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1. Abstract

The following thesis focuses on fashion brand communication from a perspective that has not been so far extensively approached. Research related to identity communication in relation to the field of fashion reveals a preponderant focus on a marketing-related approach, where the efficiency of the communication effort and the concrete results of it in respect to the financial benefits and value of capital obtained prevails. Further studies and works tackle also the subject in connection with the numerous social and cultural aspects that fashion involves. One finds plenty of material researching fashion brand communication linked with exterior aims, means or relating fields of influence, yet it seems that the views on the subject itself, reflecting on the substance and nature of this sort of communication are scarcer and considering this, such intents to expand this research field are to be welcomed.

This investigation brings out such a complementing approach, concentrating on fashion brand communication from a more philosophical perspective, yet not without practical, pragmatic application, researching the matter from the viewpoint of discourse and its potential, following a rather descriptive than a normative aim.

Apart from the fact that there is a considerable space to be filled in this research domain, my choice of theme for this paper is also a result of my personal affinity to fashion and conviction that its it can constitute a resourceful and challenging ground in relation to communication. The fact that it is a polyvalent concept, strongly bound to its environment, maybe impossible to be taken out of the context in which it develops for an analysis, its complex nature to be simultaneously both a means and an object of communication, its growing power, are only a few

thought that easily make out of fashion an interest field for any communicator. Adding to this the question of identity, the complexity and attractiveness of the theme is even more enhanced. How do you communicate the identity of an entity that swims in the river of relativity? How to find an essence of such a discourse?

In regards to the actual research interests, this paper focuses on investigating the matter of the discourse of fashion brand communication towards identifying a certain specificity of this communication that could constitute an actual distinct „language“ on its own. Are there any common traits in the communication of identity in fashion that remain unchanged despite of the whirling dynamics associated to this domain, prone to and defined by constant change? Could one find here a sort of communication essence that could constitute an actual “language” of fashion brand communication and if so, what are the main elements of its “lexicon” and how do they interact and blend in its “grammar”? Further on, through what would such a language differ from other similar languages?

Along with the matter of indentifying the essence of such a discourse, the paper also involves in its course the time coordinate in connection to fashion brand communication. While fashion is through its nature bound to a certain cyclicity, a continual game of reinvention of the old in the search of the new, does this apply also to the development in time of the discourse of fashion brand communication? Could there be identified a certain trend in the course of this discourse? What does that hint about the evolution of this discourse in the future?

Finally, given the intricate bound between fashion and the socio-cultural aspects of the environment in which it develops and that it serves, these being coordinates that help shape its essence, the investigation will sensitively consider this variable in its endeavors.

The paper sets out from the hypothesis that a specific language of fashion brand communication can exist and attempts, through the synthesis, analysis, illustration and conjunction of the various theoretical perspectives that can constitute a basis for the purposes of this study and through the further insights obtained in the interviews with experts on the theme, to expand the ideas approached in the initial hypothesis and take a step further the possibility of existence of such a specific language of fashion brand communication towards identifying some possible constituent elements of this, some forms of combination between these, its dependency or independence to

diverse factors and the diversity of its forms of manifestation. If the theoretical framing constitutes a starting point, the expert interviews refine this investigation in the direction of more concrete detailing.

The **first chapter** of the thesis approaches the concept of fashion without attempting a definition of it, but rather in the idea of pointing out several notes of substance related to fashion in order to settle a takeoff point for the interests of this research. The complex views here presented portray fashion as to have a conflicting nature, where several opposites somehow find cohesion. Here are to be found interesting perspectives, such as Wilson's view on fashion as standing at the crossroads of three ambiguities (that of capitalism, that of our identity and that of art) and setting it as our easiest way to express and access this triple ambiguity or that of Craik in relation to the simultaneously unifying and dissociating social character of fashion, or further the idea of fashion in relation to the self and its exterior manifestation of the physical body, reflecting in Svendsen's proposal of considering fashion a phenomenon helping us understand ourselves in our historical standpoint or Foucault's view on the body as a political field, performing ceremonies and emitting signs, or the relation between fashion and art, its specificity in connection to time and dynamics, or Baudrillard's unique perspective, setting fashion in the realm of the impossible, where neither the beautiful or the ugly reside, in a society where exchange is no longer possible and under the governing rule of fascination and oversaturation. This conflicting nature is at the same time a hint on the possibility of distinctiveness of the discourse of fashion, a view also sustained through the work of Barthes.

The **second chapter** proceeds further to the field of aesthetics, as a basis for the concept and practice of fashion that could not be disregarded. The matter of beauty is here analyzed, among others, in relation to ideas such as the natural drive to observe and value the aesthetic, the emotional and visionary connotations involved in the perception and criticism of the beautiful, the dissociation between the aesthetic experience and the matters of utility and morals, the self-sufficiency of this experience, beauty as a ground for synthesis between the impulses of the self and the exterior experience, the aesthetic attitude and the notion of disinterestedness, but also the bound between the beautiful and the social context, liberation and dependency, the validity of claims of universality and individuality in this field. The works of authors as Santayana, Croce, Townsend or Bullough support this argumentation.

In the **third chapter** I come closer to the matter of identity, discussing perspectives on the notion of the self and its practice. As brand communication reflects a communication of the self, this approach is a necessary step in developing the purposes of the paper. Furthermore, the matter of the self encompasses also the audience of the brand, already discussed as to be not only a “receiver” for the brand, but also a shaper of it in some matters, sharing a dynamic and reciprocal relationship with the brand. Thus, the notion of the self here discussed touches also the matters of the identity of the public, be it in its individual identity or as a mass. I have chosen to dive into this insight on the matter of the self through three interesting and in many matters somehow opposing views: that of Foucault, presented in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, then shortly passing through that of Cassirer in his *Essay on Man* and finally that of Baudrillard in his *Fatal Strategies*.

Further on, the **fourth chapter** of the paper approaches the actual matter of brands, drawing thus closer to the specific interest of the investigation. Involving views of several theorists as Ries, Murphy, Aaker, Lindstrom or Lane Keller, the chapter illustrates the extensiveness of the notion of brand, proposing various supporting perspectives of the intricacy and multidisciplinary view imposed here. Some defining elements of brands are identified, while the matter is further developed through some related relevant perspectives: brands as persons, parallels with psychoanalysis or the concepts of Dionysian and Apollonian from Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* in order to distinguish between Dionysian and Apollonian brands drawn by Craciun, the multisensory approach on brands, searching for a sensorial synergy in brand communication, symbolic and cultural meaning in brands, the idea of contextualized identity, linked with the concept of *Umwelt* of Uexküll or the matter of globalization.

Finally, the **fifth chapter** brings a few considerations on language and persuasion to discussion. Attempting to identify the specificity of fashion brand communication and in that reflect on what could constitute its individual language, a brief view on language and its link to thought, on persuasive discourse is without doubt a valuable critical basis for the endeavors of this paper. Theories on the functionality of language, the bi-directional shaping of communication by both sender and receiver, the importance of the known identity of the message sender, Wittgenstein’s views in *Philosophical Investigations*, imposing social usage as a defining element of our language, as linguistic elements bear no meaning on their own and meaning is given by the actual

use of language in a certain “language-game”, a practical situation – are to be found here. These are complemented with Aristotle’s Rhetoric and his Ethos- Logos- Pathos triad, that has remained a canon-like pattern in analyzing persuasion and an innovative approach to persuasion brought forth by Östman through his theory of Persuasion as Implicit Anchoring. Finally, the matter of specificity of language and persuasion in relation to an investigation on the field of fashion should also touch here the matter of image. A prop in this direction is here offered by through Barthe’s view on the rhetoric of image.

The theoretical analysis is, as previously mentioned, complemented by a practical investigation on the matter, conducted through interviews with experts. The research and its results are detailed in **chapters 6 to 9**. Given the research theme, the interpretative intentions of the paper and its attention to the socio-cultural aspect, a qualitative approach in the method of the practical study is here appropriate. The interviews are designed as to reflect the main points of interest of the investigation, as to complete the initial critical basis with relevant concrete insights, however, the questions in the interview are constructed in an open tailoring, leaving enough space for the respondents to develop their viewpoints following their expertise and personal will. The choice of experts to take part in the investigation is motivated by my intent to join various perspectives, coming from diverse fields of activity in relation to fashion brand communication in order to obtain a rich, miscellaneous material of observation and interpretation

2. Fashion – field specifics and selected notes on its nature

It is with a distinct quiver that we approach fashion, which, to me, comes close both to a certain degree of fearfulness as well as an indulgence into a sweet serenity. One cannot escape a sense of submission in front of the “invasion” of fashion, with its illusive touch, uncontrollable and indefinite nature, that we seem to not be able to grasp or put into any clear delineation, a relentless stampede of fascination, conquering us at a speed where time both stops and races. Yet, one also cannot escape the luscious calmness fashion also lends, that of conformity to a tantalizing rule, even if we don’t quite understand which that is, that of cohesion to our sense of self as we desire it or with a community, that of swimming in waters that are not filtered through the sifter of morality, that of pleasure without asking any questions.

Against the common misconception that fashion deals with the superficial, Wilson further supports this initial thought: “fashion clearly does also tap the unconscious source of deep emotion, and at any rate is about more than surface. Fashion, in fact, is not unlike Freud’s vision of the unconscious mind. This could contain mutually exclusive ideas with serenity; in it time was abolished, raging emotions were transformed into concrete images, and conflicts magically resolved by being metamorphosed into symbolic form.” (Wilson, 1987: 11)

This being the starting point, the following chapter does not attempt in any sort a definition of fashion, but assumes the aim of selecting a few interesting notes on fashion that can point out to its nature and through this offer a place to takeoff in the research interests of this paper.

The extensiveness of fashion and its impossibility to subscribe to one general definition was emphasized by most researchers approaching it. Svendsen rejects the idea of being able to gather fashion under a definition with necessary and sufficient conditions, proposing instead of it a view on fashion by the example of Wittgenstein’s “family resemblances”, where the contour of fashion would come out from the various instances where it is observed, from the examples of fashion, just like Wittgenstein’s “games” did not share one single trait that all games would have in common but would be at the same time interconnected by a web of similarities. (Svendsen, 2006: 14)

As claimed from the very beginning here, and it will not be contradicted by neither of the ideas that are here to follow, there is a sense of haziness attached to fashion. This may be a natural extension of the fact that fashion does play on the irrational thought and emotion, but also its actual positioning, at the conjunction of diverse territories of our life and self, seems to encourage this intricate indeterminacy. In this idea, Wilson sets fashion at the crossroads between three ambiguities, claiming it to be also for us the easiest way to access and express these ambiguities. (Wilson, 1987: 14-15) This triple ambiguity we experience in relation to fashion is “the ambiguity of capitalism itself, with its great wealth and great squalor, its capacity to create and its dreadful wastefulness; the ambiguity of our identity, of the relation of the self to body and the self to the world; and the ambiguity of art, its purpose and meaning.” (Wilson, 1987: 14-15)

The cultural approach on fashion brings out a distinctive aspect of its nature. That is - its both unifying and dissociating character; its power to integrate us in a way in our socio-cultural environment, but at the same time to separate us from others as “to distinguish” is an act close to its being. Fashion is a technique that articulates us in our habitat, tailoring us to adapt in our environment, while in this process it however remains a technique to establish distinctiveness, singularizing us from others and a group from another. (Craik, 1994: 17)

Wilson (1987) also observes this dual nature in regards to fashion as social factor. She notes that on the one hand “despite its apparent irrationality, fashion cements social solidarity and imposes group norms” (Wilson, 1987: 6), yet “at the same time the limits of conventional dress act as a barrier we attempt constantly to breach, a boundary we dare to cross. It is both defense and attack, both shield and sword” (Wilson, 1987: 8). Later, she completes this idea by claiming the ideological note of fashion, as aesthetic affair, attempting to “resolve formally, at the imaginary level, social contradictions that cannot be resolved” (Wilson, 1987: 9).

In this view, aiming both to individualize and socialize us, fashion reaches the idea of the self both as individual and as part of a group. Fashion is a concept and a practice closely linked to the idea of self. It is both creative and reflective. Through fashion we attempt not only to reflect our identity, but also to define it in a dynamic process. Seeking to find cohesion and uniqueness at the same time, the sense of individuality such defined can only be dynamic and prone to change. So, “unlike other cultural practices that define our sense of self, the essence of fashion is change and consensual trends” (Craik, 2009: 2)

Coming back to Wilson's analogy between fashion and the Freudian view on the unconscious referred to at the beginning of this chapter, some considerations from a psychoanalytic perspective could be also made on the idea of the self here discussed. As the self struggles between these conflicting premises, reaching to distinguish itself and to blend, dissipating into this dynamics only to seek a re-gathering in an identity, fashion could be "a means whereby an always fragmentary self is glued together into the semblance of a unified identity" (Wilson, 1987: 11). Or as Svendsen even better concludes this idea, "fashion (...) is a phenomenon that ought to be central to our attempts to understand ourselves in our historical situation" (Svendsen, 2006: 10).

In relation to the idea of the self is also the view on clothing as a transfer point between the body and its exterior. Fashion is generally accepted as to be more than clothing and its symbolic, communicative and aesthetic implications easily explain that. As the body is "dressed", it is in this meaningful "shell" we are wrapped that numerous exchanges with the exterior happen, while at the same time dress serves us also as a protective shield from this outer world. A both permissive and guarding shielding process, in whose dynamics we like to think we have a say through our choice. Wilson (1987) introduces here an interesting thought. Clothing mark a flexible boundary that in a way allows the element of disturbance, as through the years boundaries have given us the feeling of safety, of safeguarding purity, the individuals having attempted to strengthen boundaries through rituals and symbolic systems in order to keep out elements of "pollution" of the self. (Wilson, 1987: 2-3) This being the case, "if the body with its open orifices is itself dangerously ambiguous, then dress, which is an extension of the body yet not quite part of it, not only links that body to the social world, but also more clearly separates the two. Dress is the frontier between the self and the not-self." (Wilson, 1987: 3)

This functional status of the body in relation to positioning the self in its habitat, in a bi-directional dynamics of creation and reflection is also emphasized by O'Sickey by taking over Foucault's precise pinpointing of this idea: "The body is...directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs." (Foucault quoted by O'Sickey in Benstock and Ferriss (ed.), 1994: 25)

A recurring point of discussion regarding the nature of fashion and its being is that of raising the question whether fashion is a form of art and consequently whether its practice subscribes to the artistic endeavors or not. Without attempting to answer this question and get into the equally intricate matter of further defining what art is, in itself a concept escaping the clear delimitations of a generally accepted definition, we may at least acknowledge the numerous similarities art and fashion share and settle maybe for the idea that fashion is of artistic nature yet does not define itself solely through this trait, neither are we to unequivocally see an equivalent between the two.

Barnard also makes use of McRobbie's¹ definition of fashion design to emphasize the multiple common trait fashion and art share in their essence. Involving "creative thought", having as forefront a concern for the aesthetic in which form precedes function, fashion appears to be fairly linked to the elements that one also finds in the attempts to define art, yet the functional and communicative intent are also close to its substance and expand thus its core as to push the boundaries of defining itself through art. (Barnard, 2002: 28)

Further on he also proposes the interesting thought of reflecting on yet another duality in the nature of fashion - as so far we have encountered a few in the discussion of the concept – this time in its relation to art or creative production in general. Triggered in this idea by Williams'² claim that creative production may be acknowledged both as revelation or as mere fancy, Barnard puts a focus on how this conflicting view on art, possible to be perceived as either good or bad in this sense, is still reflected in the experience of our society with the creative product. (Barnard, 2002: 24) Therefore, the resulting products of the work of artists and creative minds, including here fashion, can be either embraced as a revelation to a superior reality, an access to a way to transcend, or as a delusion, a "potentially dangerous lunacy" (Barnard, 2002: 24).

In discussing the philosophy of fashion, Svendsen (2006) claims the new as the central principle of fashion. "A fashion object does not *in principle* need any particular qualities apart from being new. The principle of fashion is to create an ever-increasing velocity, to make an object superfluous as fast as possible, in order to let a new one have a chance. "(Svendsen, 2006: 28)

¹ McRobbie, J. (1998) *British fashion design: Rag trade or image industry?*, London: Routledge

² Williams, R. (1961) *The long revolution*, Harmondsworth: Penguin/Pelican

Indeed, the idea of novelty is closely linked to fashion. That happens in a larger context in which fashion in general speculates on the sense of time. Every fashion seems to be an imperative of a new rule, a new domination. Yet, we confront here again with another contradiction in fashion, another conflict reflecting its paradoxical nature. While the establishment of a certain fashion means the introduction of a new, revolutionary direction, contradicting and conquering the old, at the same time fashion exists in a rather cyclic temporal universe, the new being both new and a reinterpretation of the old, be it as it may a response to it, a contradiction of it, an innovation to it and so on and so forth. It is, as it is, linked in its core with a history, with what was, at some time, before. Or as Svendsen nicely puts it, pinpointing this idea of cyclic temporality in relation to fashion: “fashion exists in an interaction between forgetting and remembering, in which it still remembers its past by recycling it, but at the same time forgets that the past is exactly that. And the faster fashion evolves, one would presume, the faster it will forget.” (Svendsen, 2006: 30).

Together with the paradox of rejecting the past in fashion to establishing the new, while at the same time having this new as to be actually intricately linked with the old, comes also an irony. In introducing a new fashion and together with it a new definition of what is aesthetic or beautiful, fashion implicitly claims the old as ugly while rejecting it and here lies also the irony: this old that is now thrown away as ugly is the same one that was previously claimed as the beautiful, which points to the relative nature of fashion and the fact that none of its assertions are to be looked at as final solutions. (Wilson, 1987: 9) However, this relativism, Wilson observes, “is not as senseless as at first appears; it is a statement of the unnaturalness of human social arrangements, (...) a statement of the arbitrary nature of convention and even of morality” (Wilson, 1987: 9-10).

This conflicting change fashion holds in its essence goes together with a sense of coercion. As any modernization, it involves the establishment of the new by pressuring out the old, opening to a novel form by closing on another. (Svendsen, 2006: 24) But here comes another paradox. The emancipation from the old through the new fashion, the liberation from an old oppression, reflects at the same time the submission to a new oppression. (Svendsen, 2006: 24)

Despite its close connection to the socio-cultural environment, as previously discussed, fashion seems to follow a dynamics at the same time fairly independent from the exterior. Its course seems to be more driven from its internal conditions, on the basis of this cyclic process between

previous and current fashions. (Svendsen, 2006: 29) Even more, the change proposed by fashion does not appear to follow any concrete purpose. If we are to return to its previously claimed relation to art, the idea of intrinsic purpose, or purpose in itself could reflect also on its approach on timeliness and change, as fashion seems to reach a change for the sake of change. As Svendsen accurately states, fashion cannot be understood “as an attempt to reach a timeless ideal” (Svendsen, 2006: 29). “Fashion does not have any *telos*, any final purpose, in the sense of striving for a state of perfection, a kind of highest incarnation that will make all future developments superfluous. The aim of fashion is rather to be potentially endless, that is it creates new forms and constellations *ad infinitum*.” (Svendsen, 2006: 29)

When discussing fashion, one could not leave out the idea of beauty. The aesthetic pursuit is, as already pointed out, connected to the practice of fashion. An interesting perspective on beauty is found in the work of Baudrillard (1996), who links beauty to the idea of the impossibility of exchange that he considers to have become a fact in our society. We live, he claims, the end of exchange, in a society where things can no longer be negotiated, where exchange is closer and closer to the impossible, all which brings us to a fatal situation, as exchange is the only one that could defend us from destiny. (Baudrillard, 1996: 54) Beauty is among the things that cannot be exchanged, according to him. These un-exchangeable, un-negotiable entities are powerful, burning things, that don’t allow possession or exchange as such a thing “does not have value but neither does it have any price. It is an object without interest, but at the same time absolutely singular, without equivalent, somehow, sacred.” (Baudrillard, 1996: 54)

Yet, when further discussing fashion, Baudrillard sets it neither in the realm of the beautiful nor in that of the ugly, but in a hazy point of fascination, where the opposition between the beautiful and the ugly no longer exists. The triggers of fashion are not based on such an opposition, but actually on a lack of it, where the beautiful and the ugly blend following the purpose of an overcoming effect of seduction, where any deontology, any claim of true or false cannot find a place. (Baudrillard, 1996: 99)

Later on, he opposes the concept of fashion to the ceremonial of ornament. Ornament, he claims, is a constraint, belonging to the tactile universe, to the realm of ceremony that initiates, while fashion belongs to a transcendent universe, a modern and dynamic one, that of the public, of the accessible, of representation. (Baudrillard, 1996: 199) Unlike the archaic and timeless rigor of the

ceremony of ornament, fashion deals with the “whims” of aesthetic and political desires, joining the “concert of modern subjectivity”. (Baudrillard, 1996: 199) So, fashion does not subscribe to these constraints and therefore, opposing them, can only be a form of liberation. Yet, such liberation is not quite a path to a place of clearness or calm, as one might associate with the idea of escape. On the contrary, fashion is a form of liberation of the bodies and clothes from these constraints, in a growingly random game of combinations. (Baudrillard, 1996: 199) It is infinitely varied, but despite of that, it actually comes out of “a process of undifferentiating and promiscuity of all possible shapes”. (Baudrillard, 1996: 199)

It is among the central aims of this paper to investigate the possibility and extent of the specificity of the fashion discourse. This idea of the individuality of the “language” of fashion is found also in the work of Roland Barthes, when he discusses fashion images and fashion texts (or “written clothing” as he calls them). From the very first pages of his work he clearly states this singularity: “the fashion photograph is not just any photograph (...) It has its own units and rules; within photographic communication, it forms a specific language which no doubt has its own lexicon and syntax, its own banned or approved “turns of phrase”. Similarly, the structure of written clothing cannot be identified with the structure of a sentence; for if clothing coincided with discourse, changing a term in the discourse would suffice to alter, at the same time, the identity of the described clothing; but this is not the case. (...) Written clothing is carried by language, but also resists it, and is created by this interplay.” (Barthes, 1990: 4)

Claiming the real garment, the actual piece of clothing, as the “mother tongue” of this discourse, Barthes explains how fashion image and text are a sort of instances of “speech” for this central axis, transforming the garment into various forms of representation through the use of certain operators he calls “shifters”, that help transpose it from one code to another. (Barthes, 1990: 5-6)

Seen from this perspective of its communication, its discourse, fashion seems to draw close to semeiology, or as Barthes puts it “the function of the description of Fashion is not only to propose a model which is a copy of reality but also and especially to circulate Fashion broadly as a *meaning*. (Barthes, 1990: 10)

3. Aesthetics – a basic field of action for fashion

Santayana (1896), in his overview approach on aesthetics, *The Sense of Beauty*, points out right in the very first pages of his work a notable aspect, that I consider appropriate also to open this chapter attempting to unravel the nature and challenges of aesthetics, in what is possible here and to serve the purposes of this paper. This aspect is the intrinsic nature of beauty, in a sense of its presence in our inmost component, deriving from it our proneness to notice and treasure it.

“There must therefore be in our nature a very radical and wide-spread tendency to observe beauty, and to value it. No account of the principles of the mind can be at all adequate that passes over so conspicuous a faculty.”(Santayana, 1896: 3)

Such presented, on the premises that the matters of beauty lie somewhere in the depth of our nature, the issues arising in the discussion of aesthetics are also approached from various angles, as diverse as the intricacy of this natural core us humans guard within. According to Santayana, we may distinguish three main approaches practiced on the matter. Firstly is the aesthetic activity, the actual exercise of the aesthetic faculty, which is “not a matter of science but of character, enthusiasm, niceness of perception, and fineness of emotion.” (Santayana, 1896: 4). The second approach is an anthropological, timely-oriented view on aesthetics and aesthetic conduct, while the third one regards aesthetics from a psychological perspective. This latter view is also the focus of Santayana’s regard on beauty, proposing a scrutiny of “the origin and conditions of these feelings and their relation to the rest of our economy” (Santayana, 1896: 4), while this endeavor should “yield an understanding of the reason why we think anything right or beautiful, wrong or ugly, it would thus reveal the roots of conscience and taste in human nature (...)” (Santayana, 1896: 4).

To reach a definition of the concept of beauty, Santayana approaches also the matter of the difference between how beauty is described and how it is perceived. While some writers have assumed the notion of *criticism* in describing it, a view that points out too much the element of deliberate judgment, others closer to modern age have adopted the term *aesthetics*, as a theory of perceptions and susceptibility, risking to be too large and comprising (Santayana, 1896: 7).

Santayana proposed thus a combination of the two as to “unite two essential qualities of the theory of beauty” (Santayana, 1896: 7). This way we “reach the sphere of critical or appreciative perception” (Santayana, 1896: 8).

In the same matter, Benedetto Croce (1998) also sets aesthetics in the field of the emotional realm, defining it as “vision” and “intuition”. Constructing his theory on beauty by firstly eliminating the notions that don’t define or reflect it, Croce identifies four negations that this approach on aesthetics implies. Firstly, aesthetics is not a physical fact. The second negation denies art being a utilitarian act, as “our practical interests, with the correlatives of pleasure and pain (...) never melt into our aesthetic interest”(Croce, 1998: 23-24) At most we could say about art that it is a “particular form” of pleasure, a notion through which we would implicitly delineate it from the others. (Croce, 1998: 24) A third negation would be that aesthetics is not a moral act. As beauty is not created through an act of will, it also cannot be burdened with any moral judgment and that “not because it is granted an exceptional privilege, but simply because the moral law doesn’t find a way to apply to it.” (Croce, 1998: 25). Finally, the fourth negation implied by aesthetics, which Croce views as of highest importance, is the fact that it does not have the character of notional knowledge. The notional knowledge is always realistic, aiming to set reality over unreality, while beauty, defined through intuition, points out precisely to a hazy line between reality and the unreal, intuitive knowledge being at opposite poles to the conceptual one. (Croce, 1998: 27)

In his approach to aesthetics, Croce also critically distinguishes several “distinctions” against which he arguments. Such a distinction is the one that tries to separate intuition from expression, claiming certain autonomy of an interior and exterior of art. This, warns Croce, would only lead to later trying to find, in vain, a means to mediate them back together. “it becomes a different matter when, as must be done with every distinction, we pass from the act of distinguishing to that of establishing relation and unifying, because this time we run against most desperate obstacles. What has here been distinguished cannot be unified, because it has been badly distinguished: how can something external and extraneous to the internal become united to the internal and express it? How can a sound or a color express an image without sound and without color? How can the bodiless express a body? (...)When the intuition has been distinguished from the expression, and the one has been made different from the other, no ingenuity of middle terms

can reunite them” (Croce, 1998: 46) An interesting and easy to follow argument, emphasizing the intricate relation between expression and beauty and their blending into an inseparable whole.

On the same matter of expression, Croce critically identifies another such “distinction”. That is, the perspective that aesthetic expression is divided into two moments: the actual “naked” expression and the “ornate” expression. Yet, this provokes a logical contradiction. “An appropriate expression, if appropriate, is also beautiful, beauty being nothing but the precision of the image, and therefore of the expression ; and if it be intended to indicate by calling it naked that there is something wanted which should be present, then the expression is inappropriate and deficient, either it is not or is not yet expression. On the other hand, an ornate expression, if it be expressive in every part, cannot be called ornate, but as naked as the other, and as appropriate as the other” (Croce, 1998: 52)

In his turn, Dabney Townsend (2000) reflects also on the affective nature of beauty, observing how aesthetics filled a hole with its establishment that the exact and certain scientific view of the XVII and XVIII century could not cover with its claimed independence from individual determinations. That is, explaining the subjective elements of our experience, unapproachable to science. A scientific approach would leave out too much of the largeness and complexity of human experience and aesthetics assumed this necessary endeavor. (Townsend, 2000: 35)

Beauty is the realization of the harmony between our nature and our experience. (Santayana, 1896: 88). It offers such a satisfaction of cohesion, even in disruption, a sense of the self in balance which comes, to my opinion, as a justified extension of the previously underlined nature of the sense of beauty, in a perpetual dynamics between the interior self and the perceptions and projections it captures and creates through experience. Coming from within and being created by the experience of the self, it could thus only put the two in harmony and exclude the possibility of a contradiction between them.

Complementing this idea, Santayana notices: “it is the essential privilege of beauty to so synthesize and bring to a focus the various impulses of the self, so to suspend them to a single image, that a great peace falls upon that perturbed kingdom.” (Santayana, 1896: 77) He further distinguishes two means of securing harmony, either to unify all given elements, a unity through

inclusion which gives us the beautiful, or to reject all the elements that refuse unification, a unity by exclusion, which gives us the sublime. (Santayana, 1896: 77) The sublime is the beautiful in a state of ecstasy. “Both are pleasures: but the pleasure of the one is warm, passive, and pervasive; that of the other cold, imperious, and keen. The one identifies us with the world, the other raises us above it.” (Santayana, 1896: 77)

Beauty offers here a ground for synthesis, it lends a certain degree of coherence as its very nature is claimed to be bound by a fusion-like character. A closely bound dance between form and content seems to stir it to existence. “For the truth is really this: content and form must be clearly distinguished in art, but cannot be separately qualified as aesthetic, precisely because their relation only is artistic - that is, their unity understood not as an abstract, dead unity, but as concrete and livings which is that of the synthesis a priori ; and art is a true a priori aesthetic synthesis, of feeling and image in the intuition as to which it may be repeated that feeling without image is blind, and image without feeling is void.” (Croce, 1998: 44)

In the context of the orientation towards the individual experience, another theory is put forward – that of the aesthetic attitude. The way in which we approach the aesthetic is determined by a certain perceptive attitude, as we feel, acknowledge and interact differently with an object, depending on how we get closer to it. (Townsend, 2000: 177) As Santayana noticed - “Nothing is objectively impressive; things are impressive only when they succeed in touching the sensibility of the observer, by finding the avenues to his brain and heart.” (Santayana, 1896: 35) As discussed previously, beauty needs emotional consciousness, our appreciation is the one that gives value and through extension forms the aesthetic. Better put, “there is no value apart from some appreciation of it, and no good apart from some preference of it before its absence or its opposite. In appreciation, in preference, lies the root and essence of all excellence. Or, as Spinoza clearly expresses it, we desire nothing because it is good, but it is good only because we desire it.” (Santayana, 1896: 8)

In the same line of thought, Townsend (2000) points out the defining character of reaction in the aesthetic experience. Exemplifying his idea through comparison with a stage that if not seen by anyone, cannot become an aesthetic object, regardless of possibly possessing aesthetic qualities,

he decisively claims “in order for an aesthetic phenomenon to happen, firstly a reaction must exist” (Townsend, 2000: 173).

So, our individual perception produces value and to take this thought further in discussing the aesthetic experience, our perceptions are acknowledged in modern age as to not being neutral, but influenced by previous experiences. “We see depending on the way we look, depending on the space and time categories, as well as depending on certain expectations we transfer upon the observed object.” (Townsend, 2000: 177)

The quality thus acquired by objects through association is identified by Santayana as their expression. While in the case of material or form we deal with one object and its effect at emotional level, for expression we confront with two objects, the one perceived and the one it leads to due to our affinities and previous experience and, in this case, the emotional effect is linked to this second, associated one. (Santayana, 1896: 63) “Expression may thus make beautiful by suggestion things in themselves indifferent, or it may come to heighten the beauty which they already possess.” (Santayana, 1896: 63)

When our perception is influenced by such mental habits, the value of the perception will owe its worth not only to the enjoyment of the external catalyst but also to the “pleasantness of the apperceptive reaction; and the latter source of value will be more important in proportion as the object perceived is more dependent, for the form and meaning it presents, upon our past experience and imaginative trend, and less on the structure of the external object.” (Santayana, 1896: 38).

Given these proposed ideas, it is not hard to acknowledge the existence of a certain set of aesthetic attitudes. There is yet an issue here that arises and is also of considerable importance to the main matter of brand communication in fashion this paper approaches. That is not the existence of aesthetic attitudes, but the matter of how to describe them and if possible to maybe be able to generate them at the appropriate moment in time. (Townsend, 2000: 178) “Most of the fundamental aesthetic terms we use are, in essence, some attempts to describe aesthetic attitudes and/or ways to induce an aesthetic attitude in the act of perception.” (Townsend, 2000: 178)

The same individuality that escapes a definite description is also specific to the aesthetic experience. Townsend (2000) explains this through the following argument: in general, we can

only speak of experience types if we are to identify some common features of the experience we are referring to, as the moment they happened, their content, the person involved; while some feelings as love or hate can be grouped into categories based on the relationship type they imply, the aesthetic experience does not work this way; it is assumed that the aesthetic experience is independent from the criteria defining the identity of the object. And as such, Townsend concluded the thought “all theories on aesthetic experience must try to describe it directly, if they cannot rely on other independent descriptions of those elements that make an object to be aesthetical. Certainly, this can be done only from case to case.” (Townsend, 2000: 189) To this, he does not forget to warn that if we are to adopt this thought, we should be ready also to face its implications, that is, the fact that we do not have an aesthetic relation with the object, our feelings towards it don’t refer to the object but to our own experience, in other words, our aesthetic emotions refer strictly to themselves. (Townsend, 2000: 190)

Since aesthetic experience is something we are to live individually, what claims could there still be made for universality in regards to aesthetics? It seems generalization and categorization are not quite approachable tools when it comes to beauty. Croce sustains this thought stating that “since every work of art expresses a state of the soul, and the state of the soul is individual and always new, the intuition implies infinite intuitions, which it is impossible to place in pigeon-holes as kinds, unless there be infinite pigeon-holes, and therefore not pigeon-holes of kinds, but of intuitions” (Croce, 1998: 27).

Even Santayana’s definition of beauty as value contradicts the claim of universality as well. The misconception that what is beautiful to us applies also to the others stems from the fact that we consider beauty to be *in* the object as we undergo the psychological phenomenon of turning an element of sensation into a quality of a thing. (Santayana, 1896: 17) Yet this is contradictory, coming back to the initial thought that opened this chapter claiming beauty as intrinsic. Beauty as value “cannot be conceived as an independent existence which affects our senses and which we consequently perceive. It exists in perception, and cannot exist otherwise.” (Santayana, 1896: 17)

It was previously acknowledged that the aesthetic appears only together with appreciation, preference and that the aesthetic experience needs a reaction in order to produce itself. Individual

bias is implicitly linked to this thought. In spite of the indefiniteness and haziness usually associated with the idea of subjectivity, an interesting argument is brought forth here, that sets particularly this relativity as a crucial element to definiteness. If beauty would not be a value coming from differentiation but from an identical something that all things contain, it would be everywhere the same, as a substance and any preference would appear as an illusion. “When we try to make our judgments absolute, what we do is to surrender our natural standards and categories, and slip into another genus, until we lose ourselves in the satisfying vagueness of mere being. Relativity to our partial nature is therefore essential to all our definite thoughts, judgments, and feelings.” (Santayana, 1896: 43) Things could not be equally beautiful as it is precisely their differentiation that makes them beautiful. (Santayana, 1896: 44)

One last idea I would like to bring forward on the matter of universality when it comes to aesthetics that I think also sends to an interesting feature beauty carries and its potential. The intricacy of the world surrounding us is spread out into a million diverse elements to which we react as well diversely and that mingle and interact within themselves and with us in most various ways. The element of particularity seems to resonate better to our experience in relation to this perspective. Detail and intimacy appear to send to a more authentic approach. “If our appreciation were less general, it might be more real, and if we trained our imagination into exclusiveness, it might attain to character.” (Santayana, 1896: 16)

Another aspect of aesthetics that interestingly may come into a slight conflict with the intentionality of brand communication that we look upon in this paper is the fact that aesthetic experience is viewed as to have no further purpose but its own being. We search for no ulterior motive in aesthetic pleasure. “It suffuses an object without telling why; nor has it any need to ask the question. It justifies itself and the vision it gilds; nor is there any meaning in seeking for a cause of it, in this inward sense. Beauty exists for the same reason that the object which is beautiful exists, or the world in which that object lies, or we that look upon both. It is an experience: there is nothing more to say about it.” (Santayana, 1896: 87)

As Townsend also noticed, we cannot get “saturated” with beauty as it can be the case with other sensual experiences, because there is no other desire our aesthetic pleasure would satisfy. (Townsend, 2000: 30) The aesthetic experience is its own purpose and if we are to not want it any

longer, this would be because we don't want that certain kind of aesthetic experience anymore, thus only the desire for that certain beauty is satiable and the experience it triggers is the one that could saturate us. (Townsend, 2000: 30)

A premise of modern aesthetics in regards to our relation to the beautiful is that of disinterestedness. Townsend explains this course: "The concept of disinterestedness developed over the course of the XVIII century, in the beginning as a term referring to criticism (in that one of the conditions to be a good critic was to be disinterested) and eventually was developed by Kant as a description of the actual aesthetic judgments. Later, the disinterestedness came to be treated as a type of attitude that one can assume voluntarily. The history of the term "disinterestedness" follows closely the evolution of modern aesthetics. The liberation from exterior concerns is often considered the mark of aesthetic pleasure." (Townsend, 2000: 50)

According to Townsend (2000), this liberation can be understood in two ways. The first one emphasizes the independence of aesthetic pleasure against reality. We experience the emotions the aesthetic produces in a different realm. The examples that could sustain this are numerous, as for instance the difference in experiencing death or tragedy in a work of art or other aesthetic context and that of experiencing these negative instances in reality. Death in a painting can create joy and pleasure as experience even or in any way we don't experience it in its direct effect. There is a form of fictitious here in aesthetics. (Townsend, 2000: 51) "In this sense aesthetic pleasure depends on illusion, simulation and artifice." (Townsend, 2000: 51) The second perspective of liberation from exterior matters for aesthetics is placing it closer than other regular pleasures to a certain final reality. "In this case, her liberation from the concerns of the real is not dissimulation, but elevation. The aesthetic is more real than the real experience, not less real." (Townsend, 2000: 51) This way, the aesthetic experience is a matter of a superior reality, a surreal reality, and it could never be confounded with the pleasures of common experiences. (Townsend, 2000: 51)

Both means, however, place the aesthetic experience in the field of unique, incomparable emotion and through this cements the value beauty as sufficing in itself. This seductive uniqueness and intrinsic value present in the nature and definiteness of the aesthetic experience contradict the

possible first impulse we might have in associating the concept of disinterestedness here discussed with lack of involvement. Beauty provokes and, as stated previously, the aesthetic experience depends of the existence of a reaction.

It is precisely this complex and surprising fusion between the liberation from exterior and personal elements and at the same time the remaining of an organic, pure reaction to the stimulus that characterizes the disinterested approach on the aesthetic element. This transforms the public into a so-to-say ideal audience that can leave aside personal bias yet keep the intimacy of the experience. “Disinterestedness ignores thus most of the personal factors that could interfere with the individual’s capacity to approach a work of art, guarding at the same time the significance of the individual experience. Therefore, it transforms the individual spectator into an ideal public without letting go of the idea of the self (...)”. (Townsend, 2000: 178)

In ridding itself off from this external and personal background, the disinterested experience appears as engaged only with the immediate. In such view, disinterestedness has a phenomenal nature, which opposed to the interested experience, does not imply any previous conceptual frame or further desires and purposes to fulfill, this yet without making it less complex. (Townsend, 2000: 180-181) It is an experience that we embrace for its own sake. A momentary surrender, if we can say so, in which the self is not forgotten and from which many can derive. “It doesn’t contest the fact that later other motivations could intervene also, but it makes indeed out of the aesthetic experience the purest form of experience possible, turning it this way into an experience that logically precedes all the others.” (Townsend, 2000: 181)

A complementary notion related to this matter of disinterestedness is put forward by Edward Bullough (1912) through his “psychical distance”. Comprising but not limiting itself to the other specific types of distance encountered in relation to the aesthetic, such as actual spatial distance, the represented spatial distance portrayed in the work or the temporal distance, Bullough’s concept acts as a general connotation for this particular mental attitude of “aesthetic

consciousness” as he calls it, where “The sudden view of things from their reverse, unusually unnoticed, side, comes upon us as a revelation” (Bullough, 1912: 87-117)³

Maybe it is through this concept that the aesthetic experience receives also that missing element of “objectivity”, if we can use this term in a large sense, complementing its strong individual, relative nature. In this approach, Bullough discusses, we are to allow only those reactions that underline the “objective” features of the experience, which reflects the previously discussed matter of immediacy, while we are bound to interpret “even our 'subjective' affections not as modes of *our* being but rather as characteristics of the phenomenon.” (Bullough, 1912: 87-117)⁴ In its constant oscillation over the time between opposite approaches as “idealistic” and “realistic”, “sensual” and ‘spiritual’, “individualistic” and “typical”, aesthetics finds a synthesis of these opposites in the central notion of Distance. (Bullough, 1912: 87-117)⁵

Designated as a “highly complex” matter, the use of Distance seems to reflect also within itself an antonymous nature; it implies both a negative, inhibitory element, through the elimination of practicality, purpose and personal resonance and at the same time a positive aspect, where experience is created on this new ground that the inhibitory aspect has set up. (Bullough, 1912: 87-117)⁶

The Distance may be a general concept and impose a certain kind of “objectivity” to our individual experience, but, as admitted by Bullough, it does not present itself as an equally balanced phenomenon. Thus, there are infinite degrees in which Distance may come forth, depending both on the nature of the object of contemplation as well as on the capacity of the individual to distance himself from it. (Bullough, 1912: 87-117)⁷ From this comes a rich ground of variations that rightfully reflect the intricate nature of aesthetic experience. “There exist, therefore, two different sets of conditions affecting the degree of distance in any given case: those offered by the object and those realized by the subject. In their interplay they afford one of the

³ Bullough, E. (1912) ‘*Psychical Distance*’ as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle, British Journal of Psychology, Vol. 5 , pp. 87-117, [Online] Van Camp, J. (ed.), Available: http://www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361_r9.html, [7 Oct 2012]

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

most extensive explanations for varieties of aesthetic experience, since loss of distance, whether due to the one or the other, means loss of aesthetic appreciation.” (Bullough, 1912: 87-117)⁸

The concept of disinterestedness discusses the relation between the public and the aesthetic act and aside this, there is another relation involved in the intricacies of aesthetics that needs to be brought up here: that relation tied in aesthetic communication, linking the mind of the artist, the creator and the audience. Townsend observes that “if we are to use communication as a model for the relation between the artist and the public, we must be ready to view this relation from both sides” (Townsend, 2000: 223). In other words, we are to approach this relation as reciprocal and also prone to change together with the passing of time and altering of the socio-cultural context. (Townsend, 2000: 223) It is here proposed the idea that the artists and the public create and transform each other. When creating a work, the artist also creates a public and just as well, we as audience transform ourselves in that public that the work requires, as we find in us the necessary common elements of communication that come out of our being in that certain cultural point. (Townsend, 2000: 222) “The artists try to institute the kind of public they need, while the public asks for the creations it desires. The circumstance in which art is born is the result of this dialectics.” (Townsend, 2000: 231)

Here we get to a matter I consider of great importance to be pointed out which is the dependency of what we consider aesthetic to the context we find ourselves in or are relating to. As it was before mentioned, the aesthetic is not static, but extremely dynamic and complexly linked to diverse factors, as being a personal, individual and unique experience. It is not theoretical but intrinsic and immediate.

A similar cyclical bidirectional relation as the above mentioned is encountered in discussing the aesthetic from the perspective of hermeneutics. The public reacts to a work, interpreting it, while the work truly exists only when being interpreted. (Townsend, 2000: 203) Even more, this circle relationship is also subdued to the time and space coordinate, and, in that, to the context. “Both the public, as well as the work are changing continually, as their meeting happens in a given historical moment.” (Townsend, 2000: 203)

⁸ Ibid.

The ambitions beauty assumes are not simply theoretical, but deeply rooted into our current existence, despite it being its own purpose. As Santayana emphasized this - “Herein lies the greatest difficulty and nicety of art. It must not only create things abstractly beautiful, but it must conciliate all the competitors these may have to the attention of the world, and must know how to insinuate their charms among the objects of our passion.” (Santayana, 1896: 72)

Opposing both the claim of universality and at the same time hinting to the matter of focus of this section - the socio-cultural context as of solid importance in aesthetic experience – is the discussion rejecting an essentialist approach in defining aesthetics. Such approach would claim the existence of several essential elements that are to be found in all aesthetic entities. Townsend explains how such definitions are to fail in covering the extent of the aesthetic experience and given the constant dynamics in the world of aesthetics, where if we are to observe what is in today’s age agreed as art, beauty, aesthetic, the essentialist definitions would appear as theoretical abstractions that don’t reflect or keep up with reality. (Townsend, 2000: 64-65) Instead, we are given the option of the “open terms” that classify things allowing the expansion of their meaning at the same time. This involves the taking into consideration of a certain historicity of aesthetic matters, the application of these open terms focusing on the actual “practice” of the world of aesthetics, from artists, critics and public. (Townsend, 2000: 65) Instead of searching for essential criteria that would define the aesthetic, we look at the current and past usage of it for this. (Townsend, 2000: 66) Thus we look at the context and the relations between the users of aesthetic language to find an essence and a basis for our understanding of the aesthetic.

At the same time, the aesthetic, in its uniqueness also imposes a nature of novelty. Creativity, a very basic notion standing at the grounds of aesthetic production among others, speaks at the same time both of the new and its unavoidable integration in time. Two aspects are to be mentioned on creativity: firstly, it presumes the emergence of something new, creation being the time of the beginnings, a moment of great importance that is to define all the models that will follow it and repeat it and secondly creativity involves novelty in comparison with what is already known, as you cannot be new in relation to nothing. (Townsend, 2000: 148-149) Novelty and here also creation, imposes a term of relation, a history, a context.

So close is beauty related to culture and context that not only is it influenced and defined also through it, but in its turn can have a heavy weight on society as a whole. Aesthetic experiences are far from worthless to a culture, be that as it may that they don't follow certain purposes of utility and define themselves as sufficing. As Santayana puts it and, to my opinion, can rightly round up the discussion on the nature and importance of beauty, "we may measure the degree of happiness and civilization which any race has attained by the proportion of its energy which is devoted to free and generous pursuits, to the adornment of life and the culture of the imagination" (Santayana, 1896: 11)

4. Self and identity. The intricacies of the subject: aggregation, manifestation and dynamics

As the core theme of this paper revolves around the matters of the brand communication in its department of interest – fashion, establishing a theoretical ground for its ambitions cannot avoid a discussion of the notion of the self. Brand communication is a communication of the self. We need first an identity in order to have something to communicate through this brand communication. Even more, I have already pointed out in a previous chapter how the brand is associated with a person. From here, it is fair to say that we can open a discussion on brands from the perspective of the self, not only in the view of an identity, but also in a further expanded view of a personified, living self.

Furthermore, the matter of the self encompasses also the audience of the brand, also already discussed as to be not only a “receiver” for the brand, but also a shaper of it in some matters, sharing a dynamic and reciprocal relationship with the brand. Thus, the notion of the self here discussed touches also the matters of the identity of the public, be it in its individual identity or as a mass.

I have chosen to dive into this insight on the matter of the self through three interesting and in many matters somehow opposing views, that of Michel Foucault, presented in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, then shortly passing through that of Ernst Cassirer in his *Essay on Man* and finally that of Jean Baudrillard in his *Fatal Strategies*. The variety of the spectrum of these selected fragments of the views of these thinkers succeeds, to my opinion, in showing the largeness of the notion of the self as well as its development over the years, yet without, of course, attempting a complete or un-synopated depiction of this development, but merely pointing out some interesting matters that can stir the thought and reveal some of the intricacies of the matter of the self.

Emphasizing the existing concern for the self from the very early times of antiquity, Foucault (2004) introduces his discussion on the matter of the subject by putting forth the notion of “epimeleia heautou”, translated into the care of the self, taking care of yourself. This notion, he

considers, gathers “a rich corpus defining a ‘way of being’, an attitude, forms of reflection, practices that make it an extremely significant phenomenon and not only in the history of representations, not only in the history of notions or of theories, but in the history of subjectivity itself or, if you want, in the history of the practices of subjectivity” (Foucault, 2004: 22).

An interesting aspect of this notion of ‘*epimeleia heautou*’ is the double, bi-directional function of the self here. One must take care of himself, which implies you are both the subject, the one that takes care, but at the same time also the object, the one that is being taken care of. (Foucault, 2004: 62) We are pointed thus to a direction of the turning towards ourselves, a dynamic, reflexive turn.

Foucault also points out to a turning point in this perspective of the self care. While initially, as it was in the case of Plato’s discourse, this care of the self was oriented towards a purpose, the concern for the self being an activity meant to prepare the individual to properly run the community, starting with the first and second centuries the preoccupation for the self becomes a purpose in itself. (Foucault, 2004: 88-89) The care for the self closes on itself. It has an intrinsic finality, a self-contained purpose. “It is no longer an element of transition to something else, as the fortress or the others. The self is the definitive and unique purpose of the preoccupation for the self. (...) It is an activity centered only on the self, an activity that finds its realization, achievement and satisfaction (...) only in the actual activity that is exerted upon the self. We preoccupy ourselves with ourselves for ourselves, and precisely in the preoccupation for the self finds this concern its own reward. In the preoccupation for the self we are our own object, our own purpose.” (Foucault, 2004: 176)

Yet, the practice on the self is found even before Plato and Socrates. (Foucault, 2004) Foucault shows that there are several archaic practices of the self, that constituted somehow a historical foundation for the concern on the self, being related to knowledge, in the idea that in order to access the Truth a certain technology of the self is needed. (Foucault, 2004: 56) He enumerates, as follows, only four of these practices as to exemplify (Foucault, 2004: 56-57): first there are the rites of purification, without which the contact with the truth of the Gods is impossible – a recurrent theme in classical and Hellenic Greece; then there are the techniques of concentrating the soul. As the soul, the *pneuma*, is a mobile entity that can be agitated and suffer the influence

of exterior forces, one must guard it and take care that no one and nothing can influence it besides ourselves. We are to concentrate it, so that it persists and prevent its scattering when the time of death comes. Another technique of the self Foucault enumerates here is that of withdrawal, which is described as a means of getting detached from the world one is in, becoming absent in a way, yet without actually leaving the place, a way of breaking contact with the exterior world or as Foucault calls it “a technique of the visible absence” (Foucault, 2004: 57). Finally he ends this enumeration with another such technique of the self, related to the previous ones of withdrawal and concentration of the soul, that of practicing resistance, endurance. Through it, he explains, we are able to face the trials we encounter and the temptations that allure us.

Together with the “maturing” of the preoccupation for the self, its critical function is heightened, as the concern for the self is to carry not only a formative role, shaping the self, put also a just as solid corrective role. (Foucault, 2004: 98) Ideas as healing or recovering through the practice of the self are here put forth. “To become again that what you never were is, I think, one of the elements, one of the fundamental themes of this practice of the self.” (Foucault, 2004: 99)

Related to this is the notion of salvation that Foucault (2004) discusses. Although generally viewed as a notion that has to do with the dramatics of an event, a passing in a situation at limit, as is the case of passing from life to death or from a world to another, salvation is here acknowledged as an activity unfolding throughout the course of all lifetime, unrelated to a certain event and operated solely by the self. (Foucault, 2004: 179-182) To save yourself does not carry only the negative value of escaping a danger or liberating yourself from the constraints of the body and so on, but also positive meanings. Just as a fortress is saved by surrounding itself with protection systems, a soul is saved when it is properly equipped to be able to defend itself if needed. (Foucault, 2004: 182) “The one that saves himself is the one that is in a state of alert, in a state of resistance, in a state of control and sovereignty of the self that allows him to reject all attacks and all assaults” (Foucault, 2004: 182)

Salvation carries thus several positive connotations. To save yourself will mean at the same time to maintain a state that nothing and no one can alter, but also to benefit from a good that you did not have before and that you make for yourself, to ensure your own happiness and serenity, and finally also to escape a constraint, a menace, and through this to find your freedom, to ensure your independence. (Foucault, 2004: 182)

It is understood here that we are the agents of our own salvation; our liberation is a constant and continual activity of ours throughout our lifespan, self sufficient and closing upon itself. “Salvation represents thus an activity, a permanent activity of the subject upon himself, an activity that finds its reward in reaching a certain report of the subject with himself, when he has become inaccessible to the exterior turmoil and when he finds in himself a satisfaction that doesn’t need anything else besides himself. (...) You save yourself for yourself, you save yourself through yourself, you save yourself in order to reach no one else but yourself. (...) the self is agent, object, instrument and finality of salvation.” (Foucault, 2004: 183)

But salvation cannot be achieved by everyone. We encounter here a motif of separation between the few and the many that is, in the end, a natural fact to be associated with anything in general that requires attaining of value and implication of effort. The calling is universal but only a few are to be saved, a line of thought that will be found again throughout history over and again in various forms. (Foucault, 2004: 124-125) A separation between the chosen ones and the masses is something that was quite present in ancient culture, ensuring the hierarchical separation of the privileged and the others. (Foucault, 2004: 124-125) Yet, in the matter of the self, here discussed, this distinction does not follow the same pattern. The separation between the few and the many is no longer a hierarchical, but an operational one, distinguishing those able of those unable of the self. (Foucault, 2004: 124) “It is not the statute of the individual that defines now, from the beginning and through origin, the difference that will exist between the mass and the others, but the relation with the own self”. (Foucault, 2004: 124)

Given the above described, the world as the experience of the self presents itself as an intricate challenge. The fact that the world imposes to us as a trial is to be understood in two ways: trial in the sense of experience, as the world in the means through which we experience ourselves, discover and get to know ourselves, reveal ourselves to ourselves and trial in the sense of an exercise, the world being the grounds through which we form and transform ourselves in order to advance towards a goal, towards our salvation, or in seeking our perfection. (Foucault, 2004: 464)

A final idea I would like to point out in Foucault’s work investigating the matter of the subject, that I find very interesting and also consider a plausible point of comparison and link between what was so far discussed – the matter of the self in the philosophical thinking of the classics - and what is to be further discussed – ideas on the self in a more modern context. That is the idea

of the necessity of silence. Pointing out this notion of silence as present predominantly in the discourse of Plutarch, as a crucial element in the education of the individuals, Foucault (2004) focuses more not on the educational input of silence but on its applicability as here described in life in general, a principal that we are to follow throughout our existence. The argument goes as follows (Foucault, 2004: 326-327): after listening a speech of a wise man, a lesson or any valuable discourse, one must necessarily refrain from “immediately transforming what was heard into discourse” (Foucault, 2004: 326); guarding the silence allows us to retain within us what was heard and through that let it touch our soul, shape our self. In opposition, the loquacious, the talkative, is flawed in this matter. His ear “doesn’t communicate directly with the soul, but with the tongue.” (Foucault, 2004: 327) What he hears is rapidly lost in his speech, as he is like an empty vessel, not retaining anything perceived and not being submitted to any effect from that what was heard. (Foucault, 2004: 327)

Ernst Cassirer (1994) finds in symbol a key to the nature of man. In adapting to his environment, the man has discovered a new method, a new component of his existence, that transforms his entire experience setting him into a larger reality, or even a new dimension of reality and expanding his functional circle not only quantitatively but also qualitatively – the symbolic system. (Cassirer, 1994: 43)

This new component seems to define the human experience as constantly circling back to the self. We are seen as not mere receptors, but creators. “Man no longer lives in a purely physical universe, he lives in a symbolic universe. Language, myth, arts and religion are parts of this universe. They are the varied threads that weave the symbolic net, the intricate web of human experience. All human progress in thought and experiences refines upon and strengthens this net. No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man’s symbolic activity advances. Instead of dealing with the things themselves, man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself.” (Cassirer, 1994: 43)

In defining man as *animal symbolicum*, we reveal him thus as to inhabit no longer a factual universe, reflecting his immediate needs and desires, but a complex world of imaginary emotions, fears, hopes, illusions, fantasies and dreams. (Cassirer, 1994: 44)

Given these grounds of self-defining and practice, man is to find his social conscience in a conflicting field. Both identification and separation come here into play, as we seem to be able to find ourselves and become aware of our individuality only in a dialectical process with our social life, but at the same time we also are the carriers of a great creative influence on this actual social life. (Cassirer, 1994: 309)

This reflects an interesting view on the matter of the unity of the self. Man appears to find cohesion only in the conflict of its dissipation. How does this work? According to Cassirer, there is no longer a substantial unity in man, that would portray him as an essence existing and being revealed only through the own self. Man's unity is a functional one, which doesn't require cohesion between its elements, but actually demands a certain multiplicity in its compounds, stemming from a coexistence of the opposites. (Cassirer, 1994: 307) "The various forms of human culture are not united through an identity in their nature, but conformity in their fundamental attribution. If there is a balance in human culture, it can be described only as a dynamic balance, not a static one; it is the result of a fight between opposing forces." (Cassirer, 1994: 307)

Cassirer seems to have found a balance, even if in conflict, but Baudrillard (1996) claims quite the opposite. "The universe is not dialectical – it is (pre)destined to extremes and not balance. Destined to radical antagonism, neither to reconciliation nor to synthesis. (Baudrillard, 1996: 11) Things have found a way to escape the dialectics of meaning, which "bored them", and are now infinitely multiplying themselves, overbidding themselves, intensifying to a state of ecstasy, a continual escalation to the extremes, to the obscene, in a rationale empty of meaning. (Baudrillard, 1996: 11) Baudrillard compares this with the drifting of tectonic plates, lacking a solid ground to grab to, sliding one over the other, colliding with each other and producing intense superficial convulsions; faced with the uncertainty of the substantial, we are drifting towards this excessive and superficial multiplication of formal qualities, into this state of whirling ecstasy. (Baudrillard, 1996: 11)

We are now walking the kingdom of these extremes: the more beautiful than the beautiful, the more real than the real (the hyperreal), the more invisible than the invisible (the secret), the more visible than the visible (the obscene), the more social than the social (the mass), the fuller than the full (the obese), the more sexual than the sexual (the pornographic). (Baudrillard, 1996) Yet these

superlatives don't speak of richness, but, as suggested, rather of a redundancy that fills in a void left behind by the actual death of the real, or substantial in this ecstasy. "There where there is no longer anything, something redundant always installs itself." (Baudrillard, 1996: 15) The communication systems are here given as a good example, the author claiming them to have exceeded their function and necessity, as the information and related communication experience a state of being obese. (Baudrillard, 1996)

Baudrillard (1996:38) draws an interesting parallel between the metastatic form of ecstasy he found in one of his essays of another researcher, as an anticipation of death in the middle of life and the current communication systems. He further explains that this metastatic ecstatic form of death, "haunting the living one, making him seem just a useless incarnation, may very well be generalized to the current information systems, themselves metastatic in the sense of an anticipation of the dead meaning in the living signification and by the production of too much meaning, by the production of excessive meaning, seem a useless prosthesis." (Baudrillard, 1996: 38)

Just as movement does not disappear in motionlessness, but in speed, in acceleration, the whirlwind of the seduction of these ecstasies ends up in a deadness of true passion, meaning or necessity, Baudrillard predicting a matching destiny here: "tentacular, protuberant, excrescent, hipertelic: this is the destiny of an oversaturated world." (Baudrillard, 1996: 17).

In this over-excessive world that has lost its meaning, we are governed by the "malicious genius of passion" (Baudrillard, 1996) - seduction. As the illusion we continually experience does not use fake signs, but signs without meaning, we are allured into a sense of sweet blindness and fascination. (Baudrillard, 1996: 59) Its dominance is nothing but obvious, but our indulgence into it seems to not search for further explanations. "Seduction is not mysterious, but enigmatic. The enigma, just as the secret, is not something incomprehensible. On the contrary, it is completely comprehensible, only it cannot be expressed or revealed. This is how seduction is, the inexplicable evidence." (Baudrillard, 1996: 119)

There is a fundamental rule that Baudrillard points out, that one appears to cannot escape its calling. That is "everything that was produced must be seduced (to be initiated into disappearance after having been initiated into existence). (...) We are summoned in each moment to seduce

(meaning to deceive, sacrifice, destroy and *charm*) that what we are summoned by law to produce” (Baudrillard, 1996: 152) As previously also suggested in other ideas here discussed, the whole experience of the self in the world portrayed by Baudrillard seems to carry an intrinsic circularity between existence and non-existence, between life and death, where seduction appears as the inevitable mediator.

Baudrillard (1996) picks up again on this idea later on in his work, where he further develops it claiming the existence of actually two births. There is the biological birth and then there is the inevitable initiatic birth, taking place in the moment when we are being seduced. (Baudrillard, 1996: 157) While the biological birth imposes a history, the initiatic birth through seduction frees us of the conscious and unconscious determinism, frees us of any history, as it inaugurates for us not a history but a destiny. (Baudrillard, 1996: 157)

The productive note in the process of signification that Cassirer was talking about for his animal symbolicum is no longer the case here. The governing law that prevails now is that of alliances and seductive enchainment, as “the signs no longer establish between them an exchange contract, but a pact of alliance. Nowhere does the law of signification govern any longer, but only the enchainment of appearances.” (Baudrillard, 1996: 193)

Where does this painted picture leave the subject then? Although caught in a continual process of seduction, its fascination, as it was seen, leads only to disappearance. Trapped in the “melodrama of its own disappearance” (Baudrillard, 1996), the subject struggles uselessly in the confusions of its liberation attempts, without being able to gather itself or establish an agreement with the world or the objects. (Baudrillard, 1996: 130) The unshakable contradictions that scatter its nature are enough to make Baudrillard claim decisively: “Today, the position of subject has become, simply impossible to be held.” (Baudrillard, 1996: 131)

That being the situation, then the only position possible to be held is that of the object – the object that “defies the subject, forcing it to return to its impossible position as a subject” (Baudrillard, 1996: 131). This paradoxical relation between the subject and the object has been discussed several times also by Baudrillard in his work (1996), introducing a surprising idea that it is not the subject that is sovereign over the object, but quite the opposite – the object is the one that seduces the subject as the subject can only desire. He further explains the secret of this succeeding

strategy of the object: “the object does not believe in its own desire, the object does not live from the illusion of its own desire, the object does not have desire. He does not believe that something would belong to him as its property, he does not maintain a ghost of re-appropriation and neither of autonomy. It does not seek to rely on an own nature, regardless if it is that of desire, therefore, it does not know alterity and it is inalienable. It is not divided in its own self, which is the destiny of the subject, and does not know the state of a mirror, in which it would end up caught up in its own imagination. He IS the mirror.” (Baudrillard, 1996: 131- 132)

If this is the situation of the subject, what about its existence in plurality or individuality within the group? As it was seen, the masses are the ecstatic form of the social. More social than the social. (Baudrillard, 1996) The mirror in which the social “reflects in its complete immanence” (Baudrillard, 1996: 15). As in the case of the subject individually, the masses also face an impossible position somehow. They are “made to be freed and they cannot be freed” (Baudrillard, 1996: 105). Trapped in this void universe of ecstatic fascinations, being continually challenged to be seduced and solicited, their response could only here subscribe to the same governing state of inertness in the whirling speed of excess that was previously pointed out. “Atonic, amorphous, abyssal, they exert a passive, opaque sovereignty, they don’t say anything, but subtly, (...) they neutralize the scene”. (Baudrillard, 1996: 105)

5. Discussing Brands – various angles of approach in shaping the traits of a well defined brand

An analytical view on brands requires a multidisciplinary approach. The numerous angles from which one can view the concept of brand make it hard to succeed in summarizing the particularities of a brand in just one definition. The fact that brands have also a social component, being highly integrated and intertwined into the context in which they develop makes the matter even more complex, the definition of brands evolving also together with the course of development of the context. Even more, the fact that brands express an identity and the nature of identity forming and expression remains intricately caught in the continual struggle between the nature of the identity holder in itself, the features intended by the identity holder to be acquired and conveyed, the subjective perception of this identity by its targeted audience and the perception of the unintended audience, the influence of the socio-cultural context and the continual dialogue, negotiation and meaning exchange happening in this mixed interaction, tends to portray brands as a matter hard to grasp or keep in control. But let's not surrender before we've begun and try to gather a few features that give a bit of shape to this illusive, flexible nature of brands.

According to the volume *Brands, the New Wealth Creators*⁹, branding comprises “the development and maintenance of sets of product attributes and values which are coherent, appropriate, distinctive, protectable and appealing to customers. The brand is thus a synthesis of the physical, aesthetical, rational and structural elements”. (Hart and Murphy in Craciun, 2010:85)

Among the various aspects it enlists, this definition points out to one of the main features all brands do or should carry: conciseness. That is brevity and completeness. Brands are to reflect the essence, to be a concentrated whole. They are expected to speak of the multiple through the singular so to say. This volume is not the only one to underline the necessity of focus for brands. In his *22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, Al Ries underlines the importance of being succinct in its

⁹ Hart, S and Murphy, J. (ed.) (1992) *Brands, the new wealth creators*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

very first law: “The power of the brand is inversely proportional to its scope” (Ries and Ries, 2003:17) and strengthens it in its second law stating that “a brand becomes stronger when you narrow its focus”. (Ries and Ries, 2003:25) Although these laws refer directly to the expansion of brands, indirectly they do clearly speak of the necessity of conciseness in general when it comes to brands. Yet brevity is crucially linked with completeness, as stated before. In that, brands take upon themselves the complex task to comprise all key elements of the identity they are to express. And in doing so, it always remains the slippery realm of the beholder, whose response shapes also this identity. Even more, brands are to be aware and leave space for this active role of the spectator. An interesting analogy on this matter is drawn by Alexandra Craciun (2010), who compares this indefinite space of personal input where the audience actively takes part in brand “reading” and implicitly identity forming with the white spaces of Umberto Eco in his *Lector in Fabula*. Just as these white spaces are vital in the construction of a text, allowing the reader to add his own fictions in these gaps, such spaces of free interaction and input are important to be left available for brand audiences. (Craciun, 2010:98). Thus brands speak the essence, in short, caring not to leave out any defining aspect and at the same time to leave space for the fictions of the spectator, which can be quite challenging as “to keep these white spaces as a brand is probably the hardest mission”. (Craciun, 2010:98)

Closing his work of 22 Immutable Laws of Branding, Ries asks himself finally the question “what is a brand?” and answers with: “a singular idea or concept that you own inside the mind of the prospect” (Ries and Ries, 2003:192). This brings the attention to another key element in defining brands, singularity. For him it is “the most important aspect of a brand” (Ries and Ries, 2003:191). It would be indeed hard to argue that taking into consideration that regardless of the angle from which you approach brands, whether it is from its marketing and selling point of view or the identity forming and sharing perspective or even approaching it chronologically from the roots of the branding idea of marking cattle with a hot iron or the most modern strategic views on that, it all leads to one aim, differentiating yourself from the others. Uniqueness is highly sought-after by brands and if it is not always possible for it to be immanent in its very nature, as nowadays developments have made it harder for anything to be entirely new and outstanding, singularity may be nurtured and emerge from its personality and story.

This brings me to another characterization of the brand. In this perspective a brand can be viewed as a person (Craciun, 2010:42). The concept was fairly often included in analyses of the brand and to my opinion it is quite pertinent in describing the nature of it, especially as it implies the living, personalized and changing character of the brand. It allows us to discuss and explore its nature in all its complexity, in its mobility and pendulum between the rational and irrational, the objective and the subjective. Similar to a person, a brand can show various faces of its personality, in various contexts as well as play different roles. (Aaker, 1996:158) It has a birthplace, a history and a future, but most importantly it has a story; a personal story, and this differs from the biography of the brand (Craciun, 2010:48). “Unlike the biography of the brand, the personal story is more than a discursive experience. Linked more with the positioning, personal stories fix the nature of the relationship with the brand, prescribing the types of behavior accepted for the respective brand but also the types of associations.” (Craciun, 2010:50)

Through this narrative coordinate of brands it is emphasized the process-like nature of brand cores as well as their close link to the environment in which they develop, be that of immediate nature or in the field of assumption, experience or feeling. “Anthropologically speaking narration has a constitutive character. We are the result of a network of narrations with a formative character that make us shape as identities.” (Craciun, 2010:53) Just as the indefinite receives meaning in a shape, the narration gives some coherence to this personal reflection of a brand.

Alexandra Craciun (2010:54-57), drawing a parallel with psychoanalysis, explains how the personal story of a brand represents the meeting place between:

- The potential text – referring to the sum of acceptable messages the brand can emit or in general all possible contexts in which the brand could appear or be associated with, guarding its defining features.
- The spoken text – referring to the immediate nature of the brand. Its present discourse, which could be for instance a campaign. This is also flexible and could sometimes stray from the potential text.
- The lived text- introducing the level of experience. This brand experience is highly subjective but allows a strong connection with the audience.

- The interpreted text- this is the level of strategic discourse, where the potential text is taken out of the unexpressed state and shaped into an intended personal story.

Thus the personal story appears as a tool to bring closer the latent text to the lived text, in a present context, an attempt to bring the brand experience in cohesion with its potential. It also shifts the ground of defining a brand essence from a static space to the space of experience, through narration (Craciun, 2010:54-57)

The focus on experience brings to attention a recent perspective on brands that puts in its center a multi-sensorial approach. Martin Lindstrom predicts that the passing from a bi-sensorial to a multi-sensorial approach is the future of brand building (Lindstrom,2009:3) The next step in the evolution of brands is considered to be an approach that takes into consideration all five senses in its expression he claims. Explaining this, Lindstrom (2009) summarizes the evolution of the focus in brand views as follows: while in the 50s in center was the product and the USP- Unique Selling Proposition, together with the 60s bloomed the Emotional Selling Proposition (ESP) for brands; this was followed by an Organisational Selling Proposition (OSP) in the 1980s, where “the organization or corporation behind the brand became the brand itself” (Lindstrom, 2009:17); as the 90s came, “brands had gained enormous strength in their own right, and the Brand Selling Proposition (BSP) took over.” (Lindstrom, 2009:17); finally, together with the technical developments brands allowed in the past year a focus on MSP (Me Selling Proposition), in the case of which “the consumers became the owners of the brand”. (Lindstrom, 2009:17)

This is to be followed by this multi-sensorial approach, that Lindstrom calls “HSP-Hollistic Selling Proposition”, where each detail of the brand should carry a “true sensorial signature” (Lindstrom,2009:61) and where repetition, the current key in making brands stand out and cling to the public, is to be “replaced with sensorial synergy” (Lindstrom,2009:34).

The results of the *BRAND sense* study discussed by Lindstrom in his work showed that 37 % of the interviewed subjects claimed the sight as of greatest importance in observing the environment, 23 % of them chose smell for that, while touch was ranked last on the list. Nonetheless, the conclusions of the study indicated a rather small difference between these when it came to a

holistic evaluation of the senses, claiming thus the importance of all senses as a form of communication and at the level of experience. (Lindstrom, 2009:101)

Katie Weisman observes also - “for the 21st century, there is a revolution in store. Let's call it ‘emotional’ branding, the use of scent, touch, sound and even taste in marketing.” (Weisman, 2003) Accessing more than the usual sight and hearing in branding may be this way a powerful, creative way of expanding the resources of the brand in its expression. This sensorial synergy could double even the impact of a brand communication and strongly solidify its relation to the audience. (Lindstrom, 2009: 160).

But note that Lindstrom speaks of a synergy not only of an expansion of the number of senses the brand holder uses to communicate himself and relate with the public. That is, he indicates the necessity of a symbiosis between the sensorial instruments that are intended to be used. A tight relation so that each element of the whole would still communicate the essence of brand and send to it even when broken apart. “All sensorial elements must be smash-able”. (Lindstrom, 2009:171) Together they articulate a sensorial platform within which the brand moves. (Lindstrom, 2009:171)

Coming back to the definition of brands as persons through Lindstrom’s described approach, one can easily see how the increasing of the points of sensorial contact of the person-brand can lead to a stronger connection and at the same time helps visualize how all these points of contact still belong to the one and same person and express its identity at various levels and through their own means. It is as an expression of the same in diverse registers, so that the essence of the brand can better “translate” itself to the public and at the same time let itself some ground to renew itself. Lindstrom also introduces in relation to sensorial brands the idea of dramatization of the brand in this context, which enhances the brand personality and emotional engagement (Lindstrom, 2009:173) but warns when discussing the necessity of cohesion between sensory approaches “not to play with the sensory platform of the brand” (Lindstrom, 2009:171), as that might change this personality. In the end, the ultimate aim of the holistic approach is to create a “brand signature” (Lindstrom, 2009:176-177) and this happens only when “each sensory component is so conceived as to form a complete sensogram”. (Lindstrom, 2009:176-177)

While technological developments have enabled the use and extension of a multisensory approach (Lindstrom, 2009:169), brands have also a lot to learn from older models. Religion could be a rich source of inspiration for brand creators, with its use of the myth, symbol and metaphor over the years, creating an emotional web that overpasses the level of rational and creates meaning around the concepts of faith, conviction and community (Lindstrom, 2009: 230). This is not a surprise, observing the numerous cases of irrational “following” of a brand and its fairly religious assumption to even tattooing it on the consumer’s skin (an example of which could be Apple). In the opening chapter of his book, Lindstrom advises that in this new coming sophisticated world of holistic approach “the customer desperately needs something to believe in - and where brands very well might provide the answer.” (Lindstrom, 2009:18)

This emotional view on brands, projected in the realm of experience taken up to religious heights, assumed by a community is in concordance with an interesting brand typology drawn by Alexandra Craciun, who uses the concepts of Dionysian and Apollonian from Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* in order to distinguish between Dionysian and Apollonian brands. Both the onirical and the narcotic are realms that offer an escape from reality, both are fictional, but are experienced differently. (Craciun, 2010:141)

Dionysian brands are “brands of intuition” (Craciun, 2010:144). They feed themselves on collective instincts and tackle hidden affective contents in the individual; their evolution is experienced as an intensified whirl, their life throb being chaotic and indefinite but with a great power to incisively grab the public. (Craciun, 2010:144-145). As their name states, they have the potential to create a sort of addiction, a veneration, as any narcosis. “They can encapsulate in the brand experience the shadow, the failures, offering a sort of Katharsis, a type of feeling through which the consumer feels liberated”. (Craciun, 2010:147)

Opposing to these are the Apollonian brands that are defined by a positive balance, a well defined sphere of action, calculated and quantifiable benefits, clarity and visibility but at the same time that impose a certain distance between the brand and the consumer. (Craciun, 2010:142) The territory of the dream is a “beneficial fiction, capable to rationalize the disorder, to annul the dark areas” (Craciun, 2010:141).

In theorizing brands two directions are identified: the materialists that follow a pragmatic view in which less attention is given to the aesthetical and cultural content, the brand expressing merely a product or a service able to satisfy the needs and expectations of the consumer and the idealists that emphasize the key role of the affective, cultural and social content in a brand. (Craciun, 2010:165). Whether one tends towards one direction or the other in the focus of importance in brand analysis, it remains an undeniable fact that the meaning construction in relation to brands is connected to the temporal and spatial coordinates as well as to the social and individual ones.

The meaning of the persuasive signs as brands is not settled at the level of the intention of their creators and it goes beyond that, being decoded in the cultural context where it resides. (Corbu, 2009:56). Even more, “brands can become, in their turn, mediators of the symbolic and cultural meanings” (Corbu, 2009:61). There is an intricate relation and interaction between brands and the socio-cultural field in which they develop, that goes, as it seems, both ways, influencing each other and exchanging meaning, developing in time in various directions.

“The brand distinguishes itself among the advertising signs through that it carries in itself a kind of social memory molded subjectively by each individual in turn, a kind of global matrix on the basis of which meaning (or “meanings”) of this special type of advertising sign are formed.” (Corbu, 2009:57)

Corbu links idea of contextualized identity with the concept of *Umwelt*, developed by Jakob von Uexküll. In this, the *Umwelt* reflects the subjective, individual perception of the world of each organism, straying thus from the general view of most biologist that assume all organism share the same environment. (Corbu, 2009:32) Shortly put each organism perceives differently the objects of the surrounding world and interprets them distinctively, creating their own *Umwelt* through the interaction with the exterior world. Thus, as meaning results through interaction, the individual carries an active role in this process, perceiving and at the same time changing the world altogether. (Corbu, 2009:32)

Then, what could be said about global brands from this point of view? In the struggle for uniqueness and individualization, branding yet meets the current tendency towards globalization in our society. Are the two of opposing essences? One could not say that, given the numerous

brands that have settled themselves as global identities, Apple, Microsoft or Disney to name just a few. Nonetheless, global brands are prone to take into consideration the specificities of each individual territory in which they impose themselves. “The brand personality is built in a cultural context even for global brands.” (Corbu, 2009:70) Craciun brings to discussion the opinion of Kevin Roberts, leader of a reputed advertising company, and his claim that the motto of global companies “Think global, act local” is expired, proposing a reversed direction, that is “think local, then act global” a direction able to extract the local insight and shape it globally. (Craciun, 2010:189)

Looking upon what has been discussed above, be that the relation of the brand to the socio-cultural context, the temporal or spatial traits or the relation to the individual, it seems that all in all brands search for the one same thing, that is resonance. This reminds me of a similar peak phase associated to the gradual development of brands encompassed in Kevin Lane Keller’s (2001) CBBE (Consumer Based Brand Equity) pyramid. Following the phases of brand identity, brand meaning and brand responses, we finally get to the phase in which the brand and the consumer interact bilaterally, develop a relation and ask themselves “What about you and me?” (Keller, 2001:17)

In the end no one can fully translate this “you and me” when it comes to brands. Just as this chapter has begun, the nature of brands remains partly in the mist. Yet this extensiveness and flexibility, this largeness in concept and experience points out to the magnitude in potential brands hold. As the little prince¹⁰ charmingly said “what is essential is invisible to the eye” (Saint-Exupéry, 2011:28).

¹⁰ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince

6. A few considerations on language and persuasion

Attempting to identify the specificity of fashion brand communication and in that reflect on what could constitute its individual language (a term I use here in its most general sense, as a codified communication system), a brief view on language and its link to thought, on persuasive discourse is without doubt a valuable critical basis for the endeavors of this paper.

The functionality of the language goes beyond saying something. Language use serves numerous functions, whether it is by intent or not. An interesting concept in this perspective is that of speech acts, according to which we use language to do things, language acts having the ability to actually perform an action. (Vizental, 2007: 22) A simple example of such would be the utterance “I pronounce you husband and wife” that performs in fact the act of uniting people in matrimony.

Needless to say, this perspective opens a vast array of possibilities to what language can do, pointing out rightfully to the large functional potential language holds. Yet, linguists have generally gathered these under five main functions: an informational function, that is the use of language to convey or receive information; a directive function, controlling behavior and attitude through use of language; an expressive function, referring of course to the use of language in order to express attitudes, feelings; an aesthetic function, language designed to please the senses, the use of language for its own beauty and finally a phatic function, that is language used for keeping social relationships well and communication open, as it is the case with greeting for instance. (Vizental, 2007: 23)

Coseriu brings out some interesting points in his introductory work on linguistics by stating that “in a concrete form there are no languages but only linguistic acts of communication, different from one individual to another and also different at the same individual according to circumstances” (Coseriu in Ungureanu (ed.), 2007: 6-7) This points out not only to the relativity and flexibility of language in its use, its immensely varied nature, its openness and dependency to the context in which it develops and the moment of communication but also to the importance of

the individuals in the linguistic act, that appear as defining elements of the actual language in the end.

Both sender and receiver of the communication act have an active role in defining the language that links their interaction. Dabney Townsend underlines a relevant thought in relation to that and that also shapes an interesting perspective as linked to the efforts of this paper to approach the matter of identity communication: “Even if someone speaks coherently, we come to understand him only if his speaking is sufficient to give the speaker a certain identity. It might not be necessary to know who the speaker is, but we must know at least that much so that we can identify him as the voice that sends out the message.” (Townsend, 2000: 220) In his view, thus, words and sentences may have a meaning on their own but nothing is communicated unless there is a speaker. This identification of the message sender acts as crucial shaper of the act of communication.

A resonant line of thought is found in Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations. Straying from his view in Tractus Logico-Philosophicus, where language is given a representative function, where sentences are “images of the world”, the concept of meaning is here wider and more complex. (Vasile, 2007:150) Our use of words is a result of our belonging to a culture, a form of life. Language is used in multiple ways. Words are tools that can be diversely used. We define our communication by involving these linguistic elements that bear no meaning on their own, by social usage. Meaning is given by the actual use of language in a certain “language-game”, a practical situation. (Wittgenstein, 1958)

“We may say: *nothing* has so far been done, when a thing has been named. It has not even *got* a name except in the language-game. This was what Frege meant too, when he said that a word had meaning only as part of a sentence.

50. What does it mean to say that we can attribute neither being nor non-being to elements? — One might say: if everything that we call “being” and “non-being” consists in the existence and non-existence of connexions between elements, it makes no sense to speak of an element’s being (non-being)” (Wittgenstein, 1958:25)

The rules of these language-games are not fixed, in this view, but given by the context of the situation in which language occurs. They are prone to change. We cannot generalize a single rule

to apply to all language-games. People may understand rules differently, apply them differently, change them on the way and so on, which can lead to confusion. “Our clear and simple language-games are not preparatory studies for a future regularization of language (...)The language-games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.” (Wittgenstein, 1958:50e)

As communication is reflected upon in relation to others, this view questions the possibility of existence of a “private language” prior to a social one. (Vasile, 2007:150) Language being the instrument of mutual communication, the existence of a private language would raise the question of the possibility to have certain experiences only at the level of the individual and also the discussion on how to transcend from private to social language. (Vasile, 2007:151) Yet two persons cannot share something that is truly individual, experienced in a unique way, this putting to doubt the possibility of transmitting strictly personal feelings - what is truly personal becomes also inexpressible. (Vasile, 2007:151) An interesting thought here, if we are to extrapolate on the idea of brand communication, identity communication which is to be a communication of the self and why not here, of the most personal. Understandably, the matter of the most personal above cannot be fully reflected in a brand; at least not in the idea of a separation from the exterior or the social context. It could be a challenging though to seek for such a personal self in brands in the idea of something that remains, as Wittgenstein infers, inexpressible, something that brands keep for themselves, this “hidden” substance that I think could be translated when it comes to language, to brand discourse in the matter of the implicit. There is a “something else” when it comes to matters of identity that even though maybe not included in the direct discourse we might come to feel it, to grasp it from the complex and always unique entangling of the elements that shape an identity.

This communication of the self of brands, together with the consideration that is to be given to the persuasive aspect implicitly included in it and that is to be discussed further on in this chapter, seems to bring together a balance between two directions: that oriented towards the exterior, the public, the context in all the variables it proposes and that oriented towards the self, the identity. The relation between the two, this balance appears to actually shape the identity so to say. The identity communication of brands would be from this perspective an effort to reflect the self by orienting towards the exterior and anchoring oneself into it. To bring the exterior to you, to attract

it, to persuade it but in an identitary reflection, that can be seen as more than a simple commercial purpose to define one's self as to resonate with the exterior that one wants to allure and rather as a seek for a certain bidirectional synergy, a coherence that could happen simultaneously, coming both from the inside and from the outside. The two shape and influence each other in the search of this coherence.

Concurring to this idea of interrelation with the exterior of the self is also Lemke's view on the subject, who also enriches this thought of the exterior with the matter of "the other" and explicitly claims that "we use language to take a stance towards and socially orient ourselves and our text to others" (Lemke, 1998:33)

In reference to the matters of truth and language, Wittgenstein no longer resembles reality with what can be expressed through language. As language stems from its social use, language games don't rely on any foundation, they identify with life itself. (Vasile, 2007: 152) As such, it is inferred that language games cannot be rationally or irrationally clarified, neither can we ensure the validity or truthfulness of them. (Vasile, 2007: 152)

In *Language, Shaping, Communication*, Ungureanu brings on the discussion of the relation between language and thought. Such a correlation is here relevant I think in introducing the tackling of the matter of persuasion. While many thinkers have debated on whether language and thought have a dependency relation, the best-known theory on the matter is the *Sapir- Whorf hypothesis* or *the linguistic relativity hypothesis*, stating that language determines or at least strongly influences thought. (Ungureanu, 2007: 397) So to say, language leads out thinking into a direction or another.

The discussion of persuasion, especially in this view that we have started, as linked to language and discourse could not exclude bringing up Aristotle's Rhetoric, that has remained a canon-like pattern in analyzing persuasion. His Ethos- Logos- Pathos triad points out to the three means of persuasion, reaching out to the audience's values and principals, emotions and logic. Thus, according to his line of thought, the speaker should touch the following dimensions (after Rapp, 2010):

The ethos dimension, referring to the persuader's credibility, expertise and integrity - his character

The pathos element, pointing out to the emotional state of the listener. In other words, through this dimension the persuader seeks to establish an emotional bond with his audience, wake up feelings.

The logos dimension, referring to logic and reason. In order to persuade we need steady arguments, scientifically proven facts, plausible facts on which to rest our knowledge. Pathos, emotions need to be backed up by arguments in order to obtain the purpose of the persuasion and change opinions and attitudes.

An innovative approach to persuasion is brought forth by Östman (2005) through his theory of Persuasion as Implicit Anchoring. (Persuasive) communication takes place simultaneously at two different levels - an explicit one, where explicit linguistic choices are made, resulting in the propositional content of the sent out message and an implicit one where implicit linguistic choices are made triggered by our attitudes, feelings, the socio-cultural context, our belonging to a community, our interlocutor/audience. (Östman, 2005: 192) Östman explains: “when we in everyday terms, talk about reading between the lines of what people say, write, or sign, we are in fact attempting to decipher in what ways our interlocutors are implicitly anchoring their messages” (Östman, 2005: 192).

Further on, he discusses persuasion in reference to three parameters: coherence – relating to the way in which the speakers anchor the sent out message to the socio-cultural context they belong to, congruity with the communicative canons imposed by the context; politeness – referring to the interactional restraints given by the relationship linking the interlocutors; involvement-designating the affective constraints, related to emotions, here discourse is anchored to the attitudes and feelings of the speakers. (Östman, 2005)

The matter of specificity of language and persuasion in relation to an investigation on the field of fashion should also touch here the matter of image. A prop in this direction could be offered by Roland Barthe’s view on the rhetoric of image. He discusses this by focusing on a specific form of image, also not exterior to the fashion world - the photograph. He argues his ideas that in the end come to a conclusion which seems to expand the view on semiotics in general, by analyzing an advertising photograph for the Panzani pasta. Further on I will attempt thus a summary of his flow of argument in his essay. (Barthes, 1977: 32-51)

Starting from the existing two opposing viewpoints speculated in relation to image as language, one that sees image as a rudimentary system in comparison to language and the other that observes how signification “cannot exhaust the image’s ineffable richness” (Barthes, 1977: 29), Barthes sets out to see how meaning is inserted into the image, where it ends and what might remain beyond.

Attempting a “spectral analysis” of the message the image may contain, he identifies in the Panzani advertisement three messages: a linguistic message (the text in the advertisement, which holds two functions in relation to the other two messages in the image: that of anchorage - helping to identify the elements in the scene and guiding the interpretation of the symbolic message by limiting the potential extent of its proliferating meaning – and that of relay, where text and image complement each other), an iconic message, where he observes several signs in the image, with a cultural note (such as the three hues of the peppers, yellow, green and red, sending to “Italianicity”, or the half open bag with the vegetables spreading out pointing to the idea of freshness and domestic preparation, and so on) and a third one, for which we need only our perception in order to read it, that he calls the literal message.

This last mentioned message is what we are left with if we are to remove from the image the signs, as the image would not remain empty, but still have an informational material. “The signifieds of this third message are constituted by the real objects in the scene, the signifiers by these same objects photographed. (...)What defines the third message is precisely that the relation between signified and signifier is quasi-tautological.” (Barthes, 1977: 36) Despite the fact that a photograph implies a certain scene arrangement, Barthes explains, this is not a coding-like transformation. Due to this quasi-equivalence we are here confronted with the paradox of a “message without a code” (Barthes, 1977: 36). Cleared utopically of all connotations, this literal message would correspond to a state that reflects both an “edenic” mode of being, an “innocent” state, but also a place that allows all virtualities, or in Barthes’s precise words “it is an absence of meaning full of all the meanings” (Barthes, 1977: 42)

The two iconic messages, the literal and the symbolic one stand in a close relationship, as the first seems to act as a “support” for the second one. The denoted image “naturalizes” in a way the connoted message, it “innocents the semantic artifice of connotation” (Barthes, 1977: 45) and acts as a sort of “syntagm” for the connoted message. The leaning of one message over the other

suggests an actual connotation system here: “Hence, knowing that a system which takes over the signs of another system in order to make them its signifiers in a system of connotation, we may say immediately that the literal message is *denoted* and the symbolic message is *connoted*.” (Barthes, 1977: 37)

A rhetoric of the image, based on the constraints of it being subject to physical vision, would imply the necessity of an inventory of all its connotators, an effort that Barthes acknowledges as hard or even impossible to be finalized. Here, he comes with an explanatory proposal in viewing the situation, that he expands to semiology in general : “The most important thing however, at least for the moment, is not to inventorize the connotators but to understand that in the total image they constitute *discontinuous* or better still *scattered traits*. The connotators do not fill the whole of the lexia, reading them does not exhaust it. In other words (and this would be a valid proposition for semiology in general) not all the elements of the lexia can be transformed in connotators; there always remaining in the discourse a certain denotation without which, precisely, the discourse would not be possible.” (Barthes, 1977: 50)

Barthes concludes his essay with this hint on the possibility of application of this structural organization of the image he so far detailed, where the system of the connotation unfolds within the syntagm of the denotation, in semiology in general. He thus finally states that, “without wishing to infer too quickly from image to semiology in general, one can nevertheless venture that the world of total meaning is torn internally (structurally) between the system as culture and the syntagm as nature: the works of mass communication all combine, through diverse and diversely successful dialectics, the fascination of a nature, that of story, diegesis, syntagm , and the intelligibility of a culture, withdrawn into a few discontinuous symbols which men ‘decline’ in the shelter of their living speech.” (Barthes, 1977: 51)

Aside its own logic, Barthe’s analysis of the meaning within the photographed image may point out, at least at the level of a personal thought, to an interesting parallel to fashion in its discourse. Just like in Barthe’s analysis, in fashion there also seems to always remain a “something else”, when eliminating the forefront elements. This something else that maybe could hint to that what remains unrepresented in its discourse, that what could be maybe its inexpressible. Something “innocent”, as he says, that could maybe indicate to that specificity, that essence of the fashion discourse that we are here in search of.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1. Study approach

Following its research interests, this paper focuses on investigating the matter of the discourse of fashion brand communication towards identifying a certain specificity of this communication that could constitute an actual distinct „language“ on its own. We set out from the hypothesis that this specific language can exist, attempting to expand the investigation of the matter to a wider spectrum and take a step further the possibility of existence of such a specific language of fashion brand communication towards identifying some possible constituent elements of this, some forms of combination between these, its dependency or independence to diverse factors (such as time – the possibility of trend identification and socio-cultural aspects) and the diversity of its forms of manifestation.

While through the synthesis, analysis, illustration and conjunction of the various theoretical perspectives so far discussed, a basis was established for the purposes of this investigation, the following study conducted through expert interviews comes to refine this investigation in the direction of more concrete detailing.

Given the nature of the subject of research, tackling a rather philosophical approach on the discourse of fashion brand communication and following a descriptive interest, a qualitative method for the study is here most appropriate. Bringing about further insights on the matter, the interviews help explore the questions raised in the established research interests by joining multiple perspectives of experienced figures in the field of fashion communication. This offers a personal, valuable material of analysis for the purposes of this paper and rightfully matches its investigative aims as in an attempt to capture the defining elements of the essence of a discourse and its forms of expression one can more likely benefit from rich perspectives of experience rather than a quantitative study. Precisely also because the researched theme involves a considerable amount of vagueness that would escape submission to the rigors of such an approach and can be better revealed through the open yet purpose-focused context of in-depth interviews.

7.2. Interview design and data collection

The interview consists of 9 questions, its completion lasting approximately 40-60 minutes. I have chosen to phrase the questions in an open matter, pointing the matter of interest for the study in each of them but at the same time leaving space for the person interviewed to shape his/her response by the specificity of his/her experience and develop the subject based on his/her own views. This way the questions allow the personal input of the interviewee, offer a larger material of study through these additional perspectives brought in by the respondents through their personal perception of the matter proposed, while the main points of focus established for the interview as to serve the needs of the study are kept in view.

In regards to the design of the interview concerning the succession of the questions, the interview is constructed as to tackle the subject from large to small, starting by raising the matter of focus from a general perspective and advancing gradually towards more detailed aspects.

Thus, the first question of the interview proposes to discussion the broad view on fashion brand communication as a specific discourse, seeking opinions on what would constitute this discourse and how it would distinct itself from other such discourses.

The second question introduces also the second main line of interest for this research, as pointed out in the research questions - that is how the “time” coordinate links with fashion brand communication and from this, whether a trend can be identified in its development over time. As I am interested in capturing the essence of the discourse of fashion brand communication, a natural related interest in this investigation is to see the timely dynamics of this researched entity. From there on, I want to see whether any predictions about the future regarding its development can be made. Apart from being a natural component in an investigation, the raised question regarding the relation of time to fashion brand communication here is also an interesting view to be brought in, given the unique relation fashion has to the time coordinate in general not only regarding its discourse, being through its nature bound to a certain cyclicity, a continual game of reinvention of the old in the search of the new.

The third question goes into detail regarding this time coordinate, focusing precisely on this matter of cyclicity found in the nature of fashion and seeking to find out whether this trait could also be identified in the course of development of the discourse of fashion brands.

With the 4th question I explore the notion of “self” in relation to fashion brands. Brand communication is communication of identity. In order to research the nature of the discourse of fashion brands, a look upon this self, this identity that is being communicated is also of use.

As the connection to the socio-cultural context in which fashion brand communication develops is a variable of interest stated from the very beginning of this study, the fifth question raises exactly this matter of dependence or independence of fashion to external or internal constraints.

Triggered by the theoretical research that revealed fashion to have a nature defined by various conflicts, the 6th question approaches this subject in the idea to see whether this conflicting nature is also reflected in its discourse.

Considering that the field of fashion is closely linked to aesthetics and beauty and in that speculations on whether fashion is and manifests itself as a form of art, the 7th question investigates the relation between notions of beauty and art and fashion brand communication as well as bringing on the table a discussion on the relation between rational and irrational approaches in fashion communication or the relevance of the moral/immoral issue in here. Is the discourse of an entity defined by the beautiful also beautiful in its turn?

Finally, together with the 8th and 9th question we come to concrete examples. Respondents are asked here to give an example of a good case of brand communication in fashion. As in the previous section the interview points to the purpose-related nature of the discourse of fashion brands, here we expand this perspective in order to better grasp what would constitute a successful discourse. In researching on the nature, constitutive elements and forms of manifestation of fashion brand communication, we come to a final point where this discourse is linked to its aims. Here, I look for the elements that would define the success of fashion brand communication and try to find out in what way would the success of the discourse of fashion

brands differentiate itself from the success of other brand discourses. And, closely linked to that, to see whether the aims fashion brand communication follows are different from those sought by other brand discourses.

The conduction of the interviews showed that some deviations from the initial structure of the interview may appear on the course of it. While the main 9-questions structure was respected during all interviews taken, and all these 9 questions were answered by all interviewees, the variations appeared in regards to the order of approaching these 9 questions (in that in some cases, in the natural course of the discussion, some of the issues referred to in other questions came up earlier and were approached on the spot, as I found it important to let the interviews follow a natural flow of discussion and not resemble a fixed line of questioning) or in grouping two questions addressed in one larger, more ample answer, when the context allowed it. For instance most of the interviewees decided to link the answers of questions 2 and 3 as they both referred to the temporal coordinate in question, or to link questions 4 and 6, as they both referred to the nature of fashion and the idea of essence and identity. As said, I let this follow the natural course without interfering and even more, after I have observed a pattern in linking these 2 questions by the first 2 interviewees and saw how the questions naturally went hand in hand in a more complex answer, I also encouraged the future respondents in the direction of possibly discussing these matters together, by the patterns the previous respondents did. However, I have never imposed this, leaving the freedom of each respondent to construct and give their answers in the manner they saw fit.

These interview questions were addressed to a number of 10 experts from the field of fashion communication. The transcripts of these are found in Addendum 2. The interviews were conducted in the period between November and December 2012. The selection of the respondents was not done by any geographical, social or age criteria, but solely by the level of experience in the field and the diversity criteria imposed by the purposes of this study. As the research interests of this paper are linked with fashion brand communication on the whole, attempting to explore its nature and manifestation and not focused on a certain type of fashion brands (such as luxury brands, accessories brands, apparel brands and so on) it was considered helpful for maximizing the relevance of the study to have as much diversity among the respondents as possible. Thus, I

have tried to collect interviews from experts in the field of fashion communication that come from various segments of this domain. I talked with brand representatives, PR-ists, designers and brand managers, founders of various fashion platforms as concepts stores or online shops, branding experts from advertising and PR agencies that have worked with renowned fashion labels over the years.

Bringing in these diverse perspectives not only offers a richer analysis material for the study but also is more appropriate for the interests followed. As I am seeking to find the specificity of the discourse in fashion brand communication and through this identify those traits and elements that remain unchanged and are common to all sorts and forms of fashion brands, the insights gathered here should also come from a wide palette of professionals. Plus, it is not only the fact that we seek a global view on the entity researched but through this element of diversity among the respondents we avoid the risk of having the specificities identified through the study to be in fact the specificities of a certain segment of fashion from which the respondents come (which would be the case if I chose to have all or most respondents from one field).

7.3. Data analysis

In analyzing the 48 transcript pages gathered during the interviews a hermeneutic approach was adopted, in the idea to follow the mainly descriptive, interpretative aims of the paper. Following qualitative content analysis of the material gathered on the basis of the approach of Phillip Mayring, the initial step was to investigate the transcripts gradually in order to manage to identify some content analytical units to which various meanings can be attached. This was done following the structure of the interview questions, meaning this initiative was applied to each interview question, analyzing it from the perspective of all 10 answers received to it from all experts. Following the identification of these units a further step could be then taken in which some frequencies and repetitions of answers could be identified and in an inductive approach these could lead to some generalizations on the matter that each interview question proposed. Based on this gradual analysis process, a dynamics in interpretation was established, where although clarity was sought after, the analysis was done so that it investigates the gathered material in all its complexity and extensions, trying not to limit the vastness in any of the answers

regardless of the structuring of these answers into content units of meaning. Thus in many cases notes were done regarding the supplementary details pointed out by the experts, which could lend some interesting nuances to the final conclusions of the research.

Below are the interview questions addressed to all the 10 experts:

1. How do you see fashion brand communication from the perspective of its discourse? What do you think are its specific elements and in which way do you consider there are combined? Or in other words, what would, in your perspective define the *lexicon* and the *grammar* of the “language” of fashion brand communication? In what do you think this discourse differentiates itself from other brand communications?
2. Introducing in this matter the “time” coordinate, do you consider that a trend can be indentified/ observed in what regards the evolution of the discourse in fashion brand communication?
3. Considering the cyclic character of fashion in general, where the idea of the new is always bound to fashion, yet its novelty is also linked with a history, is also a re-inventing of a past, do you think that this cyclicity is also reflected in the course of the brand communication in fashion?
4. As brand communication involves the communication of an identity, what do you think would make this identity in the field of fashion? What do you consider defines the “self” of fashion brands? Is it well-defined, dispersed or otherwise in your view?
5. On the matter of the independence of fashion from external constraints, do you agree with the statement that fashion is more driven from its internal conditions, on the basis of this dynamics between former and current fashions, than directed by the conditioning of the socio-cultural environment in which it develops?
6. Do you consider fashion has a conflicting nature? If yes, how do you see this interior conflict that would define it reflects in its discourse?
7. How would you explain the link between the following notions and fashion brand communication: art, beauty, rational/irrational, moral/immoral?
8. Can you please offer an example of a good case of brand communication in fashion? What makes it good? In what do you think its success lies?
9. Do you think the idea of a successful fashion brand communication effort differentiates itself in any way from other types of successful brand communication efforts? Do you

consider that the purposes/aims fashion brand communication follows are different from the aims of other brand discourses? If yes, in what way?

8. RESEARCH RESULTS

8.1. Analysis of the material following the structure of the interview and main research interests

8.1.1. Specific elements of fashion brand communication; the lexicon and grammar of this language. Question 1

As a general note on this question in the interview I observed a certain difficulty in all respondents to give a concrete or full answer to this question, especially in regards to enumerating or identifying a series of specific elements to the discourse of fashion brand communication. Not that the answers received did not suggest the fact that there is a certain degree of specificity to the discourse of fashion brand communication or that the respondent rejected this idea, only that in most cases I saw a moment of confusion and a difficulty in naming these elements out and clear. It might be also the fact that this perspective in looking at fashion brand communication, from the view of its discourse, is probably not that common and the respondents did not have a large documentation at their hand to lean upon in their answers, but also I think from the personal reaction I have observed, naming clearly elements of this discourse felt hard to do because of the intricacy and dynamics of the field. Most answers for this question noted that the elements and views that they point out are just part of a wider universe, and that it would be hard or even impossible to gather the discourse of fashion brand communication into a finite vocabulary.

Even more, as it will be seen from the interpretation of the answers to the following questions, fashion communication is subject to a crucial dynamics that keeps the domain alive and defines its nature, and in what regards the discourse of fashion brands this is also varied depending on several aspects. Most respondents pointed out for this variable to the public that you address and

where you position your brand in the industry. The communication of the brand will depend greatly on these factors in most of the perspectives expressed.

Noemi Revnic, PR of a fashion concept store and fashion editor at Harper's Bazaar pointed to simplicity and clarity as crucial features of the fashion brand discourse. "In order to reach your target/public, you need to be very organized and to use a language that everyone can understand." Apart from having this concise communication, that also sends to the idea of unity and definiteness of the brand, that can be easily communicated in few well shaped elements that reflect the brand, Noemi also notes that this differentiation through well defined elements should also be found in the products of the brand, as each label should make sure that their pieces are easily recognized through these unique elements as being theirs. Nadire Omer and Carla Szabo also mentioned this feature as defining for their brands.

In relation to this variable of positioning in the industry, Mirela Bucovicean underlined in her response an interesting note that also hints to Noemi's, Nadire's and Carla's idea, but this time not in relation to product but to communication: "it is necessary to differentiate yourself through key words that you must somehow 'book' for yourself in your field." Here comes the idea that the discourse of fashion brand communication is not only linked to a certain "vocabulary", but also it can mean "owning", "patenting" a vocabulary for your brand. In a competitive market (an idea observed also predominantly in the responses of the others also), she claims, all fashion labels are struggling for governing a very small niche and in order to differentiate yourself you need to identify yourself so well with the key concepts of your brand so that you become the representation of those words. But this also sends to the idea that the discourse of brand communication of all fashion labels is extremely personal and distinct from that of the others. The idea of intensive segmentation of the fashion brands market is also pointed out by the PR representative of the brand MURMUR, Andreea Alecu "I think a certain segmentation is a specific of fashion and a difference to other brands. In fashion you may address the wide audience but yet each designer belongs to a niche."

This line of thought is also supported by the views of designer and brand owner Carla Szabo, who noted that communication, discourse is a commonly agreed convention so that we understand each other and the difference in communication is a trait in all cases not only brands, due to the fact that what we communicate, whether we are brands or individuals is a set of unique emotions

of an unique entity. The brand communicates the uniqueness of the personality behind the brand, the personality behind the message of the brand, the initiator of the message.

Nadiré Omer, designer and owner of accessories label, speaks also of this personal feature of brand communication through the creative individuality behind it. She claims that as a fashion label you can either communicate about you as designer or about you as a brand. The brand can be, as in her case, “a mask to show”, the brand being an extension of the creative personality behind it. In the cases of very large brands, she considers, this personality is somehow lost and the identity of the brand becomes more of a constructed entity, an established one, than a reflection of the creative personality behind it.

The majority of the respondents pointed out the visual to be a key element in the discourse of fashion brand communication (7 out of the 10 experts). Photographs, videos, making use of visual elements these are all seen as crucial components in transmitting the essence of fashion brands. As Ana Bucur, brand manager of Gucci Romania emphasized “Fashion by definition communicates through the visual. In the end fashion represents a series of drawings on a paper that are turned into a finite product. It is clear that it is a domain in large communicated and consumed visually.” The essence of the domain is closely linked to the visual, we consume fashion through the visual, thus its communication cannot leave out this element. Apart from this, two of the interviewed experts also pointed to another feature of this link to the visual. The fact that the visual campaigns are among the few elements that allow fashion brands to create a controlled brand experience for their public. As what fashion communicates is something that is strongly processed at personal level, the brand experience depends largely on the personal response of each consumer, fashion is consumed individually and also since fashion brands go through intermediaries as stores and rarely do consumers end up in the atelier of the designer to get a personal brand experience directly from the brand creators, visuals campaigns remain among the elements that brands can use to create brand experience that they can somehow direct through their intention.

A very interesting idea stated by 3 of the respondents in relation to the specificity of the discourse of fashion brand communication is that specificity, the attempt of finding a definite “vocabulary”

of fashion discourse would mean the end of any brand. Carla Szabo claims that “any kind of notion that becomes fixed or as you say, to search for a certain specificity is actually to search for the death, that fixed, immobile element. But there are no fixed elements. They don’t exist.” And that “the more you will see that people are trying to find notions you will see that this is another form of creating a still shot to a thing that is meant to flow.” Fashion is a dynamic entity. We cannot say, she claims, that we are specifically in a certain way, because this individuality changes constantly. There are “snapshots” so to say of several moments in time of this individuality, but they cannot be generalized as to reflect the specificity on the whole of that dynamic entity. These moments of “stop” are simply necessary pauses, in which one becomes self-aware, but to search for specificity would mean to remain stuck in a moment in time, to search “for a fixed point in a moving sea”. Fashion editors for Elle, Maurice Munteanu and Domnica Margescu, sustain the same: a specific, fixed language in fashion is “the death of any brand”. Fashion brand discourse is about something else, a more fluid something, an “attitude” as Maurice claims, a dynamics, or a “philosophy” as most of the respondents also specified in their answers. However, in the view of Ana Bucur from Gucci, especially regarding the niche of luxury brands, this dynamics is not translated also in innovation or courage in communication to approach novel ways for brand discourses. On the contrary she emphasizes that fashion is not at all a daring field in terms of communication and that most brands prefer to stick to safe paths in communication.

Speaking of “philosophy” this is another defining element pointed out by most of the experts for fashion brand communication. In the majority of the perspectives expressed a definite trait of the communication of fashion brands is the fact that it is not focused on the product, but on a feeling, a philosophy, a way of being, an aspiration. This is also in several of the opinions, one of the main differentiating traits between fashion branding and other brand communication efforts from other fields. Branding expert at Brandtailor, Andreea Florea, explains: “In fashion things start to become a bit fuzzy. (...)And this is I think the largest difference between fashion and any other kind of industry the fact that in fashion they communicate in fact a philosophy. In any other kind of industry, communication is somehow focused on the benefits of the consumer (...), in fashion communication is almost never product-centric.” Amalia Nastase, managing partner at a PR agency with elite fashion labels as clientele, sustains this idea “In the case of other types of brand

the qualities of the product are the ones that are communicated mainly, whereas in fashion you don't communicate the qualities of the products but rather a moodboard as we would say in advertising, a series of images.(...) You can no longer really differentiate yourself through the quality and features of the product and then you differentiate yourself through what it translates.” And what the product translates is a philosophy, a lifestyle as she completes the thought. This is also why many of the fashion brands, she explains, have chosen to make use of celebrity endorsement in their communication. Associating with a famous figure that resonates and reflects your brand values is used as a tool of personified communication of the brand and it creates among the public the aspiration for the philosophy and lifestyle that the celebrity represents. Ana Bucur from Gucci also gives later in her interview this example on using celebrities as tools of brand communication, as it was in the past with them regarding Grace Kelly and in the present with Charlotte Casiraghi.

From this perspective of communicating a philosophy and a lifestyle to which people are to aspire, Amalia Nastase later concludes that in many views an element of the discourse of fashion brand communication could be “illusion”, what we imagine we would have or share if we are to wear the labels. Maybe linked to this could be also Marice Munteanu's view that key in the communication of fashion brands is “to know how to lie”, hinting to the shallowness of the communication campaigns of several fashion labels today, that does not reflect any core essence of the brand or value behind it.

Other ideas pointed out here in relation to the difference between the discourse of fashion brand communication and that of other types of brands are: linked with the idea of philosophy told maybe, Domnica Margescu notes that probably a specific trait in fashion communication differencing it from others is the fact that fashion labels are oriented in their communication on telling “stories”, or the use of beauty as key element in communication as Mirela Bucovicean (owner of Molecule F fashion online store) claims “in fashion we speak of course of design, innovation, what makes the difference, authenticity, beauty, quality. I think these are the common points in a fashion discourse. (...) what I think is the element of difference is precisely beauty. Because fashion has at its basis art, the visual, even the emotion.”

On the whole, many of the views presented by the experts in relation to the differences between fashion brand communication and other brand communications from other fields point out that the differences lie in details and that fashion does share many common traits with other fields in what regards brand communication. In its communication a fashion brands seems to have to meet the rigors both of being an industry like any other, subject to the seeking of profit, as well as to reflect that “something else” that they want their public to aspire to and that should situate them as kings in their niche, with a heritage to protect. In this view Ana Bucur explains that this is why fashion brand communication also differentiates itself from others, as fashion labels develop now 2 parallel campaigns in their communication: one selling-oriented and one image oriented.

8.1.2. The dynamics of this discourse in time. Trend identification and cyclic character.

Questions 2 and 3

In reference to the idea of trend identification in fashion brand communication and the possibility of cyclicity as a feature of fashion in general to be reflected in communication also, the opinions expressed by the experts grouped mainly in 3 directions: one that emphasized an intense dynamics as the vital feature of fashion and its communication and that somehow excludes the idea of cyclic return to patterns in communication, at least not complete returns, one that points to the orientation of brands towards using the digital and new media in communication and finally one that observes as a current direction in fashion brand communication the return to initial values that have shaped the brands in their inception. A detailing of each of these is found below.

The idea of intense dynamics is linked either in relation to trend prediction in communication or in general as crucial feature of the fashion field by more than a half of the respondents.

Carla Szabo considers movement as “the essence of life” because “something blocked, stopped would be something dead”. She claims everything is in a dynamic unity. Fashion brands are just like any living entities subdued to the velocity and constant change that sustains their being. Evidently, she observes, the communication of fashion brands from the 30’s is not the same as the communication nowadays, since the society, the mediums and everything has changed under the rule of this same dynamics, but this dynamics does not follow a certain pattern. Actually she

underlines the fact that this course cannot be defined by control and “in fact, the origin of all things is a thing that escapes our control so to say”. By this logic, we cannot speak of trend identification in brand communication. And the same, we cannot speak of evolution or involution. We can only speak of constant movement. Short term trends, or “waves” as she calls them, may appear, due to the tremendous vital force of a certain creative personality that imposes itself and sets for a while a direction that others follow. Here she gives the example of us all being like rocks in a constant dynamics. We may fit with each other on one of our sides for a while and this will give us the sense of being bigger, of creating a community, a wave, but since we are in a never-ending dynamics, after a while the sides will flip and other forms of aggregation will appear. And so on and so forth.

Nadire Omer also agrees to this, pointing to evanescence as specific feature of fashion that reflects also in its communication. “We are constantly reinventing our language. The channels may be the same but the discourse is as flexible and moving as life and the perishable nature of fashion” she says. True that some momentarily trends can be seen, but one cannot speak of cyclicity in communication. Perhaps, she notes, a certain return to past patterns could be observed only in very large brands, with tradition, that may come back to formulas of success from the past in some cases.

Mirela Bucovicean also observes that trends apply to products and not to communication. Yet, she also notes that although a very dynamic field, in what regards communication, fashion has not suffered major changes over the years: “I haven’t observed a repetition of communication but neither a major change of it.” This may complete the idea pointed out by Ana Bucur from Gucci in the previous chapter, where she notes that fashion in general is not a very innovative field in reference to its communication, but follows rather safe paths. Andreea Florea, branding expert also mentions this later in her interview “From the point of view of communication, I think fashion is very closed in some mannerisms. Maybe from the point of view of the product fashion follows clearly the transformations in society. (...) But from the point of view of branding, I doubt it. I find fashion from the perspective of its communication to be a very closed field. And it has some “must haves”. I mean in a fashion magazine, if you don’t have a certain light, or do a certain click in photography it’s somehow wrong. Fashion campaigns are not really daring.”

Andreea Alecu also rejects the idea of cyclicity in fashion brand communication. She observes that indeed some themes from the past may be re-approached by fashion brand in their communication, but the manner in which this is done is always new, following a new vision on that theme (an idea also supported by Amalia Nastase).

Fashion editor Maurice Munteanu states that in his opinion, from the perspective of brand and identity communication “fashion has reached a dead end” as the market is extremely crowded with extremely numerous brands that are constructed on no basis, no history and no essence, but simply follow economic-wise recipes to impose themselves. These are “all the same” and don’t communicate actually anything in reference to identity. The majority of the population buys clothes from labels like Zara and H&M, which represent nowadays “fashion” and which he does not consider to be “fashion” in its true sense. So, he says, if you want to identify “smart” ways of brand communication, one should look at the communication of these brands, following purely commercial, retail coordinates and that propose shallow philosophies, based on tricks and not values. Plus, he observes, in the current society, with its developments and in the context of this over-crowdedness of the market with these no-core brands, everything becomes hectic and labels make use of anything to communicate. “at this point fashion communication can mean anything. It can mean an sms that you send to all that is very funny, very smart and cool, it can mean an event where balloons explode and you don’t see any piece of clothing, it can mean a runway show in a garage...it can mean anything except the type of classical communications as flyers or leaflets with presentations...these belong to the past (...) You communicate anyhow. You communicate everything. And his colleague, Domnica Margescu completes this thought, concluding that in this context and dynamics, it is hard to identify a trend in communication.

A second line of thought in relation to trend identification in brand communication agreed to by the experts is, as mentioned, the orientation of the brands towards the online media and the use of latest developments in technology and communication. 4 of the respondents pointed specifically to this direction.

Amalia Nastase observes how lately a lot is communicated in the digital and how this media has become vital for brands. The online, she notes, is an opportunity for brands to revitalize their communication and to approach original, unconventional campaigns that are not possible in other

media and that here give them the chance to differentiate through unique content. As the market is very competitive and everyone wants to stand out as unique, being original is becoming harder and harder to do. So brands turn to the digital space for this. This media, she observes, is subject to a necessary dynamics, where “time is compressed” and content easily perishable and in accordance to this fashion labels need to adapt to the rigors and come up with up to date feeds, offer constantly new material. In her opinion, the orientation towards the online has intensified even more the already high dynamics in fashion and its communication.

Mirela Bucovicean observes another result of the orientation of fashion brands towards online media. In her opinion, the use of social media and new developments in this field is particularly a direction she observes for luxury brands, that lately are decreasing in sales and as a result they are expanding their reach by using new communication platforms, because “before the client would go on his own to the brand, to the shops, now the brand has to go to the client and to direct towards him.” The change she observes as a result of this orientation of luxury brands towards social media is the fact that it has made communication “friendlier, more accessible” as she considers fashion “is going through some radical changes of substance”.

Andreea Florea from Brandtailors does observe also a tendency towards using social media and latest developments in online communication, yet she does not agree with this idea of luxury brands becoming friendlier online. She mentions that while the orientation towards the online is a general feature, the way this is used is different depending on the type of brand. While small brands use Facebook to be present and accessible, high-end brands will not want to be so accessible. They “will want to be very desirable, but not accessible”. Amalia Nastase notes also in this idea the fact that although the online takes big brands closer to the public, this doesn’t mean that their discourse in the online media is trivialized or adapted strongly to a “conversational” register. Even in social media, she notes, high-end brands keep their unity and brand communication guidelines that they follow strictly in all media where they communicate.

Andreea Alecu also sees the online space as a response to the recent needs of brands to expand, refresh their image and keep up to date in an over-saturated market. She mentions how the classical media are super crowded and limited in number so in order to expand their communication options, brands turn to the digital world. Also, she observes, the online is today a

stronger medium than the others and allows the brands to reach a much higher audience more easily.

Finally, another direction in what regards trends in communication that the experts observed is the return to the initial values that shaped the brands at the time of their creation.

Noemi Revnic of Harper Bazaar notes: "What I have observed in the last 2 years is that there is a tendency (all over the world) to go back in the past; to take icons, pictures, trends from the past and to reactivate them." This might be a trend she considers. Domnica Margescu from Elle also points out that when we speak of well-established brands, with a history, it is common for these brands to focus on this history in their communication.

Ana Bucur from Gucci speaks of this direction in fashion brand communication from the very beginning of her interview, mentioning it also as a defining, specific element in fashion brand communication, at least in the niche of luxury brands, where she activates. As opposed to the 80s and 90s, she observes, when the communication in fashion was more oriented to immediate benefit, in the past years, in this competitive market, brands have started to differentiate themselves by returning to these initial values and the heaviness that they translate pointing to quality and tradition. "This was seen in their communication campaigns where they all started to bring to light old archives, items that have been long forgotten, this trend of brand museums began, where these were transformed into communication instruments, because no one thinks that this is an extension of the brand or a point of revenue, but simply as an instrument to communicate." And this return is seen both in communication and in products, as the creation of capsule collections or limited editions of items that have shaped the brand and are somehow trademarks of it, like leather good or horse-riding accessories for Gucci etc. "Those fundamental values on which the brand was constructed and that if in the beginning were simply the effort of the person that established the brand that was taking the initiative, now it represents a capital value that the brand uses."

8.1.3. Self and identity for fashion brands. The conflict. Questions 4 and 6

On the matter of identity to be communicated and whether the nature of fashion bear any conflict within that could be reflected in its communication, the ideas proposed by the experts here go in the following directions.

Many of the interviewees expressed the importance of having a well-constructed identity prior to any effort of communication.

Carla Szabo states clearly from the beginning that “it is very important to know who you are firstly. You can’t communicate articulately enough only when you know very well who you are”. But here comes up an issue. In her views the individual, the identity is not a fixed entity. In this creative field of fashion, she considers, what we are is a sum of things. By the nature of this field, one is very perceptive within it and its identity is formed by the cumulating all the things, all the emotions that are perceived and that are then manifested in the products of the brand, of the identity. Over the course of a career a designer and its label don’t remain the same. Carla underlines that she herself has expressed fairly different over the years. This being the situation, the identity being a sum of all the perceptions that change constantly in the dynamics of life, she concludes that “A true brand communication means to *chose* which part of yourself you want to communicate and to focus on that so that the others can identify you by a certain thing/something.”

Amalia Nastase expresses the same idea regarding the importance of having a well-defined identity of the brand. She says “The idea of identity in fashion must be linked with how the essence of the brand is communicated (...) Because there are many brands that don’t know who they are. It’s just like a child. You have to know where he was born, who are the parents etc.” If you don’t build them thoroughly your communication will be confusing and people won’t know who you are. In her views the identity of the brand must firstly be well-defined through core values, and then it is defined by the way brands communicate with the exterior, which may add nuances to these core values.

The same logic was followed also by the brand MURMUR, as PR Andreea Alecu explains. They first had a very clear idea about what the brand represents, where it is situated and so on. Only then came the products, following this identity and then the communication. And this, she considers is the ideal way to do things in fashion brand communication as the competition is very high in fashion and you cannot differentiate yourself and impose without first having a solid identity. Yet, she also sees, as Carla, identity to be a mobile entity, constantly changing. Even the more a need for a well defined self, as this core will suffer variations continually and needs to withstand dissipating.

On the matter of whether identity in fashion has a conflicting nature and if this might be reflected in its communication Amalia Nastase sees conflict present in fashion in the form of controversial approaches, especially in relation to art, in the form of the unexpected, the surprise or shock the reactions triggered. Linking this to the idea of dynamics previously expressed by the respondents, Amalia notes that “conflict can help maintain that dynamic that fashion needs”. Also, in the overcrowded market of fashion labels, where communication has to be constantly reinvented and seeking new ways to reach the audience “brands do need experiences, and if they are conflicting then even better”.

Carla Szabo, on the contrary, sees dynamics not linked to conflict, but rather as a unifying force, through its power of movement. In her opinion “conflict appears when there is an alterity, a second one that observes, analyses and judges. Not when we speak of identity or nature. Things are not conflicting in themselves, but when an exterior entity appears with which one can enter into conflict.” In fashion, she details, we speak of dynamics not of conflict, which is, as previously expressed, not an element of disruption.

The same is sustained by Mirela Bucovicean: “I don’t think fashion is conflict driven nor has a conflicting nature, but what I do believe is that there is definitely a dynamics that characterizes it. Fashion is prone to change. Hopefully an evolution. It is oriented towards something otherwise, different.”

Just like Carla Szabo, Andreea Florea from Brandtailors also sees conflict as appearing as possibility only between the self and alterity. She doesn’t consider conflict to be a defining

element in fashion, but agrees to the fact that it can be used as a strategy. And this self/the others conflict is the one example she sees of conflicting situation here. She explains this so: each brand promotes the idea of being unlike the others, with the exception of some well-established mainstream brands that may communicate the idea of acquiring their brand in order to be “like the rest” in the idea of not being an outsider from this group to which you should aspire. In here lies the conflict fashion may communicate: it can both differentiate and integrate an individual within a community. Fashion has from this point of view maybe a conflicting communication, as said by her, regarding the relation self/the other/s. However, as stated from the beginning, Andreea doesn’t see conflict as defining for fashion. “On the contrary, I feel that many brands communicate very similarly. If you would pick up let’s say 20 fashion ads and you would take out the labels off of them, you would see that hardly you could still distinguish this is that, this is that”. She later explains that in her opinion fashion brands are communicating their individuality simply in order to be present, to be situated and perceived as belonging to a category and to a price segment. Or as she puts it “the individuality of a brand is the quality for it to be considered as an option by the public”. Even the few brands that use disruptions and conflict in their communication, as Marni or COS as she gives for examples, these also have gathered into a category, “the off ones” and are no longer a representation of conflict while belonging to a community.

An interesting point of view expressed in various ways by 3 of the respondents in relation to identity and self in fashion as entity to be communicated, is actually the denial of existence of such self to be communicated and its replacing with shallow concepts that also end up communicated in brand discourse.

Nadire Omer considers herself, precisely for this reason, outside of the fashion world, as she considers fashion “a field closer to the surface, the shallow, and not necessarily something to do with the self and identity or essence. We speak of a wrapping, a package that doesn’t necessarily contain something.” However, she agrees that there might be also areas of depth in fashion that are not enough communicated.

This tendency to communicate the shallow is also observed by fashion editors Maurice Munteanu and Domnica Margescu. They see a dishonest discourse in fashion brand communication that

tries to grab on to big words to attract attention while these words don't actually reflect the nature and essence of their brand. Here comes a conflict that they see in fashion communication: that between you and your brand. Maurice observes "the conflicting nature comes up from my point of view, in this moment, when the designers don't know who they are, don't know who their brand is, and they communicate things that are extremely passé and very pompous. Evidently there appears a conflict here. Firstly a conflict between me and my brand." And Domnica completes him "It's a discrepancy between surface and essence".

Nadiré also points to another conflict in fashion that is felt in its communication: the conflict that comes up as fashion wants to be simultaneously something artistic, something beautiful but also something that has to be profitable. This idea of conflict is found also in Andreea Florea's interview that points out to the specificity in the fashion field regarding communication in that it must keep a "balance between intention and aesthetics", between functionality and beauty.

The idea of a brand identity that must satisfy both the rigors of the industry and those of a concept and philosophy are found in many of the views expressed by the experts. For some, the profit-related side is predominant in communication. Ana Bucur from Gucci expresses this vehemently, stating that fashion is an industry just like any other and in terms of communication things are very clear and well-established. "it is a well defined mechanism (...) As I was saying I think it is a very dynamic field but I don't consider it a conflicting one. Things are quite clear. It is a business that follows some pretty predictable and well defined coordinates."

8.1.4. Dependence and independence from external constraints. Question 5

On the matter of whether fashion is more driven by internal or external conditions and its dependence or independence from these, the answers of the experts leaned predominantly towards the idea that both coordinates exert a strong influence on it and its communication implicitly.

Carla Szabo and Nadire Omer pointed here to the idea that fashion brands function as unities, as organisms and in this line both interior and exterior factors shape the identity and its communication. The same, Ana Bucur emphasized the importance of both spheres as, on the one

hand, ignoring the internal dynamics of the fashion field would not be possible while functioning is this well defined mechanism, as she previously claimed fashion industry to be, on the other hand losing sight of the exterior happenings would mean a failure to “adapt to the reality in which their consumer grows” and through this losing sight of the actual purpose of brand communication. Andreea Alecu points out in this same direction how “fashion is torn between exactly these 2 sides. On the one hand you can’t not take into consideration what happens within the fashion field as you work with the creative, on the other hand you can’t ignore what happens in the social field” concluding that “You have to find a balance between your vision and how or whether people will share it”.

Amalia Nastase considers that the dependence or independence to the exterior and socio-cultural environment depends on the size of the brand. Very large brands, she notes, are not interested in local or regional specificities. Even more, they might actually be the ones that may go to a certain region or culture for inspiration and then propagate this culture through their works globally, as it was the case with Louis Vuitton and Japan. Smaller brands, on the contrary, not having such well-defined strategies, might be more open to allow local approaches, but this is not necessarily a good thing, Amalia says, as these approaches may lead to dissipation of the brand long term and making it harder for people to differentiate you from the others.

Andreea Florea from Brandtailors also leans more towards the idea that fashion is not really open to exterior constraints, at least in what regards communication. As stated in the previous chapter, her response claimed that trends and exterior happenings in the society influence only the product not also communication of the brand, that stays predominantly closed in its mannerisms.

On the contrary, Mirela Bucovicean and Noemi Revnic see fashion both in product and in communication as governed predominantly by the exterior. Mirela sees fashion as “a result of the external”, stating that “If we look at what happens in fashion, it is a result of the experience of the individual (...) There is a strong relation between what happens in the society and fashion”. The same Noemi reflects that on the whole fashion is “directed by the socio-cultural environment; fashion is the result of what we are; of how we behave”.

In the views of fashion editor Maurice Munteanu, it is very hard to speak of a socio-cultural environment in relation to fashion brands as generally, he considers, the people in this industry are not preoccupied with such things. At the same time the public is also not prepared or educated enough for such an approach in fashion brand communication. In a world of fashion where brands like H&M and Zara dominate the market, details about cultural or anthropological coordinates are just “nuances” and very few brands have now a coded communication. This being the case, he states “Things are very simple. A price is established. From here starts everything. The price is very important. If a product costs 1500 euro there is a type of communication, if it costs 15 euro, there is another one. From here starts everything.”

In this fashion world, as Maurice sees it, there is no place for nuances as socio-cultural traits of the environment. Such rooted, as he calls it, communication, is something that belongs to the past, that brand of what was truly fashion could have done, 40 or 35 years ago, as Yves Saint Laurent. One could say fashion is influenced by what happens in the society maybe only from the perspective that we live in a society of consumerism and this reflects also in the “fast-food” fashion we nowadays experience in his opinion. But the idea of a cultural or anthropological approach on this, or such deeper perspective in this direction are not possible or successful today. As he explained previously, things need to be simple and start from pragmatic coordinates as price. That is why “the stupidest things that you can do in 2013 is to think that fashion is something sophisticated and to communicate your messages in a sophisticated way”, he says.

8.1.5. The link between several notions and fashion brand communication: fashion vs. art, beauty, rational/irrational, moral/immoral. Question 7

Fashion vs. art

In relation to the matter of explaining the connection between art and beauty on the one hand and fashion and its brand communication on the other hand, only one of the interviewees pronounced himself vehemently against the existence of a connection between the two and another one claimed fashion is definitely not art but may have some elements in common with art in its

communication. The rest of the respondents pointed to various nuances of an existing link between art and fashion, the great majority claiming that fashion is close to art and has a strong connection to it, however it is a form of art with certain limits that are imposed by the duality of fashion in this regard: struggling between its artistic side, its orientation to beauty and its pragmatic side, needing to satisfy also profit needs at the same time.

Andreea Alecu, PR of MURMUR, finds there is a very strong relation between art, beauty and fashion communication, especially due to the fact that the visual is a key element in fashion brand communication and this can be easily transformed into an artistic instrument.

Carla Szabo also sees in the visual a bridge connecting fashion to art. However, she claims that this is not a specific element of fashion, as other types of brands could also make use of art in their communication. She mentions that evidently, fashion, through its object of activity so to say, is a field inclined to make use of beauty and art in communication, given the fact that its products and concepts bear a clear association to aesthetics. But she sees this as simply a natural, logical tendency and not a defining element. Another element that she sees linking fashion to art is emotion. Fashion may be closer to art due to the fact that it maybe expresses stronger than other types of brands an emotion, a feeling. However, she also mentions a differentiating element: while art may be self-sufficient, design and fashion must unfold within some imposed limits due to the fact that here you must identify yourself with an audience, a target. According to her “Fashion is not limitless creativity. There is always a context, a frame, a need that guides the art among others.”

Domnica Margescu from Elle also sustains this idea that fashion is close to art due to its use of the visual. She also notes that fashion can become art when it is put into various contexts, into various stories or frames. It all depends on the context in her opinion. True that the whole “vocabulary” used in communicating fashion brands is strongly connected to aesthetics, but one should not generalize as in fashion everything is subjective somehow. She underlines that “Not necessarily fashion = beautiful. Not necessarily fashion = art. It depends on the context.”

Nadiré Omer, just like Carla Szabo, sees in emotion and feeling a connection between fashion and art. For her the amount of feeling invested in a product is the element that makes the difference between whether it is art or not. The same, Nadiré also observes the struggle of fashion between

art and commerce: “I think it is a continual fight. Both to do art and to not do art. Because each designer that starts to work on this would like to do art and in some moments it does do art. But sometimes it has to compromise and do what it is asked of him (...) Where you draw the line between art and non-art, it is hard to say. I mean...it depends on the amount of feeling you invest in that product.”

The idea of art with limits is also discussed here by Amalia Nastase. She does see designers as true artists and is convinced that even though in the past fashion could be better seen as tailoring, in the past decades it was taken to such a level that it has become a form of art. Still, designers need to take into account many things when creating, as trends and sales, so this art is not limitless. “Things are a bit commercialized” as she says, but this doesn’t annul the reality of the fact that designers are indeed gifted people. An interesting additional point she makes is regarding the heavy use of art fashion makes in its communication. From hosting art exhibitions in their headquarters or turning into patrons of art, all of these help brands paint a certain image and value attached to their brand.

These limits imposed by the pendulum fashion must keep between the orientation towards the beautiful and that towards profit is also observed by Noemi Revnic from Harper’s Bazaar and Andreea Florea from Bradtailors. As Andreea puts it “Fashion and communication in fashion even more is somehow characterized by this balance between intention and aesthetics. I mean fashion is on the one side responding, resonating to aesthetics, the beautiful and on the other side to functionality.” As an additional note to this, she also mentions that aesthetics however is diversely defined, concluding that “Clearly the field of fashion is very **subjective** both as addressability and as aesthetics.”

The same, Mirela Bucovicean notes how “fashion is not a free art” as it is also driven by the necessity to sell. Still, she sees fashion as very close to art, due to the fact that what fashion deals with does not belong to the field of the “necessary”. Fashion, in her views is closely linked to beauty as this is what she thinks the fashion client seek for. “If what we send to the client is the beautiful, then our communication needs to be accordingly, to understand the needs of the client and to communicate according to his needs.” The difference between fashion and pure art would be, in her opinion, that art is a component of fashion and not its equivalent. “A painting, you have

it and it touches some of your emotional cords. But it is a one-to-one. You and the respective painting. While fashion is what you have agreed with you, to show to the others.”

Ana Bucur from Gucci rejects the idea of an equivalent between art and fashion, considering this a “romantic theory”. Fashion is not art, it is an industry, she claims. It may have some elements in common with art, in that it does start from a series of sketches and creative ideas and not from a necessity, but what happens after that is strictly governed by the mechanisms of the market. A note she further makes on the matter of beauty here is that, although what is beautiful does differ from one brand to another in a certain way, beauty is relative only up to a point. There is a common point of balance, some general limits that all brands, at least in her niche of luxury labels, agree to and that no brand crosses.

Finally, Maurice Munteanu from Elle rejects completely the connection between art and fashion. Fashion in his opinion, in current society, is driven solely by commercial issues. And on the matter of beauty, the same he does not see it as a defining element of the field or its communication, stating that fashion brand communication may be both beautiful and ugly, depending on the intentions of the brand in their strategies.

Fashion vs. rational/irrational

In regards to linking the concepts of rational/irrational to fashion brand communication the answers of the experts tended to go in two directions: either sustaining the predominance of the irrational, in the idea that fashion speculates more on emotions and impulses, or sustaining the use of both, a mix of the two in the communication of fashion brands. None of the experts pleaded for the rational as dominant.

The following 3 respondents: Carla Szabo, Nadiré Omer and Noemi Revnic sustained the idea that fashion brand communication involves both the rational and the irrational. Going hand in hand with the idea previously detailed that fashion needs to satisfy both an artistic orientation, touching emotion and an economic purpose, the same reflects also in the need for both rational and irrational incentives in communication. Nadiré called this “a magic mix”, a recipe that

sometimes works, sometimes doesn't, as in the dynamics of the fashion field the elements change constantly and one needs to keep up and add new ingredients to this mix. "Communication is like a tangling of waves and making use of these is very diverse. Some dream, some are inspired, some are well informed. It is both rational and irrational" she explains.

Ana Bucur, speaking of the niche of premium brands that she represents, states on the other hand that here communication never speculates on the rational. Perhaps, she continues, for mass-market brands like H&M communicating with a rational focus, as a small price, might make sense, but in the luxury field this is never the case. "There you appeal strictly to emotion, aiming that the targeted person would resonate and respond to the message you send out."

The same is sustained by branding expert Andreea Florea. As a general trait, she says, fashion is governed by emotion and implicitly plays on the irrational. Only mass-market retail brands as H&M will communicate rational arguments for acquisition, as a small price, but otherwise, fashion never focuses on communicating clear qualities of the products but rather feelings. Even in these cases, as H&M, there is also a lot of emotional since "the price is only a rational trigger in a sea of emotions. When you chose a brand you think a lot about how it makes you feel, what does that mean to you, how it make you appear for the others. And this is 100 % emotion."

Mirela Bucovicean agrees with this entirely. Fashion speculates the irrational in communication because it speaks of emotions. Since fashion "fills our emotional habitat", brands must also use a type of communication that "touches the subconscious".

Andreea Alecu also speaks of a predominance of the irrational in fashion communication, explaining how fashion communication needs to be about fantasy and impulses as to appeal the affective, emotional side of the audience.

Amalia Nastase observes also a direction oriented towards the irrational, this being the result of the challenge fashion brands face to constantly invent something new in their communication given the competitive market. This use of the irrational is here a strategy more likely, and behind it lays a very rational intent. "It's a studied irrational" she explains.

Fashion editors Maurice Munteanu and Domnica Margescu observe a use of the irrational, but they consider this approach works only for a certain type of public. "If you speculate the irrational

you will catch exactly that segment of people that don't work necessarily for the money" Maurice says. "The people that don't necessarily understand the value of money, or that don't have aesthetic values well established" he continues. Also, both he and Domnica agree to the fact that the use of irrational sustains the creation of stories, which can be of use in many brand communication cases.

Fashion vs. moral/immoral

Regarding the link between moral/immoral and fashion brand communication, the majority of the experts claimed in their interviews that this is not necessarily a matter that should be taken into consideration in fashion. Some did point out a few issues related to morality that can be raised in fashion or stir a discussion on this, while others mentioned how morals can be used as tool in fashion brand communication.

Mirela Bucovicean observes how there is a note of immorality in fashion communication that could speak of a certain shallowness in discourse. Here for instance would be the use of standards as being tall, thin, with a perfect complexion, etc. a focus on the exterior. "I am not certain that immoral is the most appropriate word, but it is possible that what we do here in a society based on consumerism to affect the original values of the individual" she says. However, in her views fashion is not about morals, but about aspirations: "how we imagine ourselves. What is the image that we want to transmit to the others".

The same, Carla Szabo considers that in fashion we don't speak of a moral in a religious sense, but rather of a moral in the sense of personal values. She notes that for her morality is not a coordinate to be taken into account in fashion. However, due to the fact that fashion works primarily with the body, she sees why a discussion on morals can be raised here.

Ana Bucur herself doesn't see a connection between fashion and morality. She considers that this is a forced argument to be raised into discussion here and it doesn't link naturally to the fashion field. Andreea Alecu also agrees with this.

Branding expert Andreea Florea and Amalia Nastase are two of the experts that raised the idea of morality as a resourceful tool to be used in fashion brand communication. Florea claims that, in her opinion, in fashion the matter of morality is irrelevant, as in the field of aesthetics, when you speak of something beautiful, you can't raise the matter of it being moral or not. Yet, she observes how some brands use this to their advantage. Either by speculating on immorality, placing themselves as challengers of morality and generally accepted conventions that they set out to break and as pleasure seekers in order to make people aspire to them (and here she gives the example of many jeans brands that do this), either by speculating on morality and here she sees how communicating the respect for some moral issues has become a CSR tool for many brands (like offering fair salaries and working conditions, using certain fabrics that don't harm the environment etc).

Similarly, Amalia Nastase speaks of how some brands make use of the immoral in communication to construct for themselves the image of pleasure brands. "There is that life of sex, drugs and rock and roll that many communicated intentionally". In her views, art in general also and fashion in particular use immorality in order to shock and create attention.

Other examples of issues related to morality or immorality in fashion brought up by the experts are: women starving themselves used as models of beauty, copying and fakes, the exploitation of children and people from third world countries working for luxury labels in poor conditions, the use of elements of animal origin, furs, elements creating pollution in their production or extraction, as gold.

8.1.6. Success examples and their rationale. Question 8

The success examples that the experts gave regarding fashion brand communication reflected some common points and in that, hinted to some directions that could make a brand communication effort successful in this field. The majority of the answers (5 of the experts), although they gave different case examples, focused on the necessity to reflect correctly and sincerely the essence of the brand in communication. Varying in nuances, they all pointed however to success examples that managed to keep a symbiosis between what the brand really is

about and its discourse, whichever the form of communication may have been chosen. As an extension of this direction, two other respondents completed the idea of unity in communication with that of constancy and gradual growth. Another line observed here claims successful brand communication is the ability to adapt to the present and make use of its communication tools. Here two of the experts pointed to Burberry as a positive example for this.

On the idea of managing to guard the essence of the brand in communication, Carla Szabo proposes an interesting success example, that of Bottega Veneta and its expansion from a luxury brand recognized by leather craft to a full-fledged fashion brand, incorporating all types of product lines. She notes how Maier managed to keep intact the brand essence in all this dynamics of expansion, which is for her the element of success.

Reflecting correctly the essence of the brand is also mentioned in their examples by fashion editors Maurice Munteanu and Domnica Margescu. For Maurice, the era before Lorenzo Rosso at Margiela is the best example of successful brand communication, precisely for this fact: they reflected in their communication perfectly the core of the brand, as Margiela, he notes, is a niche brand, with a well-defined audience, and their brand communication was in line with this special positioning on the market. “It was the most creative message” Maurice remembers. From their signature mark put on unique decoupages, the mesmerizing showrooms, the events, the staff, to the invitations, everything fit perfectly with the concept of their brand.

Domnica’s success example, Stella McCartney, goes in the same direction. For her this is a success example due to the fact that their brand communication is very sincere, it doesn’t contradict the products or the personality behind the brand. She details: “Everything is very natural, simple, nothing is forced.”

Branding expert Andreea Florea gives two apparently opposite success examples, but what these communicate is actually the same idea as the previous experts noted above: a brand communication that reflects correctly the essence of the brand and in doing this obtains the authentic resonance of the audience. Her first example, Adidas’s “brilliant branding” as she considers, through their “Impossible is nothing” line communicated. This reflected perfectly the nature of the brand as a label that “gives you wings” mentions Andreea. It speaks of their philosophy, it goes beyond the product.

The second example is H&M. While she agrees that from the point of view of creativity, their communication might not be something to praise necessarily, it is an example of successful communication. “It gets the work done” as Andreea puts it. Why? Because it reflects correctly what the brand is about. H&M is not a brand of deep philosophies. It is precisely what they communicate.

PR of MURMUR brand, Andreea Alecu, speaks of a success example from their campaigns and communication initiatives of the brand. More exactly, her best success example is a collection launch event that she considers very good precisely for the fact that it managed to capture and transmit the true nature of the brand. She point out to the importance of having a sincere discourse that doesn’t stray from the core of the brand and to not fall for the temptation of constructing an exterior mask for the brand simply for the sake of attracting attention as this is momentarily. Their case was successful because “the brand was not wrapped in an image, the event perspired the brand. It was not artificial. It was very authentic and symbiotic somehow with the brand. It is very important to have a sincere and to the point communication. To not get lost in details.”

This final point she makes on the necessity of conciseness and unity is also sustained by Mirela Bucovicean and Noemi Revnic in their success examples. These two also add to this coordinate another ingredient, that of constancy in communication, being present and gradually growing with this, not steeping outside of the limits imposed by the essence of your brand, but always remaining on the radar, always sustaining your discourse.

Finally, two of the experts pointed to the necessity of keeping up with the developments in the society and adapting to the current state of it and its communication tools in order to be successful. Their example is the same: Burberry, a luxury brand that has become quite recognize in the past years for their approach towards the digital and social media and that is many times used as case example for their online communication. Ana Bucur from Gucci states clearly from the beginning “This was maybe the first brand in this niche that understood the importance of digital communication and social media and last generation tools and technology. They are probably the first that did live streaming of collections presented on the runways in their shops,

they did runways shows with closed circuits, broadcasted again through live streaming to consumers that had ipads and could set orders immediately and so on and so forth.”

Amalia Nastase also emphasizes the skill Burberry had to adapt and seize the opportunities of the present to revitalize their brand and expand their audience and their reach through the digital. She notes: “Burberry adapted itself to the evolution both of the market and of the people, of society. You can no longer communicate like Valentino in 2013. You simply can’t. (...) Burberry made this step to follow the dynamics of the society and decided it must communicate through all means. In the digital. In the music world. Everywhere. They are everywhere. They have a core value that is spread in all fields of activity.” So, the success lies in keeping up with the dynamics of the society, while guarding also the brand essence and not dissipating. An idea that we found also in the beginning in Carla Szabo in other words and with another example.

8.1.7. Differences and resemblances between fashion brand communication and the discourse of other types of brand communication in regards to aims. Question 9

7 out of the 10 experts interviewed could not say that there is a clear difference between the purposes followed by fashion brands in their communication in comparison with the purposes of other brand communication efforts from other fields. Some of them pointed to small nuances or additional aspects that the fashion field may hold in this regard, but on the whole the majority of the interviewees concluded that fashion follows mainly the same purposes in its brands communication as any other brands from other industries.

To detail some of these perspectives:

Carla Szabo thinks fashion brands follow the same purposes as other types of brands but the discourse differs, as in her views each discourse is unique in itself, due to the personality of the “speaker” and the uniqueness of the moment in time.

Fashion editor Domnica Margescu has a similar perspective. She considers there are some purposes that are followed by all brands, but in addition to this, or better said, after this initial

phase of main purposes, these are refined into more specific stories for each brand, they are personalized after each identity.

Nadiré Omer also considers the purposes are the same in the end. All brands seek to be productive, she says. Yet, following these main purposes, there may come some “sub-purposes” that could be specific to fashion only, but she sees these rather as “paths”, means than purposes.

Ana Bucur from Gucci sees things the same - no major difference between fashion brand communication purposes and those of other brands in their communication. The specificities that she however points out as to apply to the niche she represents, that of luxury brands, in what regards the purposes followed in brand communication are: “the emphasis and enforcement of a statement already existing on a market, guarding the respective target they have already gained and having the brand to be recognized as authority in the respective field, as each fight for a very narrow slice of the market, whether it is leather, or innovations in a certain something, etc.” She notes that luxury brands no longer need to make a statement through their communication, since they already *are* statements. So brand communication efforts are oriented mainly in reinforcing this statement.

Although she does not see this as a particularity found only in fashion, branding expert Andreea Florea also points to the difference in brand communication purposes followed between luxury, high-end brands and mass-market brands. “I think success in fashion is defined in relation to price categories” she states. As while success for a brand like H&M will mean volume, for a high-end brand, on the contrary, as they seek to remain desirable but not accessible for everyone, volume would mean the death of the brand.

This segmentation in the purposes followed based on the market category one belongs to is observed also by Mirela Bucovicean. She explains: “if I see mass market, I want to have volume and I will communicate “sales” and I won’t search for creating loyalty among my clients. But on the contrary, I can create fidelity in a client that resonates with my creative direction, because he finds himself in what I present.” Continuing this idea, she underlines also a specific nuance she finds in the field of fashion in this matter: emotion. “I think emotion can be a key differencing point in communication for fashion brands as opposing other kind of brands” she claims.

Andreea Alecu, PR of the brand MURMUR, also finds the idea of emotion and resonance with the public at a deeper level as to be a specific feature of fashion brand communication. She notes however that she doesn't consider the purposes followed by fashion brand communication to be fundamentally different than the ones pursued by other brand types, but she sees in this vibrant, personal connection with the public a unique trait of fashion communication. Her argument follows so: "being a very creative and personal field, you seek to find a level of resonance with your audience that goes beyond buying the product, or satisfying a need, You seek for a more intricate resonance, that of identification, of assumption, of following, reflecting yourself to the others. You communicate also through the people that wear your clothes, even though it goes beyond your reach".

Amalia Nastase observes that "uniqueness" is a very important coordinate in brand communication in fashion and sees it as a differentiating goal sought in this domain specifically. However this goal is subject to the intention of selling, placing it somehow in relation to the main profit-oriented purposes followed also by other brands. Yet, Amalia notes that selling is important but image is more important in fashion and this could be a specificity of the fashion field in branding.

9. Conclusions

This paper set out from the hypothesis that fashion brand communication does have a specific discourse that could maybe constitute a distinct “language” on its own, attempting to verify the validity of this hypothesis by confronting it with the perspectives of 10 experts in the field and furthermore expand this perspective in the direction of identifying some possible constituent elements of this, some forms of combination between these, its dependency or independence to diverse factors (such as time – the possibility of trend identification and socio-cultural aspects) and the diversity of its forms of manifestation.

While through the initial synthesis, analysis, illustration and conjunction of the various theoretical perspectives discussed in the first part of the work, a basis was established for the purposes of this investigation, the following study conducted through expert interviews came to refine this investigation in the direction of more concrete detailing. A wide approach was sought both in the construction of the interviews as well as in their interpretation, as to keep faithful to the intent of the paper to seek for generally applying elements of discourse in fashion brand communication. Yet, at the same time nuances and detailing were welcomed and taken into consideration in drawing up these conclusions specifically for allowing an extended view on the nature and forms of manifestation of the investigated discourse and also in order to help capture a realistic view of the studied phenomenon, treating it precisely as that, a phenomenon, a living entity, viewed in movement and in context and not isolated in order to be analyzed.

The analysis and interpretation of the expert interviews did not contradict the initial hypothesis but also did not manage to construct a definite, conclusive perspective on the nature and consistency of a specific language of fashion brand communication. The conducted interviews offered a very rich material of investigation in relation to the subject matter and lead to the possibility of pinpointing some elements that can help better shape the complex nature of the discourse of fashion brand communication and hint to several relevant forms of its manifestation.

It might be that the interpretation of the material lead rather to an expansion of the perspective on the discourse of fashion brand communication than a confinement of it into a definite notion or entity. Still, the interviews did provide some common lines of thought and perspectives and in such allowed drawing some connections and portraying some facets of the researched matter. To these drawn out features, several interesting details were added, offering thus an in-depth view on the matter concluding to a rich interpretation of it by several coordinates.

A difficulty in naming a concrete set of elements that could make up a “vocabulary” of this researched discourse of fashion brand communication was observed in the case of all respondents. Not that, in their majority, the experts did not admit to fashion brand communication having a specific discourse, but being a field characterized by a strong dynamics where a vast array of elements leave their mark, it felt hard to distinguish with preciseness which are those elements that belong strictly to the language of fashion brand communication and whether these can be categorized as an autonomous speech or rather an inclination towards a frequent use of them. It seems a certain degree of fuzziness surrounds the limits of the brand discourse of fashion labels. A slippery entity that one can only hint as to being there without being able to precisely put the finger on it. Most of the interviewees pointed rather to a context-based discourse specificity than a generally valid one, naming among the main variables that shape the brand communication language the targeted audience and the positioning on the market.

In fact, a feature noted by the experts as to characterize the entire field of fashion, reflecting also in its communication implicitly, is a strong segmentation, each brand functioning within a certain kind of niche. This also leads to the idea of uniqueness of each brand discourse, due to both the particularity of each moment of communication and the individuality of the personality of each creative “speaker” behind each brand.

Fashion brands reflect in their discourse the plurality of these unique emotions that make up the sum of their brand essence and functioning in a highly competitive market, divided heavily into small niches, the communication of the brands needs to keep to a certain conciseness and unity in discourse. From here, an interesting idea also derived: the need to differentiate yourself in this portrayed market means not only to identify yourself with the key concepts of the brand, but also to become a representation of those concepts. In relation to language specificity this can translate

into the following though: the discourse of fashion brand communication is not only linked to a certain “vocabulary”, but also it can mean “owning”, “patenting” a vocabulary for your brand.

With the idea of a set of unique emotions communicated by fashion brands through their discourse comes up another feature pointed out as specific to fashion brand communication: the fact that this discourse is almost never product-centric, but rather focused on a feeling, a philosophy, a way of being, an aspiration. This is also in several of the opinions, one of the main differencing traits between fashion branding and other brand communication efforts from other fields. Communicating a philosophy, a feeling that one sets as aspiration for the audience can also hint to the idea of linking the concept of “illusion” with fashion brand communication. This can speak perhaps also of the possibility of a rather “constructed” brand discourse for the exterior that may not necessarily reflect an essence but rather serve a purpose.

A recurring element pointed out as specific to fashion brand communication by the large majority of the experts is the visual. Being a field both consumed and communicated visually, items belonging to the visual as photographs, videos and so on, are all claimed as crucial in the discourse of all fashion brands. Even more, communication through the visual is mentioned also as one of the few paths that allow fashion brands to create a controlled brand experience for their public, as in this field brand experience is generally hard to control being a largely personal matter.

An interesting point made in relation to the matter of identifying the specificity of the discourse of fashion brand communication is that specificity, the attempt of finding a definite “vocabulary” of fashion discourse would mean the end of any brand. Fashion is here generally claimed as defined by dynamics and searching for a fixed element in a “moving sea”, a notion, specificity could actually mean blocking that dynamics or ignoring it.

On the whole, many of the views presented by the experts in relation to the differences between fashion brand communication and other brand communications from other fields point out that the differences lie in details and that fashion does share many common traits with other fields in what regards brand communication. In its communication a fashion brands seems to have to meet the rigors both of being an industry like any other, subject to the seeking of profit, as well as to

reflect that “something else” that it wants its public to aspire to, that individual story which should situate it as kings in its niche.

On the second line of the research interest of this paper, involving the “time” coordinate in relation to fashion brand communication, investigating the possibility of trend identification in brand communication, the study revealed three main directions observed on the matter.

One of these points to an intense dynamics as the vital feature of fashion and its communication which somehow excludes the idea of cyclic return to patterns in communication, at least not complete returns, and at the same time makes it hard to speak of concrete directions towards which fashion brand communication might orient itself in the future. In a field characterized by evanescence in its nature, governed by this defining dynamics where both the nature of the communications as well as its tools are constantly reinvented, one does not speak of trends in the idea of perspectives, or directions, but rather trends in the idea of waves, constantly changing forms of aggregation. One speaks of movement, of dynamics, not of trends. Even more, in this whirling context, nowadays fashion brand communication can mean anything. One communicates everything and anything can be transformed into a communication tool or channel.

The majority of the experts sustained this difficulty in trend identification and prediction in relation to fashion brand communication and expressed themselves against the idea of cyclicity that although is a feature strongly present in the fashion field, does not also reflect in its communication. Themes of the past may be re-approached by brands in their communication, but the discourse is different and the approach is done from a current, new vision. The same, trends are mentioned as something that is to apply to the product but not to communication in fashion.

The second direction pointed out on this matter in the study observes the orientation of brands towards using the digital and new media in communication. This is seen mostly as a natural form of adaptation of brands to the current reality of the society they address as well as a solid option in revitalizing and expanding the reach of the brand. In relation to the dynamics emphasized

above, the orientation towards the online is noted as an element that has intensified even more the already high dynamics in fashion and its communication.

However, as a note to the idea of dynamics, that was mentioned as to apply specifically to the niche of luxury brands, this dynamics is here not translated also into innovation or courage in communication to approach novel ways for brand discourses. On the contrary, most high-end fashion brands thought to be not at all daring in terms of communication and to prefer to stick to safe paths or remain closed in mannerisms.

Finally, the last line of thought drawn from the perspectives expressed by the experts on this matter observes as a current direction in fashion brand communication the return to the initial values that have shaped the brands in their inception. These fundamental values that have constituted the brand are turned into brand capital and used accordingly. Bringing to light old archives, items that have been long forgotten, the trend of opening brand museums, where these are transformed into communication instruments, all reflect this tendency.

Taking the discussion a bit further and advancing from the analysis of the discourse of fashion brand communication to looking at the nature of this identity that needs to be communicated in this discourse, the perspectives expressed mainly lead to the following idea: it is very important to have a well-constructed identity prior to any effort of communication. While all admitting to the dynamic nature of fashion and its communication, this being in a constant process of changing as well as to the creative effect of it, or, even more, due to this dynamic nature, it is crucial to first have a solid identity, to define your essence before entering this dynamics, where the challenge remains precisely to guard this essence in the turmoil of constant movement. An articulate discourse of the brand comes only with the knowing of one self. Not having this well-shaped identity in the first place brings up the risk of dissipating the brand through dispersed communication. As the identity is a sum of multiple elements absorbed by the brand, continually aggregating under various forms in the uniqueness of each moment in time, brand communication would mean to chose which part of this self you communicate and focus on, so that you guard a balance and resonance of this chosen point both with the brands essence on the whole and the existing exterior coordinates of the moment.

Actually, when it came to success examples, particularly these two key elements came out as crucial to an effective brand communication effort in fashion. These are, on the one hand the necessity to reflect correctly and sincerely the essence of the brand in communication, keeping a symbiosis between what the brand really is about and its discourse, whichever the form of communication may have been chosen and as an extension of this point, the need of unity and constancy in communication and on the other hand, the importance of having the ability to adapt to the present and make use of its communication tools.

There is also a skeptical view on the matter of identity and self in fashion, as entity to be communicated, that expressed actually a denial of the existence of such self to be communicated in the case of many brands in current society; in this view brands are governed by consumerism, fashion having rather a constructed identity, where a true self is replaced with shallow concepts that also end up communicated in brand discourse.

This leads also to another point in relation to the nature of the identity of fashion brands that may reflect also in their communication: conflict. While conflict can be found in many forms in fashion brand communication, not all experts agree to the idea that conflict is also a defining element of its nature, but rather a tool or a strategy used to reach its purposes. Yet, returning to the idea previously expressed on the discrepancy between brand essence and its communication, most of the views expressed subscribed to the existence of a conflict in fashion brand communication in that this discourse must respond both to aesthetic as well as functional rigors. Fashion has to find a balance between the beautiful, the artistic and the profitable and here conflict appears.

However, by and large conflict is not seen as a defining element of fashion and its brand communication. The general view is that dynamics is this defining element of its nature and course and this dynamics is not necessarily linked with conflict, on the contrary it can be a rather unifying force of all the diverse, sometimes opposing elements that make up the discourse and identity of fashion entities. Conflict is more of a context-related, not nature-related concept here. Conflict is said to appear only when there is an alterity, that “other” that observes, values or judges, this “other” seen here in its most general sense. And as we speak of alterity, one of these

conflicting elements that appears when we speak of fashion is precisely its power to both differentiate and integrate an individual within a community. Finally, returning to the initial though expressed in relation to identity and its communication here, the necessity of reflecting sincerely a solid brand essence in communication, of a symbiosis between the two, conflict appears also between the brand and itself when this is not properly achieved.

Now, whether this identity of fashion brands that is to be communicated is autonomous and functioning by the coordinates of an internal dynamics or rather dependent to and influenced predominantly by the exterior and the happenings in the socio-cultural environment where they develop is another matter worth approaching. The study concluded that both spheres exert a strong influence on the shaping of fashion brands and their communication implicitly. Fashion brands function as unities, or organisms, the dynamics that defines them opens them unavoidably to both interior and exterior forces of influence. Ignoring the internal factors within the field of fashion would be impossible as the “organism” will fail to function, while ignoring the exterior environment is also not an option as it would be failing to take into consideration the habitat where the consumer grows and thus would mean a loss of the purpose of fashion brand communication in the first place. A balance between individual vision and having people share it should be obtained. A note, however, on this was made by some experts, pointing out that dependence or independence to exterior factors may vary on account of one variable: the size of the brand. Large brands seem to be less open to influences of the socio-cultural environment, while smaller brands allow usually easier local specificities to be integrated in their communication.

Art and beauty in general seem to be natural associations to a field that works with aesthetics. However, the relation between art and beauty and fashion brand communication is not one of equality, neither does it seem to be an obligatory trait altogether. The study did reveal that the majority of the experts found fashion to be close to art, however, claimed it to be a form of art with certain limits that are imposed by the duality of fashion in this regard: struggling between its artistic side, its orientation to beauty and its pragmatic side, needing to satisfy also profit requirements at the same time. Fashion may be naturally inclined to make use of art and beauty in its communication, due to its object of activity, but it cannot seem to be fully declared art. Precisely due to its strong emotional character or its visual dominance, fashion may be in its

expression closer to art, but both its artistry and its beauty is always framed within a certain context and never limitless or free.

The particularity of fashion to tackle our emotional habitat in its communication results also in a predominance of the irrational in fashion brand communication, as it speculates more on feelings and impulses. Yet, the same duality found previously in its nature is also observed here at times: behind the play on the irrational does stand a rational intent and a mix of the two can be also combined in the discourse of fashion brands. Still, the rational is never claimed as predominant in this discourse, rather only an element of the mix or an element in the background, sustaining the discourse and its intents.

Finally, being a field that follows a hectic dynamics, dependent of context, marked by subjectivity and personal resonance, having aesthetics as one of its defining elements, such equation seems to reject the idea of morality in relation to fashion communication. True that some elements of morality are raised in the field of fashion or can stir a discussion on this, such as women starving themselves used as models of beauty, copying and fakes, the exploitation of children and people from third world countries working for luxury labels in poor conditions, the use of elements of animal origin, furs, elements creating pollution in their production or extraction, as gold. Even more, morality or immorality can be intentionally communicated by fashion brands and so it can be used rather as strategy than as defining element of its nature. Examples of these are many, like brands speculating on immorality, placing themselves as challengers of morality and generally accepted conventions that they set out to break and as pleasure seekers in order to create aspiration, or the other way around, brands speculating on morality, communicating the respect for some moral issues becoming a CSR tool for many labels. However, on the whole, morality is not seen as a matter that should be taken into consideration in fashion. At least not in the sense of a conventional set of morals. It could be rather perceived as related to moral in the sense of personal values or aspirations.

If the analysis of the discourse of fashion brand communication started in this study with a difficulty observed in pinpointing the exact elements that compose this discourse and basing the nature of the specificity of this discourse rather on feelings and a “sense” of its existence, the same fuzziness is found in delineating the discourse of fashion brand communication and that of

other types of brands in their communication efforts in regards to the purposes they follow. The dominant majority of the opinions expressed could not say that there is a clear difference between the purposes followed by fashion brands in their communication in comparison to the purposes of other brand communication efforts from other fields. The difference was found in small nuances or additional aspects that the fashion field may hold in this regard.

To conclude with, the present investigation in its interpretative approach did point to several key elements that may help shape the nature and forms of manifestation of fashion brand communication from the view of its discourse. However, it cannot be said that the fruits of this analysis lead to a solid conclusion, but rather to a perspective. Accepting the observed dynamics that defines the nature of fashion brand communication and its close anchoring to a context, one can only seem to grasp its features in movement and in doing so, also admit to the momentarily validity of any conclusion that might be drawn out here.

10. ADDENDA

10.1. Addendum 1

Abstract/ Deutsch

Die folgende Arbeit konzentriert sich auf Mode-Marken Kommunikation aus einer Perspektive, die bisher nicht so weit ausführlich angesprochen ist . Forschung im Identität Kommunikation in Bezug auf den Bereich der Mode zeigt einen überwiegenden Fokus auf Marketing-bezogenen Ansatz, bei dem die Effizienz der Bemühungen um Kommunikation und die konkreten Ergebnisse der es in Bezug auf die finanziellen Vorteile und den Wert des Kapitals erhaltenen vorherrscht. Weitere Studien und Arbeiten bewältigen auch das Thema im Zusammenhang mit den zahlreichen sozialen und kulturellen Aspekte, die Art und Weise umfasst. Man findet reichlich Stoff Erforschung Mode Marke Kommunikation mit äußeren Ziele, Mittel oder über Bereichen von Einfluss verbunden, aber es scheint, dass die Ansichten über das Thema selbst, der Substanz und Wesen dieser Art von Kommunikation knapper sind und erwägen, dies, wie Absichten, um ausbauen dieses Forschungsbereich zu begrüßen sind .

Diese Untersuchung bringt eine solche ergänzung Ansatz und konzentriert sich auf Mode-Marken-Kommunikation aus einer philosophischen Perspektive, aber nicht ohne praktische, pragmatische Anwendung, Erforschung der Materie aus der Sicht des Diskurses und sein Potential, nach einem eher erläuternd als einer normativen Ziel wird .

Abgesehen von der Tatsache, dass es einen beträchtlichen Raum in diesem Forschungsbereich gibt das gefüllt werden kann, ist meine Wahl des Themas für diese Arbeit auch ein Ergebnis meiner persönlichen Affinität für Mode und meine Überzeugung, dass es ein findiger und herausfordernde Boden in Bezug auf dem Kommunikation bildet . Die Tatsache, dass es eine polyvalente Konzept stark an ihre Umgebung gebunden ist, vielleicht unmöglich, aus dem Kontext, in dem es sich entwickelt es herauszunehmen für eine Analyse, seine komplexe Natur wo es gleichzeitig sowohl ein Mittel und ein Objekt der Kommunikation ist, seine wachsende

Macht, sind nur ein paar Gedanken, die leicht aus der Mode ein Interesse Feld für jeden Kommunikator macht. Zusätzlich zu dieser die Frage nach der Identität, ist die Komplexität und Attraktivität des Themas noch mehr verbessert. Wie kommuniziert man die Identität einer Entität, die in den Fluss der Relativität schwimmt? Wie ein Wesen eines solchen Diskurs zu finden?

In Hinblick auf die tatsächlichen Forschungsinteressen konzentriert sich diese Arbeit auf der Untersuchung der Angelegenheit des Diskurses der Modemarke Kommunikation zur Identifizierung einer bestimmten Spezifität dieser Kommunikation, die eine tatsächliche deutliche „Sprache“ darstellen könnte. Gibt es Gemeinsamkeiten in der Kommunikation von Identität in der Mode, die unverändert bleiben trotz der wirbelnden Dynamik, verbunden mit dieser Domain, anfällig für und durch ständigen Wandel? Könnte man hier eine Essenz der Kommunikation finden, die ein tatsächliches "Sprache" der Modemarke Kommunikation darstellen könnte und wenn ja, was sind die wichtigsten Elemente seiner "Lexikon" und wie sie interagieren und verschmelzen in seiner "Grammatik"? Weiterhin, was wurde eine solche Sprache von anderen ähnlichen Sprachen unterscheiden?

Zusammen mit der Frage der Identifizierung das Wesen eines solchen Diskurses, die Arbeit beinhaltet auch in ihrem Verlauf der "Zeit" Ordinate in Verbindung zu Modemarke Kommunikation zu binden. Während die Mode durch ihre Natur zu einem gewissen Grad der Zyklizität gebunden ist, ein ständiges Spiel der Neuerfindung des alten auf der Suche nach neuen, gilt dies auch für die Entwicklung in der Zeit des Diskurses der Modemarke Kommunikation? Könnte es eine gewisse Tendenz im Verlauf dieses Diskurses identifiziert werden? Was bedeutet, dass Andeutung über die Entwicklung dieses Diskurses in der Zukunft?

Schließlich, aufgrund der komplizierte Beziehung zwischen Mode und die sozio-kulturelle Aspekte der Umwelt, in der sie sich entwickelt, wobei diese Koordinaten, die Gestaltung seinem Wesen helfen, wird die Untersuchung diese Variable in ihren Bemühungen berücksichtigen. Die Arbeit beginnt mit der Hypothese, dass eine spezifische Sprache der Modemarke Kommunikation bestehen kann, und versucht, durch die Synthese, Analyse, Darstellung und Verbindung der verschiedenen theoretischen Perspektiven, die eine Grundlage für die Zwecke dieser Studie bilden können und durch die weitere Einblicke erhaltenen in den Interviews mit Experten über das Thema, die Ideen in der anfänglichen Hypothese auszuweiten und die Möglichkeit der Existenz eines solchen spezifischen Sprache der Mode Marken Kommunikation einen Schritt

weiter zu bringen zur Identifizierung einige mögliche Bestandteile dieses, einige Formen der Kombination zwischen diesen, ihre Abhängigkeit oder Unabhängigkeit zu diversen Faktoren und der Vielfalt ihrer Erscheinungsformen. Wenn die theoretische Rahmung stellt einen Ausgangspunkt, verfeinern die Expertenbefragungen diese Untersuchung in Richtung konkreter Details.

Das **erste Kapitel** der Arbeit nähert sich dem Konzept der Mode, ohne den Versuch einer Definition von ihm, sondern Hinweise auf mehreren Noten des Stoffes in Bezug auf Mode zu betonen, um eine Ansatzpunkt für die Forschungsinteressen zu begleichen. Die komplexen Ansichten hier vorstellen Mode als eine widersprüchliche Natur, wo mehrere Gegenteile irgendwie Zusammenhalt finden. Dort befinden sich interessante Perspektiven, wie die Sicht von Wilson auf Mode als stehend an der Kreuzung von drei Mehrdeutigkeiten (dass der Kapitalismus, das unserer Identität und der Kunst), und wo sie unser einfachste Weg ist, diese dreifache Mehrdeutigkeit auszudrücken und zuzugreifen, oder dass der Craik über die gleichzeitig vereinheitlicher und aufspaltend Charakter der Mode was die gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen angeht, oder weiter die Idee der Mode in Bezug auf den Gegenstand und seinem äußeren Manifestation des physischen Körpers, gefunden in den Vorschlag von Svendsen Mode als ein Phänomen zu berücksichtigen die uns verstehen hilft in unserem historischen Standpunkt oder Foucaults Sicht auf den Körper als politisches Feld, die Zeremonien aufführt und Zeichen emittiert, oder die Beziehung zwischen Mode und Kunst, seine Spezifität in Verbindung um Zeit und Dynamik oder die einzigartige Perspektive von Baudrillard, die Mode im Bereich der unmöglich einstellt, wo weder die schöne oder die hässliche wohnen, in einer Gesellschaft, wo der Austausch nicht mehr möglich ist und unter der Herrschaft der Faszination und Übersättigung ist . Diese Zwiespältigkeit ist zugleich ein Hinweis auf die Möglichkeit der Kennzeichnungskraft der Diskurs der Mode, eine Ansicht, die auch durch die Arbeit des Barthes erlitten.

Das zweite Kapitel geht weiter auf dem gebiet der Ästhetik, als grundlage für das Konzept und die Praxis der Mode, die nicht außer Acht gelassen werden konnten. Die Frage der Schönheit wird hier analysiert, unter anderem in Bezug auf Ideen wie die natürlichen Antrieb ästhetische Dinge zu beobachten und werten, die emotionalen und visionären Konnotationen verbunden mit der Wahrnehmung und Kritik der Schönheit, die Dissoziation zwischen der ästhetischen Erfahrung und der beteiligten Fragen der Nützlichkeit und der Moral, der Autarkie dieser Erfahrung,

Schönheit als Grund für eine Synthese zwischen den Impulsen des Selbst und der äußeren Erfahrung, die ästhetische Haltung und den Begriff der Selbstlosigkeit, sondern auch die Beziehung zwischen dem Schönen und dem sozialen Kontext, Befreiung und Abhängigkeit, die Gültigkeit der Ansprüche von Universalität und Individualität in diesem Bereich. Die Werke von Autoren wie Santayana, Croce, Townsend oder Bullough diese Argumentation unterstützen .

Im dritten Kapitel komme ich näher auf die Frage der Identität, diskutieren Perspektiven auf den Begriff des Selbst und ihre Praxis. Wie Marken Kommunikation spiegelt eine Mitteilung des Selbst, ist dieser Ansatz ein notwendiger Schritt für die Entwicklung die Zwecke der Arbeit. Weiterhin umfasst die Frage des Selbst auch das Publikum der Marke, die, wie bereits diskutiert, nicht nur ein "Empfänger" für die Marke, aber auch ein Gestalter dieser ist und die ein dynamisches und wechselseitige Beziehung mit der Marke hat . So berührt der Begriff des Selbst auch die Fragen der Identität des Publikums, weder in seine individuelle Identität oder als Masse. Ich habe mich entschieden, in diese Einblick in die Materie des Selbst durch drei interessante und in vielen Dingen irgendwie gegensätzliche Ansichten zu tauchen: die von Foucault in seiner Hermeneutik des Subjekts, dann kurz durch Cassirer in seinem Essay on Man und schließlich, Baudrillard in seinem fatalen Strategien .

Weitere auf, nähert sich das **vierte Kapitel** der Arbeit die eigentliche Frage der Marken, zeichnen damit näher an dem konkreten Interesse der Untersuchung. Durch die Einbeziehung von mehreren Ansichten von Theoretiker wie Ries, Murphy, Aaker, Lindstrom oder Keller, zeigt das Kapitel die Weitläufigkeit des Begriffs der Marke und schlägt vor verschiedene unterstützende Perspektiven der Komplexität und multidisziplinären Blick hier auferlegt. Einige prägende Elemente der Marken werden identifiziert, während die Angelegenheit ist weiter durch einige verwandte relevanten Perspektiven entwickelt: Marken als Personen, Parallelen mit der Psychoanalyse oder die Nutzung von Konzepten wie dionysisch und apollinisch von Nietzsches Geburt der Tragödie, um zwischen dionysischen und apollinischen Marken zu unterscheiden wie Alexandra Craciun macht, die multisensorische Ansatz auf Marken, die suche nach einem sensorischen Synergieeffekt in der Marken Kommunikation, symbolische und kulturelle Bedeutungen von Marken, die Idee der kontextualisierte Identität, verbunden mit dem Begriff der *Umwelt* von Uexküll oder der frage der Globalisierung.

Schließlich das **fünfte Kapitel** ein paar Überlegungen zu Sprache und Überzeugungsarbeit zur Diskussion bringt. In der Versuch die Spezifität der Mode Marke Kommunikation zu identifizieren, und wenn weiter nachdenken, was könnte seine eigene Sprache bilden, eine kurze Blick auf die Sprache und ihre Verbindung zum Denken, auf überzeugendem Diskurs ist ohne Zweifel eine wertvolle Grundlage für die kritischen Bemühungen dieser Arbeit. Theorien über die Funktionalität der Sprache, die bidirektionalen Gestaltung der Kommunikation sowohl von Sender als auch von Empfänger, die Bedeutung der bekannten Identität des Absenders des Nachrichten, Wittgensteins Ansichten in Die Philosophischen Untersuchungen, die die soziale Nutzung als bestimmendes Element unserer Sprache zeigt, als sprachliche Elemente tragen keine Bedeutung auf ihre eigenen und die Bedeutung wird durch die tatsächliche Verwendung der Sprache in einer gewissen "Sprachspiel" gegeben, eine praktische Situation - sind hier zu finden. Diese sind mit Aristoteles Rhetorik und seinem Ethos-Logos-Pathos Triade und ein innovativer Ansatz zur Persuasion brachte durch Östman und seine Theorie der Persuasion als implizite Verankerung ergänzt. Schließlich sollte die Frage der Spezifität von Sprache und Persuasion in Bezug auf eine Untersuchung auf dem Gebiet der Mode auch die Frage der Bild hier zu berühren. Eine Stütze in dieser Richtung wird hier durch Barthes Sicht auf die Rhetorik des Bildes angeboten.

Die theoretische Analyse ist, wie bereits erwähnt, ergänzt durch eine praktische Untersuchung über das Thema, durch Interviews mit Experten durchgeführt. Angesichts der Forschung Thema, die interpretative Absichten der Arbeit und seine Aufmerksamkeit auf die sozio-kulturelle Aspekte ist ein qualitativer Ansatz in dem Verfahren der praktischen Unterricht hier angemessen. Die Interviews sind entworfen, um die wichtigsten Interessenlinien der Untersuchung zu reflektieren, um die anfängliche kritische Basis mit entsprechenden konkreten Erkenntnisse zu vervollständigen, jedoch sind die Fragen in dem Interview in einem offenen Design aufgebaut, so dass die Befragten genug Platz ihre Standpunkte zu entwickeln haben.

Die Wahl der Experten zeigt meine Absicht, verschiedene Perspektiven, aus den verschiedensten Bereichen in Bezug auf Mode-Marke Kommunikation zu binden, um einen reichen, diversen Stoff für die Untersuchung zu erhalten .

10.2. Addendum 2

Transcripts of the interviews

Carla Szabo – Fashion designer and manager of own label

Question 1

Carla: Language is made so that we understand each other, in general. We speak of a standardization of the objects, a standardization of emotions, of the visual so language in itself is a form mutually agreed to. Certainly there is a difference in communication from one brand to another just as there is a difference in communication between me and you. Communication in itself is a language mutually agreed to but what you communicate differs and is unique due to the individual that is behind the language. Just as a poem is differently written by X or Y specifically because that what it communicates is a sum of unique emotions and a sum of unique feelings, all acts are unique in their way.

Me: yes. You have pointed out very well the difference in language from one individual to another. But is there something here specific especially for fashion? Is there a difference between the way fashion brands communicate themselves and other types of brands, opposed in the field of activity...like a wood factory let's say?

Carla: I don't see them as opposed. I think it is the same thing in what regards the techniques of communication. That is, they all talk about who they are and they address a certain audience. That is if they know or not this public. Because there are companies that, due to their experience, can pinpoint the audience that they address or there are people that can only aim to address a certain public.

Me: so from your point of you, the techniques are the same, and the difference lies in the personality of the one that communicates.

Carla: Yes, something like that.

Question 2 and 3

Carla: Well everything is in a unity. Evidently, when the society changes...in fact, the origin of all things is something that escapes our control so to say. Nowhere in the evolution of human kind is it about control, there are many people that had the illusion of control, true, but the control did not exist...and what we can definitely speak of is movement...I don't believe in evolution, I believe in movement. Movement is the essence of life and if we would not speak of movement we would not speak of life, because something blocked, stopped would be something dead.

There is an obvious difference between brand communication in the 30s and brand communication now, because the society is different, the communication mediums are different, absolutely everything is different. That doesn't mean that now it is better or worse than how it used to be. You can speak of something better or worse when you speak of evolution and involution, but as I said I don't believe in this thing...it is just a dynamics.

I don't have very deep knowledge of branding so that I can tell you more about brand communication in general. Everything I have done, I have done instinctively, without a certain maturity, if I am to speak of my own career and my particular case, if this helps you.

Me: Yes, of course. I am searching specifically for these individual, personal approaches. Maybe the whole field of fashion is personal.

Carla: All domains are personal. Even wars are personal. And all changes in the society come from a personal basis. In the end, the man is the one that grabs the club to hit or the pencil to write. Action is made through the intervention of the human intervention. Thus the personal side is always present. Again, I see things more in the absolute. At a personal level they are all the same. Even a nail factory, or whatever other previous example you gave, is also lead by the hands of a manager, of his personality who decides how to communicate the product or not.

It is a misconception to believe that art is more personal than the others. Maybe it speaks more of emotion than something else. But it is also a personal action. As I was saying, the brand communication decisions made in a field less emotion-related doesn't eliminate the personal character, coming out of the individuality of the decision maker.

Me: Yes, I somehow agree with you in this. I realize that I have ventured in this research starting off with the same mis(conception) that there must be a strong specificity in the language of fashion brand communication because it is a truly unique field, but I seem to realize that it is hard to put my finger on exactly those specific elements of language of fashion. As you were saying it is a dynamics...

Carla: Any kind of notion that becomes fixed or as you say, to search for a certain specificity is actually to search for the death, that fixed, immobile element. But there are no fixed elements. They don't exist.

The mind is the only organ, the only phenomenon that happens at a universal level that has the "stop" function. How can I put this? The mind creates a higher dynamics. Is just like, for instance, when a wheel is spinning and you grab it and stop it and then you let it go again, then it spins even faster. The mind makes you stop in a certain moment in time and start to slowly analyze some things. If you lean only on the mind, the ego is created, and then this blocks you even more. Think about politics. When you say this is the truth for a Romanian, only Romania is good...the idea of nation is a form of death, a form of isolation, a form of blockage. The more you will see that people are trying to find notions you will see that this is another form of creating a still shot to a thing that is meant to flow. You see? You cannot say about yourself that "all my life I have been this way", it's the greatest aberration, because you have not been even over the course of a day the same person. Actually, the more you say about yourself "I am so", in fact you sentence yourself to death. You know? It means that you have remained *stuck* in a moment in time and space. You understand? Any form of specificity you would try to find would mean in fact that you are searching for a fixed point in a sea that is moving. And that, true, it is needed, as it gives you that pause you need, in which self-awareness comes up...otherwise you simply live...well, this can be discussed in both directions, both sides can be developed...I mean, you can be self-conscious even in movement but it is harder. It is like the difference between playing chess and surfing. It is one thing to try to search for a fixed point when you are in constant

movement and another thing to do this when sitting on a chair. And in fashion...yes, we can speak of fixed things, specific things but it is...I don't feel they are defining features...and tomorrow they can change. If there is someone with a tremendous vital energy, a future designer that has a great energy and imposes his personality, he creates a trend...or let's not say that he creates a trend as trends are more perverse than this, but he can create a new wave. He practically has more personality to impose his vital energy than is itself, what? A moment in time. And the others take him as reference point, but they themselves are not fixed like him. They have maybe a part of him that they may share...and what did they create together? Another fixed point. Let's think of impressionism for example. This was at a certain point caged in a notion, yes? "This is impressionism!" But the respective painters...they have painted in so many different ways. But they chose to be in that frame exactly on the branding idea that is now. You are more easily spotted if you belong to a category. Why? Because language is a convention...and conventions create rigid forms through which we all can stop at once in the same spot. Otherwise we would all wonder chaotically, you know? Think of it this way: we are like rocks, which all have different sides and move continually. The moment these rocks match up on one side, fit together, they are stuck and they move together...then they have a common side...but then bam! They change again and some other rocks find some other side where they match...and they have the feeling of being bigger. It is no longer only my opinion as a rock but also your opinion as a rock ...and we have created a larger rock. This rock never stays the same; it is in a constant change. You can have the luck to fit with someone, but then in this dynamics comes another point and all forms of aggregation change.

Me: So, taking this into consideration, does this mean that you wouldn't necessarily resonate with the idea of cyclicity in fashion brand communication? That each moment has its uniqueness?

Carla: Depends on the moment in life you find yourself. Me for example, I find myself in a moment when I need more peace. Because I've had a period of hectic work and agitation diversity has fed me. Or better said, I have had enough energy to feed diversity. When the vital energy is weakened, you prefer to stop, thus, to be in a frame. A frame that limits and defines you. Why? Because when I communicate through my brand "pink with green dots", everybody, when they will want pink with green dots, will remember me. "Aha! Pinkwithgreendots.com...that is where I find pink with green dots!" But if I am in a continual

movement, I consume a lot of the energy of the others, because I consume both from me and from the others, because it is a thing that moves constantly. Well, the moment I stop this entity, Bam! This is me! Tanaaaaaa! That is a moment in time and that remains in the memory and the more I repeat myself, the more that image repeats itself, the more you are easier recognized.

Me: So that would be an advantage?

Carla: There is no advantage or disadvantage. It's the same principle of dichotomy. This is again a rigid form of thinking. You can't say that it is either good or bad. It is what it is. Meaning in that moment in time, the sum of elements that represents that being in that moment in time. You know, the Buddhists have a saying that I find brilliant in this context and in general as well: the mind that compares is a mind that suffers. You can't compare the horse with the donkey. No being resembles the other. You can't even compare the beings with themselves.

Question 4

Carla: I see things quite more in the absolute. I search for the roots of things in general whenever I do anything. Even when we speak right now like this. Maybe my view is a bit philosophic and somehow I address beyond notions and somehow to the more simple mechanisms of life itself, meaning ...there is someone who wants to live and comes and says "I am this!"...for instance, if it is a mushroom and says "I am a mushroom, and I am good at...stew, bla, bla, etc" It is very important to know who you are firstly. You can communicate articulately enough only when you know very well who you are...and here comes up an issue that I myself face: I am a sum of things, because through the nature of my craft I accumulate...not accumulate..I perceive all the changes that happen around me and I manifest them as such...meaning... over the course of the history of my career as designer the way in which I expressed myself has been fairly different. Very different. Because I did not rationalize the emotion. It was simply emotion. I felt in a certain way and I manifested that accordingly. A true brand communication means to *chose* which part of yourself you want to communicate and to focus on that so that the others can identify you by a certain thing/something. If you are a river that flows, all that you will see is something that flows. The moment you stop...you can say...I don't know, maybe it is not the best metaphor, but the idea is that.

Question 5

Carla: I think it is driven by both. As I was saying, we are a whole, a unity of all elements and moments. We function both by internal and external coordinates. Indeed, the socio-cultural context leaves a strong mark on brand communication, but just as well the uniqueness of the internal triggers is reflected in it.

Question 6

Carla: No. Conflict appears when there is an alterity, a second one that observes, analyses and judges. Not when we speak of identity or nature. Things are not conflictive in themselves, but when an exterior entity appears with which one can enter into conflict. There is a dynamics not a conflict. As I was saying, we are the sum of many things, experiences, perceptions. They don't shape themselves as conflicts within us...it's a diversity, a dynamical one...that doesn't create disruption, on the contrary it moves and unites.

Question 7

Carla: In regards to art and the beautiful...yes I could say that fashion, through its object of activity, having an aesthetic product in view, is more inclined to make use of art and beauty in its communication. But that is that. Simply a logical, natural tendency, corroborated with its field associated to aesthetics. This doesn't mean that other type of brands can't make use of art or beauty in their communication.

Also fashion makes use in particular of the visual. And through that it reaches to an aesthetic sense also.

To the question of whether fashion is an art or not...yes, maybe one could say that fashion is art in the idea that, as I was saying in the beginning, fashion maybe expresses more strongly than other fields an emotion, it communicates more a feeling and through this perhaps we can associate it more with art.

If art maybe self-sufficient, in design you have to identify yourself with an audience you target and this imposes some limits and frames. Design is the way in which you address this audience in your personal manner. For instance if you want to address teenagers that have the tendency to scratch around their left nostril. And the studies show that in order to scratch your left nostril there is a certain ergonomics that needs to be respected by the object with which you would scratch the left nostril, I as designer can then create an object that must respect these ergonomics and to these lines imposed I will add and suffuse my own creativity. Fashion is not limitless creativity. There is always a context, a frame, a need that guides the art among others.

Regarding the use of rational versus irrational in its communication, I think fashion brands involve both. Maybe the rational side is stronger because it is a purpose oriented communication, but I think both sides are speculated.

Me: And finally, regarding moral/immoral?

Carla: Well...I'm not sure this is a coordinate to be taken into consideration here. It is true that fashion in its workings is close to the idea of body and through that it can generate a discussion on moral. But it is not a moral in the religious sense, the Christian sense, rather one of personal value that would apply here. And here again comes the point I was making previously, that everything is personal. What is moral to me will not necessarily be moral to you. For instance I think we should all walk around naked all the time. Not many would agree to that.

I personally don't think of moral when I create or in my brand communication. It's not a coordinate I take into consideration. But as I was saying earlier I can see why it could be a subject of speculation in relation to fashion.

Question 8

Carla: Bottega Veneta and how Maier managed to transform the company from a luxury brand associated to leather craft especially handbags, to a full-fledged fashion house incorporating all lines from women's and man's wear, accessories and all. It's not an easy thing to do, expand the brand image so much without losing the essential elements on which this historic brand was constructed. Finding a balance between the defining dynamics I was telling you earlier, to which

we are all subjected and a conscious through which we want to express our self, our brand, that would be the element of success.

Question 9

Carla: I don't think the intentions differ in fashion, just the discourse. As I said, the personality of the "speaker", the uniqueness of the moment. Fashion brand follow the same purposes any other brands would follow in their communication, but each discourse is unique in itself.

Nadiré Omer - owner and designer for Lady Magpie (accessories label)

Question 1

Nadiré: A certain fact in fashion brand communication is that you have to speak either about you as a designer, or about you as a brand. As it is in my case, my brand is a kind of mask that I show. Lady Magpie - the brand is called so because it wants to represent my artistic person. Somehow it characterizes me as a self. I am attracted by materials. I started my career by discovering some materials that have amazed me and I have done some things with them. From this point of view I am a magpie, about which it is said that it steals everything that is shiny.

So yes, you communicate something about yourself as the creator. But I think all brands do that, right? Any brand has a history. And after that, you communicate through each collection, new concepts that are somehow extensions or expressions in different registers of this creative personality.

Me: So from your point of view the distinctive touch in fashion brand communication would be this personal, individual approach of each designer behind the brand?

Nadiré: Yes. But only when this personality exists. If you are a very large brand, somehow this personality is lost. If I were a huge brand and would have many designers working for me creating several collections from their perspective, this personal approach would be somehow lost and then the brand identity would be more constructed, established than an expression of the creative personality behind it.

Visual support is also something specific to fashion communication in general.

In regards to the difference between brand communication in fashion and in other domains, I don't know. I can't pinpoint something exactly. I think the difference lies in small details. I think the domain of fashion is so large that in the end the way you communicate depends on where you situate yourself in the industry. If you are a super-brand you communicate in one way ...yeah...everything is based on the target and the moment. I mean there are several small brooks that you can transform into rivers...so that you reach areas that have not been reached before. In the end it is marketing. I mean, what are we searching for? Profit! If you see it as a business in the end this is what we are looking for.

Me: Do you see it as a business?

Nadiré: I see it **also** as a business. I have to. It is a must. But I don't follow only this criterion.

I think there is a vocabulary of words that are predominantly used in fashion for instance, but I don't think I make use of it. I let the product more to speak for itself. But it is not necessarily the best way. And from what I've seen it is usually more profitable to use more pretentious words and invest more in wrapping the product in a more intricate discourse than to let it communicate itself directly.

In my products, although I have changed sometimes radically with each collection, it is about keeping a certain essence, a certain structure that is only mine and reflects my brand and to which people associate me. It actually came naturally. It is something after which people recognize me and through which I keep myself in a unity, regardless of the constant change.

Questions 2 and 3

Nadiré: I don't follow the trends but somehow in the end it happens that the result of my work is in the trend...The trend follows me.

I haven't studied the market so well in order to observe whether there is a degree of cyclicity in communication or not. Certainly, the sources of inspiration are... as I say...tremendously varied combinations.

I am convinced there are several trends. I mean. Someone has observed a river flowing in a region and the others have realized they could follow that river and they could transform it into a larger river. I don't know...I don't think there is cyclicity in communication. Maybe, again, when it comes to really large brands that somehow seem to return to classical forms of success. But that is because things are very well established there and the people that take care of these things there are also very well set ...but for small brands no...there are always some pioneers that "smell" a new, innovative way of communicating, a new territory to exploit, which is then adopted by the rest. These are usually the "big fish" because they are the ones that can afford experts to analyze tendencies and find opportunities. But this doesn't mean that there aren't small brands that find interesting ways to communicate.

Evanesence is a feature specific to fashion. This continual search of the new. And this reflects also in its communication. We are constantly reinventing our language. The channels may be the same but the discourse is as flexible and moving as life and the perishable nature of fashion.

Question 4

Nadiré: As I was saying, I don't consider myself very much to be part of the fashion field. Some put me in this category but I don't see myself as that. And this is also because I consider fashion a field closer to the surface, the shallow, and not necessarily something to do with the self and identity or essence. We speak of a wrapping, a package that doesn't necessarily contain something. But...I am sure there are also here in fashion areas of depth that probably are not enough communicated.

For me communicating is also a challenge on which I try to work now. I communicate only the minimum necessary for my collections and this may send the wrong message. Because behind each of my collections there is a very personal story. And I so far have never communicated more than a minimum something that can only hint to this story and not reach its depths. And probably others do the same.

Question 5

Nadiré: I think it depends on all that. We are an organism. We can't function without being influenced both by the exterior and our inner dynamics.

Question 6

Nadiré: Yes. I think it does have a conflictive nature and this is felt in its communication. I think the conflict comes from the fact that fashion wants to be something beautiful, something artistic, but at the same time it has to be profitable.

It is a feeling. The designer, as the painter is just an instrument to intermediate a feeling. It is a very personal field. When we perceive a fashion item, we explore it through our own personal universe. It is this kind of connection. The product tells a story that somehow resonates with you and it can tell you a million more things than what the creator wanted to transmit through it.

We are perceptive entities. We are endowed with these senses. Can't escape them. And what happens beyond the senses, from the senses, is absolutely personal.

Me: so you can't speak of objectiveness when it comes to communication?

Nadiré: You can be objective if you know Commander Data (laughs). He can be objective.

Question 7

Nadiré: I think it is a continual fight. Both to do art and to not do art. Because each designer that starts to work on this would like to do art and in some moments it does do art. But sometimes it

has to compromise and do what it is asked of him. It depends on where he works. I myself also have to adapt to the requests of my client. Where you draw the line between art and non-art it is hard to say. I mean...it depends on the amount of feeling you invest in that product. Then one could say it is art. But if you construct that product following certain “coordinates” then it is a different story. You have to give it a feeling, a certain touch.

Regarding rational/irrational, I think it is a mix, a magic mix. You use both. And the recipe is successful or not. Yes, maybe some have a recipe although I think they constantly have to reinvent it as at some point it stops working. And you have to find a new ingredient to insert in the mix. Communication is like a tangling of waves and making use of these is very diverse. Some dream, some are inspired, some are well informed. It is both rational and irrational.

Moral/immoral - This is debatable.

Me: Do you think it is a coordinate that you don’t take into account in your work.

Nadiré: No. I do. I for instance, don’t use elements of animal origin in my creations. Or I don’t want to use gold, precisely for this reason. Because its extraction creates pollution. Very few people understand this. I have close friends that still argue with me why I don’t use gold.

Question 8

Nadiré: An example of success in Romania would be MLH - Maria Lucia Hohan. She currently makes use in her brand communication of celebrity endorsement. Famous figures from Hollywood who wear her clothes. This sells. It could be one of the finalities. This use of celebrities is somehow specific to fashion in general and more exploited here.

Question 9

Nadiré: The main purpose is, as for each brand, to be productive. To sell. After this, there are a few, let’s say, sub-purposes, that may be specific to fashion. I don’t think actually that we could say they are purposes. They are more like means, path. But the purpose is the same in the end.

Ana Bucur - Brand Manager Gucci Romania

Question 1

Ana: From my point of view, brand communication in fashion has elements in common with brand communication in other fields, because these are recipes that apply also to fashion. The particularity in what regards communication in fashion and the thing that I see more and more used lately here, especially in the niche of luxury brands that I know better and where I can come with more precise examples, is differentiating the brand through the fundamental values through which the brand was built and that for a long time have been set aside, for instance in the 80s-90s where communication was more focused on the immediate profit and after that, given the fact that the competition on the market is quite high and the brands fight for the same segment of consumers, brands have started to differentiate themselves through the initial values to which all have started to return gradually. This was seen in their communication campaigns where they all started to bring to light old archives, items that have been long forgotten, this trend of brand museums began, where these were transformed into communication instruments, because no one thinks that this is an extension of the brand or a point of revenue, but simply as an instrument to communicate. As it was clearly seen at Ferragamo or Gucci or other brands. It was interesting when these campaigns appeared. And even now, if you look, you will see that there are two campaigns that are conducted in parallel, there is the selling-oriented campaign and the image campaign. The image campaign that wants to strengthen that element of uniqueness and differentiation of the brand and the campaign oriented to sell that is that known campaign with the same gorgeous models, dressed in the key pieces of the collection in a deluxe setup and so on. So I think this would be a specific element here. Again I speak from the perspective of the niche I represent, of luxury brands, although I am sure that if you would look to other brands you might see the same trend in communication.

Another particularity might be the use of the visual. Fashion by definition communicates through the visual. In the end fashion represents a series of drawings on a paper that are turned into a finite product. It is clear that it is a domain in large communicated and consumed visually.

Fashion, although it is considered a quite vanguardist and daring field, or that field that rapidly catches trends and takes them out of the streets and brings them into the shops and that here people experiment a lot and play a lot, being a field that allows a play taken to the extremes etc, I don't think it is a field that is that daring in communication as it could be or as it would seem when seen from the outside. Again, I speak here of my niche in fashion as you can't compare the way H&M communicates with the way Chanel communicates, each having their audience, their instruments and their means. Actually, if you look over the lines of communication of several brands in the same segment, like luxury, you will see that the things are quite the same, a bit reinterpreted maybe from one season to another, but as communication, as innovation in communication, it is not a field that would be represented by that. I don't know, maybe a brand like Prada has had a few more interesting initiatives, more peculiar, several collaborations with some more vanguardist artists. But otherwise, luxury brands think that it is better to hold on to a safe approach and they don't have necessarily the most daring campaigns.

Questions 2 and 3

Ana: As I was saying earlier, yes, trends can be identified in what regards brand communication in fashion. As I was telling you in the beginning, we can observe a return to the values of the brand. Those fundamental values on which the brand was constructed and that, if in the beginning were simply the effort of the person that established the brand that was taking the initiative, now it represents a capital value that the brand uses. There are numerous brands that turn to this and the industry is starting to polarize itself a bit, because there are brands as Gucci for instance for whom a large part of their beginnings was dictated by their specific, as leather goods like travel bags or horse-riding accessories and now they return a lot to this area. And they return not only through communication but also through products. Meaning there are limited editions, capsule-collections, inspired from the old times, when they were creating saddles and harnesses etc. Recently they have returned to the image of Grace Kelly, that was a character that has influenced greatly the heritage of the Gucci brand over the course of the years and now the latest image campaign of ours, the one of prestige image, is Charlotte Casiraghi. Somehow this also represents a cycle. From Grace Kelly to Charlotte Casiraghi, in a way, a circle was closed.

Yes, evidently it exists...fashion is first and foremost defined by evanescence. We all know what the cycle of a collection, of a season is. For some time, there are no longer two collections per year, but 4 collections per year. Because besides those 2 spring/summer, fall/winter, those intermediary collections were invented – cruise and pre-fall, that have entered the fashion circuit very quickly, because from a commercial point of view they represented some gaps to be covered over the course of a year. Hence there are 4 collections per year that are each consumed in 3 months. Evidently, communication from this point of view has to be even more dynamic. Each collection has a different campaign, so each campaign lasts for a very short time and has a short interval to be assimilated by the public, so everything receives a very high pace. Fashion has always been a very dynamic industry, where everything must happen very quickly otherwise you miss the train and this reflects on your business.

And from the perspective of this cyclicity, I don't predict any change. Things will probably stay the same or will become even more accelerated. It has been only one example of straying from this lately, which proved unsuccessful, that is Tom Ford who was stubborn and decided he wants to ignore this season-oriented approach and this pace and decided he will do only one collection per year and that would be the one, presented at the beginning of the season to which it would be devoted...and...it was a total failure and in the end he returned to the commercial formula that everyone respects. In the end, no matter how artistic and beautiful the domain may be it is a business that must sell.

Question 4

Ana: Fashion is an industry; arranged on several levels. What unites them all is the fact that it is a well defined mechanism, some trends that are reflected in all from mass-market brands to luxury ones. In the end they all run in the same direction. If you want to define fashion in a very large perspective you could say maybe that it gives you some tendencies, some variations and some seasonal cycles that are rapidly consumed. Otherwise, I don't know...it would be very hard to try to find an essence, an identity, a self for fashion in general. It has too many sub-divisions and nuances.

Question 5

Ana: I think it is influenced by both spheres. On the one hand the interior dynamics is reflected, on the other hand each brand has to adapt to the reality in which their consumer grows, because otherwise they lose sight of the purpose of the brand communication.

Question 6

Ana: No, not necessarily. As I was saying I think it is a very dynamic field but I don't consider it a conflicting one. Things are quite clear. It is a business that follows some pretty predictable and well defined coordinates.

Question 7

Ana: Fashion is not art. I know there is this romantic theory, but fashion is not art. It's a business, an industry and like any industry it must sustain itself. Art is nice in design schools, on the runways of the graduates, after that... the best example in this would be Gareth Pugh that has stirred the interest of the fashion industry through his collections as a student, but after that when he had to transform his fantasies into a business, things changed dramatically. I mean if we look at his graduation collection and his commercial collection, these are maybe not totally opposite things, because you can still see the same structure in his creative thinking, but we speak of a series of items that are much more commercial and that must end up in the hands of some people, that must be worn. That is why I will never agree to the theories that say that fashion is an art. It is an industry...that, unlike the industry of drilling let's say, is based on a certain degree of aesthetics, but in no way do I find it correct to define fashion as an art. Yes, it is close to art, it has many elements in common with art, the fact that each collection starts from some sketches, a series of creative ideas, not from a necessity. Practically, I think this would differentiate it from other industries.

Regarding beauty and fashion...I don't think beauty is relevant here. I mean beautiful for Gucci is not the same as beauty in general. Each brand has a different aesthetic interpretation. Yet, beauty is relative up to a point. If you look at the images used by all brands you will see that no one goes to the extremes. I mean aesthetics remains somewhere in a common balance point. Now, each

brand varies this point according to its particularities and the inspiration of the creative director, but this doesn't mean that they are fundamentally different in what regards aesthetics. Beautiful for Gucci probably means pretty much the same things as it does for Ferragamo or Prada. If you check out a bit the campaigns, the runways, things are not fundamentally different. What is aesthetic remains somehow within the same limits...with a few small variations. Again, I speak here of the luxury brands, I can't say for the rest..

On fashion versus rational/irrational...well, the rational side is never targeted in fashion, at least by these luxury brands. This would be the case for a brand like H&M, who would communicate that in this outfit the jeans are 6 Euros, let's say. That's the rational side, that you make the math and consider this a good price. In the niche of premium and deluxe brands there is no such thing. There you appeal strictly to emotion, aiming that the targeted person would resonate and respond to the message you send out.

For moral/immoral - I think this is a coordinate that has nothing to do with fashion. At least in the fashion with which I work. This is not a problem. I think this is a discussion point only for someone that would desperately want to bring out this argument. It doesn't link naturally to fashion.

Question 8

Ana: Burberry is an example. This was maybe the first brand in this niche that understood the importance of digital communication and social media and last generation tools and technology. They are probably the first that did live streaming in their shops of collections presented on the runways, they did runway shows with closed circuits, broadcasted again through live streaming to consumers that had Ipads and could set orders immediately and so on and so forth. They did an excellent job there and there are numerous case studies on them in what regards digital communication in the field of luxury fashion. A few years ago they also had a very interesting campaign, regarding what I was saying earlier about returning to the fundamental values of the brand and those authentic items that give credibility to the brand. Burberry was and remains a brand with a large trigger, respectively the trench coat - as an iconic product, easily identifiable as belonging to the brand. And they had a digital project on "the art of trench". So Burberry does a

very good job and this was quickly reflected also in the numbers, resuscitating the brand. Because it managed to keep the target and to win another one and to reposition itself very quickly because it had entered a shadowy spot and was going downward in the moment they started this refreshing campaign, that succeeded.

Question 9

Ana: By and large I think the purposes are few and clear in this area of brand communication, as I was saying. Because luxury brands no longer try to make a statement through their communication. They already ARE a statement. Thus what it is searched here is the emphasis and enforcement of a statement already existing on a market, guarding the respective target they have already gained and having the brand to be recognized as authority in the respective field, as each fight for a very narrow slice of the market, whether it is leather, or innovations in a certain something, etc. So this way things are quite simple. But I repeat, if you look over the campaigns in the last 5 years you will see that differences come only in this area of image communication, that are parallel campaigns solely with the purpose to emphasize the idea of heritage, the fact that you position yourself on a market well, for a very long time and the guarantee of the quality and so on. But, otherwise, I don't think there are different lines followed.

Maurice Munteanu and Domnica Margescu – Fashion editors at Elle magazine Romania

Question 1

Maurice: The moment you want to communicate your fashion brand, first and foremost you have to know who your target audience is. You have to succeed in creating a kind of psychological profile of the client and not only, then an extremely well defined profile of the brand. This means

of course...target, niche...especially in fashion you have to know very well where you situate yourself. This is where I would start from.

Domnica: I don't know. Maybe specific to fashion branding is the fact that you have to build up a story around what you communicate. Or if you are a brand like Chanel you use the history of the brand.

Me: but do you feel these apply only to fashion? They are specific only to the discourse used in fashion brand communication?

Maurice: In fashion there exists no specific language. A specific language in fashion represents the death of any brand.

Domnica: Exactly!

Maurice: It's more about an attitude. It's about fun. You have to constantly make fun of things. And to lie very well to the people. Because in the end what are we talking about here? About 3 rugs that end up in a closet. This is what fashion is now. You have to know how to lie, and to make fun of things, to make money out of it. One of the most accessible ways here is an aggressive promotion that makes use of all channels, including those virtual. Everything from blogs, Facebook, and so on. The moment you start to communicate.

Domnica: But it depends on the brand. I mean, it is not a general way to do things. You may use the same techniques that you use for any other brand, but in fashion you adapt them to the brand. If it has a history or not, if it is fun or not, if it's a serious brand...it depends who you address to. There is no specific way to do things.

Question 2 and 3

Maurice: This moment, if you want me to be honest, I think fashion has reached a dead end. Firstly, the market is ultra, hyper-crowded with brands that have no identity, that are all the same, that don't say anything. Currently fashion means very cheap things, currently fashion means Zara, 90 something % of the population of the planet gets dressed from Zara and H&M and 2% maybe buys something else. Let's say 5 % so that it doesn't sound dramatic. So, "smart" communication

or if you want to understand a trend in communication you have to think very well about what these brands mean, Zara, H&M, Pull and Bear. The fashion client, I mean of “fashion” in what it truly means...you don’t enter into contact with him. You never see him. Or if you see him...I don’t know he reaches you through...it’s an utopia. The people you know, the people around you are not fashion consumers, because Zara and H&M is not fashion. And then, what are the trends in communication? For luxury brands there is no direct communication. They communicate differently. There you arrive, you are invited in the office, they serve you champagne. Or look at the late French campaigns that were run: funny pictures, an unconventional approach, shots in underground alleyways...at this point fashion communication can mean anything. It can mean an sms that you send to all that is very funny, very smart and cool, it can mean an event where balloons explode and you don’t see any piece of clothing, it can mean a runway show in a garage...it can mean anything except the type of classical communications as flyers or leaflets with presentations...these belong to the past, they are no longer used. So communication in fashion can mean anything. Actually communication in general nowadays can mean anything. You communicate anyhow. You communicate everything. That is communication nowadays.

Domnica: Yes, my views are the same. Communication nowadays has a wide spectrum. You can make use of anything. So It’s hard to indentify a trend in this.

Question 5

Maurice: It is very hard for me to talk about a socio-cultural environment in which a brand develops. Because most of the people that work in fashion are not naturally preoccupied with these things. These are people that don’t necessarily have connections to this, although this is a paradox and they seem to do have. If we want to analyze, to look over anthropological details...these don’t exist here. These are nuances. Things are very simple. A price is established. From here starts everything. The price is very important. If a product costs 1500 euro there is a type of communication, if it costs 15 euro, there is another one. From here starts everything. The socio-cultural environment, nuances and para-nuances, these don’t exist. They are myths. They are things that are put out front and used to emphasize the idea of a brand, that are in the end just

soap bubbles that burst at first touch. What is the socio-cultural environment? To be inspired and influenced by regional aspects? Or by traditions?

Me: Not necessarily. I mean any external factors. The society as a whole, as it is. You were saying earlier that one of the most important things in fashion brand communication is to know your public. And the public is the society right?

Maurice: The public is illiterate. A large part of it is, so to say, illiterate. So you can't provide him this kind of approach, rooted. This is a mistake. There are these brands that go a lot in this direction, somehow leftist, but this is a mistake. This goes well maybe with the French public...or not even...with the Parisian public. There is no such thing as a public for fashion that has a certain level. Nothing. Fashion as I told you earlier is now Zara and H&M. Full stop! Everywhere in the world, not only in Romania. These are all myths with fashion that circulates...Who has still codified messages in 2012? Maison Martin Margiela?

Domnica: I think a mix can be obtained. Look for instance at the collaborations H&M has done with Margiela, with Lanvin, with Marni. This was a mix. It brought to larger audiences the products of luxury brands that the people wouldn't normally have access to.

Maurice: I think it is at limit. They have by not having.

Me: and this is a successful example?

Domnica: Yes

Maurice: Not necessarily. I think long term for the luxury brands this is not a good move. It's a sort of de-mythisation. It's like buying a Picasso from Ikea.

Domnica: I disagree. It's not the same. Because they also gain a public. A buyer from this line of H&M buys this now and after years when he grows older and maybe up on the social scale and can afford a Margiela, he will buy Margiela right? And I consider it a good thing also only from the perspective that it educates the people, the public.

Maurice: The stupidest things that you can do in 2013 is to think that fashion is something sophisticated and to communicate your messages in a sophisticated way. If you want to communicate in a sophisticated manner you start up in a different field: surgery, automatics,

compared literature...there you can communicate in a sophisticated manner. This attempt to enter into the anthropology or the archeology of the moment in fashion...that anyhow doesn't exist. You can't communicate something very sophisticated and in a very utopian, ethereal manner, when you work in fashion. This could have been done maybe 40 or 35 years ago, when...it was Yves Saint Laurent...these were people that were doing fashion

Domnica: in the 50s

Maurice: They had a market, a lifestyle; it was the place where these things were born. Now, what are we talking about? 3 rugs from H&M with 15 euro, that are immediately destroyed...That is not fashion.

Me: Do you see any way back to those times, and that true fashion

Maurice: No. No. It's lost.

Domnica: Yes, but this is a trait of the society we live in. It's consumerism.

Maurice: Yes. Fast-food. Because in fashion it's also fast-food.

Questions 4 and 6

Maurice: There is a tendency in Romanian fashion for instance to communicate through a very pompous language but the product does not reflect this and doesn't deliver most of the times. Press releases are a catastrophe.

Domnica: In fashion in general; and in Romania in particular.

Maurice: And then it is very hard for me to talk of a de-contextualizing. Of what? The nothing into nothingness?

The conflicting nature comes up from my point of view, in this moment, when the designers don't know who they are, don't know who their brand is, and they communicates things that are extremely passé and very pompous. Evidently there appears a conflict here. Firstly, a conflict between me and my brand.

Domnica: They just want it to sound well. Not to reflect the brand necessarily. It's a discrepancy between surface and essence.

Maurice: Let me give you an example I have just seen in a recent press release. Such exaggerated language. What does "asceticism" has to do with clothes? You tell me! Someone copied a phrase "la blouse roumaine", that was invented by Yves Saint Laurent and created a new brand and they communicate that with an idea of a woman that finds refuge through asceticism. Why? What is this? Is she going to the monastery? Is she a nun? The reincarnation of a nun?

They use empty words that talk about empty brands.

Domnica: They don't communicate anything. It doesn't mean anything in fact.

Question 7

Maurice: What connection could there be between art and fashion brand communication.

Domnica: Come on, Maurice, there is a clear one! Fashion is an art. Let's think only of its use of the visual, the photography. Those are artistic. Which would say fashion is an art.

Maurice: I wouldn't say fashion is an art

Domnica: Oh, really Maurice! In some contexts it can become an art. For instance a piece of clothing put in a certain setting telling a story, photographed by an artist of photography can be considered a form of art.

Maurice: maybe you could say that crafts are a form of applied art.

Domnica: and haute couture

Maurice: Haute couture is a form of tailoring of high class

Domnica: I see it as art. We ourselves has an issue dedicated to fashion as art.

Maurice. What was the next concept?

Me: Beauty. The beautiful

Maurice: Communication in fashion can be both beautiful and ugly, aggressive or calm. It depends where you want to go and what you want to transmit.

Me: So it's not a defining element for fashion brand communication

Maurice: No

Domnica: Yes. This is true. But also the whole "vocabulary" used in fashion communication has a connection to aesthetics. But not necessarily a direct one. Not necessarily fashion = beautiful. Not necessarily fashion= art. It depends on the context; it depends on the designer. For instance about Vivienne Westwood you can't necessarily say that she does a beautiful fashion. Not beautiful in the classical sense. Everything is very subjective. It's very hard to give verdicts in fashion. It's the same with moral/immoral. Some might consider a shooting beautiful or moral, others immoral and ugly. It depends.

Me: And on rational/irrational?

Maurice: If you speculate the irrational you will catch exactly that segment of people that don't work necessarily for the money. There was a study in Britain that came to the conclusion that the countries where people buy the most prêt-à-porter products are: Russia, the Arab Emirates and many of the countries from the former Russian Federation. These are women sustained by their husbands mostly. These clothes are clothes that me or Domnica let's say wouldn't buy. Well precisely these are the ones that are most sold. So of course you can speculate the irrational and create wonderful stories that will function to those people that don't necessarily have a very realistic stake in life. It's more like a periphery of the rational. The people that don't necessarily understand the value of money, or that don't have aesthetic values well established. Here the irrational can function.

Domnica: It's illogical to communicate something using the irrational.

Maurice: Only when it comes to the idea of a story

Domnica: Yes

Question 8

Maurice: I personally liked the communication of Margiela, before it was bought by Lorenzo Rosso. For me, in that moment in time, in that epoch, it was the most creative message. They had an extremely niche-oriented communication, that reflected well the brand essence, as not anyone will buy Margiela. Starting from their showroom in Paris, that was mesmerizing, it was the most beautiful showroom I have ever seen in my life, ending with the runways show, the way these shows were organized, the invitations for these shows, the whole crew, the whole team that was dressed in white robes, you didn't know if they were doctors or what they were doing there. Plus at Margiela the cuttings, the decoupage of the clothing is a signature mark. The products that is sold is the main object of communication for a brand. The main message that Margiela sent out was the exquisite product that Margiela did. This decoupage...well if others have been returning to older patters, Margiela kept inventing and inventing new decoupages from nothing.

Domnica: I particularly like the way Stella McCartney communicates. What and how she communicates. Everything is very natural, simple, nothing is forced. It reflects very well the designs and the personality of the designer behind it. It is a very sincere communication and it doesn't contradict the product or the brand. It's a symbiosis between the two that I think is a key to success.

Question 9

Maurice: I think the people that work in fashion, I mean in that system, in that culture, are unhappy people. Look at the blogosphere of fashion. Or what psychoanalysts would say. Like it was the case with those people in Japan and the manga and electronic games craze, spending tens of hours playing. The same is the case with the fashionistas that can only talk about dresses and shoes, and that are unhappy because in this world of fashion, where lines change quickly and they can't afford the pieces they would want they try to steal these outfits by patching up pieces of clothing from Zara and H&M. What could you communicate to these people? Nothing! This is why it is very easy to succeed in fashion. If you are cheeky. Cheekiness is the main form of communication in fashion. And if this comes on an arid ground that has no background: Perfect! This is the key to success. See, with this we should have started the discussion. This is the distinctive element.

Domnica: I don't necessarily agree. Yes there are cases, but again I think it depends on context. There are many examples of success that don't come like this. It's important not to generalize. There are some purposes that all brands follow, but after that, each story is different. I don't think brand communication is done differently in fashion, but after the first stage, the first effort of communication, you try to personalize it.

Amalia Nastase- managing partner at Eventures (PR agency)

Question 1

Amalia: I can speak from the perspective of my experience with our fashion clients and what I have observed in other brands. Our fashion clients, the majority of them, have chosen to communicate through special projects. For instance designers that have launched themselves have thought that their only chance is to choose to use the association with the image of well-known actors or singers. The same direction I saw also in H&M. H&M doesn't have anything else to communicate because they have already communicated "low prices" and so they communicate the same, Lana del Ray, they communicate famous designers that associate with them, so both our Romanian clients but also large labels I have seen make use of this celebrity endorsement tool in their communication. Everyone wants to be unique so then they try to take on someone with a unique personality that they can customize to their brand and that reflects their brand essence.

In the case of other types of brand the qualities of the product are the ones that are communicated mainly, whereas in fashion you don't communicate the qualities of the products but rather a moodboard as we would say in advertising, a series of images. In a H&M campaign they will never communicate in a campaign about the fabrics, or their features, the same a designer will never say "buy this because it is cotton or something else". You can no longer really differentiate yourself through the quality and features of the product and then you differentiate yourself

through what it translates. I mean it translates a life style. For instance if you dress like Lana del Ray you might be able to live like Lana del Ray. In other fields, let's say in the food brands, they may from time to time take on a celebrity to associate with their brand but even then that celebrity will communicate the qualities of the product. Nadia Comaneci for instance, in the margarine commercial, "buy this because I also give it to my son". This doesn't make you feel like Nadia, but through the fact that she has confidence in this product you buy it too. In fashion you don't have these features to communicate...it's different

Me: Would it be than fair to say, from this perspective, that one of these specific elements in fashion brand communication is illusion?

Amalia: Yes. It's the life style that you imagine you would have wearing these clothes. Look for instance at Adidas, they are also our clients. They have started to communicate a lot through celebrities. After them, the other brands also started doing that, in their line, but they were the first with Beckham, etc. They have mixed the old with the new in order to give a new twist to their brand "Original" and expended this. Because in the end people don't want to buy the best snickers...yes, of course there are also these technologies that are communicated and pointed out for their quality in their campaigns but mostly the focus in on the celebrities. Beckham, Katie Perry, famous hip-hoppers.

So this is what I think is the common element in fashion communication. Choosing life styles, choosing celebrities.

Question 2

Amalia: I think lately a lot is communicated in the digital. Digital communication is vital for brands. Except the case when you are Chanel or alike and you have Fashion Week in Paris and Vogue and all the rest, it is crucial to communicate online. And time is compressed in online. You have to have a very active presence. It's not like appearing in Vogue, that is once a month. Online is every day.

One of our clients is Burberry and I was looking at they are very active in the digital. Ever since digital communication entered our life, everything changed. And fashion labels have created very unconventional campaigns, because, again, you can't use here the same photos with models, because everyone has them. Everyone wants to create personalized initiative that go in the direction of unique experiences. That are usually based on life style.

Although the communication in the online is easily perishable, this doesn't mean that high-end brands, luxury brands for instance will trivialize their discourse in the online as to keep up with the speed. On the contrary, they keep their line. It is very important for a brand not to stray from the main line they have established and to have a strategy to which they must hold on.

Burberry for instance, they gave some guidelines that for us Romanians, some are hard to understand or not relevant, but for them it is vital that their established line to continue as it is. If I want to take an article or to post something on the Facebook page of Burberry I need just as many approvals as I would need if I wanted to move to London. It is very important to have this unity and I appreciate this a lot. The same with H&M or others. Some brands like Adidas are a bit more lenient in the idea that they allow the local market to deviate a bit the communication lines of the brand, and let us use the country specificity in some cases, but otherwise brand communication is done in a very clear and structured manner.

Question 3

Amalia: Trends are set by some people, some organizations in fashion, that meet and establish what will happen in fashion in the next two years, what will be resurrected, reinvented, what fabrics, etc. That we don't all know about. All designers create based on their originality but follow also some guidelines, some trends. There are studies on how the society goes, what people are asking for. But there are of course exceptions that break these barriers. There is a saying here that if every campaign would have followed a brief, the studies, that the I-phone would have never existed, because no one knew how to ask for something like that. So there are great creators that brake these cycles also.

In what regards communication and cyclicity...Communication has evolved a lot ever since the digital. Because what counts is to react rapidly, you don't have the time to return to older patterns. Here what counts is to offer the consumer, or Facebook user and so an original content...and since everyone wants to be original and everyone wants it, it is becoming harder and harder to offer it. So I don't think former trends in communication are re-adopted. I mean yes, maybe you can re-take a certain style, like making an image look vintage, but the way you communicate that is different. Even runway shows that are somehow an element that keeps repeating itself in fashion communication, they are always in a challenge to be done differently. Like Chanel who did that luxuriant lunch resembling a Versailles lunch, approaching a historical theme. So sure, older themes can be approached, like history but never at that time was such an event done.

Question 4

Amalia: The idea of identity in fashion must be linked with how the essence of the brand is communicated. For instance True Religion a jeans brand means freedom, fun time, craziness. So this would be the core of the brand that must clearly be known. Because there are many brands that don't know who they are. It's just like a child. You have to know where he was born, who are the parents etc. If you don't build them thoroughly you end up doing one day flower power dresses, then jeans then something else and people no longer understand who you are. So the identity of the brand must firstly be defined through core values, and then it is defined by the way you communicate with the exterior. Meaning if I communicate jeans, I might not necessarily communicate that, but a way of being, a lifestyle. Or I chose to communicate through virals, as it was the case with the Diesel campaign "Be stupid". These creative campaigns where, yes, those people wear jeans, but you don't look at the jeans in the campaign, you look at the crazy things those people do in those ads. So the identity becomes somehow something in the realm of experience, something maybe imaginary. I mean it is no longer the case as it was years ago when brands like Chanel or Yves Saint Laurent would communicate the uniqueness of the quality of their products. Also they no longer communicate the designer, because there was a time when the focus was on the designer. Like Tom Ford for Yves Saint Laurent and so on. That was then. It is the same as it was with the trend of using famous models. There was this trend when the focus was on these models and then they realized...wait a second...people look more at

the models than at the clothes. So let's take some skinny, shapeless, faceless models, so that our clothes are emphasized. And this worked for a while, but then again they returned to sensual girls, like Victoria's Secret. The same was with the designers. They communicated the designers until they realized this can't go on forever. Tom Ford left Yves Saint Laurent, McQueen died. So now what? They had to start focusing on communicating the brand. The same is now with Burberry. The designer here is not only involved with the design. He also chooses the music for the runway shows and in the shops, the artists with which the brand associates and collaborates. I mean he does much more than a designer. He does brand communication.

Question 5

Amalia: It depends on the size of the brand. If you are Louis Vuitton, you are not interested in local or regional specificities. What these large brands, that don't allow someone to communicate something locally, do is that they themselves go locally. As Louis Vuitton went to Japan. Then Louis Vuitton is the one that comes and takes some specifics of certain countries and then they propagate this all over the world. Smaller brands, that don't have such a well structured strategy, they allow local approaches. But this is not necessarily productive. Because this diversification can seem nice and thoughtful in the beginning but long term it may lead to a dissipation of the brand and having their image not so well defines in the end. People might not be able to name or distinguish you by a series of certain traits.

Question 6

Amalia: As I was saying earlier, brands do need experiences, and if they are conflicting then even better. Because you can no longer communicate the same thing. There were many brands that communicated a lot through art but they took a controversial approach with that. As it was the case with the cherries. I mean Louis Vuitton is a classical brand, the essence of French fashion. How can you paint some cherries on the bags? So they made use of this conflict. I think fashion is very much based on this kind of conflicts, of the unexpected, the shock of the opposites. Conflict can help maintain that dynamic that fashion needs.

Question 7

Amalia: Fashion designers are artists. They have taken what they do to such a level that you can associate it with art. In the past centuries, except maybe the French court, you couldn't say about designers that they are artists, they were tailors, but in the recent history, the last 60 years, designers have truly become artists. Now, of course, they have some limits, they have to take into account trends, they have to take into account the need to sell, so things are a bit commercialized, but people like McQueen, Galliano, these are gifted people. Fashion labels make use of art a lot. Louis Vuitton for instance holds art exhibitions in the headquarters of the label in Paris. Or Cartier, who has the Foundation Pour l'Art Cartier. These are all patrons of art. They communicate a lot through art about their brand. Many brands communicate through art.

Me: what about rational/irrational?

Amalia: The more vanguardists brands communicate irrationally. As I was giving you the example with the Diesel campaign, "Be stupid". It's an illogical message of course, but it works. It's what I was saying before. In this era you have to always invent something new. You can no longer redo what it was done before. And in this challenge the irrational is many times speculated. There is, of course, behind this a very rational intent from the brands, but the manner speculates fantasy. It's a studied irrational.

Regarding fashion vs. moral/immoral, I think many make use of the idea of immoral in communication. There is that life of sex, drugs and rock and roll that many communicated intentionally. Art in general also and fashion in particular makes use of immorality I think to shock and create attention. Everyone in fashion knows that it is about women that starve themselves, we all know it, but we accept it, we like it, we want to be like those girls. It's immoral to think that you can look like that and that is normal. The girl from Burberry weights 36 kilos. It's outrageous. But you like it when you see her in the magazine.

Question 8

Amalia: Burberry. This is a success example because Burberry adapted itself to the evolution both of the market and of the people, of society. You can no longer communicate like Valentino in 2013. You simply can't. Or else you will have in your shop ladies over 45. That may have the

money, but the clothes don't look just as well on them as they do on young and dynamic people. Burberry made this step to follow the dynamics of the society and decided it must communicate through all means. In the digital. In the music world. Everywhere. They are everywhere. They have a core value that is spread in all fields of activity. And when you are the kind of person that likes to dress up, and then you go into the club and hear a song that you also listened to in the shop or on Facebook Christopher Bailey posted the song of an artist that he has launched. Then you follow.

Question 9

Amalia: In order to sell the brand you have to be unique. In order to be unique you have to do some things. Everyone goes to Hermes because they have THOSE bags. Here is also a strategy. The waiting list. Not being able to enter not even the waiting list.

Returning to your question, evidently everybody wants to sell, but lately being special, unique has become a very important coordinate in brand communication. For instance Adidas told me that they don't necessarily want to sell to everyone the Original line. They want limited editions and exclusivity. That is what they want to communicate.

So sales are important but it is much more important the image of the brand. This would be a specificity of the fashion field in branding.

A conclusion: What I see in fashion to have in addition to other fields is the fact that fashion is both a means of communication and an object of communication. The code of communication that fashion gives birth to, is a code of communication that goes without saying. If you dress in a certain way it speak for itself, you don't have to open your mouth anymore. And it integrates you into communities.

Andreea Florea - branding expert at Brandtailors agency

Question 1

Andreea: I don't know if this is specific only to fashion, I think so. In general when we speak about brand typologies there are 3 categories: product brand (like Zuzu milk for instance), company brands (P&G etc) and retail brands. In product brands and retail brands and FMCG in general, things are very clear. I mean it's very well defined which is which. And they are very different in their communication. In fashion things start to become a bit fuzzy. For instance when I say Chanel, you don't know whether to think of a dress, a shop, a philosophy, a corporation, everything becomes a bit fuzzy. And this is I think the largest difference between fashion and any other kind of industry the fact that in fashion they communicate in fact a philosophy. In any other kind of industry, communication is somehow focused on the benefits of the consumer, of the kind "what's in it for me?" For instance the consumer doesn't care what dreams the producer had when he created a certain kind of chocolate, he cares that it is sweet, it has a lot of cocoa or some other things. In fashion, the way in which things are done start to become relevant. I mean for me, the experience of Coco Chanel, the fact that she had the courage to invent the mini skirt and pants for women, this talks about the brand. And without telling me what this brand does for me, it is clear that I consent to this philosophy if I choose to buy their product. And somehow the premium-ness that you pay, and here I don't speak only on luxury brands but also mass-market brands is more due to the fact that I consent to their philosophy. Clearly the story of the brand is more sophisticated once you access higher price segments, but this doesn't mean that brands like Zara and H&M don't have a story to tell or a philosophy to share.

So, to summarize: it's about this fuzziness, the fact that a fashion brand is more about a philosophy than a product or a company and a second distinctiveness would be the fact that in what regards communication, in fashion communication is almost never product-centric. In fashion true that they choose in their communication materials maybe some items, some products from their line, but they don't want to communicate this, but they want me to chose the

product that represents the best the philosophy that lies behind the brand and that they want to sell.

In what regards brand experience, probably only the ATL part of the campaigns, the ads, billboards and appearances in glossy magazines would be the only opportunity fashion brands have to create a controlled brand experience. The kind of personalized tailored brand experiences of the type of meetings, special events...the regular consumer almost never has access to these. So what remains are these. Because beyond that, your experience with the product, how you wear it, how you feel it, becomes something out of their reach, is something personal.

Then, brand communication becomes an opportunity through which you can create controlled brand experience.

Question 2 and 3

Andreea: I don't think we can speak of trends in fashion brand communication. When we speak about cyclicity or trends we speak again about the experience with the product. Like what was in fashion 12 years ago, is now again in trend and it will be again in let's say 8 years. But in what regards communication, I doubt this would apply.

There is a tendency towards using the latest developments in technology, like social media. But the way it is used differs depending on the type of brand. If smaller brands use Facebook for instance to be present, a high-end brand will not want to be so accessible. He will want to be very desirable, but not accessible.

A cool thing in fashion that maybe applies also to other brands, is this thing with extensions. Brand extensions. When you have something special and you feel the need to attach to it another denominator or to express somehow differently visually, strategically etc...in fashion, more than in any other industry, the extensions don't work in the upward direction in what regards price. If Moschino, that is a high-end label, creates Cheap & Chic, an extension like a higher H&M will never work.

Questions 4 and 6

Andreea: In brand communication, conflict can be one of the strategies. The only conflict that I can see appearing in this situation is between the self and alterity. Because each brand promotes the idea of being different. To be like you are and not to be like the others. This is a note of individuality on which they put a lot of accent. With the exception of some well-established mainstream brands that communicate in the direction “so that you are like the others, meaning not an outsider”. This is also another conflict, that fashion may stir, the fact that it can create both differentiation and social coherence, integration into a certain group, layer.

Yet, from my perspective I don’t see conflict as a defining element in fashion. On the contrary, I feel that many brands communicate very similarly. If you would pick up let’s say 20 fashion ads and you would take out the labels off of them, you would see that you could hardly still distinguish this is that, this is that... This means that they are there in order to be available as choices. In fashion, the individuality of a brand is the quality for it to be considered as an option by the public. Through their communication fashion labels I think are more interested to be considered in a category, in a right category and in the price segment. There are very few brands that use disruptions, conflicts in communication. And they themselves have started to cluster. I speak here of Marni and COS for instance. These are “the odd ones”, but they have started to create a category together. Like “the hipsters” of fashion.

Question 5

Andreea: From the point of view of communication, I think fashion is very closed in some mannerisms. Maybe from the point of view of the product fashion follows clearly the transformations in society. I mean the pants appeared for women then when the society allowed this change. But from the point of view of branding, I doubt it. I find fashion from the perspective of its communication to be a very closed field. And it has some “must haves”. I mean in a fashion magazine, if you don’t have a certain light, or do a certain click in photography it’s somehow wrong. Fashion campaigns are not really daring.

A very interesting example here would be the brand Banana Republic. I don't know if you are familiar with it. This was a very cool brand. In general a fashion brand addresses a certain type of woman, like the woman with 3 children, well...Banana Republic addressed a moment of consume so to say. They were travelling clothes. This started with an insight of the family that built up the brand. They were Americans...or Canadians or something like that and they wanted to go on a Safari and they wanted a piece of clothing that would be very useful and versatile...to keep him warm at night, to not be heavy during the day, to be comfortable. Well they didn't find this anywhere. And the man's wife made a jacket out of 3 separate jackets to create what they needed. And then their friends liked it and their friends' friends and so on. So they turned this into a business. This until the brand was bought by another brand, the Gap, and they started doing clothes that strayed a bit from the initial philosophy, more street-wear, more client-oriented.

Question 7

Andreea: Fashion and communication in fashion even more is somehow characterized by this balance between intention and aesthetics. I mean fashion is on the one side responding, resonating to aesthetics, the beautiful and on the other side to functionality. Many times, surprisingly or not, the brands that focus a lot on functionality end up having a very particular and unique aesthetics. That may not be the generally accepted aesthetics, but they have a very specific aesthetics, very well defined. And here again I give as example COS. They have very special volumes, that maybe are not so easily digested by the mass consumers, but that create a special aesthetics. The reasons behind those specificities may be functional, like creating a piece that fits well a woman that doesn't weigh 50 kilos, but in the end their creations start up and redefine aesthetics.

Probably a particularity in fashion is the fact that each defines its aesthetics and goes after a line established by them. Clearly the field of fashion is very subjective both as addressability and as aesthetics.

Regarding the balance between rational and irrational, I think in fashion there is a very high degree of emotion. Fashion brand communication is governed by emotion. You don't communicate clear particularities of the products. Ok, maybe H&M has this thing to communicate price, dress- 10 euro. Buy this because it's cheap and by the way it looks good. Maybe this would be a rational side. But even there, there is a lot of emotional. The price is only a rational trigger in a sea of emotions. When you chose a brand you think a lot about how it makes you feel, what does that mean to you, how it make you appear for the others. And this is 100 % emotion.

Me: And regarding moral/ immoral?

Andreea: I think when you speak about aesthetics the idea of moral loses its importance or relevance. If something is beautiful you don't think about how moral or immoral that is. Some use this in their communication though. For instance the jeans brands I think have created a true creed in standing against socially accepted morals. They place themselves as challengers of this morality and pleasure seekers.

What I think also lately has been an issue in fashion focused upon in relation to brand communication is a certain corporate moral. Offering civilized, fair pricing for work, using certain fabrics that don't harm the environment, and so on. So morality becomes a CSR tool. But in the brand communication not that corporate communication, I don't see the place of morality.

Question 8

Andreea: I will give you 2 examples. The first one is Adidas, that had that line "Impossible is nothing" and a brand that says "Impossible is nothing" can show you anything. I mean, you already say it is not about the clothes you wear. It's about this philosophy. In general this is the kind of brand that "gives you wings". In a segment where it's about comfort, manufacturing techniques, fabrics, durability etc as it is here in sportswear, comes this brand and says "Impossible is nothing". This is brilliant branding. I am positive that this created a lot of brand

evangelists among the consumers. It's a philosophy that goes beyond the products and makes a lot of sense in the brand segment of sportswear.

If you want, a successful brand communication is also what H&M does. Even with their lame communication. I mean it is not something brilliant from a creative point of view but it is hugely successful. You put billboards all over the city saying look this dress is only 10 euro. People do. People buy it. I don't know how much brand building they do. I doubt they do brand building, but it gets the work done.

Question 9

Andreea: I think success in fashion is defined in relation to price categories. Because success for H&M means volume, as they have a very small profit margin. On the other hand, for a high-end brand, volume would mean the death of the brand. For them it is very important that only the very special few to buy that brand and not everyone. They want the brand to be desirable for everyone but not bought by everyone .

I think what fashion brands follow in terms of purposes differs from one brand to another. I mean you can do a reconditioning campaign to communicate a new turn in identity, you can do a sales oriented campaign, as H&M does, or you can do an image campaign to enhance this desirability of the brand. But this is not a particularity found only in fashion. One of the particularities that I see is that they are almost never product-centric.

Mirela Bucovicean - manager and founder of Molecule F (one of the largest online Romanian fashion shops)

Question 1

Mirela: Now, in fashion we speak of course of design, innovation, what makes the difference, authenticity, beauty, quality. I think these are the common points in a fashion discourse. But since it is a very competitive market, it is necessary to differentiate yourself through key words that you must somehow “book” for yourself in your field. We, for example, activate on a market of a niche. We speak of a local design, that from the start has a level of awareness only in the country of origin and much less internationally, we speak of design not mass-market, of unique products, capsule collections, mini collections and I think our business, although it is an online one with aspirations to be an international shop, it is activating in a very small niche and we look at it as an online boutique.

The words that we use to position ourselves there where we want to be in the collective subconscious are: authenticity, Romanian design, unique, innovation, differencing, statement, knowledge, because our target is formed of women that know themselves very well....and I can tell you words that we don't use, for instance fashion victim, we don't communicate anything with perspectives as “we have a collection fitting international trends”, because what the designers we collaborate with create, and that we consider to be the first line of artists in Romanian design, are timeless creations mostly, they are very well established items, they are *beautiful* items. And I have observed that our clients acquire a *beautiful* item. They are interested neither in the price, nor if it is in trends, less from what designer it comes, they look after beautiful pieces, that can resist in their closet and in their visual appearance forever with the same strength.

Also, the designers we have in our shop resonate with the philosophy of our brand. This is how we obtain unity in the diversity of hosting so many strong brands. We don't aim for commercial. It is considered more a vanguardist site, a height of Romanian fashion.

Regarding the difference between these elements of fashion and other brand communications... I always try to explain that fashion is an industry just like any other industries. We would have the same elements in developing our business with a nail factory. Yet, what I think is the element of difference is precisely beauty. Because fashion has at its basis art, the visual, even the emotion. All these things belong to our emotional habitat.

Question 7

Mirela: Evidently, if you want to sell, fashion is not a free art. I think in any artistic field there are very few that succeed to throw their creativity up in the sky and say wow, how successful I am! Things don't go this way. But I think what is included in the fashion industry doesn't enter the category of the "necessary". Because if it would be like that, we would all be wearing some overalls in the same color to fulfill our need to cover ourselves and this is where any discussion about fashion would end.

Me: So, from your point of view fashion has a lot to do with art and beauty.

Mirela: Absolutely! If what we send to the client is the beautiful, then our communication needs to be accordingly, to understand the needs of the client and to communicate according to his needs.

Me: What about rational/irrational?

Mirela: I think since fashion, as I was saying earlier, fills out emotional habitat, we must use a type of communication that also touches the subconscious. There are people that buy brands, labels, because these are aspirations for them. You go and buy Margiela because you want to be perceived as cool, artsy, you belong to a niche as opposed to when you buy Cavalli, where you have a completely different group to which you aspire. And then of course you communicate a lifestyle. What do you like? Do you want bling-bling? You want a huge logo on the front? etc

Me: And finally on fashion vs. moral/ immoral?

Mirela: I think this is a very interesting question. Because fashion has a note of immorality, transposed, if you will, in shallowness. All magazines show us that you must be tall, thin, with a

perfect complexion; all focus is put on the exterior, on the first mask that you show to the society. It can be considered immoral. I am not certain that immoral is the most appropriate word, but it is possible that what we do here in a society based on consumerism to affect the original values of the individual. And this yes, is not the most moral thing to do.

I think in fashion it is more about the aspirations I was telling you about and not about moral or immoral. But how we imagine ourselves. What is the image that we want to transmit to the others.

I think the difference between pure art, a painting let's say, and fashion, starts from the fact that fashion has art as part of it, as component. It doesn't equal art. If painting is a figurative art, fashion has also a practical and a commercial side. So it is much more extended. A painting, you have it and it touches some of your emotional cords. But it is a one to one. You and the respective painting. While fashion is what you have agreed with you, to show to the others.

Questions 2 and 3

Mirela: I haven't observed a repetition of communication but neither a major change of it. I think fashion in a way or another has been communicated forever in pretty much the same way. And we can go back to the French court. There the higher your rank was the higher the heels you wore. Because this is what we are talking about. Today if you afford a Chanel, it's a statement.

But I haven't done a proper case study on this. And there is another thing. 20 years ago, when Romania was first starting to cross paths with fashion, communication in fashion did not exist.

I am in the fashion business for 20 years and this has allowed me to observe some patterns that have been readopted over the years. But this is regarding products and not necessarily communication.

In what regards this trend towards using social media and new developments in technology I think this applies mainly to the luxury brands. I think in the luxury segment the brands have realized that their sales drop lately and in the books it is clearly written: when you are in a crisis period in the luxury segment you raise the price. I think they have realized they need to expand

and to touch areas and segments that they didn't before. Because before the client would go on his own to the brand, to the shops, now the brand has to go to the client and to direct towards him. If there is a change here with this tendency, I think it has made the communication friendlier, more accessible. I think the fashion domain is going through some radical changes of substance. This may go along with a phrase I heard and like: it is no longer fashionable to be in fashion. But I don't see this as a threat but as an opportunity for authenticity and the return to original values.

Questions 4 and 6

Mirela: I don't think fashion is conflict-driven nor has a conflicting nature, but what I do believe is that there is definitely a dynamics that characterizes it. Fashion is prone to change. Hopefully an evolution. It is oriented towards something otherwise, different. Let's look at the last trends. The last strong trend to really revolutionize was in the 80s. But socially, there was no other really revolutionary point of change, except the economical crisis which is more of a cold war than a revolution. I truly think we live a true reset movement of values at a global level and this is reflected also in fashion.

Question 5

Mirela: If we look at what happens in fashion, it is a result of the experience of the individual. And if the individual would be in a financial plus, a wealth, a lifestyle, I think we would see only richness, but I look at the collections that are now, that are feminine, simple...and also another example, I don't know if you remember a few year ago when the crisis has finally hit everyone and all the collections started to be more austere, more simple, more minimal, more safe, less opulent and this lasted for a few good seasons. Until someone woke up and said; hello good people, we have to respect ourselves, but this doesn't mean that we have to give up the things that make us happy. And art is part of what makes us happy. There is a strong relation between what happens in the society and fashion.

Question 8

Mirela: I will give you our example. Not because I see it this way as a good example, but because it is how the others see Molecule F. Molecule after only 2 years and a half, having already follow

cases and copy paste cases, because there have appeared sites that are truly copies of us, Molecule has remained a standard and if you may, a place that credits, vouches your designs. The way we got here was a healthy way. I think constancy has been our key. We remained faithful to the request. We always aspired to a better quality of the services, correct associations that would not harm our positioning, we didn't do switches in communication and we assumed the fact that if it is a niche business it is a slow growth but a stable one. Constancy and unity is the key of success for us. And if you ask someone now: give me a fashion site in Romania that is credible and stable, he will give you Molecule F.

Question 9

Mirela: I think it depends a lot on the kind of product that you sell, on its segment. If we speak of mass market, luxury, FMCG, low consumers, I mean it depends a lot. Because if I see mass market, I want to have volume and I will communicate "sales" and I won't search for creating loyalty among my clients. But on the contrary, I can create fidelity in a client that resonates with my creative direction, because he finds himself in what I present. I think emotion can be a key differencing point in communication for fashion brands as opposing other kind of brands.

Andreea Alecu – PR for MURMUR (fashion brand by Andreea Badala)

Question 1

Andreea: I think in fashion a very used path is that of a story transmitted through a photograph. I think all brands need this, because if you don't tell a story through photography it is very hard to communicate to the wide audience, since this audience doesn't come in their large majority to your atelier and doesn't know too much about your brand. Of course, ideas about a collection

let's say or about the brand can be transmitted also through a runway show, but in our country this is I think less practiced.

We ourselves haven't done any such runways shows; we do only events that hold in their essence the concept of the collection. For instance our first event communicated exactly the sensual nature of our brand, letting the public through a series of experiences to feel the intimate atmosphere of a captured moment, when you are at ease in your home, yet you have the feeling that you are being watched and observed.

I think a certain segmentation is a specific of fashion and a difference to other brands. In fashion you may address the wide audience but yet each designer belongs to a niche.

Me: Even H&M?

Andreea: I don't consider them to be in the fashion field. They do retail, mass retail.

Questions 2 and 3

Andreea: No, I don't think cyclicity is reflected in communication. Fashion indeed always returns, but not entirely. Some elements of what was once are re-approached but they are used in a new vision. And accordingly, the communication also will be in line with this new vision on the product that is only *inspired* from the past. Fashion brand communication is strongly determined by the product. Because the product reflects the idea and we communicate the idea.

Regarding observing a trend in communication, I think people have oriented themselves. I mean, as long as the communication channels are very limited...let's take the example of our country: there a few large magazines, some small magazines, as for TV you don't really have a place to go because there is no slot suitable for this, then there is the online media, where...what are the options? To create a site, a blog, an online shop, a twitter account, a Facebook account and a few other social media that you might want to choose. So as I said I think people oriented themselves towards digital media, because the online is now a lot stronger than written press, as the target that you can reach there is a lot higher.

Questions 4 and 6

Andreea: In our case, for instance, the identity was complete and structured from the very beginning. So for us first was created the brand identity and then the product and its communication. Andreea (the designer) did her studies in London and has worked there for a while with several designers among which even Alexander McQueen for instance. And even from back then she started to sketch her brand. She cleverly realized that there is a gap between lingerie and daywear and she saw here an opportunity and has built her brand so that it covers precisely this gap. Ideally you should do things like this, to have a very well structured identity first. Because the competition is very high in fashion. So it is well to have a very well defined identity, but this identity is also evolving and constantly changing. It's can't stand still. Fashion changes every 6 months. It is all about dynamics. And so are the identities here.

Question 5

Andreea: I think fashion is torn between exactly these 2 sides. On the one hand you can't not take into consideration what happens within the fashion field as you work with the creative, on the other hand you can't ignore what happens in the social field. Who comes to buy? What was best sold? How can that product be reinterpreted according to fashion requirements? You have to give people what they like. Both sides influence fashion and its communication. You have to find a balance between your vision and how or whether people will share it. There is a difference between the clothes made simply for the events, for the runways shows, where you can let your imagination run wild and the clothes that end up in the shops, which must be worn and accepted. Of course, these both lines bear the essence of the brand, its creative core. Let me give you an example from us. For spring/summer we will now go out with 2 lines: the main line, MURMUR, with which we started from the very beginning, and a diffusion label, that will be called "MURMUR take away", a lot more accessible as price, made out of natural fabrics, as cotton, that on the whole don't have anything to do with the main brand from the perspective of the design, yet you will find in them a lot of the key elements (as perforations for instance) that are the defining notes of our brand, that differentiate it from others.

Question 7

Andreea: I think there is a very heavy relation between art, beauty and fashion communication. As I was saying a key element in fashion communication is the visual and this can be taken very easily to the status of art in fashion. The photographs used, the videos created to communicate the brand, all bear an artistic touch.

As for rational/irrational, I think fashion brand communication speculates more on the irrational, and through irrational I refer mainly to fantasy and impulse. Here you evidently appeals to the affective, emotional side of the public.

On the matter of moral/immoral, I think this doesn't really have something to do with fashion. You can't think about a piece of clothing that it is immoral; the most you could say maybe is that it is vulgar.

Question 8

Andreea: A success example from our brand was our first event that I was telling you about earlier. This had a very big echo in all media, who wrote from their own initiative. The success was due not only to the uniqueness of the event but also mainly because it was a very sincere discourse, in concordance with the brand essence. It managed to capture perfectly what the brand is about. It was not done as an event oriented only to capture attention, following exterior or superficial triggers, the brand was not wrapped in an image, the event perspired the brand. It was not artificial. It was very authentic and symbiotic somehow with the brand. It is very important to have a sincere and to the point communication. To not get lost in details. To transmit exactly as much as it is needed. So authenticity, symbiosis with the essence of the brand and conciseness, unity.

Question 9

Andreea: I think a difference between fashion brands and other types of brands is the fact that in fashion you have more ways and opportunities to communicate about your identity. I don't think fundamentally the purposes followed by fashions brands are different than the ones followed by other types of brands, but the way in which they do this is different. I mean, in fashion, being a

very creative and personal field, you seek to find a level of resonance with your audience that goes beyond buying the product, or satisfying a need, You seek for a more intricate resonance, that of identification, of assumption, of following, reflecting yourself to the others. You communicate also through the people that wear your clothes, even though it goes beyond your reach.

Noemi Revnic - PR for The Place, one of the first fashion concept stores in Romania and editor at Harper's Bazaar magazine

Question 1

Noemi: In my opinion (but this is my opinion), the fashion language has to be very simple and clear. In order to reach your target/public, you need to be very organized and to use a language that everyone can understand. And the most important thing for a designer is that his collections can be recognized by the people. For the Romanian designers, in my opinion a few of them have this "theme" of the collections: Andreea Badala (Murmur), 109 (Marina Moldovan), Lucian Broscatean, Ana Alexe, Alina Botea, Razvan Firea (Le Petit Indigent), Irina Marinescu.

Question 2

Noemi: It might be. What I have observed in the last 2 years is that there is a tendency (all over the world) to go back in the past; to take icons, pictures, trends from the past and to reactivate them.

Question 3

Noemi: I think that the cyclicity is a result of the evolution (in fashion, communication, literature, other arts), is in what we see in our families, at home, in our friends behavior, in the

street style; the “explosion” of all the fashion blogs and the fast forward era. Because all these things happen today very quickly, because of the evolution in technology; and not to forget the quality of the new fabrics (in fashion).

Question 4

Noemi: Originality; a friendly language; to be present without annoying; to be smart; to be fast; to read a lot; to be informed.

Question 5

Noemi: I rather think that is directed by the socio-cultural environment; fashion is the result of what we are; of how we behave.

Question 6

Noemi: In my opinion, fashion is a necessity; is like a religion; but, of course, not a fundamentalist one

Question 7

Noemi: In my opinion there are only two immoral issues that sometimes I meet in fashion: copy/paste & to use children and people from “Third World” who work in very poor conditions. I prefer to buy more expensive items from designers (limited edition) than items produced in poor countries. I believe in ethical fashion. Immoral is to use the people, not to show nudity.

Regarding art and beauty I am convinced there is a strong connection here to fashion and its communication. Fashion can be taken to the level of art. Yet it should not be forgotten that it is also a business and limits are imposed through purposes. The same applies to rational/irrational. We touch emotion through fashion but it is not only that. There is a balance between the two.

Question 8

Noemi: There are a lot of examples. From Romania: Molecule-f, the best shopping online website in Romania, representing Romanian designers; AndreeaBadala (Murmur); Lucian Broscatean; 109, Ana Alexe, BOLD, Le Petit Indigent (RazvanFirea). International brands: Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Maison Martin Margiela, Prada, Sonia Rykiel, Dior, Rick Owens, Alexander Wang, Kenzo, Yves Saint Laurent (even I do not agree with Saint Laurent), Chanel.

Question 9

Noemi: I believe in continuously communication, but not in intoxicating the public at large. This may apply also to other types of brands, but in fashion I think it is a must.

10.3. Curriculum Vitae – Emilia Păunescu

Education:

2012- 2013 Preparation of the master thesis on the theme "Discourse Specificity in Fashion Brand Communication"

Winter semester 2009 Beginning of the master degree study at Institut für Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft

2005-2008 Bachelor degree on Communication and Public Relations- Western University of Timisoara, Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communication Sciences

Final thesis written on the theme "The Mobility of the Sign in Advertising"

2001-2005 Elena Cuza National College, Philology, Bilingual English profile, finalized with Certificate of Linguistic Competence in English

Courses and trainings:

2012 - GRAFFITI BBDO Romania - PR for NGOs

2009 - Goethe Institut Bukarest - Diploma of German language competence- B2 level

2007 - APFR Romania- Training on writing projects

Language skills:	English- advanced	French - upper intermediate
	German- advanced	Spanish - beginner

Other activities:

2012 - 2013 - Communication and Marketing coordinator - 4 Proof Film (Romania, Intrare Iuliu valaori, no.6)

2007 - 2012 Vicepresident (communication) - Turn Cultural Association (Romania, Timisoara, str. Vulturilor, no.57)

2004 - 2005 Junior editor - Media Sud Europa (Romania, Campia Islaz 97A)

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