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Some Effect of Creativity on Fashion Market Behavior

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Fashion, Market behavior, and Creativity

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Introduction

Fashion, Market Behavior, and Creativity

Creativity-based goods are among the most specialized goods. The creativity, like the culture, has two profound cultural roots: time and space. The culture of creativity, or its inherited capital, is indissolubly linked to a place, or in a social sense, to a community and its history. As far as the creativity is concerned space and time matter.

Moreover the more time-specific and space-specific is a commodity, the less the market mechanism is able to efficiently regulate its production and consumption. The more

specialized is a good, the less the price system provides the relevant information and the less the competition rule reaches its expected results¹.

The efficient economic behavior is mainly grounded on timeless and spaceless goods. On the contrary, the market becomes an imperfect institution, as and when it must regulate creativity-based goods, like fashion, design and art. In this sense the paper is a contribution to a social interpretation of the economic theory, since a society is identified by the place and the time of its development. The aim of the paper is to show some drawbacks of the market behavior when creativity matters. Moreover the fashion will be the background of this approach, centered on the economic effects of creativity and its idiosyncratic character.

The myth of the creativity is the starting point of the fashion market analysis. Several reasons, indeed, accompany its enigmatic presence:

- The culture of the creativity, with its secret fall-out on the originality of the object, its aesthetic and technological quality and its image is the clearer sign of the fashion products, whose essential characteristic is to be carrying symbolic values, to be *sémiophores* goods (Santagata, 1998; Barrère and Santagata, 1998).
- The stylist, with its imagination and its fantasy, but also with its lecture of the society and the mankind history, his manners and its beliefs is the real *deus ex machina* of the workshop-atelier, the mysterious and productive place where the fashion finds the beauty of its forms.
- The presence of stylists of great fame is an indicator of a creative environment. The number of creative designers leaving in Paris during the XIX^o century is impressive. It also announces an increasing internationalization of the fashion designers, still associated with a spatial concentration.

Table n. 1 Stylists in Paris by date of appearance

Période	Année	Couturier
Before the Haute Couture	1858	Charles Frédéric Worth et Gustave Boberg
	1871	Jacques Doucet
	1889	Jeanne Paquin
	1898	Callot Soeurs
	1900	Jeanne Lanvin
	1904	Paul Poiret
Within the two wars	1911	Jean Patou
	1912	Madeleine Vionnet
	1912	Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel
	1919	Edward Molyneux
	1919	Lucien Lelong
	1932	Nina Ricci
	1934	Germaine Barton " Grès "
	1935	Elsa Schiapparelli
	1938	Cristobal Balenciaga Eisaguri

¹ See the concept of « peculiarity » of the products evoked by Salais et Storper (1993): "Cette particularité signifie que le producteur ou demandeur ont imprimé une identité donnée au produit et qu'ils ont la capacité de la reconnaître. Sinon le produit se résumerait pour eux à un coût ou à un prix. Ce qui l'en écarte est qu'il incorpore un service spécifique en fonction du demandeur, un délai de livraison plus rapide, des savoir-faire, une technologie spécialisée ou une qualité que seul ce producteur peut maîtriser...." (pag. 12.)

The 1950's	1937	Jacques Fath
	1944	Carmen Mallet " Carven "
	1945	Pierre Balmain
	1947	Christian Dior
	1949	Ted Lapidus
	1950	Louis Féraud
	1952	Hubert de Givenchy
	1953	Pierre Cardin
The 1960's	1950	Louis Féraud
	1958	Yves Saint Laurent
	1959	Valentino Garavani
	1960	Karl Lagerfeld
	1961	André Courrègue
	1961	Rosette Met " Torrente "
	1962	Jean Loius Scherrer
	1965	Emanuel Ungaro
	1966	Paco Rabane
	Cacharel	
The 1970's	1970	Jean Charle de Casteljacob
	1973	Thierry Mugler
	1976	Jean Paul Gaultier
	1976	Christian Lacroix
		Miyaké
		Kenzo
The contemporary age	Tom Ford , John Galliano , Alexandre McQueen , Martin Margiela	

Sources: Grau, La Haute Couture, 2000; Bergeron, Les industries du luxe en France

◦ The clearest example of the creativity in the world of fashion is the emergence of the couple: high couture/ *prêt-à-porter*. The ready-to-wear already existed, the haute couture already existed, but the joining of these two worlds is an absolutely Paris originality.

However it is especially in the analysis of the economic behavior of the actors, both consumers and producers, that the original, theoretical and social role of the creativity and the creativity-based goods can be discovered.

◦ As will be shortly argued in the last section of the paper, the consumers have developed a post-modern attitude that privileges in their choices the creative and symbolic factor, as well aesthetic and functional. Consequently the search for newness (Lipovetsky, 1987), with its connection to the dynamics of the mimicking manners, is the source of economic behaviors well anchored in the social interactions. (Simmel, 1904 ; Bourdieu, 1994 ; Waquet et Laporte, 1999).

◦ The idiosyncratic and inherited character of the creativity-based goods, in particular in the world of the fashion, affects the economic behavior through two interactive ways: the involvement in a community or social group, and the immersion in the productive atmosphere of the cultural industrial districts.

◦ A fashion good incorporates a quantity of creative intellectual property which overrides the material components of its production. This dominating rate of intellectual contents and its public good quality are the principal cause of the illegal market of counterfeited goods (Benghozi and Santagata, 2001).

° The international dissemination of the techniques standardized the terms of the international competition. To compete in terms of the production costs is less and less discriminating. The globalization of the markets promotes a competition in terms of product creativity. Creativity is the engine of competitive differentiation and success.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first one deals with models: the creative genius, the manager and the problem solving, and the creativity as neurological and social process. The second part is devoted to an economic definition of creativity. Although the creativity is *per se* a quality of the mind, it is perceived as built-in in the objects or in the organizations. Therefore, two aspects of the fashion creativity will be discussed: the creativity incorporated in the objects by the stylist or the fashion designer (the subjective side of the creative action); and the creativity of the entrepreneur and the manager (the organizational and industrial side of the creative action). The third part is dedicated to the effects of the creativity on the economic behavior in the fashion world. On the supply side we will examine the effects of the generational renewal of creativity, and of the emergence of the creative management in the communities of episteme and of practices that animate the modern firm. On the demand side we will examine the costs of use of rationality and its effect on the economic calculus of consumers of fashion.

1. Models

From random talents to governed process

The creativity is a hedged and dynamic concept. The search for an exhaustive or absolute definition is a process that remains unfinished. However in the metamorphoses of its rationale can be recognized a tendency to establish itself as a fundamental resource of a post-modern society.

1.1 *The creative genius*

The conventional model of the creativity is based on the romantic idea that the creativity is the sign of the genius, a " .. superior aptitude of the spirit that makes somebody capable of creations, of inventions which appear extraordinary"².

According to this image, the creative genius is absolutely an inspired person, ". .. an instrument through which the Reality or the Beautiful, the Nature or the Spirit, reveal themselves to the mankind."³ This is the representation of the creativity as an epiphany, a gift received by means of the inspiration, which means ". .. to receive from a mysterious authority, in a way charged of all the characteristic opacity of the creative act, the secrecy of a discovery"⁴.

The model is especially directed to the narration of the intellectual and psychoanalytical traits of the genius. For William Duff (1767) she/he must have imagination, which makes it possible to invent new ideas and to discover original associations between them; judgment, which regulates and monitors the imagination and draws the creativity from the ideas produced; and taste, i.e. the internal sensitivity of the creative artist. For Kris and Kurz (1934) the biographies of the artists hide psychoanalytic episodes, from which can be traced a relation between the legend of the artists and certain features of human psyche. For Redfield Jamison

² Dictionnaire Micro Robert, 1988.

³ Rouquette, 1997, 6° ed., p. 10

⁴ Rouquette, 1997, 6° ed., p. 10

(1995) the creativity seems to be more intense when the syndrome maniac-depressive reaches the individual. In effects, for the post-modern culture and especially in the contemporary art, the genial artist who creates in opposition to styles and previous movements is not simply stimulated by socio-economic reasons, but also by psychoanalytic reasons. The theory of the post-modernism is based, in certain interpretations, on the rupture of the typical couple time-space typical of the schizophrenia. At the origin of each artistic production a hallucinated and delirious vision is found. On one side the schizophrenic subject is unable to unify its temporal experience, on the other "the collapse of the chain of meanings" takes along it to conceive art as discontinuity, fracture, pastiche, chaos (Jameson, 1984).

This model also explores the whole set of conditions that make it possible to release the creativity like a potential property of the spirit. And then one seeks the correlations between creativity and a number of human conditions: the feeling of culpability, the madness, the need for autonomy, the attitude towards the risk, the sex, the age, intelligence, money and non-conformism. The image of the creative genius is, therefore, related to a literary and psychoanalytic conception (Gombrich, 1953) of the creativity, like in the case of the creative inventor. To create is to invent, from Latin *invenire*, to come-inside. It is to find the good way towards a place (Rouquette, 1997).

The model gives a literary description of the dash of the genius, which has the gift of the vision and the internal force to create ideas, functional apparatuses or original and new forms.

But if one wants to force the concept of the creativity in an absolute definition one must prepare with a long intellectual voyage, which being endless inevitably lead to the logic of conventional definitions. In 1959 already more than hundred definitions of the creativity were counted. Nevertheless the minimal definition advanced by Herbert Simon is a procedural formula, which moves the topic of the creativity in a cognitive dimension and anticipates the logic of the creativity as process (Rouquette, 1997).

1.2 *Creativity as problem solving*

It has been said that the creativity is a way of operating of the mind " ..the process with the means of which the mind transforms information into combinations of concepts and produce new ideas "(Goleman, 1997). One can add to this that the creativity is an act of the human brain that takes the form of a process assisting us to think and solve our problems in a way that can be considered creative.

The thesis-definition of Herbert Simon is that the creativity consists of good problem-solving.

"Acts are judged to be creative when they produce something that is novel and that is thought to be interesting or to have social value. Interesting or valuable novelty is the touchstone of the creative" Simon (1986).

Although the originality of the creative act is accompanied by a feeling of surprise and unobviousness, from the point of view of the technology of the brain a small creative act, like a small music, is the result of the same process which generated the great theories of Newton or Leibnitz.

The process that carries to the creativity is founded for Simon (1986) out of three general conditions.

1. Be prepared. *"Chance, in the words of Pasteur, favors the prepared mind."* A casual discovery *per se* doesn't exist. *" It is the surprise, the departure from the expected, that creates the fruitful accident; and there are no surprises without expectations, nor expectations without knowledge (Simon, 1986)."*

2. To be experts. Nobody - fashion designer, players of failures, painters, and musicians - reach a level of excellence without " *an intensive effort to acquiring knowledge and skill about a domaine of expertise* ".

3. To risk. Often science requires accepting calculated bets. "*Information is only valuable if others do not have it or do not believe it strongly enough to act on it. (...) Science is an occupation for gamblers.*" It is necessary to risk, because to explore in a creative way new fields the common information is not used to obtain differentiated advantages: "...*scientists require a "contrarian" streak that gives them the confidence to pit their knowledge and judgment against the common wisdom of their colleagues.*" (Simon 1986)

This set of characteristic conditions represent an improvement, but it is actually only the production of images around a concept. It says to us that if the fashion designer, as an example, has imagination, judgment, taste, intelligence, expertness, and likes the risk, therefore, he is creative. It does not reveal us the physical sources of the creativity. How the human brain produces the creativity? Which are the physical mechanisms of the brain that activate a creative mind? When all the secrecies of the production of ideas, emotions, and feelings will be known, one will be able to better understand how to define the creativity; just as today we better know the limits of the pure rationality following the discovery on the relations spirit-brain-emotion-social behavior (Damasio, 1994).

The two approaches mentioned namely that of the creative genius and the creativity as problem solving, are anyway very different. The vision of the creative genius is a mythical image. From the political and constructivist point of view it is a definition which does not help us in the mission of increasing, reproducing and transmitting the creativity. In the world of the fashion how much dressmakers are described with these same terms, by transforming them into extra-ordinary characters? Nothing is more misleading. On the contrary, the procedural meaning of Simon and contemporary cognitive sciences is a significant source of practical suggestions.

But is now time to analyze the *Descartes's Error* and the neurologist theory of the creative emotions, according to the remarkable work of Antonio Damasio (1994).

1.3 *The Mind and the Brain; the Body and the Emotions*

The body counts, the brain counts. The revolutionary Damasio's message announces that all our body is involved in our rational faculty, "... that the body provides a basic reference to the mental processes ". The body and the brain play a fundamental role in the faculty of reasoning: their physical function is to treat the emotions that the external world sends us at every moment. The body and the brain, as a unique organism, take part in the interaction with the environment, which is, partly, the product of the activity itself of the human organism.

The emotions count. They are defined as "the series of the changes which occur in the body and the brain, generally in reactions to particular mental contents". One of the more astonishing discoveries in modern neurobiology is to have positioned in the geography of the brain the area which is surrounded to produce in the body an emotional state. It is a surprising history that of Phineas Gage (1899-1986), which in an accident loses the pre-frontal part of its brain, without apparent physical and psychic damages. Following the accumulation of clinical and experimental data, it becomes known that this part of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex, is the center of recognition of the emotions and, on the contrary, that in its absence we have " knowledge without emotions". The patients who do not have emotions continue anyway to exert an intact and active intellectual faculty, but they do not manage to make a decision. Damasio notes that the reasoning of the individuals without emotions proceeds like an infinite sequence of comparisons between the costs and the benefit, without ever leading to a decision.

Rationality without emotions proves to be an infinite process. The sole rationality is the bankruptcy of any process of decision-making. What makes it possible to decide is the presence of those that he calls the "somatic markers", i.e. the images which rise from the emotions and which act in the neural structure making it possible the brain to announce that it is necessary to stop reasoning, because one does not arrive nowhere; that it is necessary to choose an alternative and to continue. The relation emotion-reasoning and the assumption of the somatic markers, who facilitate the decision, give a neurological base to the theory of the bounded rationality by Simon.

Environment counts. To return to the theme of the creativity, and the fashion, it is realized that the creativity as problem-solving activity depends on our capacity to interact with a continual flow of emotions. But good emotions influence us positively if we live in a natural or social environment that is rich of these: an environment where there are no intellectual constraints, where incentives and ideas circulate freely and without cost, where freedom to associate ideas and to experiment reaches its climax. As we will see by analyzing the subject of creative management, the theory of the emotions explains why is it necessary to redraw the organizational and mental environment, so to speak, of the companies to increase their rate of creativity.

While, as a certain economic vision affirms, the individual and his mind are a monad, an atom which simply reacts to a system of signal-price, without contacts nor communications with the other atomized individuals, the body and the brain lie in the nature, are submerged in a universe of relations, emotions, and interactions. It can be asserted that without social interactions and the relative emotions, one cannot be rational as far as to be able to solve a problem or to be creative is concerned. Said differently, to modify the productive or research environment in a manner that it releases creative emotions, it becomes the key that makes it possible to produce, increase and transmit the creativity.

The Descartes' error was to underestimate the value of the body compared to the mind: the *res extensa* compared to the *res cogitans*. The modern neurology of the areas of the pre-frontal cortex reveals us that *we are and then we reason*. And we are in social and natural environment that can be modified, as well as by means of the emotions experienced we can modify in turn our rate of creativity.

The metamorphoses of the creativity show a tendency towards a procedural approach. Understanding the fundamentals of its origin, the conditions of its existence and the needs to which it is an answer, it is a necessary step on the way to produce, increase and transmit the creativity. The creativity is going to be considered as a process characterized by a double socio-esthetics and organizational nature⁵. This process related to any field of the human activity and in particular to the logic and the dynamics of the industrial production. The fashion market in particular was deeply influenced by the creative action of stylists and entrepreneurs-managers. Although a creative *haute couture* had existed since the XX^o century, like the serial cloth production and the *ready-to wear* (Grumbach, 1993), what is new is the development of concept of the creativity. It developed on two complementary levels: on one side the subjective sphere of the design of the fashion goods; on the other the collective sphere of the economic organizations and the creative management.

⁵ Salviolo et Testa, 2000, donnent la définition suivante: "...la créativité peut être définie comme le processus au moyen duquel les nouvelles idées sont créés, développées et transformées en valeur économique." pag. 23

2. Attributes

Special characteristic of creativity and creative-based fashion goods

2.1 A Minimal Economic Definition

I will sketch in this section a minimal economic definition of creativity. In the next section I will explore its impact on market behavior. Fashion is the reference market.

The creativity may be conceived as an economic good produced by the human mind. Creativity is the action that gives existence to something original and unique that sort out of nothing. This action may take different forms: invention, to discovery, and epiphany. The creativity is the disclosure of the newness.

Table N. 2 shows a broad list of the economic characteristics, *latu sensu*, of creativity. They are classified according to three criteria: the particular nature of the good, the attributes that influence demand, and the attributes that influence supply. I will outline in this section the basic elements of a minimal economic definition, then in the next section I will inquire into the impact of other attributes on the market behaviors, in particular in the fashion and clothing.

Table n. 2 *Defining Creativity in economic language*

Essence of the Creativity as an economic good	Characters Influencing Demand Market Behavior	Characters Influencing Supply Market Behavior	
		Products	Organizations
Anti-utilitarianism	Symbol and zero information costs	Idiosyncraticity	Generation-based goods
Non cumulability		Joint production	Communities of practices vs. communities of episteme
Publicness			
Non-exhaustibility			

2.2 Creativity vs. innovation

Concerning the economic language, creativity may be conventionally opposed to innovation. While to create means give life to something that derives from nothing before it; to innovate means to introduce something new in some domain, sequence or process.

In this sense the creativity is an essential component of the human life. It basically assists to develop the intrinsic capacities of the personality. In economic terms this approach regards the creativity as an anti-utilitarian act and opposes it to the concept of innovation, which on the contrary is registered in the utilitarian system of behavior. The creativity is without scope, it is an *anti-utilitarian good*. The creative effort produces positive values. It functions as a factor of *self-realization*, it is full with *intrinsic enjoyment*, with *self-fulfilment*. The assumption that the work of the creator is a costly effort is less and less valid as soon as one

approaches with the concept of creative work. In an anti-utilitarian model there is an intrinsic satisfaction in creative work: the more time she/he devotes to this type of work the more she/he is satisfied (Horvat, 1999; Throsby, 2000).

A second character of the creativity is to be a *non-cumulative good*. The creativity is rupture, whereas the "normal" innovation, conceived within the frame of a given scientific paradigm (Kuhn, 1962, 1977) is a cumulative and incremental process (Santagata, 1998). This feature helps us to define in a more precise way the anti-utilitarian behavior assumption: the creator offers his working time, because it draws a pleasure from it. The quality of its life does not depend only on consumption, but also on the advisability of choosing a creative work. The "... *desire for creativity is one of the most important motivations of human beings in general, and in our post-industrial era in particular.*"⁶ This model of behavior or "art for art's sake property" model is rather the rule in creative industry (Caves, 2000). On the contrary, the innovation is directed towards the implementation of the change (aesthetic, technological, functional). It is an utilitarian good. The innovation is a utilitarian, incremental and cumulative act. It relates to consumption, expressing the objective utility of a product or service. The work applied to the innovating process is sacrifice, it costs, it refers to an external monetary reward.

2.3 *Other essential attributes*

As for the other essential characteristics it should first of all be noted that the *intangible* character of the creativity implies that it should be observed in some material support, which contains it and reveals it. It can be simply a sheet of paper to store ideas, design and forms; it can be a more complex object that shows a creative function. Now, while the support is usually a private good, the creativity *per se* and the creativity incorporated in an object are a good public, sharing the features of non-rivalness and nonexclusion. However like an idea, the creativity must be protected on the market especially by means of the institutions of the intellectual property. As it is well known in the literature on counterfeiting (Benghozi and Santagata, 2001), the enforcement of the law is often ineffective and the illegal or criminal producers can copy at zero costs any sign of creativity seen, perceived or detected in a creativity-based object. The more the creative and intellectual component of an object has economic value, the higher are the incentives to copy.

Finally, the creativity is a *non-exhaustible* and not non-saturable goods. The immaterial support of the creativity is the idea. An idea expresses, describes, and makes historical a creative act. Contrary to the natural resources, the ideas, resulting from the human creativity, are fully exploitable, but not exhaustibles. The creativity of fashion goods is linked with the social evolution, and it is then always being renewed. The design is related to its time, therefore always different. Industry enters an inexhaustible layer, which constitutes a new ground of confrontation and competition among the firms. However, as we will see in the next section, the evolution of the creativity can not be linear: periods of great creativity and phases of stagnation can be always found, especially in the fashion.

⁶ Horvath, 1999, p. 3

3. *Effects on market behavior.*

The creativity discloses several forms, each of them affecting different goods and services. Consequently its effects on the market behavior may be better articulated by type of goods. Table N. 3 shows a simple taxonomy which classifies the goods in terms of the presence of the creativity in the aesthetics, the design, the function and the productive organization. The most significant cleavage is between the effects on the organization and those relating to the other modes of creativity. The effects on the demand are rather concentrated on the aesthetic, design and functional forms, while the effects on the supply are rather of organizational type.

Table n. 3 Modes of creativity				
Goods	Esthetic	Design	Function	Organisation
Fashion	Robe de J. Galliano	Model by Miyaké	Apparel: Haute Couture / Prêt-à-porter	Department of product ideation
Objects	Contemporary Art	Lemon squeezer by P. Starck	Lighting systems	Creative management

3.2 *Effects on the supply side*

This part of the paper will be devoted to the effects of the creativity on the behavior of agents which are in charge of the supply of creativity-based fashion. The effects of creativity on international competition will be approached, as well as the consolidation in the new companies of the so-called *communities of episteme* and the *communities of practices*. The others effects are simply evoked: the idiosyncrasy and the specialization of creativity-based products (Santagata, 2002); the joint production of creativity by both the producer and the consumer (Barrère and Santagata, 1998).

3.1.1 *The dilemma of a generation-based good and the effects on competition*

The couple time/space, which characterizes the theoretical ground and the dynamics of the creativity, shows a significant ancillary trait. The creativity *per se* is the original and specific product of a generation. Now, if the generations in their sequence are affected by various conditions of time/space, the rising dilemma is how to renew the production of creativity with the same quality. Each generation will produce its creative world, but the effects of this phenomenon on the structure of competition are unexpected and significant, in particular in the fashion market. We will see that competition between the creativity-based goods is biased by a generation kind of path dependency.

* *The couturiers and the creativity.*

To tell the truth the succession of the generations is a progressive phenomenon as it is well proved by the dynamics of what Bourdieu calls the "field of forces" (Bourdieu, 1971, 1994). As all the fields of cultural production the field of force of the fashion is a field of fights: "... avec ses rapports de force physique, économique et surtout symbolique (liés par exemple au

*volume et à la structure des capitaux possédés par les différents membres) et ses luttes pour la conservation ou la transformation de ces rapports de force "(Bourdieu, 1994, p.140). The coordination of practices and the stakes of the fashion market are, therefore, the texture of a network of conflicts and agreements inherited by former fights. These general conditions affect all the generations. The emergent ones, which seek room by opposing to the leaders of dominant *maisons*, as well as the successful ones, which control the official requirements and instances of the fashion world and the production of value.*

In order that a new stylist can emerge, the field must modify its structure, because the stylist must create a new pole in a rather complex process of differentiation. The search for distinction is dominated by the absence of a single principle which makes it possible to place the dressmakers/*couturier* in a universal hierarchy of values and which makes the factors of consecration and legitimation independent of the logic of the market. The dynamics of the field is endless, implying revisions, arrangements and permanent redefinitions, which are repeated and polarized on arrival of each new generation.

Consequently the rhythm of change of the fashion field is marked by the succession of the generations of creators. The reasons go up with the definition of the fashion in terms of an idiosyncratic good, which refers to the couple space/time. The random conditions that are at the base of the success of the most renowned *couturiers* find their co-ordinates anyway in a place (Paris, for example) and during one time (the Fifties, for example). The time/space unit is a formidable force that marks a generation with an image at the same time symbolic in its capacity of seduction and concrete in its achievements.

In table n. 1 has been showed, by dates of entry in the field and by recurrent waves, the evolution of the most renowned Paris *couturiers*. The dilemma of reproducing the creativity from one generation to another with same quality is self-evident. Indeed, mother nature distributes the talents in an unforeseeable way, the places and time changes according to nonlinear trajectories. What was Berlin before the Second World War was not reproducible in the 1950's or in the post-1989. The historic time either never runs reproducing itself: ideas, culture, manners change, the attitudes towards the great social questions fluctuate, and the styles evolve. As a result each generation has its own identity, pace, distinction, without guarantee of a virtuous progression.

* *The generations and the creativity*

An encouraging environment and the historical experience seem to show that a wave, a talented cluster, occurs when a critical mass is reached. If so, the creativity accompanies the arc by life of a generation. Thus creative waves occurred in the French fashion in the 1950's and the 1960's: Christian Dior, Karl Lagerfeld, Hubert de Givency, André Courrèges, Pierre Cardin, Pierre Balmain, and finally Yves Saint Laurent. Their visibility was strong, although a cohort of epigones always follows a cluster of creativity.

The succession of the waves, however, was signed by a *crescendo* of attention and the stronger reasons for their emergence can be summarized in three points.

o *Increasing in the trademark value*

Historically can be noticed that few houses of haute couture, which were born in the first half of the XX^o century, survived: Mrs Vionnet, Poiret, Worms, the *arbiter elegantiarum* of a glorious age ceased their activity without leaving heirs. On the contrary those *maison* which went beyond the Second World War had more chance to survive their founders. It has been as if the value of the trademark became larger, as a result of the increased size of the market. This occurred especially with the success of the fashion accessories. The perfumes, in particular,

gave to the mark an ascending value. And Chanel, for example, is one of the first houses to survive its creator. The reputation then becomes an immaterial asset on which it is worth to invest.

- *Changing ownership structure*

The ownership of the great *maisons* is less controlled by the founder's family. The dissemination of the ownership shares and the access to the stock exchange market make the succession an ordinary routine: there is no financial identification between *couturier*-founder and ownership anymore.

- *Cosmopolite reception*

Alongside these arguments, one can add the very Paris presence of a cosmopolitan tradition of reception. Paris was always effective to accommodate the best personalities which came from all the world, independently of their name, nationality or social condition. The greatest stylists seem not to fear to change country and continents. A cosmopolitan tradition allows intergenerational substitution without scandal nor regrets. Came from abroad the less known dressmakers (George Vaskène, of Armenian origin; Pierre d' Alby, Polish Zyga Pianko; Chloé, the Egyptian woman Gaby Aghion) as well as the renown ones (Charles Frederic Worth, Christobal Balenciaga, Elsa Schiapparelli, Nina Ricci, Pierre Cardin, Emanuel Ungaro and Karl Lagerfeld), while in Italy, for instance, the consumers and the staff even of the firm clings to the founder head narrowly.

* *The international competition and the new wave of the luxury industries.*

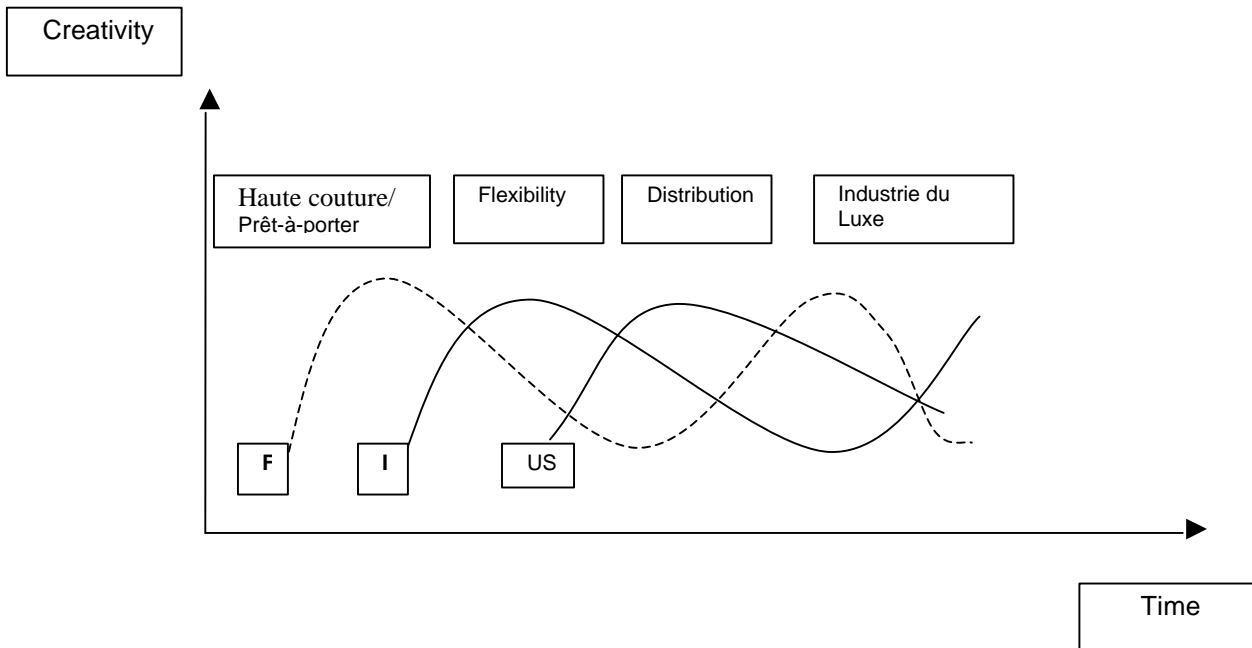
A creative wave is not simply the invention of a style, new forms, and an original esthetics. From an economic and organizational standpoint a new wave is carrying fundamental creation of new processes and products.

If a simplification is accepted, one could say that :

- the large French wave of the years 1950-1960 is highly associated with invention of the couple "*haute couture*/ modern *prêt-à-porter*";
- the Italian one is marked by the organizational flexibility of the industrial districts;
- the American one with the strategic logic of the great distribution.

But the French creative wave, which revitalized the *haute couture* and supported the modern *prêt-à-porter*, shows, like any human phenomenon, a loss of power, a sort of quality depreciation, around the Years 1990-2000. A creative wave, indeed, is characterized by a rate of depreciation in time: at its epiphany the creativity attains its maximum level, after that a progressive weakness, which takes along to the decline, is perceived. This argument seems to be worth both for the individuals and their creative push, and for an organizational pattern in which brilliant pioneers are replaced by epigones...masters in repetition. In the figure n. 1 the trajectory of the wave has been traced in the same way for France, Italy and the US, but as can be seen there is a time shift: the Italian wave shapes approximately twenty years after the French wave, that American one after thirty.

Fig. n. 1 The advantage to be *first comer*



The effect of the generational pattern on international market behaviors is that the French wave will take force in the same moment when a certain weakness of the Italian dressmakers is announced. This is either due to their natural or tragic disappearance (Moschino, Versace, Gucci), or to the beginning of the decline of their creative wave. The same advantage will appear with reference to the American competitors, where the mythical Ralph Lauren is 62 years old. Therefore it may be suggested that the international competition in the world of fashion be biased by the generation factor, which could also be expressed in terms of path dependency.

This dynamics is well confirmed by the history of the French fashion. France was the first fashion producer to having to face the substitution of the greatest founder *couturiers*. In other words, France was the first country in which a creative generation of dressmaker emerged in the 1950's and /1960's, and it was once again the first in the challenge of renewal of the great stylists in the 1990's-2000: Tarlazzi for Guy Laroche, Ferré for Dior, Montana for Lanvin, Lagerfeld for Chanel, and still Galliano, Ford, Lacroix. Today a "new French wave" is at work. The groups of the luxury are the engines of this second French vague. The challenge is, therefore, multiple. For French what is at stakes is to seize this positional opportunity related to the posture of first comer. This can lead to the development of a French superiority in the industry of the creative luxury. The industry of luxury goods emerges as a creation of a new product, leader of the French creative wave of the years 2000. It is the new French *creative passion* (Arnault, 2001).

3.1.2 *The creative firm between the communities of practices and the communities of episteme*

We shall turn now to the influence of creativity on the organizational change in the production of the haute couture and prêt-à-porter (dresses, costumes, coats). At the origin of this change are the transformations of firms, products and creators occurred in the 1990's.

The fashion products are more and more charged with symbolic values, their nature is dematerialized, and their intellectual component (creativity, design, technology) constantly increases its weight. Moreover the fashion goods accelerate their metamorphosis in a new class of goods, the luxury goods: characterized for the first time in the secular history of the conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1912) by mass production and non-exclusive consumption.

Also the creators are involved in a qualitative change. For example, in the model of the *haute couture*, the creator was closer to an artist - as was the case of Cristobal Balenciaga -, while in the current model of the democratic fashion the creator is closer to a designer - as Martin Margiela -, whose work inevitably takes into account the market rules.

Indeed the firms of the future will resemble more and more a workshop of the Renaissance, with a production department annexed. The heart of the activity is the creation of ideas, the technology deals with the production techniques. The new perimeter of the company is marked by a cognitive and organizational duality: various forms of knowledge develop. "*L'entreprise se compose de poches de connaissance tacites et codifiées et de flux d'informations qui se nourrissent et s'imprègnent mutuellement*"⁷. Their need for creativity combines itself in two collective internal structures, which better explain the distinction between the creativity of the entrepreneurs and managers and the creativity into the organizations. A theory of the firm based on knowledge distinguishes, in fact, between two kinds of communities (Créplet, Dupouet, Kern and Munier 2001):

° *Epistemic communities*: they are the place of creation of the knowledge required for dealing with strategic problems. It is the activity of the individual or collective entrepreneur and is held in conditions of uncertainty. The group recognizes a procedural authority. The epistemic communities base themselves on idiosyncratic knowledge and explore zones of ignorance of long period. Their creativity is close to that of the Schumpeterian entrepreneur: the stylist and his manager have a strategic vision in terms of design and esthetics of the products and of the relationship between the *maison*, his laboratory-factory of clothes and the social or communitarian environment.

° *Communities of practices*: they are groups of people who are committed in the same practice. Their knowledge is made by localized know-how (*savoir-faire*). Oriented at the short period, they constitute a functional organization; their goal is to make the activity worthwhile and the firm competitive and effective in a probabilistic context of risk. Their creativity aims at organizational flexibility, it targets commercial, advertising objectives and the public of the consumers. (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

* *The creativity of the entrepreneurs and managers*

The most famous theory on the creativity of the managers is the model of the capitalist entrepreneur put forward by Schumpeter (1934). The metaphor that gave an international repercussion to the idea of Schumpeter is that of the "creative destruction", which is also a

⁷ Créplet, Dupouet, Kern et Munier 2001

way of binding two different phenomena: the design of a new product and the birth of a new firm. The pivot of the process is the entrepreneur who has competences, which has charisma and which takes the economic risk of the realization of its project.

Although this model effectively described the evolution of the capitalism in the XIX^o and XX^o centuries, it rests on an individual vision of the conception and innovation activities. Nowadays, on the contrary, *"les édifices gestionnaires de l'ingénierie et de la concurrence ont justement pour objet de construire des formes sociales adaptées à la conception."* et que la *"conception de nouveaux produits implique le dialogue et la coopération d'une grande variété d'expertises"* (Midler, 1997-98, p. 25).

The creative work is not an individual phenomenon but the result of the contribution of several actors: designers, the *chef-de-produit*, experts of communication, artistic directors, photographers and other creators of the image (Saviolo and Testa, 2000). The teams are at work in the production of music, in the design sector and undoubtedly in the fashion. Here many assistants help the creator, each one being a creator in his field. Usually only the dressmaker or the designer is visible, but that depends of the strategy of reputation used to reinforce the mark of the firm.

For the manager the creativity is intuition and judgment: capacity to answer immediately the new problems. Problem-solving is the fruit of the expertness and of the time spent to accumulate knowledge. In reference to the three general conditions of the creativity listed by Simon, the manager must develop:

- Sensitivity to opportunities, which is equivalent to the precept: Be prepared;
- Attention to strategic planning, which is equivalent to the expertness;
- Willingness to adventure, which is equivalent to the gambling.

There is a systematic confirmation as of these arguments: in the fashion industry the emotional and the rational soul (Goleman, 1997) always found complementary couples. One corresponds to the posture of creator manager, the other to the posture of stylist: Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé; Giorgio Armani and Sergio Galeotti; Valentino Garavani and Giancarlo Giammetti; Ottavio and Rosita Missoni; Mariuccia Mandelli (Krizia) and Sergio Pinto; Ferré Gianfranco and Franco Mattioli; Gianni and Santo Versace; Tom Ford and Domenico De Sole; Calvin Klein and Barry Schwartz (Saviolo, Tested, 2000).

This vision of the creativity *à la* Simon thus presupposes that the process adapts to the solution of a problem, while the experience of the global markets indicates that it is not possible to examine the problems independently of the construction of an answer (Shön, 1983). The problem-setting takes the place of the problem-solving in an environment characterized by a high degree of uncertainty and by supply led markets, which wants to anticipate the demand, the individual needs and the use values of consumers.

* *The creativity of the organisations*

The creativity is an antidote with the ageing of the fashion and modifies its rhythm and evolution, because there is a constant danger of mummification. In the background of this kind of creativity there is a basic strategic informational system. The data and the information used and shared in the firm constitute a significant source of creativity. Moreover this creativity becomes strategic and essential for the design of the product:

« ... dans la décennie 1990, la dynamique de l'organisation globale des firmes, comme celle des formes de relations inter firmes, a été tendanciellement tirée par la problématique de la conception, comme en d'autres temps la question de la production de masse (Ford), celle du compromis entre contrôle, taille et variété (Sloan), la qualité totale de la fabrication (Ohno),

la gouvernance et l'évaluation de la valeur pour l'actionnaire ont été à l'origine d'apprentissages durables aboutissant à des archétypes gestionnaires globaux. »⁸

Since the beginning of 1990's this new form of creativity is found in the transformation of the processes of design and conception of the new products.

"La dynamique des processus de conception de nouveaux produits s'accompagne d'une transformation profonde des périmètres des firmes et des modes de coopération inter firmes suivant un double mouvement: la spécialisation de la firme amenant une désintégration croissante d'un côté, mais aussi la création de liens stables et étroits avec des partenaires privilégiés de l'autre. La mise en concurrence et son effet sur les prix appaierait de moins en moins créateurs d'avantage compétitif dans la nouvelle stratégie en comparaison de la constitution de réseaux permettant de réunir des compétences clés et de les coordonner efficacement sur les projets."⁹

This change led to the *concurrent engineering* (Midler, 1997), whose essential aspect for the creativity is the assertion of a new actor: the project director, which has a total responsibility as of the design for the project to the exploitation of the new product. (Remaury, 1998); and the "rupture de la linéarité et segmentarité de la conception taylorienne (Midler, 1997, p. 28). It prevails the dialogue and the negotiation throughout process of the creative conception.

The design of a new product is often an emblematic case of creativity that requires a non-cumulative strategy:

- ° It is necessary to increase the differences with respect to the other competitors and to be perceived as producers of symbolic goods;

- ° It is necessary to be original, i.e. unique, either in the functional satisfaction of a need, or in the aesthetic dimension of the product.

In this sense a new creative and cumulative product is a contradiction in terms. If an object is the result of a cumulative process, it loses its capacity of seduction related to originality and relative exclusion. For instance, Benetton signs watches very close to the Swatch design, but they do not share same success.

3.2 *Effects on the demand of fashion*

Symbols and creativity-based goods

When the creativity is committed to the esthetic, the form and original functions, the goods that receive it are charged with symbolic value. The reason is that esthetic, the design, an original function or new forms are recognized by consumers not only for their measurable qualities and quantities, but rather by the signals that touch the heart, the soul, the emotions, the ambition or courage.

For the fashion goods the creativity is even the core of the production chain of value. The convention of originality, i.e. the search for newness which signs the dynamics of the sector, implies the formation of a sense of social belonging, because people like a dress if, being it original, also develops the sense of distinction and at the same time of social belonging.

The assimilation of the creative-based goods to the symbolic goods takes different ways: while the symbolic charm could be related in the short run to the emergence of the originality,

⁸ Benghozi, Charue-Duboc, et Midler, 2000, p. 34

⁹ Mahmoud-Jouini et Midler, 1999, p.38

what matters in the long run is a sort of permanent originality, let us say, classic and traditional. Through the creativity we are involved in a symbolic world in two ways. Because of our attitude in the search of originality and of distinction, or because of our fidelity with a style that was fully creative at its appearance and which continues to be symbolically representative of a status or esthetic culture¹⁰.

The effects on the consumer behavior of a large class of goods that can be named *creative symbolic goods* will be analyzed here. These goods amalgamate in them the creative and symbolic quality. They cannot be carried out without one and the other.

Among the characteristics of the creative symbolic goods we will discuss first of all their effects on the rationality of the economic agents. In principle it may be stated that there is no rationality (*ratio, calculus*) without knowledge (*cognitio*). There are emotions, myth, generosity, symbolic adhesion, and chance. Without knowledge there is no economic calculation of the costs and benefit of the action. But to produce knowledge, it costs. The system of the signs, the languages, the texts, the techniques, the experiments and the information, which enables us to know in order to choose rationally, is a composite good which has a divergent structure of the costs. Paradoxically, to produce information cost less and less, but to look for and employ information to know if, as, where and when the goods and services can be acquired costs more and more.

Our assumption is attached to a conjecture about the increase in the costs of use of the market, and consequently of the economic rationality. In the creative industry (fashion, performing arts, arts visual, industrial design, arts of the communication: movie, TV, editions, advertising) individuals appear more and more attracted by production and consumption of the symbolic goods and beliefs. In particular, they modify their choices replacing complex goods, with high information costs, with new goods at low information cost, like those rich of the symbolic value. According to this conjecture, if we need a practical object, we do not study its market structure, we do not measure its hidden quality, but we are inspired to choose the symbol which allured us and in which we are identified. If we must choose how to dress, we do not calculate the expected costs and advantages, but the fascination and charisma of the model captivate us.

The assumption of increasing costs of use of information for rational choices can be examined at least under two points of view:

- First of all the weakening of the pricing system. Into the economic model the prices are the necessary and sufficient signals for the computation of the rational consumer. The capacity of the prices to transmit the essential minimal information faces more and more the problem of quality and the symbolic contents of the exchanged goods. The modern goods and services have become more complex and may hide their qualitative attributes. In order to evaluate them the consumer has not the technical skill, nor sufficient knowledge. To be rational costs always more.
- Secondly, the costs of assimilation and consumption of information must be considered. The rational consumer in order to have useful information must activate a search, which requires a spending of time and intellectual and physical efforts. The consumption of information is an activity with increasing costs, also given satisfying decision strategies.

¹⁰ Le styliste Gianni Armani aime dire qu'un produit de luxe est "pour la vie".

* *Creative Symbolic Goods: zero information costs.*

A normal consequence of the increase in the costs of use of rationality is the search for minor resistance inside the logic of calculation. Among the possible paths there is the substitution of the symbolic values to the information content of the goods. Instead of having to know the quantitative and qualitative attributes the goods we entrust or are allured by their symbolic image. The symbols influence the behaviors because the social actors react to the symbols that they assign to the things. Yet the symbols lead the action. The symbols reinforce the common beliefs and the feelings of belonging to a community.

What is interesting to note in relation with the consumer behavior is the characteristic of *zero-degree costs of information*. From an economic standpoint, the reduction of the information costs to degree zero is the more significant attribute of the symbolic creative goods. It explains their emergence in terms of a micro-economic consumer answer to the increase in the costs of use of rationality.

What matters is the capacity to transmit, without costs of information for the receivers, a sign which gathers significant information. The consumer is pushed to a purchase because the identifying symbolic good conquers him. He does not need an investigation in order to estimate the quantitative and quality contents of the goods and services. This behavior corresponds of what Umberto Eco says about the mentality of the medieval man: *"la mentalità simbolistica si inseriva curiosamente nel modo di pensare del medievale, uso procedere secondo una interpretazione genetica dei processi reali, secondo una catena di cause ed effetti. Si è parlato di corto circuito dello spirito, del pensiero che non cerca il rapporto tra due cose seguendo le delle volute loro connessioni causali, ma lo trova con un brusco salto, come rapporto di significato e scopo."* It is a thunderbolt, which leaves a print in the conscience of the people.

6. Conclusions

This short inquiry on creativity and its effects on the economic behavior led us to a certain number of theoretical observations concerning both market demand and supply. Many peculiar traits have been noticed:

- that the creativity is an immaterial good that can be produced and transmitted within a positive environment;
- that the conditions of production are dependent of the idiosyncratic nature of creativity-based goods, both in terms of space and time;
- that the creativity is a generation-based good whose main problem is the continuity of production at constant quality;
- that the creativity became central for the post-fordist firms, by modifying their structure and internal hierarchy;
- that the creativity through its symbolic nature modifies the choices of the consumers in providing goods with zero costs of information.

These remarks induce us to consider with certain skepticism the efficiency of the price system in the regulation of creativity-based goods. Space, time, symbols, culture and the social environment demand an economic theory, which does not classify them like exceptions any more.

The fashion world has been deeply influenced by the emergence of the creativity. Consumers and producers extensively adjusted their behaviors to the rhythms and changes of creativity, a good at the same time rare and inexhaustible.

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