

económicamente. Este fenómeno incluye obviamente a nuestras alumnas y, porque no decirlo, de algunos sectores de maestros debido a la fuerza de valores adquiridos que genera el formar parte de este medio como serían valores estéticos como belleza, elegancia, prestigio, valores sociales como pertenencia a una élite social, fama y presencia en los medios, entre otros. Esta presión o tendencia hace que nos olvidemos o desvinculemos en la mayoría de los casos de la realidad social y económica de la mayoría de habitantes de nuestro país. Creo entonces necesitamos buscar esquemas que expresen nuevos valores y abran espacios a la posibilidad de que a través de la participación de nuestras egresadas se logren cambios fundamentales en la industria textil, del vestido, textil artesanal y de la moda en general que se vean reflejados en la construcción de un México para todos.

Conclusiones.

¿Como lograr esos nuevos esquemas y una nueva jerarquía de valores en el diseño textil desde las aulas, los cuales se vean reflejados en el quehacer profesional? ¿ como lograr que dentro del mundo globalizado, y una política económica neoliberal podamos desvincularnos de los valores adquiridos por la moda, para lograr esos nuevos esquemas que se van reflejados en nuestros ámbitos laborales, llamémoslos escuelas, despachos, fábricas? .

No tengo una respuesta clara, ella requiere del análisis y trabajo colegiado de académicos de nuestra universidad y todas aquellas institución de de diseño textil y de la moda que quieran participar en este proceso.

Retail and design for the ageing society

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Abstract

The increasing number of elderly people in Italy invites to reflect upon the necessity of developing, inside the traditional Points of Sale (PoS), systems of products, services, knowledge, and information for these special users, and, at the same time, transform the traditional stores in places more accessible, usable, perceptible. Starting from an analysis of the contemporary trends in Large Scale Retailing (LSR), the article proposes to trace the guidelines which can orient the designer in developing a new format for PoS, with reference to ageing society.

Keywords

Sustainable design, Design for all, Accessibility, Large Scale Retailing, Contemporary goods.

Paper

In recent decades, the distribution of goods has assumed a progressively larger role in consumption processes. Considering the wealth of merchandise available on the market, the moment of purchase and the experience linked to this moment have become decisive in determining consumer choices (Celaschi, 2007). Thus we are living in a period of history when exchange processes are evolving, yet the degree of sophistication of the merchandise exchanged is not matched by an equal sophistication of the Points of Sale (PoS), particularly in Large Scale Retailing (LSR).

Having become the consummate “non-place”, the context in which “the customer moves around in silence, reads labels, weighs fruits and vegetables on a machine that gives the prize along with the weight; then hands his credit card to a young woman as silent as himself” (Augé, 1995, pp. 99-100), the shopping centre has frequently been the object of studies by authors seeking to define the impact of an ever more elusive mass culture. Starting from research by Walter Benjamin, Lewis Mumford, and Fernand Braudel,

a wide and transdisciplinary body of knowledge about this phenomenon has recently been built up. Experts of different origins such as Jean Baudrillard, Marc Augé, James Graham Ballard, and Benjamin Barber have taken the shopping mall and, sometimes, the whole system of goods exchange, as a metaphor of the social and cultural transformations of late modernity.

The association between shopping centres and contemporary “non-places” represents by now a shared idea, sometimes almost overused: we can apply it to the general concept of supermarket, without taking care of its dimension, destination, or localization. In synthesis we can affirm that LSR spaces are important culturally and are destined to improve considerably. Nevertheless, if we observe a typical large chain store today, this statement appears questionable. It is not always evident how much money has been invested and the emotional adventure of making a purchase is not always a pleasant one (Morace, 2008).

However, even while preserving the simplicity that usually characterises the buildings themselves, these PoS could play an exceptional scenographic role, telling stories, celebrating products, stimulating client interaction, changing over the course of days and weeks. They could adapt to the products they offer, identifying themselves with those products through techniques such as product packaging, or taking their distance and advocating for the consumer.

The range of potential innovations is vast, and there is room for both minor strategies and major overhauls, provided that these are guided by attention to rising consumer-user awareness.

The hypothesis is that it is possible to introduce innovation starting from the PoS’s “equipment”, which represents the meeting point of products, brands, clients, and space. Modifying the interior (without forgetting the connection between this and the players involved in exchange processes), while leaving the outer structure intact, may help us to understand how a design innovation can activate a change starting from an object. These considerations are based on a wide system of competences acquired during several years of collaboration with companies operating in the LSR sector, particularly in PoS design. Since 2008, a team of the Turin Polytechnic has developed research programs on design applications in PoS innovation, thanks to the collaboration of experts in history of material culture, interior design, brand strategy and ergonomics who already operate in this specific sector (Celaschi, Formia, 2009).

On the other side, this research is driven by the tradition of sustainable design which addresses the degree course in Industrial Design of the 1st Faculty of Architecture of Turin Polytechnic. The development of an eco-compatible

approach involves a system of relationships encompassing three spheres: biological (the relation between man and nature), technical (the relation between man and manufactured goods), and social (the relation between man and society). The last one needs a focus on the humanistic components of the design culture, requiring a close link between innovation and new productive systems (Germak, 2008).

The increasing number of elderly people and, more in detail, of subjects affected by the dementia syndrome, in particular the patients that suffer from Alzheimer disease (AD), invites to reflect upon the necessity of taking in consideration these special users in the context of a design driven innovation of the PoS (in contrast, do not surprise how supermarkets are full by babies’ products).

In 2008, the phenomenon of the ageing of population was confirmed: in Italy life expectancy is 78,8 years old for men and 84,1 for women. In January 2009 the population with more than 65 years old represented the 20,1% of the Italian population (they were the 17,8% in 1999) (ISTAT, 2008). Corresponding tendencies can be found in other industrial countries. The purchasing power of older people during the coming decades is expected to be higher than before, as will be the demands for good quality of life, activity opportunities and self-determination. In addition to the increase on the proportion of elderly people, it is also important, particularly in a design context, to take into consideration that the generation which is now growing old has essentially different experiences, expectations, and demands compared to earlier generations. These dates demonstrate how the phenomenon of an ageing society will have a great influence on the market of all commonly-used products, which will be expected to be suitable for this growing group of people who will be active, qualified, quality-oriented, endowed with economic means. The elderly market is the largest market there ever been.

In Italy we can find traces of a new interest that moves in this direction: development of new products, collections, services, knowledge, and expertise with reference to design for the ageing society. Italian companies such as Caimi Brevetti, Sunbeam, HB Group, Serrature Meroni produce objects which are not expressed design for elderly, but could be indicated for people with some kind of disabilities. But the really innovative contests are universities: the Milan Polytechnic (Faculty of Design) is developing a research design centre for elderly people called DAS and the University of Genoa (Faculty of Architecture) is studying new products for the subjects affected by the dementia syndrome, in particular the patients that suffer from AD (Stabilini, 2008). Nevertheless, in respect to these researches, it is important also to take in consideration, in a design oriented perspective, how this kind of products, services and strategies could be commercialized, distributed, and popularized in LSR.

Looking at objects made for the elderly really says more about what product designers and manufactures consider the seniors are. People still think that elderly means pathetic, poor, and unfortunate. It is true that a large proportion of elderly is affected by dementia (the dementia syndrome afflicts more or less a million of Italians, a number that will duplicate in 2050) and needs constant assistance by the caregivers, but, just as important from a design perspective, however they represent the 20% of people over 80. At the same time, as our society matures, and baby Boomers start swelling ranks of the elderly, we will have to start coming up with innovative products and services for seniors.

Contemporary PoS in Italy still have not many solutions to fulfil the needs of this kind of users/consumers, especially concerning the interior equipment. Maybe foreign countries demonstrated a much more deep sensibility. Specialty online retailers, like Gold Violin and Senior Shops, created an online shopping system easy, understandable, and usable. A similar approach can drive also new formats for PoS.

If we consider the vital elderly, who present new requirements while carrying out their usual daily activity and have much more time for shopping, the design driven innovation of the PoS could imply:

1. new departments (as new worlds) that could be, at the same time, systems-product-device to exhibit new products and services;
2. new information systems that could involve the consumer in a recreational dimension which can continue also outside the PoS;
3. new tools which can trigger, in the consumer, the desire of rediscovering traditional techniques, processes, modalities concerning food consumption, hobbies and other consolidate customs;
4. new equipments that could be showcase of the manufacturer and the brand.

If we consider the disabled elderly, the design driven innovation of the PoS could imply:
the ergonomic aspects, to create places more accessible, usable, perceptible.

Finally, if we consider the elderly that can't go shopping because they are afflicted by dementia or other acute diseases, we have to take the caregivers into account. In this case, the design driven innovation of the PoS could imply:
new information systems to promote, spread, and popularize knowledge and expertises about the disease, the therapies, the places providing assistance, etc., apart from selling products and services.

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