

## **THE CONCEPT OF NEWNESS IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY**

**Lucian BIVOL**

*Department Design and Technologies in extiles, group DVI-221, Faculty of Design, Technical University of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova*

Corresponding author: Lucian BIVOL, [lucian.bivol@dtm.utm.md](mailto:lucian.bivol@dtm.utm.md)

**Tutor: TOCARCIUC ALINA, univ. lect.,** Department Design and Technologies in Textiles, TUM

**Abstract.** *The paper aims to describe the human psychology behind the desire to acquire new possessions and makes an introspection into how fashion brands exploit it to benefit their sales and keep up their relevance on the market. Also, it explores the psychological pathway from the desire to the actual purchase and its fading, short-term value, presenting the three pillars on which the concept of newness supports itself: the situational product involvement; the hedonic experience of being the first possessor; the physical possession itself. Wearables represent a utilitarian commodity, embedded in our subconscious, through which we fulfil our basic human needs, such as self-expression or appurtenance and it is used for someone's own gain. Brands often make use of strategies such as encouraging ever-changing trends or exquisite packaging as to lure the consumer into buying by triggering certain feelings. The study serves to spread awareness towards the subject of overconsumption, the tactics used by its benefiter and encourage the consumer category to make better, meaningful spendings as to contribute to the decrease of overproduction and fabric waste, in the virtue of adopting sustainable habits for the wellbeing of the planet. The presented material, though being inspired from multiple sources, was extracted from a personally conducted interview with Fashion Psychology Specialist, Pak Chiu.*

**Key words:** *psychology, overconsumption, sustainability, marketing, overproduction.*

### **Introduction**

Almost everyone nowadays tends to desire constantly acquiring new items, regardless of whether it is necessary or not. Sometimes they end up with a pile of new possessions and then proceed to fall into the same pattern, which results in overconsumption. At first glance, it may sound absurd. However, is there an explanation to this phenomenon that seems almost impossible to control?

Like any other behaviour, it always comes down to our psyche. The way it reacts is influenced by marketers and their strategies to alter the way we perceive not only brands but everything. Even though the mind is an intangible, almost metaphysical entity, it is vulnerable to all kinds of exterior factors, which makes having our guards up whenever we deal with retail, especially fashion, a necessity.

### **The scientific explanation behind the concept of Newness**

There is, indeed, a scientific explanation to the matter. The concept itself is called NEWNESS and it is, aside from tricky, interconnected with our evolutionary needs. Scientists describe it as the hardwiring of our brains to be attracted to the pristine quality of potential possessions (Bunzeck & Düzel, 2006) There are three pillars on which NEWNESS supports itself: the situational product involvement, which is the interest provided by the pre purchase activities, independent from the baseline interest in the product; the hedonic experience of being the first possessor, deriving from the virgin, ideal physical state of the product (considered a universal signal of quality (Dawar & Parker, 1994)); the physical possession itself (or the proximity to ownership) , through which the customer can experience the NEWNESS, the pleasure being ensured by the utility benefits (or the anticipation of those benefits) of the item. The importance of this perception, in consumption experience, is it generates short-term value, meaning NEWNESS fades with time passage, usage and adaptation (Dinnin, 2009).

### **The role of clothing in human perception and how brands exploit it**

The previous statements explain why clothes are the perfect tools to exploit our "weakness". Clothes represent a commodity embedded in our subconscious due to utilitarian purposes, being part of the social norm, which dictates the social creatures we are. Moreover, clothes have always carried social and personal values. Consequently, wearables are a very handy way of self-expression, used to tell our own stories and beliefs wordlessly. There is a constant, interior tendency to match our current selves to our ideal selves - an alter ego even. Dressing up is a more than efficient way to do that. It can also be used as a means of identity, fulfilling our basic needs such as acceptance and belonging. It is important to count in the social clout.

From the market perspective, these are the right chords to strum for the fashion brands. Combining these positive psychological experiences and the never-ending change of fashion, the odds of brands profiting are already looking good. To ensure sales, they play the aces up their sleeves: price manipulation - the lower it is, the more the garment becomes a potential possession; elegant showcase - it's packaged or displayed in a way that suggests it's untouched, bolstering desire; psychological obsolescence - shortening "service life" (Fletcher, 2017) through fast fashion and encouraging new trends, making sure we would be, eventually, needing something new.

### **Conclusions**

Al in all, even if it seems that brands outsmarted us or it's something out of our reach, rest assured that there are things that can be done. The first step would be making this process, that takes place in our minds almost every time, known to as many people as possible. The second one would be to tackle the psychological obsolescence strategy, which is the main bad apple in this narrative. This could be achieved by creating services to extend garments' "service life", not only on a psychological level by revitalizing the emotional attachment factor, but also on a practical one through reusing them in ways that make it feel new again and unique. As much as the industry holds power over such matters, I believe the eradication of overconsumption will always reside in our collective customer effort.

### **References**

1. N. Bunzeck și E. Düzel, „Absolute Coding of Stimulus Novelty in the Human Substantia Nigra/VTA,” *Neuron*, vol. 51, nr. 3, pp. 369-379, 03 August 2006.
2. N. Dawar și P. Parker, „Marketing Universals: Consumers' Use of Brand Name, Price, Physical Appearance, and Retailer Reputation as Signals of Product Quality,” *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 58, nr. 2, pp. 81-95, April 1994.
3. Dinnin, „The Appeal of Our New Stuff: How Newness Creates Value,” *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 36, pp. 261-265, 2009.
4. Fletcher, „Exploring demand reduction through design, durability and ‘usership’ of fashion clothes,” *Material demand reduction*, vol. 375, nr. 2095, 01 May 2017.