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## **The Consumer's Perception on Sustainability**

### **Abstract**

The term sustainability is an expression that has been widely used and disclosed today by several companies, either for durable goods and nondurable goods. This term is quite complex to be defined, because for a product to be considered sustainable it has to go through some pre-requisites such as social, environmental and economic, varying from environmental care to social consciousness related to the product. Therefore, this article aims at making a reflection about how the consumer has been realizing the issue of sustainability in the fashion segment. This is done through the analysis of the signs that lead people to believe that the consumer is becoming aware of the impacts of unbridled consumption over time and their reaction in relation to this idea. In order to do so, we aim at detecting the signs that have taken place within contemporary society and that can affect the fashion market. We also aim at addressing sustainability from the perspective of fashion products that are being developed, since their establishment, including raw materials, processes and management, aimed at social and economic development as well as environmental protection. To do so, we make a parallel between sustainable development, the direction of consumption and the designer's role in relation to the product and the consumer, in order to understand, and monitor the consumer perception from his/her power and responsibilities as an agent who transforms his/her space. We also report the emerging lifestyles in response to the economic crisis that spreads worldwide, and to environmental impact. So, we focus on a particular style named slow fashion, which arises in response to what has been made so far and only last a short period of time, because of the so-called fast fashion that currently is questioned as a global problem. Finally, we show the changing factors that are being decisive at the moment of the purchase, and assisting designers during these changes.

**Keywords:** sustainability, consumption, designer

### **1. Introduction**

Concerns with environmental changes worldwide have already been reflected in fashion consumption, posing as a major concern throughout the production chain that surrounds the textile and fashion industry.

This article points out the factors over time where the consumption of industrialized goods became associated with the possibility of differentiation and what are the signs of change in consumption which are emerging. Reflecting on consumer behavior throughout history.

Also addresses the importance of sustainable product development, reflecting on the designer's role. Considering from the production of raw materials to the disposable of the final product.

Finally focuses on lifestyles that are emerging, as a result of social and environmental changes, making a reflection about the new behaviors: slow life, fast fashion, slow fashion, and so on.

## 2. Fashion consumption throughout history

Throughout history of fashion evolution, clothing styles and their meanings within society began to differentiate itself. At beginning, the clothing was imposed by a society that worried about tradition preservation, only changing these standards by social class. However, it is in the Middle Ages that starts a clear differentiation between the sex and also a greater appreciation for aesthetics, because the bourgeoisie began to adopt the nobility style, and in turn, nobility began looking for tailors to differentiate from bourgeoisie. And so, were born the first fashion cycles.

After the industrial revolution, in the 19th century, a set of technological changes along with the acceleration of information and communications, have had a profound impact on productive, economic and social processes, creating a new relationship between clothing and society. The consumption of industrialized goods became often associated with the possibility of differentiation, allowing the creation of varied styles and proclaiming a certain "independence" of the consumer.

"you want to say that, without the production system, there would be many needs. Believes that companies, to produce such goods or services, raise also all appropriate suggestion for the lead to accept and which therefore ' produce ' at the bottom the needs to which they correspond. Serious psychological gap reveals itself here. The needs are closely specified beforehand by the finite objects. Only there is need for such or such an object and the psyche of the consumer is reduced to simple showcase or catalog." (Baudrillard apud, Galbraith, 2010: 85- 86)

According to Sant'Anna (2010:58), the consumer society has received a growing importance when the publicity gave way to advertising and the individual body came to be seen as the place from which our main fears and our greatest pleasures come. Many advertisements are showing how each person felt before and after the consumption of certain products, some even having the ability to modify the consumer's psychological state. Increasing product life cycles, the durability that was an important characteristic, ends up becoming an outdated concept. The consumer looks for the "new" at any moment, not caring for ethical values, only making a growing consumerist society that lives and feeds on novelty. This randomness, striving to meet and to show the world through the use of new, ultimately annual personal styles, that instead of differentiate by new, end up matching everyone who also seek to individualize. According to Sant'Anna (2010:64-65) consume became a gesture aimed at building similar to the images themselves and happiness in a new and paradoxical pleasures designed commercial network. The author also defends the idea that each individual was increasingly and more called to become a kind of "mini-company program", which would expect to emerge the forces necessary to escape any kind of suffering.

Every six months, when new fashion collections are released, it is not clear and sometimes not even matters knowing the long process by which a piece of clothing or accessory went on to reach the final destination: the wardrobe of the consumer. The speed of access to information leaves consumers eager to buy the pieces that have just been launched and also to know what the trends are for the next few seasons. According to Castilho (2006:81) "the possibility of redesigning the body itself, on grounds of human dissatisfaction with one's own eternal appearance, is a moving of that allow processing of biological human being or" more natural "to be cultural". Fashion, above all it is you want, be an instrument for rapid communication. For Lomazzi (1989:87) "fashion, dress, is first and foremost a significant signal system, a language: way more convenient but also the most important and more straightforward that the individual can use daily to express, in addition to the word". But what many consumers don't know is that within this aestheticization process, creates a mine of depletion of sustainable

goods. Depending on the fashion industry obeying logic of cycles that begin and end each season, clothes and accessories enter the class of disposable products.

With the aggravation of overconsumption, it is believed that consumers tend to change their position, getting used to think more before buying and also learning how to consume less. Unnecessary things consumption over time will be out of tune with the behavior of this new society.

"New design proposals, with longer life cycles for products and educational movements for a more consumption will be fundamental to the recast intellectualized of the fashion system. A new sign begins to take shape based on "is fashionable preserve". The society begins to take a stance of rejection to the exaggerated consumerism and inconsequential." (Aguilar, 2010)

Discover how to make proper fashion trends, which is ethical and that the consumer accepted, is the great challenge for the future fashion producers and designers.

### **3. Design X Sustainability**

Fashion consumption cycle is increasingly on the move, began thinking on the development of creating products with more affordable prices, and with more updated design. Thus, the consumption trend "at moment" became more exploited and caused a desire to purchase, producing textile waste to become much greater.

From this fashion consumption accelerated, the design became increasingly show within the enterprise, participating in all processes of product development since the aesthetics, functionality, choice of materials and raw materials, causing the consumer desire to consume to be much larger front of so many options on the market.

So, designer has to create a product that competes amid so many choices of innovative products and high-technology, is necessary to invest in materials, design and manufacturing processes, because a product without a differential and without quality has no chances of being accepted into the market. And for a product to be considered good, is not just aesthetics, must be ergonomic, functional, affordable and environmentally friendly.

The design is the Act of design, develop or create, seeking improvement than already exists, being attentive to all phases of the product, from the raw materials to the disposal of the product. The design to be considered a sustainable design has to be tuned to all phases of the product life and take into account all environmental factors, social, economic sustainability, because it encompasses all of these aspects and also the social equality, cultural diversity, respect, the possibility of shared experience, the collective work ease of resources and ability to design the future. He cares about the impacts which are produced by collaborating to lessen the damage and works in people's awareness towards fairer economy.

Therefore, the designer to think in the choice of materials is necessary to examine what the impacts that the extraction of raw materials are and the manufacturing process will cause to the environment, that is, must think of the product until his breakdown and recycling after its use.

To talk about sustainability versus design has been thinking about the role of design for sustainability that includes product development, services, and systems that don't affect the environment and on quality products. Sustainability is related to the product when there is talk about the criteria, methods and investments of Life Cycle Design that is part of the product's life cycle, being also known with Eco design and Design For Environment (Vezzoli, 2008).

According to Vezzoli (2008) the product life cycle or Life Cycle Design is divided into four parts which are:

- Pre-co-production: is the purchase of resources such as raw materials to the production of materials;
- Production: are mounting, finishing and the labor process of materials;
- Distribution: in addition to transport and storage, packaging and consumer feedback;
- Use of the product: is the maintenance and the reflection of design on the consumer to any resource consumption;
- Allocation of product: is the disposition until the recycling, reuse and remanufacturing services product.

Sustainable encompasses all that exists in the organizations since the people's awareness to the entire planet. For an organization to be considered sustainable it must fill four basic requirements are: be environmentally correct, economically viable, and socially just and culturally fair (Wanderley, & Zuim, 2011).

The environmental, social and economic damage caused by clothing and textile industry are included in all stages of processes. Forum for Future organization and Greenpeace researcher are identified with the problems the following points: the fashion consumption, water consumption, working conditions, wasted energy, the use of chemicals, production of certain materials such as unsustainable, the carbon dioxide fibers used for the transport of tissues and end products for the point of sale the management of waste and recycling (Morais, Carvalho, & Broega, 2011).

According to Holmberg (apud Manzini, & Vezzoli, 2002), sustainability is seen with a goal and not with a goal to be pursued, because not everything that causes environmental improvement is considered a sustainable product. So to be sustainable a product must comply with the following rules:

- Be based on renewable products;
- Improving the employment of non-renewable products (air, water and land);
- The non-accumulation of garbage that the ecosystem is not able to degrade;
- Work so that all individuals can use their environmental space limits.

Sustainable development is able to satisfy the wishes of the current generations, believing in their ability to meet the wishes of future generations. Is the development that does not wear the assets for the future. One of the most important indicator for sustainable development is the change in the patterns of consumption and easy perception of happiness and well being of the society that are not related to the levels of economic activity and consumption.

For Vezzoli (2009), to achieve the complex balance of the three dimensions of sustainability is an interdisciplinary, demand that requires radical changes in actors and society in their relations; It is very important the role of design in society, both in the field of research, professional practice, such as in education.

Thus, the new fashion designer profile search ally and restructure the uses of renewable resources, the decrease of trash in the ecosystem; social support and product awareness, raw extraction and the efficient use of resources with efficiency (Rech, & Souza, 2009).

Today some brands and designers are already working the ethical fashion; also the British Fashion Council gave place to the eco fashion similarly which gave rise to the other industries of fashion (The Ecologist, 2012). Citroen Dalia and Rose works with luxury fashion on measure and calls him ecoluxo, because labor is fair, the products are made on measure and the raw material is considered to be of good quality.

Also, in the collections of the international fashion designer Carlos Miele begins to show that this work is viable and can be lucrative, because for some time now has been working closely with poor communities in the development of artisanal techniques

using linen reuse of patchwork fabrics that would go to waste, turning into luxury parts (Bezerra, Matos, & Pessoa 2011).

#### **4. New lifestyles**

Reports of the World Wildlife Fund of 2010 suggest that the environment is collapsing, as a result of years of abuse and negligence. The need for constant raw extraction, fossils that are finite, reached levels impractical. Knowing that, the modes of consumption are the main culprits and the economic crisis is making strides and expanding quickly. Soon it is expected that there will be by imposition a change in lifestyles.

According to the work of Lipovetsky (1989) the fashion mirrors society, therefore, it is correct to say that those changes occurring in the environment directly affect the entire chain of fashion and consequently modify the Act of consuming.

It is notice that today we live a transitional state where the fast fashion, with products that are offered at low prices and with similar aesthetic to the major brands of luxuries, is still in force but it can also be seen that the consumer does not react in the same way and is tended to become much more reflective in their actions and what they have done in the past.

The appearance of movements for more restrained lifestyles began to emerge in the first decade of the year 2000 and is now gaining more strength.

These suggest that the solution to the world is slowing down and not consume. Thus, in 2002, arose in Japan the movement called "Slow Life", asking the downturn of lifestyles. Exchanging material values to more social and ecological concerns. Emerging along the movement called "Slow wear", which suggests that the Fashion should be more durable, respecting the environment, economic and social values, while being sustainable (Carneiro, Flores, & Quevedo, et al 2009).

According to Fletcher's article (2010:61), the concept "Slow Fashion" has much in common with the "Slow Food" movement. The latter was founded in 1986 by Carlo Petrini in Italy, with the goal of combining food with awareness and responsibility. Where the fundamentals are linked to consumer information, protection of cultural identity and opposing to the massification of the food. Bases that served to other movements "Slow". In the case of fashion, the "slow Fashion" arises as a matter of symbolic change, where fashion is the most durable with perennial products aesthetically appealing and with quality. The author points out that the psychological needs (forming an identity and communicate through clothing) as well as the physical needs (referring to cover and protect the body) remains, what changes is the quantity issues. Without the pressure to produce more and more, the quality tends to be achieved more easily, because there is more time for better planning and more investment in workers. There is thus a better interaction between designer, manufacturer and consumer.

Knowing this, it is noted that the "Fast Fashion" movement that still follows conducting the Fashion these days, is powered by a measly wages and inadequate environmental exploitation.

A sign that the market is absorbing these changes is the fact that there are already trying to change image tags to fit this new consumer that emerges. Create lines that appeal to the "ecologically correct" or with the messaging socially positive behavior (Valente 2008).

According to article of Valens (2008), until the Decade of 70 major fashion houses dominated, then came the brands that offered social status associated with the product and that today the consumer is going to consume an identity, a vision that associates the

product brand. Reinforcing the idea that mark must sustain and transmit values. That is, the Act of buying went on to have subjective character, to meet wishes and personal values.

According to the book of Lipovetsky & Serroy (2010) a sign of change in consumption is in fact buying today have no more sense to highlight the human being in society and Yes, first, satisfying the individual itself. Alert to the fact that the world is shifting to what are called "world culture", a global culture in which access is universal, reaching more people and becoming so popular. The main cause of this would be the fact that there are about 150 million people currently outside their countries of origin, making believe that future generations will be increasingly formed by citizens without local identity, but with a global one. It is true to say that the human being within a society that is continuously more homogeneous is having increasingly more individual needs and becoming more questioners. Personal fulfillment already surpasses the marriage. And society before composed of young people already demonstrates a concern for reversal signs.

News reports in The Guardian (2008, 2010, & 2011), claim that in Britain already is visible a change in the consuming Act of the inhabitants. It is reported that consumers are already looking for products with higher longevity and quality raw materials and from work arising from fair jobs, this is, don't come from slave labor. The consumer is seen as more conscious and more susceptible to incorporate ethical values linked to products, which are more thoughtful and bearing in mind the value of what they buy. Stresses that acceptance may be similar to that organic food in the past was unworkable and nowadays move billions.

Report in the "Exame" magazine (2010), extols the next generation of consumers, called the Z generation, is very well informed, concerned about sustainability and willing to not consume. It is a restless generation not faithful to brands and closely linked to technological advances. Leading you to believe that more and more consumers tend to be less predictable and more insightful of what is acquired by them.

Companies are more tuned to these consumers, the focus now is on the individual, and increasingly personalized services. Nike offers customers the opportunity to customize a tennis model as the taste of each. With the popular Social Media on the internet, blogs and facebook have become the platform for new movements such as DIY (do it yourself), meaning make yourself your customization, a kind of recycling, become stronger.

## **5. Concluding Remarks**

After bibliographic research it possible to say that consumption of fashion products every day, is bigger and their quality does not match with the reality that emerges.

Most consumers are increasingly aware with the product they are buying according to the employment policies within ethical fashion chain.

The designer's role has to be increasingly worried about consumer behavior, with the product and with the environment, aiming at a long-term product, and not just the aesthetics, also the quality, social issues and durability.

It is noted that the emerging movements are reflections of a society that is in crisis; the capital now, no longer allows so many excesses. Thus, the movement slow life that today seems to be an option, in the future will be imposing economic and social issues.

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