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FASHION, SPECULATIVE DESIGN AND FASHION FILMS IN CONTEMPORARY FASHION BRANDS: A LITERATURE REVIEW
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Fashion is seen as a complex social phenomenon and in this context, there is a need to study this topic in-depth and integrate several areas of knowledge, for a more comprehensive understanding of this industry in contemporary times. An investigation that encompasses fashion, speculative design, and fashion films, particularly in contemporary fashion, allows a re-evaluation of the communication strategies of the sector, through visual narratives brought by fashion films. It also contributes to an understanding of fashion as a cultural event, in that it not only reflects it, but also influences it, as well as an aesthetic and identity, both in clothing and in the behavior of society and places. The intersection of fashion with speculative design and fashion films adds to brands an insight into alternative possibilities of future scenarios, with more impact on the industry, through more conscious strategies and focused on developing stronger emotional relationships with consumers. This paper, through a literature review of references already published makes a historical contextualization of fashion as a form of cultural and social expression over time, highlighting the evolution of Speculative Design and its influence on visual narrative in contemporary fashion, through fashion films.

Keywords: Fashion; Social role of fashion; Speculative Design; Fashion Films; Contemporary Fashion Brands

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Introduction

Understanding fashion, a specific way of life that aims at the trend for social equality and at the same time, a trend for individual difference and diversity in a single procedure (Simmel, 2006), fashion, nowadays, the traditional forms of communication and exposure in stores, expands through the most diverse channels and formats. This is not only limited to runway shows or street windows but also takes on innovative and digital forms, such as Fashion Films (Soloaga & Guerrero, 2016). These digital fashion contents are not only vehicles for displaying collections but rather visual narratives that overlap fashion itself, embedding themselves in contemporary culture and reflecting the complexities and variations of modern society (García, 2021). As discussions around fashion broaden beyond the traditional, visual communication assumes a central and fundamental role. Fashion Films emerge as a marketing tool in the dynamic communication strategy of contemporary fashion brands, to tell stories, explore identities, and communicate particularities in an engaging and immersive way (Hernández-Herrera et al., 2022). This setting challenges the traditional by providing opportunities for content creation and sharing, encouraging not only aesthetic appreciation but also a deeper understanding of the narratives behind fashion creations (Kim, 2020). Re-evaluating communication strategies in fashion and perfecting effective opportunities for visual transmission, especially through Fashion Films, has the potential to redefine the experience in fashion (Rodríguez & García, 2018). Designers and fashion brands of greater expression are responsible for the exhibition and definition of what is a fashion trend and its diffusion. Patterns of consumer behavior are defined by how the fashion industry is conducted.

This is and will always be a profitable industry. Increasingly, the appreciation of aesthetic appearance in various aspects of everyday life is valued, contributing to the fact that in modernity there is an aestheticization. In addition to clothing, fashion also influences the aesthetics of spaces, objects, and even bodies, transforming human life into a visual display. With globalization, fashion in modernity has become a worldwide phenomenon, where trends and styles can spread rapidly in various parts of the world. This contributes to a certain homogenization, with dominant international brands and a certain standardization of consumer tastes and preferences. Because it is volatile and constantly changing, fashion in modern society will always be constantly updated (Fontenelle, 2009); (Lipovestky, 2010); (Cardoso, 2017). Speculative design is a perspective, through design searches futures and contextualizes the current conventions.

Through narratives, objects, or scenarios that oppose the existing norms, calls for critical reflections on the possibilities of diverse futures, instead of staying only for the resolution of immediate problems. This action contributes to a creative vision and the argumentation about directions that technology, culture, and society would have as an option, to explore alternative paths, with a sense to foster debates and critical reflections (Dune & Raby, 2013).

Studying fashion cycles and trends through the interaction between Speculative Design, Fashion Films, and the social role of fashion over time, identifying recurring patterns that make it possible to predict and understand styles and ideas at various times, is fundamental to contemporary fashion, as it facilitates the understanding of the context and evolution of the industry. Contemporary fashion is dynamic and is constantly evolving and the interdisciplinarity between these three areas: fashion, speculative design, and fashion films allows a convergence of knowledge that results in the redefinition of communication strategies of brands in the sector.

Theoretical Review

Social Role of Fashion - Historical Context

Since the 15th century, fashion has been significant, so that over time, from the 18th century onwards, we began to see a process of democratization (Svendsen, 2010). The "common people" (the working class) were only drawn into the realm of fashion in the 19th century. Until then, they had been excluded for economic reasons, but the rapid expansion of mass production, in which the introduction of sewing and knitting machines played a crucial role, made it possible to produce enormous quantities of complex clothes, which had previously been the privilege of hand sewing. This opened entirely new possibilities for mass fashion consumption (Svendsen, 2010).

Before that, clothes were extremely expensive and with this fact, mass production and consumption began to spread rapidly. In the process of democratization, the individual must give up part of their individuality to reinforce it later as a group. The individual's desire to acquire objects that elevate their image makes them seek this condition, and consequently, social inequalities arise (Ferreira, 2000).

Fashion is constantly changing and encompasses the individual's lifestyle in general. It does not just concern clothing, but also areas where taste is present, such as music, poetry, cinema, and even architecture (Kawamura, 2005).

The purpose of the lower classes is to rise to the level of the upper classes so that they are always at the back since it is in the upper classes that innovation happens first (Simmel, 2006).

The reflection of this orientation that the individual has in society, to reproduce what he sees in others, is what makes him carry over what he acquires from group life into his individual life. In this way, it is easy for the individual not to feel alone in their choices, as they are a repercussion of the group (Barbosa, 2021).

About a lifestyle in which the individual communicates and express themselves through fashion and which belongs to the upper classes, the lower classes begin to take on and take over that same fashion, as they always try to be close to the upper classes. When the external communication barriers, such as fashion, that separate the different classes are diluted, the upper classes move away from that fashion and look for another innovative fashion that will distinguish them from the masses, returning this movement to the beginning. Fashion is linked to an individual's attitude and behavior, both towards themselves and towards others (Loschek, 2009); (Young, 2017). That said, we can understand that fashion is a phenomenon that should be central to our understanding of ourselves and our historical situation. Its emergence as a historical phenomenon has an essential characteristic in common with modernism: the interruption of tradition, together with the commitment to conquer novelty. Fashion always requires news, innovation, and originality (Sousa; Cabral & Albino, 2006).

Socialization between groups is all the stronger because of the eccentricity of the fashion that unites them, as this adherence to a particular fashion reflects the cohesion of the group itself. Similar groups with similar lifestyles often create their fashions, characteristic only of the group, which reflects an internal cohesion and, at the same time, an external difference from other groups. The significance of fashion is that only one segment of the group is exercising it, and the rest of the group is in the process of making it happen. As soon as this so-called fashion is acquired by all members of the group, it ceases to be fashionable. This growing movement, since it annuls what distinguishes it, ends up being its end (Simmel, 2008); (Campos & Rech, 2010). Large cities were perfect for new forms of social interaction to emerge. Simmel (2014) highlighted the

centrality of the economy, focused on the economic transition mediated by money in the context of modernity and this becomes the common mediator of interactions in the context of the big city (Simmel; Frisby & Featherstone, 1997).

In this way, the urban setting is conducive to social differentiation through fashion. Georg Simmel (1957) refers to aspects that question individual freedom in the integration of the individual into groups, such as the autonomy that the individual can maintain in this same integration. With a multitude of choices, the individual makes his decisions based on the various solutions, and there is no question of freedom passing through a complete lack of demands. The fact that fashion is characterized by the constant launch of trends every season, all of which are very varied, can make the individual in modern society, with an infinite number of choices, feel lost when it comes to making decisions. As such, fashion will continue to be relevant, as far as the individual is in the context of society, because of their proximity to a certain community, their choices are much more directed towards that community. Another angle to highlight is the context of the social occasion for which fashion will have an effect, such as a wedding or other specific events where there is a dress code that allows the individual to have a reference of what is expected to be worn in these circumstances. On the other hand, events in which the individual has total freedom of choice and can be themselves, can cause doubts and concern about the possibility of a mismatch with the specific situation. We can say that these anticipated references about what to wear free the individual from their insecurities and doubts, so the result of being part of a group reduces the options that the individual needs to know what direction to take in the context of modern society with some comfort. Throughout history, it has always been possible to understand the changes that clothing has undergone. In some longer periods, there have even been huge changes, while in other shorter ones, there have been constant changes in fashion. These cyclical renewals can continue over time without going out of fashion, as is the case with a simple black dress, a symbol of elegance. In general, fashion is not static and is constantly changing, because the opposite would mean that social groups at distinct levels would not be in conflict or would not seek the differentiation that allows for the absence of a timeless and global fashion standard (Simmel, 2006). With an internal tendency towards individualization, individuals will always try to distinguish themselves from others through their choice of material goods, their culture, and their lifestyle. This search for distinction, understood as a conflict, in the context of modern society, where the choices are endless, is a much simpler and calmer task for the individual, supported by fashion, since it reduces the daily choices resulting from their contextualization and insertion in a group (Simmel, 2014). For Walter Benjamin, fashion was a central event in the expression of modern society and its social and cultural changes. It was much more than just following trends or simply dressing according to them. Through a complex system of meanings and symbols, individuals constructed their own identity or expressed their belonging to a certain group or social class (Benjamin, 1985).

It highlighted the relationship between industry and consumer culture, where clothing and accessories were mass-produced and discarded to make way for newer ones. Fashion, in this sense, was intrinsically linked to the fast pace of urban life and the constant cycle of novelty and obsolescence. According to the author, fashion was marked by transience and the constant search for novelty. Benjamin (1985) also explored the role of fashion in the construction of gender identities and the relationship between fashion and power, observing how fashion could reinforce stereotypes and social norms, but also offer possibilities for subversion and resistance. Benjamin (1985) studied the notion of technical reproducibility in the age of photography and cinema, discussing how technology affects art, cinema, and fashion. He questioned the unique aura of original works of art and suggested that fashion, like art, can be reproduced and disseminated in masse (Lehmann, 2000).

The individual is always the result of two components, one individual, belonging to the individual and not present now of interaction, but which nevertheless ensures the realization and presence of the social context and another component that corresponds to the performance of their social role (Mascarenhas, 2012). In our history, man has always manifested this dichotomy between the tendency to belong, to continuity, equality, individuality, and unity, evolving into a predisposition to imitation, in the realization of all these aspects (Simmel, 2006).

To Simmel (2014), modernity was driven by the constant search for novelty and the need to stand out in an increasingly individualistic society. He noted that fashion was always on the move, with trends and styles

changing rapidly. This created a dynamic in which people needed to be up-to-date and keep up with the latest trends to remain relevant in the social sphere. Simmel also highlighted the relationship between fashion and imitation. He mentioned that fashion was driven by people's desire to imitate those who were considered socially superior or influential and that by imitating the clothes and styles of people in prominent positions, the former sought to identify with these groups or individuals and thus obtain social recognition. He also highlighted the ambivalence of fashion in modern times. On the one hand, fashion allowed individual expression and the creation of distinct identities; on the other hand, it could also lead to conformity and the loss of individuality, since many people followed the same trends and standards that were established (Lehmann, 2000); (Godart, 2012); (Aviléz-Ortiz, 2016).

Baudelaire interprets fashion as a social phenomenon related to the image that everyone conveys of themselves through their clothing and lifestyle, as well as the consumption of goods and products. This phenomenon is characterized by constant change and renewal, by the latest trends and styles that appear regularly, quickly replacing previous ones (Baudelaire, 1996).

After the democratization of fashion in the 19th century, and with its continuous transformation today, we can say that changes in fashion are linked to what we feel and that they arise from the various spheres of society. We can also say that they can emerge from subcultures, tribes, the periphery, and not just the big centers Mccracken (2007).

The Emergence of Speculative Design in Fashion

In a definition of fashion as a creation or language that fosters an identity that encourages its artistic development, we have, because of this process, consumer products for the different segments of the various national and international markets. Fashion is in line with the times we live in and sometimes even accelerates them (Moura & Almeida, 2013); (Takamitso & Junior, 2019).

All stages of a fashion product, from its production to its communication, are somehow linked to working with textile materials (Santana & Pessoa, 2022). Sustainable consumption and production are key factors in preserving limited natural resources and affecting climate change. In the textile sector, the increase in consumption is due to fast fashion which results in an increase in the amount of textile waste and much more quickly (Elander et al., 2015); (Fletcher & Dilys, 2013). The fashion industry is one of the industries with the worst impact on the environment and taking a circular economy into account, designed from the ground up, could be part of the solution to this current situation. With this type of approach, a cycle of material waste could be created that is non-existent if it is thought through from the design stage. As a result, we would have greater exclusivity and innovation (Moorhouse & Moorhouse, 2017); (Nishimura & Triska, 2021).

The main function of a fashion designer is to make creative thoughts tangible and to add value to those thoughts so that the end consumer sees and identifies with the products they create. Acting from such an early stage, the designer has a highly active role in the complete process of creating a particular product, which, if it has a primary focus on sustainability, can thus contribute to improving the production system in fashion, which still has its main objective focused on profit (Schulte et al., 2013). Clothing ends up being a considerable slice of the products we consume, and the end consumer has already realized that the way they consume will dictate the future of the planet (Lee, 2009). Brands need to reinvent themselves, from designing, and creating sustainable solutions when they create and launch products, to their organizational structure. To attract consumer attention and add value to the brand's identity, these products increasingly need to be exclusive and attract attention, because of the speed and way in which competing content is now consumed via social networks (Williams et al., 2009); (Moorhouse & Moorhouse, 2017). Today, driven by the shift towards sustainability, designers are already working together with agricultural producers, raw material suppliers, artisans, and other players in the production chain of fashion products, to work towards a more sustainable future (Williams, 2010); (Rocha et al., 2022).

It is essential to invest in research focused on conscious design and consumption, social responsibility, and sustainable social development driven by innovation and technology. Innovation thus is a great ally in

SPECULATIVE

creating value for a product and a brand. In this way, companies are seeking to gain a competitive edge in a reality marked by and awakened by sensitivity to novelty. To innovate, we need to be connected to networks in some way, so that we can better understand how to connect effectively (Goldsmith, 2015).

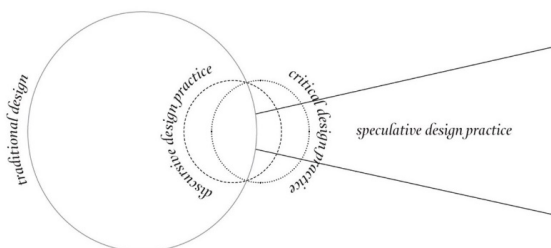
Businesses depend on nature for absolutely everything and if the situation is not reversed, we are compromising future generations with the strategies we use today. Education has the role of stimulating in students a vision that contributes to a better future, with present-day initiatives that can cross the boundaries between theory and practice, thus linking design and production for success. Adding value to fashion involves creating something unique, based on new knowledge about sustainability, supporting biodiversity among design choices, sharing ideas, and sharing curiosities (Goldsmith, 2015).

Speculative Design is a vehicle for questioning, criticizing, and provoking discussion, rather than just presenting solutions (Sterling, 2005). Since ancient times, man has told stories, which are not only one of the oldest art forms but are also a significant tool in evolutionary adaptation (Damásio & Silva, 2022).

Fiction in design must be emphasized, as storytelling, building narratives, and fictional scenarios are essential tools for creating imagery and discussing potential differentiating futures. By creating imaginary worlds, designers can explore and communicate more complex ideas about society, technology, and culture, but speculative design aims to challenge society's collective imagination to get involved in creating alternative futures. Encouraging people in general to participate in imagining and shaping their future, highlighting the role of communities in visualizing, and creating change (Sterling, 2005); (Dune & Raby, 2013). In his book "Shaping Things", Sterling (2005) even talks about objects that are traceable and connected to the Internet throughout their entire life cycle, from production to total disposal, thus introducing the concept of "spimes". He analyzes how the Internet is transforming the nature of objects and our interaction with them. It talks about the function of objects, design, technology, and the influence of these topics on contemporary society. It exposes themes ranging from the transformation of objects themselves to the cultural and environmental changes inherent in these transformations (Sterling, 2005).

Speculative design is seen as a way of counteracting traditional design and its role in the world - a branch of design that can act free of the various restrictions imposed on models that are adapted to the market - restrictions in terms of economics, aesthetics, technology, politics, ethics, and history. Figure 1 shows the intersection between traditional design and speculative design. Without these restrictions, the designer is free to imagine new and alternative possibilities, thus challenging established systems and functions. In the field of teaching, it is essential to instruct students based on tactics that allow them to react in complex and changing environments, in a dynamic world (Mitrović, 2016).

Figure 1. Traditional design vs *Speculative design*.



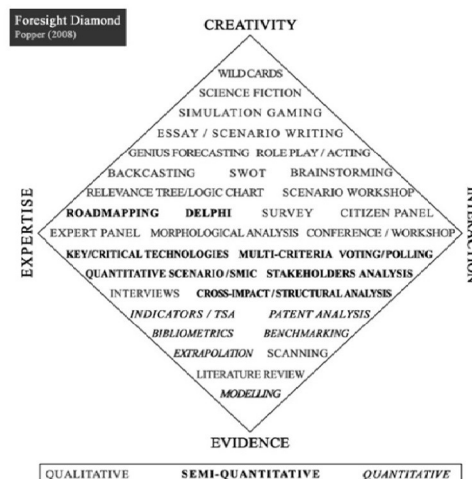
Source: Mitrović, 2016

SPECULATIVE

Speculative Design, as a methodology to support strategic and proactive thinking, helps to follow a path towards investigating different future scenarios, through immersive and impactful experiences, some more probable and real, and others more dependent on stimuli and fanciful (Attari et al., 2021); (O'Brien & Forbes, 2021).

Rafael Popper developed a theoretical framework that encompasses everything from understanding the past to articulating visions and strategies to fit the desired future "Foresight Diamond". This theoretical framework is used to guide the application of methods and approaches related to the future in various areas, providing a basis for analyzing and planning scenarios and forecasts. As we can see in Figure 2, this theoretical framework positions methods based on their main type of knowledge source (based on creativity, expertise, interaction, or evidence). It should be noted that these domains are not independent of each other. The diamond consists of four main elements: creativity, which usually requires a mixture of original thinking and imagination; expertise, which relies on skill and knowledge in a specific area or subject; interaction, with a fundamental role in building more complete visions of the future and promoting participatory and inclusive approaches to strategic foresight, and which, because it is closely connected with other expertise, is more directed towards foresight activities, these activities are more participatory and inclusive, and are not just left to evidence and experts (Popper, 2008); (Koivisto et al., 2008).

Figure 2. The Foresight Diamond



Source: (Popper 2008)

Fashion Films as a Marketing Tool in the Communication of Contemporary Fashion Brands

Fashion films were born out of the immense desire to shake up a world that was ruled by the immobility of photography in the past, telling stories, and adding identification and emotion to the world of fashion. Fashion photographers were the great driving forces behind this type of content, as it allowed them to explore and experience new paths. The intention to tell a story and the dynamics go back a long way, but it was impossible to achieve this due to the barriers caused by the limitations of static photography (Uhlirva, 2013).

Fashion films are not just seen as fashion content, they are themselves used as a powerful means of connecting with consumers who follow fashion content, as they creatively communicate the values and DNA of brands. Another type of classification of fashion films, used by Needham (2013), takes a much broader viewpoint and follows the following categories: boutique film, which involves online stores; designer film, as the name suggests, related directly to the creative or brand in question; auteur film, this type of film is directed by a recognized director; and artist film, a film that is directed by an already recognized artist, with the support of a Brand. The author also adds that fashion films are the solution to conventional fashion shows, online catalogs, and other types of content to promote brands or magazines, they encompass all types of moving images (Needham, 2013). Fashion films are increasingly a format used by fashion brands for their strategic usefulness, for the differentiating way in which they can reach the public in general and the fashion consumer in specific, their use is here to stay. They are a form of implicit advertising; they manage to convey the values and purpose of an advertisement, without appearing to be one (Soloaga & Guerrero, 2016). Their success, according to Serrano & Cachero (2009); Muller (2016), is because today's consumers themselves look for the brands they are interested in, rather than vice versa.

According to the authors (Serrano & Cachero, 2009); (Needham, 2013); (Uhlirva, 2015); (Muller, 2016); (Huh, 2016); (Buffo, 2017); (Chang & Suh, 2017), fashion films have been redefined as a comprehensive concept of contemporary visual culture that contributes to defining and strengthening the visual identity of a fashion brand. This entertainment, information, or just emotional content that integrates fashion and media is illustrative of the constant dialog between these two areas that results in an implicit commercial relationship. They are a powerful marketing tool and a new means of communication for fashion brands in the 21st century, through which they can convey messages about long-term brand understanding, with a positive effect on brand branding, to consumers in a modern digitally based society, where integrated communication is fundamental. This type of film is widely used for various purposes, such as brand understanding, image enhancement, and entertainment effects, borrowing from various video formats, such as short films, animations, documentaries, and photo essays, as well as advertisements to persuade consumers towards products and promote sales, thus conveying a broad message. It is a new way for brands to communicate with consumers whose tastes and desires are much more subdivided and diverse.

The incessant growth and change of the market, where brands move and compete, require them to adapt and align new strategies, management methods, and business models to suit these new scenarios. It is the internet that provides these opportunities that allow companies to reach a much wider base of consumers, to reduce costs and the way they get them to connect with their brands, and thus, consequently, create value for consumers (Wang & Kennon, 2017).

The current fashion market is the result of the constant change in the end consumer's way of thinking and their influence on the sector's industry, which has exponentially increased with the use of digital social networks (Vehmas et al., 2018).

To be relevant in the results of a given market, it must integrate the omnichannel strategy into its business: the use of online stores, digital payments, product launches, and online fashion shows, as well as other initiatives aimed at social networks, are some of the approaches used by brands (Barreto et al., 2022).

Fashion communication aims to persuade consumers through the message of a brand or designer, which is constantly changing, considering social changes and the constant search for new communication methods is fundamental, along with these changes in consumer culture (Lee et al., 2011); (Wu et al., 2013). The 21st century is the era in which the digital technology revolution enables two-way communication and emotional values are enhanced, as such interfering in the communication and fashion industry. Along with fashion shows, advertising, and other initiatives, many fashion brands have increased their use of fashion films to launch and communicate their products (Wu et al., 2013); (Huh, 2016); (Soloaga & Guerrero, 2016); (Gibson, 2017); (Rodriguez & García, 2018).

Fashion films play a significant role in building the discourse of contemporary fashion brands, as they are a creative platform for expression, connecting with the public, transmitting brand values, differentiating the brand, and reaching out online. This type of audiovisual production is a powerful tool for conveying brand identity, creating emotional connections with the public, and standing out in an increasingly competitive

market. This innovative form of communication for fashion brands uses short videos to promote fashion brands, clothes, accessories, or even specific campaigns. These videos incorporate elements of storytelling, fashion, cinematography, art direction, and music to create an engaging visual experience and convey the essence of the brand creatively, thus captivating the public (Soloaga & Guerrero, 2016); (Buffo, 2017); (Kim, 2020).

This marketing strategy has gained prominence in recent years due to the rise of digital media and online video platforms such as YouTube and social networks. Fashion films allow brands to stand out from the competition and create an emotional bond with their target audience through engaging narratives and surprising visuals. Unlike traditional TV ads, which last 15 to 30 seconds, fashion films are longer and seek to tell more complex stories, most of the time without dialogue. The focus is on conveying an artistic and inspiring message, involving the viewer in a unique visual experience, and simultaneously conveying the brand's values and identity, telling the story behind a collection, or establishing an emotional connection with the public. They are a powerful marketing tool because they manage to combine entertainment and implicit advertising without seeming overly promotional. They manage to offer a visual and aesthetic experience that can attract a wider audience and generate a lasting impact on viewers' memories (Serrano & Cachero, 2009); (Needham, 2013); (Uhlírova, 2015).

However, it is important to emphasize that fashion films are part of a broader, integrated marketing strategy, complementing other brand promotion activities. In addition, the films must be well-produced and aligned with the brand's identity so that they are effective in conveying the desired message (Kim, 2020).

In terms of their characteristics, fashion films have been classified as promotional fashion films (made by fashion brands, by designers, distributors, or representatives of brands to inform, communicate, or announce a specific event, to show the new collections and new products of a new season, always with the branding elements that mark the identity of the brand itself). Editorial fashion films, focused on entertainment, show the most emotional and imaginative part of the creative director, disseminated on online platforms, and on the brand's websites to bring fashion news in a differentiating way (Kim, 2020); (Buffo, 2017).

This genre of film can also result from the collaboration between the most diverse types of artists and brands if they have values that cross. It is a way to bring something new to the consumer, quite regularly, to keep the interest and surprise of the public. Another advantage of these collaborations lies in bringing together the admirers of a brand and an artist. It is a way to massify the art and to make a product as a piece of art customized for a consumer in concrete. Finally, as regards independent fashion films, which have their methods and more specific purposes, they are placed in independent channels that go through festivals and online communities of the theme and, in the accounts of the social networks of their respective brands, much more conventional, to compose their portfolios. In this genre of film, the whole context is much more differentiated and can even go out of the domain of fashion (Kim, 2020).

In the reality that we live in today, always in motion and where everything is extremely fast, the criteria and decision-making factors of the consumer have changed, everything must be instantaneous. This is the biggest change in this new era, the fact that consumers spend much of their time online. It is online that this current consumer can find all this ease in buying where and when he wants, regardless of the chosen channel (Kotler et al. 2017).

To give the brands credibility and visibility, they marked presence in industry magazines, physical catalogs, TV advertising spots, fashion shows, mudpies, and outdoors. These are quite expensive media and advertising and the new pattern of consumption by the public, led brands to redefine their marketing and communication strategies and to be in touch with their audience. The success of fashion films as a strategy proves how fashion and cinema have a close relationship (Gibson, 2017).

The more conventional means of communication used by trademarks are no longer sufficient, they are complementary. Online has gained more importance, especially for social networks, in terms of achieving a larger market share (Rodríguez & García, 2018).

Brands need to reinvent themselves from design, creating sustainable solutions when they create and launch products. These, to attract the attention of the consumer and add value to the brand identity, increasingly, need to be exclusive and attract attention, because of the speed and the way the contents of the competition, today are consumed, through social networks (Moorhouse & Moorhouse, 2017).

Regarding brand identity, this represents the personality, values, and purpose of a brand. Identity encompasses elements such as brand history, mission, vision, target audience, and market positioning. The identity of the contemporary fashion brand is expressed through its visual aesthetics, communication, products, and experiences offered to consumers, understanding these aspects and how to express itself is primary to its success. This identity must be present in your personality and your relationship with the consumer, because through this relationship comes your loyalty. It is the combination of visual symbols with your personality. In turn, the personality of the brand concerns its character, which is why it is more difficult to imitate, thus allowing us to identify the brand among the others. A strong brand can deliver benefits to its consumers, and thus, it becomes less price-sensitive. A brand must be consistent over time (Aaker, 2007); (Hameide, 2011).

A contemporary fashion brand seeks to maintain coherent visual aesthetics in all its expressions, ensuring that all visual elements are harmonious and reflect their identity. Of these elements, we highlight strategy, creative orientation, visual system involving basic and complementary elements, graphic elements, applications, visual language, and finally, manuals and brand books (Olins, 2003); (Oliveira, 2015).

The ability to balance trends and their aesthetics is an important characteristic aspect of contemporary fashion brands, although they constantly innovate their visual esthetics, exploring new forms, materials, textures, and creative approaches. These brands can try out unusual combinations, use innovative production techniques, and collaborate with emerging or dedicated artists and designers, to create unique and captivating aesthetics, and thus, create capsule collections that can make the brand known to target audiences that at first, otherwise would not cross. Visual aesthetics also plays a crucial role in creating a memorable experience for consumers. From the design of physical stores to the e-commerce interface, packaging, advertising campaigns, and even social media presence, visual aesthetics influence how consumers perceive and connect with the brand (Puls et al., 2015).

Concluding considerations

This research, which is still in progress and based on a literature review, aims to analyze, and deepen the understanding of fashion as a complex social phenomenon, seeking the intersection between these disciplines to re-evaluate integrated communication strategies in the fashion industry. It highlights the role of Fashion Films as marketing tools in the communication of contemporary fashion brands, which through visual narratives influence and translate contemporary culture, as well as the role of Speculative Design in suggesting alternative futures. The central theme is increasingly evolving towards sustainability in fashion (Campos & Rech, 2015). On this path, designers play a key role in redefining attitudes and practices and creating a much more conscious production cycle. More extensive research into contemporary fashion contributes to a deeper understanding of this cultural phenomenon and its influence on modernity. Speculative design appears as a significant method for exploring alternative futures, challenging the restrictions of traditional methods. This type of approach, as well as encouraging innovative creative processes, allows society to participate in the significant changes resulting from a collective imagination, in the creation of a more promising future. In this way, the interrelationship between fashion and speculative design offers the possibility of researching new, differentiating communication approaches for contemporary fashion brands, which use fashion films as a marketing tool in their communication. Today's fashion brands need to be able to camouflage themselves as well as possible and become practically unnoticeable, so they are resorting to online videos with increasingly complex narrative strategies, inspired more by the world of

cinema than by classic advertising, using storytelling, where the brand appears discreetly (Hong & Kim, 2013); (Berry, 2013); (Ye-Eun, 2016); (Kim, 2017); (Atarama-Rojas et al., 2022).

Films are about people's stories, and it is these same stories that move us and captivate our attention with their characters (Lunden, 2019). Fashion films present themselves as a platform for telling stories that can address a simple idea or more complex narratives, always in an emotionally captivating way. It is in the process of storytelling that contemporary fashion brands can create a deeper bond with their audience, conveying the values, concepts, and inspirations behind their collections (Soloaga & Guerrero, 2016). This type of digital content offers the possibility of boosting and promoting more creative and inclusive practices on alternative futures, encouraging reflection on these issues and, at the same time, contributing to the construction of the contemporary fashion brand's identity through stories. This convergence between fashion, speculative design, and the narrative of fashion films reflects not only an evolution in the industry but also the constant need to investigate and innovate to recreate appropriate methodologies, practices, and approaches to be closer to consumers in a constantly evolving world. This study's main objective is to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of fashion as a cultural phenomenon that not only reflects but also influences a society's aesthetics, identity, and behavior. Another contribution of this research is to highlight how Speculative Design and Fashion Films can provide an innovative and conscious vision in the integrated communication strategies of contemporary fashion brands, to develop stronger emotional relationships with the consumer, thus highlighting their relevance in contemporary society.

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