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**T TYPOLOGY OF FASHION DESIGNERS AND THEIR
BRANDING STRATEGIES: PROMOTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF
FASHION SHOWS**

SUMMARY

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Introduction

This doctoral dissertation examines the promotional role of fashion shows in the brand-building processes of fashion actors, focusing on the specificities of the Romanian fashion sector. As a point of departure, the analysis concentrates on the microenvironment of the Romanian fashion scene, emphasizing the role of fashion designers who represent the core pillars of the professional network and the system at large. During the research, I developed a typological framework for categorizing different designer personas and investigating the promotional opportunities offered by fashion shows and their impact on professional development and market positioning.

The Romanian fashion market is a dynamic yet under-researched field that, as a young industry with an evolving consumer base, provides a fertile ground for exploring the functions and strategic roles of fashion events. The post-2008 resurgence, coupled with the increasing visibility of creative industries and fashion events—especially in the aftermath of COVID-19—has created an opportune context for a deeper understanding of the strategic functions of fashion presentations. This study seeks to uncover how various designer types utilize fashion shows for branding, networking, and long-term professional positioning at regional and international levels, shedding light on their strategic significance.

The resulting theoretical model presents the diversity of Romanian fashion designers and typifies the personas who pursue different career paths, construct their professional identities in varied ways, and position their brands accordingly. The research pays particular attention to the role of fashion shows within the strategic frameworks of these personas and how such events contribute to designer visibility, network expansion, and long-term market sustainability. The findings comprehensively show the synergies between professional identities, branding strategies, and regional fashion events. (Cimpoca, 2024)

With these objectives in mind, I formulated the following research questions to guide the study: What designer personas can be distinguished within the Romanian fashion scene? What characteristics, career paths, and strategies define these types? How do fashion shows relate to designer types and the brand-building process? What synergies can be observed between regional fashion events and the evolution of designer careers?

Justification of Data Collection Methods and Their Application

A closer interrelation between the research questions outlined above and the first two, third, and fourth questions can be identified. Consequently, the research process was structured according to these conceptual links. A qualitative research methodology - interviews were primarily employed to address these objectives, as it enables the collection of in-depth, descriptive data concerning designers' personal experiences, motivations, and perspectives—elements that a quantitative approach would be less capable of capturing in sufficient detail. The interview method was subsequently complemented by content analysis. Therefore, the methodological foundation of this study is rooted in a qualitative approach built upon two main pillars: interviews and content analysis.

Fashion designers may be categorized from various analytical perspectives, including branding strategies, creative direction, personal motivations, or their networks within the industry. However, the present research categorizes designers based on their career trajectories and professional backgrounds, as this framework has proven to be the most coherent and operationally effective for analyzing Romanian fashion events. This approach helps illuminate how different professional paths—whether those of entrepreneurs, classical designers, educators, career-changers, or hobbyists—influence designers' relationships to fashion events and their integration within the structures of the local fashion scene. Thus, the career-path-based typology not only reflects individual strategies and aspirations but also sheds light on how the ecosystem of Romanian fashion is shaped at the intersection of diverse professional backgrounds, instilling confidence in the research methodology.

The study was conducted in three phases, employing a qualitative, multimodal research design. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were used to map Romanian fashion designers' career trajectories, brand-building strategies, and challenges, forming the basis for an initial persona typology. In the second phase, structured interviews and online content analysis were conducted to supplement the dataset, particularly regarding the most prominent designers. All collected data

were analyzed using a unified coding scheme, ensuring a consistent and substantiated examination of the research questions. In the third phase, triangulation was applied to compare designers' insights with the analysis of Romanian fashion events. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the synergies between career development and the prestige of fashion shows.

Findings

The findings of this research are structured around the central research questions. The first part of the analysis presents a typology of Romanian fashion designers developed through semi-structured interviews and content analysis. This typology was intended to make visible the diverse professional profiles operating within the Romanian fashion industry and to explore the variations in their brand-building strategies. Based on the responses of interviewees, five distinct designer personas emerged. These include the entrepreneurial designer, who strategically employs fashion shows to strengthen their business presence; the classical designer, who values shows for their artistic legitimacy and professional recognition; the career-changer, who uses these events to affirm a new professional identity; the educator or mentor, who engages in shows as a means to contribute to the development of the broader fashion community; and the hobbyist designer, for whom fashion shows are both platforms for self-expression and potential entry points into the professional field.

In the second phase of the research, I investigated the role of fashion shows in brand development and career progression, with a particular emphasis on the synergies between regional events and the evolution of designer careers. The results demonstrate that fashion events serve as opportunities for public exposure and as strategic tools for enhancing brand visibility and cultivating professional networks. Across all designer types, interviewees emphasized the value of direct audience engagement and the experiential dimension of presenting collections in person. Regardless of event scale or prestige, fashion shows are perceived as essential components of professional practice within the Romanian fashion sector, offering a space for communicating brand identity, attracting international attention, and fostering industry connections.

The analysis further indicates how designers utilize fashion events vary according to their typology. Entrepreneurial designers are particularly drawn to high-prestige platforms such as Bucharest Fashion Week or Romanian Design Week, which are viewed as gateways to international markets. These designers also engage with smaller-scale, business-oriented formats like trunk shows that allow for targeted visibility. Classical designers tend to adjust their event participation according to their career stage—starting with regional events such as Sepsi Design Week and later appearing on more prestigious platforms like Gala UAD, using these occasions to strengthen professional credibility. For career-changers and hobbyist designers, local and regional events offer accessible platforms for receiving market feedback and testing audience responses. Educator designers, by contrast, do not adhere to a fixed event type but participate across various contexts, often guided by goals related to mentorship, pedagogy, or institutional representation. Overall, the persona-based framework developed in this research, combined with an analysis of fashion event types, reveals that while designer categories are distinguishable, individual designers may transition across these types over time. This confirms professional identity formation's dynamic and evolving nature in the Romanian fashion ecosystem.

Closing Thoughts

The findings of this research contribute to a more refined understanding of designer typologies and offer more profound insight into the strategic role of fashion events. The categorization presented in this dissertation holds theoretical value. It serves as a foundation for future studies that may further explore the complexities of professional trajectories and decision-making processes among fashion designers. By analyzing the functions of fashion events, this research provides a novel perspective for industry stakeholders, supporting more targeted event planning and more effective designer positioning within the market.

Beyond its relevance to designers, the research may influence how consumers engage with fashion products. The practical application of the proposed typologies enables consumers to connect with fashion not solely through the garments themselves but through the designers' personal narratives and creative identities. In this way, fashion becomes a more human-centered and authentic

experience, fostering deeper relationships between designers and their audiences. This dissertation aims to highlight the diversity of professional models within the field, encouraging a rethinking of conventional industry structures and contributing to the broader structural development of the fashion sector.

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