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## ANDRÉ CARVALHAL (2014) *A MODA IMITA A VIDA, ESTAÇÃO DAS LETRAS E CORES* (278 PÁGINAS – BROCHURA)

Kathia Castilho

Associação Brasileira de Estudos e Pesquisas em Moda (ABEPEM); Centro de Pesquisa Sociosemióticas – CPS, PUC

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### THE LIFE OF A BRAND, THE UNCOVERED VALUE OF BEING A BRAZILIAN BRAND

Fashion seems to have definitely come into fashion again — and into people's lives. It is no longer related to a way of dressing. It is now related to interior decoration, food, *gadgets*, cars, domestic appliances, and it establishes all kinds of partnerships. In Brazil, making fashion, being a designer and establishing all the possible relations that are structured around the study of fashion have become the main themes of soap operas and TV series. The themes have gained more space in the press, in the new magazines and in the million sites and blogs dedicated to this matter, and also, they have expanded interest in pursuing formation in this area, so much so that, nowadays, there are 164 Higher Education Institutions that offer higher education training in the fashion business, more specifically, in fashion design.

It is clear that most of the youngsters that reach our universities dream of becoming designers, creating and managing their own brands and presenting their collections in the national fashion calendar. In a little more than 20 years, training and interest in Brazilian fashion have changed completely. In the history of Brazilian fashion, or even when we talk about the History of Brazil, the images that come to our mind inevitably conjure up the discovery of Brazil, its conquerors' puffed breeches — a model that was adopted in Europe among the noblemen and elegant gentlemen of the sixteenth century — we think of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the first mass, the letter written by Pêro Vaz de Caminha and the images of a tropical Eden. In that new world, the native women with their hard flattened hair, the *ibira pitanga* tree and redwood, provided the backdrop for the discovery of what was to become the greatest country in South America.

Historians and researchers from various countries have always studied that territory, not only its generous geography, gold mines, ethnicities of all colours, origins and customs, but also the potential offered by nature in multiple aspects. Our heroes stand out in books, in national celebrations and even in the themes of the Samba Schools. But, for the ones who are passionate about fashion — students, *designers*, stylists or diletantes — there are still very few publications that show the evolution of clothing, garments, costumes and fashion in Brazil over time. Nor is it an easy task to find a Brazilian work that can understand the fashion movements and their genetic codes that promote revolutions in the dress codes and in the way we dress. Doing research wasn't enough to satisfy this curiosity, much needed for a first in-depth analysis of the studies in that area and which are also related with a better understanding of the development of the accessories, fabrics, colours, prints, shapes and styles.

For a long time, it was believed that Brazil did not produce fashion and this truth was mirrored in Brazilian consumers' desire for European and especially French products.

The fashion brands that really mattered, and were truly desirable, were international and those that told a story and had brand power and market interest, likewise, were the ones that were marketed as being foreign.

Indeed, since the beginning, the history that tells us about the dressing and consumer habits in our country, it is said that merchants adapted their Turkish, German and Portuguese-origin names to the French language.

Thus, it takes a long time for the social and economic settings related to the production and creation of fashion to start structuring themselves on foundations of credibility and social, economic and cultural investment.

To design fashion brands in Brazil, how to structure and build them with values that are perceived in our country is, therefore, a recent event.

According to André Carvalhal, in fashion or in life we are constantly searching for our own space: “Who are we?”, “Where are we?”, “Where are we going?”. That questioning is the core issue of our existence, as if everything needed to be revealed in the field of rationality, in order to become real. When we are dealing with the construction of a brand, finding out what to do is deeply connected with what the brand is. And quite often, the answers already exist, they are there, waiting to be discovered.

The book *A Moda Imita a Vida /Fashion Imitates Life/* has a touch of “self-help”. Written in a clear language and addressing the reader directly, without the slightest intention of providing recipes or miracle answers, it has the objective of generating *insights* about the ways of constructing and maintaining a fashion brand, through its self-knowledge.

André Carvalhal, the author, is a fashion marketing manager and a teacher of brand management in Post-graduation and extension courses in some Brazilian States (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Porto Alegre). He has a very clear style, as if he were standing in front of a classroom, chatting and exchanging points of view with his students. The text invites the reader to participate, to know and evaluate strategies adopted by the success brands in the Brazilian market, some of which have also achieved international projection nowadays.

The author is responsible for the marketing management of the “carioca” brand of feminine fashion — FARM - a case of success in the international scene of brands linked to a vision of the Brazilian world, more specifically of a brand with a “carioca” lifestyle that expands throughout the whole national territory and which calls itself a beach brand: it sells the connection between Rio de Janeiro, beach, colourful prints, carefree and saucy lifestyle.

*A Moda Imita a Vida /Fashion Imitates Life/* presents a narrative built around interviews with Ronaldo Fraga, Oskar Metsavaht from Osklem, Katia and Marcelo Barros from FARM, Isabela Capeto, among others, nowadays some of the leading professionals in the contemporary fashion market, who talk about identity, image, market position and actions, besides presenting a guide intended to provide help in the self-knowledge of the brand. Thus, supported by cases of Brazilian brands that are oriented according to principles that reveal values that establish and consolidate themselves in our country, which is the starting point to internationalise their activities, guarantees their chance to come to be implemented brands that respect personal values, that care about and disseminate

socio-cultural landscapes and hence, establish fashion brands that produce directions when they relate to other stories in the coming and going of contemporary references.

If, on the one hand, there are brands that are consolidated and established in the national scenery, on the other hand our consumers increasingly demand more truthful information, greater proximity and become more and more skeptical. Understanding what a brand is, no longer constitutes a mystery for consumers nowadays. "There was a time when to announce or (just) to hire a super-model was enough to make everyone run to the stores. Today a bit more than that is needed. People are more demanding when faced with so many choices. They are no longer willing to (just) be presented with the traditional communication, nor to buy the brands that have not updated themselves." And he continues; *"The truth is that nowadays there are too many products, too many brands, too much noise and too much marketing and so, surviving is a challenge. It is necessary to accept that the world has changed. And as human beings, we change our behaviour accordingly. As brands, we should change as well. We need to find not only a new way of thinking, but also a new way of being."*

As it can be easily observed, trademarks are constantly opening and closing. It seems that what ensures permanence nowadays is the level of relevance that the brand offers people. Yes, for the author, a brand is a living organism that is born, like us. It grows the same way we do and writes its own story (maybe the only difference is that it has the chance of being eternal while it lasts). It is not by chance that that people talk about brand DNA so much, because it is precisely by focusing on the meanings, recorded in each one of the brands that many people find in fashion a way of building their own identity. In fact, *"we like brands for what they represent. And the more meaning they have, the stronger and the more inspiring they will be. Building a brand is related to building a meaning. And once the meaning of the brand starts to come up, it needs to be treated as something precious. It must be nourished and preserved."*

Thus, throughout the book, it becomes clear that one needs to think, know and reflect about the recent history of fashion brands in Brazil, the context of brand is widely understood as everything that surrounds it; from the logo, name or label that identifies and differentiates products in the market and also the organization, history, trajectory, fame, concept, identity, values and all the signification that adds magic and personalizes the desired soul of a product. The latter is defined by the author while it is in the manufacturing process, as a mere "garment" (that maybe you don't even need), until it is baptized by a brand and becomes a fashion product, a desire-product.

Every brand is therefore a group of settings. Just like us, it is an integration of several things. And besides the (uncountable) variables that interfere in consumer behaviour, it is the result of this reading (what a brand means to each person) that will generate a link of affection, desire or repulsion.

Something very similar happens to us in our personal relationships. We meet a lot of people in our lives. Some will remain (for what they mean to us), colleagues will become friends, "family", partners, while we will just let go of others.

These precious associations between the life of the consumer subject and the brand, and even the possible relationship, seduction and links that position and create

mutual and continuous identities, they continue in meaningful relationships in the 278 pages of the book.

To transmit contents that are established through a great conviviality with brands and the practice of success in the market to the students of higher education courses is an excellent possibility to enable dialogue and the teaching of strategies to read and build market values that reinforce the Brazilian brand and fashion in the enhancement of the national consumer. He/She is maybe the most resistant, and the most international that possibly gets more enticed by the cultural values that are implicit in the Brazilian products and brands.

The book will be launched by the end of February in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. When buying it, the reader will be invited to interact and participate in the reflections that are established throughout, by doing the analysis worksheets and the assessment exercises that accompany it. ✍

André Carvalho graduated in advertising and journalism and has a post-graduation in digital marketing. He is a Professor of Fashion Marketing and Branding at ESPM, FGV and Perestroika. He has been a brand manager and consultant for 6 years, leading the marketing of FARM, the women's fashion brand.

"A Estação das Letras e Cores" is a publisher devoted to higher education, and its mission is text editing in the fields of fashion, design and communication. It is interested in reflecting about trends, brands, and worries mainly about publishing works by national authors who study and know the dynamics and policy of Brazilian fashion.

It is fundamental to seize this time of interest and growth of the sector, so that we can prepare ourselves to a greater professional, structuring the area which is still young and needs maturity, in order to get experience and attention.

Traduzido por João Paulo Abreu Silva.