

The Fashion and the City: Porto Case Study

Graça Guedes^{1,a*}, Aline Guimarães Fernandes^{2,b} and A. Dinis Marques^{3,c}

^{1,3}2C2T, Universidade do Minho, Guimarães, Portugal

²Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

^amgg@det.uminho.pt, ^balinefguimaraes2003@yahoo.com.br, ^cadinis@det.uminho.pt

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Abstract. As a simultaneously cultural and global phenomenon, fashion has become an attractive factor in many cities, particularly the large metropolises where it assumes a prominent role, as in Paris, London, Milan, or New York. In countries where fashion does not assume notoriety and global prestige, fashion movements are more associated with local cultural characteristics, which fashion designers use as sources of inspiration and differentiation.

In major cities, world-renowned designers and brands take on recognised importance, and fashion districts' attractiveness to visitors is notorious. In smaller cities, however, generally associated with cultural and artistic heritage, fashion appears in some places as a specific offer, marked by originality and differentiation of historical roots or inspired by local culture. The interest in fashion, in general, can lead the management of territories to associate the local dynamics of fashion creation with shopping tourism. To create specific itineraries and infrastructures, to follow the example of the big cities can develop the local fashion business and simultaneously increase the reasons of interest to visitors.

Porto is a medium-sized city with high touristic demand and a developed local fashion system. However, visitors miss noticing Porto's role locally and nationally as it is not integrated systematically in a communication addressed to visitors. The most important designers are not easily accessible to them. The study aims to understand the perspective of fashion agents of Porto regarding the interest for the local fashion business of considering fashion as a touristic attraction and integrating it into the city touristic development plans.

Introduction

Fashion is simultaneously a cultural and global phenomenon. It has become an attraction factor in many cities, and in large metropolises, such as Paris, London, Milan or New York, fashion assumes a prominent role [1]. World-renowned designers and brands assume recognised importance, and the attractiveness of fashion districts to visitors is notorious [2].

However, in smaller cities, fashion does not assume significant notoriety or prestige. There is an emergence of fashion movements more associated with local culture that fashion designers use as a source of inspiration and differentiation [3]. The interest in fashion, in general, leads the management of territories to associate local dynamics of fashion creation with shopping tourism, creating specific routes and infrastructures [4]. Those investments attempt to develop fashion businesses and increase visitors' interest in local fashion designers.

Antwerp in Belgium is an example of a city that achieved international visibility through fashion. Antwerp's notoriety in fashion is linked to design and its tradition with lace. This differential made it a reference in the fashion industry, influencing the city's branding and, at the same time, using its elements to build its identity. In Bruges (Belgium), the visitors can see a map of the city made in lace. Its exhibition highlights the importance of design in local identity, and local culture becomes an opportunity for designers to relate their brands to tradition [5]. After all, cultures can be "consumed" in product form. Hence, the representation of fashion as a cultural object can be analysed together with local social factors [6].

The cultural dimension of fashion as an urban phenomenon is also present in local architecture and monuments, in the clothing and lifestyle of the residents, in the transmission of knowledge passed from generation to generation, a combination of elements capable of composing the local collective identity [7; 8]. Through cultural exchange and global influences, local traditions, customs, and behaviours are components of the urban environment [6].

Attentive to urban elements and local identity, designers can create differentiated and peculiar products compared to global brands. Fashion design creates conditions and business opportunities for residents and professionals in the area, attracting visitors from all over the world motivated to learn about and consume local fashion [9]. The relationship between fashion and tourism is in consumption practices, as fashion is present in the contemporary urban environment [10].

According to Bulcão [11], the distinction strategy in the urban sphere is to customise styles. With this, people tend to look for innovative products that meet their needs and aesthetics, to the point of seducing them before the new meanings are collectively constructed. Due to its great competitiveness, the fashion segment identified the recovery of rudimentary production handcrafting as a market trend. For decades, doings have fallen out of favour due to the technology of the modern global world. Due to its ability to recreate itself in the face of specific interests and fierce competition, the trend of success and value in fashion focus on the peculiar, local and artisanal. Due to cultural and historical factors, this procedure has a sensitivity and meanings in its production inherited in the family stamp. The way of building, associated with the manual techniques of making, is generally learned from generation to generation, having a whole sentimental apparatus and historical construction, which is part of the territories' identity. Local and global cultures need to be analysed in a complementary way, using the place as a competitive strategy [12].

Against the example of Antwerp and other medium-sized cities, other cities and regions can be encouraged to develop with fashion as another segment of attraction associated with local tradition. The North of Portugal fits this context, as its economy is related to the textile/clothing sector tradition. With its industry structured mainly in small and medium exporting companies, its products are known for the quality of production, service and tradition, whose legacy of knowledge crosses generations, the "know-how", a traditional local characteristic. Braga and Porto stand out among the cities in the North of Portugal, headquarters of the districts where most companies in the segment locate. According to data from the EuroClusTex Project, in 2010, Braga had 47% of companies in the region and Porto 38%. The two cities are also internationally known for their tourism, a factor that contributes to possible fashion development strategies based on tourist attractiveness [13].

Dantas [14] states that the city of Porto is one of the most sought after tourist destinations in Europe. In 2001, the city was the European capital of culture, favouring investments in urban public spaces and infrastructure for cultural events. With a mixture of modernity, tradition, authenticity and innovation, the city of Porto is internationally known for cultural tourism [9]. In 2017, it received the title of best European destination, with votes from 174 countries. Gastronomy, culture, architecture, history, commerce, meeting and discovery are items of excellence and highlight of Porto on the European best destinations website. In addition, the city has been hosting Portugal Fashion since 1995, which is an international event capable of promoting Portuguese fashion and design culture internationally [15]. The sum of this information, together with the fact that the city has a textile/clothing tradition, was able to unite enough elements to choose it to be the field study of this investigation [9]. However, the city touristic information is notorious for not presenting fashion as an attraction. It is also evident that local fashion offer is very dispersed throughout the city, failing to capture the attention of most visitors. The city is strongly linked with the Portuguese textile and fashion industries. It was in Porto that was founded the first professional fashion school in the '80s, and for more than 20 years, twice a year take place at Porto the Textile and Fashion International Sallon Mod'tissimo and Portugal Fashion, the fashion week of Portuguese fashion designers and brands. Porto is also home to sector associations like ANIVÉC/APIV (National Association of Clothing Industries) that integrates the Internacional Color Association and Children Fashion from Europe, and research Centres as CENIT (Centre of Textile Intelligence) that promotes an international

annual Fashion Award, Moda Portugal. The city has excellent conditions to frame fashion as a tourist attraction.

This article aims to understand the perspective of fashion designers and the City Hall management towards the inclusion of local fashion in the touristic development plans of Porto. Those perspectives are central to determining the variables to design in-depth research on the barriers to local fashion promotion as a touristic attraction.

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Methodology

The study method adopted in this research is qualitative and exploratory. It is designed to understand the perspective of local fashion designers concerning integrating fashion in the city touristic developments plans.

Fashion designers' approach was planned to capture the city reality concerning fashion. The study focused on three local designers who have their brands and stores in the city. Two of them are national and internationally known designers that maintain their shops for more than twenty years. The perspective of young designers is also essential, and the study included a young designer in the market with her shop less than ten years. The perspective of City Hall was obtained through the councillor for the Economy and Tourism.

The study of these three designers and the City Hall councillor uses interviews and documents for analysis as the primary research techniques [6]. It is noteworthy that the data obtained in this study is an excerpt of a broad and deep doctoral research, which analysed the fashion of Porto as another element of attractiveness in the city [9].

The design interview followed a script of nineteen questions. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees and transcribed later. The data was analysed using Bardin's content

analysis technique. After processing the data and analysing it, the investigation's conclusions were drawn [9].

We opted for conducting semi-structured interviews with open questions. Thus, informally interviewing deepened the discussions on the subjects covered, having the freedom to return to some point, if necessary, or request explanations if they needed clarification [9]. In general, the interview allowed to deepen particularities related to specific phenomena and audiences linked to the research object. It is a technique that requires more time to apply and analyse data [16]. The semi-structured interview script is synthetic, and the informal way of conducting the activity is necessary to achieve the result of the investigation [17].

Content analysis was the technique used to interpret the data collected in the interviews. According to Bardin [18, p. 42], content analysis "is the set of communication analysis techniques". Several items are required, with systematic procedures and objectives for describing the messages in the documents. The instrument for analysis has methodological rigour and is also adaptable to various communication formats. The indicators extracted from the documents used in the research allow the knowledge gathered. Twelve record units (UR) were identified and categorised by codes and numbering. The similarity of the themes covered in the interviews was the criterion used to define the units of records, as the interviewees did not use the exact words to report the same subject. However, it was possible to identify elements that could be compared based on the context and research theme [9].

The Registration Units are as follows: UR1. Author fashion; UR2. Local fashion; UR3. Competitiveness between local and global fashion in Porto; UR4. Fashion as a travel experience; UR5. Dissemination of local fashion for tourists in Porto; UR6. Fashion circuit in Porto; UR7. Porto Identity; UR8. Porto and Tourism; UR9. Consumption of fashion products by tourists in Porto; UR10. Fashion design is another element of attractiveness in Porto; UR11. Fashion events and UR12. Consumption experience in the physical store [9].

Bardin's method divides research into three phases: pre-analysis, material exploration and interpretation. In the pre-analysis, the initial ideas mentioned in the theoretical framework were matched to establish indicators interpreted based on the collected information [18]. Thus, the transcribed text was cut into record units (RU) to be compared according to the categories created for thematic analysis, established according to recurring messages contained in the analysed material or theme of easy perception in the text. Sampling techniques were not used in the present research due to the reduced data (three interviews). Thus, the representativeness rule was not necessary. The three interviews carried out with the designers had the same format and rigour, being homogeneous. The entire script and content of the interview transcript establish a comprehensive dialogue with the objective of the study in question [9].

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After this phase, the "exploitation of the material" began the second phase of Bardin's method. The categories and the confrontation with the obtained data were analysed, managing the decisions taken [18]. According to the "record units" already established, the subcategories (SC) were created through data regrouping dialoguing with the theme. Thus, two subcategories were defined: SC1. Fashion

consumption in Porto and SC2. Identity, Tourism and Fashion [9]. With the two subcategories defined, the final category was reached. According to Bardin's method, the creation of the "category" is the last step of the exercise in order not to obtain biased results, discrediting the research [18]. Therefore, the category "Territory and Culture" was defined as the theme that included the two subcategories mentioned. Once the category was defined, the interpretation and treatment of the achieved results began focused on the objective proposed in the investigation. Such an analysis is part of Bardin's method's third and final phase. Subsequently, inferences were made according to the theoretical framework used in the investigation.

Results and Discussion

The content analysis of the interviews allowed us to identify some common points in the view of the problematic issues of the three designers. One of the points raised is that the interviewees consider it essential that the city concentrates on the organisation of the urban space to allow fashion to attract visitors coherently and strategically and not depend on chance in the routes they take through the city. Such information was categorised in the UR6 Registration Unit, named "Porto Fashion Circuit".

The clipping of the unit's interviews is related to the reports of tourists, as noted by the designers, who stated that the city of Porto does not have a street, zone or place where Portuguese fashion stores and designers locate. Cities, where fashion is a celebrated activity, give fashion brands and shops high visibility by concentrating them in attractive areas in the city. This practice facilitates visitors to know and buy fashion. Despite having a solid textile and clothing tradition and attracting people interested in textiles and fashion, Porto maintains a clear separation between the industries efforts to meet international interest in the sector and the touristic development strategies of the city [9].

Porto is an old city, with intense pressure on the demand for commercial and residential spaces, making it difficult for designers to install themselves in places with greater accessibility. Even if commercial places are vacant, shop rentals are very high, making hiring impossible. Despite this, designers claim that foreign visitors visit their stores and studios, and many of them become customers. However, in most cases, these visitors arrive at the designers' stores after obtaining the address on the internet. Possibly, visitors should meet them before visiting the city. Getting to its stores just walking around the city is very difficult, due to the distance that the stores are from the tourist and commercial centre of the city. One of them moved its store to the city centre in late 2019, where many people appreciate its brand. The other two designers do not consider changing the location of their stores, away from the more accessible areas [9].

According to content analysis, such data can be identified in the UR8 Registration Unit, named "Porto and Tourism." The unit mentions tourism in Porto through the reports of the interviewed designers. Identified as an important economic activity for the city's development, respondents highlighted some negative impacts of tourism on the city. The situation can be modified through planning and intervention by the local public administration. The main elements addressed in the interview were the real estate speculation of establishments, mainly in the downtown area, associated with the city's cultural mischaracterisation for profitability.

Fashion products in clothing, shoes and accessories. The three designers interviewed were unanimous in considering the need for development strategies, using fashion as a factor to attract visitors. This approach is remarkably consistent with the city context, as foreign tourists recognise Portugal as producing high-quality fashion products [9]. Such analysis was identified in the UR9 Registration Unit, called "Consumption of fashion products by tourists in Porto". This unit states that the interviewees have tourist customers who come to their stores looking for local fashion products, even without strategic disclosure to this audience [9]. Visitors to Porto are interested in local fashion products for the designers interviewed. The city's tourist routes do not integrate their stories compared to large metropolises like Paris, London, or Milan.

Conclusion

The study of the impact of fashion on the attractiveness of medium-sized cities has become very relevant recently. Local fashion can act as an attractive element for tourists, as it has cultural and aesthetic aspects that centre the visitors' interest. Given the interest in fashion in today's society, the expected result is the increased length of stay in the city and a more significant shopping by visitors. Both results result in considerable stimulation of the local economy.

Understanding the dynamics of local fashion, assumed by local economic agents, is essential to define strategic models for developing activities directly linked to fashion, namely those originating from local designers. Three local fashion participated in the study and allowed the identification of central aspects of the city's fashion dynamics, which allow establishing parameters to be considered in the formulation of fashion strategies, with development models such as the city's attractiveness factor.

The city of Porto is known for its tourist activity due to its cultural diversity. Having local fashion as part of the city's socio-cultural context favours the development of local fashion and the city's attractiveness, as the local design of fashion products identity materialises the local culture and aesthetics.

Even with the lack of communication of local fashion as a tourist segment in Porto, the interviewed designers receive tourists interested in knowing and buying their products in their stores and perceive the activity as promising. They offer the city visitors a fashion experience through direct contact with them, their stories and collections, often finalised by the experience of the products themselves. They consider their individuality and unique fashion image rooted in the quality and relationship of identity with the territory.

Integrating local fashion in the strategic plans of the city's development can stimulate commerce and generate profits and business opportunities. That will also help preserve local culture stimulating design-related activities and its ability to materialise culture as a value in the fashion product, enhancing the city's urban landscape and attractiveness.

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