



CIMODE 2014

2° Congresso internazionale di Moda e Design

2° International Fashion and Design Congress

SCUOLA DEL DESIGN - POLITECNICO DI MILANO

MILANO 5-7 NOVEMBRE 2014

A cura di

Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis

Alba Cappellieri

Rossana Gaddi

Conference Manager

Rossana Gaddi

Official website

www.cimode.polimi.it

METID – Politecnico di Milano

Editore

POLISCRIP - Politecnico di Milano

La responsabilità del contenuto degli articoli scientifici è dei singoli autori

ISBN 978 88 6493 027 5

DETAILED PROGRAM

TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER

- 18:00 **Registration** | Sala Castiglioni
- 19:00-20:00 **Welcome cocktail** | Sala Castiglioni

WEDNESDAY 5TH NOVEMBER

- 9:00 **Registration** | Sala Castiglioni
- 9:30-10:30 **Plenary Opening Session** | Sala Castiglioni
**The importance of scientific research in Fashion Design.
The Cimode Experience**
- Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis | Dean of the School of Design, Politecnico di Milano
Alba Cappellieri | President of the Fashion Design Course, Politecnico di Milano
Ana Cristina Broega | UMinho, President of Centre for Textile Science and Technology
Kathia Castilho | President of ABEPEN Associação Brasileira de Estudos e Pesquisas em Moda
- 10:30-11:30 **Plenary Session 1** | Sala Castiglioni
Fashion Design at Politecnico di Milano
- Arturo Dell'Acqua Bellavitis and Rita Airaghi
An analysis of the design methodology of Politecnico di Milano. Introduces prof. Arturo Dell'Acqua and closes Rita Airaghi from Ferré Foundation, who will talk about the work of one of the finest graduates in Politecnico in the fashion industry, Gianfranco Ferré.
- 11:30-12:00 **Coffee Break** | Sala Castiglioni
- 12:00-13:00 **Parallel Session 1**
Fashion and Communication | Politeca Sala Viola
Fashion, Identities and Cultures | Sala Castiglioni
Sustainability for Fashion Design | Politeca Sala Verde
Emerging Global Trends in Fashion Design processes | Politeca Sala Rossa
- Fashion and Communication**
Sala Viola Politeca
- Session Moderators
Federico Poletti - POLITECNICO DI MILANO
Simone Sanfratello - POLITECNICO DI MILANO
Renata Pitombo - UFBA (BR) UFBA - Universidade Federal da Bahia
Alessandra Vaccari - IUAV
- Papers
A STANDARDIZATION OF DISPLAYS THE CENTERS SHOPPING MALLS: GLOBALIZATION AS AFFECTED RETAIL FASHION
Marcela Favero, Francisco J.S.M. Alvarez, Maria José Abreu
- X MARKS THE SPOT
Demetra Kolakis
- CAROLINA HERRERA: ELEGANCE AND SENSUALITY IN ADVERTISEMENT CH PERFUME
Taísa Vieira-Sena

Papers

ANIMAL PRINT SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION: AN URBAN SAFARI IN SÃO PAULO

Maria Carolina Garcia, Ludmila Paz

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FASHION FIELD AND FINE ART IN THE IDENTITARY DYNAMICS

Lucie Decker

BODY COVERS MICROCOSMS CREATORS - THOUGHTS ON TEGUMENT, CLOTHING, ORNAMENTS

Beatriz Ferreira Pires

FASHION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS: NEW APPROACHES IN THE SPHERE OF CULTURE

Maria Eduarda Araujo Guimaraes

CREATION CELL PROJECT

Luziane Lima Santos, Jorge Oliveira Gomes, Rávila Gabrielle Ferreira Melo, Vallerya Almeida Lima, Ana Carolina Nogueira Lemos Clemente

CREATION OF FASHION PRODUCTS FOR AN ANDROGYNOUS BODY

Stephan Maus, Francisca Dantas Mendes

NARRATIVES OF FASHION. What becomes heritage? What turns into history?

Rafaela Norogrado, João A. Mota

BRAZILIAN CULTURAL ELEMENTS APPLIED TO THE CREATION OF A BRAND FOR FEMALE FASHION ACCESSORIES

Jamile Goulart, Rita Ribeiro, Helder Carvalho

Marketing and Consumption

Sala Verde Politeca

Session Moderators

Marco Turinetti - POLITECNICO DI MILANO

Flávio Sabrá - SENAI CETIQT (BR)

Maria da Graça Guedes - DET Universidade do Minho (PT)

Papers

PERSONA, BRANDS AND IDENTITY

Maria Gabriela Gama

INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS: TRENDS OF FASHION AND TRENDS OF DESIGN

Amanda Queiroz Campos, Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez

CASE: ESPAÇO GARIMPO, PLATFORM OF BUSINESS, EDUCATION AND INNOVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS OF FASHION

Germana Uchoa Moreira Reis

THE INFLUENCE OF BLOGS ON FASHION CONSUMERS IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA: A METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Alexandra Bigotte de Almeida, Lílian Carvalho, Carolina Pitelli, Letticia Cordeiro

BEHAVIORISM, IN-STORE DESIGN EXPERIENCE AND SETTING OF THE BRAND: AN ANALYSIS OF THE HAVAIANAS BRAND

Diego Piovesan, Grasielle Pilatti, Clarissa Martins Alves, Richard Perassi, Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez

VISUAL MERCHANDISING AS A TOOL FOR THE "TXM" METHODOLOGY: CASE HAVAIANAS

Leandro Ribeiro, Luiz Salomão Gomez

FASHION AND CLOTHING CONSUMPTION: SOME THOUGHTS FROM AN ANALYSIS MODEL

Maria Alice Vasconcelos Rocha

THE MARKET SEGMENT OF PLUS SIZE FASHION PRODUCTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Fábia Costa, Helder Carvalho, Nuno Marques

THE UNEMPLOYMENT IS A TREND: ROLE OF FASHION HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE PORTUGUESE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Maria Da Graça Guedes, Alexandra Bigotte Almeida



THE MARKET SEGMENT OF *PLUS SIZE* FASHION PRODUCTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

FÁBIA COSTA¹, HELDER CARVALHO¹, NUNO MARQUES²

¹Universidade do Minho, Dep. Eng. Têxtil, Guimarães, Portugal, fabiacosta88@hotmail.com, helder@det.uminho.pt

²Universidade do Minho, Dep. Gestão, Braga, Portugal, d4255@eeg.uminho.pt

Abstract: *Until recently it was thought that overweighted and obese people evidenced a lower sensitivity and involvement in the consumption of fashion products. Today it is known, through some empirical studies, that this segment values the fashion products in the same way that consumers in other segments (Meng, 2007) Some studies on the "plus size", or large sizes, market segment, point to a general dissatisfaction with the current market offering (Costa and Cardoso, 2008 and Otieno et al, 2005). However, bibliography on the subject is still scarce, which motivated this work, in which a case study of an exploratory nature is chosen, with the aim of collecting data and information to enable the development of insights, to be deepened in future research, aiming at a generalization. With this study it was determined that, although some market offering for "plus size" consumers is already available, the consumers (of the sample) express dissatisfaction, almost exclusively due to the available product, considered inappropriate to their physical and psychological needs. The results also suggest that specific care and design for their bodies and even the personalized service, close to the customer, are highly valued by this segment. Additionally, the study provides insights to be further studied by academy and management practice, particularly in terms of product, communication and characteristics of retail space.*

Keywords: fashion marketing, obesity and fashion, *plus size* market segment, *plus size* fashion design, design with social responsibility, big sizes

1. Introduction

The fashion market is directed to what in modern society is understood as an archetype of "perfect body", with certain measures, known as "ideal", a concept of beauty that is defined by the modern fashion world. (Felippe, 2003; Carreteiro, 2005; and Gama, 2011). This standardization takes the markets to drive its offer for the "models" of beauty, forgetting other groups of people, such as people with excessive weight and obesity. These do not fall into the defined measures, but not only do they have the same basic needs of protection conferred by the clothing, but also the needs of esteem and appreciation, and above all the "right to fashion".

One of the biggest difficulties often reported by people with excessive weight and obesity, is the difficulty in finding clothes to wear, not just the right size, but mostly clothing that is fashionable, not necessarily the latest trend, but at least within the generally dominant fashion style accepted by society. Costa and Cardoso (2008) conducted a qualitative study of 25 Portuguese women who fall within that segment, concluding that most of these women showed dissatisfaction with the current market supply, being the main cause, the lack of "attractiveness" of large-sized products. The authors emphasize that for many of these women it is extremely difficult to find clothes that match their needs.

Clothing for overweight people are generally thought to their physical needs, ignoring their needs for self-esteem and their desire for "fashion", with all its meanings. This is because the clothing one chooses to use has a material purpose- to hide the nakedness and protect the body from cold- but especially in today's society it also has a cultural purpose - to meet the psychosocial needs of each one (Barreiro, 1998). And the result commonly observed is that these people buy garments that serve them physically, but that do not satisfy their ego.

The values found by Carmo et al. (Carmo et al., 2008) support the idea that more than half of the adult population in Portugal suffers from problems of excessive weight and obesity. This means that more than half of the Portuguese population stumbles upon a market essentially directed to thin people when they intend to purchase fashion products. The market is in itself significant, as is easily inferred by the data presented, but the management practice and academia have neglected the study and the development of management solutions applied, able to confer effective responses to the needs of a market segment that craves offer coalescing their needs, expectations, and idiosyncratic characteristics.

In this context, the aim of this study is to try to better understand the market for *plus size* fashion products, determine how to characterize the current offer on the Portuguese market, analyse the opinion of consumers regarding the offer, and secondly to draw conclusions about how to configure the offer so as to adjust it to the segment. Thus, the two questions that guide this study are: how are the variables of the marketing mix of *plus size* fashion products characterized under the perspective of three brands in the Portuguese market, namely C&A, Elena Miró and TCO, regarding *plus size* consumers. We also intend to analyze the most relevant factors that must be taken into account in these variables, when applied to this market segment.

Due to the scarcity of literature that relates the two subjects, overweight and obesity with fashion, it was necessary to conduct an exploratory study to enable a better understanding of this issue and thus provide important data and information for future investigations. Thus, a case study was conducted using different qualitative techniques for data collection, namely, semi-directive interviews, documental analysis and participating observation.

2. Excessive weight and obesity, and fashion

Since 1980 the number of obese people worldwide has doubled, and in some European countries even triplicated. The number of affected people continues to grow alarmingly, leading the World Health Organization to classify obesity as an epidemic disease (World Health Organization 1997, cited by Santos, 2010). This disease affects, according to the World Health Organization, WHO, 1.5 billion adults over age 20 worldwide (World Health Organization, 2012).

According to Bonafini and Pozzilli (2010) never in history has an image of the ideal body remained unchanged, and analyzing ancient and recent "art" magazines and media, there is a dramatic change in the patterns of beauty. Current standards determined by fashion and the media state that women should be thin and tall, men tall and highly muscled. As refers Gama (2011), when speaking of thinness, one is "always talking about the body of fashion, which established that thinness means a slender body", so that bodies parading the catwalks are synonyms of beauty and a social ideal. This modern utopia of perfect bodies exposed by the media leaves aside those who do not fall in this category, such as overweight and obese people and leads to a stigmatization of the excluded individuals (Felippe, 2003; Carreteiro, 2005), also felt in the clothing and fashion markets, in which the offerings are directed primarily to the "models" of beauty. People with excessive weight and obesity although not included in the measurement classes defined, not only have the same basic needs of protection conferred by clothing, but mostly need of esteem and appreciation produced by them, and above all, also have the right to "fashion".

In the perspective of Chris Hansen, quoted by Matis (2006), there has always been the assumption that, because of its shape and its body, the obese had no relation to the clothing, and much less with fashion, but recent studies (e.g. Meng 2007, Costa and Cardoso, 2008) prove that these consumers engage with fashion in the same way as the other consumers, and they also like to see and buy fashion products.

However, the gap between fashion and obesity may be seeing its last days, because all the forces that disseminated stereotypes of beauty associated with thinness, such as the media, where fashion magazines are included, as well as advertising and fashion shows, are revising their concepts, and approaches seem - if not changed- at least different. The prestigious fashion magazines Elle and Vogue published covers and fashion editorials with *plus size* models and even Italian Vogue features on its website the "V" section dedicated to the segment. The creation of specific "Fashion Weeks" such as the "Full Figure Fashion Week" in New York, the existence of *plus size* model agencies such as "Agence Plus" and even the emergence of recognized *plus size* bloggers such as the French Stephanie Zwicky (author of blog "Le Blog the Big Beauty"), prove that the relationship between fashion and the problem of excess weight and obesity has really been changing.

3. The *plus size* products market segment

Overweight women are increasingly buying and paying attention to the clothes that favor their body rather than clothes that hide their curved shapes (Mintel cited by Meng, 2007). Some retailers quickly realized the opportunity this market represents and *plus size* brands appeared, like "Lane Bryant", one of the first brands dedicated to the segment and the most significant in the United States of America (Meng, 2007). Besides the emergence of brands dedicated to segment, some recognized fashion brands like Tommy Hilfiger, DKNY, Ann Taylor, JC Penny (MATIS, 2006) among others, extended their product line to larger sizes. More recently, the big Swedish retailer H & M presented a line of *plus size* clothes in selected stores and even the Spanish Mango launched the "Violeta" line, dedicated to the segment. With several brands in several countries, the plus size market is a booming market, referenced by Aron and Stoner (cited by Meng, 2007) and Matis (2006) as the segment of women's clothing industry with the fastest growth in recent years. In 2005, sales in this market accounted for 41.4% of total sales in the apparel and fashion market (Mintel, quoted by Meng, 2007), and therefore presents itself as a very attractive opportunity for both marketers as for retailers (Meng, 2007; Otieno, 2005).

Although this market has grown greatly, there are still gaps, and consumers remain dissatisfied with the proposals. For retailers, the problem may not be just to offer a wide variety of sizes and styles, but in the fashion content, the way the garments fit and also in the store environment (Otieno, 2005). Otieno conducted an exploratory study to determine the satisfaction / dissatisfaction of *plus size* consumers in the UK. In a sample of 250 women about 66% of overweight respondents felt that it was hard to find garments that fit, particularly in the categories that outline the body and emphasize its shapes such as bathing suits, ceremony clothing and intimate wear. Similarly, Mintel (2007) concluded in a study conducted using 4 semi-directive interviews to 4 retailers and 3 *plus size* consumers that - observing the degree of dissatisfaction of younger respondents who claimed not being able to find attractive, well-fitting garments, such as found for regular sizes - there were still aspects that retailers were not exploring. Otieno *et al* (cited by Meng, 2007) states that consumers considered the available clothes as suggesting being directed to older women.

In Portugal, as previously referenced, a study by Costa and Cardoso (2008) conducted on 25 overweight women also found that the Portuguese overweight are not satisfied with what the market offers. 72% of the sample stated that it is extremely difficult to find clothes that match their needs. Reasons pointed out are scarce offer and the "unattractiveness" of large-sized clothing. The survey also showed that when buying clothes, these women value quality first, followed by beauty/fashion, the price and last the comfort. The first choice for shopping is the brand C&A, followed by seamstresses producing clothes made to measure, and only then the Italian Elena Miró. Both C&A as well as Elena Miró were identified as being expensive shops and positioned towards a segment of older people.

Studies by Meng (2007) and Otieno *et al* (2005) point out that especially overweight and obese women have an interest in fashion, for observing shop windows and stores, but the reason for which they don't do it is related to the store environment, and the experience of buying clothes.

Otieno *et al* (2005) have established with their study that women who wear big sizes are not satisfied with the environment of clothing stores. According to the authors, managers of clothing stores are not giving due attention to the point of sale, apparently not creating atmospheres that attract this type of consumer. The store atmosphere is of even greater importance when one considers the overweight or obese consumer. This consumer, according to literature, suffers a high psychological discomfort and unease with the body and it is essential that the environment is pleasant and makes them feel well inside the store. Although all elements are important, there are some that should be particularly planned taking into account this specific audience. Meng (2007) found in their study that one of the most important attributes of clothing stores, referred to by overweight or obese consumers, is the layout of the store, where great importance to the ability to move freely through the store (e.g. large corridors) is given. Also the service should be considered. According to Otieno (2005), the shop assistants of a store should be carefully chosen, since they have a big influence on how the shopping experience is understood by this consumer. Finally, Meng (2007) found that the fitting rooms are an element that these consumers consider very important. Considering the previous insights, it will be important to validate if the factors mentioned above are relevant in the context of the analysis unit, the Portuguese consumers.

4. Research questions and objectives

This paper presents a research carried out in order to study the aspects of the *plus size* market segment in Portugal. The questions that guided this research were: [1] How to characterize the variables of the marketing mix of *plus size* fashion products in the study cases of the brands C&A, Elena Miró and TCO? and [2] What factors should be taken into consideration in the marketing mix variables when applied to the products of the *plus size* fashion industry, in the perspective of improving the consumer experience?

The first question [1] directs research in information retrieval which allows characterizing the product, communication, pricing and distribution, highlighting the point of sale of the *plus size* product in the Portuguese market under the perspective of the three brands tested and under the perspective of the two samples interviewed. The second [2] directs the research to obtain data about the necessary adaptations or modifications to the variables of the marketing mix when they are applied to products of *plus size* fashion, in order to improve management solutions (e.g. marketing, design and product engineering).

Based on the research questions defined the following study objectives were defined: to study the characteristics of the product for the *plus size* segment; to study the characteristics of product communication for the *plus size* segment; to study the distribution of the *plus size* product, and still within the distribution, to study the point of sale for *plus size* products.

5. Methodology for the exploratory study

Due to the scarce literature that relates the two subjects (overweight/obesity, and fashion) it was necessary to conduct an exploratory study of qualitative nature. Qualitative research, according Malhotra (cited by Vieira and Tibola, 2005) is defined as an unstructured research of exploratory nature that, generally using small samples, allowing to obtain important data which provides "insights" that contextualizes the problem under study and opens new ways for empirical validation.

For this research three techniques of data collection were used: Interviews, document analysis, and participant observation. The interviews were semi-directive since these are the most appropriate when a subject is to be explored in more detail (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1993), and were applied under two different perspectives, on two different samples.

Sample 1 is composed of people with experience and expertise in the area that could contribute to important research data, including two entrepreneurs in the textile business, one with experience in the *plus size* market and also a textile engineer who also fits the profile of *plus size* consumer. Sample 2, on the other hand, consists of eight women who fit or have fit the profile of overweight and obesity.

Regarding the research technique by observation and documentary analysis, this study aimed to examine the current characteristics of the marketing mix of three brands (C&A, Elena Miró and TCO) in order to characterize this offer in the *plus size* market segment. The choice of these brands was based on a set of characteristics which although making them quite different, complement the research. C&A is a big retailer with an international presence, dedicated to various segments including overweight and obese people, indicated by the study of Costa and Cardoso (2008) as the preferred location for this segment to buy clothes. Elena Miró, also mentioned as a place of purchase in the study of Costa and Cardoso (2008), is a brand dedicated to larger sizes. Finally, TCO is a Portuguese brand dedicated to the *plus size* segment.

With permission of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded and lasted on average 10 minutes for sample 1 and 20 minutes for sample 2. In order to address all the issues and research objectives and still allow a more systematic analysis of the data collected, an interview guide for each of samples 1 and 2 responses was defined. The responses were later transcribed and grouped according to the research objectives.

To carry out the documentary analysis and observation, information was collected primarily from websites, social networks, company reports and documents such as journal articles and dissertations. We then proceeded to the analysis and characterization of the marketing mix of each brand, considering the product, price, communication, distribution and, in greater detail, the point of sale.

6. Data analysis

The following tables aggregate the data collected from the three brands studied and from the interviews with two samples, according to the variables product, price, communication and distribution, with focus on the point of sale.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of the product for the *plus size* market segment

VARIABLE:PRODUCT	
BRANDS: C&A, ELENA MIRÓ E TCO	<p>C&A: Fashionable garments, but having in mind the body and specific modeling for this audience, and thus resulting in "clothes with good fit that enhance the lap and mark the waist" (C&A, 2012). <u>Observation data:</u> The line of <i>plus size</i> products is smaller than the others and has less styles, with only two types of garments: day-to-day and sports.</p> <p>Elena Miró: The product brand Elena Miró follows fashion, being designed according to trends and styles for each season, and adapted to the curved bodies of women who require larger numbers (ELENA MIRÓ, 2012). <u>Observation data:</u> Diversity of products and types of clothing, featuring clothing for day-to-day, sport, ceremony and swimsuits.</p> <p>TCO: The quality of products is one of the guarantees offered by TCO, as well as of the brands that TCO imports and sells in their stores (TCO, 2012). <u>Observation data:</u> Although little diversity of clothing types is present, only for ceremony and every day, they feature a great variety of products in each of these classes. TCO does not have a specialized team of designers for product development.</p>
PERSPECTIVE SAMPLE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fashion is an important element -correct pattern design and grading in this product segment is critical -careful thought and design specifically to favour the <i>plus size</i> body is important
PERSPECTIVE	-the product offered by the market: few models and little variety, wide rectangular pieces

SAMPLE 2	<p>and prepared to serve in size, no aesthetics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -product prepared for older people -lack current and modern design, comfort and quality are also important -it is important develop parts with a specific design for these bodies, so they are not only garments fitting in size, but also to look nice and fit well, above all making the consumer feel good
-----------------	---

Table 2: Comparative analysis of the product price for the *plus size* market segment

VARIABLE: PRODUCT PRICE	
BRANDS: C&A, ELENA MIRÓ E TCO	<p>C&A: The brand's mission is to provide consumers with quality fashion products at affordable price (C&A, 2012) <u>Observation data:</u> of the three brands analyses, C&A is the one that has the lowest prices, with the lowest price around €10 and the highest €60.</p> <p>Elena Miró: <u>Observation data:</u> of the three brands analysed this is the one with the highest prices. The lowest price is about €49 and the highest is €545.</p> <p>TCO: justifies its prices based on the high quality of the products (TCO, 2012). <u>Observation data:</u> the lowest price (€12) approaches C&A, but the highest is slightly higher, with €80. However this higher price is the price of ceremony dresses, a line that C&A does not have and which generally has a higher price than the day-to-day products</p>
PERSPECTIVE SAMPLE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the price of these products is higher than the products of other sizes, but due to the reduced offering the consumers pay the price in order to have clothing -dissatisfaction at having to pay more for something they consider worse than the products offered with normal sizes - The brand Elena Miró was reported by two consumers as a store with very expensive products, not accessible to everybody which includes the segment

Table 3: Comparative analysis of product communication for the *plus size* market segment

VARIABLE: PRODUCT COMMUNICATION	
BRANDS: C&A, ELENA MIRÓ E TCO	<p>C&A - <u>Observation data:</u> The brand does not use a communication addressed to the <i>plus size</i> market. The channels used to communicate with the segment are the promotional pictures on the brand's site, and the sign inside the store that indicates the area for large sizes. In its communication, slightly larger than regular models are used, without ever exposing evident cases of obesity</p> <p>Elena Miró - <u>Observation data:</u> Of three brands analysed, Elena Miró stands out as <i>plus size</i> brand dedicated exclusively to this segment, and this position is clearly communicated. Communication is addressed to the segment through campaigns with messages specifically related to this consumer, using the slogan itself "Ciau, magre!" ("Good-bye, thin people"), and also by the use of larger models in campaigns and catalogs, including large mannequins in the shop windows and inside the store. It is however a less explicit communication than for example the communication of TCO.</p> <p>TCO - <u>Observation data:</u> The communication is addressed explicitly to the segment of the large size market. Through some of the channels the brand communicates its positioning, being a brand that, in addition to regular sizes, also addresses the <i>plus size</i> segment. These channels are: the catalog (where models with evident obesity are found), the shop window, which uses a larger mannequin, and the brand slogan "Fashion is for all and not for some."</p>

PERSPECTIVE SAMPLE 1	<p>- communication for this segment was identified as a complicated task creating many doubts in choosing messages and correct channels.</p> <p>-as a guideline indicated by the interviewees, communication should not restrict or label the consumer, and should move away from the communication addressed explicitly to the segment.</p>
PERSPECTIVE SAMPLE 2	<p>- communication for this segment should be similar to other, without reference to the condition, or at least explicit reference, since the use of a slightly larger model in itself directs to it</p> <p>- two consumers chose garments from Elena Miró dressed by models that are closer to regular, lean people than to the representative models in the segment, so it can be assumed that the use of very large models may not be too relevant to <i>plus size</i> consumers.</p> <p>-a catalogue using intermediate models, without exposing either thinness nor obesity, made the consumers unanimous in finding the catalogue cute and attractive, so this seems to be the best solution.</p>

Table 4: Comparative analysis of distribution for the *plus size* market segment: the point of sale

VARIABLE: DISTRIBUTION / POINT OF SALE	
BRANDS: C&A, ELENA MIRÓ E TCO	<p>C&A - <u>Observation data:</u> Type of point of sale: not specialized, specific area for <i>plus size</i> Shop space: large store, tidy, allows free movement of the consumer Fitting rooms: many rooms, with seat inside, medium space (larger compared to TCO), with individual door. Customer: upon entering the store the consumer is not approached, attention is paid only when requested</p> <p>Elena Miró - <u>Observation data:</u> Type of point of sale: specialized store for the segment Shop space: store smaller than the C&A but broad, free movement Fitting rooms: spacious, with seat inside, and curtains as a closure system, located in a private area that allows the consumer to get out of the dressing room with carpet, seated waiting area and a large mirror Service: the service depends on the consumer, but is usually personal, the consumer is left on his own if desired</p> <p>TCO - <u>Observation data:</u> Type of point of sale: not specialized, <i>plus size</i> product distributed among the remaining products of regular sizes Shop space: small shop compared to C&A, but wide, and allows free movement of the consumer Fitting rooms: only two small rooms, located in front of the service counter without seat inside. Customer: personalized service, close to the customer</p>
PERSPECTIVE SAMPLE 1	<p>-the point of sale should move away from designations such as “large sizes store “, being ideally a shop with all sizes, mixed without specific corners set up, to avoid the same error of labeling and discrimination</p>
PERSPECTIVE SAMPLE 2	<p>Type of point of sale: a common store, with all sizes including <i>plus</i> sizes appears to be the most effective for the segment, as opposed to specialized stores Shop space: it is important that it is wide and enables the free circulation Fitting rooms: Insufficient space in most stores so they can try the clothes comfortably and with freedom of movement. Privacy is also important, rooms should be designed to assure it Customer: analysis of the interviews point to a kind of more personalized service, close to the customer</p>

7. Discussion and final remarks

The product appears to be the main flaw of the offer in the plus size market segment in Portugal, and the results found by this research corroborate the results obtained by Costa and Cardoso (2008), showing that the plus size consumer is dissatisfied with the market offering. Clothing for the segment, similar to what Otieno (cited by Meng, 2007) found, was considered to be directed to a segment of greater age. These results indicate that there are opportunities for improvement and adjacent segments that are still not adequately addressed, such as young overweight people. Developing products and marketing concepts which are consistent with this segment represents an opportunity for stakeholders in the fashion industry. However, the youth segment within the overweight fashion consumers is a subject that should be further investigated, given that the studies identified in the literature do not focus on this specific unit of analysis.

The conclusions drawn on the price confirm the results obtained in previous studies by Costa and Cardoso (2008) and Meng (2007), indicating that the price is not an elementary variable because, for products that match their needs, consumers would be willing to pay more. This result was probably generated by an insufficient supply over demand, as the data suggests.

Regarding the communication strategy, the study gives the contribution of warning about the difficulty of communicating effectively with the segment (as specified by sample 1). The responses of consumers would tend to indicate that the most effective communication (from the perspective of consumers interviewed) is to not discriminate nor make use of stereotypes. The issue of women not feeling discriminated is multidimensional; the aspect of the space itself (i.e. the women tend to feel uncomfortable with stores or areas within the store which are directly identified with their condition), the service (i.e. to be treated differently from other customers), but at the same time, because they feel (often) greater insecurity, they value the advice and not being limited in their product options. As one interviewee refers, sometimes it is enough "just to use a slightly larger model." However, the balance between effectively communicate the message of the proposed value of the offer and not discriminating or generating stereotyped associations, leading to the rejection of the message and the product by the segment, is very difficult to achieve. Further study is suggested, especially quantitative studies with larger and more representative samples that would allow generalization.

Regarding the point of sale, the findings about the fitting rooms and shop space corroborate the results of Meng (2007), in which these consumers attributed great importance to the rooms, preferring them to be large and providing privacy. Here the challenge is how to give response to this need, in the context of optimizing the area and making commercial spaces profitable. The design and spatial conception of the stores, considering that the customers are not confined solely to the analysed segment, is presented as an important issue to clarify in future research. The data draws attention to the problem of store concepts, which could incorporate the design of modularity and greater flexibility into the physical elements (e.g. hangers, chairs, shelves) enabling the expansion of usable space optimizing the areas but responding simultaneously to the needs of customers who require more space. For further clarification of this issue, the suggestion is given of rethinking the spaces to make them expandable (e.g. by joining two rooms, if necessary), designing shelves for easy access and height-adjustable hangers, adjustable chairs, among other possibilities for architects and interior designers that conceive the shop spaces for the plus-size segment. This suggestion does not only seek greater satisfaction in this segment, but for all customers with different needs, such as disabled people who use wheelchairs, very short people, the elderly, children, etc. Companies with high social responsibility should pay attention to the subtlety that these details can confer, making a difference in competitiveness (i.e. satisfying a greater number of consumers / consumer segments) and its image as a socially responsible organizational actor, creating a positive image in society. At academic level, in the area of design, it is important to produce relevant studies to examine how organizational actors address this problem of space and physical media and thus incorporate greater social responsibility, also contributing to organizational competitiveness. It would be relevant to study if the relationship of integrating social responsibility in the space and product design, aiming to satisfy customers with special needs and not just the majority, has a significant correlation with better performance

indicators (e.g. sales, profit, and customer flow, among other performance indicators). The current study does not allow an answer to this question, due to the small sample size and exploratory nature, but allows inferring this possibility, to be further validated.

Through the interviews with the consumers it was found that the clothing for daily use is not the only product of difficult access to the segment. Basic products such as underwear and socks are extremely difficult to find for some consumers. Also regarding footwear, the sample reveals that the segment has no offer. One female respondent referred that she often has to buy men's sport shoes. This is an important contribution of the study, exposing that market opportunities are not being potentiated by companies operating in the apparel, footwear and accessories market, pointing and reinforcing the need to investigate solutions (e.g. design, product engineering and materials) which gives effective response to the needs of this segment.

In the study herein presented, as in the study by Costa and Cardoso (2008), only women were considered, but the number of Portuguese men with excessive weight is also high. These consumers most certainly also lack a market supply adjusted to their needs, and therefore this can be presented as a starting point for future research. No studies of the phenomenon of plus size fashion from the perspective of male consumers were identified in.

References

- Barreiro, A. M., (1998) "La Moda en las Sociedades Modernas", Madrid: Editorial Tecnos
- Bonafini, B., E Pozzilli, P. (2010) "Body weight and beauty: the changing face of the ideal female body weight". *Obesity Reviews* 12: 62-65. International Association For The Study Of Obesity
- CARMO, I., SANTOS, O., CAMOLAS, J., VIEIRA, J. (2008) "Obesidade em Portugal e no Mundo"; Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade; Lisboa
- Carreteiro, C.T. (2005) "Corpo e Contemporaneidade", *Psicologia em Revista*, Belo Horizonte, v. 11, n. 17, p. 62-76
- C&A (2012) [online] disponível em: <http://www.cea.com.br/> [consultado de Junho a Outubro de 2012]
- Costa, T., E Cardoso, A. (2008) "O 'Peso da Moda': A relação e o Envolvimento das Mulheres Obesas com a Moda", *Revista da Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Sociais*. Porto. ISSN 1646-0502. 4 (2007) 54-67
- Elena Miró (2012) [online] disponível em: <http://www.elenamiro.com/> [consultado de Junho a Outubro de 2012]
- Felippe, F. M. (2003) " O peso social da obesidade", *Revista Virtual Textos & Contextos*, nº 2
- Gama, M. G. (2011) "Comunicação e Moda - Quando o Real se Realiza em Signo", Tese de Doutoramento em Ciências da Comunicação, Especialidade de Comunicação Estratégica, Universidade do Minho
- Ghiglione, R., e MATALON, M. (1993) " O inquérito: teoria e prática", Celta Editora, Oeiras
- Kvale, S. (1996) "InterViews : an introduction to qualitative research interviewing", Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks
- Matis, M. (2006) "Trends Plus – Fashion discovers a new market", USC's Center for Management Communication
- Meng, W. (2007) "The U.S. Plus-size Female Consumer: Self-Perception, Clothing Involvement, and the Importance of Store Attributes", *Dissertação De Mestrado Em Ciência*, Universidade da Carolina do Norte
- Otieno, R., Harrow, C., Lea-Greenwood, G. (2005) "The Unhappy shopper, a retail experience: exploring fashion, fit and affordability", *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Vol. 33, No,4

Vieira, V. A., E Tibola, F. "Pesquisa qualitativa em marketing e suas variações: trilhas para pesquisas futuras" Rev. adm. contemp. [online]. 2005, vol.9, n.2, pp. 9-33. ISSN 1982-7849.

World Health Organization (2012) Data and statistics [online] disponível em: <http://www.who.int/research/en/>, [consultado de Janeiro a Março de 2012]