

# Chapter 4

## Involving Customers Through Co-Creation: An Approach From the Fashion Industry

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### ABSTRACT

*In an increasingly competitive market environment, companies across different sectors are being pushed to develop new strategies and marketing approaches in order to better promote and engage customers with their products and services. By increasing customers' involvement, companies can improve their marketing results, which may positively relate to their accounting results. In this context, one of the most important approaches is based on promoting consumer involvement with products and services. This involvement can be increased through co-creation design. Co-creation processes are gaining momentum as a customer involvement tool that has important implications for brands including brand co-creation and new product development. This chapter analyzes the new values on consumers and the co-creation processes in the fashion industry and in fashion design education, highlighting the entertainment factor as a key element that fosters co-creation activities. Firstly, the authors conceptualize consumer values through fashion and its functions to then extend the analysis to the co-creation design processes.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The changes produced by the influence of both the economic context and technology have fostered the emergence of new ways of thinking, understanding and working with design, which has led us to more democratic, collaborative and customized design processes. Simultaneously, a demand for a meaningful consumption is growing as consumers seek new experience dimensions through alternative consumption models. From this perspective the implementation of collaborative working methods in the area of design management is revitalizing new ways to work and to understand both design and its research. From the

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field of industry, the new value markets have generated a paradigm shift from the logic of active production to an active customer, which has produced changes within information and communication systems by creating interactive platforms where multidimensional relationships among different actors take place (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Likewise, the strong impact of these communication changes, delimited by the broadcasting system which takes place nowadays in the social media through the internet, has transformed the power structures of the traditional markets by generating new markets and strengthening new consumerism's behaviors and attitudes (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). The belief on the resurgence of new roles for designers strengthens the new educational system- a learning that is established now as the focus debate in the management of design participation (DP). Therefore, the practice of tools and methods for co-design implementation in design teaching activates a new working model that involves a new way of viewing and understanding design from the base. In this sense, commitment, involvement and roles' exchanging between designers and non-designers reinforce the vision of a new collaborative and sustainable design.

Currently, design practice has shifted the approach from a driven-design towards the market to a market-driven design. This change implies a new design thinking that uses co-design strategies to develop new ways of design participation which actively involve consumers in the process of products and services development (Sanders, 2006). Transforming design practice into a creative experience common to everyone is the main challenge that designers/researchers, companies and design teachers have to face. Specifically, the fashion industry has transformed its management models in favor of more open working models facilitating the development of products and services increasingly customized. Brands such as Adidas, Nike or Lego have experienced with branded online platforms that allow consumers to customize and co-develop their products. The fashion industry has long time experienced with product customization and represents a promising area for customer co-creation development.

This chapter analyzes the new values on consumers and the co-creation processes in the fashion industry and in the fashion design education. So, firstly we conceptualize consumer values through fashion and its functions to then extend the analysis to the co-creation design processes.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **1.1. Fashion Functions Development Through the Value's Concept**

Fashion, a cultural phenomenon linked to the historical and social evolution, is today more than ever an integrating part of the thought and culture of society. Currently, with the technologic development and the advent of the Web 2.0 and the Web 3.0, the internet galaxy has been positioned as a meeting point which sets a date to different cultures and societies which through the social media has caused the emergence of new needs and relations by determining new ways of consumerism and new ways of thinking in consumers' minds. Likewise, these facts have produced changes in social values and in the functions that products and services must meet. Thus, the new paradigms of contemporary thinking design are based on the democratization of consumerism and on the new value of co-creation, which is transmitted through experience and aspirations by loading both the products and services with new meanings (Nixon & Blakley, 2012). Consequently, in the present section we explore consumer's needs from the existence of the first relations between the functions of the dress with the social values, and its co-evolutionary development up until the actual social context.

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