



COMMUNICATION AND DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN COMMERCIAL FOOTWEAR V CONCEPTUAL FOOTWEAR THROUGH SEMIOTICS ANALYSIS

MÁRCIA SOTORIVA, ANA CRISTINA BROEGA, ANA MERY DE CARLI

University of Minho, marciasotoriva@ibest.com.br

University of Minho, cbroega@det.uminho.pt

University of Caxias do Sul, sdecarli@terra.com.br

Abstract

Fashion communication occurs through images, shapes, and cultural values, leading individuals to feel the need to "belong" to a particular group. This article investigates the communication and differentiation between commercial footwear V conceptual analysis, through semiotic analysis. For such differentiation could be studied, it was made a brief study on semiotic analysis, settling some points to be analyzed in commercial and conceptual images of footwear in order to demonstrate this differentiation. The result of this analysis shows that the interpreter differentiates the products by several aspects, determining which one to use and the other as conceptual or symbolic object that favors the concept in detriment of the use or sellable.

Keywords: *Communication; Commercial Footwear; Conceptual Footwear; Semiotics.*

Introduction

This work discusses the implications of fashion as communication through analysis of the historical context in which these belong, as well as its development and usability. It is possible to trace a route of evolution and how each piece of clothing and accessories created throughout history have always had the function of mean, depending on where it was inserted and who would be the interpreter. Therefore, this article attempts to understand how the shoes can communicate, being this commercial (manufactured in series), or conceptual (manufactured on a small scale, available in specialized locations), and also how can differentiate both.

To carry out this analysis, initially sought to understand the historical part of the communication in the fashion and through footwear. In a second moment proceeded to analyze of what would be a conceptual shoes and what are its goals. And finally, a semiotic analysis with the focus directed to the foundation of the sign with the purpose of creating a form of differentiation between the conceptual and commercial footwear.

1. Development of communication in fashion

When it comes to fashion communication, quickly we think in social relationships, cultural values, shapes, and images as systems of signification. On a social organization that makes individuals to consume and increasingly more and feel the need to "belong" to a particular group, the contemporary society leads

people to live a constant process of choices and search for self-identity. One of the main features of human communication is to adorn the body in search of propagate the languages that enable communication. For Castilho (2005, p. 36) a character much more symbolic than functional, is present by elements that composing the clothing in the course of the story. The decoration of the body is a practice that involves the construction of various narratives with the ambition of producing new dynamics, valid in a given community. According to Lee (2006), the communication refers to the understanding of the message from the association of signs. Thus, when talking, when gesturing, when listening to music, can be an experience of signs. As Mesquita (2004, p.77), considering fashion as language, it must be considered from the perspective of a complex network. For example, given the mixture of references common to contemporary fashion, the influences that the globalization process produces, and appropriation that the consumer makes of the fashion codes, we should take extreme care when interpreting messages. For the same author, "fashion, especially from the 1990's decade, confuses more than it reveals. Mixing social, economic, geographic codes, in addition it exalts the individual language to the detriment of the collective".

The act of differentiation on the dressing creates a meaning that forms a society and institutions code of where it is used. The era in which the footwear and clothing had the function of protecting the body from the cold and decency was overcome by fashion. For Petersen, (2007), the footwear passes strong meanings, as for example when it comes home at the end of a long day of work and we exchange the social shoe by the slippers, ends up winning rest status. The footwear can also represent stages of life, as for example footwear that was used to get a very much-wanted job or one that was used on a sad time. As Petersen, (2007), the footwear can mean respect, security, transforming or empowering. In the case of the Cinderella fable, the shoe left her more herself confident and also caused her to be judged differently.

2. The communication of footwear through the historical context

The footwear makes up an important part of the economic structure, and eventually portrays the conditions of a society. As Pattison (1998, p. 6), before the 20th century, work in shoes was considered a modest craft category of shoemakers. To draw a shoe was not thought as an artistic activity was only part of the total process. This reality was changing with the emergence of the industry and mass production, and the craft of designing shoes turned out to distinguish the work of cobbler. According to O'Keeffe (1996, p. 12) "For much of history, the shoes of women remained in the darkness, hidden underneath the volume of petticoats. However, although they were one of the most hidden female adornments, ironically, it was and continues to be one of the most revealing". One can understand the great historic part of society only by research and analysis of shapes, use and values inserted on the shoes. According O'Keeffe (1996, p. 22), due to the simplicity of its construction, the sandals were the first shoes made by man. A long time passed after the emergence of the first shoes, and each civilization began to adapt them, each revealing the spirit of its society. One of the salient points of the history of footwear was the emergence of the high soles, which left people further away from the ground. According to Pattison (1998, p. 52), the first high soles emerged in Egypt, and date back to the year 1000 BC. Those probably provided to who wore it, a considerable social position.

But with the passage of time, the high soles turned into high heels, giving new meanings to its users. The heels are no longer just appeal of social position, now they got status of power and seduction. Second O'Keeffe (1996, p. 72), psychologically, the heels allow a woman, commanding and not be commanded. Despite the different cultures in which they were generated, the shoes turns those who use it into an object, and sharpens the sexual appetite of those who look at them. This remarkable status of "fetish" and seduction that the shoe has acquired over the years remains up to our days, because all that is associated with pornography and powerful women comes attached to wearing shoes with very high heels. As Steele

(1998, p. 63), in the popular imagination, it seems that the women's shoes must be sexy and uncomfortable.

3. The communication through conceptual footwear

The word "conceptual" first appears in Europe and in the United States in the late 1960, through an artistic movement that advocates a superiority of ideas carried by the artwork. According to Janson (1992, p. 722) conceptual art calls into question our definition of art, insisting that is the area of imaginative, and not in execution, that art lies. In conceptual art, ideas are the most important, leaving the implementation and the final result of the work in the background. Here, the audience is forced to leave to be just a passive observer and is forced to reflect on the work for the understanding of same. In fashion collections, the conceptual pieces aims to represent the language of a brand, conceptualizing a given collection. The conceptual pieces are not intended to be used in day to day, to be functional, but rather to create emotional impact to the public, with experimental and innovative character, bringing the collection to a status of object of cult with preponderance of its symbolic value. In the book of "the Psychology of Dress", Eco (1975, p. 13) explains that to communicate, do not talk only with the mouth, but also with the hands, eyes, etc. This means that life in society consists on one hand, in acts of communication, sound or sign entities "they say that", and other things that "work", i.e. "serve for". The author presents a case of communication in fashion, taking as an example the primitive man who wore animal skin to protect himself from weathering. In this case the skin "serve for", but with the time passages, the same men are wear fur for the distinction between the good hunters, these, conquered by the price of a hard fight with the animals, and the other, the weak, without skins. Therefore, the clothing speaks by itself, transfers meanings and also identifies ideological positions, and thus works the conceptual pieces inserted in fashion collections, transmitting a message, "saying that", symbolizing something...

It's easy to forget the sense of utility of a garment or a shoe when we are by true conceptual works created for the contemporary universe of fashion, which are breaking the limits of art. According to O'Keeffe, (1996, p. 454) "unique in design and in conception the shoes that come out of the fantasy of a designer are authentic dreams made truth in the foot, bringing the shoe to the status of a piece of art". In this feature the project emphasizes the symbolic character of the product. Besides according to the author, the conceptual shoes that became more famous throughout history were these created specifically for the film industry, because these models helped to build a character.

4. Difference between commercial footwear V conceptual footwear – a semiotics analysis

Established by a theoretical and methodological apparatus, semiotics is known as a science of signs, which aims to clarify the meaning of the communication processes. In antiquity the language was considered a category of signs or symbols, which served for men communicate with each other. There, the concept of sign was designated as something perceptive as: heat, colors, shapes, sounds, and also something that can be assigned a meaning. According to Joly (2008, p. 32), semiotics is a American term origin, is the canonical term that designates the semiotics as a philosophy of languages. This designation is constructed from the Greek word *semeion*, meaning sign. Yet as the author, the idea of developing a science of signs, called semiotics, is to be able to study the different types of signs that we interpret, integrating them into a typology and finding the laws of functioning of the different categories of signs. The signs may be classified as verbal and non-verbal, the first being identified in the reading of the combinations of alphabet letters (the words) and the second by means of visual signals (paintings, drawings, photos, among others).

As Castilho (2005, p. 52) in the case of fashion, their texts, the objects—clothes, it go's through readings that extrapolate its functionality and enhance its subjective valuation issues, both by the group that assigns certain values to an outfit, such as by the user of an object that provides itself, certain identity traits. The semiotics surrounds the several studies involving fashion, for example, it can analyze the game of relationships and the dissemination around the fashion events, the design of a collection, such as the distribution of parts at sale point, advertising campaigns, among others. In addition to these approaches, fashion can still be analyzed as a dialogue between the body x identity construction x social identity insertion of a individual. But all these investigations start through analysis of visual message itself, on one hand there is the image function and on the other, the context of your appearance.

Santaella (2004, p.7) also cites the phenomenology in semiotics, understood as: "... everything, anything, that appears to perception and mind. The phenomenology has for function to present formal and universal categories of modes in which the phenomena are apprehended by the mind." According to Santaella (2004, p. 7) Charles Sanders Peirce, in his studies focused on philosophy, signalled that there are three formal and universal elements in all phenomena that present themselves to perception. These elements were called "firstness", "secondness" and "thirdness". Santaella (2004, pp. 7-34-129) explains "firstness" as being all that appears related to the "*chance*", opportunity, quality, feeling, originality and freedom. At this point, what matters is the first look, is it that takes into account only the aspects relating to the qualities of the sign. The apprehension of "quali-sign" requires from the beholder an availability to the power of suggestion, evolution, the association with the appearance that the sign presents. Santaella (2004, pp. 7-25, 34-129) comprises the "secondness" as being the second kind of look, is linked to ideas of dependency, determination, duality, action and reaction, surprise and doubt. The "secondness" takes into consideration only the existing aspect of a sign, i.e. the "sin-sign" (when it is analysed the mode of existence of a particular phenomenon). For the interpretation to happen, it need to pay attention in the directions that the sin-sign points. Santaella (2004, pp. 35-48-7-134) also clarifies the "thirdness", as being the third way of looking, this, should lead to the sign foundation. The "thirdness" relates to the generality, continuity, growing and intelligence. Here, what it takes into account is the property of law, "legi-sign" (are the General principles of a message, is a law that is a sign. Messages can be examined in its general character of something that belongs to a class of things, like that is analysing the "legi-signs" of a message) as the Foundation. In human semiotics, the "legi-signs" are almost always cultural conventions; the examination leads to a field symbol references that include customs and collective values.

Based on the assumptions presented by Santaella (2004), the aim of this work is the analysis of commercial v conceptual shoes, with the focus directed to sign foundation in order to systematize a way of differentiating between the two categories. In the future it is intend to continue this work as the objective of creating conceptual footwear, as well as its justification.

The image of commercial footwear chosen to be analysed, was removed from the website of the Brazilian footwear company of Arezzo. This brand was chosen for being a reference in footwear with contemporary design in Brazil. On the choice of image of conceptual footwear to be analysed, account has been taken of the challenging and innovative shoe design of the designer Marloes Ten Bhomer. According to Huey (2011, p. 165) Bhomer has chosen to work with shoes by his fascination of the machines complexities. His goal is to create objects that ignore or criticize the conventional products that can escape from the traditional forms in order to make for the world less common products.

The figure 1 presents shoe from the winter footwear collection 2012 from Arezzo (commercial footwear). The figure 2 presents a shoe made of carbon fibber and leather of Marloes Ten Bhomer (Conceptual footwear).

7



Figure 1: Footwear winter collection 2012 - Arezzo

Source: www.arezzo.com.br



Figure 2: Footwear from designer Marloes Tem Bhomeer

Source: *Contemporary footwear design*

Observing the images of figures 1 and 2, and considering the three formal elements that make up the foundation of the sign, according to Peirce (apud Santaella, 2004, p. 7), three tables were created for proper comparison between the products, regarding the "firstness" (table 1), "secondness" (table 2) and "thirdness" (table 3).

Table 1: Comparison of footwear style – "Firstness"

	COMMERCIAL	CONCEPTUAL
"Quali-sign": appearance that the sign displays, its qualities, impressions, associations and sensations. Is personal, requires observation and slow. Santaella says that we should allow time to the sign manifest itself.	Suggestions of elegance, sophistication, power, contemporary, comfort, ergonomics, novelty, colour and good finishing, can be felt in the observation of the object shown in the image (fig. 1).	Suggestions of technology, rationality, sobriety, stiffness, discomfort, innovation, imbalance, instability, insecurity, vanguard and geometrization, innovation can be felt on the observation of the object (fig. 2).

Table 2: Comparison of style of footwear – "Secondness"

	COMMERCIAL	CONCEPTUAL
"Sin-sign": Connected to the ideas of dependency, determination, duality, action and reaction, conflict, surprise and doubt. Takes into account only the existing aspects of a sign.	The object shown is part of the category: women's footwear and subcategory: high heels shoe sandal with frontal compensation. The material used is leather with varnish finishing and laser cut; stamped with animal skin, snake like, with artificial colour. The heel has 110 mm in height; the front has already compensated approximately 25 mm.	Created by Bhomeer, with the goal to ignore or criticize the conventional creates this object with the end of that missis the function that is associated with the term footwear. The object shown was manufactured with carbon fiber and goat leather. Carbon fiber suggests an object of decoration and/or technological. Made from 3 parts, tries to portray a

	<p>The sandal belongs to the Brazilian brand Arezzo and is part of a sandals collection winter 2012. The brand is well positioned and highly influences the Brazilian women's footwear market because it works with strong fashion appealing. Its target audience are confident bold women, attentive to new trends and aware that their current image in the world.</p>	<p>sandal peep-toe style, with approximately 85 mm from the ground. The designer says that she has been influenced by "Cheetah" (prosthetic leg made of carbon fiber, designed for sports activities).</p>
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 3: Comparison of style of footwear – “Thirdness”

	COMMERCIAL	CONCEPTUAL
<p>“Legi-ign”: In “legi-ign” establishes relationships between the “quali-sign” and the “sin-sign”, are not personal opinions that predominate, but the proven knowledge, the research. (It is a law that is a sign, something that belongs to a class of things, cultural conventions, symbols, costumes and collective values).</p>	<p>The sandal chosen for analysis, it is considered an object of fashion because it follows fashion trends settled for the winter 2012. The fashion system with seasonal launches is collective value in capitalist consumer society. According to conventions of the company, which the sandal belongs, are launched two annual products collections, (winter and summer), in addition to these two, smaller collections are released throughout the year to bring the new to consumers. The height-heel of the sandal analysed eminences for the elegance and power, as the sole compensated refers to the comfort and security in the walk, because when it comes to a shoe with a height-heel of 110 mm, the insertion of compensation is intended to make the impact of the height-heel smaller (resulting in increased foot accommodation), without making the sandal less elegant. The artificial coloured of the snakeskin, gives to the customers that defend the species against the extermination the certification of not using natural skin.</p>	<p>Object displayed in form of footwear. The conceptual objects as the chosen for this analysis has the aim to conceptualize a collection. In this case, the object conceptualizes the collection of Bhomer. This designer she studied 3D design in her academic formation, and it was from her training that she began to develop objects that challenge the perception, having as hers biggest customers museums and art or design collectors.</p>

Completed the three steps of analysis, we can discuss de results: that in "firstness", the image of the first footwear (fig 1.) can be interpreted as being commercial, sophisticated, comfortable, ergonomic, with values that match the brand to which it belongs, as the quality of finishing's. The second image (fig. 2) can

be interpreted as a geometric object, which suggests a technological shoe made with uncomfortable material. Here, one can interpret the image as being an innovative product. In the "secondness" you can interpret the first image (fig. 1) as an object in the category of footwear and subcategory of high-heel sandal with compensated front. Here, one can see the mark target audience, because of the print type used in raw materials as well as their colours, for a bold and contemporary woman. When observing in the second image (fig. 2), the material that the object is constituted and how it presents itself, it ends up losing the sense, because does not give a proper idea for its use. And to finish, "thirdness", the object of the first image (fig. 1) is considered a fashion product because it follows world trends of fashion for the respective station. In addition, by the height of the sandal heel, it ends up stating for elegance and power. When one realizes that this is not natural leather snake, the brand has just adding advantages with customers who defend the species against the extermination. In the second image (fig. 2), one realizes that the shoe in question it is a conceptual object or symbolic that privileges the concept rather than the market end-use. Here the aim of this object is to conceptualize the collection of that designer.

Conclusion

With the result of semiotic analysis carried out with the purpose of finding points of differentiation between commercial and conceptual footwear, it can be concluded that over the steps, there are three logical, dynamic interpretations, that for Peirce are interpreter's minds. The first is the design sector of the company where the commercial footwear was designed, it was this that tried to search and interpret fashion trends for the season which the footwear would be inserted. Here, also enter Bhomer, which to achieve your conceptual object, had to search materials and manufacturing methods. The second interpreter would be the runner of the research in general, that collects data and appropriates of the semiotic methodologies for analysis. And the third will be the consumer, that when confronted with the commercial footwear, he will recognize it as part of a particular collection, brand and target audience, due to its explicit characteristics. In the case of conceptual object, in addition to its visual, interpretation will also be given by their presentation conditions, if it will be available in a store for sale or only exposed for consideration in an art gallery.

Finally, comes to the conclusion that for occur the differentiation between products, it will depend on the interpretation of those who made it, in the way of this is presented and how this will be interpreted. In the case of the two products presented here, one is highly the commercial type because it was designed in accordance with specifications of brand that belongs with the goal of conquering the consumer. The other is raised to conceptual or symbolic object, since its conception by Bhomer happened through materials research that could be conducted to escape from traditional forms. According to Huey (2011, p. 165), this designer creates carbon fiber parts and said to have been influenced by "Cheetah" (prosthetic leg made of carbon fiber, designed for sports activities). Bhomer says that his biggest fascination is when one understands the product, but at the same time it looks like nothing you've ever seen.

Bibliography

Castilho, K. and Marcelo, M. M., 2005. *Discursos da Moda. Semiótica, design e corpo*. São Paulo: Anhembi Morumbi.

Eco, U., 1975. O Hábito fala pelo Monge. In: *Psicologia do Vestir*. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, pp.07-20.

Huey, S. and Proctor, R., 2011. *New Shoes: Contemporary footwear design*. Traduzido do Inglês por Márcia Sotoriva. London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd.

Janson, H. W., 1992. *Historia da Arte*. 5rd ed. Traduzido do inglês por J. A. Ferreira de Almeida e M. M. Rocheta Santos. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Joly, M., 2008. *Introdução à Análise da Imagem*. Lisboa: Edições 70.

Lopes, M. T., 2006. 'A relevância do estudo da teoria da comunicação e da semiótica na formação e no aperfeiçoamento do profissional de design', *Revista Design em Foco*. Vol. III, Núm. 2, Brasil, julho-dezembro, pp.103-115.

Mesquita, C., 2004. *Moda Contemporânea: quatro ou cinco conexões possíveis*. São Paulo: Editora Anhembi Morumbi.

O'Keeffe, L., 1996. *Sapatos: Uma festa De Sapatos De Salto, Sandálias, Botas...* Colônia: Konemann.

Pattison, A. and Cawthorne, N., 1998. *Un Siglo De Calzado: Iconos De Los Estilos En El Siglo XX*. Traduzido do Espanhol por Márcia Sotoriva. Arrigorriaga: Status Ediciones, S.L.

Petersen, R., 2007. *Trocando As Mãos Pelos Pés: A Expressão Do Self Através Dos Calçados*. Master Thesis: Universidade Federal Do Rio Grande Do Sul.

Santaella, L., 2004. *Semiótica Aplicada*. São Paulo: Pioneira Thomson Learning.

Steele, V., 1998. *Shoes: A Lexicon Of Style*. Traduzido do Inglês por Márcia Sotoriva. Inglaterra: Scriptum Editions.

AREZZO (Online)

Available at:

http://www.arezzo.com.br/inverno2012/colecao/colecao?detalhe=2816_7916_0BXL_0S4S

(Accessed 28 March 2012).