



Changes in Fashion Communication

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Abstract. The text follows the task set by this conference to observe, “how communication practices impact today upon fashion industry and on societal fashion-related practices and values”.

A product is “anything that can be offered to the market with the objective of satisfying a consumer’s need” and everything s/he receives in an exchange with a retailer. This includes not only physical goods, but also a growing amount of immaterial products, such as experiences, causes, spiritual values and many others (described in this text). The effective offer of the fashion industry shows nevertheless a very low use of these highly requested immaterial goods. This contribution analyses, for some immaterial goods, the areas, which are today generating them, especially the products grown from Street Styles, from cultural policies such as City Making and from ethical efforts, such as Eco Fashion. The conclusion shows that change happens, when a re-combination of old traditions and new behaviors, generate new products and communication. The value lies today in the immateriality of the products, powered by the emotional interaction of people. The rise of immaterial products and of a new fashion communication is therefore more that the invention of a new commercial item or advertising campaign. It is an evolution of mentality, which documents the existence of ideas, values, ethical concepts, creativity and human dialogue behind the new products.

Keywords: Communication/Fashion communication · Immaterial products · Street Style · City Making/Fashion City Making · Ethical fashion

1 Introduction: Term and Subject Definition

The title of the event ‘Fashion Communication: between tradition and future digital developments - FACTUM19’ suggests that the renewal of fashion communication derives from new digital developments which are opposed to tradition [1]. There is no doubt that the market, consumption and society are changing and that this change is taking place during transition to a so-called network society which is able to produce new behaviors, real-time events [2] and the reinvention of sales. It is true that on the Web traditional hierarchies are today transformed into a network of horizontally connected people who decide their consumption [3]. It also true that losing their centrality and decision-making power, institutions and industries are forced to move from a “make and sell” to a “sense and response” strategy that satisfies more individual [3], and (recently) also more inclusive [4], needs and desires.

Today the market undoubtedly faces a situation characterized by the birth of an information society, which relies on the marketing strategies offered by the network. This market is nevertheless forced to meet the requests of a new, informed and more demanding consumer. The new buyer is empowered. The value of products is today established by his/her demand. Although consumption can be, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by trends (a trend is “a general development or change in a situation or in the way people are behaving”) [5], by word of mouth information and by product or service evaluations among buyers, on websites such as Tripadvisor, in reality it is the consumer’s new intangible, or better immaterial, demand that determines his/her choices. ‘Immaterial’ is here the appropriate term, because, as Theodore Levitt suggested, intangibles can have material qualities and tangibles immaterial ones [6]. This immaterial demand arises from desires and dynamics which are completely unrelated with the market or the network. Therefore, it is highly probable that the new technologies, the digital communication and the increased use of the Internet, are only new means which reveal and serve in a better way and therefore amplify a new type of demand.

Undoubtedly, a rise of e-sales, driven by Amazon and mobile phones, has been registered. It is nevertheless dubious if this growth depends on an innovation of the products and of their offer or on a renewal of fashion communication brought about by the digital platforms. Some of the leaders of the digital apparel sector, like Zalando, have registered a growth, but it is not as spectacular as announced. During an interview on 28 February 2018, a Zalando marketing executive proclaimed an estimated income growth, for the year, of over 28%. Not only did this prospected growth not materialize, but it even scored below the high expectations expressed for the Christmas sales, later in that same year. In September 2018, the prospected online sales rise had been estimated for Christmas at around 14% [7]. Zalando attributed its negative outcome at the end of 2018 to a “prolonged and unusually warm summer period, with a reduction in demand and a delay in the transition to the autumn/winter season” [8], which seems to be a weak excuse for its failure.

Moreover, it is certainly a repeated commonplace that traditional luxury stores and malls are in crisis and struggling to survive. Many articles speak today even of the closure of traditional shops [9] and malls. In the United States more than two dozen malls have been shut in the past four years [10], while another sixty are on the brink of death, as can be seen on the website Deadmalls, which lists “dead” shopping centers [11]. Many journalists speak today, in apocalyptic tones, of a high street and mall crisis [12] and so far in 2019, in the United States, as many as 5300 shops of famous brands, such as The Gap, Victoria’s Secret and many others, have closed [13]. It is however unlikely that all these failures depend exclusively on the rise and growth of Internet sales.

The success registered by the new digital sales, in contrast to the traditional luxury stores and malls, undoubtedly says something about the modern consumers’ habits, conveniences and time availabilities. It nevertheless says less about the new qualities of the sold products or the innovation of their communication strategies. The sale of an advanced product can take place, traditionally, in an old building, while old-fashioned sales practices can be used in newly built skyscrapers or on the presumably so innovative web facilities. A contemporary sales and communication concept connects

products, services and emotions in order to sell lifestyles, ideas and desires. The resistance to change and innovate products, sales and communication strategies is clearly visible in the luxury brand e-shops on the Internet. These websites, such as the BVLGARI website [14] respond to a “traditional” fashion demand made of old and superfluous products. Most luxury brand e-shops, abuse a “new” medium (the Web) to sell and communicate traditional items, in exactly the same way, as they would be offered in a branded store. This cannot be considered a new way of selling.

Innovation must therefore have a different origin.

In fact, Philip Kotler, marketing professor and consultant [15], believes that the next phase of the market, towards which we are rapidly heading, is one in which products will increasingly include desires, feelings, added and immaterial values. The consumer will define trade with his/her demand for immaterial goods, thus becoming the absolute protagonist of the market. At this stage, marketing and sales will have to respond to all the requests, aspirations and hopes of the consumer, who, by encouraging change, will make the market a mirror of the evolution of society [16].

Today, even the trendy products proposed by the fashion industry are undergoing the boost towards this future phase of the market. In fact, they are assuming a new shape, and they change from being material goods to being increasingly immaterial goods with strong added values [17]. Consumption is made increasingly of varieties and differences, of shared feelings and belongings to new elective tribes, which encourage a re-invention of products and communication strategies.

Let us therefore start fulfilling the task set by this conference to observe “how communication practices impact today upon fashion industry and on societal fashion-related practices and values” [18]. “Communication” is “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium”, but also “the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings”, a definition that contemplates the high immaterial content of this exchange. As communication is also “the field of study concerned with the transmission of information” [19], fashion communication must be “the field in fashion concerned with the transmission of information” [20]. Changes arise always when many creative ideas, which are simultaneously present in different fields of society, mix in alternative combinations, composing new knowledge, products and practices [21].

2 Products and Immaterial Products

Products with innovative qualities arise from a renewal of already existing material or immaterial items through a highly creative idea, which, re-combining old and new elements, in an unexpected and innovative way, generates a progress [22]. A product is, according to Kotler, “anything that can be offered to the market with the objective of satisfying a consumer’s need” and everything s/he receives in an exchange with a retailer [23]. This includes not only physical goods, but also a growing amount of immaterial products, such as experiences, causes or spiritual values.

Products are re-invented by rethinking the basic idea behind them. The ongoing development of the electrical plug, might, for example, no longer require for an item’s cable to be brought to its site on the wall. A newer idea of a plug might instead entail

moving the plug towards the item that needs be connected to electricity, by rolling out a long cable hidden in the wall. Change creeps unnoticed [24] into old thoughts, actions, values and modifies society. The transition to contemporary society brings new ideas, new ways to socialize and the re-invention of many products and behaviors.

Products and communication strategies with innovative qualities arise from a renewal of already existing material or immaterial items, through a highly creative idea, which, re-combining old and new elements, in an unexpected and innovative way, generates a progress [25].

Incorporating the results of scientific research, products may express new beautiful forms made of technically advanced or sustainable materials [26], such as Ross Lovegroves's Swarovski Solar Car, a vehicle powered by solar panels, enhanced by Swarovski crystals, which perfectly combines the scientific research of two different fields in order to produce a futuristic locomotion [27]. Technological advance is nevertheless not true innovation, although it is a means used to express a new way of thinking.

Innovative products are capable to give ideas a new shape and show a "flexible and disseminated body" [28], which, by leaving the item's physical limits, allows a connection between the material and the immaterial world. Goods of this kind, such as the enchanting chandelier by Hilden & Diaz which projects shadows of a forest into your room, are not only bought for their material characteristics, but rather for their ability to respond to the buyer's immaterial desires and create a link to their personal imaginary world.

The many studies on consumerism seldom investigate the origin of the innovative qualities of products, although these are reliable indicators of change and the state of our contemporary condition. What people use, buy, wear and eat reproduces what they desire, know, believe and imagine. This process is also reversed and new immaterial products may become a force that fosters change [29] through the consumer's collaboration in the product's outcome and the rise of a creative society accustomed to new technological media through the evolution of science and ethics and through the cultural forces leading towards globalization [30].

Society's new knowledge and projects [from Latin *proicere*, throwing, driving forward or ahead] [31] for the future, by concretizing in products' qualities, are able to change lifestyles, the production of meanings and of collective imagination [32]. Green architecture, such as Tokyo's "Vent Vert Apartments", which are designed by Edward Suzuki Associates and feature a facade of luxuriantly growing greenery, raising the level of the consumer's quality demand, will in time modify all lifestyles [33].

Today, among all goods, there is a "no-thing" which is invisible because it is not a material item but an immaterial concept. It represents the most advanced and sought-after product on the market [34].

The great success of the sensational Burberry Prorsum Autumn/Winter 2011 fashion show is due to a contemporaneous advertising campaign which, by linking the brand to the proverbial rainy weather of London, through a dedicated weather app, intelligent bus stops and the presence of digital snow on the catwalk, transformed it into one of the most tweeted fashion events of all times.

A success repeated in April 2012, in Peking when, to herald the opening of the first Burberry flagship store in Taiwan, the brand created a multi-sensory experience of the

world of Burberry through a 360° film viewing experience, with live music and digital “weather” [35]. Burberry’s notoriety does here not arise from the luxury or the exclusiveness of its material products, nor from the new digital technologies used to communicate the products, but rather from the consumption of a different communication strategy, an immaterial product, which is used to communicate the brand’s product to the public in accordance with its new demands.

This new type of communication signals an innovation in which the change is fostered by three new forces.

- (1) the cultural forces leading towards globalization (with all its paradoxes, such as the growing gap of wealth and knowledge).
- (2) the collaborative force of the consumer in his/her own consumption (the consumer must now collaborate in his/her consumption).
- (3) the creative forces of the consumers participating in the creation of the immaterial product [30].

In turn the market is forced to re-think the substance of its products [36] and to concentrate on an immaterial consumption. Subsequent paragraphs, however, are indented.

3 Types of Immaterial Products

Immaterial products are exclusive services products, which are distinguished by the buyer’s participation in the goods’ outcome and by an acquisition, which precedes their production.

Events products offer the experiential aspects of fashion, sports and entertainment shows. People become products, such as athletes or stars used for sales endorsement or politicians marketed to gain votes [37].

The conference entitled “Religions as Brands – The Marketization of Religion and Spirituality” [38] showed that religions can also be products intended to satisfy a demand for spiritual values. The immensely popular beatification of Karol Wojtyła, which was broadcasted worldwide, was a product, which attracted not only Catholics but also an overwhelming mass of people from all confessions, even declared atheists. It revealed that their participation was not at all tied to religious devotion. The high emotional involvement of the participants suggests, instead, the presence of a strong demand for the sacred, a very immaterial product, in the contemporary world.

In a very similar way the recent, international ecological movement “Fridays for Future”, inspired by the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, nominated for the Nobel Prize [39], gave rise, on 15 March 2019, to a coordinated global strike which turned out to be the biggest climate action event ever. The protest involved about 1 million people, in 2000 cities [40], in more than 125 countries [41]. The protesters, which could not be dismissed as some ‘kids skipping school’ [42], included students, their families and teachers, but also ecologists, climate activists, politicians and eminent scientists. Support came from many climate, energy and environmental research institutions, such as the Max-Planck-Institut [43], from an Open Letter of 350 Dutch scientists [44], and from the foundation of Scientists for Future created by 12,000 German scientists [45].

Favorable official statements were made by the UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres [46] and by the Club of Rome (a Think Tank founded at the Accademia dei Licei in Rome), composed of heads of state, politicians, international organization officials, diplomats, scientists, economists, and business leaders from all over the world [47].

The great participation, the emotional involvement of the participants and the immediate supportive response of so many authorities, suggest that Friday for Future, more than a protest to avoid further global warming and climate change, is an immaterial product intended to satisfy a strong demand for different (i.e. ecological) spiritual values.

Experiences, a product that evolved from “luxury experiences”, promote added values that become available through a participation of the consumer and a “different” consumption [48]. The alternative diet of the Freegans or the Dumpster Divings, who eat only food retrieved from supermarket garbage and recycle items found in the trash of luxurious neighborhoods, is for example a product promoting the downshifting of consumption and a freedom from brands [49].

Likewise, in the popular cause products, a social cause, such as nuclear-free or ecologically “clean” living, is the value sold. Smart companies can today position their brand by marketing cause products or by donating part of their revenue to charitable causes. The term “corporate social responsibility” expresses the company’s commitment to ethical behavior, which takes into account the economic, social and environmental consequences of the company’s activity.

Naomi Klein, a Canadian social activist, became known for her famous best-seller, *No Logo* [50], which sold over 1 million copies in 28 languages. In her book she attacks the branded consumer culture and the abuses of big businesses, like Nike, McDonald’s and Microsoft. Her accusations, especially about Nike’s exploitation of the poorest workers and child labor, forced industries to introduce more sustainable productions. *No Logo* thus became a product supporting the cause against corporate globalization.

The value of all these new products is neither tangible, material nor enduring, but the buyer’s collaboration in the product’s outcome, his/her high personal involvement and his/her strong relationship with the producers, in other words, the product’s relational qualities, are indicators of its novelty.

The effective offer of the fashion industry (exactly like many other producers) nevertheless shows a very low use of these highly requested immaterial goods [51]. A failure of the system to recognize and understand these new goods means, however, also an inability to communicate them or to narrate the contemporary evolution of society.

Let us analyze, for some immaterial goods, the areas, which are today generating them, especially the products grown from Street Styles, from cultural policies such as City Making and from Ethical efforts such as Eco Fashion.

4 Street Style

In “Street Style”, according to Polhemus, people ‘style surf’ the entire ocean of fashion, choose from an endless array of garments from designers, ethnic cultures, street kids and vintage shops, the items that they like and mix them into personal combinations

[52]. This personal choice allows the invention of a new intangible product: an individual dressing style and lifestyle [53]. “Style surfing” [54] substitutes a “traditional” fashion [55] prescribed by a charismatic designer or by marketing strategies [56]. The entire history of style of the whole world is today mixed to personal innovative looks. Many of these Street Style novelties form in subcultures, where street kids, such as hipsters, punks or ravers, share clothing styles. To alleviate its constant need for novelties, the fashion industry imitates their street styles [57]. The “perfecto” motorcycle jacket, born from a Second World War aviator jacket and worn by Marlon Brando in the movie *The Wild One*, as a symbol of a rebellious lifestyle [58], was for example copied again and again by fashion and shown on the catwalks of Montana, J. P. Gaultier, Gianni Versace, Burberry and many others. Unfortunately, the subcultural identity, which is the immaterial part of the product, gets lost when it becomes “the latest fashion”.

During a visit, with a group of English fashion students at the creative offices of Valentino Couture, on looking at the mood boards, I was shocked to discover that the Spring/Summer 2011 collections were completely inspired by the movie *Avatar*. Having lost its innovative power [59], the fashion system not only fails to communicate the immateriality of products, but also by copying them, disperses the precious immaterial quality of the new immaterial goods.

The increase of shape imitation, without its content, the fusion of contrasting distinctive characteristics, and the reproduction of the distinctive elements of urban tribes [60] produces countless hybrid style combinations. Multiplying and fusing, they lose their intrinsic meaning and become available to all. People on the streets display a stylistic promiscuity, dressing like punks one day, like hippies the next [61]. In this “supermarket of styles” [62], society moves towards a new global street wear [63] in which everything is possible. Multiplicity and creative liberty become leading features of this new immaterial fashion product [64] and transform it into a universal cultural phenomenon [65].

5 City Making

Cultural products, grown from cultural policies such as City Making, can be powerful means of innovation. Actions aimed at innovating the city, which is composed not only of the tangible urban geography but also of the movements and habits of the inhabitants, by their connective substance and their immaterial flux, are called City Making [66]. City Making does not simply invent new material marketing strategies to sell the city. City Making is an immaterial cultural product, created by cultural politics as a powerful mean of innovation, which encourages the citizens to be creative as a mass and re-launch the city [67]. To affirm an identity, the city needs a ‘tale’, or a narrative communication of itself. Paris, which calls itself “the city of fashion”, presents identity and behavioral models, which differ strongly from a city, like Rome, that describes

itself as “the city of the church”. The narration or communication of these different identities implies, however, a high rate of creativity on the part of the citizens who structure their lifestyle according to these different tales. The creativity and the innovative quality of the city are related, because a city that never changes, that is not created or continually renewed, dies. It is therefore the creativity of citizens that keeps it alive.

Copenhagen was turned into a pedestrian city by thousands of cyclists who acted simultaneously against traffic [68]. Civic creativity is the imaginative capacity to solve the problems, granting all citizens an advantage [69] and thereby produce a new feeling, an immaterial product, that modifies the city. How these feelings have been communicated and were able to become a collective way of thinking about the city has yet to be thoroughly investigated. I was not able to find a description of the creation and communication of this very interesting immaterial product.

However, not only creativity makes the city evolve, the links among economy, society and city configure a system that generates evolution, if it is communicated [70]. Models for cities’ development no longer focus only on the financial value [71], but concentrate on the wealth gained from immaterial products, such as the establishment of a Fashion Capital, which is branded and managed as a good [72].

The long-running television series, concluded in 2006, “Sex and the City” is for example a competitive promotional and communicative vehicle, which associates branded fashion products, such as Manolo Blahnik shoes, with the City of New York [73]. Subsequently the Sex and the City series also became a vehicle to connect any type of product with any city.

The Roman cupcake shop “Cake and the City”, opened in December 2010 but unfortunately now closed, linked the Eternal City not only to a foreign pastry but also to a new lifestyle. The television show had therefore been used to communicate not only a new image of the city and a new lifestyle, but also new ways of the inhabitants to relate to each other and to live the city. The creative link between the city and a material good (the cupcake) communicated an immaterial product.

The establishing of strong Fashion City brands [74], the hosting of Fashion Weeks in a city, are also immaterial goods which use fashion to generate tourism and cultural events [75], which in turn favor the growth of the city’s immaterial value, popularity and fame.

An active and communicated Fashion Culture is able to turn its Street Style into distinguishing features of the city. The presence of the Japanese avant-garde, since the 1980s, changed for example the immaterial value of Paris forever. This “fashionalization” is a sort of identity construction of the city, in which its “fashioned” clothing culturally promotes it to the world [76]. The mix of fashion, business and coolness guarantees a glamorous image on the global stage [75]. The immaterial value of the city, which links fashion and cultural identity, becomes an essential part of the urban culture, which is also an immaterial product.

6 Ethical Fashion

Ethical Fashion is another generator of immaterial products. Grown from urban culture, these goods bring about changes that favor the community [77] and respond to new collective needs, such as the halting of environmental pollution. Elements from different fields are today combined to invent these new immaterial products: the mix of commerce and ethics produces fair trade; that of ecology and fashion produces Eco fashion; and that of fashion and the needs of the very poor generates social businesses operating to put an end to poverty [78].

Ethical fashion fosters the rise of many innovative goods, which incorporate immaterial ethical added values into clothing, such as a minimized pollution, correct labors' conditions, re-cycling and sustainability [79].

One of the first eco fashion products, which also marked the beginning of the process that turned sustainability into an immaterial fashion product, was the iconic T-shirt by Katharine Hammnet "58% do not want Pershing." The Pershing is a medium-range ballistic missile invented by the US Army, and Katharine Hammnet's shirt alluded to the fact that, in the 1980s, 58% of the UK population was opposed to acquiring this weapon. Thanks to this T-shirt Hammnet was not only chosen as designer of the year 1983, but was also invited to meet the conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whose government favored these weapons. In this way, the product's immaterial quality was turned into an effective communicational product [80].

Eco fashion invents many innovative ways to produce. Inventive designers up-cycle industries' off-cuts. An example of this practice is Christopher Raeburn, who (especially in his first collections) made beautiful garments from raincoat scraps or the brand From Somewhere (today unfortunately extinct) which re-sewed vintage dresses into unique pieces [81].

Eco fashion invents many innovative ways to communicate immaterial values. A growing number of celebrities, such as Stella McCartney or Colin and Livia Firth, associate with it [82]. Many cities host Ethical Fashion shows, and Eco companies come up with different ideas, such as innovative business models, recycling and refashioning ideas or effective social businesses.

The great opportunities in this sector are also at the basis of the new Social Business companies proposed by Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen group. This new kind of business conceived by Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his "microcredit" bank, responds to the demands of the very poor, either by manufacturing high quality but inexpensive products or by making the workers partners in the production [83]. In the Yunus' Grameen-Uniqlo textiles company, created in 2010, two thousand local women will become their own business owners, by selling the clothes they produce to their neighbors [84]. This will give them the opportunity to defeat poverty. A world without poverty is the first of 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by The United Nations, to be fulfilled by 2030 [85]. The added values and the advantages for the community reveal these productions to be typical immaterial products.

7 Conclusion

This text has defined immaterial products and has shown their ability to respond to buyers' new demand, which is much richer than imagined. Tired of just using, showing, buying, wearing or eating, consumers now request items that embody what they desire, know, believe and imagine. New technologies, digital communications and the increased use of the Internet, unable by themselves to satisfy this request, are the useful means to materially answer the growing demand for these goods, which embody immaterial desires and are linked to imaginary worlds. In this process, immaterial goods foster changes [86] through the rise of a collaborative creative and globalized society [30] accustomed to the use of digital media. Immaterial products are the most advanced and sought-after goods on the market today. Designers and producers show, however, a difficulty in understanding that, to sell products today, it is neither their materiality (such as shape, color, luxury, exclusiveness), nor the available means used to get to know and acquire them (such as online e-shops, digital communication campaigns) that have to be adjusted. The market must acknowledge a globalized, collaborative and creative consumer and re-think the very substance/substantiality (or rather in-substance/in-substantiality) of its products [87].

The distinctive sign of the present era is, as is known, constant change: of the market, of sciences and technologies, of products, of consumption, marketing and communication. In a series of publications, Kotler illustrates the transition of the focus of successful marketing communication from 1. the product, to 2. the customer, to 3. the human spirit, to 4. the digital. In his book *Marketing 4.0: Moving from Traditional to Digital* [88], he lists the many changes taking place in the passage to a digital economy. Market segmentation and targeting are substituted by spontaneous communities of choice [89]. Traditionally fixed parameters (such as products and prices), diffuse and become dynamic (like the changing prices of flights and hotel rooms) [90]. Brand positioning and differentiation are now less important than keeping faith to a commitment and maintaining the brand's features constant [91]. This is necessary because, as has been shown elsewhere, a clear differentiation among sectors is fading and a tendency towards convergence and integration is visible in all fields [92]. The marketing mix moves from its four P's (product, price, promotion, and place) to a mix made of four C's (co-creation, currency, community, conversation) [93]. Product promotion is no longer only a movement from the producer to the client, but its main influence is exerted in the interactions among the consumers and in the feedback action from the client to the producer [94]. In other words, the transition to digital technologies changes the marketing focus and the material way to respond to the new demand. The strong immaterial (choices, commitments, brand characters) and social (community, integration, interaction) qualities of this transition reveal nevertheless a profound change of attitudes, desires and ideas which has yet to be met. In effect, Kotler believes that "digital marketing is not meant to replace traditional marketing. Instead the two will co-exist with interchanging roles [...]" [95]. Kotler sees the two forms as two tools able to fulfil different tasks. "The essence of Marketing 4.0 is to recognize the shifting roles of traditional and digital marketing in building customer engagement and advocacy" [96]. He also believes that "marketing 4.0 is a marketing

approach that combines online and offline interactions between companies and customer, [and] complements machine-to-machine connectivity with human-to-human touch to strengthen customer engagement” [96].

In all fields change occurs today with similar dynamics [97] and simultaneously more than consequentially. An increased use of digital technologies alone could probably not produce all these similar modifications. The extensive change arises rather from a series of coincidences. The change of the market, of consumption and of society concurs with the transition to the network society. At the same time there is also a coincidence of many strong catalysts, such as the erosion of all differences between the dominant, mainstream culture and the new urban tribes [98]; the cultural flow produced by migrations and by the creation of transnational ties which re-cast local cultures and produce multiple globalizations [99]; people’s chosen lifestyles and behaviors; their new immaterial needs and desires. All these elements are the true fuel of this change.

Change happens when a re-combination of old traditions and new behaviors gives life to new products and communication. Product innovations arise from a renewal of already existing items, through creative ideas, which recombine old and new elements in unexpected ways, generating progress [100]. Innovation is not born suddenly, but arises from many often un-recognized precursors. It creeps unnoticed into old thoughts, values, behaviors and modifies them. This is why it becomes visible only by changing perspective [101] and why, rarely recognized, it is often mistaken for what is already known. Columbus discovered America, but for a long time, unable to recognize his discovery, he kept calling it the Indies [102].

While a traditional version of the fashion narrative, backed by the fashion system, goes on recounting how economy and an unlimited mass consumption rule society, new products, new consumption behaviors and a new communication gain ground, in which the changes of society and the empowered consumers define the market and its products.

Recognizing these changes should enable the market to preview peoples’ demands. It should allow the system to preview their needs and redesign goods and strategies, “so that the product or service fits...and sells itself [...]. Postmodern marketing [should] make selling unnecessary” [103]. Today’s sales and communication strategies show, however, the inability of the market to offer a valid response to the consumers’ new immaterial needs [104].

This inability can however stop neither innovation, nor the re-invention of products, of consumption and of fashion consumption. The rise of new products is not the end of the market. It is the sign of a strong demand for a new consumption. While the idea of society as an inexhaustible material mass market shows all its inconsistency, the consumers’ new requests and behaviors grow increasingly effective in today’s inter-connected world [105]. Each of the innovative product categories (Street Styles, City Making, Ethical Fashion) analyzed in this text concentrates on the immateriality of the new goods, which transforms consumption into social, cultural and ethical activity. The focus shifts from being material to being immaterial, from being an object to being a concept. A new consumer fashion communication arises. Its new traits are multiplicity, diversity, inclusivity [106] and creative liberty [107]. The value lies today in the immateriality of the products [108], powered by the emotional interaction of people. It is their mutual contacts, their communication and collaboration, which transforms old

goods into highly desirable new products. The rise of immaterial products and of a new fashion communication is therefore more than the invention of a new commercial item or advertising campaign. It is an evolution of mentality, which documents the existence of ideas, values, ethical concepts, creativity and human dialogue behind the new products.

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