

# CHARACTERISTICS OF «FAST FASHION» CONCEPT IN FASHION INDUSTRY

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**Abstract:** *the research contains the analysis of main principles, making the «fast-fashion» concept successful, reveals the key criteria, according to which the brands are classified as «fast-fashion». The present publication reflects the core principles of fashion business entities activity within the «fast-fashion» segment and specifies the criteria of singling out the target consumer audience. The concept under consideration is viewed as a factor of fashion business vector transformation. The research claims that within the high-responsiveness concept the fashion product is being developed and manufactured based on mass-market customer demand, its attitude towards fashion changes and life-style, rather than designer approaches.*

**Key words:** *fashion industry, fast fashion, subjects of fashion industry, fashion product, total look, designer's brand, flagship store*

**1. INTRODUCTION:** It is generally admitted that fashion industry, as any complex production system, is oriented at planning the production and advertising strategy, as well as forecasting the emerging consumers' demand, rather than meeting it. Non-stop acceleration of life tempo and manifold increase in social and economic competition in society triggers the stepping-up of consumer-related processes and expansion of consumers' demand boundaries. Currently the main consumer's trend lies in replication of new needs and reduction of consumption cycles.

Such a situation, no doubt, resulted in appearance of great many fashion industry entities [1], engaged in design, promotion and sales activities, thus triggering integration of «fast-fashion» high-responsiveness concept into industry itself. The most comprehensive definition of fashion business high-responsiveness was articulated by Leslie Davis Burns and Nancy O'Bryant in "The Business of Fashion" "...definitions of this phenomenon are subject to change depending on industrial sector in mind. The textile industry views the high-responsiveness in coordinated work of thread, fabric and clothes producers. For cloth designers high-responsiveness means frequent resorting to technologies and establishing connection with fabric and clothes producers, as well as retail stores". [2], [3]

**2. ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHES AND PUBLICATIONS:** Experience has shown that high-responsiveness concept may be characterized as a factor of fashion business vector transformation. Previously the fashion industry was based on "from producer to final user" scheme, preconditioning the routine character of designing and production, as well as automatically determining the relevance of the produced fashion piece and its demand. In literature practicing designers term this principle "pushing" (the products are pushed to the sales and use stages). [4] In opposition to this the functioning of high-responsiveness concept is viewed as "engaging" principle, as the fashion product manufacturing process is activated only by emerging demand or necessity to refresh the fashion product pursuant to the mass-market customer demand (consumer's "getting" of the fashion product from the

manufacturing system).

The process of traditional fashion product distribution (“from producer to final user”) included presentation, encouragement and subsequently high-pressure selling to the consumer of designers’ and manufacturers’ deliverables. Within the context of high-responsiveness concept, fashion product is designed and manufactured on the basis of mass-market customer, rather than designers’ offers. Technologies of necessary precise information collection are now playing the decisive role in operation of marketing departments, dealing with all categories of brand fashionable clothes, as well as in operation of mass media, highlighting the fashion and trendy clothes industry issues.

Producers of fashionable clothes within the American mass market accepted the emerging high-responsiveness concept as another logistics manifestation and prognosticated its significant role in the fashion business transformation and departure from design-oriented approach as a primary aspect of trendy clothes industry [5]. Nevertheless, the consequences of introducing fast-fashion within the global trendy clothes market appeared to be far more serious. In spite of the fact that companies, engaged in the present market segment, are satisfied with all the advantages offered by «fast fashion» (gain in sales, profit enhancement, warehousing expenditures reduction, sales season cut-down), they are forced to be subject to continuous change and production of new product keep pace with modernizations in the sales sphere and to fully fulfill the consumers’ demand within the framework of intense competition. Consequently the project component of their fashion product goes behind as regards of its innovativeness, causing serious concerns of brand networks owners.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:** The core aspect of high-responsiveness concept is constant image change within the context of fashionable tendencies. The most significant external criteria of the concept success was monthly or even weekly, rather than season-based renewal of clothes, as a fashion product, within the fashion market. It resulted in drastic reduction in fashion product life-cycle and its multifold recurrence in the life of short-term changing trend tendency. [4]

All the abovementioned may be explained by the central motto of «fast-fashion» concept – timely satisfaction of consumers’ demand for fashion product at affordable prices. In other words the high-responsiveness concept has overwhelmingly invaded the mass market segment. Currently the active «fast-fashion» concept advancement is traced in those market segments, the consumers of which as regards of their attitude to fashion do not belong to conservatives or those falling behind time, but are strongly fashion conscious. Namely these consumers’ categories are more often subject to provocation as regards of outfit renewing. Low cost and constant rotation of hot items in sales outlets allow timely and cheaply copying the image and character, offered by designer brands within the elite fashion market segment. [6]

The main principles of fashion business entities work within the «fast-fashion» segment are as follows:

- Fashion product release in small batches, frequent renovation of models pursuant to up-to-date tendencies;
- Limited circulation of each fashion piece model in order to emphasize its exclusiveness and therefore status value;
- Frequent assortment renewal of fashion product in sales outlets (2-4 times a month);
- Short-term sale of fashion product in sales outlets, what allows minimizing the necessity to introduce the sales season for fashion product.

The key aspect of high-responsiveness concept is considered to be the shopping agiotage, triggered by an extremely limited circulation of highly fashionable pieces, accessible to mass consumer.

Such a strategy lead to the situation, in which the fashion product is capable of satisfying the needs of mass shopper all the more so, as the repeated circulation of each model is unreasonable and, consequently, hardly probable. The described situation only contributes to high-responsiveness concept strong penetration into shoppers' minds, creating the illusion of adherence to fashion product of «prêt-a-porte de luxe» class, having the same limited and unrepeated circulation.

The shopping agiotage is also strengthened by advertising and show technologies widely used within the sector under consideration: merchandising, PR-events, etc.)

Namely the speed of trademarks' response to changes in fashion tendencies, as well as adequate fashion product assortment correction (within the framework of commercial availability) attract mass-market customer, especially of those from metropolitan cities with its rapid speed of life supporting the spirit of trendy clothes change.

In close relation with fashion business high-responsiveness concept the «just-in-time» concept has emerged. The main essence of the concept is that the raw stock and material used for clothes production (especially under conditions of constant assortment change and new clothes production in small batches) are supplied to manufacturing plant right up to beginning of the production cycle, reducing the warehousing cost to minimum.

Consequently, companies, engaged in the factory-supplied and retail brands segments, do not simply renew the fashionable clothes assortment, they change the approach to its creation in order to comply with and satisfy the needs of mass-market customer. This being the case, previously about 80% of all the fashionable clothes assortment was covered by the «primary usage» items, and only 20% were targeted at production and sale of assortment, subject to up-to-date tendencies. By today the priorities have changed, and namely the trendy assortment is regarded as of paramount importance by the companies, working in high-responsiveness concept stream. «Fashion capsules», formed on the basis of artistic and stylish themes of current trendy tendencies constitute the basis for assortment development and collections design.

As a result the trendy clothes collections in sales outlets are constantly renewed fostering the feeling of need to get the newest fashion piece, thus enhancing the customers' demand and shopping agiotage. Accordingly, such a swift circulation of fashion product in retail stores contributes to change of customers' attitude towards fashion and own needs. The term of wearing trendy clothes has educed to minimum, in the long run making the fashionable outfits «single-use» items. The main aspects of successful functioning of fast-fashion high-responsiveness concept within the fashion business are represented at Diagram 1.

By reference to the fact, that fast-fashion concept needs the complete coverage of mass-market customer in the shortest time possible, the factory-supplied and especially commercial brands, engaged in the segment, were named «network brands». The name is derived from the sale approach – fashionable clothes of these companies is usually sold in widely represented trading network, embracing mono- und multi-brand shops. [1

If characterizing the notion network brand pursuant to the same criteria as other fashion business brands, it will meet all the unique qualities of «brand» - personalized name, trade mark, symbols and other identity elements, vital for authentication of the trendy product, produced by the brand. As regards of specific network brands factors, they are highlighted in Table 2.

## Key elements of fast fashion concept



Such an aggressive world fashion market occupation policy of factory-supplied and retail brands leads to paradox in the fashion world. High fashion houses, owning designer brands and «de luxe market», create fashion, develop up-to-date project characters and modern tendencies and foster their advancement in society with the help of mass media, advertising and show technologies, forming fashion standards in the society. On the other hand as soon as it comes to obtaining the commercial satisfaction due to advancement and sales of own ideas the mass market appears to be full of fashionable product in the fast-fashion incarnation. The designer brands speed up to create new modern tendencies and standards in order to keep regular customers' and mass media attention. Nevertheless the creators of designer brands with ever increasing frequency have to accept the tendencies, originating in mass fashion. Colin McDowell in his book "Designer tricks", discussing the significance of catwalk and other forms of fashion tendencies presentation, has stated: "Namely here the newly-designed product are approbated. Companies, selling clothes for mass consumer, cooperate with wide ranges of agencies, creating fashion trends for two-three seasons ahead and copy the haute couture models, patterns and interweavings, adapting them for cheap product market ... This is a real role of haute couture in trade: manifest the new trends for color, fabrics and accessories". [7]

Similar cyclical nature of different brand existence within the consumers market forces the designer brands to correct the directions of their activities. In such a way the fashionable clothes lines for different target consumer audience (for example, Fashion House DIOR is releasing three diffuse outfit lines: woman prêt-a-porte MISS DIOR, children BABY DIOR and manprêt-a-porte CHRISTIAN DIOR MONSIEUR) is appearing. Furthermore, the world fashion market is witnessing activation in sale of licenses for the use of Fashion Houses names on conspicuous consumption items, not related to clothing (Pierre Cardin is the founder of the tendency); famous designers expand the sphere of their activity to other design fields (interior decoration, jewelry, designing of textile products, etc.)

### Factors and characteristics of world brands in fashion business

Factors	Characteristics
1	2
Seasonality	Minimum six collections a year provided that world fashion-calendar dictates extremely tight deadlines for designing, production, advertisement and sale of season collections
Role of brand-manager in shaping the brand	Shaping of fashion-tendency, support of clothes stylistic uniqueness, participation in designing the season program of marketing communication of the brand are included into professional duties of brand-manager
Flagship stores	Traditionally the network brands are sold either in own shops or through the system of franchising agreements with dealers, specifying seasonal volumes, procurement terms, requirements to retail space arrangement, terms of collection supply. An important tendency lies in creating so-called flagship stores, being the quintessence of aesthetic philosophy of the brand and creating unique shopping atmosphere
Positioning	Uniqueness of network trade mark is determined by sharply outlined position in comprehending the target audience, rather than by style, form and color of the fashion product
Balance of models and accessories	Possibility for the customer to create Total Look (stylistically shaped project image of the customer), i.e. be dressed from head to foot in one "designer" brand

**4. CONCLUSIONS:** Pursuant to the results of the carried out analysis it is worth mentioning, that the experience of fashionable outfit mass consumption proves the necessity of constant change in fashion standards and patterns, constituting the fashion main scope of activities. It depends namely on consumers and manufacturers of trendy product whether the fashion industry will be fully represented within the mass market. Sophistication of production technologies and modernization of manufacturing equipment constitute a significant background for the speed of fashionable outfit renovation. It allows producing more trendy clothes in shortest time, as well as reducing the product price due to use of automatization and global differentiation of labor within the production process. Correspondingly, the analysis of expenses on materials, time spent for product designing, as well as production expenditures constitute the key criteria of efficient fashionable outfit design within the framework of fast fashion concept.

Nevertheless, the most successful approach is the consolidation of creative ideas of High Fashion Houses' designers and stylists, offering trademarks and factory-supplied brands within the fast-fashion segment. Developers of designer brands gain large-scale involvement and availability of fashion product, and, consequently, tonnage media and wide marketing network. On the other hand with their names they provide the mass consumption trendy outfit with the hint of exclusiveness, resulting in limited circulation, constrained representation in the sales outlets and boosting of product price. The present tendency of collaborations shaping is developing both actively and in diversified direction and may become the starting point for a new concept of fashionable innovations distribution in future.

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