the desire for differentiation by the taste of the new, being also described as the transitory use that regulates the way of dressing (AGUIAR, 2006), and that modern society is rightly characterized by the influence of fashion, of the desire for the new, in all spheres of consumption - going far beyond clothing - what regulates the emergence and adoption of a novelty?

It is certain that objects are bearers of indexed social meanings, of a social and cultural hierarchy - and this is the smallest of their details: form, material, color, durability, the arrangement in space - on the whole, it is certain that they constitute a code (BAUDRILLARD, 1981). The objects of consumption, therefore, are signs, belonging to the cultural code of modern society. A sign has a materiality that we perceive with one or more of our senses. This perceived thing is in the place of another - it is present to designate or mean something else, absent, concrete or abstract" (PEIRCE, 1978 *apud* JOLY, 2007).

Clothes [and any object], because they are signs that carry in themselves a series of meanings, imprint on their bearer a daily choice of positioning on

culture's bigger set of webs of complex meanings (SANT'ANNA, 2003). These meanings include those of concepts such as change and innovation that are the incorporation of fashion itself into objects. But for them to be signs of fashion, they must represent the new. Consumption, in the context of modern society, must occur in a cycle, therefore, of change and innovation so that products incorporate the representation of the new.

Two ideas guide this cycle: anticipation and change. More than knowing the consumer, you must leave that knowledge behind. The fluidity of the consumer is the fluidity of knowledge - or ignorance - about them. It serves to explain why there is such a relentless need for change and anticipation. This consumer just does not become an irrelevant part of the system because it is who buys (BERGAMO, 2007).

Style represents a magic power to sell and distinguish a particular product, incorporating, in a trend language, the idea of a supposed anticipated knowledge about the consumer that necessarily presupposes their constant renewal (BERGAMO, 2007).

> Trends are convergences of collective taste. They are focal points of desire through which very different individuals find themselves with the same desires. Today, the wishes of the majority seem governed by an authority as powerful as it is capricious: fashion. One day, however, fashion wears off. Understanding trends means penetrating the paths of imitation, the diffusion of tastes, and the social indicator role that they can play (ERNER, 2015).

The fashion cycle is defined by sociological rigorousness: a behavior adopted temporarily by a substantial part of a social group when this behavior is perceived as socially adequate for the time and situation (ERNER, 2015). And it is undeniable that in recent decades there has been a multiplication of commercial trends. Some principles that govern the fashion of clothing today apply to other scopes.

This cycle of fashion defined by an anticipated knowledge, which impels incessantly towards change,

ends up giving the product a magic character: its selling power and distinction for the company is lost, transferred, will be in another product to which one should arrive before the competitor. It is necessary, therefore, to suppose a mechanism capable of identifying the transfers operated by this magical power. This is the responsibility of the style bureaux: to foresee such transfers - the fashion trends that are to come (BERGAMO, 2007). Predict what tends to be the new "new" - to know in advance to which product the collective taste tends to converge.

The first "bureaux de style" appeared in the late 1950s on the French market, with the aim of organizing the textile industry through its suggestions on colors, materials, and shapes (LEÃO, 2002). Some examples are the Bureaux Promostyl, Peclers Paris, and Nelly Rodi. Since its inception, trend counseling has become a consolidated economic activity. Most of the offices have retained a trace of their original trade: to advise the production line in fashion, that is, guarantors and fabric manufacturers. That is why the bureaux, first, are devoted to colors, then to materials, and finally to shapes. Their work is organized around creative teams composed of artistic directors and stylists, sometimes confronted with outsiders - semiologists, sociologists or fashion historians (ERNER, 2015).

However, at the height of their "preaching" - in the golden years of the 1960s - the bureaux monopolized the right to predict trends and commercialize them, a fact that established a pragmatic and dictatorial order on the aesthetic laws they conceived (LEÃO, 2002). The offices or agencies of style substantiate and elaborate all the necessary information for the creation of fashion trends, which are organized in specific books called "cahiers de tendances", which provide the necessary security for the development of a fashion product (idem).

The main activity of the agencies is the sale of these "trend books", which are presented in the form of luxurious creative guides that mix colors, sketches, samples of fabrics, texts and concepts. Themes, palette suggestions, style proposals are uncovered (ERNER,

2015). However, it is important to emphasize that the target audience of these books produced by the style offices is the industry, be it textile or other consumer goods. This is specialized information of interest to the manufacturers of raw materials and products. From the beginning of the twentieth century until the present day, the final consumers of the objects or finished pieces are informed about fashion trends through magazines, especially women's magazines, which inform trends that are already in vogue, without anticipation. Therefore, it is more a diagnosis than a forecast.

In addition to women's magazines, currently, another very important source of information about trends are websites and social networks. The content on the network and the amount of information on user behavior available are making the internet a prime source of research, including for the industry. The consultation of websites specialized in trends, economics, politics, lifestyles, among other topics, and digital influencers profiles in social networks, blogs aimed at various sectors and target audiences, are able to provide an invaluable and unmatched source of information about life habits and consumption of diverse groups and individuals - their behaviors, values, and tastes.

When it comes to the bureaux, in general, their job is to provide accurate analysis to the construction of the image of a product. However, there is a highly subjective aspect that acts in this process: the intuition of each one that works in a "style bureau". A poetic exercise that, however, masks the simple goal of selling more and better, standardizing, in a way, feelings and attitudes - creating a field in which freedom of choice between what we like or not is meticulously predetermined. But how can such concepts be transformed into products and act on our behavior? And how can such a particular perspective of our reality impact the decisions of important industries? (LEÃO, 2002).

In order for fashion brands to take into account the tendencies of collective taste expressed by the

bureaux in the development of their products, this information cannot, of course, derive from nothing. There is an instrument responsible for the forecast which is called "research". There are also certain individuals who are responsible for obtaining this information. Most of them are individuals linked to art and who assume the role of "capturing agents" of social transformations. It does not matter exactly how these surveys are done, but simply the fact that they serve as a seal for forecasting, which then comes to be seen as a result of observation and measurement (BERGAMO, 2007).

Far away from the speeches of certain fashion gurus, the trend books offer industry professionals precise indications that allow for the creation of a collection. Could they anticipate trends in a relevant way? In some cases, yes, due to the self-fulfilling nature of these forecasts. Providing a source of inspiration common to many creators, the few names that matter in the area contributes to shaping the trends. The proposed model sketches are used as creative snacks by style agencies (ERNER, 2015).

> The eyes of those who work in "style bureaux" are powerful for capturing moments - an unusual gesture, a transgressive attitude, a social behavior that is being common, the same among some groups of people: a highlighted accessory, a color, an element that stands out from all its scenery. Something new, not measured or mentioned, without violations or interventions. They use perception and sensitivity to perceive something that is a sign of a priority theme (LEÃO, 2002).

It is necessary to feel before the general public, to verify the cultural, economic or political encounters that are to come (PENICAUT, 1994, p.99 *apud* Leão, 2002). To know that what is seen in front of them can be converted into colors, fabrics, and shapes. Capture influences that will later become fashion trends (LEÃO, 2002).

Traveling all over the world, style office coordinators analyze everything that can be converted into fashion, following all the oscillations and evolutions

that occur in the fashion market, their needs or saturation (often of an aesthetic or behavioral tendency), always evaluating possible future ways of satisfying consumers (LEÃO, 2002). They are researchers, creators, illustrators, models, etc., whose main mission is to discover the trends that will affect consumer behavior and translate them into guides for creation.

Predicting trends does not depend on any analytical method. Each agency has its own manufacturing recipes, but beyond the singularities, a way of acting is recurrent. First, a framework composed of keywords that supposedly define the period is drawn up.It includes very broad terms. To dress these words, the makers of the books are engaged in a vigilance exercise. They are inspired by fashion designers, but also in other related areas, at the forefront of which is contemporary art. Particular attention is given to cutting-edge media capable of revealing the future trend. Finally, numerous "showcase runs" are organized, allowing the exchange of ideas around the world, not only in the textile areas (ERNER, 2015).

All this precise analysis, already elaborated two years in advance and based on the discovery of economic, political, aesthetic, cultural tendencies and, also, in the currents of tastes, will work together for the construction of trend notebooks - a solid base of references, marketed, on average, 18 to 20 months in advance of the season at prices ranging from 4,000 to 60,000.00 USD, according to Bureau Arena & Guelfin (1997 *apud* LEÃO, 2002).

Traditionally, style agencies provided creative anticipation guides to their clients. These, almost always in the field of textile fashion or cosmetics, found practical advice on what would happen two years later. However, this periodicity began to evolve, with the need for "update" proposals. Thus, alongside a long period, shorter time intervals of three to six months are proposed, with opportunistic advice on the current season (ERNER, 2015).

The two approaches differ, of course. Anticipating a trend two years implies a real creative

work, as well as defining, within these agency-councils, collections plans hinged around themes, aimed at a wide range of potential customers, from large distributors to small brands that want strengthen their team of creators. On the other hand, the anticipations of three to six months are often confined to photographs taken in fashionable places, giving an idea of the feel of the time, or a close reading of the fashion press and its celebrity pages (ERNER, 2015).

It is important to note, however, that the bureaux services currently are not only limited to the textile area (from the thread to the garment) but also developing actions for the automobile industry, cosmetics, etc., as well as advising the major fashion brands of the whole world (LEÃO, 2002).

Of course, there are also other sources of information, of which the vast majority of companies serve themselves, precisely because they are more public in nature and, above all, because such sources are much more financially accessible. In this case, there are two major fashion fairs that take place in Europe, Premiere Vision and Interstoff. In addition, there is also the dissemination of fashion trends at the media level, acting without intermediaries on the target of this whole process, which is the final consumer (LEÃO, 2002).

In the process of aesthetic creation of the bureaux, however, there are two distinct stages: the first deals with the search for aesthetic elements that may collide and attend to the spirit of the time (and this includes sociocultural, political, religious and economic tendencies) and their respective "lifestyles". These aesthetic elements (shapes, colors, and materials) will then be evaluated according to market studies and their own performance if already used in previous seasons. Technological advances are also a factor of extreme importance on the suitability of the raw material to the product (LEÃO, 2002).

The second step is to use all data obtained and completed, and reformulate them according to the optics of each bureau, which later on will appear in lectures, trend books, audiovisual presentations, etc.,

mixing all the elements of fashion trends - colors, shapes, materials and themes according to the creative repertoire of the one who conceives it, of their sensitivity and imagination - that represents subtle nuances of our reality and imagination through images, diluting the aesthetic elements in the themes proposed to the tendencies of fashion (Leão, 2002): recipe of a fashion trend: influence + colors + materials + shapes = theme = trend.

These ingredients will form the recipe that each bureau will prepare for its fashion trends - a factor that will express the personality of each office. The researched aesthetic elements will integrate themes created for the trends. The colors, for example, will be organized in chromatic families and will integrate a color chart (LEÃO, 2002). The materials (fabrics and finishes) and the aesthetic forms will also be evoked from the rigorous analysis of influences and other aspects, according to their performance in the previous season. At the same time, the typology of the framework/ligament is being investigated due to the availability of raw materials, the oscillations in consumer taste, culture and historical epochs. Lines and shapes are evaluated according to the physical/technical characteristics of the fabrics (SIMÕES, 1994, p.14 *apud* LEÃO, 2002).

From that point on, the themes (which are usually divided into four streams) are born, which will integrate, in addition to all social analysis already mentioned, an ambience - the environment that situates the theme, as well as the influences and origins - and a lifestyle, that is, a market segment that will indicate to whom the product should be directed. For example romanticism - the atmosphere in the nineteen twenties, the lifestyle of men and women of classic style, couture as a fashion segment. Or, if it targets the adolescent market, casualwear as a segment. Everything will depend on the market and social reality of the moment to promote a given market niche and direct it to one fashion segment or another (LEÃO, 2002).

Many bureaux, in forming their themes, structure their specifications in sociological, psychological and semiological analyzes, making them an important tool for companies to elaborate their aesthetic creation - a factor that contributes to fashion taking on its ordinary character (LEÃO, 2002).

Another aspect emerges for an even greater aesthetic standardization: the fact that specifications travel the world through their various commercial representatives [and nowadays, access to the style bureaux portals available to worldwide subscribers]. In this way, a very particular view of our social reality is reaffirmed, which is being molded in a highly tendentious aesthetic environment, since the anticipations, when inserted in the economic context, become part of a systematic industrial organization, which will de-characterize the whole character of fashion trends, which is the originality of their influences (LEÃO, 2002).

This is because bureaux clients are generally companies that act in the production of raw material for the clothing sector (and the likes). Generally, colorants and textile companies, and, therefore, fall into the first level in the industrial production scale. In the second level are the weaving mills, and in the third, the garments (LEÃO, 2002). All these sectors begin to shape their products according to the raw material supplied by their predecessor in the production chain, which, for the most part, base themselves on the prospects suggested by the style offices.

These days, however, it has been necessary for the bureaux to offer a new proposal of work - that of partnership - in the sense of guaranteeing and retaining their clients, making their relationship more flexible - so that each brand can now request and use information acquired according to their choices and market needs, even putting together their own themes for fashion trends, based on the information provided by the bureaux. However, the same conformist character still resides, as the persistence in determining aesthetic variants. The system is already addicted to offering (as

an industry) and accepting (as a consumer) (LEÃO, 2002).

In this sense, it is observed that the imitation of certain aesthetic and also behavioral standards becomes legitimate in our society, insofar as it submits to the market impositions of our capitalist world: we are no longer the products of events, but the response to prescribed, taught codes (LEÃO, 2002). The question is: could the bureaux guess the trends of tomorrow? The myriad of proposals that are formulated and the large number of embedded solutions make it virtually impossible to answer this question. However, in their obligation to bestow each season with new trends, they undoubtedly encourage innovation. We cannot say the same about some services launched recently on the Internet, such as the WGSN (ERNER, 2015).

Would it be possible to constantly monitor the fashion planet? What no style consultant could do today is claimed by WGSN. Under this acronym, we find a company called Worth Global Style Network, founded in 1998, which became the number one site on trends, leaving competitors - Stylesight, for example - well behind. Like financial news feeds, this service site offers its subscribers a constant picture of current trends (ERNER, 2015).

This continuous trend chart is firstly monitored by branches present on all continents. The WGSN offers reports on major fashion events delivered to very short deadlines. Reports on boutiques and shops complement the traditional races to the storefronts, impossible to carry out permanently. Finally, the service proposes analyzes of emerging trends, especially fueled by a continuous study of the high-tech, or even new creators. The ambition of this service, with subscribers in the leading fashion societies, is to offer the world an analysis of the short-term tendencies, between three and six months, on which renewal is based (ERNER, 2015). The query awakens the vertigo of immediate and exhaustive information. Perverse effects can be expected if this system, as we can imagine, spreads in the future. The role of stimulus to innovation played by trend books will seem outdated compared to this

constantly vigilant service of fashion news (Erner, 2015).

While the bureaux's speech assumes characteristics close to prophecy, which necessarily has a character of rupture - meeting the expectations of the corporate discourse, products, in this case, colors, fabrics, and shapes, need to be left behind for new ones to come -, the same rupture can be observed with regard to "knowing" about consumers (BERGAMO, 2007). What is known about them must be constantly left behind in order for new "knowledge" to come. The function of the bureaux is to tell what the changes are or are about to occur and to disclose them to the brands of the sector. The fashion trend discourse is therefore based, on the one hand, on its consonance with the corporate discourse, that is, on the belief that one is talking about the "consumer of tomorrow", and, on the other, on purposely vague information (BERGAMO, 2007).

Companies, therefore, work to produce that which research has announced as knowledge. In two years' time, we will find on the market everything the bureaux said people would buy. Even if people want to buy something different, it is the result of the forecast that will be available in the market. The implication is not that bureaux successfully predicted, but that entrepreneurs, because of the belief that they were faced with an instrument of knowledge about the consumer, made the effort, as an obvious result, to give reality to the forecast. And the trend information covers the entire textile chain, from the production of yarn and dye to clothes that will be bought in a store or found in a fashion magazine (BERGAMO, 2007).

It is not, however, a pure and simple imposition, nor some form of manipulation or, even on the part of the trend consultants, a deception. There is a hierarchy, a flow, of information (BERGAMO, 2007): "knowing that our own judgment is worthless, we strive to put ourselves under the judgment of the rest of the world [...]. Thus we try to conform to the behavior of the majority or the average. In this little game,

whoever guesses what the crowd will do is who wins" (KEYNES, 1936 *apud* ERNER, 2015).

In the field of fashion, to speculate is to imitate. That is why one winning trend can eclipse all others. A shape, a color, or a flavor will be more likely to triumph over rivals if everyone thinks, at that point, that it will be the winner over competitors (ERNER, 2015). The final consumer also reinforces this logic, informing themselves about the trends in vogue at a given moment and aiming to consume the objects and pieces of clothing published by women's magazines, blogs and specialized websites, and influencers.

We can, therefore, say that a transformation is underway in the universe of fashion trends. The instantaneousness with which the fashion world news is conveyed, the fairs and shows are covered and transmitted by the press and in social networks, the materials produced by the style offices are copied and shared; in short: in addition to endless content, the speed with which it spreads in the network gives rise to a consumer aligned on the time axis with the industry itself, greatly shortening the timeframe between research, forecasting, and production. A consequence of this is already the "see now, buy now" movement, in which major brands, such as the English Burberry, are putting on sale in their stores around the world the pieces of a certain collection immediately after its launch in the show.

7. CONCLUSION

Whether it is the style bureaux that dictate what will be the trend in the near future or it is the social groups that change patterns of behavior and consumption, and the offices only observe and capture these changes, it is indeed found that modern society processes renewal cycles periodically. Which can be proven spontaneously through changes in clothing over time.

Not only clothing brands, but brands of various consumer goods, and the entire industry in general,

rely on trend knowledge, deliberately or even intuitively, to develop changes and innovations in their products. There is a broad understanding in modern society that individuals appreciate change, novelty, and companies for more than centuries have demonstrated efforts to fulfill this desire for consumers.

The knowledge that is lacking for most of the population, generally, is that there is a concept that not only explains this phenomenon but is also the engine of modern society that powers consumer relations - fashion. There have been many fields in recent decades that have studied this social ethos, and branding, as a work philosophy dedicated to branding and brand maintenance, has drawn on knowledge about fashion cycles and their influence on consumer behavior to manage clothing brands and other products that need to be renovated and modified over time to meet people's desire for new.

Regardless of the trend books marketed by fashion bureaux or other sources of trend information, whether in terms of aesthetic, social or consumer behavior, the fact is that fashion brands need to be aware of the desire for novelty that is intrinsic to the culture of our modern society, as well as observing of the direction in which that desire walks, what type of products, shapes, materials, relations, values, etc., will tend to please a certain group of consumers in the near future, to be able to compete in the market.

Managing fashion brands in modern society is about not only studying and applying branding knowledge but also researching and adopting trend information in one's products. At the same time, it is necessary to preserve and reinforce the values and characteristics of the brand and to promote transformations and innovations in products. It is necessary to respect the cultural values intrinsic to society, and the ephemeral trends of modern consumption.
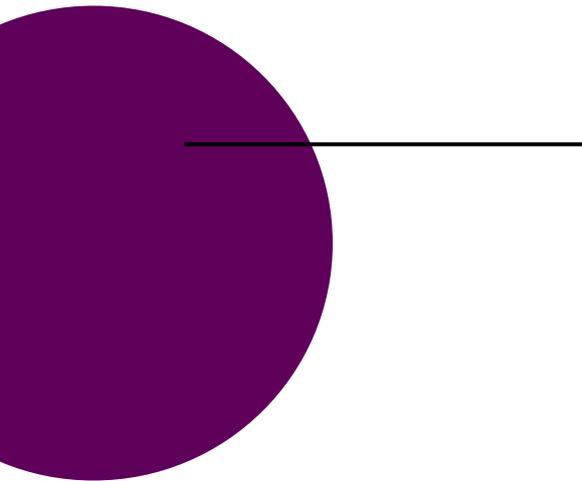
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