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1 The Recent Evolution of Fashion

by Nicola Misani and Paola Varacca Capello

1. Fashion: products, style and innovation

Fashion refers to all those products characterized by short renewal cycles, divided by seasons, belonging to the sectors of textile-clothing (and its various segments), leather goods and footwear. In these sectors companies renew their product portfolio at least twice a year, alternating between seasons and as a function of specific goals and occasions. The sectors contain segments – such as underwear, pajamas and silk accessories (ties, scarves and foulards) – that follow the seasons less and propose similar products continuously, even though these segments tend to follow fashion more than they did in the past, and tend to accelerate the renewal of the collections.

The sectors are divided into segments by types of products and price ranges: for example, clothing can be divided into *haute couture*, *prêt-à-porter* (PAP), *diffusion*, *bridge* and *mass* (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009). If we look at the highest price segments, we see the overlapping of the worlds of fashion and *luxury*: the most exclusive bags, the most expensive shoes and the dresses modeled in Paris represent luxury in the sectors that are commonly included under fashion.

In principle, luxury products should have quality and style characteristics that are “timeless” (more or less accessible or exclusive in terms of price). However, this does not mean that the luxury segment is not affected by creativity and innovation: *haute couture* shows in particular are the manifestation of creativity free from cost constraints, that through exaggeration strengthen the image of a clothing brand and stress the uniqueness of what it has to offer (Scopelliti, Cillo & Mazursky, 2011).

Given that innovation and creativity are the basis of the phenomenon of fashion, it is necessary to rationally and clearly describe the processes that companies implement to face the challenge of product renewal, combining aesthetic principles with market goals and budget constraints. Current language often confuses the concepts of brand, style, line, product and collection, which we will discuss in detail in the paragraphs and chapters below. The concept of *innovation* must also be properly defined. Innovation varies based on:

- the *activities* involved, and here it is necessary first of all to separate *process* innovation from *product* innovation (Utterback & Abernathy, 1975);
- the *extent* of the change (*incremental* and *radical* innovation, see for example Perrini, 2012);
- the *content* of the change, that allows for distinguishing between *technical*, *economic*, *aesthetic* and *symbolic* innovations (Cappetta, Cillo & Ponti, 2006; Verganti, 2009).

Furthermore, innovation may be conceived as a business competence, comparing organizations that prove they are ready to follow new paths with those that, on the other hand, follow, imitate or reinterpret innovations introduced by others (Perrini, 2012).

In recent years fashion companies have been affected by numerous process innovations in supply chain management (principally in order to reduce lead times and working capital), in sales distribution (where the structure of relations between producers and distributors has changed, as have stock turnover policies) and in communication (heavily impacted by digital evolution). Even fast fashion, which we will discuss later, has created innovation in its market approach, with significant repercussions on product development and other internal processes (Tokatli, 2008). After the initial introduction by pioneers and leaders, those process innovations have been adopted over time by all of the competitors, to a greater or lesser extent based on consistency with each entity's reference market and structure.

Other process innovations have regarded design and production systems, such as CAD-CAM systems, automated cutting of fabrics and leather, and digital printing. Despite this, in many cases the assembly phase (i.e. the final production of the clothing item, a pair of shoes or a bag)

is still performed by artisans or specialized workers with the assistance of traditional sewing machines or other elementary equipment. Software programs have also been developed, called product life-cycle management (PLM) and product data management (PDM), to provide comprehensive product management, from the design phase through all of the activities and aspects that characterize the process.

Product innovation is what is most relevant for this book, that focuses on the development of the collections of fashion companies. In this context, some innovations have a strictly functional value and regard new types of yarn (as happened with nylon and other artificial and synthetic fibers introduced during the 1900s), new fabrics (that result from new yarns or new weaving and finishing operations) and new non-textile materials (such as Alcantara).

Other innovations, and especially those that follow the rhythms of fashion, regard product *style*. This concept of *style*, that embodies the aesthetic dimension of the product, requires responses to many questions:

- what do we mean by *style*, speaking of collections of clothing items and leather and footwear articles?
- on what elements of the product are stylistic innovation and product development concentrated in fashion companies?
- to what extent do sector trends, rather than designer creativity, influence the process of stylistic renewal of collections by fashion companies?
- if it is true that product renewal is linked to the seasons, is it also true that trends last only one season?
- how do the markets (or segments of demand) chosen by a company as targets, and its brand identity, influence the company's stylistic choices and product development process?

In the language of fashion, style can refer to:

- *dressing* styles;
- what is sometimes called the *look* of the product, i.e. its aesthetic impact.

Dressing styles are linked to historical epochs. Despite there being various labels, we can start by distinguishing between *classic*, *traditional*, *modern*

(or contemporary) and *avant-garde* styles. Classic style is inspired by stylistic precepts defined and linked to the past. Traditional style reinterprets the stylistic precepts of the past, giving them a current expression. Modern style introduces contemporary values in a vision that is still classic, but offers elements of fashion. *Avant-garde* style differs due to its radically new solutions, offered to market segments which are very sensitive to innovation and open to breaking with the past.

With reference to male clothing, the most classic proposals are those that are not as tight on the waist, softer and oriented towards a less youthful target, including in the type of fabrics, that are more traditional. Unstructured jackets, closer fitting lines and more technological fabrics characterize more modern concepts.

In the context of each clothing style, the *look* defines specific styles, which are expressed in elements “of cut (close-fitting, structured, fluid, etc.), color (soft or lively colors), patterns (prints, graphic patterns, flowers, etc.), fabric (synthetic, natural, decorated, rough), and length (referring in particular to skirts and pants: mini, knee-length, ankle-length, etc.)” (Cappetta, Cillo & Ponti, 2003). Style is also defined by accessories: think of the chains of bags, or studs, that have recently become very common.

Some styles recall architectural styles (baroque, *liberty*/art nouveau, etc.), historical periods (empire style), “work” clothes (military style) and so on: a rich vocabulary is developed by the creative designers and the media involved in reading and spreading the fashion. Style understood in this way is interpreted each time according to the dressing styles, the designers’ choices and the identity of the brand.

When style means *look*, it offers continuous occasions for innovation, that at times use new functional elements for aesthetic purposes. For example, a light down jacket and leggings were conceived in functional terms to meet needs of comfort and practicality, exploiting technical improvements in materials, but they provided designers the opportunity to offer new aesthetic views.

Stylistic innovations often transmit precise meanings and value messages. The miniskirt, invented at the time of *Swinging London*, embodied an era of female emancipation and protest against rules of behavior considered outdated. Decades earlier, the Poiret *maison* had freed women from the slavery of the corset and the “S-line.” On a less epoch-making scale, contemporary stylistic options also frequently have symbolic contents (like the sensuality expressed by Dolce & Gabbana collections).

Each brand (and each designer) has a stylistic identity that each collection interprets based on the new trends proposed. This identity also includes what are called *brand identifiers*, unchanging formal elements that over time become a code for recognizing a brand. This can be a type of product (rubber sole loafers by Tod's, or unstructured jackets by Armani), materials (the *matelassée* in Chanel bags, or woven leather in those of Bottega Veneta), the brand's logo or initials (presented as a pendant, pattern, etc.) or recurring themes (the Eiffel Tower for Louis Vuitton, the magnolia for Chanel, the Medusa for Versace, the Duc carriage for Hermès). A brand's stylistic identity opens up new spaces but also defines the boundaries of innovation, because the designer and his team will always be asked to propose new elements that respect the aesthetic values the brand has acquired over time.

If we want to apply a distinction between radical and incremental innovations in fashion companies, the former are often based on new yarns or materials (think of the role of nylon in the birth of modern women's stockings) or at the level of a single company, new models (of dresses, skirts, pants, etc.) that are completely innovative compared to previous collections. Incremental innovations are those that are limited to modifying existing models or introducing variations in colors, fabrics, patterns or accessories. As we will see, these forms of innovation in fashion entail various types of risk, different abilities to capture trends and clients' needs for new concepts, and above all different degrees of variety and complexity in the process of development of a collection.

2. How fashion is born, and how it evolves

Who creates fashion? What material and symbolic references are used by the creatives who develop products? Does creativity belong to individuals, or is it the result of more complex social mechanisms and dominant styles that more or less consciously shape how new trends are born?

Chapter 4 explains how the entire chain of actors in the fashion world generates trends, defined as macro-trends precisely because they regard the sector as a whole. Those trends are agreed on and proposed each season, and illustrate evolution in society, costumes and lifestyles, translated into specific aesthetic precepts. Not all proposals are valued to the same extent by creatives. Some are ignored, others will be developed by design-

ers and companies, but will fail at the time they hit the market; and still others will be welcomed by the public, becoming popular and long-lasting.

In filtering the proposals accepted in the collections of the various brands, and then launched through communications campaigns, an increasingly important role is played by the media, that includes not only journalists, but also bloggers and celebrities, who speak of new items, wear them or even criticize them, and in any event bring them to the attention of consumers. In turn, consumers play a role of social sharing, participating in defining what is cool at a certain time, undoubtedly influenced by the communication system, but hopefully, also with their own ability to choose and discern.

Research has demonstrated that fashion can go through periods of unrest or uncertainty of aesthetic precepts, and other more stable periods (that can last for a few years) in which a style becomes dominant and establishes itself as a characteristic followed by the majority of creatives (Cappetta, Cillo & Ponti, 2003). For example, between the middle of the nineteen-eighties and the middle of the nineteen-nineties, there was a shift from masculine style, to minimal style, and ultimately to kitsch. This convergence around a dominant style allows the companies and designers who are best at interpreting it to prosper (Cavalli's success in the new millennium is at least in part explained by the popularity of the *animalier* style, a characteristic of this Italian company). To the contrary, those who prove incapable of following the dominant style will find difficulty selling, however much their loyal clients value their creations.

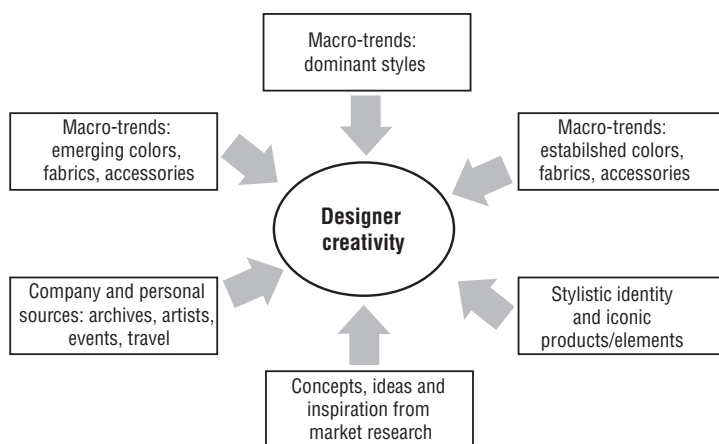
Given the dominant style of a period, the colors, prints, fabrics and other elements of a product also have durations and life cycles. These elements are introduced in a certain season (because they are launched by some producers), and after finding success, are proposed again in subsequent seasons by a growing number of competitors. A topical case is lace, a traditional element relaunched by various brands some seasons ago, that was highly successful and thus stably entered the collections of many companies for multiple seasons. The same reasoning applies to accessories, types and shapes of leather goods, or the height of heels and the roundness of the tips of shoes.

For luxury brands, product innovation is critical but cannot be linked as strictly to trends, to not lose the timelessness associated with this category of goods. The challenge for manufacturers in the luxury sector is to manage this duality between tradition and fashion. The challenge is

often resolved by accompanying timeless products, that may have varied very little over the years, with products closer to trends or limited series of ongoing products, where iconic aspects are mixed with new characteristics aimed at a less conservative customer base.

Therefore, if it is correct to say that fashion is a *seasonal* phenomenon, because companies renew collections each season, and the product chain defines the macro-trends at the start of each season, it is just as correct to say that product styles and elements can last longer and define historical periods. This does not mean that stylists do not draw on personal inspiration or their own experiences as well, proposing variety, reinterpretations and also entirely original ideas that can mark the start and the end of certain styles. An interesting example is the “winged” (or trapeze) bag by Céline, created by the designer Phoebe Philo in 2008, and then picked up by all producers in the following years. Figure 1 attempts to summarize the references that feed creativity in fashion products.

Figure 1 The sources of stylistic creativity



It is also necessary to stress that fashion companies vary based on how they balance creativity and follow styles that become established on the market. This is in part a reflection of the features of the brands, that can have either a more innovative or more commercial identity. To a certain extent it also depends on how the fashion company is internally organized, in particular as regards collection development. A more “artistic” approach

can contrast with a more “scientific” approach (Cillo & Verona, 2008), summarized in Figure 2.

In the first approach the creative is dominant, as typically happens in *maisons* founded by a designer. In the second, there is a style office with an extensive team of collaborators and assistants, organized to monitor and interpret new trends. Furthermore, the artistic approach relies on the authority of the creative and his/her individual creations, while the scientific approach is based more on outside stimulus and collective elaboration. The artistic approach, although it can be a source of inefficiency, produces the best results when, thanks to the actual talent of the designer, it is able to define a recognizable and inimitable brand identity. The scientific approach, although it can lead to less original and recognizable products, finds its strength in the ability to follow or anticipate market trends.

Figure 2 Organizational approaches to creativity

	“Artistic” approach	“Scientific” approach
Stimulus to change	Designer	Style office
Locus of research process	Close to the expertise or identity of the designer (e.g. archives)	Distant search: use of trend setters, opinion leaders
Role of individuals	The designer is an “artist”	Collective or repetitive process
Expected results	Develop and consolidate the company’s stylistic identity	Changes that anticipate market trends

Source: based on Cillo & Verona (2008).

3. Changes in the system

Fashion also experiences widespread changes both of the concept of fashion products and the methods of their distribution, that transform the dynamics and structures in the sector over the long-term (Merlo, 2003). Probably, the greatest historical innovations of the fashion system were the birth of *haute couture* in Paris at the start of last century, the development of *prêt-à-porter* in Italy in the nineteen-sixties, thanks to a new model of collaboration between companies and designers, and the advent of fast fashion in the last two decades. Fast fashion, which we will discuss below for its implications for collection management, indicates the *modus ope-*

randi of companies able to modify their product assortments at very short intervals. Inditex, that is considered the inventor of fast fashion and is still the leader in this approach, delivers new articles to its stores twice a week, a revolution compared to the old approach of preparing collections twice a year (Ferdows, Lewis, & Machuca, 2004).

Fast fashion has influenced the sector in two ways: greatly shortening product development times and all of the production and logistics processes; and stimulating the consumer to go to stores more often, where he/she is certain to discover something new every time. Fast fashion's ability to offer new items at reasonable prices has fueled the practice of mix & match, in which the consumer pairs costly brand-name articles with fresh, cheap items not likely to last long, but that are in tune with the current fashion and allow for renewing one's look every day.

As a system-wide innovation, fast fashion has accompanied a series of other phenomena in the sector and changes in company strategies. All of the operators, including those less intensely linked to fashion, have been forced to review structure and times of collections, to deal with competition and take advantage of the new opportunities that have arisen.

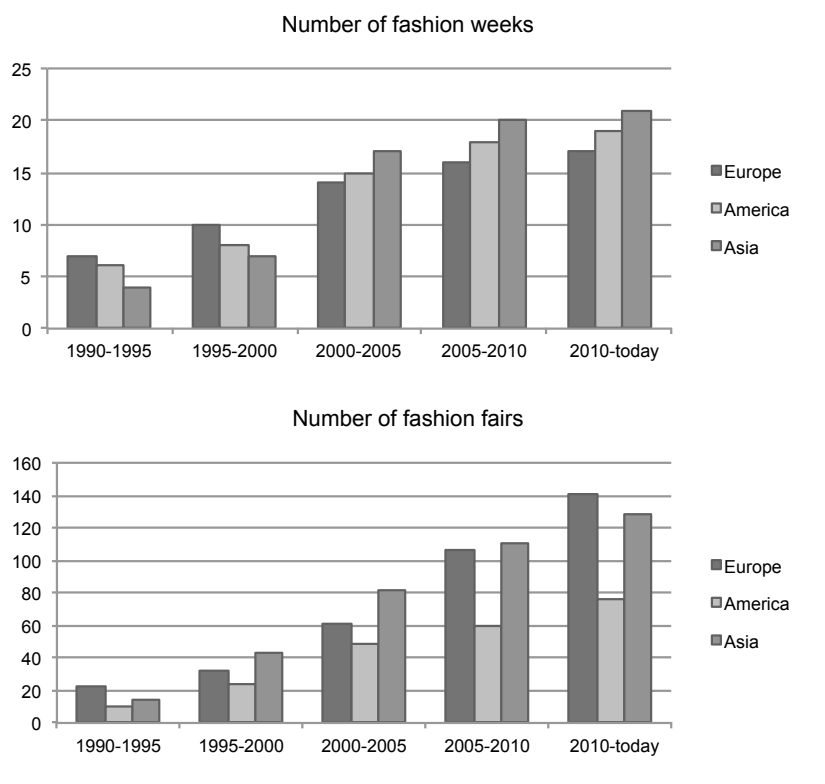
Apart from the emergence of fast fashion, the current era is characterized by:

- increasingly complex and international competition between companies to win over consumers who are increasingly unpredictable, careful and selective;
- the growing dynamism of manufacturers and the supply chain, demonstrated by the multiplication of fashion weeks and fair events, that have the goal of promoting the offerings of various operators in the supply chain in a targeted way; in fact, a considerable increase is being seen in the number of events, that are increasingly specialized and have more flexible schedules than the traditional appointments (Figure 3); in particular, fashion weeks are no longer only for experts (who had to filter, interpret and transmit them to final customers) but also moments of immediate communication to the public at large;
- the periods of economic crisis that have followed one another in the new millennium in developed economies, and the parallel emergence of Asian consumers as a fundamental market;
- the advent of social networks, mobile devices and e-commerce,

that are transforming communications and the relationship with consumers;

- the development of a new level of sensitivity towards the natural environment and in general towards corporate social responsibility (which we will discuss further in the subsequent section);
- the transformation of the retail system, with the evolution of stores into places for communication, and not only sales, that has led to massive investments by producers in directly operated stores;
- the development of the outlet distribution channel, both as physical stores and through e-commerce.

Figure 3 Increase of sector events



Source: Authors' elaboration of public data.

It should also be observed that, in this complex market context, many traditional and consolidated abilities of fashion companies remain valid and can be exploited and even enhanced. For example, the manufacturing culture of Italian fashion remains an important competitive advantage. After years of searching for low-cost producers in developing countries, we are now seeing a global return to the values of artisanal production. The processing of fabrics, pattern making, embroidery, knitwork and other manufacturing activities reward manual skill and tradition, especially for high-end products. Moreover, a growing desire for product personalization is leading to a revival of tailoring work.

The quality of manufacturing in the Italian fashion system is proven by the foreign companies that choose Italian suppliers, or buy them, or develop production facilities in the Vicenza area, Tuscany, or other districts, stressing the Italian origin of the products in their communication activities. For example, Pierre Denis, the CEO of the English brand Jimmy Choo, has said: "All, and I mean all Jimmy Choo products are produced in Italy, so Italy is the center of our artisanal production. As a luxury brand, focused on accessories, we consider 'Made in Italy' as an essential part of our brand identity and a fundamental sign of the quality of our products" (Misani & Varacca Capello, 2013).

4. Sustainability in fashion

According to Fashion and Luxury Insight (Varacca Capello et al., 2015), the SDA Bocconi and Altagamma report dedicated to fashion and luxury, only 24% of the companies in these sectors publish a sustainability report consistent with GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) standards or other formal reporting standards. The report covers the largest listed international fashion and luxury companies, while excluding family-owned or closed companies where sustainability reporting is even less common. This 24% places the sector well below the average for listed companies, among which approximately 75% of companies in the Global 500 list publish a sustainability report.

The resistance in the fashion and luxury world to meet transparency obligations regarding social and environmental performance, even in large international companies, is surprising if we consider the many critical aspects the sector must face:

- the environmental impact of consumption of materials and energy in textile and leather production;
- the problem of reusing discarded garments;
- the risk that the chemicals used in textile production and tanning can cause harm to human health or fauna;
- the working conditions in the factories and control of the supply chain.

In addition to the transformations already described, the advent of fast fashion has also shortened the useful life of clothing and accessories, leading to an increase in the natural resources used. It is necessary to remember that the production of fibers has a negative impact on the environment. To obtain cotton, the most common fiber, large quantities of water are needed, in addition to pesticides and fertilizers that have negative consequences on the territory and workers. There are also emissions of CO₂ generated in the transport of fibers from countries of origin to those where the subsequent phases of transformation and sale take place, that are often very far away. Some fashion brands have responded to this problem by attempting to use biological cotton, a non-chemical product resulting from less intensive farming practices; however, this only reduces in part the total environmental costs of the fiber.

The most direct way to save natural fibers consists of the cradle-to-cradle approach, by which an attempt is made to give materials new life. The best-known case is that of recycling PET bottles, from which continuous filaments can be obtained for use in clothing (fleece, in particular). We are also seeing renewed interest for natural dyeing techniques, that had fallen into disuse with the spread of synthetic colorants. In addition, some fashion companies are experimenting with biodegradable materials fit for composting. For example, Gucci has introduced biodegradable glasses and shoes, while Puma has announced that it will produce new types of t-shirts and shoes that at the end of their life cycle transform into fertilizers (Carpenter, 2012). For the possibilities of reuse, the most promising technologies are those of artificial fibers, such as polymers, that are derived from fossil fuels but in theory can be recycled infinitely.

These attempts to innovate products to improve their sustainability are in harmony with the gradual emergence of new consumption sensitivities (Rinaldi & Testa, 2013). Nowadays many consumers wish to know how the manufacturer produced a garment, with what materials, in what coun-

tries, by whom and in what conditions. New media and social networks drive this need for transparency, because negative information spreads rapidly and acts as a check on business conduct.

The consumer does not want to give up style, emotion, elegance and all of the traditional aesthetic values transmitted by fashion, of course; what the consumer wants, is for these values not to be obtained to the detriment of the environment, and with respect for people. According to some studies, the consumer of sustainable fashion is educated, well-off, has time to dedicate to shopping, and is young but not too young, because he/she must be mature enough to appreciate the cultural meaning of what he/she purchases (Niinimäki, 2010). This opens up opportunities for designers to combine sustainability and creativity, returning materials previously considered poor to the category of beauty and luxury. Stella McCartney is a well-known case of the combination of ethical and aesthetic values, with her broad use of artificial leather in bags and garments with high fashion content (and high price).

At the same time, for the lower ranges of the market, there is an evident conflict between the search for sustainability and the consumer's temptation to purchase fashionable garments at convenient prices. Fast fashion can pull consumers away from thought-out purchases of clothing items, leading them towards "disposable" consumption. A closely related issue is that of working conditions in low-cost countries. The issue became topical after the collapse of the textile factory in Dacca (Bangladesh) in 2013, in which over 1,100 workers lost their lives. The factory produced clothing items for numerous western brands, such as Benetton, Mango, Walmart, El Corte Inglés and Primark (Butler, 2013). The tragedy brought media attention to the structure of the global textile chain, where manufacturing is outsourced to a complex, multi-level network of suppliers, often outside the control of the producer that designs and places its trademark on the product. Exploitation of child labor, suppression of labor union rights, inhuman working hours, insufficient pay, risks to health and dangerous buildings are all possible consequences, despite the fact that many fashion companies have codes of conduct that establish behavior and requirements that suppliers and sub-suppliers must follow.

The origin of the problem is companies' desire to save on costs and increase operating flexibility, through decentralization of production to low-cost suppliers, ready to accept orders with short deadlines. In developing countries these goals translate into pressure on workers. Local govern-

ments avoid encouraging social development policies that would increase costs and reduce competitiveness of their manufacturers on the global markets. Fashion companies themselves sometimes admit they are not certain that proper working conditions are guaranteed, or that harmful chemicals are not used, given that the factories are located in places where it is impossible to fully monitor their operations.

On the product level, the sustainability profile can represent a source of competitive differentiation, but in the long-term it is destined to become an indispensable characteristic for all producers. The moderate use of sustainability reports among fashion and luxury companies indicates a delay in translating social and environmental problems into organizational solutions, accompanied by goals, performance measurement and control systems. Fashion companies must also abandon a risk management approach (Misani, 1995) in which interventions are only aimed at protecting the brand, and shift to a logic in which sustainability participates in defining the main company processes:

- *product design* (development and industrialization of products with longer duration, with a selection of fibers and fabrics whose processing minimizes environmental impact);
- *branding* (consumer education and involvement);
- *logistics and transport* (inclusion of emissions in efficiency calculations);
- *supply chain* (traceability, transparency, training and monitoring of suppliers of raw materials, components and finished products).

Sustainability rewards above all fashion companies that invest in brand identity and wish to provide consumers with a high-quality experience, that involves not only the product per se, but its intangible qualities, and thus the history of the company and consistency with its heritage (Corbellini & Marafioti, 2013). Countries like Italy, that have a manufacturing culture, can efficiently combine style and sustainability, and capitalize on them to offer stimulus to consumers who are not yet sensitive to these themes but are ready to comprehend excellence. Box 1 presents an initiative by the *Camera della Moda* that goes in this direction.

Box 1 – The Sustainability Manifesto of the Camera Nazionale della Moda

In 2012, the *Camera Nazionale della Moda* published a Manifesto for the sustainability of Italian fashion. The Manifesto lists and describes ten fundamental principles to ensure the responsible management of fashion products along the value chain.

1. DESIGN. Design quality products that can last a long time and minimize impact on ecosystems.
2. CHOICE OF RAW MATERIALS. Use raw materials, materials and fabrics with high environmental and social value.
3. PROCESSING OF RAW MATERIALS AND PRODUCTION: reduce environmental and social impact of activities and acknowledge everyone's contribution to product value.
4. DISTRIBUTION, MARKETING AND SALE: Include sustainability criteria along the path your product follows to the customer.
5. MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: Commit to continuous improvement of company performance.
6. FASHION AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM: Support the local territory and Made in Italy production.
7. BUSINESS ETHICS: Integrate universal values in your brand.
8. TRANSPARENCY: Communicate your commitment to sustainability to stakeholders in a transparent way.
9. EDUCATION: Promote ethics and sustainability with consumers and all other interlocutors.
10. Bring the Rules to life

Source: Camera Nazionale della Moda (2012).

5. Impacts on collection development

How are fashion companies reacting to the changes affecting the sector? In particular, what are the impacts of the breadth of assortments, product development collection structure and the respective timeframes? The most common orientation at this time can be summarized as follows:

- a rethinking of the structure of the product offering, especially when divided over multiple lines, to avoid overlapping and reduce costs (the abandonment of the second D&G line by Dolce & Gabbana is a good example);

- a more careful monitoring of the total number of SKUs (stock keeping unit, an approximation of the number of references in the collection, determined by the number of models, fabrics and colors), in order to reduce the complexity of the assortment, and also to make space for an extension of product categories or the introduction of new occasions of use;
- the search for savings in the cost of samples, principally through the reduction of fabric and color variants for the offer presented in showrooms; this policy is favored by new digital solutions that make it possible to also show the client the variants that are not physically available;
- refocusing on iconic products or elements, to strengthen stylistic and brand identity; for high-end companies, this means working more on heritage and less on logo; an example was the relaunching of Burberry in 2006 by the CEO Angela Ahrendts (Ahrendts, 2013), that eliminated licensed products and concentrated on the trench coat, the company's historical strong point;
- the hiring by premium industrial brands of famous creative directors in order to innovate and reinvigorate the stylistic contents of products;
- the review of make or buy choices in collection development activities (design, prototyping, industrialization); as we will discuss below, most companies currently prefer to keep control of the most critical activities or the most complex products, while outsourcing the rest of the phases to qualified suppliers, with long-term relationships, even though approaches differ considerably depending on types of companies;
- review of the structure of seasonal collections, in terms of sales campaigns and delivery times; today most companies propose a pre- and a main season, in addition to a runway (that is generally not sold, to also limit the number of sales campaigns); during the season they produce limited packages (in terms of number of references), called injections, capsules, limited editions, flashes, etc., to continuously renew the assortments and bring the time of purchase by stores closer to the time of sale to final consumers; this trend also leads some companies to make their garments available in the online store immediately after fashion shows (see now, buy now);

- the attempt to combine men's and women's fashion shows, for example at Gucci, with the goal of reducing costs and concentrating in a single event the presentation of products that in any event share the same inspiration.

It follows that product development is no longer necessarily scheduled following classical seasonal timeframes, but can be divided into multiple phases, sometimes using dedicated teams, even in companies that adopt the *programmato* logic. Product development becomes a continuous process of adjustment of the various components of collections, increasingly compressing the time between the conceiving of the product and production and delivery.

Another important trend is producers' investment in networks of directly owned or directly operated stores – known as DOS. The separation between producers, who had their logics and critical activities, and retailers, who had others, essentially no longer exists. The integration between production and retailing, started by fashion retailers, has now been generalized, with two important implications:

- the assortments proposed by fashion companies must be adequate for the needs of DOS, to properly fill the display space and not leave it poorly stocked even at times of more difficult sales;
- fashion companies must learn a new trade, that of the retailer (Brandazza, Rovetta & Varacca Capello, 2010); it is crucial for assortments in the various sales channels to be coordinated and managed rationally in terms of quantities, qualities and times, and delicate choices arise concerning the proper degree of centralization (at company headquarters) or decentralization (in the various local markets) of the assortment choices.

The development of the outlet channel, which allows companies to maintain high mark-ups on new in-season collections and to still use stock in a convenient way, also impacts collections. The companies for which this channel is important have an interest in developing ad hoc products for outlets, to take advantage of the less critical expectations of consumers. This challenge has now become strategic for some brands, especially of leather goods, that propose successful color or material variants of their products in outlets.

The multiplication of international markets also influences collections and management processes. Even though companies desire uniform collections, in order to preserve the brand and style identity, in addition to achieving economies of scale, some markets can require product adjustment. The entry into countries with opposing seasons, large cultural distances, and consumers with very different anthropomorphic characteristics and clothing tastes, can create problems for companies, including with respect to reassortment processes for potential DOS. In addition, despite many emerging countries having significant growth rates, their dimensions do not always initially justify the considerable investments necessary for entry, with the consequence that the company must carefully evaluate times and risks. Mature and traditional markets, where the brand is consolidated, must in any event always be cultivated, including to obtain volumes, turnover and margins that allow companies to invest in emerging countries.

The technological options linked to new devices and applications are constantly evolving and involve above all the processes of communication, sale and collection of information on consumers. Many innovations that are in the experimental phase for now, like virtual mirrors (that make it possible to try on clothes on an avatar), can transform consumers' shopping experience and at the same time enrich knowledge of their tastes, with repercussions on product development. New technologies can also facilitate co-creation, in which consumers are directly involved in the adjustment of products, choosing from a menu of preset options (Fuchs *et al.*, 2013).

Sensitivity towards the environment and corporate social responsibility, in addition to imposing an overall rethinking of production processes and supply chain management, can also translate into new lines for organizing types of products. Examples are offered by "sustainable collections" created by some producers, like the H&M Conscious Collection.

All of these innovations overlap, bringing complexity and dynamism to the sector. However, in a field such as fashion, where aesthetic factors, style and image are of fundamental importance, the specificities of single companies continue to play an essential role in market and financial success.

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