



MAPPING THE FAST-FASHION SEGMENT

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the emergence of fast-fashion as one of the most dynamic segments of the fashion industry worldwide in order to discuss the main reasons for its development as well as identify a socio-spatial characterization of its internationalization taking for granted major business groups. The research has been developed through an exploratory, descriptive and explanatory method that combined not only a literature review on the fashion industry and the fast-fashion but also a integrative review of information in websites about the main business groups of fast-fashion which resulted in the construction of maps that indicate the existence of regional complexes of fashion in the globe that are characterized as poles of attraction and diffusion of fast fashion. Based on these discussions subsidies have been provided for a better understanding of the reverberance of the fast-fashion phenomenon in the fashion world due to its revolutionary impact on the fashion segment mainly in the production and marketing areas.*

keywords: *business internationalization of fast-fashion; regional complex of fast-fashion; fast fashion; fashion industry*

1. Introduction

In a short period of time, business groups of fast-fashion have built economies of scale and scope that impacted in the emergence of widespread internationalization strategies with high capillarity in the world using tools and formulas that attain and delight its target audience.

Making reference to the theme of fast-fashion this article has been structured in two complementary sections that sought, in one hand, to bring an understanding about the characterization and the dimensioning of the fast-fashion phenomenon in the fashion world based on a literature review, and, on the other hand, to identify the internationalization features of fast-fashion and map it through an integrative review of information obtained in the websites of the companies.

In the first section, "The fast-fashion industry," the purpose of the research was to characterize the *sui generis* dimension of the strategy of this new fashion segment grounding on the projection of innovations in the production and marketing areas that enabled the construction of a flexible, lean and fast industry of reticular nature.

In the second section, "Internationalization of fast-fashion worldwide", this article aimed to build a macro characterization of the fast-fashion's role mapping it as a form of international business with extensive international influence and builder of a field of power among attractor and diffuser centers of fast-fashion business networks in the international relations.

Based on these discussions, the article proposed to develop a systemic analysis of the fast fashion segment in order to supply subsidies to discuss fashion as a changing phenomenological field and in constant relational evolution through socio-constructive patterns materialized in domestic and foreign affairs.

2. The fast-fashion industry

The first theory that arises about fast-fashion has been created in the 1980s when the University of North Carolina began research on how to improve the flexibility, agility and diversity of manufacturers and retailers in a number of industries of fast consumption goods through quick market oriented strategies.

The fast-fashion model is a modern concept of the fashion business because it represents an evolution development that consists in an acceleration of the rate of production and trade turnover based on an aggressive and intensive strategy under the prism of marketing as well as the prism of the logistics and the information and communication technologies platforms.

On one hand, the upstream industry of fast-fashion has been structured based on a production acceleration of the collections which resonates in an increase launch of new collections after a few weeks or months as opposed to the traditional fashion industry that produces a new collection on an average of 10 up to 14 months.

On the other hand, the downstream industry of fast-fashion has been structured on a marketing mix strategy oriented to make a quicker attraction of customers and trade of goods through differentiated products brought by partnerships with designers at reasonable prices and direct links to classic or avant-garde trends in the fashion industry.

“The emergence of ‘fast-fashion’ brands such as Zara, H&M and Mango has been driven by a demand for trendy, disposable items that can be mixed with expensive, classic pieces. Consumers don’t just buy designer, or chain store, or vintage – they buy all three, and throw them together in a style that is uniquely personal.” (TUNGATE, 2005, p. 228).

The combination of a faster pace in the production of a new collection and its trade by the fast fashion industry conform a rapid response fashion model that takes effect with high turnover levels. This happens, first, on the downstream industry due to the eclecticism of the clientele of the generations X and Y as well as the middle and upper classes, and second, on the upstream industry due to the design process of clothes when the number of copies to be quickly reproduced and distributed to stores are decided.

The following diagram presents the difference from the fast fashion system to the traditional method of production and trade according to the participation of four players. First is the brand.

Second is the holding company to which the brand belongs. Third is the tributation and inviting policies for the entry of companies in the fast fashion segment of shops. Fourth, there have been outsourcing companies involved in international production networks (FERREIRA, 2015).

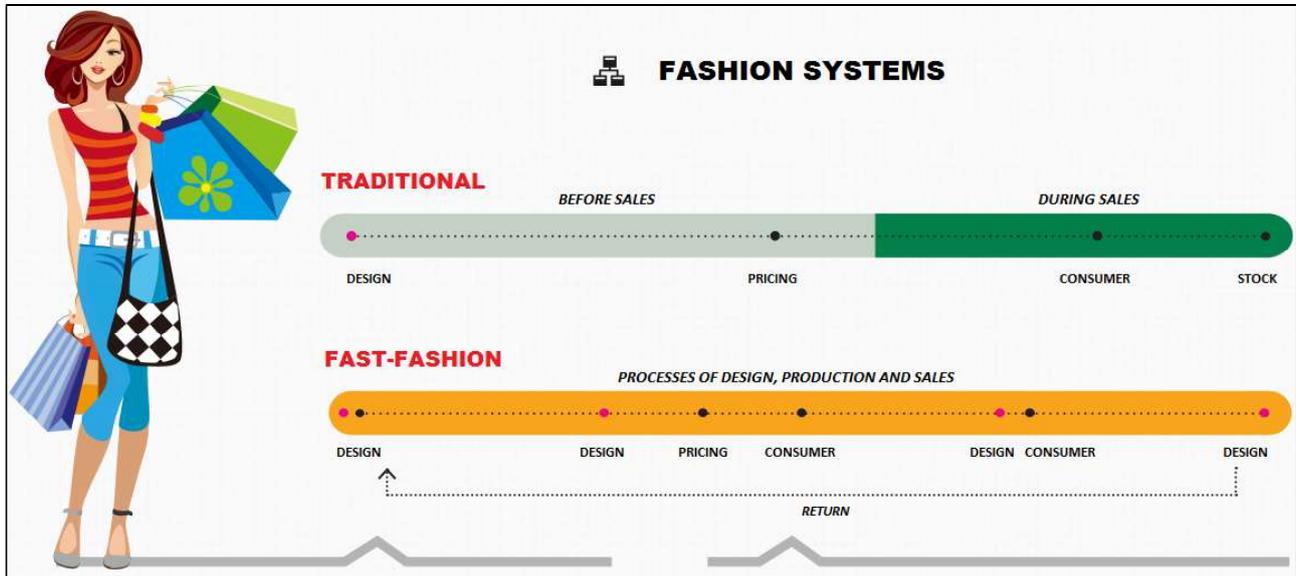


Figure 1: Comparison of *fast fashion systems worldwide*.
Source: SEBRAE (2014).

Generally, in the fast-fashion model strong operations from companies able to quickly and efficiently adapt to market have been a practice through the control of the supply chain and direct relation with suppliers as well as through strong marketing channels of communication and fidelization of customers which both reflect in a vigorous dynamism in the international fashion industry.

"Whatever the indicator used, the affirmation of these companies in terms of relevance in the fashion market is undeniable: growing revenues, high income and reputation of their brands. It seems, therefore, a new generation of companies was born even while not using the traditional instruments of the parade and the big advertising investment because they knew how to gain traction in the market, reputation of the employees, media and in the opinion of leaders who play in fashion decisive roles for the affirmation of the brand"(Cietta, 2012, p. 28).

Fast fashion has increasingly become important in the fashion industry because of its high ability to produce incremental innovations in a short time providing better market positioning and increased value of products to the customers based on the combination of a number of different variables, such as creativity, distribution, communication and marketing.

This concept appears at first by a manufacturing model of "rapid response" developed in the late 1980s for the mass market, and consequently moved to a model of fast fashion based on the market in late 1990 and the beginning of the twenty-first century bringing to the sector of fashion services the idea of lean production with low inventories and high turnover.

3. Internationalization of fast-fashion worldwide

The internationalization of fast-fashion worldwide can be understood as one of the most significant features in the fashion industry in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first quartile of the XXI century due to the solid scale based on the expansion of large networks which have been very quickly structured in almost all over the globe, as can it be seen in Figure2.

The spatial construction procedure of business internationalization of fast-fashion in this present article was mapped based on a comprehensive search of data in almost 100 websites of fast fashion companies. A compilation of this information was structured by country and region in order to construct thematic maps about the internationalization of fast-fashion in the world through the use of the integrative review technique (SENHORAS; FERREIRA, 2015).

A quick globe display shows the capillarity degree of the fast-fashion networks in both the Western and Eastern world due to the conformation of international fashion trends shared by different countries in the light of the demand of the consumer markets and the light of supply through the international diffusion of fast-fashion industry in global value chains.

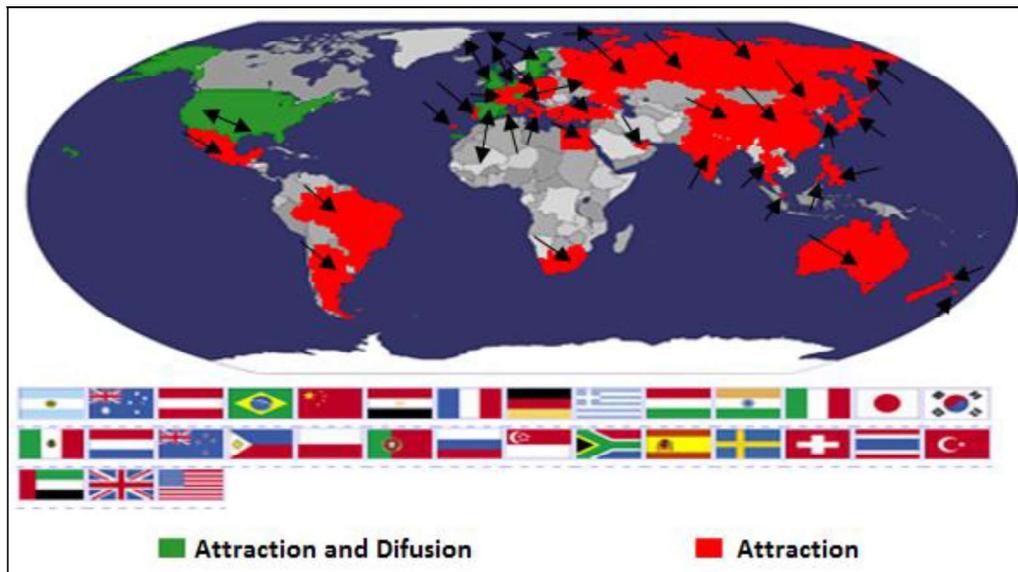


Figure 2: Poles of attraction and diffusion of *fast-fashion*

Source: Authors' elaboration. Field research on websites of fast-fashion companies in the United States and Europe.

Born in Europe and matured in the United States, the fast-fashion model acquired scale and scope in these areas due to both systems of production and marketing which provided competitive expertise in a quick and flexible context of global values of chain enabling the expansion of the fast-fashion business networks beyond the US and European national markets.

In this European and American regional complex fast-fashion turned out to be a dynamic model in the production and marketing dimensions since because these pushful Western markets in

one hand project themselves as diffuser poles for the internationalization of fast-fashion networks in the world and in the other hand become attractor poles of international networks.

Together, Europe and the United States conform a Regional Complex of Fast-Fashion in the North Atlantic axis characterized by a very high dynamism and greater maturity of the production and consumption of fast fashion in comparison to another areas in the world due to high degrees of internationalization of their business worldwide and also high capacity to absorb foreign fast-fashion groups in their territories (figure 3).

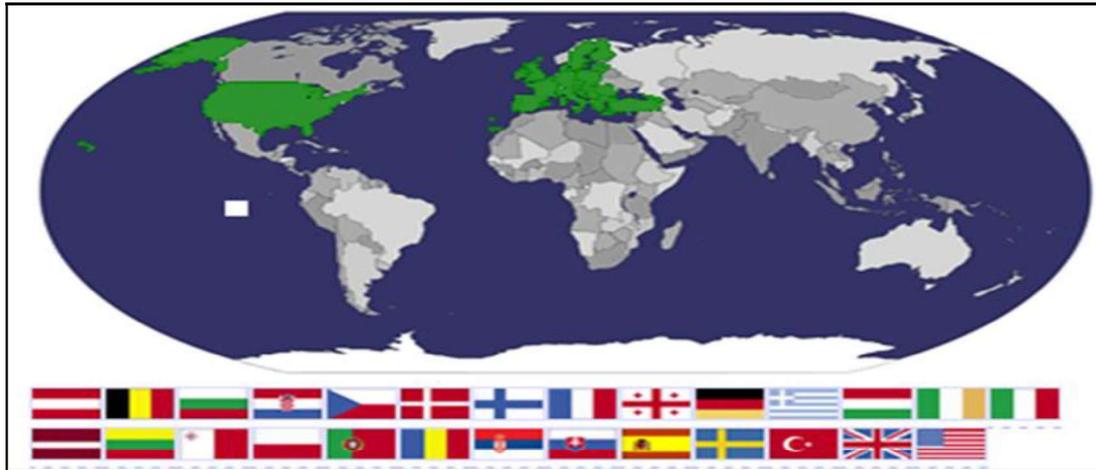


Figure 3: Regional complex of *fast-fashion* in the North Atlantic axis

Source: Authors' elaboration. Field research on websites of fast-fashion companies in the United States and Europe.

All the other countries emerge in the world of fast-fashion with specific qualifications according to a hierarchy stratified by high, medium or low attraction markets in this fashion industry segment due to the high influence of the internationalization of the fast-fashion companies from the top regional complex of *fast-fashion* conformed by US and Europe.

First, Africa is identified as a regional complex of fast-fashion whose characterization manifests the presence of a few number of domestic companies, lack of international diffusion of fast-fashion business networking and low capacity to attract international networks of fast fashion due to the negative indicators of income (exception to South Africa).

Second, Oceania, East Asia, China and Russia, conform in the axis of the Pacific a Regional Complex of Fast-Fashion whose characterization is identified by the presence of endogenous groups of fast-fashion companies although with a low degree of internationalization in a dynamic context of very strong attraction of European and American networks of fast-fashion due to the high average income from their consumers.

Third, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico present similar characteristics of what is called the Latin American Regional Complex of Fast-Fashion with domestic fast-fashion companies well positioned in the domestic markets, low degree of internationalization and high capacity to attract

big international companies of fast-fashion due to the scale of population and the consumption capacity of the middle class.

Fourth, oil-producer countries from the Middle East and Continental Asia compose attracting areas for the international networks of fast-fashion due to high indicators of income although the absence of capacity of this complex of countries to impulsionate inward or abroad domestic business groups in this segment of the fashion industry.

The regionalization of specific dynamics of international attraction or diffusion nature for the fast-fashion companies in the world demonstrate that the specific characteristics of the regional complexes make this segment *suis generis* according to the different degrees of attraction and repulsion in the respective contexts of complexity of the countries despite the general feature of fast-fashion as a dynamic conjuncture force that homogenizes fashion trends.

The impact of fast fashion in the international relations is embodied in accordance to a an image of field of power in which different countries are hierarchically inserted, first, as fast-fashion poles of high diffusion attending an inside-outside logical pattern such as the North Atlantic Regional Complex of Fast-Fashion, and, second, as fast-fashion poles of high attraction such as the North America, Latin America and the Pacific Regional Complexes of Fast-Fashion.

4. Final Remarks

This paper introduced the fast-fashion segment in the light of a theoretical review of its characteristics in the upstream and downstream industry mainly focusing production and marketing areas. It also presented the origins and the broad international dissemination of fast-fashion as one of the most important phenomena in the fashion world since the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Subsidies have been supplied in this paper about the hybrid nature of fast-fashion in its ability to deal with the constant market changes through strategies based on an aggressive speed of the supply and demand chains that naturally adjust in various situations of growth or crisis.

The text showed that a macro vision of the fast-fashion poles of international attraction and diffusion can be recognized by identification of emerging regional complexes of fast-fashion that manifest specific characteristics and patterns of interaction with consequent degrees of asymmetry and hierarchy in the international dynamic insertion of consumption or production in the fast-fashion world.

Based on these discussions it was concluded that fast-fashion is presented as a dynamic force in the fashion world which clearly spills-over a number of impacts with domestic consequences in the dynamics of consumption and production as well as internationally, structuring

hierarchical and asymmetrical relations among attractor and diffuser poles for fast-fashion companies.

5. References

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