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WORKING PAPER SERIES

Creativity, Fashion, and Market Behavior

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1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity-based goods are among the most specialized of all goods. Creativity, like culture, is profoundly rooted both in time and in space. The culture of creativity, or its inherited capital, is inextricably linked to a place, or - in a social sense - to a community and its history. As far as creativity is concerned, time and space matter.

Yet theory on efficient economic behavior is mainly grounded in goods lacking a specific collocation in time or in space. In fact, the more time- and space-specific a commodity becomes, the less efficient is the market mechanism in regulating its production and consumption. The more specialized a good becomes, the less capable is the price system of supplying relevant information, and the less likely is the competition rule to accurately predict results. Thus, the market is an imperfect model for the regulation of creativity-based goods such as fashion, design and art.

This paper aims to reveal some of the limitations of market behavior analysis concerning creative goods, using the world of fashion as a backdrop for discussion of the economic effects and idiosyncratic characteristics of creative endeavors. In this sense, it contributes to a social interpretation of economic theory, insofar as a society is defined by the place and the time of its development.

The fashion market is apposite for exploring the problems posed by market behavior as it relates to creativity. The enigmatic influence of culture within the fashion industry is manifested in several ways. The culture of creativity -

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with its recondite fall-out on the originality of an object, its aesthetic and technological quality, and its image – is a distinctive feature of fashion products, whose essential characteristic is that of embodying symbolic values: they are *semiophore* goods (Santagata, 1998a; Barrère and Santagata, 1998). Moreover, it is the designers themselves, their imagination and fantasy, their views of society and of the history of humankind and their manners and beliefs, that represent the true *deux ex machina* of the workshop-atelier, that mysterious and productive place where fashion is made manifest in the beauty of its forms.

Indeed, the presence of celebrated designers in a given place at a given time is an indicator of a creative environment. The number of creative designers living in Paris during the XIX century is impressive (Table 1). It also heralds the increasing internationalization of fashion designers, another factor related to the spatial component of creativity.

Table n. 1 Designers in Paris by date of appearance

Period	Year	Couturier
Prior to Haute Couture	1858	Charles Frédéric **Worth** and Gustave **Boberg**
	1871	Jacques **Doucet**
	1889	Jeanne **Paquin**
	1898	Les soeurs **Callot**
	1900	Jeanne **Lanvin**
	1904	Paul **Poiret**
Between 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**
The 1950s	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 1960s		
	1958	Yves **Saint Laurent**
	1959	**Valentino** Garavani
	1960	Karl **Lagerfeld**
	1961	André **Courrèges**
	1961	Rosette Met "**Torrente**"
	1962	Jean Louis **Scherrer**
	1962	**Cacharel** (Jean
	1965	Emanuel **Ungaro**
	1966	Paco **Rabane**
The 1970s	1970	Jean Charles de
	1970	Issey **Miyake**
	1970	**Kenzo**
	1973	Thierry **Mugler**
	1976	Jean Paul **Gaultier**
	1976	Christian **Lacroix**

The contemporary age 1980-2000	Tom **Ford**, John **Galliano**, Alexandre **McQueen**, Martin **Margiela**

Data base: Grau, 2000; Bergeron,1998

The felicitous coupling of *haute couture* with *prêt-à-porter* is an excellent example of the creative forces at work in the fashion world. *Ready-to-wear* and *haute couture* apparel had already been made available separately, but the merging of these two worlds was an absolute Paris original.

Nonetheless, analysis of the economic behaviour of the actors - both consumers and producers - is even more revealing of the original, theoretical and social role of creativity and creativity-based goods.

As will be touched on again in the last section of this paper, consumers have developed a post-modern attitude in their choices, by which they attribute greater value to creative and symbolic factors than to aesthetic and functional characteristics. Consequently, the quest for novelty (Lipovetsky, 1987) - with all of its ramifications within the dynamics of the mimicking manners - is the source of economic behaviour affecting social interaction. (Simmel, 1904; Bourdieu, 1994; Waquet et Laporte, 1999). The idiosyncratic and inherited character of creativity-based goods, especially in the fashion world, affects economic behaviour in two interactive ways: by means of involvement in a community or social group, and by immersion in the productive atmosphere of the cultural industrial districts.

International dissemination of technology has levelled the playing field in international competition, and competition in terms of lower production costs is becoming less and less of a discriminating factor. Consequently, the globalization of markets promotes competition in terms of product creativity. Creativity is the engine of competitive differentiation and success. The amount of creative intellectual property comprising a fashion product overrides the material components by far. Unfortunately, this has led to a burgeoning of the illegal market for counterfeit goods, which is fuelled by of the predominance of the intellectual value of a good and by its public good nature (Benghozi and Santagata, 2001).

This paper has three sections. The first presents and discusses three models of creative people and the process of creativity: the creative genius, the manager and problem solving, and creativity as a neurological and social process. The second section is devoted to an economic definition of creativity. The final

section of the paper deals with the effects of creativity on economic behaviour in the fashion world. On the supply side, we will examine the effects of generational waves of creativity. On the demand side, we will examine the high costs of using rationality and their effect on the economic calculus done by the consumers of fashion.

2. MODELS

Creativity is a hedged and dynamic concept. The search for a complete or absolute definition is an ongoing process. Nonetheless, in the metamorphoses of its rationale, we can recognize the tendency for creativity to have become a fundamental resource of a post-modern society.

2.1 The creative genius

The conventional model of creativity is based on the romantic idea that creativity is the sign of genius, a ".. superior aptitude of the spirit that makes somebody capable of creations, of inventions which appear extraordinary"[1]. According to this definition, the creative genius is absolutely an inspired person. This is the image of creativity as epiphany, a gift received by means of the inspiration, meaning " .. to receive from a mysterious authority, in a way charged of all the characteristic opacity of the creative act, the secrecy of a discovery[2]. "

This model is especially interested in the narration of the intellectual and psychoanalytical traits of the genius (Kris and Kurz,1934; Jameson,1984). Actually, for post-modern culture and particularly for contemporary art, the artist-genius who creates works opposing previous movements and styles is considered to be highly stimulated by psychoanalytic phenomena. Each work of art originates from a hallucination or delirious vision.

This model also explores the whole set of conditions that make it possible to release creativity as a potential property of the spirit. Then it seeks correlations between creativity and a number of human conditions: feelings of guilt, madness, need for autonomy, attitudes towards risk, sex, age, intelligence, money and non-conformism. The image of the creative genius is, therefore, related to a literary and psychoanalytic conception of creativity, as in the case of the creative inventor.

While this model offers a literary description of genius, it would require a lot of jumping through intellectual hoops in order to derive from it a general

[1] Dictionnaire Micro Robert, 1988.
[2] Rouquette,1993, p. 10