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JOURNAL OF DESIGN CULTURE

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FAST FASHION AND GLOBALIZATION

STUDY OF FLORIANÓPOLIS' SISTER STORE OF THE SPANISH FAST- FASHION RETAIL CHAIN ZARA

**Amanda Queiroz Campos
Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez**

ABSTRACT

This paper consists of a comparative study of the contextual contrast between data from the business model of the Spanish brand Zara, and data from the brand's sister store in the city of Florianópolis, located in the south of Brazil. The data collection methods were participant observation in the local shopping mall store, and semi-structured interviews with employees and former employees of this store. Theoretical references to globalization, fashion and modernity ground this study. The aim is to investigate the non-hegemonic aspects of globalization in the specific case of the importation of the Zara brand—which operates as a fast-fashion company—to Brazil. The study contends that the speed of change in fashion trends is characteristic of modernity's radicalization, and that the copying of Zara's business model and products by national and local companies is characteristic of popularization of fashion products. The extent to which fashion is a non-hegemonic system is considered through Zara's "inspired appropriation" of great designs from prêt-à-porter collections as well as the reproduction of Zara's clothes by other Brazilian fast-fashion retail chains—for example by the local Sul Center. The dynamism generated, among others, by the copying mechanism stimulates the creative efforts of fashion designers, making fashion an even stronger creative center.

#Zara, #fashion, #fast fashion, #globalization

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INTRODUCTION

One may consider wardrobes as microcosms that express the changes in manufacture due to globalization processes. As a mark of the economic globalization that generated opening of the market in the 1980s, the impact of global commerce on clothing and apparel engendered the contemporary concept of fast-fashion—quickly produced, low-cost, and visually appealing clothing—that dominates fashion retail nowadays.

The change of the specific fashion calendar of two annual seasons and the growth of a geographic network that goes beyond the traditional fashion capitals are the main modifications that the new business model inaugurated. Besides its characteristic seasonality, the creative fashion market was, for a long time limited to a very specific geography. However, despite the fact that the context of globalization implies a conjuncture of non-supremacy, remarkably, European preeminence remains, and is antecedent to an expert condition (Giddens 1991). Therefore, notwithstanding changes, the European expertise in fashion endures.

The methodology that guided this work's development was comprised of comparative research. The specific comparative approach consisted of the contrasting of contexts (Morlino & Sartori 1994), i.e., by analyzing information about Zara's business model and stores and the brand's store in the city of Florianópolis, Brazil. The data on the Spanish brand Zara's business model was retrieved from scientific papers, books, journalistic articles and the brand's website. The data about the specific Brazilian sister store, located in the city of Florianópolis, on the southern coast of Brazil, was collected through interviews with the current manager and three former employers of the only Zara store in the city of Florianópolis. The interview framework was based on the secondary research data about Zara, and was adapted for the different interviewees. This characterizes the interviews as semi-structured. The application of the comparison procedure to the data collected in the interviews relied on the secondary literature on globalization, modernity, and the fashion market, referenced in the bibliography.

Despite the already mentioned European tradition in fashion, the research results elucidate non-hegemonic aspects of globalization in the specific case of the adoption (or *translation*) and consumption of

¹ In this context, I use Sant'Anna's understanding of fashion system, which is mostly based on Lipovetsky, to indicate the ethos that constitutes the current society in which changes occur rapidly and constantly, and are ruled. Although I acknowledge Kawamura's (2014; 2005) comprehension of the fashion system as the institutionalization of fashion, mostly through haute couture and the createur Charles Frederick Worth and later with the emergence of prêt-à-porter, for the purposes of this paper, fashion system will mean having novelty in the present and appearing as the main grounding pillar of modern and contemporary societies.

Zara products in Brazil. One identifies a non-hegemonic system (Ribeiro 2010) in fashion when exploring the manner through which apparel of the Spanish brand is reinvented, produced, distributed, commercialized, and appropriated in Florianópolis.

Zara, as fast-fashion retail chain, appropriates the creations and trends of *prêt-à-porter* into its products. On the other side, Zara's sister store in Florianópolis itself serves as a point of reference for the local retail chains—for example, the local chain, Sul Center—their customers and other customers who shop online. Hence the store serves as a barometer of trendiness for fashion products.

FASHION AND MODERNITY

The changes that occur from time to time are features of a system that constitutes contemporary society. The historical beginning of such a system—in the Late Middle Ages (Lipovetsky 2007)—was contemporary with the emergence of the idea of man as an individual. One of the milestones in the definition of the fashion system's¹ birth was that changes in furniture, manner, clothing, and in verbal and many other expressions are no longer random and casual, but ruled, ordered and constant. The fashion system consists in the very dynamic that produced modernity (Sant'Anna 2010). Therefore, scholars consider that the late-Middle Ages in the West set up a society that altered subjects and the meanings they produced.

At the end of the twentieth century, the hypothesis arises that humanity is on the threshold of a new era beyond modernity itself. Authors use terms like „postmodernity” and „post-industrial society” to name the transition, which marks the end of absolute certainties, the break with faith in human progress and the failure of science. Giddens (1991) attests that modernity produced lifestyles that broke with the tradition. After globalization and the decline of European centrality, striking features of a radicalized form of modernity are: that the pace of change is faster, the scope of change is global interconnection, and the nature of institutions.

I have decided to use the term “reflexive modernity”, citing Giddens as its main supporter, due to the fact that the fashion system, unlike other areas such as cinema and the arts, is still grounded in a traditional logic of fashion. Giddens, Lash and Beck chose the term “reflectivity” as an alternative to “postmodernity”, which implies the complete end of an era. Reflectivity, therefore, points to the possibility of a new phase of modernity: the reinvention of modernity and its industrial forms. Reflectivity also implies that a new modernity is examined and redefined in the light of new information about its practices.

Thus, the alterations proposed by fast fashion as the acceleration of consumption and production cycles interfere with the traditional structural logic of fashion, but to radicalize it, rather than to subvert

or to end it altogether. Another determining factor relative to the modernity of the fashion system is the remarkable and decisive presence of experts in the whole process, central figures for the consolidation of fashion trends and for the success of fashion brands. The “disembeddings” accentuated in the contemporary situation are mediated through symbolic tokens, “expert systems” (Giddens, 1991), i.e., the institutionalized and rationalist organization of specific knowledge. These expert systems have therefore become central to the organization of social life—in this specific case, fashion as a social field.

One cannot deny that the heyday of blogs and street style lent a supposed democratization to fashion and its expertise. However, as a commercial system, fashion promptly manages to make such „individuals” expert personalities on the judgment of fashion and style trends, making them major opinion makers. We need look no further than the success and consolidated career of fashion bloggers and “instagrammers”. Furthermore, many people plan and lead these careers as life projects, desiring the visibility and recognition they provide. Giddens considers, therefore, that globalization deepened the reflectivity processes of modernity in different areas, achieving higher levels of reach and intensity (Giddens 1991).

The modernity of the fashion system is still very evident in the changes in fashion, which “can mostly translate the desire for novelties in social practice” (Baldini 2005). The fashion market—responsible for the production of consumer garments and accessories—has, since the end of the nineteenth century, been a stage for exchanges of novelties with a fixed schedule: two collections per year (Godart 2010). After World War II, short cycles (characteristic of modernity and fashion) operated in the wider exchange of products and confirmed “planned obsolescence” as a strategy to strengthen consumption.

In the 1960s, the fashion market saw the emergence of prêt-à-porter and ready-to-wear and the inauguration of a supposed “democratization of fashion” as a strategy to meet the demand of the growing population of baby boomers. The middle class, in love with novelties, became the consumer of fashion, what was once restricted to the elite. Also in the 1960s, the rise of counterculture boosted the emergence of exotic styles and pluralism. This added speed to the whole fashion production chain. Also, regarding the supposed democratization of fashion since 1970, cities such as Milan, Tokyo, Bangkok and Antwerp have gained notoriety in the fashion world, but as previously mentioned, they were legitimated by the fashion system.

The last twenty years have brought substantial changes in fashion, mostly in terms of its breadth, which comprises the geographical globalization of fashion (Riello 2013). It is necessary, however, to pay attention to the term globalization. Understanding that fashion has expanded its reach to the entire globe, does not mean that it operates in the different locations with the same force and in the same way (Wallerstein 2006; Ribeiro 2010).

In terms of the textile industrial chain, production centers such as Asia, Southern Asia, Turkey, Northern Africa, and the Caribbean countries have become the main workforce market in the non-hegemonic geography of fashion. This non-hegemonic character (Ribeiro 2010) combines the world's fashion cities with other cities that consume and produce fashion in a network. Gilbert (2006, 10) advises: "it is necessary to understand cities as part of a world system, emphasizing the connections and interdependencies between major cities, but also their positions in a structured hierarchy."

The term globalization carries with it connotations of intensified flows of people, money, goods, images, information, and technology (Appadurai 1990). It does not necessarily create uniformity. The hegemonic character of fashion was broken with the emergence of exotic styles of dress in the 1960s and 1970s as a form of countercultural expression. The different fluxes of globalization were also pushed by fashion itself, and are very evident in the processes of many fast-fashion companies. A customer in the United States can purchase a sweater from a European brand, designed by a South-American designer, and produced in Southern Africa.

Of course, as previously mentioned, the different processes imply different fluxes of products, intelligence, and money. In the field of fashion, so-called "immaterial work" is the best appreciated and paid. Fast fashion has induced a radical change in the fashion industry. With the new model, fashion's dynamism reaches shores beyond the traditional corporate system, invades transnational populations in global cities, and forwards hybridizations of global and local influence in emerging centers of this so-called fast fashion (Gilbert 2006).

FAST FASHION

In the late twentieth century, the fast fashion model caused a furor in fashion marketing. French and Italians dispute the invention of such "achievement". For Cietta (2010), the new business model emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in Italian retail, driven by changes in apparel production. Alternatively, Erner (2005) considers France the home of fast fashion, specifically the Paris district Sentier, in which small traders began to produce clothing slightly later, only after acknowledging consumers' demands and trends.

The main change introduced by fast fashion is the launch of more collections (Slack et. al. 2008). The Spanish company Zara launches an average of seventeen mini-collections in a single year (Godart 2010), while companies that are more traditional maintain two annual collections. The change began with the launch of intermediate collections between the two main collections. Those collections allowed a more frequent renewal of designs. The name of those in-between collections are often pre-spring and pre-fall. There are also some indicators that companies use the names Cruise

and Resort for special summer collections that are not necessarily launched during the summer.

The context of the rise of fast fashion responded to consumers' demands for new and good-looking products—rapidly adapted to the market from fashion shows. As characteristic of a modernity radicalization (Giddens 1991), the desire for increasingly urgent novelties on the catwalks implies the shortening of fashion production cycles due to consumer requirements. The new dynamic stresses the role of consumers, since they demand the availability of products when they want them (Cietta 2010). One of the foundations of such a system, however, originates in the United States of America, where real mass-production had already started in the 1960s.

The old production models lasted around six months and had as their starting point the trends predicted by forecasting agencies, *bureaux de style*. What drives the creation of fashion products in the fast-fashion model is usually sales efficiency. Fast-fashion companies substituted a logic in which companies respond directly to changing consumer demands for the logic of the designer. The responsiveness to the consumers' wishes is possible due to the industrial coordination of the supply chain, making it feasible for a new product to be available for purchase in few weeks.

The fashion market has difficulties that involve the production process. Among them are: 1) the risk of unpredictability of demand, and, 2) the management of the creative system and the supply chain (which includes the distribution of products at the points of sale). The greatest success of the fast fashion model is the coordinated management of creation, production, and distribution, for it became possible to develop products with shorter lead time, investing more assertively in the consumers' desires through the conjunction between the short circuit and a directly controlled distribution network² (Erner 2005).

Another relevant aspect of fast fashion is the low prices, which, in a certain manner, have illustrated the democratic approach of fashion since the second half of the twentieth century (Baldini 2005). The reasons for such practice are cheapened production, due to a poorly paid and outsourced workforce (Riello 2013) and the low-cost equipment compared with other industries. Another rate-reducing aspect consists in the non-payment of royalties to the great designers' houses of the original models that serve as inspiration for companies. At the same time, fast fashion companies save by not investing in fashion shows, magazines, advertising, and high-end shops (Ribeiro 2010).

Consumers do not see fast-fashion products as investment. Purchases are more frequent, and consumers use clothing items for the duration of about two collections (Mihm 2010). Low prices are attractive to consumers, who are able to please themselves more often, which becomes therapeutic phenomenon. According to Lipovestly (2007), with the purchase of small items, we have the opportunity not

² The original quote in Portuguese is: [...] através da "conjunção entre o circuito curto e uma rede de distribuição diretamente controlada" (Erner 2005, 146).

³ The original quote in Portuguese is: „com a compra de pequenas peças, não só temos ocasião de exercer a escolha mais frequentemente, como também nos damos prazer mais vezes” (Lipovetsky 2007. 226).

only to exercise choice more often, but also to give us pleasure more often³ (Lipovetsky 2007).

According to Delgado (2008), fast fashion operates according to a logic of homogeneous demand, and on the assumption that the whole globe would be interested in the same aesthetic trends and fashion proposals, without paying attention to local characteristics. Global media works towards the increase of a homogenized taste, and is also enhanced by the fast and wide access to the internet and cable television—*mediascapes* (Appadurai 1990). The homogenization of demand corroborates with reduced costs, since companies produce a single clothing item on a large scale for worldwide distribution.

Overall, one can consider that fast fashion operates on a model of rapid production, mostly by verticalizing the production chain, where one actor controls the whole design-production-retail chain. Another strategy of rapid production in the productive structure, relying on an elastic and decentralized distribution network. As the name fast fashion suggests, the biggest innovation involves the *time to market*. Both models meet the required speed by excluding lengthy design and patterning processes, mostly by copying trends and styles directly from the catwalk and offering them in a *delivery flow* rather than in a collection structure (Saviolo & Testa 2015).

THE BRAND ZARA®

Founded in La Coruña, Spain, in 1975, the brand started as a lingerie business (Mihm 2010). In 1985, Inditex Group—Industria de Diseño Textil—purchased and incorporated the brand. Currently, the brand is the group's largest contributor, selling fashion, accessories, shoes, and decoration products in more than 1,600 points of sale in eighty-two countries (Inditex 2013).

Around forty new products enter Zara's stores every replacement day. The wide range is the key differentiator of Zara: rapid creation and distribution. The company uses the so-called vertical integration model, controlling every part of design procedures, manufacturing, and distribution. According to the reviewed data, design takes place in La Coruña and involves a team of 260 designers in the group's headquarters in the industrial center. The design collections adopt the most urgent fashion trends, also called micro-trends. There is also a strong reference to the “inspiration” of renowned designers' collections and fashion week catwalk shows, suggesting copying or plagiarism.

The main job of the designers is to adapt—translate—the northern hemisphere collections for the southern hemisphere, in which Brazil is prominent. The practice of „translation” involves amending specific aspects of each clothing item, such as fabrics, prints and colors to the mood and preferences of the southern half of the globe. According to Mihm (2010), 85 percent of the product line offered at different points of sale is standard and only 15 percent varies according to local

tastes. As strategy attending to local tastes, the Zara network works so that each store manager is an informant of successes and failures of the collections—along with sales and stock data. Consequently, the point of sale is not the end of the supply chain, but the beginning (Slack et al. 2008).

To promptly meet the retail demands, the company adopts Quick response manufacturing or Just-in-time manufacturing (Minadeo 2008). Unlike other fashion companies, which have about eighty percent of its collection already produced at the collection launch, Zara produces only fifteen percent of its clothing before the season, fifty percent at the beginning of the season, and the remaining thirty-five percent during the season; based on information from points of sale (Kumar & Linguri 2006). Part of the strategy is to have vast amounts of basic pieces made with neutral fabric—without color or prints—and submit them for modifications only after acknowledging consumer preferences (Mihm 2010).

The creation and production chain takes merely two weeks, i.e., the entire company manages to go from scratch to product in only fifteen days (Tiplady 2006). Thus, “the speed of response, [the] time to produce a new collection fell from twenty-four months to a few weeks” (Cietta 2010, 23). Zara produces approximately sixty percent of its collection in its own factories in La Coruña, which contributes to the ability to operate with such short production periods. After production, the clothing items travel to the logistics center located in northern Spain for exportation (Mihm 2010). In European countries, the produced items arrive at Zara’s points of sale within twenty-four hours— by truck—and in up to thirty-six hours in countries that are further afield. To reflect the costs of logistics and importation, prices vary from country to country; in Spain, Zara charges its lowest prices.

Another success factor is the supply-chain approach. The strategy is to maintain low stock levels. Like other brands of fast fashion, Zara tends to fill shelves with new products, rather than replacing old products. By doing so, the brand motivates consumers to buy the products before they definitely disappear from the stores (Ferdows, Lewis & Machuca 2004), encouraging frequent visits and purchases. This reinforces the novelty appeal and avoids a product-crowded store. The company collects and relocates items that remain in the store for over two weeks (Minadeo 2008) so that the shelves are deliberately left empty.

THE ZARA SISTER STORE IN FLORIANÓPOLIS

The first Zara sister store opened in Florianópolis in 2008, right after the opening of a new mall—*Shopping Iguatemi*, a shopping center chain of São Paulo. Just like all the stores of the Inditex Group, this store belongs directly to the group, without corresponding to the franchising model operated by many retail chains. The store occupies

a major area of the first floor of the mall, being an anchor store. In this space, Zara's area is divided into three sections: male, female and children—with each one being coordinated by a specific manager.

All the names of the internal sectors come from Spain without changes. The male section is entitled *Cro*, the child, *Niño* and the female, *Señora*. Each section offers different product lines, from formal to casual. The female sector offers, as in all Zara stores, the product lines *Woman*, *Basic* and *Trafaluc*. Whereas *Basic* changes little with time, depending on the trends on color, and the lines *Woman* and *Trafaluc* are more volatile to obvious aesthetic changes. The male section also offers both basic and trendier items, but without line differentiation.

The offered pieces come from different industrial parks around the world, which rules out the existence of any unique production center close to the single creation center in La Coruña. Most of the jeans originate from São Paulo and address the Brazilian tradition, specifically regarding jeans patterning. Argentina produces the greatest part of the available clothing, due to its geographic proximity.

The interviewers reported the existence of a Zara creation center in Brazil, in the state of São Paulo. The style team creates for the national and for the international market. The representative of the Brazilian design team presents the clothing ideas to the Spanish design team in La Coruña, who select them based on marketability. The Florianópolis' store manager, Natasha, stated that even the clothing items created and produced in Brazil are presented to the European public before coming to Brazil.

Based on the experience in Spain, the clothing items that sell well arrive in the Brazilian sister stores. Hence, Spain—and the entire northern hemisphere—serves as a laboratory to evaluate which products will go to the southern hemisphere. The top selling items go through another filter that corresponds to the local public's characteristics. According to a former-employee, Lara, one of the preferences of the local public is the preference for vibrant colors and patterns, such as animal prints.

Lara also reports that Brazilian women's body specificities require the alteration of clothing sizes, which need to be larger in Brazil than in Europe. However, the store manager, Natasha, denies the size-grading alteration, insisting that it is standardized worldwide. Also regarding the sizes, Natasha affirms that the brand does not offer the products in very large sizes. The grading, limited to smaller sizes, is a consciously aimed at the slimmer woman, excluding those not adequate to the brands'—and fashion's—standards.

As the literature proposes, the replacement of clothes on the shelves is the main activity of the employees. The store works in the system of self-service—which diverges from the traditional fashion retail models in Brazil. According to Natasha, the local public is not yet accustomed to shopping in department stores—which are traditional in Europe and

in the United States. The selling approach of Zara, however, intends to educate the Brazilian consumer in the model, since the store employees do not offer help and only speak to clients when spoken to.

It is also a common practice in Zara clothing items to be discontinued after the production batch sells out completely. Natasha says that with time, the clients get used to buying the clothes as they see them for the first time because they know there is a high chance that the product will be unavailable within days. The store's design tactic encourages purchases. In specific cases, the brand re-launches top-selling items, but usually with a different finishing or detail, or in a different color or print.

A former employee, Lara, commented that more people frequent the store on weekends or after 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, when the high-street closes. Sunday is the busiest day. Another former employee, Renata, said that people do buy on Sundays; conversely, Lara drew attention to the large crowd that visits the store without purchasing anything. According to Lara, many visit Zara to know and be able to copy the season's trends. This public often buys from Chinese websites, which offer similar products in extreme low prices, and in more popular local retail chains, such as Sul Center in Florianópolis. As a result, this public would visit Zara with the goal of finding out which clothes to buy in other sale points.

Employees and clients do not know about launched collections and there are no events or fashion shows to launch a new collection. For the internal worker and external public the only visible collection division is between summer and winter clothing, but recurrences of winter clothes in summer and vice-versa also occur. The employees—regardless of level—are unaware the specific collections and just know that new clothes come twice a week—on Tuesdays and Fridays. Renata, who holds a degree in fashion, recalled that one can notice similar or matching pieces that could compose a fashion collection, but which Zara does not officially communicate.

One of Zara's employees is to follow catwalk shows and the fashion weeks of Paris, London, Milan and New York. They also need to be acquainted with the latest trends. Lara mentions that the female department manager, Carolina, indicates the website *Fashion Forward* (<http://ffw.com.br/>) as information source. The knowledge is central, because Zara often appropriates international catwalk shows and *haute couture* collections as points of reference for the products they offer—having them match the catwalk trends.

When asked about the reason for Zara's success, opinions diverge. Some attest that the material quality of products is higher than the apparent national competition, for example, the brands Riachuelo and Renner; others reject the idea of associating Zara with superior material quality. However, they share the impression that the brand's distinctive feature is fashionable appeal, which the local companies have not yet managed to reproduce. This alignment with trends and the ur-

gent answer to novelty allow Zara to launch products far in advance of the market. For Lara, another distinctive feature is the brand itself and the strong tradition of European fashion.

ZARA AND A CREATIVE DYNAMISM

The fashion world is distinctive for its highly fragmented fluxes of messages, processes, projects, languages and forms that do not present a single vision (Próni 2008). The fragmentation of fashion media and processes characterize modernity's radicalization (Giddens, Lash & Beck 2012) that accelerates the rhythm of change and puts its trust less and less in trend forecasting reports. The Zara store in Florianópolis confirms the business model of rapid response that almost eliminates experts forecasting fashion trends.

Zara's success is testified by the fact that the fashion market is experiencing the fall of explicit seasonal collections and is being forced into institutionalized fashion trends. On the other hand, "global" media incites similar desires in a vast fashion-enthusiastic public. Zara addresses a large public with its broadening of the product range and the rapid response to fads publicized by the formal and informal media in websites, blogs and other popular media, such as the currently popular Instagram and Snapchat; in total composing a *mediascape* (Appadurai 1990) and a global community of fashion enthusiasts.

The importance of technology—*technoscape* (Appadurai 1990)—is also explicit and essential to the business connections in different parts of the world at the present stage of globalization. There is a wide range of technologies that directly influence and support the development of fast fashion. Intricate operating systems allow Zara to capture information and readily alter product offerings to the store in Florianópolis, supported by flexible supply chains, processes of creation, production, logistics, and retail.

One might think that the public of Florianópolis is not fully adequate to Zara's retail model that falls into the category department store. It reflects the local resistance to giving up the personalized service tradition in regular stores. As well as other department stores, the Zara store in Shopping Iguatemi in Florianópolis can be considered a non-place (Augé, 1992), given the anonymity of its clients and attendants—who could be substituted by mannequins—and the fact that labels, cash registers, and credit cards are the mediators of the interactions inside the store.

Nevertheless, considering the brand opened another point of sale on the outskirts of the city in 2013, the retail chain is successful in Florianópolis. In total, there are more than 1,600 Zara stores worldwide, of which fifty-five are in Brazil. Despite not investing large amounts of money in traditional advertising, the brand gained notoriety for investing in brand loyalty through the reputation of employees and opinion leaders (Cietta 2010), which was reinforced by

the success of its products—whose discontinuation strategy leads to clothing items becoming “irresistible”. Thus, the brand achieves massive profits and reaches new markets with a fast and supposedly globalized fashion.

Overall, Zara cultivates the air of fashion boutiques without the exorbitant prices and invests in its brand name rather than in the name of designers. The clothes are inexpensive and the prices are rarely reduced, which implies profits. In Brazil, however, the cost of the clothing items is considerably higher when compared with Europe. According to the store manager in Florianópolis, the price increase is directly related to the import and logistic costs. In turn, the markup cost suits a Brazilian public that already has awareness of the brand from their travels to Europe, which helped the brand’s positioning in Brazil.

Considering the Brazilian market, the brands who could compete with Zara either offer similar product appeal for much higher costs or similar costs for rather basic or unattractive products. Zara is an enormous company that controls the whole design-production-retail process and smaller Brazilian companies cannot compete with Zara’s strength and control, often depending on less stable and trustworthy suppliers and retailers. Furthermore, despite being considered a regular brand in Europe, Zara enters the Brazilian market as European brand and is associated with the historical value of European expertise in fashion.

The positive valuation of Zara as European fashion by the local (Florianópolis) public coincides with the fashion tradition of the continent. Accordingly, some brand practices reinforce the idea of an earlier developed fashion system, such as having a delayed product launch calendar in the southern hemisphere—suggesting that Brazilian fashion is lagging behind European fashion. As for being Spanish, the brand’s success has already broken with the hegemony of French, Italian, and English fashion expertise, but it also maintains the dominance of European fashion in the sector.

Making reference to a global fashion, but with a European tag, Zara commercializes similar products worldwide, slightly altering attributes such as color and print according to sales data. Also, although they have different creative centers around the world, all designs must be accepted by the European public—being multicultural does not reflect global heterogeneity.

Often in fast fashion, copyright and patent registration is faced with the reproduction (or adaption) of *prêt-à-porter* designers. Although the great designers complain about the illegality of copy, it is also evident that in this way fashionable creations became accessible to a much larger public. Johanna Blakely (2013) attests that the freedom of copying in the fashion industry is revolutionary. As utility items of basic (not always so basic) needs, clothes cannot be patented in the USA and are only rarely in Europe. Even if patenting

were possible, it would not likely happen, since a designer collection presents numerous clothing items and is completely renewed within months.

The context analyzed by this work elucidates the inspiring appropriation of designs from famous *prêt-à-porter* designers by Zara, but also the reproduction and appropriation of Zara's versions of designs by national and local brands. The Florianópolis retail store in Sul Center offers global products, sometimes visually identical to those of Zara, for much lower prices. Zara's affiliate in Florianópolis not only provides products visually similar to those of fashion houses at a price affordable for the local upper-middle class, but also works as a mediator of the major trends from the catwalks to the lower-middle and lower classes. By doing so, Zara anticipates the speed with which the public with less purchasing power assimilates fashion trends.

The recent furor of designers giving up their positions due to industry pressure draws attention to the industry's creative (un)sustainability (Corner 2014). As a strategy for escaping the copies of fast-fashion companies, other brands have positioned themselves differently in the market regarding traditional fashion specificities. For example, in the latest fashion week shows, British house Burberry has completely altered the fashion calendar and geography by presenting a collection without seasons, available in stores directly after the show and with the intention of appealing to clients in both hemispheres—a model called “see-now/buy-now” (Friedman 2016).

In addition to the effort of fashion houses and designers to strengthen intellectual property laws, in the recently published article “The Copycat Economy”, Vanessa Pike presents the following strategies of designers as a form of protecting their creations. One of them is the use of technical fabrics and complicated designs that cannot be easily copied or reproduced in low-cost production. Another strategy is close communication with customers through the internet; by defending their designs, and going public against plagiarism (Op. cit.).

These strategies aim to prevent an old habit in fashion. According to Pike (2016), already in the 1930s Worth started labeling his clothes in the attempt to authenticate his creations and avoid unauthorized copies. Fast-fashion companies build their business by assimilating other designers' creations and reproducing them for lower prices and therefore are viewed badly by the fashion business. The “Piracy Paradox” that considers the benefits of copying within fashion is rejected by Pike (2016). Traditional fashion cycles have been accelerated since information has become accessible instantaneously on the internet. In such a scenario, she contends that “copyists are winning right now” (Op. cit.).

However, a group of theorists and other actors consider piracy rather positive for the fashion system, considering the drive for creating new products and styles, defending the “Piracy Paradox”. The

threat of copying stimulates not only more elaborate designs, but also the creation of new strategies in fashion, whether in product design, marketing or retailing. This dynamism—long since characteristic of fashion—stimulates the creative efforts of fashion designers, who increasingly provide news creations for the public, making fashion an even greater creative force that never tires of reinventing itself.

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