ELICITING EMOTIONS, A STRATEGY FOR FASHION COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: Fashion Communication strategies are facing significant changes. New digital communication technologies are transforming human communication and interactions, allowing people to increasingly share more contents and information through mobile media and social networks. Thus, leading to a significant progress in developing online experiences.
To gain notoriety and loyalty, brands need to emotionally connect with consumers. Hence Fashion Communication strategies should take into account the consumer needs and desires in order to provide powerful emotional experiences.
The present work aimed at perceiving users emotional relation to new digital media, based on an exploratory study of an application developed for iPad, promoting a particular Fashion project.
The usability tests provided important insights to demystify user's relationship with the app and highlighted valuable inputs to be considered when designing exciting and memorable experiences, opening new possibilities for developing strong personal bonds between Fashion brands and consumers.

Keywords: Interaction Design, Fashion Communication, Design, User Experience, Emotion.

1. Introduction

We are facing a change of scenery in Fashion Communication: activity and costs for media campaigns based on the traditional media advertising (TV, magazines, etc.) have been reducing in recent years. On the other hand, online content, mobile media and social media have progressed significantly (Greenwood, 2013).

The adherence to new technologies is transforming communication and interactions between people at a global level as well as the selection and purchase of goods and services (Ryan & Jones, 2009). Information is becoming increasingly widely accessible, content sharing is constant and is part of everyday life for most people.

Aiming to connect to the consumer, Fashion Communication strategies should disseminate the brand image taking into account this new phenomenon as well as the emotional responses of consumers. The emotion has a great influence on our daily lives, commands attention and highlights some memories while minimizing other (Reeves & Nass, 1998 as cited in Van Gorp & Adams, 2012).

Undeniably, the rise of technological developments provides new resources to brands and therefore create new opportunities to offer engaging experiences. Ahmed, chairman and co-founder of AKQA company, states that consumers are more inspired by immersive and memorable interactive experiences (as cited in Davis, 2009). In addition, he believes that these experiences are an asset because they capture the audience and enhance brand value of tangible and measurable ways as well.

This research systematically addresses new types of communication in fashion brands and explores the potential of new technologies to arouse emotions.

2. Technology, Emotion and Fashion Communication Strategies

The role of modern brands is to encourage the consumer to take more risks, explore new behaviours and try new unexpected products (Kapferer, 2012). In this sense, the emergence of new digital media may become a valuable aid because it generates new opportunities for the establishment of a higher interpersonal relationship with brands.

Chae and Bateman (as cited in Meyers & Gertsman, 2001) refer the sensuality inherent to digital environment by merging and converging several elements - touch, voice, video, graphics and text - in one environment. From their perspective, it´s crucial to create immersive environments because brands that are going to be successful are those that are going to have something compelling to say. Therefore we witnessed the dawn of diverse communication strategies that take advantage of technological developments.

Several national and international fashion brands invest in short videos, seeking to take advantage of the power of video and image to highlight the brand´s character and personality. These videos, entitled Fashion Films, with duration between a minute to ten minutes, can either tell a story about the fashion label or dwell on a particular collection and its essence (Pancholi, 2014).

Promoted by California fashion label Wren, the video "First Kiss" features twenty strangers, all wearing Wren´s fall 2014 clothing collection, meeting for the first time and kissing on camera. The video went viral and received seven million YouTube views in one day. From the study of Jonah Berger, Weinschenk (2013) concludes that the most important element for a message going viral is that it elicits a strong emotional reaction. Thus, it is assumed that the video is so popular because it uses strong emotional content in three and a half minutes.

Figure 1: First Kiss. Source: Ciambriello, 2014

The latest NFR Retail´s Big Show, annual reference event in retail, highlighted the technological integration, the role of social media, mobile experience, among other major trends in marketing and communication strategies for 2015. The concept of "Internet of Things" acquired a big emphasis. In this regard, Arthur and Aldenton (2015) declare:

"This is about everyday objects being increasingly connected so as to enable more interactions as well as deeper levels of data. For retailers, this is moving away from just showcasing pieces of technology on the shop floor to linking up the entire experience."

An example that reflects precisely this new concept comes from Rebecca Minkoff connect stores: interactive mirrors provide shoppers with product recommendations and access to in-store inventory information; shoppers receive texts when fitting room is available; inside the fitting room a touch screen mirror can be used to request more items or ask for assistance; merchandise tags equipped with radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology provide detailed data about products and track which items customers try on; shoppers receive texts when fitting room is available; inside the fitting room a touch screen mirror can be used to request more items or ask for assistance, among other innovations.

The system applied in this store aims to meet an increasingly demanding and informed consumer, and on the other hand becomes a valuable tool because it provides the brand information about customer preferences. In a interview with Fast Company (n.d.), the co-founder and creative director Rebecca Minkoff

said that this collation of information can be used to solve problems and dictate the next step to take to enthuse the client: "I think you are looking at the data but you always have to be innovating".

Figure 2: Rebecca Minkoff's flagship store, photographer Brian Harkin. Source: Holmes, 2014

In order to meet the needs of a culturally conscious consumer it is vital to deliver memorable experiences to help establishing emotional bonds. Steven Lowey, Co-Chief Executive Officer of Westfield Labs (as cited in Ceribelli, 2015) mentioned that "Human's love to be entertained. Human's love to be excited. Human's love to share experiences with one another".

Fashion Communication will continue to evolve in parallel with technology, for which reason it is necessary to deepen theoretical and practical knowledge of this phenomenon. In addition, it should be emphasized the lack of formal material about this subject, in this particular Fashion context.

3. Studying User Experience

3.1 Objectives

This study sought to understand how people relate to digital media from an emotional and experience point of view, based on interactions, pre-existing languages and rhetoric.

Therefore, it was conceived a Fashion Communication tool, seeking to take advantage of the creative and kinetic potential of a particular technology. It was developed an iPad application bearing in mind the creation of emotional impact on users. Subsequently, existing control metrics were selected to measure qualitative and quantitative results of emotional experience.

3.2 Application development process

The application development process included the following steps: selection of theme, defining the structure, design of graphical interface and development of high-fidelity prototype.

Concerning the theme of the application, it was chosen a singular fashion project to avoid preconceived associations of Fashion brands which, by their influence on user, could compromise the experience with the application. In this way, without having any prior knowledge of the project, users could genuinely experience the application in its fullness because it is a novelty.

An opportunity to work with the project "Careca Cabeluda" arose, which consists in a fashion collection by Cláudia Mendes, a young fashion designer, graduated in Fashion Design at University of Beira Interior - Portugal. The selection criteria resided primarily in the versatility of the collection, the imaginary achieved by black and white and for the aesthetics linked to illustration and comics.

To study the application's structure were used support tools such as mind maps and tables to aid in understanding the problem and reflecting on the best way forward.
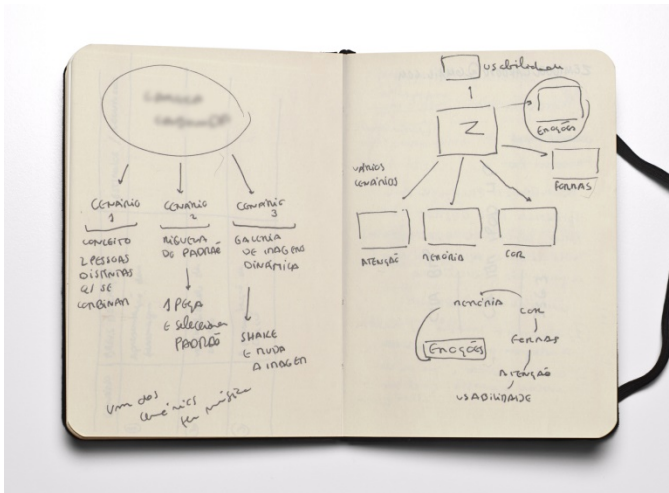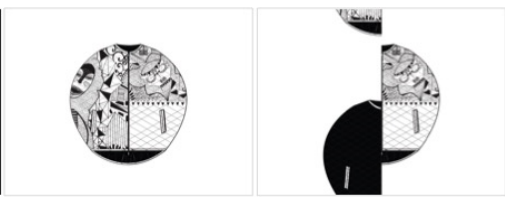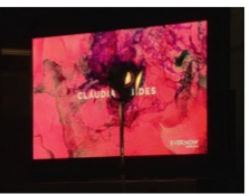
Figure 3: Diagrams developed to assist the application´s structuration process

The graphic interface was conceived based on graphic design recommendations with regard to legibility and consistency of the graphic elements used.

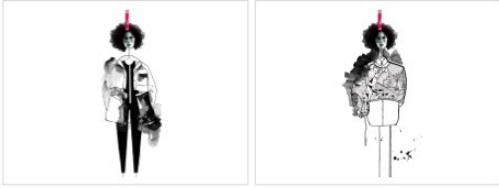The application is a set of interaction scenarios that took into account the concepts of the Fashion collection. They were designed aiming to establish bonds with the user through experimentation, positive emotions and curiosity. It was intended that they were dynamic and communicate the Fashion project.

Table 1: Interaction scenarios description of the application

Screenshot	Scenario Description
	Scenario A: presents a piece that the user can modify and transform through gestures oriented vertically, demonstrating the versatility of the collection.
	Scenario B: shows in a considerable size the illustration that features the collection. Moving the iPad pans us around the whole image.
	Scenario C: displays video with the presentation of the collection at the event Moda Lisboa.
	Scenario D: firstly appears a photograph with two characters and after accepting the invitation to scrape the picture the iPad presents the user with an explanatory text about the concept of the collection which consists precisely in experiences of the characters presented earlier.

Screenshot	Scenario Description
	Scenario E: finally, the scenario E presents images of sketches by shaking the iPad.

3.2.1 Interaction Guide

The structure that was set comprises three parts: the first one presents the project and the navigation's instructions; the second presents different interaction scenarios randomly, concluding with a specific scenario and the third part displays a page where the user can quit the application or learn more about the project.
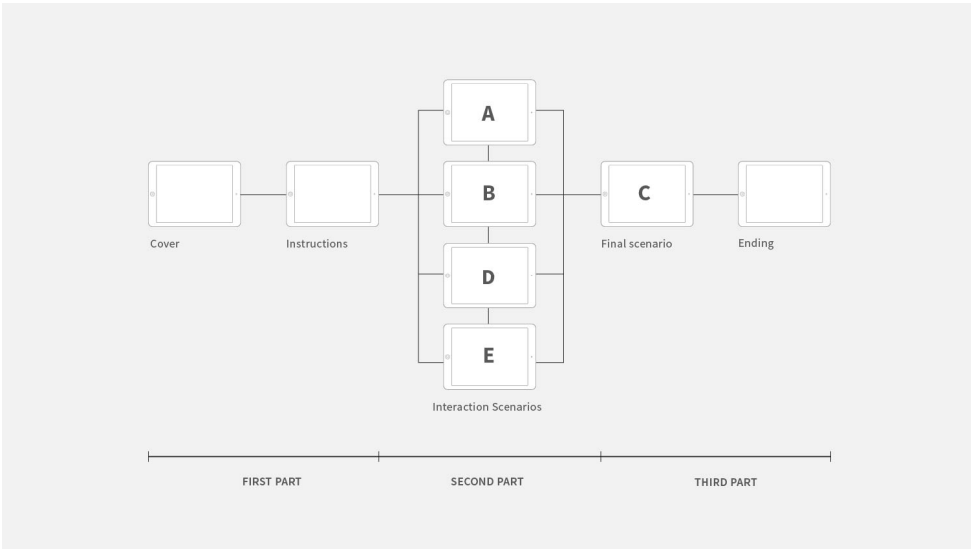

Figure 4: Application's structure

It was established that scenarios A, B, D and E were presented randomly, to provide different experiences, and that scenario C would always be displayed last. This option is justified by the positive emotions that were intended to elicit. The goal is that users were aware that the application was about Fashion and without more information were lured to know more about the purpose of the application through the interaction scenarios. In the end, when confronted with the video collection, they could understand and establish links with the interaction scenarios previously displayed.

It was considered relevant to provide context upon opening the application so that the relation to a Fashion project was clear.

Regarding navigation, it was chosen a system, in which to explore content users must touch the screen center. Then, the navigation instructions were placed so that users take immediate knowledge of how system operates. In addition, it is noteworthy that throughout the application there´s no more information about navigation to not distract users from interaction scenarios.

Then, it is presented one of the interaction scenarios, proceeded of its respective instruction that fades after 4 seconds. From here, by touching at the center of the interface, users are transported to other scenarios.

Cooper, Reimann and Cronin (2007) state that use of icons and other illustrative elements can help users understand an interface or, if poorly executed, can irritate, confuse or insult.

Based on Saffer´s recommendations (2009), written instructions were used for unambiguous gestures and for those that could be misinterpreted, simple illustrations to complement words were developed.

The illustrations were designed with enough size to be understood and share the same visual attributes: positioning, size, line weight and overall style. The adopted style should be consistent - if some icons use bold black lines and rounded corners while others use thin, angular lines, the visual style won´t be cohesive (Cooper, Reimann & Cronin, 2007).

On the last page of the application were offered two choices: "exit" the application or "see more" in order to understand if the raised interactions attracted users and stimulate their curiosity.

3.3 Usability Study

To achieve the proposed objectives, it was conducted an exploratory usability study. The observation of interactions between the users and the application will allow to analyze emotional states and experiences evoked.

Barnum (2011) states that usability is invisible when it is inherent to the products we use. This factor occurs when the products meet the needs of users, when they work as expected. Although sometimes it´s necessary to learn some elements to interact with certain products, there´s no problem when this effort is rewarded with the ease of learning, ease of use, intuitiveness and fun.

Usability studies can quickly reveal a considerable amount of information on how people understand interactive systems (Goodman, Kuniavsky & Moed, 2012). After a certain number of these tests, researchers compare observations and compile a list of relevant information for future developments.

For the conduct of tests it was written a script that matches a list of instructions to be followed so that tests are consistent and no element is forgotten (Goodman, Kuniavsky & Moed, 2012). It was estimated a duration of about twenty minutes for each test and they were conducted with one participant at a time.

Before the beginning of sessions we ask participants to verbalize their thoughts. This technique entitled "think aloud" is used to obtain feedback from user behavior. It allows to learn about their problem solving and thought processes (Unger & Chandler, 2012).

To gather additional information, it was decided to record video and make screen capture of the activity on the iPad. It should be emphasized the importance of video as an analysis element: video can reveal crucial moments that audio can´t capture (Goodman, Kuniavsky & Moed, 2012) - a participant can answer yes to a particular subject and show the opposite through body language.

To complement the analysis of user experience it was designed a survey in order to collect information about the following key elements: connection between mobile devices and digital Fashion publications with users; knowledge of this type of interaction in Fashion communication media; degree of interest for each scenarios; description of scenarios; positive and negative aspects of the application and ultimately, suggestions/comments.

Given the above, it were written open and multiple choice questions, behavioral questions (ex. "How often you use tablets?") and attitudinal questions (eg. "Rate the interaction of each scenario according to the degree of interest aroused"). The attitudinal questions used a four-point scale: "Very Interesting" "Interesting," Uninteresting" and "Very Uninteresting". It was decided not to put an intermediate value to avoid ambiguous answers and lead participants to take a position regarding the product.

3.3.1 Data gathering

The usability study included two sessions and was conducted in eight participants. Schaffer and Lahiri (2014) mention that usability tests require fewer participants than Marketing studies because the results of these studies are qualitative rather than descriptive statistics. In addition, Gogcay, Yildirim and Global (2011) argue that identifying and measuring emotions is an inexact science.

Data collection was performed throughout the sessions through video (using the camera of a computer) and video capture of the iPad´s screen´ interactions (via X- Mirage software). Since it was intended to use

video material for later analysis, it was prepared a video consent form, previously delivered to each participant before the test.

At the end of each test, participants were asked to individually fill in the elaborated survey.

3.4 Results

The collected findings through video, iPad´s screen´ interactions, observation sessions and surveys were systematized in the form of tables.

3.4.1 Observation sessions

The verbalization of participants and the video capture of usability tests allowed a in-depth analysis of user experience.

The following issues have been identified: ambiguities in illustrations (scenarios B and E); motion speed on scenario D and delimitation problems of the touch targets in scenario A.

The suggested movement in scenario B intrigued the participants, who tried to decode the image through gestures and by the rotation of the device (Figure 5). Additionally, the fact that the image is not revealed immediately generated curiosity.

Figure 5: Set of images extracted from the videos captured during the sessions

Three participants have established a parallel between the gesture of scenario D and scratch cards, which provided fun times. Video footage showed that participants feedback was positive. When facing objects or experiences that are similar to objects and experiences we already have strong association with, we sometimes experience the emotions we felt previously, albeit at a lower intensity (Van Gorp & Adams, 2012).

It can be considered that scenario E was the one that sparked major controversy within the participants: the instruction was considered barely perceptible; participants 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8 did not perform properly the gesture and the first participant made the gesture too vigorously, culminating with an iPad clash on the table. It was also denoted some reluctance by participants in handling the iPad and moving it freely.

The video allowed participants to establish relations with previous interactions and voice their preferences and opinions regarding the collection itself. It is noteworthy that two of the participants mentioned the lack of interactivity of this scenario in comparison with others.

On the last page, five of the eight participants expressed interest in knowing more about the project.

Relating to navigation, there have been some hesitations from the participants. It is assumed that this factor has elapsed by the absence of instructions in the scenarios, besides those that appear at the opening of the application.

3.4.2 iPad's screen' interactions

The video capture of the iPad's screen' interactions, captured by X- Mirage software, provided information about the permanence of participants in each part of the application.

In the scenarios where participants did not understand the instruction, occurred two behaviors: at the lack of visible changes, there were participants who lost interest and moved to the next scenario and others spent more time exploring, trying to decode the intended gesture.

Weinschenk (2013) states that people like challenges and feel motivated in front of one. However, when they don´t feel that they can achieve at least some level of mastery, then the challenge is not motivating anymore.

It is noteworthy that participants who spent more time in scenario D are those who expressed positive comments on usability testing. Emotional reactions influences information processing and task performance (Van Gorp & Adams, 2012).

3.4.3 Survey

The findings collected in observations allowed to acquire an insight about the reasons that led users to adopt certain action when interacting with the application. On the other hand, surveys clarified users´ view, in addition to sessions.

From the obtained answers about frequency of use of tablets and regular consultation of Fashion digital publications, it was not possible to obtain a clear conclusion because the number of participants was not enough and it was not intended quantitative data. However, the participants who knew and used Fashion communication media proved to be more comfortable with the iPad and revealed minor difficulties interacting with it.

Scenario A raised the most positive rating, considered by six of the participants as "Very Interesting" and by two participants as "Interesting". The gathered comments revealed game associations and manifestations of curiosity in trying to understand the interaction: "Interesting in a visual level, resembling with a game to find the matching piece"; "Interest to discover possible combinations"; "Mobility".

Games are commonly associated with fun and are holders of other positive aspects that shouldn´t be overlooked: they can make life more intuitive, engaging, memorable, meaningful, rewarding, productive, effective and successful. In the words of Ferrara (2012), "the instinctive human drive toward play continuously pushes us to find new ways to understand and influence the world around us".

Participants that gave a connotation of "Uninteresting" and "Very Uninteresting" to scenario E failed to understand the instruction and as a result, they could only observed a static image. On the other hand, participants who were able to make the gesture, although classified as "Very Interesting" and "Interesting" they considered it distractive, tiresome and confusing.

With regards to positive aspects of the application, all participants mention some. The app was considered innovative, fun, interesting and with potential to establish relationships. In comparison to positive aspects, negative aspects are minor and related to the ambiguities of instructions, issues related to gestures and to the fact that people are not acquainted with this kind of media.

The section "suggestions/comments" emerged in order to give users the possibility to actively participate in the construction process of such applications.

Unfortunately, the feedback was not the expected because there were participants who left no response. The ones who did, commented that the app was a good initiative and very creative. Participant 7 mentioned that interactions aroused interest about the presented project.

4. Conclusions

The usability study gave important information to demystify the relationship of users with the app and provided valuable inputs: enabled the identification of problems in terms of usability, satisfaction, preferences and positive or negative experiences.

Regarding the resources needed to perform the usability tests, in future sessions, it is suggested video capture through the iPad, for a better perception of facial expressions, and it is recommended to record audio with an external device.

To solve the identified problems by users it is needed to explore other approaches to make instructions more perceptible and making changes in application concerning motion speed and delimitation of touch targets in the scenarios that have been identified.

The generated interactions arose curiosity, provided fun times and triggered difficulties in implementing more abrupt gestures. It was verified that the emotional states of users influence their behavior and attitudes: emotion transmits energy and moves people (Desmet, 2011 as cited in TEDx Talks, 2011). To obtain more significant results the usability study should grow, increasing the number of participants involved.

It should be stressed the seduction inherent to gestural interfaces. By allowing direct manipulation of digitally content, they allow people feel like they are actually "touching" information, resembling a tangible experience in the digital world (Hinman, 2012).

Despite being a territory not yet explored in the Fashion Industry, this type of support should be considered for the creation of relationships between brands and consumers because of the potential that has been revealed to evoke emotions.

This research is a contribution to the enrichment of an undiscovered area specifically in the context of fashion.

4.1 Future Research
From the results obtained, it should be stressed a sense of urgency to acquire new skills in order to address new challenges in Fashion Industry.

Parallel to technology, knowledge of human perception and cognition will continue to evolve (Johnson, 2010). The future prospects are to deepen the study of the relationship between digital communication media and the user and then based on it develop new tools to support Fashion Communication Systems that enhance memorable emotional experiences.

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