

# Technology and Creativity: Fashion Design in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## ABSTRACT

Creatively harnessing the zeitgeist, or spirit of the times, and translating its inspiration into unique, timely, and marketable fashions has been the key to survival of apparel companies since the early 20th century. Increased global competition makes the development of a financially successful fashion product more difficult than ever, however technology has significantly increased efficiency in many components of the supply chain (Kusterbeck, 2008). In the fashion business, it is the designer's role to translate cultural influences into new products (Lamb & Kallal, 1992). This research was developed to enhance the understanding of fashion design in the post-modern context: How has technology influenced the creative design process?

Focusing on creativity in fashion design, this study evolved using a grounded theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) approach to qualitative inquiry. Luxury-level fashion designers and industry executives in France and the United States were interviewed in depth regarding creativity and the influence of technology, specifically the Internet, on the fashion design process. Data analysis led to defining a typology for creativity and a typology for technology in fashion design in the global competitive environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through relating these typologies to various dimensions of the work of a fashion designer, the study contributed a new perspective to the social-cultural and ideological shifts that are occurring.