

SEMESTER I

Course Title: FASHION: DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT (THEORY)

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UNIT- V: Fashion Categories

Fashion is an exciting, dynamic and creative global business that combines the attributes of aesthetics, technology, and business, while creating a special and fascinating industry. Fashion is about self-expression, emotion, and identity and in a wider context, it defines cultural and social boundaries. Customers expect low prices and thereby push the producers to reduce production costs. This phenomenon led to the relocation of production of numerous companies to countries with low labour costs, mainly to the Middle East, followed by Italy, Portugal and Turkey. Profits of the fashion industry keep growing, mainly due to increasing fashion consumption by the female population that nowadays has larger disposable incomes compared to the past decades and is thus able to buy desired items independently. Retailers are, therefore, constantly trying to increase their sales volumes. The fashion market currently represents a very competitive environment and, therefore, retailers cannot win customers by simply offering the best price, but also by introducing new and innovative products to the market. Constantly changing customer needs are strongly dependent on their changing lifestyles and thus lead to a constant demand for new fashion trends. Traditionally, the fashion cycle depends on seasonal trends and fashion shows by prestigious fashion houses that typically take place twice a year.

categories of clothing as well as different fashion brands. Fashion categories are designed based on various criteria and perspectives and thus differ for individual countries. A very traditional concept of fashion categorization was designed. The highest level of this categorization is the 'Haute Couture Houses' (high handmade fashion). This term was created in Paris and refers to manual work of the highest quality, custom made for a specific customer. These designers reveal their collections only twice a year at prestigious fashion shows.

The second level of this hierarchy is represented by 'Designer Wear'. This style of fashion is also very expensive; however it is characterized by limited editions and not by original items. Collections are made accessible for wider consumer groups and prices range in the hundreds of pounds rather than thousands of pounds. The third level is represented by 'Mass Market' or 'High Street Fashion', which is designed for a wide range of customers and the clothing is sold at affordable prices. Yet the resulting quality of workmanship is lower. However, Sorensen himself questions this classification, stating that at this time there are already a number of other categories of fashion. This hierarchy may thus be considered as the basic classification by level of price and quality, although it provides only three categories that may be considered insufficient and not reflecting the real market. The English concept of fashion categories was introduced by Anne Priest (2005). Her first category is labelled 'International Superbrands' and it regroups internationally known worldwide luxury brands. According to Priest, a second category called 'UK (London) style' describes local fashion designers and students of design schools. The importance of this category lies in the generation of new ideas and the refreshment of daily fashion. The third category is called 'McFashion' and was initially defined by Lee in 2003. This group includes international clothing chains with high street fashions that are characterized by chic clothing, which respects the same principle as fast food chains - a reasonable quality for a reasonable price, targeting the largest social class. Among

the representatives of this category, we may find Zara, H & M and Marks and Spencer, as well as fashion available in supermarkets. The last category of the hierarchy introduced by Anne Priest she calls 'micro market' and contains fashion inspired by nonconsumer styles of living, such as spiritualism, and ethnic minorities. In terms of marketing strategies and terminology, this division is not very common, even though it is designed by experts on fashion. Individual categories are created according to consumer segments and the overall philosophy of fashion companies; yet do not consider such criteria as price and quality.

Description of the fashion categories-

1) Second Hand- Most students perceive second-hand shops as the cheapest. Yet on the other hand, they consider them as providing relatively good quality due to the fact that although they offer pre worn clothing, it very often originates from high-quality brands. One might conclude that second-hand does not always comply with the rule that price matches quality. Many students perceive it as an advantage that this type of shop provides original pieces they could not normally afford. Disadvantages include fashion that may not be contemporary and also the fact that the clothing has already been worn by someone else.

2) Vietnamese retail- Vietnamese shops emerged in the Czech Republic in the 1990s when a large number of immigrants from Vietnam came to the country and opened very cheap clothing stores there. consumers also feel the quality of goods from these stores is very poor. This is the most important factor for them that discourage buying. They further assume that the goods are produced in a non-environmentally friendly way and with the help of an under paid workforce. Students consider the Vietnamese retail as socially irresponsible. An advantage is they are fashionable and offer a relatively wide range.

3) Discount stores- Discount stores were defined as large grocery stores that are located in shopping centres or independent shops. Their main feature is an unorganized environment and clothes thrown in heaps. Discount stores may be seen as a good alternative for those who cannot afford to buy clothes from designer stores. Respondents agree that prices are relatively low and correspond to the lower quality, but the stores definitely do not sell fashionable or even original clothes. "Clothes at discount stores are made completely without any concept or imagination. Everyone who wears these clothes looks the same. They certainly do not fulfil my idea of unique clothes." A very uncomfortable buying experience and poor atmosphere in the stores are perceived as another disadvantage.

4) Supermarkets Supermarkets- were very often associated by respondents along with discounts. Two groups, however, described them as a separate category. The largest advantage reported by the students was the availability of store, the possibility of parking, as well as a buying process that is not time-consuming. We may conclude that customers are attracted by the opportunity to combine purchases of food and clothing.

5) Cheaper conventional fashion- Shops belonging to this category are located mostly in shopping centres. These are brand retail chains that are available in a variety of countries. According to focus groups, students most often buy clothes in this category of stores. They admit that the clothes are not of a very good quality, but they are relatively cheap and considered trendy. "The clothes are fashionable and thanks to the lower price you can replace it every season, and be always stylish." These statements reflect the current trend of very frequent clothes swapping (Sull and Turconi, 2008). On the positive side,

respondents evaluated these store environments as pleasant, and they highlighted the possibility to have loyalty cards and return non-fitting clothes. The downside of this type of fashion distribution, besides its quality, may be the reluctant staff and large numbers of examples of one type of clothing.

6) Expensive conventional fashion This category is very similar to the previous category, in terms of location – the shops are located in shopping centres as well. However, according to students, the prices and quality are higher and thus this category is treated as a separate type of fashion. Respondents agree that they do not buy clothes belonging to this category very often because they perceive the merchandise as being a little too expensive. According to the students, the range of clothes offered by these shops is more suitable for working people who are concerned about how they look. In general, consumer rated this category of fashion as providing quality goods with fashionable designs for an appropriate price and described the shopping environment as more pleasant than in the previous categories. Students perceive the volume as a disadvantage and possibly socially irresponsible and environmentally unfriendly production.

7) Boutique- Boutiques may be characterized as small independent stores that offer smaller collections of clothing at prices ranging in thousands. It is very unusual for students to seek out and visit boutiques. “Boutiques are meant for people who want to look luxurious, but do not have that much money.” Consumers believe that prices in boutiques do not completely match the quality. And the very process of purchase is not seen as optimal by the young generation. For the older generation, it is probably nice that staff cares for them. On the other hand, respondents agree that the clothes sold by boutiques are original.

8) Luxury fashion- Selective distribution is typical for luxury fashion. This type of fashion store is mainly located in Paris Street. Focus group participants considered this type of fashion as very expensive and therefore nearly unreachable for them. “These clothes are being worn mainly by celebrities and wealthy businessmen. For students, it is very important that the production of luxury goods does not take place in Asia and they consider these companies as socially responsible. Among the negative aspects, students named inflated prices, unavailability of goods and snobbery.

9) Fashion designers- Only three groups of respondents marked Czech fashion designers as a separate category. They found that, unlike luxury brands, the names of respected designers are not very well known. “Fashion designers have stores dress, but it is not possible that average person is able to buy something in these stores.” In terms of quality, students associate designers with luxury brands, however, they assume that designers are more expensive. That is why fashion designers represent the top category of the hierarchy. Overall we conclude that students are unfamiliar with Czech fashion designers or their work.