CULTURAL IDENTITY IN PRODUCT DESIGN OF FASHION TECHNOLOGY – TOOLS AND METHOD

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In the 21st century, in a context of globalization of economies and technologies, cultural technologies strike a discordant note because they work on the basis of cultural icons, and specific societal imaginary. In this field, Technical engineering, informatic (logic-mathematical) and cultural (cognitive-emotional) languages need to find a common denominator in order to respond to the complexity of consumers' demands for modern products. Interdisciplinary approaches should not remain only at academic or technological level, transdisciplinarity may be a holistic key to the success of some disciplines, in the context in which co-creation and collaborative design are nowadays common in leadership and user-oriented creation. The article presents the laboratory verification, together with young designers, of a method of generating the identity, practical design of product creation by using a mix of cultural instruments, a method substantiated by the main author of this article. The purpose of this practical method is to make creative individuals aware of the importance of cultural work instruments in fashion technologies.

Keywords: cultural work instrument, artistic imaginary, identity design, fashion technology

INTRODUCTION

The development of design theories and scientific research in the last 10-15 years, and the design thinking and the typologies of this field, have also led to the humanistic approach of practice in fashion design and research of fashion. New research directions have emerged in product design that contribute to a better understanding of both product and design, not only by the consumer, but also by the professional practice and research in design. Design research is innovation-oriented, by finding elements of attractiveness of the existing product, or by invention, by designing a product with new, original attributes. In both types of design research, specific work instruments are used that belong to classical, IT, or cultural technologies. The last years have been dominated by the interest of both designers and marketers, both in terms of revenue growth through design, but especially in terms of knowledge of the consumer's needs in relation to the product, to its personalization techniques, and the awareness of creativity. Interactive design, UX design, Emotional design, Co-design, or Sustainable Cultural Identity of design are as many research directions in innovation design that led to the formation of research and training companies. Humanities for fashion is based on a specific aesthetic research. As Kawamura (2005) says, "fashion is the immaterial dimension of modern culture". It is used in marketing as a working tool for understanding people's relationship with creative and cultural objects. The relationship between product experience and values aesthetic is important in the context of cultural studies, "because implicit and explicit values are often seen as key determinants of culture" (Desmet and Hekkert, 2007). In this context, of articulating the human experience with the practical, more technical environment of design, if we want to understand emotional design as consumer-centered practice, it is necessary to understand the content and the imaginative meaning of the design concept. Practically, by reading the aesthetics of design, by understanding the metaphor or visual metonymy, the aesthetic emotion is

achieved, which gives the feeling of aesthetic pleasure. Paul Hekkert (2006) “proposes to restrict the term aesthetic to the pleasure attained from sensory perception, as opposed to anesthetic. An experience of any kind, e.g. of an artwork, a product, a landscape, or an event, thus comprises an aesthetic part, but the experience as a whole is not aesthetic”. The purpose of this practical method is to make creative individuals aware of the importance of cultural work instruments in fashion technologies, which they use intuitively or as initial informational baggage (Nahin *et al.*, 2014). The approach of this experience with the students, which outlines a method of analyzing the content of the design project, is one required in current practice, because fashion humanist research must also be in the designer's creative studio, not just in cultural studies.

In fact, both the artist and the art consumer, both the designer and the design consumer, must belong to the same symbolic universe in order for the work or product to be correctly received, assessed and considered valuable in itself, both for the soul and the mind of each individual. In a more technical way, emotional design is necessary in the conceptualization of any type of product, for the simple reason that each of us, consumers of globalized civilization products, such as minimalist design, based only on functionality, feel it is not enough. Design based on a marketing story begins to stop working because the human being of today, living in an information society, wants more out of a product. In this context, the identity design becomes not only a research object but also a work instrument in any kind of conceptualization of a modern product. The epistemological landmarks of this research call into question both theories of philosophical or artistic approach to the imaginary, as well as its “monads” - the myth and archetype, which in turn express themselves through story, symbol or visual sign in the research of emotional design fashion. The theories on the philosophy of the imaginary show that the real-symbolic-imaginary triad is used as a starting point in any humanistic analysis, because these three elements represent the levels of the individual's relation to the world. That is why through this fashion design project we assert that emotional design that uses theme-specific cultural instruments based on research of the imaginary can provide the consumer with a smart and sensitive product at the same time. Basically, this research project seeks, on the one hand, to identify the typology of the archetypal imaginary in fashion, and on the other hand, through laboratory experiments, intends to verify the integration mechanisms of the archetypal elements expressed by icono-plastic sign, identity sign and sign-symbol in the sketches of ideas for future products. All these are generated by the cultural instruments used: international trends in fashion, philosophical, mythological or archetypal thematizations, and the awareness of personal ideation as a psycho-cultural work instrument. Cultural technologies in fashion design use content instruments as work instruments: philosophical imaging, visual archetypes and visual cultural items, also using cultural expression instruments that are defined by artistic language, with its own syntax and stylistics (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Cultural work instruments (author)

The transversal actions of creation offered by visual language use both content codes and the aesthetic material basis, by means specific to visual language, as an instrument of cultural expression. Thus, ideation processes are obtained which bring new aesthetic elements both through innovation and through the creative diversity of aesthetic concepts. Transforming such an idea into a product concept involves transversal actions, stylistic declination and commercial (assortment) declination. Thus, through this design thought process, with the help of cultural instruments, a greater variety of cultural objects and creative products are developed, transforming the specific matter into an emotional and cultural product. In fashion design, cultural content instruments are:

Generic cultural instruments:

- Global, industrial trends,
- Identity imaging (figure 2),
- Market and consumption study.

Specific cultural instruments:

- Cultural artistic trends in fashion,
- Media and reference events,
- Styling.

Figure 2. Identity imaging: The Romanian Repertory of Images, www.aaicrea.ro

METHODOLOGY

From the humanist practices in industry, such as semiotics, history, philosophy, psychology and the theory of different design practices and specific visual languages, the closest form of communication to any type of consumer, cultural identity design is centered on visual stylistics and semiotics. Among the general theoretical frameworks used so far in the development of identity and emotional design, the most often used are those of Norman and Verganti (2004) who proposed three levels of pleasant experiences based on neurobiological emotion theory, and Hassenzahl (2010) who proposed six positive experiences of clients in relation to the product. The cultural content instruments are defined by the thematic elements, and those of artistic expression in product design, by the semiotic ones, the metaphor and the visual metonymy. In order to develop a visual metaphor, or metonymy, the designer needs a general cultural instrument of synthesis to help him express and conceive the configuration of a new product. In order to implement the method of generating creation through the mix of

cultural instruments, the method substantiated by the main author of this article, a training was carried out with all the young designers of Pestos Production SRL Bucharest, in the 2017-2018. Explaining the role and importance of research in design, the structure of the method of generating creation through the mix of cultural instruments, and the methodology used to carry out the experiments generated many additional questions and explanations, which demonstrated young people's need for knowledge. In general, the following aspects of the method were explained:

- Definitions, types and cognitive schemes of research in the practice of art and design for the fashion, clothing and textiles industry;
- Structure of research in design and the process of its development in the stages of ideation and creation of the new product concepts - "Design Thinking" instrument;
- The definition and types of cultural instruments used in product creation and design: international fashion trends, inclusive and identity thematizations, such as the Romanian Repertory of Images and awareness of personal creativity;
- Definition, typology and examples of identity design;
- What is and which is the importance of the Romanian Repertory of Images as a cultural instrument for developing the cultural sustainability of modern Romanian products;
- Experiment methodology that primarily seeks to use cultural content tools and perform transversal visual conceptual hybridization actions.

By explaining the stages of ideation and of conceptualization of the teams' and individual project, it was easier to follow the steps of the method and work was more relaxed and continuous (fig. 3).

- Activating the team and choosing the Romanian term from the Romanian Repertory of Images;
- Brainstorming session with the team to identify the ideological field of the chosen term;
- Analytical session for reading the definition of the term and identifying its cultural items;
- Individual proposals for the atmosphere page of the term (individual moodboard);
- Making the moodboard of the term by the entire team, specifying materials and the chromatic palette;
- Associating a clothing architecture from the streetwear study and from next season trends, with the atmosphere page and the choice of a certain typology of clothing;
- Outlining a new idea by associating the details of the atmosphere page with the chosen clothing architecture, integrating the Romanian element chosen from the Repertory and visually defined by the whole team;
- Analysis-synthesis of creative activity and making a decision on the concept idea;
- Developing the concept idea by individual stylistic declinations;
- Developing the new concept and presenting it in several variants of the sketch of idea through commercial declinations;
- Choice, by the team, of sketches of ideas that can be presented in a common moodboard;
- Elaboration of team moodboard;
- Elaboration of individual sketchboard with details of materials and palette, set by the team;
- Choosing the best sketches for the team sketchboard;
- Choosing the best three sketches, one for each team, for transposition into the material as laboratory research stage.

Figure 3. The steps of the method

RESULTS

The design team came up with a complex imaginative mood-board, which can be transposed visually by the values identity of the brand, values identity of the trends and Romanian values identity. The team came up with a complex imaginative mood-board, which can be transposed visually by the product collection for a/w 2018-2019.

Figure 4. The cultural identity of the brand design: Ivona Manea and Bianca Andronache

CONCLUSIONS

The mix of cultural tools method allows the designer to become aware of his own creativity and the context of the collaborative imaginative environment.

The knowledge base of young designers at any creative individual can be developed on the recommendation of the study or work environment of each person who implements the identity design method and development identity design. It was also noted that collaborative design is more semantically, cognitively and emotionally charged than average individual design.

In addition, experiments have shown that the cultural sustainability of creative industries products will exist as long as the appropriate cultural instruments are used, both in terms of semiotic and semantic code, and aesthetic material resource.

This synthetic method of the mix of cultural instruments suggests the need for a deeper approach to typology of the synthesis elements required to develop an effective practice in identity design, specific to fashion design.

The elements of visual semiotics, like metaphor and visual metonymy, require a thorough study conjugating the expression with the ideation of the content of a fashion project.

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