

**YAŞAR UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**  
**MASTER THESIS**

**Customer orientation, Cross cultural communication,  
Market demand & Social media: An e-business case from  
British fashion industry**

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## FORM OF OATH

This is to confirm my master thesis was independently composed/authored by myself, using solely the referred sources and support.

I additionally assert that this thesis has not been part of another examination process.

Date 06/10/2016

Signature

Maria

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to start by thanking my supervisor Assist.Prof.Dr Ayda Sabuncuoglu for all her assistance and efforts in the times when things were not going well. Without her wisdom this thesis would have not been completed.

Secondly I would like to thank Dr Cagri Bulut for his guidance and humble gestures through the process.

Finally I would like to thank my family; especially my mother for her strong support and belief in me, eventually my friends for their patience and understanding during the critical times.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Master Thesis**

# **Customer orientation, Cross cultural communication, Market demand & Social media: An e-business case from British fashion industry**

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The fashion industry, being very dynamic in its nature is combined with the fourth industrial revolution under the globalization effect. That makes it very hard for companies interfering on the field; they end up failing in computing their structure to an e-business concept. The aim of this thesis is to design an e-business model for the fashion companies, to use internally to achieve success.

In order to find out the impacting major factors, a qualitative research with a case study has been conducted. Semi-structured interviews, the company's website analysis and a triangulation of data helped on shaping the method.

The findings revealed that there is a strong connection between four impacting factors on the success of an e-business which are; market demand, cross cultural communication, customer orientation and social media tools.

**Keywords:** Fashion industry, Industry 4.0, E-commerce, Social Media

## ÖZET

### YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

# Müşteri odaklılık, Kültürlerarası iletişim, Pazar talepleri ve Sosyal Medya: İngiltere moda endüstrisi bir e-ticaret vaka analizi

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Moda endüstrisi, küreselleşmenin etkisi altında gerçekleşen dördüncü dönem endüstriyel devrimi sebebiyle dinamik bir yapıya sahiptir. Bu durum, sektördeki müdahil şirketler açısından zorluklara neden olmakta ve elektronik ticaret anlayışına uyum sağlayacak yapısal düzenlemelerde başarısız olmalarına yol açmaktadır. Bu tez çalışmasının amacı moda sektöründe faaliyet gösteren işletmeler için bir elektronik ticaret iş modelini ortaya koymaktır. Tez araştırması kapsamında temel etki faktörlerini bulmak için nitel araştırma ve örnek olay inceleme yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme gerçekleştirilmesi, şirketin web sayfasının analiz edilmesi ve verinin çeşitlendirilmesi, yöntemin oluşturulmasında faydalı olmuştur. Bulgular incelendiğinde, elektronik ticaret alanında başarıya etki eden pazardaki talep, kültürlerarası iletişim, müşteri yönelimi ve sosyal medya araçları olmak üzere dört etki faktörü arasında güçlü bir bağlantı olduğu görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Moda endüstrisi, Endüstri 4.0, E-ticaret, Sosyal Medya

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## 1-INTRODUCTION

Globalization has made the world flat, as the famous Thomas Friedman referred to in his book. Therefore, competitiveness has raised to a never known before level; companies now need to be over creative to keep up with the cadency. For a company to be well positioned in nowadays market, there is a need of technology integration and a high customer value added. In the opposite case and in a long term, companies risk to fail at their mission and dissolve quickly in such a competitive market. One of the most professional and known ways to be part of the online world, is the practise of electronic commerce.

E-business concept started during the nineties and became a must on the twenties; there is almost no exception for that. The phenomenon applies to all the industries but is more emphasized in creative industries especially the fashion industry. Although the requirement of such implications on the online world, there is a sort of saturation not allowing all the e-businesses to survive the battle; because the issue is not on launching but more about lasting. This thesis research questions are about what impacts the success of an e-business in a market where the digital industry meets the fashion industry, what strategies can be used to avoid the effervescence, and how are social media tools changing the business interactions.

The aim of this thesis is to first elaborate on the hidden links among four major factors, and second of all raise awareness on the importance of the management and combination of them factors for a successful e-business in the fashion industry. Those factors are as follow: Market Demand, Cross cultural Communication, Customer Orientation and Social Media Tools, all respectively given the following abbreviations: M.D, CcC, C.O, S.M.T (from now on, the possibility of using the factors abbreviations instead of their full name, might occur). That will constitute a proposal of an e-business model that fashion companies could use in order to integrate it within their structure without depending on a technological firm to do so.

The novel model will be communicating with the final customer through the e-business where the three factors; market demand, cross cultural communication

and customer orientation come as dimensions and social media tools as the order factor which has changed the traditional rules of doing business. The ultimate expectancy from this model is that it develops an e-business model for fashion industry in digital communication.

The thesis design is taking a case study form or more of an in depth qualitative research presenting a case about a company who sells softwares to the apparel industry, and tries to operate in it while undertaking the roles of the communications with the customers. The company's name is Dressipi, a start-up having a purpose to represent the best online fashion style adviser by combining their technology skills with top stylists recommendations and understanding every woman's struggle in being busy and wanting to be looking lovely.

It is an entrepreneurship study based on transactions in between today's world and the digital world for the business enterprises that are looking for a kind of companies which will communicate with their customers, and try to outsource that digital communication with the customers because for today they can not create such a specialized department in their enterprises. There is basically a transaction in the fashion industry that the companies can not communicate with their other businesses, from this reason, the e-business flourished. What can be the tasks and the mission of this e-business will be the subject.

Besides, it would be good to elaborate the issues from the beginning; the idea is that those textile companies have the core competencies in designing and manufacturing their products according to their customers expectations and demands but by showing them through internet or social media is kind of different for a company which has been dealing with the suppliers, manufacturers, designers and distribution channels only. Now, there is a new proficiency they have to apply in their organization and it is very hard for them to do so by having their employees focused on their specialized functions; that is why they outsource these operations. Dressipi case undertakes high skills or high qualified aspects on behalf of the fashion companies.

This thesis considers that there are two main points why this e-business exists. The first one says that; there are people who never want to work under anyone so they be the entrepreneurs, their own boss. the second one is; about the many existing transactions within the industries that the company sees as the kind

of opportunity, which it tries to fulfill and take care of, by getting people and fashion leading brands together, negotiating and finding more solutions for both parties.

This thesis is willing to discuss the literature starting from a general description of the fashion industry and the digital age and also showing their interactions as a background and rationale for a novel model, to point out what brought up the concept considered on this study case or simply why the company exists, then, narrow it down to the e-business ideology and its relation with the four main factors mentioned on the previous lines (M.D, CcC, C.O, S.M.T).

By laying out the full picture of the situation, there is an obvious gap in the literature regarding the focus on fashion companies delegating such parts of the process to a company of a dedicated specialization. A kind of issue that the international or global fashion companies are in the obligation to deal with, and in some days maybe they will be able to create a department of e-business within their own organizations.

The thesis will be designed into three chapters as follow; the first is combining an introduction as an overview of the topic with a literature review in order to define the notions and terms in a relevant and fair representation. The second is the heart of this study which is the methodology describing the way things have been dealt with from the data collection with the conditions on which this data has been gathered, to the case sampling to eventually end it with an evaluation of findings. The third and final is discussing and concluding by summing up: the topic benefits to the field of literature leaving room for improvement, mentioning some limitations of the thesis and giving recommendations involving both future researches on the topic itself and on what could the company Dressipi integrate for a better performance. This last section will also include a paragraph of the kind of readers the thesis might interest.

## **2-FASHION INDUSTRY & INDUSTRY 4.0**

To start the literature review from a logical and structured perspective, the first approach is taken towards the fashion and digital industries scope followed by an introduction to the e-business concept. This section has three sub-sections obviously and as follow:

The first sub-section elaborates on the fashion notion through eras to show how its meaning has changed over time. It points out the main pioneers of the fashion industry to give a shape to its composition and show who participates as what. Then it narrows the broad subject down to the fast fashion concept which is an important aspect that fashion takes when a product life cycle is shorter than the typical one. The reason for giving importance to the fast fashion concept is because it makes the industry even much more dynamic in its process requiring companies for a quick adoption of trends and styles.

The second sub-section is regarding the industry 4.0 background and its objectives. It discusses the e-commerce effect and how it spread itself in the professional world in a remarkable manner, which in turn has been facing and undergoing the effects of both internet growth and social media use.

The third and last sub-section is the e-business concept considered as a branch of e-commerce. On the context of this thesis, only two activities of the e-business have been considered according to their full representation of the case study. Those two activities are B2B and B2C; the most used types of businesses interactions aiming to reach other businesses on the B2B side and customers on the B2C.

### **2.1 Fashion industry as a creative industry:**

Many changes in the industries environment have occurred over time due to the globalization effect generating a tough competition to go through, a technological revolution and a raise in terms of customer's preferences. Traditional structures of companies no longer fulfill those requirements (Djelic and Ainamo, 1999).

According to Tran (2008), fashion companies have moved to creative activities

and focusing less on the production side. Companies need to think of valorizing their purpose and involving their activities in more than what they are created for; which is providing the basic products to the customers. In a world in which brands rule, fashion brands are no longer bundles of functional characteristic but they are means to provide and create experience (Schmitt, 1999; Jablanović et al, 2015). The spirit of the time for the companies interacting within the fashion field is to be able to reach the inner self of the customer, people now have a thirst for being part of a story and not just labeled; referring to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, products can satisfy physiological and safety needs, services can satisfy the needs for belonging and esteem; experiences however, reach even further and fulfill the need for self-actualization, knowledge, understanding and aesthetics (Yu & Fang, 2009; Jablanović et al, 2015). It can also be said that this whole switch of situation comes from the fact that terms and notions have changed through generations and perceptions which modifies each of the actions taken by the companies. The notion of fashion has witnessed this switch and therefore embodied several apparitions, that nowadays, it is hard to limit it in one definition.

### **2.1.1 Fashion notion through eras:**

Our understanding of the luxury fashion industry has in fact significantly evolved. There is no single specific situation called fashion or luxury, it is whatever inspires people in terms of clothing of course, but also lifestyles, idols, adventures, food and so forth. It is the spirit of the times where the consumers no longer rely of the basic need fulfillment but see way beyond that (CERNA, 1995; Djelic and Gutsatz, 1998; Ecole de Paris, 1998; Djelic and Ainamo, 1999).

As mentioned on the previous paragraph; companies, in this context, interacting within the fashion industry nowadays do not just have a basic responsibility of managing their production of goods or services; it requires much more to deal with in order to be the best ingredient in the pot. Those companies add value to their purpose; a philosophy of being in their membership, representing clothe trend but also an expression of existence to their customers who would like to be differenciated in every aspect by wearing the brand of their choice they are loyal to for such a uniqueness.

Due to the globalization in last years, the fashion industry has progressively changed the way in which it operates. Companies need to find their place in the market in order to be successful. In this environment, innovation and differentiation play an important role in order to gain a better position. It becomes essential to use different ways to reach consumers, and the use of IT has transformed the traditional concern of the firms in brand identity, distribution or design to look for other ways to enrich their organizations. Web technologies have an essential role in this process of innovation (Salmeron and Hurtado, 2006). According to Blazquez (2014), the reason for fashion industry being slower than other industries in adopting the e-commerce is due to the difficulty of translating the in-store experience into online experience (Jablanović et al, 2015). Ignoring the e-market share is not the solution but finding gaps to fill among those difficulties is; for example, by thinking of what could be the advantages to bring into life better online than in a store. Since text doesn't inspire shopping but visual images do then the efforts are put on pulling out the senses reactions by creating: an eye catching showroom, a window shopping experience without forgetting the commitment to personalize services. So, just as the instore experience; when having someone to help you in case of hesitations or questions, the person would feel the same treat online with more advantages. That way, an in depth review of the situation will be happening as if it was a real face to face interaction. The effect of the switch is still on-going; as the fashion industry involved more and more participants in the process in order to fulfill the needs of present times. Those participants are called pioneers, considered as players at different levels and all related to supporting the fashion field.

### **2.1.2 Pioneers in the fashion industry:**

According to Michelle M.Granger (2012), the fashion industry players have been described by organizing them in three main parts as follow; the first concerns the creators/designers, providers of raw materials and manufacturers, the second is about the retailers from apparel to home furnishings. And the third concern which is the last is regarding the auxiliary industries that support the work done by the creators and retailers.

The auxiliary industries is the aimed category on this thesis, which is itself a wide topic to talk about but to briefly give an idea of what it involves; the



participants are as many as cited in the following terms. Some of them are event producers, modeling and talent agencies, fashion photographers, stylists, bloggers, fashion advice sites etc. All them branches, get funded by the parent company which has a large organization factor in the fashion industry.

To fully capture the niche market of the auxiliary industries in an online world; it could be seen in social medias as a form of blogging and sharing photographs which can be found on facebook pages for instance or any other social media site. This doesn't mean it is only undertaken by professionals, but it actually includes any person influencing a community of followers like a page owner.

Overally, the auxiliary industries gather whoever is standing by and boosting the fashion industry direct players. The fact of targetting them auxiliary industries as the topic 'principal character' is not out of random, but because those companies interfering within; offer services beyond tangible products. That is harder to manage in terms of business achievements and success but it is exactly what is looked for to create the opportunity of integrating creative activities rather than focusing on the productive side only as it has been seen on the previous sub-section. Those auxiliary companies represent not only a bridge for those creators and retailers to reach their customers, but create a strong connection between a brand and its user.

The network becomes much more complex but the flow of information is somehow more fluent for a product image or an advertising for example, to reach the customer. There are many points of connection indeed, but by each coherently leading to the other; it helps on showing exclusive trends and transporting their content faster then ever. The adoption of the speed of the process is then handled, which gives many benefits on the side of fast fashion concept.

### **2.1.3 Fast fashion concept:**

The fast fashion concept appeared because of the customers's demand with the upstream operations of design, procurement, production, and distribution (Tokatli, 2008; Jablanović et al, 2015). Fast fashion happens when there is a short lead time with a big amount of successive trendy and non lasting collections offered in the market. This ideology makes it a double challenge to compagnies from a first level of survival then from the fact of being able to compete all along

with a remarkable flexibility. It is surely pushed up by a sign of quick boredom from the customer and also a thirst for exclusivity. The rise of 'fast fashion' represents the increasing shortening of product life cycles in the fashion industry, as customers increasingly demand catwalk style products immediately after fashion week which is putting increased pressure on large organisations to continually innovate (Lin et al.2012). While most companies in fast fashion industry appear as a vertical integration to put a great emphasis on the efficiency of the supply chain (Zhenxiang and Lijie, 2011), they would have more control on setting their strategies and enough gap to think about their business in terms of innovation and uniqueness of service like ZARA, one of the leading fast fashion concept companies who reached the record of producing 11000 items annually (Sardar and Lee, 2015). This gives the clients or users of ZARA products a wide range of items to select from season to season, and on the other hand, gives designers a free choice of creating extraordinary designs that can be showcased on display to not only attract new users to the market but also keep the existing customers eager. In parallel, users are becoming more and more demanding due to the fact that of the vast variety of items getting produced seasonally, this makes a competitive market to follow for small businesses as the lack of designers and producers to keep up with the trend of fashion is highly existing.

From a supplier perspective, according to Bhardwaj and Tennessee (2010), it could be seen that retailers found a niche market with a flexibility and rapid responsiveness in today's market due to the quick fashion approach which transitions from a production-driven to a market-driven aspect in the fashion industrial world. For an efficient work to be conducted; collaboration, information sharing and trust were needed (Birtwistle, Siddhiqui, and Fiorito 2003).

There is a fast process of information flow and trends which leads to a variety of choices and option for consumers to shop (Hoffman 2007). Fashion retailers find themselves forced to renew merchandise in order to deal with the growth of the market competition, which is a consequence of sociocultural factors and a constant need of exclusivity (Sproles and Burns 1994).

Improvements in communication between retailers and producers through technology such as computer-aided- design (CAD) and electronic data interchange (EDI) have contributed to shortening lead times (Bruce, Daly, and

Towers 2004). They all become tied up to one big supply chain, which makes it easy to take a good control on what they do.

Technology has obviously its role on the online world, understanding how it got introduced to industries is an important part to assimilate the rest.

## **2.2 Industry 4.0 & Digital Age:**

Ever since the beginning of industrialization, technological leaps have led to paradigm shifts which today are ex-post named “industrial revolutions”: in the field of mechanization (1st industrial revolution), of the intensive use of electrical energy (2nd industrial revolution), and of the widespread digitalization (3rd industrial revolution) (Lasi et al, 2014).

With a look back at history; according to McCraw (1997), the first industrial revolution occurred between 1760s and 1840s, and one of the most important inventions of that period was the steam engine and the use of hydropower which revolutionized production. The textile industry is very much associated with this revolution in terms of machinery invention which replaced the human labor needed to make clothes.

The late 1900 century, the rise of electrical engineering and mass production, constitutes the second industrial revolution. Production was increasingly powered by electric motors and the internal combustion engine. The first assembly line belt was created by the car company Ford; which helped the process time for building a car decrease by roughly 75%.

In the mid 1970, electronics and information technology began to expend rapidly into industries. Virtual corporations became conceivable and the typical products of this period included the Video Cassette Recording (VCR), the cellular telephone, the personal computer with its vast range of software and a huge assortment of pharmaceuticals. At that time, Siemens developed the first programmable logic controller and production became increasingly based on computer assisting controllers monitoring the state of the input device and controlling the output based on a custom program.

On the basis of an advanced digitalization within factories, the combination of Internet technologies and future-oriented technologies in the field of “smart” objects (machines and products) seems to result in a new fundamental

paradigm shift in industrial production.

It is a futuristic project where machines get to deal with the process of production by themselves as well as order the tasks to each other without a requirement of a human interference. Those machines are equipped with motion detectors which allows them to acknowledge the process of manufacturing while being all strongly connected to one network. Tempted by this future expectation, the term “Industry 4.0” was established ex-ante for a planned “4th industrial revolution”, the term being a reminiscence of software versioning (Lasi, 2014).

The major technical background of industry 4.0 is the introduction of internet technologies into industry. A potential hit given that all contributing parties collaborate well to overcome the challenges (Drath and Horch, 2014). Industry 4.0 refers to cooperation between different factories that are generally located in different remote places. The objective of industry 4.0 is to connect and integrate traditional industries, particularly manufacturing, to realize flexibility, adaptability, and efficiency and increase effective communication between producers and consumers. Therefore, communications and networks play an important role in Industry 4.0 (Xiaomin Li, 2015). Yet, this fourth industrial revolution is still considered as a futuristic plan of intelligent factories where everything will be interconnected wirelessly. Machines as well as devices will be communicating directly with each other and controlling each other cooperatively, all without the need of a human interruption and expertise due to the fact that these systems known as cyber physical systems are equipped with sensor factors and communication technology. The control and linked sensors are connected to the internet. For the customers, this means tailored made products at relatively affordable prices. For industry, it means highly flexible mass production can be rapidly adapted to market changes.

Again, the example of Siemens is shaping the world of the industry, showing that connecting the real with the virtual world of production is making it possible to enter entirely new dimensions in quality, efficiency and flexibility. It is important for a company's fund to be dedicated to such an investment, which gives a long term return in different aspects; such as a brand image, a customer idol, an open door to the global market, economies on interactions and so forth. Firms can expect both an increase in services offered and sales by adding the web

to their traditional channels. E-commerce and web technologies are a great start in terms of strategies for keeping their current customers and luring new ones, expanding their markets, finding new distribution channels and providing value-added customer services (Chatterjee, et al., 2002; Salmeron and Hurtado, 2006).

### **2.2.1 The E-Commerce Effect:**

The practise of electronic commerce (e-commerce) has been established in 1965 when consumers were able to withdraw money from Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) and make purchases using point of scale terminals and credit cards. This was followed by systems that crossed organizational boundaries and enable organizations to exchange information and conduct business electronically (Senn, 2000, Molla and Licker, 2001). The term e-commerce has taken many forms and definitions over time; when it has been notified by Zwass (1996) as the sharing of business information, maintaining business relationships and conducting business transactions by means of telecommunications networks. Later on, the previous statement has been supported by considering that e-commerce actually includes various processes within and outside the organization in addition to buying and selling activities (Molla and Licker, 2001). The idea of an e-commerce offering wider services than the money transactions is supported on this context, as a traditional business would need much more than its operating services to succeed, same goes for the online business which should think of more features in terms of quality service, innovativeness, customer value and so forth. E-commerce may help companies to reduce their overheads by having access to a wider range of suppliers, improving the internal system and using it as a new sales front to aim for customers (Pelissie du Rausas et al., 2011;Fauska et al, 2013).

E-commerces not only gave opportunities for potential customers in an online world, but also gave occasions to small businesses to be recognized by a large audience without the need of owning a corner shop. This also reduces the overhead of the products due to the fact of not needing storage area or staff or management of the store, which leads to the fact that customers become eager to purchase online rather than going to a store and buy a product with a double price. E-commerce basic features stayed the same so far, but with what is surrounding it as developments and changes all along the events from globalization , companies are challenged to think on how to deal with the whole combination. In fact,

internet expansion made it possible to reach more and more businesses and customers, but also harder for a company x to be noticed among the rest unless this company x has the potential and know how of penetrating the internet world. To be selling their business image and pulling more communities, companies thought of taking some of the human aspect and start interacting with their customers. The use of social media here, plays a very essential role.

### **2.2.2 Internet Growth And Social Media**

The Internet has truly transformed the way consumers shop in a multitude of categories (e.g., travel, books, videos) and the way most retailers do business with their suppliers as well as their customers. Internet keeps growing as the fundamentals of its usage and advertising are still in place. It is now a must to go through internet in order to be qualified to participate in the market competition. Starting in the mid-1990s and continuing into the 2000s, the retailing marketplace obviously changed significantly due to the tremendous surge in the use of the Internet by virtually all consumers and business segments (Grewal and Levy, 2009).

More and more successful retailers are capturing the power of the Internet in various fashions, including offering more stock keeping units (SKUs) online (e.g., Staples), providing online customization (e.g., Dell), and publishing online flyers and promotions (e.g., CVS). Consumers use the Internet to shop more effectively (Puccinelli et al, Grewal and Levy, 2009).

Internet is a fantastic growth sector, the long term global fundamentals for its usage and advertising are still very much in place. The key thing to focus on with the growth of internet is social; investors are really latched on the fact that social is a real opportunity with the internet to not miss out.

The growing availability of high-speed Internet access further added to the popularity of the social media concept, leading to the creation of social networking sites such as MySpace (in 2003) and Facebook (in 2004) (Kaplan and Haenlein,2010).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010); social media is a selection of applications that got developed on to the technology Web 2.0, which allows the exchange of user content. Web 2.0 is a term that was first used in 2004 to describe

a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the World Wide Web; which is a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion. When Web 2.0 represents the ideological and technological foundation, User Generated Content (UGC) can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. The term, which achieved broad popularity in 2005, is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users. Marketers are in fact following their audience wherever it goes, and consumers are now strongly focused on social media.

Consumers don't only use social media for the sake of ads to follow what's related to their purchases only. It is about showing their identities, talking and seeing people from all around the world, learning new things, sharing and expressing their thoughts and by that; building up a community of people having same ideas and interests. There is also curiosity which makes it interesting to chase other's people social life for certain reasons like wanting to know what the friends have done 'today', or scrolling through talented people's pictures out of admiration, or looking for what to make as a person model to follow when it comes to lifestyle or anything else which is exciting to live for adventurous spirits and so forth. For some, it can be a source of entertainment and nothing more, while others would take it more seriously; for instance, the conspicuous consumption which is on behalf a main reason of displaying wealth and standard of life which results in getting popular sometimes. The list of motives is long and depends on each person's personal and other factors. The openness to the virtual world also allows consumers to relate to the brand itself by commenting or criticizing which in turn helps the company improve its performance and get along with its customer needs from a bright angle because then if those comments and critics are not given time and consideration, they could easily ruin the brand's reputation and it is very much easy to trust a complete stranger who had an experience with that brand more than the brand's statement and marketing ideas because despite the fact that it is a stranger, this person might be representing a major part of the population and her experience may be very talkative to many. Therefore, it is essential for a company to understand how its targetted consumer

perceives things and what influences his behavior.

Social media did appear on early times, but it wasn't as famous before since there was less interaction within the virtual world. A very big population is part of the phenomenon, with a variety of age differences; it is therefore reasonable to say that social media represent a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to companies operating in online space or any space, for that matter (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media is a very wide notion to diagnose and it comes with many aspects; it needs to be cracked, and that is how Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated it: "applied to the context of social media, we assume that a second classification can be made based on the degree of self-disclosure it requires and the type of self-presentation it allows. Combining both dimensions leads to a classification of social media; with respect to social presence and media richness, applications such as collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia) and blogs score lowest, as they are often text-based and hence only allow for a relatively simple exchange. On the next level are content communities (e.g., YouTube) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) which, in addition to text-based communication, enable the sharing of pictures, videos, and other forms of media. On the highest level are virtual game and social worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft, Second Life), which try to replicate all dimensions of face-to-face interactions in a virtual environment." For a better understanding of those applications; collaborative projects have a main purpose of becoming the reliable source for web visitors and make them choose it over the thousands and thousands of other sources of information, which is in turn an advantage for companies to publish and update their history and news. Blogs; are a sort of personal websites that usually display date-stamped entries in reverse chronological order, managed by one person and could come in a multitude of variations depending on what's driving the author's motivations which could be supported, commented on and argued over by the followers. Content communities; without requiring any personal account, there is huge amount of media content shared between users, in a wide range of different media types like vides, images, including text. Social networking sites; enable users to create their personal space that they could share with their friends, family or whoever people they would like to invite as members of their list, send messages to them in any form wanted (text, video, image),



publish statuses and interests. Finally, virtual game and social worlds; platforms that replicate a three-dimensional environment in which users appear in a form of avatar and interact with each other just as in real life. The only difference between the virtual game and the social worlds is the restriction of the rules to follow on the virtual game. Social media of course has its positive side, which could turn to the total opposite in case of lack or absence of management and acknowledgment of its use. Companies deciding for implicating themselves in such a thing, are basically in a position of managing their business electronically as much as they do so on the traditional market. The electronic business has also its concept with its rules and guidelines to respect, its advantages and disadvantages to try to balance in order to achieve success.

### **2.3 E-business concept:**

E-business concept occurred since the browser made internet accessible to the broader community (Coltman et al, 2001), which keeps growing in an unbelievable way. The actual meaning of e-business is extracted from the e-commerce, but on this case; the companies don't only aim for financial return but transmit themselves from a traditional business to an electronic business to expand and have more market share. Clothing retailers have exemplified that well, as they are not only offering the customers to buy their items online, but they are also letting them do a virtual try-on for example before making any purchase. E-business is not only a part on e-commerce but it is also dealing with the value chain internally and externally. Companies nowadays use the electronic business for a better branding purpose rather than just selling their products, because they have realized that their clients have as many choices choices as they want and if they were about to chose them over another brand; it is because of such a difference. It is very easy to set up an e-commerce and start selling whatever product which would fulfill a certain need in people's life, what is hard and needs more strategic considerations is an e-business platform paying attention to the full parts of a business existence and its relation with the rest of the supply chain.

For business companies, it is a beautiful occasion to pop up and interact with all this population waiting to get more entertainment on the net, but it is unfortunately not as easy as it sounds like for those companies to adapt their traditional activities and create a sort of complementarity with the electronic lines.

Some face such difficulties due to different reasons; such as entry timing, lack of resources, emerging technology, misled focus and so forth. To avoid this handicap, and still be part of the online revolution; companies decide to collaborate and make deals with professionals which could handle that part of their business in much better conditions.

Electronic business (e-business) today plays a major role in the world's economy. Based on various types of trading partners, according to Phan (2013), there are many categories of e-business which all have in common the fact that they are conducted over the internet. Some of them will be cited as follow;

Business to Business (B2B); commercial transactions online, between two different businesses where one is procuring different services to the other. Business to Consumer (B2C); where the transactions take place between the business organization and the consumer.

Consumer to Business (C2B); the opposite of B2C obviously and the most recent e-business model, where individual consumers provide a product or service to companies which are willing to purchase them.

Consumer to Consumer (C2C); is about people who come together online either to buy, sell or trade. Consumers interact directly with each other on online platform that a business does operate.

People to People (P2P); or a peer to peer, is any company which takes care of the business platform to engage consumers who would use this service to be directly related to each other. The company is basically a sort of match maker in between.

Government to Citizen (G2C); it is about the services provided by the government to its citizens, including information, tax payments among others. Without the use of face to face operations, all e-business transactions are performed electronically by using computer and communication networks. Phan (2013) also refers that, e-business has principal functions of applications which are; electronic markets or e-marketplaces: the transactions of money by dealing with goods and services exchange, inter-organizational systems: facilitating inter- and intra-organization flow of goods, services, information, communication, and collaboration, eventually customer service: offering a variety

of services when it comes to assisting all along the process and being responsive to any of the occurring unsatisfactions and so forth.

E-businesses give a large advantage to its users, by reducing the price of products, giving vast options of items all over the world which can be accessed any time of the day, adding to it the fact that it doesn't have checkout queues. For the purpose of this study, only B2B and B2C are taken into consideration.

### **2.3.1 B2B e-commerce:**

B2B markets are about companies or businesses interacting with each other, buying goods and services in order to use them in development, creation and delivery of own products and services or to resell to others (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010; Fauska et al,2013). B2B e-commerce would be defined the same way but with an integration to the online world, adding more value to its existence and interacting globally instead of being limited locally and costing more in case of a need of a business extension. Following the same perspective, Laudon and Traver (2011) approve that B2B e-commerce is defined as B2B commerce, which is enabled by the internet (Fauska et al,2013). Companies find themselves in the obligation of creating a virtual interaction between each other in order to ease the process and fasten the information flow as well as link up all to a close supply chain. Companies that use B2B e-commerce are aware of the significant profit they would make on behalf the savings of not needing a warehouse or any settlement. The advantages of running a B2B e-commerce are several; for instance, it allows an international presence with no cost, a connected supply chain unifying the business with its suppliers and customers, a remarkable traceability, all among others. Unfortunately, the B2B e-commerce has also its disadvantages such as lack of insurance, not easy to adopt on some specificities, no face-to-face interaction, low barriers to competitors and so forth. B2B is the largest type of e-commerce based on market volume. It is about ten times larger than the size of B2C e-commerce (Laudon and Traver,2011; Fauska et al,2013).

### **2.3.2 B2C e-commerce:**

Despite the enjoyment of shopping in stores during a whole day from a center to another, people now prefer to save money and time by shopping online, B2C e-commerce refers to online business focusing on individual end consumers (Laudon and Traver,2011; Fauska et al,2013). Web site and B2C activities are an advantageous means of marketing for the firms (Willcocks and Plant, 2001; Salmeron and Hurtado, 2006), the exclusive news from the company's angle and the quick access to information from the consumer's angle finally meet up, the instant exchange with the customer gives a feeling of involvement and belonging which in turn creates loyalty and attachment. The B2C e-commerce advantages are surely concerning both the business and the consumers. Companies on their side, have the opportunity to directly interact with a large community of customers which cancels the presence of a 'middleman' role, and helps their e-business on better defining their tasks and reshaping their misled objectives to be on an agreement with their visitors. Also, there are less efforts and repeated control sessions due to the workflow automation. The consumers on the other side, are free to visit the webpage in an unlimited amount of times during 24 hours, that eliminates the pressure and the time management issue. Consumers also can automatically report and are sure that it will be reaching the company the sooner possible.

All the most significant fashion companies have developed their own Web sites, but only a few of them have developed B2C (Salmeron and Hurtado, 2006). One of the biggest inconvenient is that it is effectively hard to personalize the service for millions and millions of customers, and that requires an other department specialization only customer focused, so the companies keep a general control on the business and its products while assisted with a customer value added. Yet, both fashion and digital industries are interlinked and would merge well under well stated conditions. Besides, it is acceptable to discuss the probable opportunities to take when the fashion world merges with the digital one.

### **3-TRANSACTIONS IN INDUSTRY 4.0 & FASHION INDUSTRY**

This section which represents the middle section of the literature review focuses on the existing relation between both the fashion industry and the industry 4.0 which have been clarified separately on the previous section. Before elaborating on the kind of transaction opportunities to give matter to, between both industries, there will be a first sub section defining the transaction cost concept and theory in order to make the reader aware of the source and purpose of these transactions.

#### **3.1 Transaction Cost Theory:**

A company existing for its purpose comes on behalf the fact that there is a cost benefit to gain out of a transaction between this company and another company. The cost of negotiation and conduction of contract regarding the transaction is also taken into account. This cost may go down but can not be eliminated due to the rapid information transmission that specialists of the field will sell (Coase, 1937).

Transaction costs are all costs buyer and seller incur as they gather information and negotiate a sale. To exemplify the situation; if a certain company decides to sell a product 'y', this company will have to pay a visit to most of the companies that are creating the product 'y'. Another company, sees the opportunity and proposes to be in charge of all the process needed to be getting the requests that the company concerned is asking for. Then, this will certainly save time and money to the company concerned. The savings represent the transaction costs. Transaction cost theory, also referred to as TCT, as discussed by Williamson (1975), puts the notion of "transactions" or units of exchange as the focal point of the theory (Grover and Malhotra, 2003), as its name refers to, TCT regards a cost-economizing relationship between organizations. Williamson (1975, 1979, 1983) also suggests that 'a transaction occurs when a good or service is transferred across a technologically separable interface.' Two key assumptions characterize TCT (Rindfleisch and Heide, 1997). These can be summarized under the titles of bounded rationality and opportunism (Grover and Malhotra, 2003); bounded rationality occurs when the organizations of a specific field try to act rational but

are limited and very certainly mistaken on the process, opportunism is the purpose which brings up interest of transactioning or what these organizations don't have and see in others they could do a transaction with.

The transaction cost approach to the study of organizations has been applied at three levels of analysis. The first is regarding the broad image image of the enterprise in terms of its structure as given and asking how the operating parts would be linked up one to another. The second or middle level focuses on the operating parts and asks which activities should be performed within the firm, which outside it, and why. This can be pointing out the limitations of units within an organizations. The third level of analysis is concerned with the manner in which human assets are organized (Williamson, 1981). The focus on this thesis will be based on the second level, more specifically, on the outsided activities; defining TCT as a sort of cost resulting from the outsourcing decisions and could be for various reasons such as technology, market uncertainty, among others. Instead of being committed to a lot of expense and probably missing opportunities while trying to work on those specialized activities, companies sign themselves up to the agreement of transaction to avoid time loss, expenses and stress that go in to have to continually negotiating new deals; and that is what's known as the cost of a transaction; everytime it is done by the companies themselves, it takes lots of time and money in researching it and negotiating it. Those companies will potentially lose the flexibility aspect but on another side, will have the benefit of being able to predict in better conditions because this would make it easier to control and be in a more certain zone. Now, since this thesis topic is more about fashion, there is an unknown gap to fill regarding the opportunities of transaction cost that the companies interffering within the fashion industry would value. That will be the next sub-section.

### **3.2 Transactions As Opportunities In The Fashion Industry:**

In today's though competition and dynamism of the fashion marketing environment, channel and retailing systems compete for supremacy.

In theory, those systems that master the customer satisfaction and keep up with an efficient and effective chain will of course take it over less professional systems. In practice, however enough inertia exists to allow inefficiency to survive until an environmental shock or some pioneering entrepreneur initiates a

more effective process. Some systems adapt to the new milieu by either adopting new strong elements of systems or just investing less on those existing systems they can not manage well (Shemwell and Aun, 2010). Basic changes in environmental conditions, competitors, technologies and consumers (Gist 1968), allow more advanced forms of retailing to emerge. For instance, modern efficiencies in technology have allowed mail order companies whose business models already incorporate the type of centralized ordering and distribution necessary for internet retailing to expand to the internet more rapidly and efficiently than traditional store retailers (Shemwell and Aun, 2010).

Besides, companies willing to adapt themselves to the market bargains choose to integrate a new system version to theirs or simply decide to delegate this part of responsibility to another company which would know better about it, in transactions cost economic theory the basic premise is that market systems will outperform hierarchies whenever there is an efficient market for functions in questions (Shemwell and Aun, 2010). Transaction cost economics perspective point to firms deciding to either make-or- buy an input. In practice, this tends to result in low-skill functions being outsourced while those of higher value are retained, the outsourcing literature, driven from a perspective of transaction cost economics (TCE) has highlighted that sometimes the best advantage may come from devolving parts of the operational process to third party companies that offer cost or quality advantages over in-house production. This then allows the company to focus more resources on improving their core competence and competitive advantage in the marketplace. (Lin et al, 2013). As pointed by Lin, Piercy and Campbell (2013), several evolutions of research on outsourcing are apparent based on the nature of activity being considered; the first type of outsourcing is the typical type of outlocating parts of the manufacturing process (Taps and Steger-Jensen 2007), the second type is regarding the transportation and logistics (Chen et al, 2011) plus the exchanges across the supply chain (Harland et al. 2005, Ounnar et al. 2007), the third and last type, still emerging, concerns activities which are not about physical goods or movement but more of a service supporting the process (Everaert et al, 2007). It is all about this last part of outsourcing specified intangible assets like creativity in presenting the product/service to the customer. In the fashion industry, there is no focus on the

outsourcing of non- manufacturing activities (Lin et al, 2013).

The idea is well thought on this thesis, to give more visibility to this perspective. Basing on semi-structured interviews conducted and asked to the designers of London Fashion Week by the year 2010; when asked to define the term 'creativity', the respondents identified several key features. Many of them identified that creativity is such a broad concept that is difficult quantify or identify. By generalising from their answers, it is possible to determine common themes – creativity can be defined as something new or different, which is generated by people who are originally inspired by their daily life and then translate and express this to the world (Lin et al, 2013). Lin, Piercy and Campbell (2013), attest that two key skill sets are critical for new product success in the fashion sector – (1) highly creative new products and (2) successful commercialisation (marketing, production and market access); because there is almost no exclusivity left with the existence of similarity in products, the innovation is not only about the product design itself but all what is related to it. And most of the time, that is where the company faces its boundaries since it is specialized on giving shape to the product, not life to its story. For that reason, those types of fashion companies need to consider testing themselves on the relying of an e-business model, so they will undertake a vertical integration and handle this part of the job that is usually done by an outsider. The next section is proposing an e-business model with factors dimensions, being the hypotheses of this thesis, before being proven of the case study of course.

#### **4- E-BUSINESS MODEL FOR FASHION INDUSTRY**

In this last section of the literature, which is gathering the main points that this thesis is trying to enlighten; there are three sub-sections as follow: starting with the market demand which is basically the market resulted from the merging of the fashion industry market with the digital age. The second sub-section is concerning the communication online from a cross-culture perspective. Finally, the third sub-section is about the consumer orientation; taking the consumer as an individual and believing that the companies need to understand how the product or service impacts the consumer's perception, what motivates this consumer to purchase goods or services and how to activate the appropriate consumer self in a given situation.



#### **4.1 Market Demand:**

In recent years, the companies have been misled by market signs thinking that they could apply their same strategies used in the traditional market to the emerging market. While, obviously if different results are expected then different approaches should be taken in order to make a difference. The companies ended up lasting in a very short period of time with that cadency, and the consequences were hard to catch up on. To be successful, companies shouldn't sum up their decisions to reducing the prices and offering promotions because deals now are more of a typical offer than an added value service consumers would see as a differentiator criterion. Companies will need to search and implement innovative strategies that capitalize on both the power of the Internet and the changes in both traditional and electronic markets (Phan, 2002). The point here is not for companies to think the same way about succeeding but to think out of the box; to play on other features of the business in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors in a market they all try to be mastering in, obviously those features got to make them see beyond the strategies set for a normal process. As Phan (2002) testifies; the e-market place becomes more lucrative, it attracts new entrants and created turmoil in the market, still, there have been many spectacular successes and many failures. This thesis is taking a close look at those failures with an objective of creating an e-business model for them to apply. The potential of e-business is so great that many believe that e-business is the new economy that leads future business organizations to success. Andy Grove, Chairman of Intel boldly stated in 1998: "Within 5 years, all companies will be Internet companies or they would not be companies", Porter has argued that the key question is not about deploying an e-business to take advantage of the Internet technology, but it is more about how to deploy this e-business as it requires a total different business plan with its conditions and rules (Phan, 2002). It is not about doing it, it is about how well companies can do it because without sufficient knowledge on what could be undertaken, it might probably work for a period of time but such efforts with an absence of risk calculation would drop out or be quickly overwhelmed in a long term, by those which are considering valuing each step carefully. Fashion markets are synonymous with rapid change and, as a result, commercial success or failure in those markets is largely determined by the

organisation's flexibility and responsiveness.

There are three critical lead-times that must be managed by organisations that seek to compete successfully in fashion markets which are; time-to-market, time-to-serve and time-to-react. Time-to-Market – concerning how long the business company takes to acknowledge a market opportunity and make it concrete as a product or service and eventually present it to the market. Time-to-Serve – about how long it takes between capturing a customer's order and delivering the product to the retail customer's satisfaction. Time-to-React – concerning how much it takes for a business to adopt the speed of the market change. And if the 'tap' can be turned on or off quickly. (Christopher et al, 2004). Usual issues in the fashion industry are arising with the fast mode the century is taking such as; a huge amount of time spent in spotting trends in the markets or the several interactions between a company, its supplier and its customers which are taking a long path before achieving a sort of satisfaction. This thesis believes that technology and online business integration within the fashion industry would be creating fluidity in flows and facilitating any kind of transaction happening between the company, its suppliers and its customers. The difference that this thesis is trying to make is that; usually the notions have been discussed overallly and separately, while eventhough things seem to be independent; they are actually all interlinked in someway that indicating the importance of one would lead to another and so on. Yet, not much of the literature has discussed fashion industry from such a perspective, in other terms, what is being newly proposed here, is that companies interfering in the fashion industry shall consider integrating the e-business part as a function among the existing departments and that there is a strong outcome in managing the full spectrum combining the market demand adaptability (concerned with the actual paragraph) with the communication rules application online, the customer orientation matching (will be elaborated on the next paragraphs) and cover them all with a meaningful presence on the web more specifically on social media networks discussed on the previous section. Maybe, some companies have already tried to follow such a logic without realizing and recognizing they are, but failed or still fight through it, therefore, it would be very enlightening to have a base to start on and not a random base but a very reliable one; for example relying on an e-business on the field, with the needed

specialization and the appropriate skills to fulfill this gap. The main reason why the actual research is raising awareness on this topic and emphasizing on it by involving a concrete case of an existing e-business, in order to give a fair representation of the facts. Just as communicating this model to the readers and practitioners on the fashion field is important, so as a business communicating positively toward its customer.

#### **4.2 Communication: From a cultural perspective**

The rise of business world or other human life sectors will not be successful without the existence of communication. In principle, communication helps on altering the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of the society. Communication moved from a one-way communication where the marketing department of a business was the only way to reach the exterior world, to a two-way communication where there is a fluent exchange in between the parties of the process (Darwis,2013).

There is an obvious difference between communication in both a traditional business and an e-business on many levels of comparison; it changes from an internal flow of information within the company to a whole networking within and outside the organization; where all the concerned parties feel involved; including staff, suppliers, third-parties and customers.

In the business world, an excellent communicator, in addition to possessing excellent communication skills (definitely), must also use various kinds of communication tools or media available to convey business messages to other parties in an effective and efficient manner so that the objectives of conveying business messages may be achieved (Djoko Purwanto, 2006; Darwis, 2013).

The internet is a form of communication. With the internet, communication is faster and easier than ever; people on opposite sides of the world can speak to each other over the internet as if they were speaking to each other in person. It aids on spreading the cultures as well and becomes a sort of enormous international community of people interacting efficiently and affordably. Everything is now possible to be done by distance with the internet advantages of providing for example; online classes for learners, the possibility to pay the bills online, shop online, and so forth. Of course, this makes it hard for the companies

to deal with such a variety of people and even harder for the companies who haven't even thought of extending their business on the online world. The important message to get here is that; no matter what services and beliefs the company wants to communicate, it is recommended to not neglect the virtual presence because the chances that this company could have its targeted customer knowing it and being updated about it are higher on the online world. In this new market, knowledge of cultural differences, cross-culture teamwork and multicultural collaboration constitute vital factors for the success of an organization. A strong relationship between communication and culture leads to the mixed term: cross-cultural communication; a communication used in the business world, either verbal or non-verbal communication, with due regard to the cultural factors of a region, territory or nation (Darwis, 2013). In this case just like Darwis case (2013), the meaning of cross-culture does not solely constitute foreign cultures but also cultures growing and developing in various regions within a national territory. Communication is assumed to be related to the behavior and fulfillment of human needs for interactions with other human beings.

The Internet as a marketing channel is interactive, accessible, ubiquitous, and integrates marketing communication with commercial transactions and service delivery. The potential for building relationships is inherent in every transaction and dialog. No longer does the marketer need to speculate about customer needs; they actually know customer purchasing profiles (Rowley, 2004). In the digital world, marketing communications is concerned with creating presence, relationships, and mutual value. One of the best known communication tools would be social networks which help to reach not only the local customers but also the global customers, and track their lifestyles in order to get to know them and predict their needs and preferences. These benefits are also seen on a business to business matter, where businesses could collaborate and for example different branches of one same brand could have a conference call over Skype instead of having to take a flight from each corner and waste money and energy on organizing the logistics part as well as the meeting point and the care fees for each person present on the event.

A very complicated schema indeed but, with a specific purpose dedicated to each action taken; it would go as well as expected. With the advance of technology and the creation of such thing as social media, our lives became more simple, faster and easier.

Companies use social media for many advantages as follow: creation of a business page for free while generating a big market, possibility of improving the customer satisfaction and promote brand loyalty by communicating via social networks, right to post a variety of content. Plus if business have a high number of followers, it can have an impact on the same due to the customer recognition on live. It is also very easy to track the customers using the name of the company by 'hashtag' or 'tweet' for example and acknowledge any complain if existing and resolve them before they get multiplied.

On the other hand, social media doesn't help when it gives the total right to an unsatisfied customer to basically comment and leave negative feedbacks that others could see and probably be influenced. Another inconvenient for the business, is that it should posting regularly so it could remain active in the customer's eye. Businesses are also pressurized by the idea that they should be fun but stay professional at the same time.

If social media is being used by more than one third of the entire world, it clearly has a major influence on society. Social media use is imposing itself on an every day routine to the point that people find themselves on their Facebook or Instagram pages without having to plan for it to happen. People are almost unable to control how much time they spend online which shows a psychological addiction based on a mix of emotions and attention which in turn influence their decision making. A never ending wonder about how the human's brain perceives and decides to react or not toward the thousand of things displayed in such a fast cadency that there is not much time to realize and calculate each move. Realistically, a company can not expect them next actions taken by the consumer at a 100% certitude. The company can still choose to be customer oriented by following up with what could be least prevented (according to the context of this research) such as; the transformation of the needs from basic to very self actualized ones, the sensory stimulus, the several motives to push to action.

### **4.3 Customer orientation**

Customer-oriented behavior goes along with the concept of customer orientation mentioned on the previous researches. According to Saxe and Weitz (1982), customer-oriented behavior is defined as the ability of the salespeople to assist their customers on getting familiar with the product or service offered to them as well as knowing how to get use of it in order to be truly satisfied (Ruth and Wayne, 2005).

Customer orientation is only one feature of the market orientation, taken in account on this thesis research since the whole focus is on the consumer power leading. The other one is the competitor orientation which is concerning the fact that companies are not only driven by what consumers need, but also by having to innovate in parallel with what the competitor sets as a standard level. Competitor orientation has been put apart, in other words neglected on this thesis in order to not confuse the reader toward the main goal of the study.

The fundamental concept of marketing nowadays is perform marketing activities based on customer, the must is to focus on the customer in implementing marketing strategy. What it takes to be customer-oriented, is what a company should continuously think about. Offering a product or service without following up with the customer is almost useless, because what should be done is listening to the customers to say how they use this product and show them how to use it better. Designing great products and leaving them to their destiny is not the way things are supposed to happen. It is very hard in fact to be customer oriented, and what makes it not happen is the fact that everything is conceived around the product only, even the marketing concept is of a first aim to see the product, which if a company be asked how much they outcome of a product, it would know how to answer unlike if it's asked how much do they get out of a customer.

Consumer behavior is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Soloman, 2014). Speaking of needs and desires; it reached another level of interaction for the satisfaction to occur. The physiological and safety aspects of a product are of a basic nature which would be the least found in every product offered in the market, the choice is technically relying on how much of the customer's personality, beliefs and

emotions are mirrored in those products features. That way only, the customer would see a reflection of his person in the product image the brand is trying to give.

### 4.3.1 Product role in the consumer's perception:

The product, on this context, is more of a service and it would be the online store, which according to Kim, Fiore and Lee (2007), has adopted various types of image, interactivity, technology (ITT) in order to offer an innovative way to present the product, articulate product attributes and simulate product experience in a virtual world.

The way the customer perceives and interprets depends on so many criteria and aspects that it forms a whole topic to study separately, on this context, it is seen from a sensorial and symbolic angle with a certain attention to the degree of

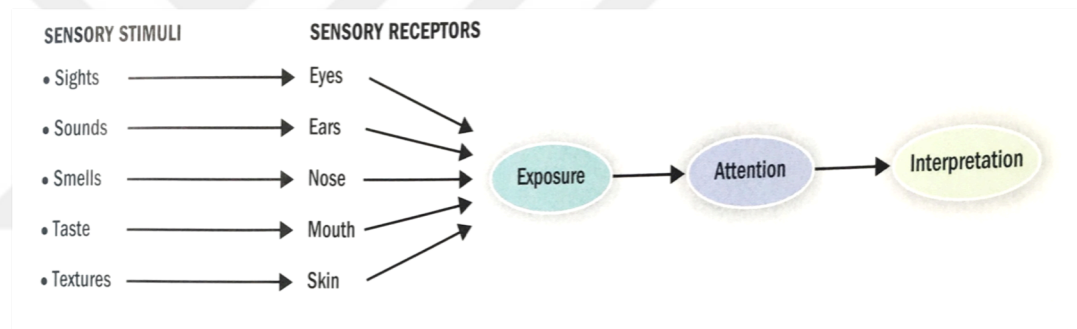


Figure 1: Overview of the perceptual process of the customer

involvement of the customer. It is good enough in terms of standarzation of the thesis proposal. Figure 1 is shematizing an overview of the perceptual process (Solomon, 2014).

As the figure is showing; there are five sensory stimuli relying on the five senses a human has. A sensory stimuli is any event occuring and probable to be received by one of the sens. The attention happens when the senses are exposed to a specific pleasing and catching moment; either the eye seeing a content of a quality, the ears hearing a motivational speech, the noise smelling a fresh air, the mouth tasting a lovely dessert or the skin touching the texture of a clothe, and it would be perfect if all happen together.

If a company doing e-business is able to master this process and juggle

well with the sensory part, then there are big chances to gain customers dedication of time, money and a positive influence towards the rest.

Moreover, the interactive nature of web sites has been credited with positively affecting consumer responses, including increasing the desire to browse and purchase online (Fiore and Jin, 2003; Fiore et al., 2005a,b; Gehrke and Turban, 1999; Lee et al., in press; Mathwick, 2002; Kim et al., 2007).

#### **4.3.2 Consumer motives for e-shopping:**

Business to consumer e-commerce conducted via the mechanism of web-shopping provides an expanded opportunity for companies to create a cognitively and esthetically rich shopping environment in ways not readily imitable in the nonelectronic shopping world (Childers et al, 2001).

According to Childers, Carr, Peck and Carson (2001); clearly many motivations exist pushing a purchase to happen (cf. Westbrook and Black 1985), but the most considered types of motivations are the utilitarian and hedonic as the main two motivations to base on for understanding consumer shopping behavior because of their basic description of the human's nature way of dealing with things (Babin, Darden and Griffin 1994). In the utilitarian case, the consumer is

basically meant to purchase a product fulfilling a basic need on behalf a planned action. Unlike that, the hedonic consumption has a materialistic fantasist side and is mainly existing due to a desire of looking for feelings like pleasure, fun and enjoyment. This thesis believes that brands nowadays should think of first attaching their products to an emotional humanbeing aspect in order to make customers prefer buying their products on a basic need over the rivals one. It basically goes on a kind of reversed logic, where the differentiation of the product concept is in terms of being talkative to the consumer belonging and inner potential in order for this consumer to adopt the product not only on a hedonic mode but also on a physiological primary need. Rohm and Swaminathan (2004) argue that; given the significant growth in online retailing, the online retailer needs to understand the particular reasons why consumers choose to shop online. To develop a typology of online shoppers based on shopping motives is an important action to take, not only to be well positioned



to compete with a high standard on the market but also to be able to reach as many types of customers as possible in order to target them especially.

Several motives may be used to classify the online shopper: shopping convenience, including time savings (e.g., Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Darden and Ashton, 1975; Eastlick and Feinberg, 1999; Stephenson and Willett, 1969; Westbrook and Black, 1985; Williams et al., 1978); information seeking (e.g., Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980), social interaction gained from shopping (e.g., Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Westbrook and Black, 1985), and shopping as a recreational experience itself (e.g., Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980; Gehrt and Shim, 1998). Additionally, the literature suggests that the tendency to seek variety (e.g., Raju, 1980; McAlister and Pessemier, 1982; Menon and Kahn, 1995) and the desirability of immediate possession (e.g., Alba et al., 1997) may also be motives for shopping.

The six motives, that help to classify the online shopper in a way which answers why an online shopper would choose an online store and not another, are examined in greater detail next (Rohm and Swaminathan, 2004).

- Shopping convenience; is the fact that a customer won't need to move from his location and could just shop from where he is, with time and money saved.
- Information seeking; concerns the easy and free access to whatever information needed and required at that specific time while shopping, the research online can give more specific answers and in-depth results. Immediate possession, is the preference of shopping on the online store 'x' and not 'y' because of the desire of an instantaneous delivery of product.
- Social interaction; says that a customer is in a continuous need to share opinions and have advice by interacting with someone else in order to be able to decide basing on some criteria as the communication with others who have the same interest. The retail shopping experience; as a new experience itself, it can be pulling the customer for a matter of entertainment and discovery, because a humanbeing is curious in his nature and would want to explore the unknown.

- Variety seeking; being offered a variety of options to look at and decide which one suits the best, is always better to be given one choice without a certain knowledge of what else exists in the market, in terms of style, color.

As noticed, most of those classifications could be described as an enjoyment of experience and usefulness. Yet, the customer needs do only increase and become demanding over time, people now are not even driven exclusively by the price, deals are maybe considered as a commodity and not necessarily a differentiator anymore. There is a hunger for quality with a human touch; quality for example in the product visualization, the imagery generally, technology provided and so on.

On the other hand, customers are looking to bring each other together and bring that experience of shopping to the way it used to be, therefore, customers would look for a feeling of dealing more with a human than a robot or a computer. Despite the motives as reasons; consumers also react towards and understand from a product basing on the connections their brain is used to match with the sensory, as well as the relation they have with the people around at the time of the purchase.

## **5- METHODOLOGY**

This section is the heart of the thesis, starting with discussing the method used on this study, followed by the case study and all the characteristics of the company taken a sample.

The findings will be also presented on this section with an evaluation of the results.

### **5.1 Method:**

The purpose of this thesis method is to pull out the most representative aspects of a successful e-business company in terms of the four factors which are: market demand, cross cultural communication, customer orientation and social media. It will be a qualitative research design, with a case study consideration for a better understanding of what the ideas discussed look like in the real world. Choosing a cross sectional study and analyzing the phenomenon at its time, is an

advantage in terms of the events occurring during the present conditions, which makes the application of the recommendations actually very faisable.

To start from the scratch, by travelling back in time through the process of a successful idea; showing what are the threats to turn into opportunities to take in hand and how to take positon of strenght, is exactly what this paper is trying to achieve, with the aim of testing a theoretical importance of what makes an e-business successful by analyzing different keys it bases on.

The point here is to prove that there are specific major factors driving an e-business to success, when all given a matter. This paper attests that those factors are embodied in many aspects which will be extracted and listed in terms of efficiency and adaptation to the situation then dispatched among each of the following factors; market demand, cross cultural communication, consumer orientation, and finally social media tools all grouped below in form of hypotheses (Figure 2).

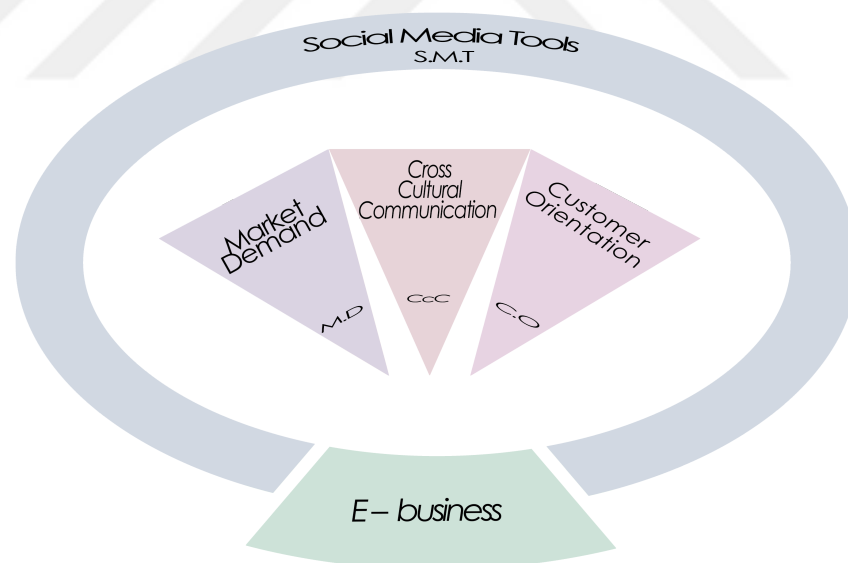


Figure 2: The relational impact on e-businesses

- E-business notion, on this context, is representing the online platforms with a creative ideology to engage with fashion brands and create a sort of middle man between those collaborators and their consumers, being a sort of a connection bridge needs a handling of multi-function skills as the e-business should be able to be responsive to both the fashion industry guidelines and the consumer's expectations, which come beyond the basic mission of being part of the online world and doing the job well.
- The market demand; is regarding the merging of both the fashion industry with the digital industry pressure that an e-business has to deal with carefully while interferring within their lands. In other words, it is about what an e-market of fashion sets as requirements, rules of survival, as well as the level of competition for the e-business to be mastering among all other e-businesses.
- The Cross cultural Communication: communication as a whole factor is a strong impactor, from the aspect of culture, this paper believes that it should be narrowed down to the Cross cultural Communication simply due to the strong relation between communication and culture because one comes with the other; for instance, we do take that in consideration spontaneously without having to really think of it, for example: when a person exchanges speeches with another person from a different background and culture education, well, there is a sort of effort put in terms of being 'on the same boat' while dealing with each other. Cross cultural Communication occurs when the communicator is a member of a culture and the communicatee is a member of another culture (Darwis, 2013). On an e-business objective, the hit should come from a point which would either talk to the majority; play on the 'iso' human features to get attention from the most, or adapt the offers to several cultures for their own satisfaction. Understanding how consumers behave is a sub of understanding of how a human's brain operates.
- The customer orientation represents the power of the consumer's perception in changing his attitude toward what is offered to him as a

product or service. Understanding the processes by which consumers form their opinions and choices about fashion and fashion products is very essential. Other job fields get involved here; like psychology, sociology, marketing innovation... It is like going through the target's filter, where the e-business workers would have to think while putting themselves in the consumer's shoes, seeing through their eyes, and acting on behalf their cultural background.

- The fashion industry was initially slow to adopt social media; some labels ignored the trend, while others used it only for sales and promotional purposes (Wright, 2009, Cassidy&Al, 2013). Well, this mentality changed and even got forced to change by the spirit of the times. The companies need to be where the customers are, without meaning it as an harassment because then the customers will just do whatever it takes to avoid being reached, it should be a part of pleasure which generates curiosity and the will to know more... Companies need to see what happens between people talking over them, it is amazing how people would trust an anecdote coming from a total stranger than the brand itself (Cassidy&Al, 2013); for the simple reason that this stranger is one of them which is much meaningful to their daily experiences. Social media tools transformed the routine of businesses, in terms of a presence required in almost all types of networks in order to get larger customers' bases.

Each of those notions background has been worked out on the literature review, by clarifying their in-depth meaning but also pointing out the inter-connections existing between them notions. The thesis attests that the degree of success of an e-business relies on the efficiency and careful attention given to thoses factors separately on one dimension then all together on another dimension; to rephrase it, there is a need of coherence in set strategies, as it is more logical when looking at the large picture and realizing that the factors all together form a cycle making them lead to each other.

In parallel with the factor's diagnose, many researches were ongoing in order to find the best example of company which fully and successfully represents the management of those factors and covers the most essential points the research

is studying ; then make it the case study model to follow.

Several e-businesses were picked according to the following criteria:

- Being a start-up interfering within the fashion industry
- Interacting with both fashion leading brands and consumers
- Providing services beyond the e-commerce money transactions
- Being recognized and rewarded in several prize events
- Integrating all aspects of the four factors of the research
- Having a balanced/equal presence in social media networks
- Giving a variety of e-contact informations
- Involving customers in the service performance and maintenance of reputation
- Showing simplicity in comprehending their professional and creative initiatives
- Leaving room to widening the business abroad
- Offering quality in imagery and content
- Having an english platform due to the language requirement by default
- Existing in a European market, considering that it is the source of innovation of famous fashion designers and brand makers

By listing these criteria, it can already be noticed what really matters from an anthropological and scientifically relevant perception. After many attempts in trying to get hold of two companies which have been convincing to be picked among the probabilities of choices; via email, and facebook messenger, one of them gladly replied within a short amount of time.

From that point, first exchanges occurred with one of the co-founders of the e-business concerned, introducing the main purpose of the research and explaining the reason why their company has been chosen among so many others. After that, a conference call via skype has been arranged with the same co-founder in order to discuss their business ideas and have more answers, not mainly present on the web and representing the features which in turn are faithfully representing the four factors. The questions and the diagnose which follows are of course very much linked up to the spinning wheel of factors, to avoid clouding the findings.

The collection of data has started with an in-depth unstructured interview as notified above, followed by a form of triangulation between primary and secondary observations, with an experimental to facilitate the validation through cross verification. Basically, a full website analysis will be occurring in terms of content efficiency and reliability combined with a check-up of how the e-business expansion is managed in social media, plus and eventually a use of other reliable sources (sent from the co-founder) like newspapers, magazines or other websites which mentioned the e-business concept, presence in events and all what concerns it. The method used on this paper makes it easy and practical to help on generating answers to the questions who, what, why and how.

This part of the methodology section will be followed by a whole presentation of what the e-business stands for, its story, its structure and so on. Later on, the same model “the relational impact on e-businesses” will be used to organize the findings, matching them with each of the four factors. The section will end with an evaluation of the results in order to prove their validity and relevance.

## **5.2 DRESSIPI Case:**

Dressipi is changing the online customer experience. By creating a unique fashion fingerprint for every customer and tagging all the products with relevant metadata, they combine data and algorithms with stylists to give genuinely personalised recommendations. Ultimately, they determine and show the most appropriate products for each customer based on a number of their preferences, including taste, style, shape, size and what is relevant to them at that time.

Dressipi is a fashion advice e-business launched in 2011 to today, founded by two business women; Miss Sarah Mcvittie And Miss Donna North. The idea is impressive in its simplicity, aiming to make clothes shopping and dressing hassle free for all women and give them the confidence to look fabulous and great. Dressipi is basically the dream of every woman of every age.

Dressipi staff might seem of a big number according to all the work they get to do, but they are actually just fourteen members. A team constituting a mix of functions and cultures; but just enough to be able to do the tasks in an efficient

manner and also think in an appropriate and suitable way which can only be an advantage for such a business targeting a wide community, also of different cultures.

Dressipi has had many rewards after few years of being a start-up. They have been nominated as the best tech firm with the best use of innovation (by Drapers digital awards), they have also had the title of the best use of technology for personalisation in 2014 (by Retail systems awards). Their last reward was in 2015, with the service award (by the Internet retailing awards) and finally, Dressipi was noted as the best customer experience (by Tech and ecomm awards)

- Dressipi story-telling

An e-business from a consumer facing side in fashion is quite difficult, and there is an undetermined number of reasons why it is. Being part of it is a big adventure.

The co-founders both have data & technology background, and are not related to fashion at all. They have always been thinking of doing something together and combining their expertise with a top styling team, as even though they are on the same study focus, they have unsimilar personalities but very complementary.

Being two busy working women but also wanting to look lovely, they got inspired from a basic daily need that actually every woman must be struggling with in life, the only difference which occurred is that they actually decided to make something out of it, stand and achieve such a goal by making it a solution for their gender but also an income for their living.

Back in 2010, by opening up to their sense of observation, they noticed that; more and more retailers were typically going online, and everyone was trying to sell their products and pushing them very heavily but very few were genuinely and truly trying to serve the customers in person, basing on who they really are, what their budget is, what they already own in their wardrobe, their lifestyles, the stage of their life and so forth.

It started to be more and more complicated and very overwhelming to a certain extent for customers to find what they're looking for, and suddenly by wanting a



simple specific item, they would get hundreds if it's not thousands of results that they have to filter by themselves. The two ladies co-founders transformed those issues into opportunities by strongly believing they could use their skills and find the solution with the help of technology development, to finally get to satisfy those lost consumers who can not picture a better scenario for their purchase experience.

It is indeed a 'customerless' gap in the market which will surely have its community as it is well thought in terms of sensibilization and personal motives a consumer would be having.

One of the things greatly appreciated, as Miss Sarah McVittie tells on the interview, is that fashion is a very dynamic field; composed of very different purchases which could go from clothe to mobilephone to laptop etc. Wondering what would be quickly and appropriately adopted by the fashion players and consumers without having to switch with every seasonal change, led them business women to innovate and think out of the box.

Currently, very satisfied with the ambiance of work and the way things are performing, Dressipi is rising and cheering up to the effervescence of e-businesses in the fashion industry. This story-telling has been fully inspired from the interview with the Co-founder Miss Sarah McVittie.

- Business structure and strategies

Dressipi's business structure is not complexed as shown on figure 3 below.

Besides, if there is one important thing to take note of is that; the money transactions that Dressipi is having are only with the two of businesses (Fashion brand leaders/Retailers and Multi brand retailers). It is mainly a B2B company, helping its partners and collaborators to improve their customer experience, with a very delicate attention not to be forgetting the customer orientation; who it is actually about.

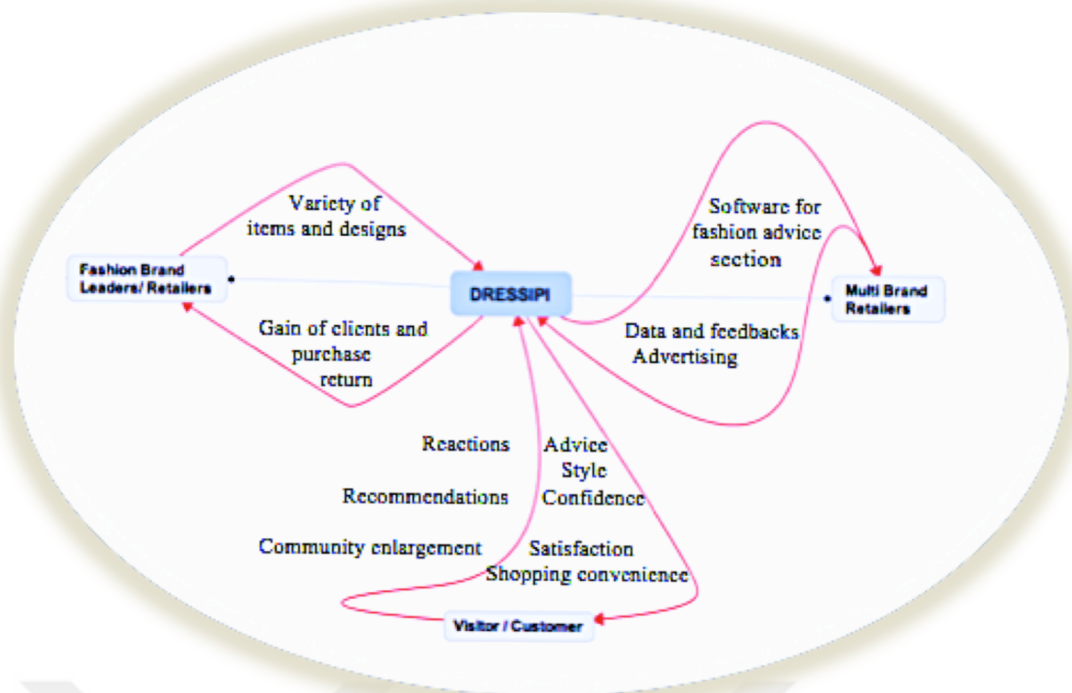


Figure 3: Business structure - Dressipi's connections

#### Visitor / Customer:

Dressipi started as a single online platform; letting visitors experience a useful and exciting process where they were getting advice and tips for clothing style after taking a test asking for specific details of their look, shape and characteristics and so on (more details will be shown on the experimental part of this section). The integration of the visitor's opinions was very valued and essential part of Dressipi's responsibility; and that led Dressipi's team to having continuous reactions and suggestions from people they target; as they were sharing what they could assume was missing while dealing with the web services, which improved the team's ideas and made the business grow and have a large community.

#### Fashion brand leaders/Retailers:

With the aggregation of people; the process got complexed and while thinking of more creativity to add to the next alternatives to take, Dressipi got approached by some first retailers who were very interested in collaborating and actually helped the business forward in

two ways: in terms of return and data collection. Retailers get an instant pay back of a big gain in consumer population size plus the return on their purchases. Visitors then have access to a whole range of resulting items, sourced of numerous fashion leading brands, based on their specifications and preferences concluded from the test taken. A whole mutual active exchange between Dressipi and those retailers makes a win-win negotiation, with remarkable benefits to both parties, over a long time period.

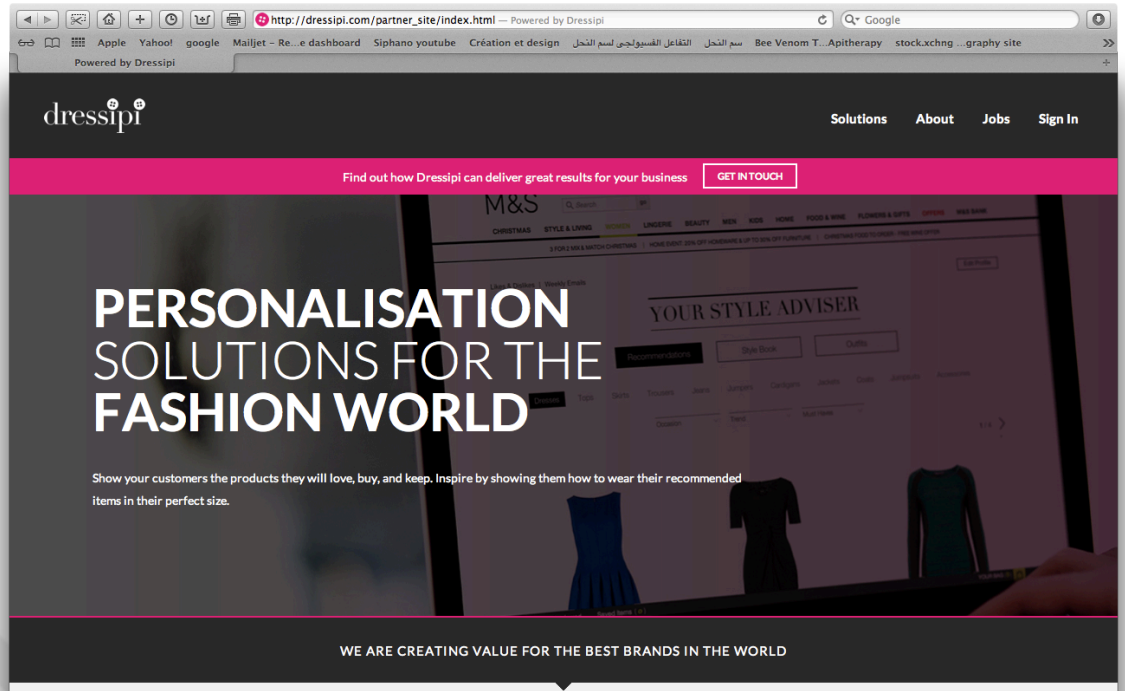
Multi brand retailers:

After handling enough of the work, Dressipi decides for a market penetration by partnering with multi brand retailers websites and allowing them to use their software as a help for creating an advice section on the home page of their websites. Those multi brand retailers could increase their customers level satisfaction by differentiating themselves from their competitors and offering them customers an added value service.

Dressipi on the hand, is getting to keep up with the last trends and has the prestige of being advertised and recommended by those famous multi brand retailers.

- Core competencies

Dressipi's step to the online world is fabulous that it can't be not obvious. The layout of their website is constructed in a way it brings the experience of shopping to the way it used to be but in a 'digitalized' version. By working on passing the best positive message during the 'five seconds first impression' that any visitor would have right after clicking on their link, their website gives a 'cosy' feeling as it comforts the eyes and relaxes the mind with very simple ideas to interpret. Dressipi's enhanced technological image and content quality, as well as their ability to easily attract attention by playing on keywords that once read, push curiosity to another level; all this harmony and combination of multiple resources and skills make them not only greatly positioned but also distinguished on the market compared to their rivals.



Source: [http://dressipi.com/partner\\_site/index.html](http://dressipi.com/partner_site/index.html) , accessed on May 2016

Yet, they have specialized services which emphasize better on this differentiation and product/ service development, as follow:

- Style Adviser: Offering every woman the luxury and prestige of having her own personal stylist, the industry's most renowned stylists, allowing her to valorize her body shapes with the perfect advice and guidelines, while of course always taking her preferences in consideration including context and emotion. There is logic and coherence in the actions taken by Dressipi as they try to proceed step by step to not miss any detail and fake the results, because they truly care.
- Automated Personalised Outfits: Providing choices of outfits which are generated in real-time and ensuring to both their customers and partners respectively that; on one side, the customers get to have a modernised/technology integrated way to shop instore as they have the ability to see a garment and what could wear it, match it with new

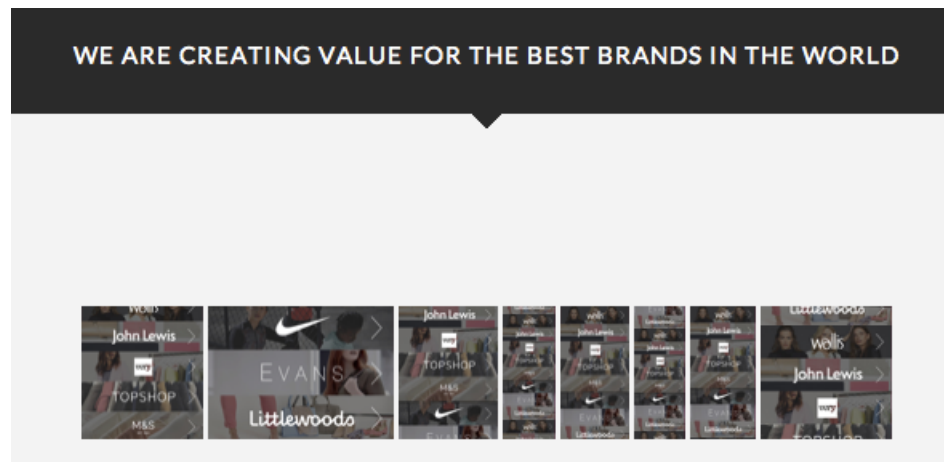
clothes or what they already own. On the other side, Dressipi talks numbers with the retailers and fashion brand leaders as it brings up a true and critical fact about a huge number of visitors (97-99%) who leave sites without buying anything, then proves that they have the solution to make their products image shine and give the customer all the confidence needed to click that all-important 'buy' button. This aspect of Dressipi's services keeps the customer experience alive and mostly guarantee a return with an increase in purchase behavior due to the displaying of items that go perfectly with the original, means a customer sees products they may not have previously noticed and that encourages further browsing. The best part is that it is all proved live on the website, so by reading and while looking for convincing reasons to join the Dressipi's community, people find themselves in enjoyable pre-experiences showing the concrete of the words and retailers/brand partners can actually go for trials and get the explanation to every step they would make in case of interest to collaborate.

- The Perfect Size Everytime: explaining itself by its name, it give the appropriate size on each of the purchases the customer makes which makes the recommendations given on the Style Adviser part very relevant since it adapts to the situation with all its aspects and conditions. Again, from a retailer perspective, Dressipi does not forget to remind its partners of what could be better than ensuring their customers buy the right size everytime they shop and get the right advice as well and all that can only raise the degree of loyalty of a customer toward the concerned retailer/brand. Benefits are unbelievably true when it comes to fewer returns occuring which keeps the cutomer happy and willing to buy then the retailer maintain its margins without any losses.

- Business partnerships

Dressipi company deals with over 500 leading fashion brands all present on the heading sections of a home account of any profile who joins Dressipi's

community. The items of these brands are all listed under the forms of recommendations, advice, inspiration and help; providing comfort in style 24/7.



Source: [http://dressipi.com/partner\\_site/index.html](http://dressipi.com/partner_site/index.html) , accessed on May 2016

On the other hand, Dressipi's service is available at several retailers websites, who are now able to provide greater customer experience than their competitors in terms of availability and clothing recommendations wherever the consumer is purchasing.

### Use Dressipi at Your Favourite Retailers

The Dressipi service is now available at the retailers below, so you can get great clothing recommendations wherever you are shopping.

John Lewis

M&S  
EST 1884



TOPSHOP



EVANS

Littlewoods

wallis

Source: <https://dressipi.com/login> , accessed on May 2016

- Dressipi networking

Dressipi is not underestimating the use of social media and takes in account the importance of having a strong presence in most of the social networks.

Dressipi can be found on facebook, instagram, twitter, Pinterest and also has a blog; five of them are spreading information on the web in a different manner:

Facebook is where Dressipi team is usually sharing style advices around three or four times a week or sometimes in successive days, attaching images of outfits mixed and matched with shoes and accessories with a linked attachment from the original source; the blog site. The members already signed in are then alerted of what they could be missing out and that it is time to check their personal account, the rest of followers which are just likers of the facebook page may be intrigued to know more and join the community.

The good part about having a Facebook business page is that people could actually see the posts on their newsfeed, react toward them either by sharing their favorite posts on their wall or commenting or even tagging their friends. That's what creates interactions, feedbacks and generates more followers as well, it also makes Dressipi itself more aware of what the visitor likes to be viewing which is beneficial in terms of knowledge of data manipulation in the best way it could reduce the uncertainty of having the visitor/consumer's attention.

About the blog, also refreshed at the same cadency as facebook; it gives more details on the mixed and matched outfits such as a little theme caption for the image telling a mini-story of how the style proposed got to be selected and suggested, the brand and the price of each item, as well as the name of the Dressipi stylist/author of the publication. There is also a section for comments, likes and shares on different other social networks. The blog is actually a part of the personal account services among the 'Inspiration' sub-sections.

On Instagram; there are more varied subjects posted apart from the outfits seen on the blog and facebook which are again posted, as it is supposed that the visitors or followers on Instagram are not the same people on the other networks, so it would be also a good idea to give them a moment of discovery.

Then there are other posts concerned with enjoyable moments happening in Dressipi's framework to show how life is by Dressipi's team and bring visitors

from a closer angle into Dressipi's offices; which is actually a great initiative as it is giving a human touch to the 'robotised' aspect of the business, shots of inspiring looks and trends, personalities quotes, funny sayings, interesting and original contexts, and sometimes even advertisements of some of their window shopping partners spotted in the famous streets of London.

On the side of Twitter; the e-business company is spreading its offers redirecting to the blog by tweeting links, talking about news in Dressipi and UK's market in terms of fashion and technology, retweeting sources mentioning its business, reaching a wider and different category, interacting etc.

Dressipi is also on a mood of sharing catalogs of inspired and inspiring ideas on Pinterest, as it provides a sort of albums which are called 'boards' after listing and completing the items of a specific context shared. The items are named 'pins' because of the way they are being discovered, marked and saved to eventually be combined and constitute the board.

That is a very original way indeed, to present findings as the 'must to have' or 'must to see' things which interest the members/ Dressipi Pinterest followers, who are considered as much more curious, patient and reactive consumers in a long term, and like to be informed about a diversified trendy and fancy phenomena or are hoping to get tips on different subjects like beauty&care or the places to go to nowadays or even a whole lifestyle recommendations. Members can pin the e-business images that they most like and make it to their pinboard which in turn gives more privilege to Dressipi to get to know where is the consumer being usually oriented and what kind of things this consumer would like to see more.

Dressipi does it well and one more time proves to what degree it embodies a source of rich and creative content.

- Corporate image

After all what has been said and analyzed about Dressipi company on this thesis, it would be good to have a brief overview on how the press talks about it and how the business world welcomes it. The business launching wasn't discrete when it had magazines attention at the first year of foundation (2011); being



described as the “*Dawn of the digital style guru*” (Roberts & Ria, 2011) or “*Cyber shop till you drop*” (Neidpath, 2011).

For Cheshire (2012) ; Amazon doesn't recommend a book based on where you read it and last.fm can't scrobble what mood you're in but Dressipi aims to do exactly these for fashionistas, a term used for people who are devoted to fashion and applies to trend leaders on the web. Dressipi site came out of beta in November 2011 and already attracted 20000 users by the end of its first week. Dressipi was chosen as one of Vogue's 100 best places to shop online (Vogue, 2012).

Later on, Watts (2013) attests that ‘ In the beginning, fashion and technology were two separate concepts. people were born into shoes that lip up, wearable music players and screens that magically followed when they were flipped’ to show how Dressipi took over both industries and could actually make complementaries. It also reminds how Dressipi is seen by You magazine, as a solution to eradicate the frustrating cycle of click, buy, try and return while at that time only after two years of settling; it boasts 250000 profiles and purchases of 50% using outfit builder recommendation.

In 2014, Dressipi success path was given a great boost by titling it as the start-up which woos the e-commerce client. The company was basically founded to target time-poor, fashion conscious women struggling to find flattering clothes among the vast selection of the internet. But what started as a consumer product that was intended to generate enough aggregated data to sell for a profit has morphed into a business to business product taken up by some of the UK's biggest retailers (Gordon, 2014). On the same year, the two women co-founders, Misses Sarah McVittie and Donna North have been called the movers & shakers (Davis, 2014).

Dressipi has been positioned as the 12<sup>th</sup> among Britain's top tech firms growing 1000pc a year (Callander, 2015).

One of the last articles written so far about Dressipi company, was a form of open debate about their start-up at its growth stage and what business plans will be undertaken in the future years as well as the importance of seeking for an advisor assistance ; not because they don't think that their team is not amazing at its work,

as one of the co-founders stated it well, but more to help them see beyond the ‘day to day hurly burly’ of running that business (McVittie, 2015).

- Experimental part

Although giving information about a project with an overall look at the full image might sound good and enough, it is always better and more faithful to the representation when a tutorial is showing the practical side and giving the exact actions to take.

A trial has actually been given by creating a visitor’s account in Dressipi’s web, the first data to provide them with was obviously and simply; the full user’s name with the email address and a password for privacy purpose.

After signing up, the page automatically directs to an on-boarding first interaction with the person/user where she is asked to create her own fashion profile that she edit and update whenever there are changes occurring.

Of course, it is possible to just surf on the web platform and discover what is introduced and what kind of benefits to get but the informations will be very general and wouldn’t apply to the person’s profile which will get back to a typical online shopping space where the person has thousands of choices she has to flick through to find the wanted one.

Dressipi calls it “the fashion fingerprint” , the customer’s unique style DNA, it’s a collection of everything that is key to you when making that all-important ‘what to wear’, ‘what to buy’ and ‘how to shop’ decision. The fashion fingerprint is used to edit and improve clothes recommendations and advice, as follow:

- The body shape, to help Dressipi give effective results with the right size. The body shape is dispatched in three major aspects; height&weight, body proportion, bust and waist where the user gets to choose among different shaped drawings the best one approximately close to her measures. It ends with a short, motivational and positive text valorizing the body shape described and giving advice on what would suit it most, as well as what to

avoid. A drawing shaded of a woman's body is attached on the side to give a real sight to the person who is filling the questionnaire and also in case something shows wrong then a modification is done at the present moment before moving to the next step by clicking on the 'Edit Body Shape' button taking back to the previous pages. Also, while taking the test, at the bottom of those pages and the following ones, some captures of entertaining fashion news are given to already set the new member on the mood.

- The style quizz is the next step, for the team to understand the style and present the brands and clothes which are highly probable to be loved by the customer. There are ten (multiple choice) questions which are delicately designed by the stylists. The answers are analyzed and summed up in exactly four words telling what kind of style the person is assumed to have, rating stars are also provided to ensure the validity of the team's feedback.
- Colour information, composed of five sections; eye colour, hair colour, skin colour, favourite colours, least favourite colours. It would help on finding out which colors would matches better the customer's appearance.

After completing the colours section, it is suggested to first take a look at the clothes recommendations and notice the changes and the specificity of the the items presented. Indeed, the results show clothes, shoes and accessories which are very much based on the aggregated data. Dressipi's stylits ask if the person would also like to be given other types of choices, in that case; they display trends and colors they would judge and pick the most suiting.

There are few more sections left afterwards and whenever the customer feels for continuing the process, and the more to fill, the better the results are:

- Sizes, given in four different categories of clothes but only three to fill the data for; a dress, a top, and the choice between trousers or jeans. The usual brand that is for each wearable item is asked and of course the size as well except for the jeans which requires the waist and length.

- Brands; is concerning the list of favorite brands the customer could tell Dressipi about because there is no point for having all of the brands selected if the customer is going to end up picking her favorite ones.
- Reveal & Conceal; is about the customer confessing to Dressipi, which part of the body she like to show and valorize, and which other part of the body she would like to hide.
- Features; is a collection of all the clothing features that a customer has selected to never be shown again. By ticking the little bix of each garment, the customer will edit her favorite and least favorite clothing features.
- Measurements; are requested for the shoulders, bust, waist, hips and inside leg. The unit of measurement is centimeters by default.

After the fulfillment of all the data needed to complete a visitor's profile, the tour starts with a customer experience to not regret.

To give a brief idea about what's waiting for the visitor to discover:

On the home icon; Dressipi is respectively displaying what's new, the visitor's saved outfits, wishlist, likes and dislikes, saved searches, with even an option to invite friends.

On the recommendations icon; there is an option called 'perfect for you' , followed by weekly emails and the outfits according to the choice of clothes of course.

The next icon is the advice; where the visitor gets some style guide, style advice, and the size finder.

Inspiration, is about the seasonal trends. The blog, the brand directory and the fashion glossary are also found on this icon.

The help icon is assisting on defining Dressipi concept in few lines, explaining how it works, and contact information.

The last icon on the right corner, is the name of the member registered. It tells you basically that there is a possibility to edit your account or your fashion fingerprint informations.

Few minutes later, after the registration, Dressipi sends a welcoming email. They thank the visitor for joining then ask for a confirmation of the adress and other informations if not complete.

### **5.3 Research findings**

It is preferable to gather all the results and shematize them, to give an overview to the reader before reading any elaboration on the results of the findings. So the results have been first summed up below (see figure 4).

The shape of the figure is made that way in order to emphasize on giving a clear image of how Dressipi is managing the four factors together (Market Demand, Cross cultural Communication, Customer Orientation, Social Media) to come up with such a success in its first years as it is a fresh start up company, dating from year 2011.

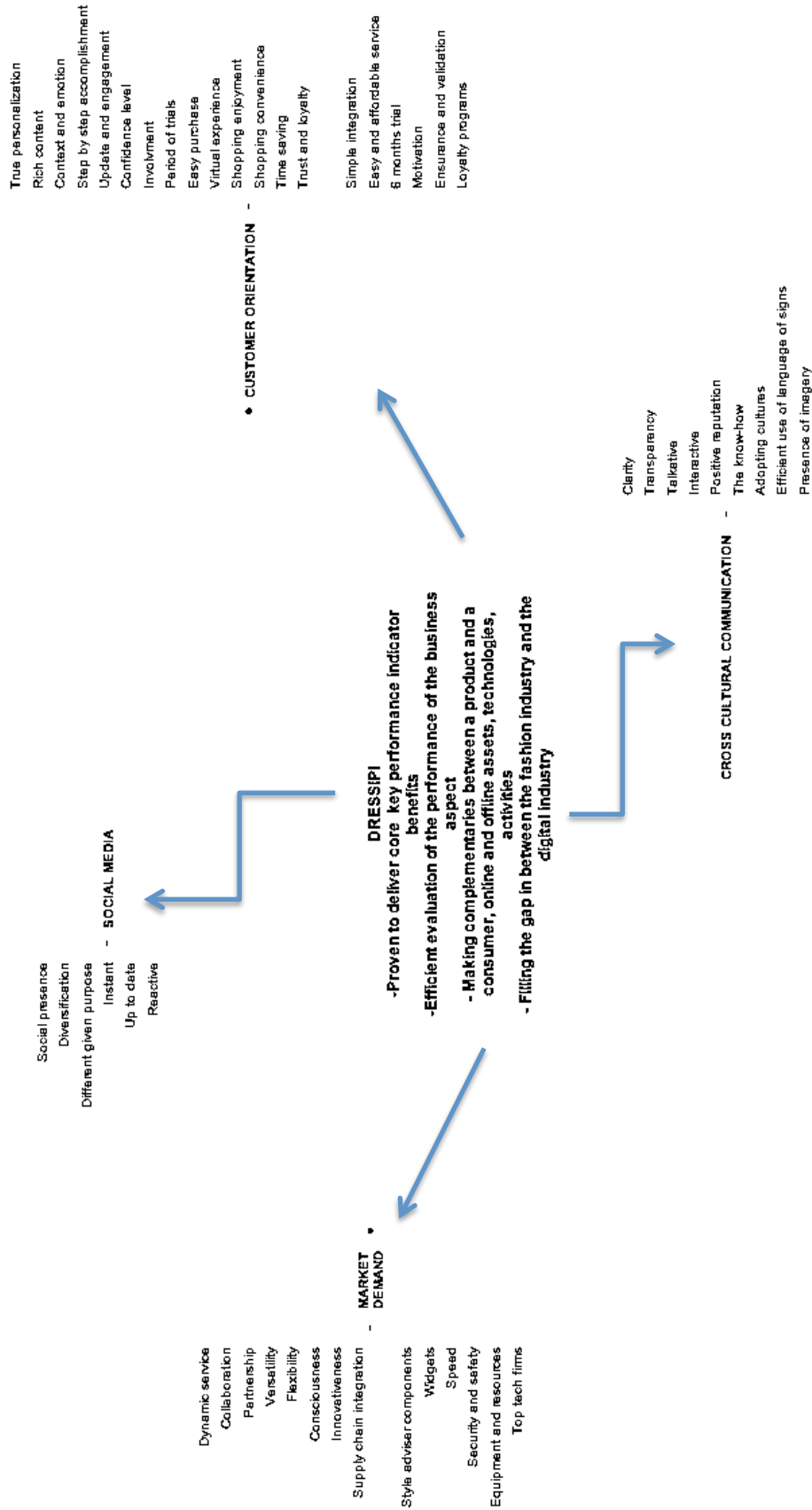


Figure 4: Dressipi's management of the four factors

## 5.4 Evaluation of the results

Based on a qualitative research, Dressipi as an e-business model case has been investigated according the market demand, customer orientation, cross cultural communication and social media. The following part elaborates these links and interactions.

- Dressipi vs Market Demand:

The market demand as mentioned on the previous section, is about both the fashion industry and the digital industry being demanding towards the businesses occurring within.

Regarding the fashion industry, Dressipi keeps up with its uncertain and unexpected rhythm by being on a very dynamic service and collaborating with professionals on the field.

The e-business company is showing versatility as its services are adapted to different situations with different aims and wide list of lots of categories of brands approaches. Eventhough the background of the co-founders was fully on data and technology, by adding to their team artistic skills of several stylists, Dressipi is therefore ver fashion conscient and innovative in finding answers to the customer's needs in terms of clothing.

Eventually, Dressipi has built over those few years a very strong supply chain which is integrating functions of all all needed departments found in bigger business structures, and it works because they insist on the quality of their service and the very efficient well calculated effort they put in each action.

From the digital industry perspective, Dressipi is again cheering up by being well equiped with human and material resources. The work pays off, for instance, the e-business company is one of the top tech firm growing 1000pc a year.

On their website, they are fluent at technology advancement and speed. They also have widgets flexibility and more essentially; the availability of their style adviser components on mobile and instore.

- Dressipi vs Customer Orientation:

Dressipi is very customer oriented and it applies its philosophy on two dimensions:

The first dimension is about the people who make the Dressipi community, as it makes sure of giving a true personalisation to each of its customers with a rich and nicely designed content to not easily get bored of. The e-business company made it possible to engage itself in the context and emotions of every customer, and care about taking each visitor to the Dressipi adventure step by step till the accomplishment of what this visitor was willing for.

Dressipi doesn't stop reaching and satisfying its customers even after their registration, as it follows up with seasonal and weekly emails to boost the customer experience. It coaches the confidence level of those women struggling between their jobs and looking feminine and elegant, by being so involved in those customer's life decisions basing on their activities and past purchases. The company also provides a pre-experience online for those visitors to get an preview of what is waiting for them when they decide for signing up. After the person makes up her mind, she realizes how much the virtual experience Dressipi is preparing is full of fun and joy to the point that it becomes addictive, especially that all the hard work is done and the purchase is facilitated with all the convenience needed. Eventually, Dressipi obviously emphasizes on making a trusting relation with the customer and it doesn't miss any occasion to point that out.

The second dimension is about the fashion leading brands and retailers, where Dressipi shows a simple integration and assures an easy and affordable site. It offers a six month trial and a flat fee pricing at the first interaction to cancel any doubt issue about whether their services potentially work or not. The company keeps on a motivation track by ensuring and validating their clients purchases as they guarantee more financial return and less item return , for them brands and retailers to be convinced and include Dressipi's software service among theirs.

Dressipi builds loyalty programs with its partners and does all the possible to be assisting them all along the process.



- Dressipi vs Cross cultural Communication:

The e-business success wouldn't have been existing out of Dressipi's offices if the message hasn't been passed through communication, to the outside world.

Yet, it is not only about throwing some words that it happens to be one of the best successful startups heard about; it is a whole consideration and attention to details but also a maintenance of this behavior. If those features appear quickly on Dressipi's description, it is because of its clarity and transparency of content, it wants anyone to understand what it does, how it does it and what kind of benefits it could bring.

Dressipi gives the feeling that the speech or texts given on its platforms talk to each of the person visiting their web, in terms of activating their human senses, using signs and body language when it comes to using meaningful images and appropriate wording to the layout.

Dressipi is very interactive in its interior world but also in the exterior world; it could adopt many cultures in once since the concept itself doesn't change and would apply to anyone.

Moreover, the press thinks all positive about their business, without any hesitation to improve their image and reputation day by day, not only to talk about it as a last rephrased retailing but also to give it as an example of business strategies and initiative courage.

Dressipi surely has the know-how of communicating its presence on the web and impact on the merging of the fashion and digital industries, as well as their loyalty to their visitors.

Dressipi uses the sign language perfectly and places the imagery on the right spot, at the right time.

- Dressipi vs Social Media:

The presence of a business in social media is a must nowadays, and Dressipi got it right; they represent themselves in a different shape on each of the social networks as it has been discussed previously. For instance, they are on facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blog and Pinterest with a great diversification of content use

which would let their customers want to follow them everywhere to see what is occurring in every day. In other words, Dressipi gives each of the social networks a purpose to exist and doesn't only use them randomly and widely. That might sound complicated to daily manage, but it is in fact a very smart way to enlarge the community of fans and make them proud of being part of it.

Dressipi's team is trying to be there for their followers, coming almost every day with a new little story to share, the best part is that they are also reactive within the few next hours after they are sent any kind of request, and that is a rare feature for such fast developing businesses to have.

- Dressipi is centralizing:

The circle in the middle of the schema (see Figure 4), represents how Dressipi doesn't only manage each one of the factors; they actually ensure their flow all together by delivering core key performance indicator benefits ( KPI benefits ).

The reason for having such a matter is to evaluate the factor that are crucial to its success, in order to maintain their position.

Dressipi's team also keeps an effort of coherence in its actions, which makes the opinions they give to millions of women more trustable and relevant to their brand image.

Dressipi is working on complementarities between:

- Their product service and the customer experience
- Their online and offline assets
- Their technologies
- Their activities

## 6- DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The fashion industry has undertaken so many roles and changes over years, that the notion of creativity has been having many definitions which led to a full spectrum tolerance. As it is not limited to a specific set of values; it varies infinitely and that requires lots of flexibility and ability to adopt quick trends.

This speed of styles is given the name of the fast fashion; an aspect of fashion where items have a short lead-time which in turn becomes a short life cycle moving the clothes from the catwalk to the shopping glass of a store. The earlier it happens; the better it is suspected to achieve acknowledgments and acceptance from the market and the customer.

Due to the internationalization of markets and the customers differences in cultures and beliefs; a wide data information is needed to be collected and interactions to be encouraged. The pioneers of the fashion industry and more specifically the auxiliary ones, take place by helping on improving those points by assisting every step with the most appropriate resource in two-way dimensions. From a human resource perspective; the fashion leaders, photographers, event agencies and models among many others represent the spirit of the time.

From a material resource perspective; it is about what these fashion leaders, photographers or any other, are doing to reach a large community of people. Technology development, internet growth and social media tools all together participated in managing this huge flow of information exceeding the internal communication a traditional company could be working on.

Companies embraced this era by switching to an online business to business and business to customer focus, which are the usual activities of the electronic commerce. The decision taken toward the situation might have solved the issues of boundaries but created other challenges to deal with.

The difficulties become emphasized when there isn't a complete integration and assimilation of the transactions occurring between both the fashion and the digital industries. Yet, even by realizing that gap in the market, e-business companies failed in serving such a purpose as it is impacted by the major factors considered

on this context, to be the main factors formed by the aggregation of many sub-factors.

This thesis research aim has been to first grow the knowledge of the four following factors, which are: market demand, cross cultural communication, customer orientation and social media tools. Then, prove the inter-connection between those factors and their impact on an e-business.

Taking the fashion advice site, Dressipi as a case study example helped on analyzing the full situation of phenomenon from a closer angle.

The findings justify well the theoretical model. The management of the four main factors which are; market demand, cross cultural communication, customer orientation and social media, is strongly making an impact on an e-business success. Those findings have shown what has been supposed to be influencing or enhancing the success of an e-business interfering within the fashion industry; depending on how the company takes those factors responsibility in charge.

The first motivations of this thesis started from a simple curiosity of observing consumers getting used to a sort of routine experience that businesses were offering online; there was not much attachment keeping those consumers loyal or visitors frequent as usual. After digging and looking for the logic things occurred with; more dimensions got themselves involved in the period of trying to answer several wonderings. It transitioned from what's making an e-business able to keep up with its visitors to what's impacting an e-business in terms of the market, the communication, the consumer and the social aspect.

Basically, a company handling well those factors is a company that works on; adapting strategies to the demanding market of nowadays in terms of fashion speed movement and technology development. With a high degree of the customer's involvement and a sensitive approach, the company will be having a fair understanding of how this customer's perception functions; therefore this company will know how to make a customer fully satisfied. None of this goes without a great communication, the only difference which would make the company distinguishing itself is to consider the cross culture boundary in a global market and think of providing services which could adopt themselves easily. This

company will be also good at communicating in the real world as well as transmitting the same if not a better positivity and experience on the online world.

Social media comes as a factor order, allowing all the other factors to be used in interactions and enhanced in application.

The contribution of this thesis to the industry of fashion can be seen already in terms of supply chain reinforcement with a vertical integration, as the theoretical model's role is to make a company interacting on the field of fashion able to handle and control the full process. Fashion companies will be able to manage their own e-business without depending on any outsourcing or delegation of tasks.

The thesis has also participated on drawing the full spectrum of the fashion market segments operating at each stage. It has updated the field with the latest news regarding what is happening within and around, and how to deal with it under the current conditions.

On the academic side, this thesis has opened up new insights and contributed with a beginning of visioning concepts all as part of one cycle and looking forward to relating them to each other.

## **7- LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The importance of this thesis is valuable when it comes to discussing a different era of a variety of notions and concepts which are themselves hard to break down when doing each diagnose separately.

Also, there is no obstacle about who this thesis targets as it can be read by an unlimited type of people, from the students writing on the same subject direction, the academics and practicioners to the 'just curious' person.

Obviously and just like every research, this thesis has limitations. For instance, it hasn't define notions background and purpose in depth with all the considerations. It is recommended to bring diverse professional skilled people together into further research to not be neglecting parts of the process which might have also a somehow influence on the study conducted.

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## APPENDIXES

- The semi-structured interview, these are the questions that have been asked to the co-founder:

1. Can you explain your e business model?
2. What is your strategy in order to make a success?
3. What type of technologies are used to support and grow your business?
4. How many partners helped move the business forward?
5. Did the software improve the customer experience in any of the platforms?
6. To what extend do you integrate your customers?
7. How easy is your purchase process, for instance how much time does it take and how many features do you take in consideration?
8. What about the language requirement and multi currency acceptance?
9. In future; are there any planes to develop the business to outside of UK?
10. How do you market your business?
11. What makes your concept unique over competitors?
12. Are there any privileges for users ?
13. What you doing with loyalty of customers ?
14. How are you evolving with the fashion boom?
15. The four skilled resources – information technology , creativity, consulting , marketing?
16. What is the typology of the website?
17. As the famous quote says, “ the best way to build momentum and create a movement is to tell a good story” what’s yours?
18. Is it possible to get hold of the publications regarding dressipi ?