DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE OF PRODUCTS WITH ROMANIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

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In the current context, research on cultural identity unfolds as an uninterrupted process of modeling and remodeling, constituting the link between past, present and future. The issue of cultural identity has become an increasingly important topic in recent years, especially in the European context, due to the need to legitimize European cultural identity as a link between European citizens and as a unifying principle of different cultural heritage. The current processes of social and economic globalization provide major challenges on the world market of consumer-oriented production sectors. The increase of competition in the market, as well as consumers' exigency, calls for the manufacture of innovative products in the field of footwear as well. Thus, the approached topic appeared as a necessity to make footwear products with innovative design, in order to sustainably develop the competitiveness of companies through the strategic development of footwear production. The research that is the object of this article consists in the creative reinterpretation of footwear, creating a new product concept with Romanian cultural identity. The aim is, on the one hand, to identify and analyze the product concept and, on the other hand, to develop the product with the help of creative industries, highlighting cultural identity.

Keywords: footwear, cultural identity, heritage.

INTRODUCTION

In the work “Romanian identity in the context of trend modernity”, Constantin Schifirnet mentions that “national identity returns as a problem of maximum relevance in countries integrated in the European Union, obviously interested in reinventing their national identity” (Schifirnet, 2009).

In this context, research on cultural identity takes place as an uninterrupted process of modeling and remodeling, constituting the link between past, present and future. (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). The issue of cultural identity has become an increasingly important topic in recent years, especially in the European context, due to the need to legitimize European cultural identity as a link between European citizens and as a unifying principle of different cultural heritage (Kjær and Palsbro, 2008; Antonsich, 2008).

The current processes of social and economic globalization offer major challenges on the world market of consumer-oriented production sectors. The increase of the competition on the market, as well as that of the consumers' exigency, calls for the manufacture of innovative products in the field of footwear as well.

To meet such a global challenge of competition, new competitive strategies must be designed and developed based on new consumer-focused product capabilities and new industrial paradigms, especially in the footwear sector, characterized by rapid market dynamics and a large number of SMEs.

Thus, the approached topic appeared as a necessity to create footwear products with innovative design, in order to sustainably develop the competitiveness of companies through the strategic development of footwear production.

The main objective of this research is to develop a collection of shoes at a high standard of quality, inspired by national heritage, helping to trigger a real change in which we appreciate, protect and promote our heritage, shaping the personality and daily life of wearers.

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The innovative character of the research consists in the elaboration of the finished product with cultural identity and the creation of a high-class concept-collection, with the help of Romanian cultural instruments.

The research consists in the creative reinterpretation of footwear, developing a new product concept with a Romanian cultural identity. Basically, the research aims, on the one hand, to identify and analyze the product concept and on the other hand, to develop the product with the help of creative industries, highlighting cultural identity.

METHODOLOGY

The research is structured in two main stages:

- documentary research on the symbols of Romanian culture, in order to make the cultural tools useful for the concept of footwear, as well as the models and types of footwear specific to each region of the country;
- development, by creating prototypes, which will be made with Romanian cultural tools, specific to each region of the country, through new design concept technologies, with scientific know-how of product creation, incorporating the experience and competence of design research staff.

The identification and analysis of the Romanian patrimony objects and of the geographical areas from which they come are the first steps taken in the vertical and horizontal development of the first creative elements that will lead to the development of a concept collection with roots in the national patrimony.

Selection of Materials and Accessories

The design of footwear deals not only with the image of the product and the image elements of the elaborated stylistic concept but also with the identification and selection of materials and accessories that will lead to the manufacture of the finished object. Choosing the material and accessories is a key step in any design process because it is the crucial decision in making a product. Improper choice of material or accessory can lead not only to a failed product, but also to an inadequate cost. The selection of materials and accessories is an activity that establishes the technological process, adapted to the selected material and accessory, in order to meet the requirements of the new product. The texture of the materials and accessories leads to the recomposition of the heritage object, in new forms, with impact in contemporaneity.

Creating a Collection of Shoe Models by Transposing the Heritage Object into Modernity

The decoding of images and their transposition into the sketches that prefigure the finished product go through a whole process of emotional and pragmatic conception:

- atmosphere sketches are the first to refer to the emotional space of the designer;
- the image sketches lead to the reception of the product in the imaging space;
- the sketches of ideas express a cultural communication through image and its decoding, through key words, which lead to graphic and technical expression.

The conceived object is transposed into component parts and patterns of idea sketches. Footwear design involves a complex process of ideation, heritage identification, conceptualization, design, graphic design, advertising, illustration. All these factors lead to the creation of the finished product with cultural identity and of a

high-class concept-collection. Original, internationally competitive footwear products are designed, with a major socio-economic impact on the consumer.

RESULTS

Bibliographic Study on the Symbols of Romanian Culture

All the manifestations expressed, spiritually or materially, are subordinated to almost immutable codes, sacredly observed by all members of an ethnic group. Tradition is a complex of highly resistant chains of habits. In some specialized studies, it is claimed that, at the level of traditional culture, there is an ornamental “grammar” and a chromatic one.

We set out to establish the defining characteristics of the traditional Romanian culture, based on the presence of the component elements within the symbolic series, to which we added their frequency and area of circulation. A bibliographic study on the symbols of Romanian culture was made.

Technical Documentation Containing Model Sketches

Making model sketches is essential for the implementation to be correct and to obtain a finished product exactly as it was conceived by the designer. The technical sketch of the shoe model shows the upper and lower assemblies of the shoe (Fig. 1-5), the characteristics of the model, the destination, the materials as well as the colors of the component parts.

The design of the footwear not only deals with the image of the product and the image elements of the elaborated stylistic concept but also with the identification and selection of materials and accessories that will lead to the manufacture of the finished object. Choosing the material and accessories is a key step in a design process because it is the crucial decision in making a product. Improper choice of material or accessory can lead not only to a failed product, but also to an inadequate cost.

The selection of materials and accessories is an activity that helps establish the technological process, adapted to the selected material and accessory, in order to meet the requirements of the new product. The texture of the materials and accessories led to the recomposition of the heritage object, in new forms, with an impact on contemporaneity.

Figure 1. Peasant sandal –
inspired from Oltenia region

Figure 2. Children's peasant sandal
- inspired from Oltenia region

Figure 3. Peasant sandal – inspired from Muntenia region

Figure 4. Peasant sandal – inspired from Mehedinti region

Figure 5. Model sketches

Technical Documentation regarding the Design of Footwear Models (Standard Copy, Footwear Patterns, Materials, Technology, etc.)

The technical documentation regarding the design of footwear models entails making the standard copy of the footwear, the patterns of the component parts of the footwear, the choice of materials, as well as the technological manufacturing process.

The last is a three-dimensional object that must be copied and transformed without distortion into a 2D shape (the surface of the shoe unfolded), thus obtaining a copy. Therefore, a copy is a flat representation of the dorsal surface of the last.

The stages of obtaining the patterns were:

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- Making the standard copy of the shoe - The standard copy represents the average of the unfolded outer and inner surfaces of the last and is the most important “pattern” when designing the shoe.
- Drawing the baselines - On the standard copy, placed in a reference system, the baselines are drawn. These are the traces of transverse profile planes that section the foot through a series of important anatomical points.
- Drawing the 3D model directly on the last - To draw the 3D network and the model lines on the last, the following steps must be followed: marking the metatarsophalangeal joints I and V; drawing the toe line; marking the height of the quarters at the back; drawing the upper line of the quarters; marking the instep point; drawing the instep line; drawing pattern lines.
- Obtaining patterns - each pattern is separated, sewing allowances, signs and all technical details of the parts are marked and patterns are obtained for: vamp, tongue, quarter, counter, eyelet reinforcement, collar, etc., depending on the model (Fig. 6).

Conventional (natural leather) and unconventional materials (transparent PVC foil) were used to create the collection. The shoes were manufactured using the glued sole system.

Figure 6. Footwear patterns

Collection of Footwear Models

The high-class concept-collection contains 20 footwear models and was created by transposing the heritage object into modernity, according to Figure 7.

Figure 7. Collection of footwear models

CONCLUSIONS

The research consisted in the creative reinterpretation of footwear, creating a new product concept with Romanian cultural identity. Basically, the aim was, on the one hand, to identify and analyze the product concept and, on the other hand, to develop the product with the help of creative industries, highlighting the cultural identity. Footwear design involves a complex process of ideation, heritage identification, conceptualization, design, graphic design, advertising, illustration. All these factors lead to the elaboration of the finished product with cultural identity and of a high-class concept-collection.

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