

A Listening Design Approach in Fashion Research Fields

Un Listening Design Enfoque en los campos de investigación de Moda

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RESUME: The Fashion Research Lab platform, of Università degli Studi della Campania, deals with fashion and textiles design research, where develops continues experimenting a methodology that underlines the importance of sharing methods and practices in the value-creation processes by interacting with local and national manufacturing realities. Campania's productive landscape is understood as a reserve of material and immaterial resources, the university acts to create useful connections and interactions in the logic of networking. The design ability for Fashion to feed radical innovations in the consumer world and thus inform innovation strategies in production is able to lead to new economic prospects in which a fundamental role is played by human and relational capital. The territorial laboratory assumes open source connotation, the approach is 'Listening Design' that allows it to act as a systemic innovation driving force.

KEYWORDS: Creative ecosystem, collective intelligence, knowledge intensive, advanced prototyping

ABSTRACT: La plataforma de Laboratorio de Investigación de Moda de la Università degli Studi della Campania, se dedica a la investigación del diseño de moda y textil, donde continúa experimentando una metodología que subraya la importancia de compartir métodos y prácticas en los procesos de creación de valor interactuando con las realidades manufactureras locales y nacionales. El paisaje productivo de Campania se entiende como una reserva de recursos materiales e inmateriales, la universidad actúa para crear conexiones útiles e interacciones en la lógica de la creación de redes. La capacidad de diseño de Fashion para alimentar las innovaciones radicales en el mundo del consumidor y así informar las estrategias de innovación en la producción es capaz de conducir a nuevas perspectivas económicas en las que un papel fundamental es desempeñado por el capital humano y relacional. El laboratorio territorial asume la connotación de código abierto, el enfoque es el de 'Listening Design' que le permite actuar como un motor de innovación sistémica.

KEYWORDS: Ecosistema creativo, inteligencia colectiva, conocimiento intensivo, prototipado avanzado

1. Introduction

The Fa.Re. Fashion Research Lab of Università degli Studi della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli", Dept. DICDEA, is oriented towards the development of new, advanced and sustainable production models, accompanied by democratic processes that define new ways of diffusion and consumption. Fashion is a complex system of multidisciplinary interactions; Research expands from stylistics to traditional and innovative materials, from the typical processing to the most sophisticated digital technologies, to the logic of marketing and communication, to the distribution and sales processes. The Design research for Fashion field can not ignore the overhaul the themes that relate to new scenarios that consider the evolution of behaviors, of socio-cultural aspects and symbolic and identity values that drive, in addition to redefining performance and their value in use in contemporary Age.

The research fields cover various topics of study, including the theme of "handmade" and "new tailoring" referring to the work of excellence typical of made in Italy, which focuses on the research of productive territories as the origin of the National and international fashion system. The connections between laboratories in the various hand-made sectors start from partnerships with Italian-regional companies that provide their know-how for experimentation and research aimed at cutting / packaging, leather goods, footwear and silk sector.

Another research theme is focused on Technical Textile, which is tailored to various areas of application, from safety to healthcare, protection against pollution to advanced performance in the field of clothing. Compared with emerging issues at the social level, another aspect is the wellbeing through the development of products aimed to contemporary needs.

The heritage of Italian fashion, thanks to the formalization of theories, methods and tools for the enhancement of the historical brands that have built the image of made in Italy in the world, nowadays can be a starting point for research and historical study at the International level. The research line, through rigorous archive studies and a work of reconstruction and analysis of existing materials and artefacts, works in close collaboration with the fabric of prestigious Italian companies, enhancing the design and cultural identities of the fashion project. The FA.RE laboratory, for some years, has been conducting experimentation of a research and design methodology in the field of design for Innovation in the Fashion sector, which underlines the importance of sharing strategies, listening methods and practices, to implement in specific stages of the design process.

Starting with a Design Thinking approach, we are proposing a methodology developing activities that can generate innovation, giving back a crucial role to the stage of "amplified listening", intended as experimenting of an open model with specific tools that follow the design stages. The design ability, for Fashion to feed radical innovations in the consumer world and thus inform innovation in production strategies, is able to lead to new economic perspectives in which a fundamental role is played by human and relational capital. The "cognitive surplus", implied by contemporary society, sees fashion design as an emerging discipline able to gather fragmented knowledge and aggregate it by creating connectivity opportunities to develop new models of innovation through complex actions spread across the various actors of the territory.

2. Innovation in Fashion system

The turning point in the fashion system is determined by the environment and culture contexts. Tangible and the intangible goods characterize the whole system are inseparable; Fashion is an ecosystem of institutions, organizations, groups, producers, events, communication that acts on the basic needs, and satisfying the first latent needs. The interaction between above-mentioned different systems, economic productivity, cultural-identity, goes beyond the boundaries of the industry itself, to achieve, in the last two decades, the education system of schools and universities. On the other hand, the narrative mood of the craft system is a more relevant subject than ever, surpassing the idealization of 'handmade' relegated to the category of interpretation of a manual work that cannot reproduce in the current requirements item. Rather, "any project, even the most advanced on the industrial level, could do without the "handmade" component or the symbolic and narrative element that exceeds any particular denomination and utilization," says G. Dorflès (2012), underlining, on the one hand, the presence of "a given utilitarian and functional, and on the other hand, a mythical value not reproducible in other areas". Therefore, the add value of Italian production, already able to integrate industrial production with the "hand made" component, could be the continuous innovation produced by the educational system in which the logic of learning and transmission capacity and the transfer of know-how, update on combined production practices, encoded by a process called Hand-Mind processes. It relies on networks development that influenced the transformation and often the undoing of traditional organizations, replacing new ways of thinking, designing, producing, consuming and disposing. Operating practices activate leading projects linked to a defined context in which figures knowledge and production units combining together. A new self-organized ecosystem is configured, according to the leading project where designers with their own skills operate as specialists in the process, and design thinking turns a catalyst within relational people network. The task is to facilitate and direct the flow of relationships in a specific and operative way, to converge on a shared and positive result. Education, industry, handicrafts, today more than ever at the center of a debate that examines in a strategic way to configure the relational activities; sharing, cooperation, peer-to-peer relations, social networking, as indispensable led process to meet the demand of authentic, ethical, safer production, where transparency is a requirement that is reflected across the entire value chain.

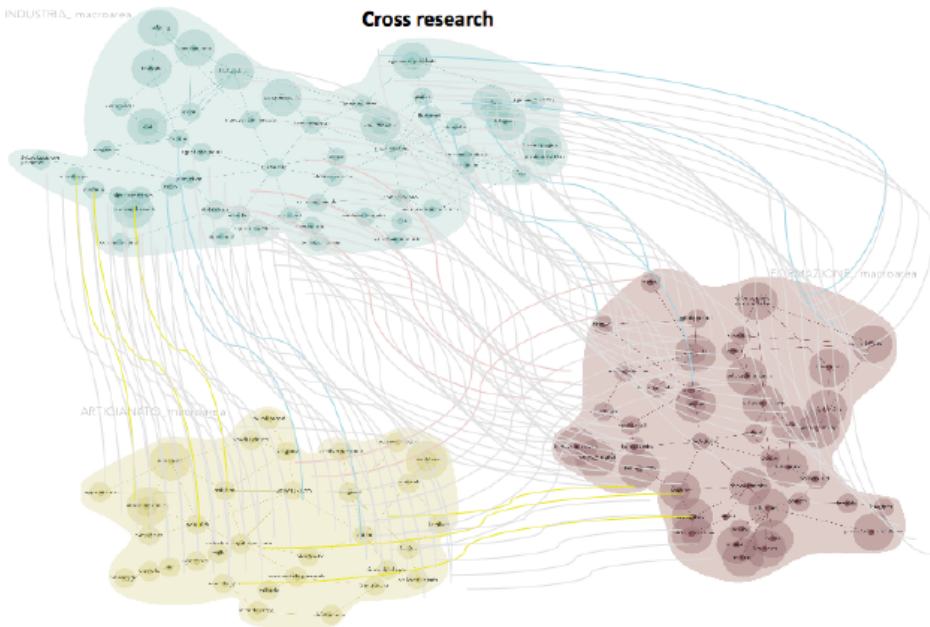
3. Relational options

The self-organized ecosystem processes turn the driving and the advisory force of interpretation to determine the dialogue between the various actors in the design system. They innovate in the meanings and getting a crucial point of defining new languages and interpretation codes within the fashion system. It's about innovation established as a set of meanings and values assumed by the mass production. Each object and its own generate process it has its own meaning, and the risk run by many companies is do not care about those meanings, not to them emerge, or rather not define them (Verganti, 2009). The new meanings are possible by combining tangible and intangible values, ideas and technology. Relational goods that support the self-organized ecosystem innovation processes are not integrated in the tools, but they are managed and developed by the people within various systems. A relational knowledge appears, not codified but, on one hand, designed and fostered by specialists, on the other hand, widespread and shared by stakeholders of various kind. A uniqueness and complexity of collaborative networks as an important source of competitive advantage arises. The self-organized ecosystem processes define the strategic scenario in which not more the consumer, or rather, its observation and its consumer behavior determine the market supply. The market offer made by the study of the meanings, to address the behavior of the consumer and not vice versa. In a period of change, as the current one, it shows the need to "implement sketchy shapes to produce alternative worlds" (Verganti, 2009). One of the goals, in fact, in the fashion field, is precisely identify the signals that are defining a change in training requirements, productive, social, and that are triggering new paths, relationships within the design category, now codified.

4. Creative networking

Networking is a set of nodes, bound together through their relationships, according to the theory of any networking system becomes "a structured group of organizations" (Benkler, 2006). The development of networks and innovation in ICT's, at the center of new and great opportunities, connecting creative businesses and new models based on the collaboration between production and cultural contents. European Commission, with the project "Creative Networks", promotes at transnational and international level, and to try to adapt to changes in order to achieve the overall objectives and to facilitate and stimulate cultural diversity, over that strengthen the competitiveness of these sectors through interventions promoting innovation. Therefore, the information, knowledge and culture are fundamental to human freedom and in the same way the development of the capacity of the individual in connection with other actors from both social and production assets. The manners in which products and contents are produced and broadcast in society and in business, critically influence the way people see things and their behaviors in the interaction overall. Through the networked information economy, individuals can achieve or produce information in the world, being connected to each other through the network. Similarly, networking influences the production of goods and services; the culture of making, production, design, each with its own design and production area, not more considered closed systems, self-contained, which are governed by patterns encoded, but major hubs of the complex system of fashion. A place in which people, skills, stages of processing, products and services cross each other, carrying out collaboration, cooperation. Tasks such a way as to suggest a scenario in which a multiplicity of systems could communicate with each other through the dynamics of networking.

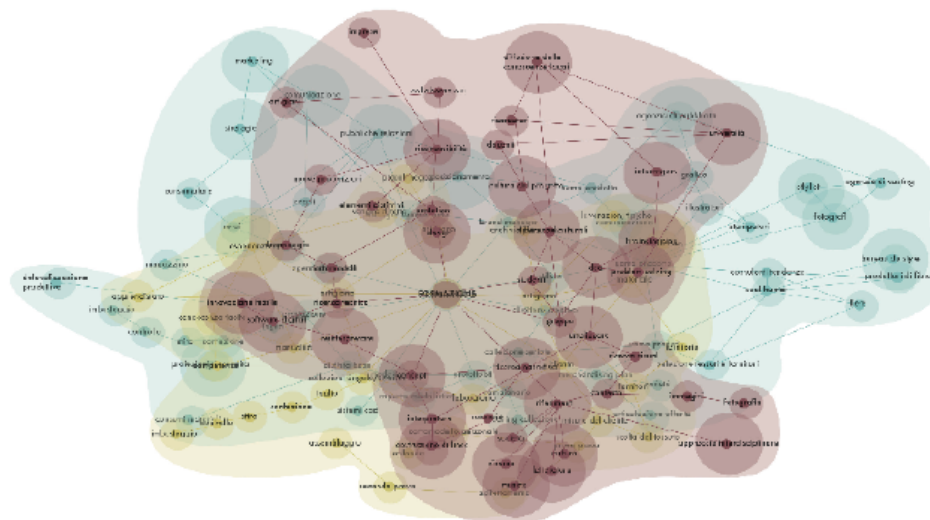
Figure 1 - Fashion Design Creative ecosystem of Campania Region.



5. The networking model within fashion system

Depiction of networking is configured as a series of structured spaces according to a new spatial model, polycentric, horizontal, where the above-mentioned systems industrial, craft and educational can live in an open relationship. The Networking becomes a structure: malleable with no form of its own; peripheral channel parallel or divergent, which explore the space of new and possible; flexible; self-organized in small units (Rullani, 2010). The networking shape is well suited to both the evolution of new technologies, both to the growth of the creative class needs, looking for frequent contacts and relationships. So, each single creative talent or creative micro-enterprise (industrial or craft) becomes the node of a high-frequency information exchanges networking. Several interconnected networks carry out with the high specialization of activities, producing a social and ethical mesh for the exchange of aesthetic, technological and commercial informations (Bertacchini, Santagata, 2012). Opportunities ranging skills to weave people, knowledge, hands-on and planning attitudes to create new added value through the connection. Fashion itself, express its being through a dense network of relationships between people, skills, knowledge; therefore, the fashion system look like a network of actors whose actions are closely interrelated and interdependents. Different systems, industrial, craft and educational for their own characteristics, may structure new processes: working in the supply chain; making from territory their knowledge and relationships (social capital, imitation, qualified labor, services); mobilizing the right people; putting the interpersonal family relationships in the service of production which become components of a networking. "This strategic approach causes the loss of boundaries, the predominant features are the influence of the external environment and effective communication with the same" (Du Preez, 2008). "Each network alone is not enough, it should be extended in the sense trans-regional and cross-sectoral, seeking new partners, and increase the space of possibilities The network is not only technology, but the division of labor, the exploration of new practices, becoming a mode of production that uses fluid intelligence and the ties that make them capable of interacting with other enterprises, knowledge workers, consumers, lenders, land" (Rullani, 2011). As a part of the creative process / ideational in the fashion industry, the concept of networking has highlighted the processes to generate products. Applying networking to communicate among the different project and production cycles (artisanal, industrial and educational): each consisting of stages, processes, relationships, in which tangible and intangible components interact; influencing each other which trigger new opportunities emerging from the relations among subjects where knowledge is propagated from node to node in the network; growing more horizontally than it does vertically "network capitalism" (Rullani. 2011).

Figure 2 - Model of networking between education, research, industry, handcrafts.



6. Listening Design Methodology

The methodology proposed is oriented to develop an action research in the field of fashion and textile. It is a creative and innovative design approach defined from the design research group (Veneziano et al., 2013) and adopted in various experiments of the design field.

The interaction with stakeholders, values and territories produce an evolutionary system that suits to the different actors defining new values systems and new innovation demands came from enterprises. The methodology phases, described below, have been adapted and implemented during the application.

Listening Design is an open, equal design methodology aiming at leading enterprises towards expressing the demand for innovation. Recent research in the field of design shows that innovation does no longer originate from individual subjects but from "dialogic collaborations" (Sennett, 2012) based on the ability to bring together several competences. The aim of the methodology is to set up a creative ecosystem including designers, researchers, companies, users and local resources in order to connect competences, which may, together, produce innovation.

The practices and tools of Listening Design include 'collective' and 'connective' intelligence in all the stages of the innovation process to guarantee a rich and complex interaction. Listening Design starts from the Design Thinking approach and identifies a variety of actions to implement open, careful and analytical practices. This makes up the conditions to take the creative, productive and economic opportunities offered by the local ecosystems.

In order to involve a greater number of people around a piece of innovation the project must be transformed into an effective message. Telling a story is the most successful way to catch people's attention. To increase its effectiveness, this activity of storytelling – a consolidated practice of development in the Design Thinking approach – must adopt the technique of "dialogic exchange" introduced by Sennett, who stresses not only the importance of technique and of the gift of synthesis needed by someone who delivers a speech, but also the equally important skill of the listeners to "follow and interpret in detail what the others say before responding, understanding the speaker's gestures and silent pauses alongside statements" (Sennett, 2012). Silence sometimes hides undeclared intentions, which are not explicitly stated by the speaker: in this case a good listener – says Theodore Zeldin – can identify a common ground in what the speaker assumes rather than in what he or she actually says (Zeldin, 1998). This is the "dialogical principle" introduced by Michail Bachtin with reference to a type of communication that is not resolved in finding a common ground but in triggering a research process that introduces new discourses to be shared. Even more than generate invention and novelty, to innovate means being able to read, catch and bring to light competences.

There is a need to create a new model using the principle of empathy meant as the "ability to understand" (Mead, 1934) the other in an open, collaborative way, spreading culture and knowledge. "Empathy is the social glue that allows increasingly individualized and diverse populations to forge bonds of solidarity across broader domains so that society can cohere as a whole" (Rifkin, 2010). To spread empathy it is necessary to listen carefully and to catch all the signals this listening provides us with. The next real innovation will lie in the ability of each and every one of us to listen and to collaborate "together".

7. Stages of the Methodology

The stages that composed the Listening Design methodology are: Open listening, Cross Research and Open Concept. Each stage is adapted to the fashion sector and its specific values. In the collaboration process are involved all the complex competences of the fashion system with the aim to define a common strategies.

The common strategies is the competitive one built during the method steps.

During the Open listening, in which there are specific actions and tools, will be identify the details of the fashion ecosystem. The phase results are the identification of a framework of relations that contribute to built all the information related to the demand for innovation. The tools adopted during the step will configure the innovation canvas model document. Among the actors involved in the creative fashion ecosystem, there are the researchers, designers, companies and stakeholders of the supply chain.

The approach is based on the collaboration among all the participants enhancing skills, competences and needs that make up tools according to individual, "connective" and "collective" intelligences. After the ecosystem definition and after the instruments selection, the research group arranges a sequence of workshops to experiment, to test and to increase the creative fashion ecosystem and its interactions and exchanges. The stage is documented by short notes making up called Posting stage. These members of the research group are supported by audiovisual materials that record the story telling on the stakeholders, companies and talents, with the aim of enhancing relationship between and among them. The Posting stage results will flow into to the following stage – Sharing and Fixing, which selects, mixes and re-generates data and information. During this stage will be share criteria aim to evaluate the impact of the themes discussed in the meeting point and consequently to define their potential impact of innovation related to the visions. The meetings programme are create with the final aim to define a common vision in which the group will obtain an equal opportunities through an appropriate, accessible, adaptable and efficient creative ecosystem. With this premise will be built an equal creative process.

After these meetings will be define a series of Listening Prototypes coming in the form of tendency maps, scenarios, moods, colours, materials and inspiration images.

The creative ecosystem will be ready to the next stage – Cross Research – in which will be realized an environment sustained by scientific and practices competences of different disciplines. The competences involved are related to the specific project themes that will be developed. The contributions produced at this stage are collected in a list of potential "aided to the creation" in support of the project like cutting-edge technologies, materials of colours, textiles, manufactures tools, called Vision prototype. The last stage will be dedicated to the development of the fashion collection, Open Concept. After defining a number of candidate collection, the members of the creative ecosystem, together with the companies, ratify the list of the "aided to the creation" to produce the final collection. At this stage the creative fashion ecosystem will move in the companies production places and it will include in the supply chain. The results became products for stakeholders and buyers, which spread and implement the communication and market values.

The Listening Design Method, in the first part of the process, adopts the unexpected elements called "Noise" factors, considering its key-factors as fundamental increasing values of the system. The variability of the creative ecosystem environment, called White Room, leads by the Listening Design methodology. Figures 3 and 4.

The Open Listening methodology views the fashion designer as an intermediary rule, from the creation to the products realization, understanding the conversation and flowing up in the innovative projects.

Figure 3 - Listening Design Map: open listening, first phase of the methods.

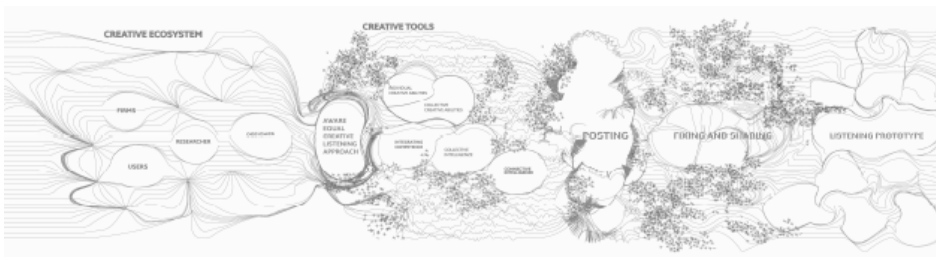
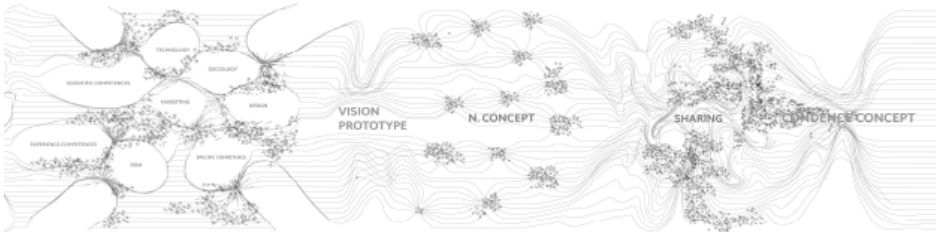


Figure 4 - Listening Design Map: cross research and open concept, second and third phase of the methods.



8. Results: BIANCA Valentino capsule collections made in Naples.

Among the Neapolitans who have made a significant contribution to the history of Made in Italy, besides Fausto Sarli, Livio De Simone and Emilio Schubert, is the figure of Mario Valentino. With this first brand, the "listening design" path started on a cultural field in the Campanian fashion segment structured by FA.RE. Fashion Research Lab of the department DICDEA of the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli with the 3 courses: Fashion History, Advanced Scenarios for Fashion and Fashion EcoDesign 1. The first stage of listening and identifying issues related to the brand analyzed consisted of a series of meetings, interviews, real, video and photography at the company located in the heart of Naples in the Sanità District. This first phase was used to create a listening design map, created by the teachers / researchers, by the students and the various people present in the company. In this first phase, the structured path with the teacher of the History of Fashion was fundamental to analyze the past of the historic Mario Valentino company.

Figure 5 - Listening Design interviews, first phase of the methods.



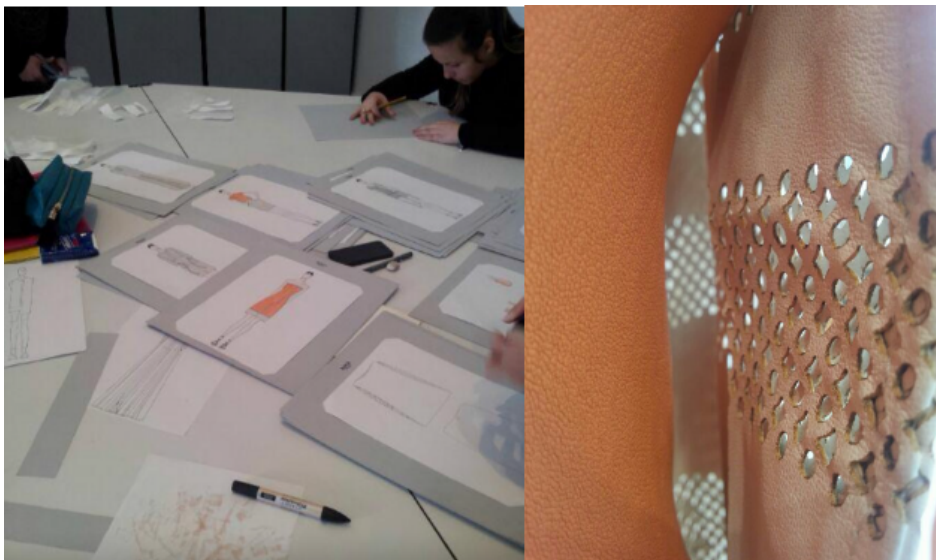
Important protagonist of Italian fashion from 1952 to 1980, he joined with a personal design research - also carried out in collaboration with stylists like Karl Lagerfeld, Mauriel Grateau, Marie France Acquaviva, Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace and Claude Montana Prêt-à-porter, enhancing the craftsmanship of the parthenopean through a clever process of technical experimentation, which has impressed the skin with the delicacy of silk, the bare lace transparency, the reindeer the linearity of the chalk, the suede the discontinuity of the weaved fabric. Upon the death of its founder, the company continued to operate in the origin groove, but more than twenty years ago, the event was matured by researchers in the field of fashion history and corporate heirs Desire to enhance the enormous cultural field in it. A heritage that in the broadest sense adopted, goes beyond the pure concept of materiality and expands in a complex intellectual and cultural dimension. From this first stage, a first prototype listening was created, consisting of a video designed to reconstruct the story of Mario Valentino (listen prototyping N° 1) with the idea of entrusting a whole capsule collection project to creative young designer capable of reinterpret the key prerogatives of the historical brand in key terms in response to the implicit needs of fashion innovation. Another prototype of this first stage of listening was a small Mario Valentino Museum (listen prototyping N° 2) realized within the same company with the help of the teachers and students of the university courses involved. This first step is served to teachers, researchers and students to better understand the true value of this historic important company and for Mario Valentino to retrace the salient moments of family brand history and fully understand the real potential of the brand.

The second step was to find a trendy search for the creation of the capsule collection created by the style office of the Fashion Eco Design 1 course, and for this reason a second video (listen prototyping N° 3) was created, on the trend line at the base of the collection of the '60s. This second prototype was the result of the "Advanced fashion scenario course" of the Degree Course DXI, and was the basis for working on the real prototype made up of real capsule collection.

The capsule collection was born from the critical reading of forty years of activity by the historic company to trace themes and characters to be rebuilt in a large redesign project of its collections. A unique experience, following the company model ever pursued by Mario Valentino, who, born as a shoe designer, soon became a successful entrepreneur who believed in teamwork in the spirit of Shop, preserving them in time between the operating principles of your company. Faithful to its Parthenopean origins, since the mid-1960s its company has been highly internationalized, thanks to the involvement of well-known designers, as seen in the first stage of listening, in the presence of numerous shops in the world context and the conveyance of its products on the world market through sophisticated communication strategies. The creative ability of many designers who worked with the Neapolitan company in this work has turned into an inevitable critical premise, from which the study group has embarked on a wider project in which the innovation objective is translated into a continuous and tight confrontation with many different professions, all of which are highly significant, from teacher to learner, from marketing expert to fashion history, from leather specialist to communicator, from model to cutter. This multidisciplinary path is the basis of the listening design operating method and has made it possible to identify the most innovative aspects to be included in the designed capsule collection. At this stage it emerged the need to outsource a part of the process of leather dress that was once inside the company, and from this moment started a process of "listening to productive territories" of made in Italy which led to the identification of Solofra's leathers production district and to the identification of two companies of the same DeJavù and DMD, one for leather processing and laser cutting and the other for the tanning and coloring of the skins used for the collection. In fact, the choice of the microlaser was according to a design of the designers of the collection, applied to the clothes of the capsule itself.

This resulted in an overall project that found its final result in the BIANCA capsule collection. In the archives of the company we have traced not only scenarios of reference, but tendencies, silhouettes, colors, stylistic details; in collections of clothes and footwear kept in the company's halls, forms and compositions; in the store, a huge assortment of hides, shades, weaves, plots. From the synthesis of the repertoire investigated, several design paradigms have emerged that have animated the design strategy adopted to guarantee an indispensable welding between past and contemporaneity with vivid authenticity. The concluding multidisciplinary approach taken by the various stakeholders involved has led to the theoretical - methodological plan being made purely applicative and that the contribution of the historical - critical disciplines to integrate into a single but complex research work with the design ones. BIANCA is not just a tribute to the first female soul active in the company's history (the wife of Mario Valentino, specifically interested in the women's clothing industry), but is the reference to an essential collection that he intended to impress in the history of the house. Another beginning, through which to give new light to the ancient shine of what was a flagship of the high craftsmanship of the bell. It is the outcome of a bold design exercise that declines in the key present the cornerstones of Mario Valentino's long operational path, such as luxury, high quality, style and modernity. The project explores new ways to build a creative and innovative methodology with the goal of conduct research with leading companies to generate constant innovation processes through an open and equal listening process among the various actors involved.

Figure 6-7 - Listening Design prototype: the capsule BIANCA, and the laser cut leather.



The methodology, which involves a hybridization of knowledge, disseminates design practices to promote social development through various actions to involve the users plays a crucial role for the network of relationships in creating an environment within which to develop and share the process Innovation, which is then the ultimate goal of the listening design method that uses design thinking typical of design thinking. The fourth prototype (listen prototyping N° 4) consists of prototyping from the companies involved, the collection heads selected by the owners of Mario Valentino, so to propose the final outcome with photos on capsule models made by the style office created during the experimentation. The final phase of the proposed method, which consists of testing prototypes made during the various phases of the project, involved the participation of the capsules in the showroom of Mario Valentino in Milan during the Vogue Fashion Night Out, a preview of the Women Fashion Week in September in Milan. This last important phase was the final test for the full project in which both researchers, creators, university designers and the company and the various actors involved by the brand, Mario Valentino, have verified the true functionality of the project on the real market. A final test that was eventually used for real stage training at the company of students involved in agreements between universities and maison.

Figure 8-9 - Listening Design Testing: VOGUE Fashion Night out events in Milan.



The case study described below then had several others followed with the same design methodology of listening design applied to case studies of Emilio Schubert, Livio De Simone and the study that is being done in the men's tailor made with the research conducted in the Man's tailoring course with the application with the Kiton company, who adopted the same strategy of listening to business issues applied to real brands.

Figure 10-11-12 - Emilio Schubert and KITON capsule collections in Milan.



9. Conclusions

The listening design method is an excellent approach to university research and didactics applied to real case studies in the Italian fashion industry companies, both as an approach to teaching and as a method for application of business innovation in the fashion system. The research explores new ways for the construction of a creative and innovative methodology with the aim of leading enterprises towards defining the demand for innovation generating continuous innovation processes through an open and equal listening process between the various stakeholders involved.

The methodology, which entails a hybridisation of knowledge and practices, spreads design strategies to promote development by means relational networking. It gives a crucial role to the network of interactions in setting up an environment within which to develop and share the innovation processes.

The FA.RE. Fashion Research Lab of Università della Campania experiments with the methodology by developing innovation-led design processes with the aim of promoting the excellences of Campania Region and spread best practices in fashion-oriented production and design.

Acknowledgments

This paper was presented at 6th EIMAD – Meeting of Research in Music, Art and Design, and published exclusively at Convergences.

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The 7, chapter is written by R. Liberti

Reference According to APA Style, 5th edition:

Ranzo, P. Sbordone, M. Veneziano, R. Liberti, R. ; (2018) *A Listening Design Approach in Fashion Research Fields*. *Convergências - Revista de Investigação e Ensino das Artes*, VOL XI (22) Retrieved from journal URL: <http://convergencias.ipcb.pt>