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RETROSPECTIVES OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

CAZAC Viorica, CÎRJA Jana, URSU Elena
Technical University of Moldova, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova
viorica.cazac@dip.utm.md

The paper presents the results of the study on the evolution of fashion in the Republic of Moldova from 2010 to 2025. The stages of evolution were analyzed and presented, as well as the main support programs that contributed to the relaunch of the fashion industry in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the combined contribution of several institutions that ensured effective results in this regard. The study conducted allowed for the clear distinction of several stages in the modern evolution of the fashion industry in the Republic of Moldova: the pre-independence stage, the period of the economic crisis, the manufacturing stage, the stage of the revival of the fashion industry, the stage of the internationalization of local fashion, the stage of digital fashion. The study was carried out within the national project, 020408 Research on Ensuring Sustainable Development and Increasing Competitiveness of the Republic of Moldova in a European Context.

Key words: fashion, digital fashion, support programs, fashion evolution

INTRODUCTION

The fashion field in the Republic of Moldova is marked at every stage by different imperatives of the time: social, political, economic, cultural, etc. manifested in everything that represents the set of elements that form the image of a user.

The evolution of the fashion field during the period since 1991 to the present has been noted through various forms of manifestation, from creating products from what was within the reach of creators to digital fashion in all its breadth, with the infinite possibilities of resources and solutions capable of diversifying and personalizing the aspirations of each creator and wearer.

PURPOSE

The study is aimed at analyzing the evolution of the fashion industry in the Republic of Moldova from the pre-independence period to the present, the measures and support activities that determined the amplification and dynamism of the industry's activity and its revival.

1. STAGES OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE FASHION FIELD IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

The analysis of the evolution of the fashion industry in the Republic of Moldova (1991-2025) led to the definition of the distinctive stages presented below.

The pre-independence period (1985-1991) is characterized by the functioning of Fashion Houses: Fashion House born from the Factory for Individual Clothing Manufacturing and Repair (24.11.1958), "Fashion Center" (1970) with the activity carried out on Armenească Street 30, Chișinău, Fashion House on Ștefan cel



Mare and Sfânt 182, bd., of companies in the field of light industry: "lonel", Chișinău, "Steaua-Reds", Chișinău, "Floare", Tighina; "Moldova", Bălți.

The period of economic crisis (1991-2000) denotes the period of transition and reconfiguration of the Republic of Moldova as an independent country (the declaration of independence of August 27, 1991). This was marked as a complicated period from an economic point of view, but at the same time as a period of launching the international practice of activity according to the C&M system, known as the "lohn" system (1993-1994). In the "lohn" system, companies from the Republic of Moldova represented sources of cheap labor involved in the process of manufacturing the product, from cutting to distribution, the concepts being developed by the commissioned clients. The activity of the fashion field was known thanks to the Fashion Centers/Houses, the garment enterprises: "lonel", Chisinau; "Artima", Chisinau, "Bălțeanca", Bălți, "Floare-Carpet", Unigeni; "Tricon", Cahul, "Dana", Soroca; "Zorile", Chisinau; "Steaua-Reds", Chisinau; Tiraspol Paper and Cotton Mill and others.

The manufacturing stage (2000-2005) represents the period of maximum intensity of the activity of garment enterprises in the "lohn" system. There is a revival of the field and an increase in the number of companies in the field of light industry launched. The activity of Fashion Houses enters an irreversible decline, reducing their teams against the background of the reduction in demand for the services offered.

The period of the fashion revival (2005-2010) is characterized by the launch of the first small businesses focused on the production of own-designed products. Also during this period, the relaunch of own-designed product lines within existing clothing companies is attested, along with the activation of the "lohn" system as coexistence. Fashion Houses cease their activity. Some employees are tempted by the opening of fashion workshops.

The period of internationalization (2010-2021) is represented by the period of support provided by the European Union and the USA through (USAID) the US Agency for International Development, which dynamically and prolifically boosted the development of the fashion industry in the Republic of Moldova through the numerous programs and projects carried out. A favorable environment was created for the increase in the number of start-ups in this field with the active involvement of young people. Thus, another stage in the evolution of the fashion field was noted starting in 2015, while at the same time ensuring the stimulation of creative talents.

The digital age is being accelerated by the global health pandemic crisis called COVID 19. The restrictions and measures taken during the pandemic have hastened the beginning of the digital age in fashion. This is marked by the development of augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain technologies through initiatives related to digital design, augmented reality, virtual reality, personalization and NFTs. NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) are unique digital assets based on blockchain technology, which certify the authenticity and ownership of a digital asset.

2. SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FASHION FIELD

The fashion sector in the Republic of Moldova has resisted with great stoicism at all times. The 90s were a period of great conjuncture for economic development,



the fashion sector being one of the few economic sectors that went from economic decentralization and functioning in the "lohn" system that ensured their existence and survival while companies in other sectors were in a process of total stagnation. Facilitating the stimulation of the development of the fashion sector by manufacturing products of their own design and not just operating in the "lohn" system was due to the implementation of support programs at the country level that led to the revival of the sector [5].

A great contribution to the support of the fashion industry in the Republic of Moldova was made by the support provided by USAID (US Agency for International Development) [6] within the programs: Future Technologies in Moldova Project (2021-2026); The "From the Heart" Project and the stimulation of light industry, the organization of fashion shows within the "Moldova Fashion Days" event; Rural Competitiveness and Resilience Activity (RCRA); other programs and projects.

The Light Industry Employers Association (APIUS) [5] was actively involved through contributions to effective communication, but also in the organization of events to promote the activity of companies in the field, such as programs, projects and fashion shows: SMART FACTORY – 2024 programme; Moldovan Brands Runway; Street style Moldovan Brands Runway.

In stimulating the development of the field, higher education institutions and centers of excellence that ensure the training of fashion specialists are actively involved. Through good connections with fashion enterprises at the institutional level, they promote fashion culture by organizing various annual events focused on creativity, innovation, design and technology. Among them, we will mention: Faculty of Design at Technical University of Moldova; Zip House, Center for Excellence and Acceleration in Design and Technologies, an innovative platform in Fashion of the Technical University (4.09.2015); Faculty of Fine Arts, Decorative and Design of the Academy of Music, Theater and Fine Arts; Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, "Ion Creanga" State Pedagogical University; Faculty of Informatics, Engineering, Design, Free International University of Moldova.

CONCLUSIONS

The study conducted allowed the following conclusions to be drawn:

- fashion represents a complex integrated system, an expression of politics, economy, culture and the integral social and individual;
- knowledge of the evolution of the field is important for knowing the main actors and their contributions to this process;
- the stages of fashion evolution were defined as: the pre-independence stage, the period of economic crisis, the manufacturing stage, the stage of the revival of the fashion field, the stage of the internationalization of local fashion, the stage of digital fashion;
- each stage in the evolution of the fashion field was driven by certain reference premises that determined the overall manifestation in a certain form;
- creativity, innovation and technologies are the triggers of evolution, including in the field of fashion;
- the support provided by the European Union and the US Agency for International Development have dynamically and prolifically boosted the development of the fashion field in the Republic of Moldova through the numerous programs and



projects carried out. The success of this field as it is noted today would not have been possible without this support at such an accelerated and substantial pace;

– the support provided was directed at several sectors, with activities taking place simultaneously and functioning as a complex system: economic - through support for start-ups and increased competitiveness, educational - through motivating, discovering and encouraging young talents, cultural - through holding fashion events and capitalizing on traditional cultural values as a strategic objective of ensuring unity through diversity, focusing on slow fashion; social - through developing a culture for fashion, recognizing values and avoiding kitsch, health - through recognizing, distinguishing and using products with health-enhancing value for wearers, environmental protection - through creating sustainable products with a long lifespan as part of slow fashion;

– the impact of involving educational institutions in the call to strengthen the fashion field was and is a long-term one, and investing in it contributes to the formation of fashion culture, aesthetics in society and motivates young people to develop their careers at home and contribute to the development of society.

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КАЗАК В., СІР'Я Дж., УРСУ Е.

РЕТРОСПЕКТИВИ ЕВОЛЮЦІЇ ІНДУСТРІЇ МОДИ В РЕСПУБЛІЦІ МОЛДОВА

У роботі представлено результати дослідження еволюції моди в Республіці Молдова з 2010 по 2025 рік. Було проаналізовано та представлено етапи еволюції, а також основні програми підтримки, що сприяли перезапуску індустрії моди в Республіці Молдова, а також спільний внесок кількох установ, які забезпечили ефективні результати в цьому відношенні. Проведене дослідження дозволило чітко виділити кілька етапів сучасної еволюції індустрії моди в Республіці Молдова: етап до здобуття незалежності, період економічної кризи, етап виробництва, етап відродження індустрії моди, етап інтернаціоналізації місцевої моди, етап цифрової моди. Дослідження було проведено в рамках національного проекту 020408 «Дослідження забезпечення сталого розвитку та підвищення конкурентоспроможності Республіки Молдова в європейському контексті».

***Ключові слова:** мода, цифрова мода, програми підтримки, еволюція моди.*