

**IDENTITY DESIGN - METHOD OF GENERATING CULTURAL  
SUSTAINABILITY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PRODUCTS**

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Creative industries, those industries structured around the cultural creativity - individuality - prototype system, are built based on the need for added value of the product. This concept of valued identity may be, when considering a creative industry, the paradigm of an identity of the product concept, of the brand or an ethnical, national identity of the trademark. Decoding product concepts at object level is very important in the context of cultural sustainability of creative industries because it enables knowledge of the semantic and graphic construction and of the general stylistic expression of the product through the analysis of visual semiotics and symbolic items. To establish the place of this type of research in design taxonomy, a synthesis of the European design knowledge map over the last four decades will be presented. In this context the paper proposes to present a method of identity design that focuses on sustainable use of cultural instruments. Identity design, as generative method of the originality of the culturally sustainable design concept, is defined by the complexity of cultural items and visual archetypes that transcend the primary message and reveal, through symbolic qualities of visual language elements and artistic techniques, an entire characteristic universe. Theoretical and experimental data of the method applied in fashion design are presented.

Keywords: identity design, method, cultural sustainability

**INTRODUCTION**

Creative industries are economic activities whose main ingredient is cultural creativity. Creative products are objects, actions or services through which artists generate new meanings and experiences, making the connection between man and man-dominated world, object-based and symbolic. There is only one keyword for all creative industries, from architecture and design, to performing arts, fashion, film and media, music and IT games and that is: ARTIST.

The economic and industrial mechanisms of today comprise technical and cultural innovation in the rhythms imposed by consumption. If manufacturing industries use either technical or marketing innovation as a sales growth element, in creative industries, the cultural innovation that the product embeds is psycho-philosophical because it is designed to meet the requirements of novelty, change, originality or artistic-cultural identity of the consumer.

The economic dynamics of the creative industries is influenced by four exogenous factors:

- market demand,
- public policies in the field,
- advanced digital and cultural technologies,
- globalization.

These socio-economic components are found in the concept of creative product. Given the societal coordinates, design was developed both in philosophical terms and through practices based on knowledge and skills gained through research, throughout the twentieth century. Research into product design has already been practiced in Europe for over 36 years, leading to the shaping and domination of the object world of to what today is called human civilization. A team of British researchers from the

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University of Birmingham mapped the European design knowledge over the last four decades to highlight the structure and level of knowledge in this field. The basis to trace the history and development of design ideas and design writing over the following 36 years through classifying the issues that are central to the papers published in Design Studies, and quantifying the changes of emphasis in design topics over that period (Burns *et al.*, 2016), figure 1.

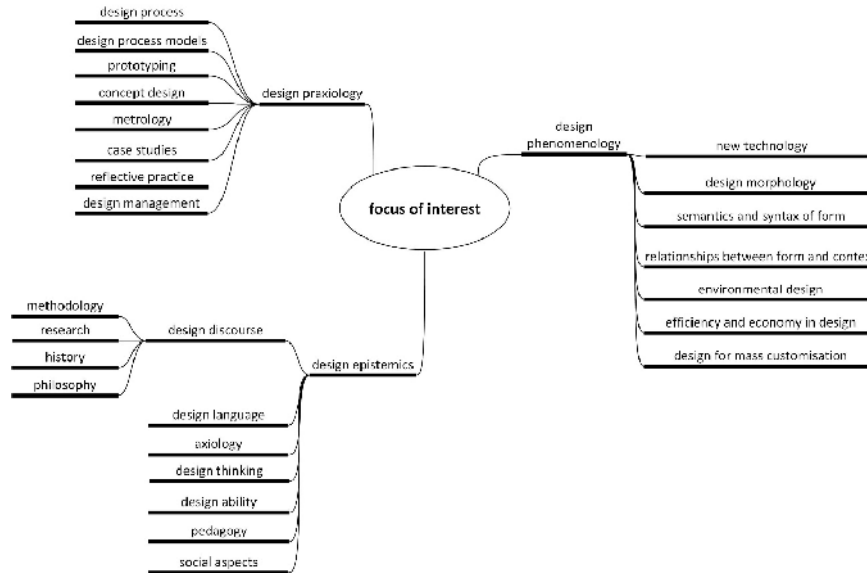


Figure 1. Mapping design knowledge: 36 years of Design Studies, 2016 (with permission)

The field of fashion design comprises most types of product design knowledge. From the perspective of fashion design knowledge, therefore fashion, identity design can be approached from the perspective of design phenomenology, as well as epistemic design based on design practice. In our reasoning, the phenomenological approach will be presented, as the interest is focused on product sustainability.

In the field of fashion and life-style industries, Ethical Fashion Forum defines sustainability as the approach to fashion that maximizes benefits for people and minimizes environmental impact. In this context cultural sustainability of the fashion product and processes consists in achieving, by means of the dominant culture, subculture and alternative culture in a system, a diversity of creation that is in opposition to the universal monoculture imposed by globalization.

**THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF IDENTITY DESIGN METHOD**

We know from practice that, in the textile and leather processing industries, there is a system of fashion, and a practice of using the notion of fashion over the entire value chain of the product, a practice more or less coherent and assumed by clothing manufacturers. All activities pertaining to product conceptualization, design and communication are components of immaterial production, a production dominated by

the creativity and artistic expression of the product, brand or trademark. All this can be seen in the aesthetics of a product through its style, through the cultural items that a consumer notices and identifies with, leading to the decision to purchase the product, in most cases. However immaterial production in fashion is less defined in manufacturing or processing of raw materials, as the division of labor is very high and the whole concept of a product dissipates into its components, converted into parts which no longer carry the entire philosophy of the product. Unlike the industrial manufacturing of a fashion product, which requires a technological process divided into several operations, where the immaterial fashion production dissipates, in creative companies, based on prototype and short series, where handmade processes are preponderant, and the ability of keeping the philosophy, aesthetics and artistic message of the product and of the author are recognizable. Thus, we identify a mass fashion and designer fashion, this time not by encodings of international standards, but by the artistic codes of immaterial production. Designer production is one based on identity because it is focused on the identity of the creative individual. In the industrial fashion production there is an identity of the brand and one of the trademark, that may be oriented towards an ethnic identity or a corporate one. This type of identity is not limited to just graphics that define the visual identity of the brand or trademark, but also encompasses the cultural identity of the product. As corporate identity is best evidenced by the graphic design practices of a globalized culture, ethnic identity design analysis may reveal mechanisms of creativity and can emphasize the dominant cultural items.

The sustainable identity-based product development method we propose was developed in the field of fashion and textile arts and design applied to textiles and is based on two pillars of understanding the creative processes:

- the use of cultural instruments;
- conceptual hybridization actions.

Cultural sustainability of the product of creative industries is expressed by:

- the authenticity of creation;
- the uniqueness of innovation;
- the stylistic concept.

Sustainability is created using cultural instruments:

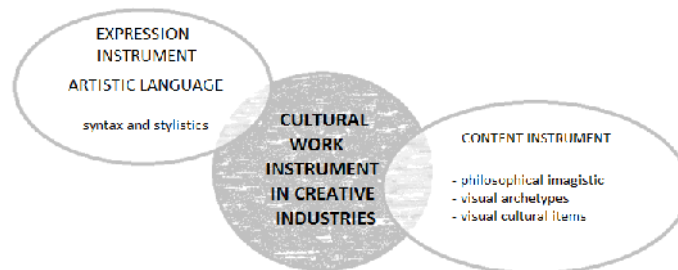


Figure 2. Cultural instruments

In fashion, the most common cultural work instruments range from images or visual elements, to cultural items of: trends, stylistic themes, motifs, mythological, philosophical and artistic images, archetypes and visual cultural elements.

The cultural instruments of the creative individual have two components: semiotic codes and aesthetic material resources. These are two keys to understanding the cultural dimensions of creative products that are subject to permanent change.

Semiotic codes emphasize the symbolic nature of the product and are an expression of artistic language that gives meaning to the work of the creative individual (Hirsch, 1972; 2000). Semiotic codes vary depending on the conventions of artistic systems they are a part of. Symbolic codes change much more slowly in the area of classical music or museum structures, focusing on refining the field, while the cultural system of fashion is very dynamic and permanent.

The aesthetic material resources include not only the materials that shape creative products, but also technologies and socio-technical systems that enable the production and consumption of creative products (Miller, 2010).

The material resources of creative products entail distinct ecosystems of knowledge, types of suppliers, artists and consumers that allow development through co-creation, proactive design, and collaborative design.

The so-called hybrid combinations of changing the semiotic codes and aesthetic material resources, which occur in all types of creative thinking, lead to an increase in creativity, and therefore, a permanent cultural and economic development of such industries. These transversal actions are processes of Conservation, Ideation, Transformation and Recreation.

Conservation, used in museums, architecture, design, fashion, music, media, cinema refers to the collection and preservation of a semiotic code pertaining to a cultural instrument such as the style of an art object, the ornamental motif of a fabric, the expression of a character, etc., and its recurrence in a new product.

Ideation processes, specific to areas such as fashion, music, digital games, cinema, media, visual arts, design and architecture, refer to original and innovative processes of creation that provide new aesthetic elements through both innovation and creative diversity of aesthetic concepts;

Transformation is a kind of thinking in design, and therefore creation, applied in creative industries, by means of which the aesthetic material resources are acted upon using cultural instruments, in order to create a greater diversity of cultural objects and creative products, transforming matter.

Recreation is a creative process that occurs in all creative industries and refers to shaping the semiotic codes and aesthetic material resources recognized as valuable and transforming them into new creative ideas, objects and artistic processes that are subject to economic niches.

## **EXPERIMENT**

During the development of a complex work instrument regarding the Romanian cultural identity, called the Romanian Imagistic Repertoire, the identity design method, whose instrumental elements were listed above, was attempted together with a team of Master's students of the National University of Arts (UNA), Bucharest. Thus, during work sessions, each Master's student has chosen a Romanian landmark, that they have used to develop the scope and structure of their personal imaginary, and then to create their own sketches of ideas and products (Figures 3 and 4).

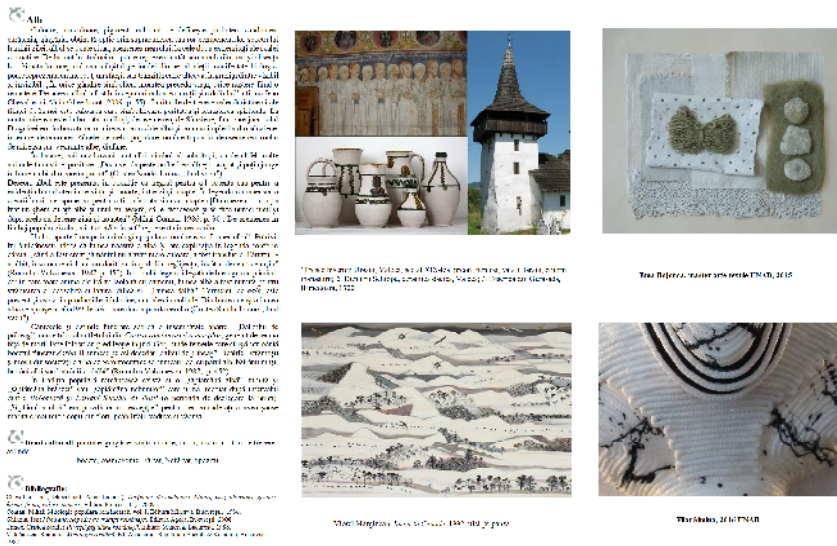


Figure 3. Imagistic instrument in the Romanian Imagistic Repertoire



Figure 4. Fashion design works of UNA students, 2014 and 2016

## CONCLUSIONS

It was noted during experiments, that any additional visual knowledge increases the value of ideas and concepts. The knowledge base of students or any creative individual can be developed, on the recommendation of the study or work environment of each person that implements the identity design method.

It was also noted that collaborative design is more semantically, cognitively and emotionally charged than the average individual design.

In addition, experiments have shown that the cultural sustainability of creative industries products will exist as long as the appropriate cultural instruments are used, both in terms of semiotic and semantic code, and aesthetic material resources.

In this context, in the Romanian identity design, the Romanian Imagistic Repertoire developed by INCDTP-ICPI in cooperation with UNA Bucharest in the experimental part, within the AAICREA project, is a response to the need to map the Romanian identity cultural instruments. The repertoire constitutes an aesthetic material resource that comprises aesthetic identity codes, crucial for a creative individual, artist or designer in the creative industries.

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