# Pause to think: Creating a fashion collection through music and emotions

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ABSTRACT: The human brain is a complex organ. From studies on emotional intelligence, neuroscience, psychology, and others, it has come to be seen more emotionally, making room for studies on thinking that lead to creativity. Thus, this article presents experimental research with a qualitative approach, where a methodology was developed to stimulate creativity through music directed to creating fashion collections. To this end, the literature review was initially carried out; an experiment was conducted where exercises were applied with fashion designers who used music as the only stimulus for their creations. As a result, it was realized that the use of music to boost creativity could be as efficient as the already known and most used sources of visual inspiration.

Keywords: Creativity, Music, Human brain, Fashion design, Clothing design

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, creativity and creative environments are subjects discussed and questioned in scientific and commercial fields. Within Fashion, creative processes go through several phases, from research and development to materializing in products and services. The expectations of young fashion designers will sometimes be limited because their professional life (creative process) will be conditioned to the target audience and market requirements. Eventually, they will need to adapt to a molded format, restricted to the repetition of the collections themselves or by adapted copies, as the fashion system demands speed in creation and production to provoke/promote consumption.

On the other hand, there has been a fascination with the human mind's creativity, especially when individuals have to deal with their own emotions. When the fashion system paradigms are questioned—in a pandemic scenario, in the urgent need to adopt sustainable practices—it is justified to think about new concepts, applications, and ways of communicating through fashion with creativity. The emergence of new markets and new consumer practices elevates the status of innovative, "cool" products committed to concepts such as distinction, eccentricity, and renewal. Kerner & Pressman (2008) state

that "cool" is configured as a strategy, and it is the best path to be taken to stand out from the competition. However, this will only be achieved when being a result of a successful creative process.

Creativity is seen as one of the engines of economic and cultural knowledge, as it understands processes that combine cognitive, conative, emotional, and environmental factors in an interactive way (Lubart, 2003). From a market perspective, the need for innovation has never been more urgent, and the desire for the new so widespread, thus making the next generations more creative, is an undeniable task of society within the capitalist logic. So, it becomes important to cultivate the creative ability and the taste for creation as a virtuous purpose (Ribeiro, 2018).

Many factors such as environment, aromas, lighting, and sounds can arouse sensations that generate more original thoughts concerning creation. Furthermore, music can also serve as a stimulus for opening new creative ways due to the stimuli and sensations it causes since it stimulates dopamine production and accesses the right side of the brain, directly related to creative activities (Sacks, 2008).

In the meantime, and regarding the designer's work, this article proposes a new way of stimulating creativity to develop fashion products. It presents the results of experimental research with a qualitative

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approach, where music was used as a basis for the execution of practical exercises oriented to the conception of a conceptual fashion collection. Music was worked as an element of ambiance and inspiration, its aspects – such as rhythm, beat, and style – were translated into design elements, such as line, shape, silhouette, and color, and innovatively materialized in fashion products.

#### 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 The music and the brain

Darwin assumed that our "semi-human" ancestors used musical tones and rhythms in courtship periods, in transitions when all kinds of animals were excited and mated not only for love but also for intense impulses of jealousy, rivalry, and triumph (Levitin, 2013). According to Levitin (2013), the first flutes found, made of mammoth bones, date from at least forty-three thousand years ago; music is observed in all cultures that have already been studied and recognized as an intrinsic part of the human being. Through history, universality, and popularity, researchers in the field assumed that the human brain could be equipped with a "musical chamber," which would be in the cerebral cortex and would be responsible for detecting and interpreting sound signals (Levitin, 2013). Over time, it was discovered that it was much more than just the "musical chamber." Music can create brain explosions, and the brain activity provoked is so intense that the behavior is more like a complete body workout.

As Levitin (2013), Darwin also assumed that "speech" started to evolve after this primitive music. He considered the eyes a miracle of evolution and the ears very complex and beautiful, with their trajectories of sound vibrations from the external channels, passing through the membranes of the eardrum and undergoing interpretations in the brain. According to Sacks (2008), the English philosopher and anthropologist Herbert Spencer said that music had arisen precisely because of the "lack of emotional speech," generated through the emotions the human brain had developed and evolved until that time. The author also states that fear was the first feeling focused on human survival through the many hostilities of the world around. Furthermore, the Swedish composer and writer Rousseau believed that music and speech were born simultaneously and diverged over time (Sacks, 2008).

In addition, for the American philosopher and psychologist William James, music is an "accidental genesis," an incidental birth that resulted from the auditory organ by its own function (Sacks, 2008). Finally, in contemporary times, the American psychologist Steven Pinker (1997) says that if music disappeared from people's lives, their lifestyles would

remain unchanged. However, he believes there are individuals with language instinct or highly evolved musical instincts, regardless of how this evolution occurred (Sacks, 2008).

However, humans are considered a musical species, as well as a linguistic one. Most people can perceive music, musical tones and timbres, intervals between notes, melodic contours, harmony, and even more "rhythm." Individuals integrate these aspects using many parts of the brain, and both the appreciation and the reaction are always "emotional," where each area of the cerebral cortex is responsible for a stage in this process. The primary auditory cortex is responsible for sound perception, the primary cortex is responsible for sound recognition, and the cerebellum is for emotion. The entire sound transmission takes place in a matter of seconds, and there are differences between mere listeners and instrumentalists in musical interpretation, but they reach the same conclusion (Sacks, 2008).

Levitin (2013) states that the more he learned about science and music; he noticed a fascinating similarity in both, for never provoking the same experience twice in the same way. Both being sources of surprise and satisfaction, the author explains that music and science are no longer different areas and do not mix; both music and science teach a lot about how the brain works, and both can say a lot about people.

#### 2.2 Do individuals stop to think and to feel?

Daily, the news tells stories about lack of civility, lack of security, evil, aggression and copies, plagiarism, false identities, and piracy. Very often, stories emphasize emotions and sensations, and in the socalled network society (Castells, 2005), they end up spreading very quickly and with global reach. This type of news has continuously grown in the last decade, these years of anger and despair in families and communities. People locked in their homes watching television or receiving digital information. some abandoned, neglected, or mistreated, in addition to the increase in depression across the planet (Goleman, 2016). These data drive the development of studies related to emotion, and in this scenario emerged technologies capable of improving the visualization and perception of the brain, the functioning of emotions, and how external factors (such as drugs and other therapies) can contribute to the relief of emotional crisis, causing an impact not only on the individual but on the entire community.

Neuroscience researchers, such as Goleman (2016) and Pink (2017), comment on the delay in such procedures and lament that science is only now looking more closely at the depth of human emotion. When presenting in 2016 his book entitled "Emotional Intelligence," Goleman reported having had to wait until that moment, where the harvest of

scientific age information was sufficiently abundant, to write it. Thus, it can be said that nowadays, there are also other efficient ways of measuring intelligence and the so-called Intelligence Quotient (IQ). The capacity for self-control and compassion, love for others, respect, goodwill towards others causes neurotransmitters to flow constantly, making the brain more active, more intelligent, and consequently, more creative (Goleman, 2016).

Therefore, Goleman (2016) states that there is a representation of predisposition for action for each emotion felt. Even the name given to humans, Homo sapiens, or "the species that thinks," does not seem, in the light of science, to find the place of emotions in people's lives. Moreover, this is probably because the human species has, for a long time, been concerned only with its survival. Some "protocols" seem to have tried to control human emotions, such as religious commandments, philosophies, and theories, commonly presented in books as suggestions of new habits and lifestyles. In the meantime, Goleman (2016) still states that, as Freud described in his book "Civilization and its Discontents" (1930), society must impose rules from the outside to control the waves of emotional excess that arise too freely in its interior. In the digital age, humanity created behavioral parameters to feel the approval of society. This fact can be seen, for example, in the way, social networks were dimensioned: an interaction between users takes place through the so-called "Likes" (Goleman, 2016).

However, some professions allow individuals to develop a high level of emotional intelligence. Teachers, religious leaders, politicians, salespeople, artists, and designers, for example, tend to be more effective in the professional and personal spheres because of their intrapersonal motivation. This is because their professional activity provides direct access to their feelings, and thus, they can distinguish which would be the best behaviors to be adopted to achieve their goals (Damásio, 2017).

## 2.3 What can influence creativity?

Working creatively can mean, for the individuals, to challenge themselves every day, searching to improve their perception of the world and direct their creativity in favor of elaborating new concepts, products, and services. Mastering one's creative process is an important exercise these professionals practice, especially when they are still students. Those aware of their errors and limitations do better and understand that creative stimuli can arise from the most diverse situations, such as work and study and moments of leisure and social life.

For some students, the exercise of intellectual activity is considered pleasurable and may provide success and recognition in the future, often through awards. However, Howard Gardner (as cited in

Ribeiro, 2018), a researcher psychologist linked to Harvard University and author of the theory of multiple intelligences, warns that awards for good performance in studies or contests may not be so beneficial because self-awareness of being the best of you and the satisfaction of learning must be the real purpose, bringing the true feeling of happiness. Still concerning to attitudes and awareness of emotions, Glória Leon (as cited in Ribeiro, 2018), a psychologist at the University of Minnesota, conducted studies where it was possible to observe that many people are unable to distinguish the difference between their feelings and physical sensations, like between being scared, angry or hungry, for example. This can take them to disturbances and the lack of awareness of their emotions and body signals, triggering various health, learning, and even creativity problems.

Thinkers widely discussed the theme of creativity in ancient Greece, and many of their points remain relevant to the present day. Plato said that a poet could not create without having a muse to inspire him and that this individual was extraordinary for having the gift of expressing his creative ideas given by the gods (Ribeiro, 2018). According to Dacey & Lennon (1998), Hesiod also shared the same concept and reported that, when Zeus' daughters offered him a branch, he breathed in the divine song, and thus he was allowed to reveal the glory of the gods. Later in the story, Beethoven said he was enveloped by a kind of "spirit" while creating his compositions, which invaded him and dictated the music (Ribeiro, 2018). And still, in this mystical and irrational approach, Rudyard Kipling, an English writer, stated that a very familiar "demon" lived in his pen, which accompanied him in the writing process (Ribeiro, 2018). On the other hand, Aristotle stated that creativity was an individual and intimate inspiration within his mental associations and that is derived from his or her general knowledge, not from divine implications (Ribeiro, 2018).

Looking at the present days, the introspection of some designers, artists, writers, or composers can be justified by the same beliefs and ideologies – related to something mysterious or supernatural-however, creativity itself has been losing attention. Ribeiro (2018) states that the French psychiatrist Édouard Toulouse investigated these psychological aspects, such as perception, memory, reason, and personality, while Alfred Binet, a French educator, and psychologist, associated creativity as part of human intelligence. Freud said that creativity comes from conscious reality and unconscious drives, suggesting that creative people express their desires (Ribeiro, 2018). Thus, these researchers brought the discussion about creativity to the psychological and rational sphere.

In the second half of the twentieth century, there was a deepening of research on creative ability and

its development in the human mind. The American psychologist Joy Paul Guilford (2020) said that creativity requires several intellectual capacities so that it is possible to see the problem to be solved, analyze it, then evaluate and synthesize it with fluidity and flexibility of thought. As Damásio (2017) puts it, imagination and emotion were, for a long time, excluded from the realm of intelligence, with ignorance and the pretext of being irresponsible and dangerous. The author explains that the execution of a sculpture or a surgery, the interpretation of a song or a choreography, and the understanding of others or oneself, do not fit in the reason. These activities are not related to reason and are no less important than the mental activities tested in IQ assessments (Damásio, 2017).

The Argentine-American mathematical scientist Gregory Chaitin (2011) adds that more important than computers that execute programs is the intelligence of those who programmed them. Human intelligence is flexible and unlimited and, like memory, transforms reality and relates means to ends, creating transformations, inventing possibilities (Damásio, 2017).

Therefore, it is in this way that, nowadays, intelligence is measured: through the acceptance of imprecision, freedom of thought, and perception of information, and thus creativity reaches unknown, the subjective, and materializes in ideas. A transparent border between reason and imagination separates and unites while experience or creation is transmuted from subjectivity to objectivity. A creative individual becomes rational when his creation is born; until then, there is a fusion between thoughts and information, methods and processes. experiences and research, mistakes and successes, and mainly, the imminence of contentment brought by success or eventual acceptance of failure. In summary, this is the concept of creativity by Joy Paul Guilford, the set of intellectual abilities in which fluidity, flexibility, originality, sensitivity to problems, and the ability to deal with complexity (Damásio, 2017).

#### 2.4 Creativity in fashion

Fashion is a phenomenon that does not belong to all ages and civilizations, but that is undoubtedly the result of human evolution. The observation of how fashion develops allows identifying specific changes in certain societies, over time, especially about the way individuals dress (Barthes, 2014). These changes reflect the spirit of time – cultural values, habits, and behaviors (Souza, 1987) – materialized in clothes, shoes, and accessories by the hands of creative professionals: dressmakers, stylists, and designers.

In the field of fashion, creativity has always been aimed at proposing to break paradigms, go beyond tradition, and propose democratization (especially in dress) through innovation (Svendsen, 2010). Lipovetsky (2009) states that one of the unique characteristics of fashion is searching for the new, making it a dynamic and ephemeral phenomenon. Because it is based on cultural manifestations originating from social individuals imitate each other, and thus the information spreads, in what Barthes (2014) calls mental epidemics. Therefore, the work of the fashion designer consists of the challenge of starting from the existing one, creating new concepts, new styles that can be imitated, and, in this way, maintain the continuity of the cycle. On the other hand, it is known that all imitation/copying is based on something previously consolidated, in other words, on a previous creation that was successful before. The history of fashion shows several eternalized looks, iconic styles taken as a reference until now, such as Coco Chanel's tweed suit, Christian Dior's New Look, or Yves Saint Laurent's Women's tuxedo many others (Fogg, 2013).

Seiweright (2009) states that research in the search for inspiration has fundamental importance for the fashion designer's creative process and that the sources can be the most diverse, such as historical events, nature, arts, architecture, literature, cinema, music, technology, among others. Thus, both young and experienced designers seek historical and iconic references as inspiration sources, such as those mentioned above. Often the interest is in the political character behind the creation, other times in how the materials were used and the production techniques were carried out, or simply because of their aesthetic-visual composition. However, it is important to note that, regardless of which sources they originate from, these references are materialized in fashion products through the so-called visual elements of design: point, line, shape, silhouette, color, and texture (Treptow, 2013; Löbach, 2001), in other words, inspiration starts from the abstract to the concrete.

#### 3 METHODOLOGY

In the first phase, exploring this theme took place through extensive bibliographic research, mostly by consulting books, researching scientific articles, master's dissertations, and doctoral thesis, in other words, primary and secondary information (Marconi & Lakatos, 2003). Among the topics sought to provide the necessary theoretical support was the evolution of the human mind through neuroscience, emotional intelligence, creativity and music, and brain studies.

After the bibliographic research, a method was developed to stimulate creativity through musical melodies to create a fashion collection.

The proposal was for the designer to create a contemporary, original and creative clothing proposal in terms of design, volume, and details. In this case study, the proposed theme was the "construction of the self," which, being an interesting challenge that escapes from a traditional proposal.

The Clothing Design Methodology traditionally is a more or less linear process that includes several steps, starting with the research and analysis of concepts supported by a theme; fashion trend research; characterization of a target audience; materials selection; follows the phase of creativity; the selection of the best proposals, and finally the creation of the technical sheets for the prototyping. Traditionally the creativity phase, the designers' work from visual references for the generation and creation of new ideas, from the mood boards that bring together all the information collected in the research phase.

In this case study, the creativity phase used a different method to stimulate divergent thinking to generate new ideas.

This method consists of, on a first phase, proposing some sketch exercises to be performed while the designer/student listens to music. At first, the designer executed a drawing with the eyes blindfolded (using a soft fabric), using music as the only tool of sensitization and stimulation. Then, the stripe was removed, and he could execute new drawings. based on the first one, also listening to music. Two distinct musical styles were used: in the first moment, the Mozart classic "No. 5 Allegro"; and in the second moment "Alegría," the soundtrack of the same name spectacle, by the Canadian circus company Cirque du Soleil. The researchers chose the music used in the first moment, and the one used in the second moment was chosen by the designer based on the sensations and emotions he felt from the first experience. This, then, was also used throughout the process of creation, planning, and development of the fashion collection that resulted from this experimental project. Every fashion creation experience was inspired exclusively by the music heard and the visual elements (sketches) created from the emotions generated by these melodies. The experiment records were made by observation and photos taken by the researcher, and testimonies of the designer.

#### 4 RESEARCH OUTCOMES

As a result of the method's first moment, an abstract sketch was drawn, with organic lines, elaborated by the designer while he was blindfolded and listening to Mozart's song "Allegro No. 5". This drawing, entitled by the designer as "Waves, Layers and Calm" (Figure 1), is composed of free lines, sometimes more intense and sometimes softer, which express the emotions felt by the designer when

listening to the music, and which later expressed having "felt a soft joy and calm," allowing himself "to be lulled by the melody."

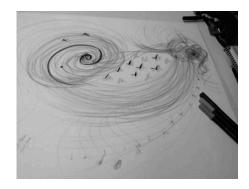


Figure 1. "Waves, Layers and Calm," drawing from the first stage of using the musical method (Source: authors, 2017).

"From the first drawing, then, the idea of the name of the collection came up: AEIA (vowels of the word "alegria," which means happiness in Portuguese." "The design was also used as an inspiration to generate the desired ambiance: lightness, freedom, and delicacy," explained the designer. These aspects were later materialized in the Looks of the collection – in the manipulation of fluid, organic and concentric lines for the construction of the silhouette and the use of light, transparent and flowing materials.

In the second phase of the method application, the planning and choices of techniques and technologies for the collection began. For this phase, the designer chose the song "Alegría" (by Cirque du Soleil), given the awakening of the emotions of joy in the first phase. At the beginning of this second phase, there was a concern to raise the result of the first phase to more concrete terms, so the eyes were uncovered, and the designer – still on the effect of the melody – could make a drawing more representative of his emotions, on the model-shaped figure (Figure 2).

Regarding the technical aspects of the products created, from the sketch, the design elements that would be worked throughout the collection were conceived, such as the horizontal organic lines, the overlapping layers, and the color (or absence of it). Concerning draping, the pieces were then thought to have overlapping layers so that the consumer could wear them in a personalized way. The white color was chosen, also present in the drawings, returning to the image of lightness and freedom intended for the collection (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Sketches on a model-shaped figure and execution of the collection's first look (Source: authors, 2017).

The sheaths of the pieces were made by laser cutting to allow lightness and transparency once again. The overlapping layers refer to the sense of the order of the musical staves, where the lines are placed in layers, the notes are placed on them, just as the composer gives birth to his creation.

Figure 3 presents the other looks of the minicollection created from the concept and elements worked in the context of music and emotions.

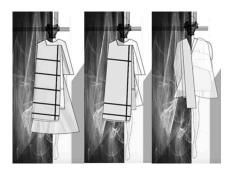


Figure 3. AEIA collection sketches (Source: authors, 2017).

Through the images, it is possible to see that the collection has conformity between the elements found in the lines and layers – the result of the method applied in the first phase – and how the clothing design elements were worked from then on. This demonstrates an interaction with the inspiration sources used in the creative process and the emotions conveyed by the songs.

Under the emotional effect aroused by the music, the collection's communication image was also created. Thus, he executed the composition entitled "Head/Musical Mind" (Figure 4), composed of female human figures with musical notes in place of hair – musical notes come out of the head instead of hair. From this drawing, it is possible to conceive the concept of the fashion image of the collection.



Figure 4. "Head/Musical Mind," representative drawing of the collection concept, collection communication image (Source: authors, 2017).

#### 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Developing the most diverse skills necessary to execute creative processes must be at the heart of the designers' education. As professionals working in a multifaceted and overly competitive market, own's creativity is put to the test every day; each project has a new challenge. Sometimes designers see their creative skills questioned, as they need to direct their ideas to the consumer's interests and in line with the brand identity, the resources available, with social and environmental responsibility. Therefore, there is a need to train professionals with transversal skills to answer questions about creating, planning, producing, and commercializing products and services.

The exercise of creativity has been the subject of much debate nowadays, both in the academic and professional spheres, because creation is considered a profitable practice and the expression of emotions. For some, it can be seen as a pleasurable intellectual activity, a path taken in search of success and recognition, even satisfaction and happiness. Some studies showed that being aware of emotions and knowing how to distinguish them from physical sensations is important for successful creation and avoiding health problems. As creativity is a brain activity, research was conducted to understand how the brain works from internal stimuli – emotions – and external factors, such as drugs and other therapies. Neuroscientists claim that exercising the domain of emotions

makes the brain more active, intelligent (the socalled emotional intelligence), and, consequently, more creative.

In fashion, creativity can emerge from the most diverse sources of inspiration, such as nature, technology, the arts, and even music. Historical references to iconic looks are also widely used, both for the content of the symbolism they carry with them and the originality of their aesthetic-visual compositions. These materialize, then, in visual elements of design, using lines, shapes, colors, and textures. In this way, inspiration leaves the field of ideas and abstraction and becomes concrete, physical.

In the meantime, music can be considered an efficient source of inspiration for fashion designers, especially those at the beginning of their careers. The perception of music is as much present in human cognitive development as the linguistic perception; however, the tones and timbres are recognized by the area of the brain that is also responsible emotional issues. Therefore. developing a methodology that stimulates the brain through music becomes efficient for developing fashion products, as it contributes to the exercise of the flow of emotions of the individual who creates them related to the concept of emotional intelligence. Therefore, through the presentation of the AEIA collection, it was possible to perceive that creativity can pass through culture, information, life experiences, and the emotions brought by music. The use of music is considered beneficial for triggering emotions capable of resulting in more original and innovative ideas making and room experimentation.

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