

THE SPATIAL TRENDS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SPACE FOR FASHION DESIGN SECTOR IN ISTANBUL

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Abstract

Researches that examined process of cultural production and creative sectors refer especially the importance of space. According to Scott, creative industries tend to agglomerate in areas where the easy access to specialized labor force, supply companies and support services are concentrated (Scott, 2000). Fashion design sector is also indicated the same trend as a sub sector in cultural industries. Furthermore with the structural change in global economy enhance the importance bestowed upon the sectors constituting the culture industries in the spatial, economical and physical development of cities. The sector of fashion design is amongst these sectors acquiring importance and generating economical gain through the creative capacity.

During these developments in the World, there are significant moves taking place in the field of fashion design in Istanbul. To put it in another way, Istanbul is among the prime cities with a potential for the development of this sector in Turkey. There is a vast accumulation of knowledge resulting from a history in production in the city with the biggest portion in exports in the clothing and textiles field in Turkey. On the other hand, due to its central position in commercial and economical activities and its global disposition Istanbul is also characterised as a centre of Turkish fashion where creative activities are located, various related fairs, activities and fashion shows take place, where the initial steps for organising the sector are taken and where institutions of education concentrate. The statements uttered by various actors of the sector in interviews, that there is no other city which contains so many key factors necessary for the development of fashion design prove that design is not considering to relocate.

Within this context, in the scope of the research the aim is determined as to reveal the importance of space over the development of design, spatial proximity and inter-relationship between production and design, and the geographic characteristics of fashion design in Istanbul as well as the contributions of interviews with fashion designers and some other stakeholders².

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1. Introduction

In the literature, it is claimed that as a creative industry fashion design is a sector which tends to cluster and share a socio-economic environment. At the same time, in the sector many fashion companies in these places carries out cooperation with other local actors (Rantisi, 2004; Hauge, Malmberg & Power, 2009). Indeed, the trend in the world also proved the creative and production processes prefer places that provide appropriate necessary conditions. In fact, with the globalization, low-cost production in developing countries based on growth policies has led to a fragmented structure in the geographic distribution of fashion design, garment and textile sectors. Accordingly, the production takes place mostly in developing countries, design and marketing phase finds its place in global cities of developed countries (Bair & Gereffi, 2003:149; Hassler 2003:523).

However, it is emphasized that the importance of local conditions should be taken into account in questioning the relationship between fashion design and the space localization. There is a world-wide distribution of the value chain, but on the other hand in the creation of value the role of the local potentials are also important (Hauge, Malmberg & Power, 2009). In other words, the geographical location has an important role on the innovation and learning process. The innovation and learning ability can be produced conveniently where the resources, knowledge and other inputs and facilities agglomerated in the specific environments rather than a single individual attempts. The spatial agglomeration of firms within the same industry, related services, education, research and development activities that allows face to face relationships, share and facilitate the flow of information by creating scale economies (Asheim, 2007). Today, even though more recent developments in communication technologies created an incredibly long distances interaction, some of the knowledge and skills transfer takes place by means of face to face relationships (Malmberg & Maskell, 1999).

Beside, when the geographical features of fashion design industry analyzed, according to the global trends manufacturing and design activities are in different locations from each other, yet many fashion centers had a history of production. With this context when Istanbul is examined the presence of textile and clothing manufacturing has an important contribution to the development of the fashion design in Istanbul. Of course, this trend is not only shaped by the location selection of the industry but also the presence of an accumulation of the other creative industries, central structure of Istanbul in commercial and economic terms, fashion-related exhibitions, events and fashion shows take place in Istanbul and fashion design departments of universities and private institutions providing education in fashion design, even historic identity , considered to be important factors in the specification of Istanbul as the center of Turkish fashion.

Kozaman, S. , 2011. Fashion Design In Istanbul: Structural Features, Threats, Opportunities and Policy Implications. İstanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture Project, Inventory of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Economies in Istanbul.

<http://www.istanbulkulturenvanteri.gov.tr/files/yayinlar/ISTANBULDA_MODA_TASARIM.pdf >

Taking all of these developments into account the aim of the research is determined as to reveal the importance of space over the development of design, spatial proximity and inter-relationship between production and design, and the geographic characteristics of fashion design in Istanbul with the contributions of interviews with fashion designers and some other stakeholders.

2. Fashion Design Sector in Istanbul

Textile and apparel sectors, create important opportunities for economic development, especially in 19th century in England and in the 20th century in other countries the industrialization led to the development of exports by providing the accumulation of capital. Today, it's observed that due to the presence of cheap workforce in developing countries, especially in order to ensure the capital stock, the production of textile and apparel sectors take similar roles in economic development (Dal and Gülpınar,2010).

Indeed, the cheap cost of production-based growth policies in developing countries, along with the globalization, has led to the emergence of a fragmented structure in the geographic distribution of fashion design, garment and textile industries. Production takes place mostly in developing countries, design and marketing phase mostly located in developed countries and global cities. In other words, the geographical distribution of the production of apparel and the industry reveals widespread structure, yet the accumulation of value-creating activities such as branding, design and marketing in certain areas caused the flow of value into specific areas (Bair and Gereffi, 2003). In particular, Paris, Milan, New York, London must be considered as pioneers in global cities not only as the places of trend designers in fashion, but also stand out as the places of consuming fashion.

Textile and clothing sector in Turkey has a history based on Ottoman Period. To briefly summarize the status of sectors, during 1923-1970 government policies and development plans attributed to the importance of textile sector investments to increase production capacity in this direction. After 1980s, with the liberalization process in Turkey, foreign capital and goods started to enter with imports and also Turkey opened to foreign markets at the same rate. With the start of world brands taking place in local apparel retail market, the demand for consumption of fashion products has increased.

In 80's foreign trade relations based on textile and in 90's, apparel exports gained importance. During this period of structural change in the Turkish economy cheap workforce, minimum capital requirement and the existence of necessary raw materials in local industry (cotton etc.) has provided a rapid development in apparel and textile sectors. In addition, the number of large-scale enterprises in clothing sector has increased with the development of foreign trade relations.

Yet in 1990's the firms in Turkey and also in Istanbul had a market approach based on contract manufacturing. After the structural change in apparel and textile industries in the world this has turned into brand-building efforts. In order to manufacture products with high added value, companies tried to include design in the

production process. Especially in Istanbul after 2000s, a process was taken in the development of fashion design industry. In this context government and private initiatives has started to make significant investments in education, R&D operations. And also clothing, textile and fashion design professional associations were established. With the efforts of some actors in the sector and the public support major projects have been developed. In 2006 Fashion Designers Association were established and from August 2009 Istanbul Fashion Week was started with international participation. Although the latency of developments, these and similar steps contributed to the growth potential of the sector.

In Istanbul, due to the presence of capital in proportion of industrial location preferences textile and clothing sector has also started to concentrate in the city. When we examined the exports in garments and textile products, it's observed that most of the exports are carried out from Istanbul. In 2009, the share of Istanbul in Turkey is %78 in garment and %52 in textile products. From 2002 to 2009 export rates are increased from 3 to 5 billion \$ in textile. In parallel to this improvement the export in garment products are also increased from 5 to 7.5 billion \$. But from 2007 there is a decline trend in the export rates of sectors in Turkey and also in Istanbul (Turkish Statistical Institute, Foreign Trade Statistics, 2002-2009).

According to 2009 data of Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICC), in the "personal or household goods such as textiles, clothing, shoes, jewelry, furniture and other interior decoration and other fashion goods related to fashion design activities" category there are 155 companies. This number is minor than the firms recorded under manufacturing or retailing classifications in garment and textile sectors.

Taking all these statistics into consideration, for fashion design, textile and clothing sectors Istanbul is the central location for trade and the large number of firms were concentrated in the city. Yet the number of fashion design companies registered to ICC is lower than the textile and clothing firms. In general, the results obtained from the review reports and data indicate that the export of Turkey in these sectors are in a declining trend. In parallel, the share in exports of Istanbul also shrinks.

It is clear that the approach that endorse cheap labor and production based manufacturing caused a redundant competition with Far East countries. In this aspect it's not rational to compete in cheap manufacturing category on a global scale. The sectoral acquisition will pursue to decline unless Turkey kept pace to the structural changes in the competitive environment. In this manner, the importance of innovative practices in design, branding developments has also been reported as dominant factors for the sectoral improvement in interviews with stakeholders.

“I’ve been working for an apparel firm as fashion design department director and also I have my own brand. In this geography, 10 years ago, there are no examples of designers who also work as a consultant for apparel firms. With this partnership the firm increases the rates of its turnover almost %50 in every season.”

Arzu Kaprol, Fashion Designer

Today although fashion and manufacturing phases are prone to locate in different places according to global trends, many fashion centers of today had a history of manufacturing. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the presence of textile and apparel manufacturing in Istanbul made a valuable contribution to the development of fashion design in the city. Of course, this trend has been shaped not only within the framework of location preferences of the industry but also the presence of the accumulation of other creative industries, fashion-related exhibitions, events and fashion shows, fashion design education institutions even the historic identity of city effects the clustering potential in Istanbul as important factors. In addition, interviews with fashion designers mentioned that there is no other city in Turkey that has so much potential together for the development of the sector.

3. Location Choice of Fashion Design in Istanbul

With globalization as a result of competition to attract capital, urban areas which had become valuable for manufacturing have turned to be the preferable places for finance, commerce, creative and cultural sectors. In Istanbul this decentralization process is reinforced by strategic plans and policies. In this context, with the interviews, effects of decentralization process of textile and apparel manufacturing to fashion design sector are investigated. Interpretations of designers are differentiated from each other about the spatial relationship between production and design. There are some views emphasizing the importance and advantages of clustering or close spatial relationships between manufacturer and designers to ensure the existence of cooperation between them. Besides there are some opposing views that support the independency of design activities from mass production and possibility of cooperation without proximity and the development potential of textile and clothing industry (manufacturing) in other cities.

The current location preferences of the sector is also an evident for the consideration of the city as the most suitable geography for development of fashion design sector. The maximum agglomeration is seen in the Şişli District. %16.8 of total companies are located in this district. After Şişli, Beşiktaş (%8.4), Bakırköy (%7.1), Kadıköy (%6.5), Beyoğlu, Kagithane and Umraniye (5.8% each one) are the locations that take over (Figure 1).

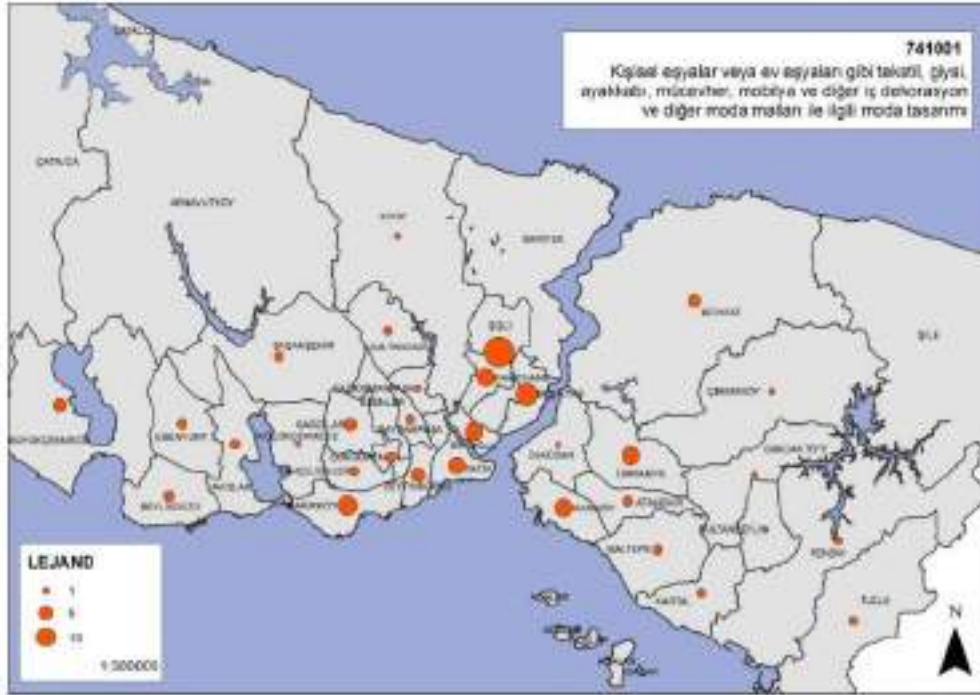


Figure 1. The distribution of fashion design firms according to districts (ICC member records)

In addition to this, there are 92 members registered to Fashion Designers Association. Members are classified as fashion designers, young fashion designers, fabric designers and future fashion designers (who are still students in universities). Two categories (fashion designers and young fashion designers) are considered to understand the location choices. The spatial distribution of 76 members in these categories show similar tendencies with the locations observed in ICC members. Sisli (%38), and Beyoğlu (%13) are districts with high agglomerations.

In summary, the fashion design activities have chosen to locate in the center of the city in places that has history and identity. Yet Şişli is a place not only with prestigious commercial streets but also from 1970's small garment workshops had located in the district. Fashion design sector tend to concentrate in space and this trend creates opportunities for market sharing and also can be considered in the context of a capacity to transform space. In Beyoğlu, Galata region is an evidence for this transformation.

"As my point of view, artists are the main leading stakeholders who can change and transform the space. Galata is one of the oldest and historical part of Istanbul. In its history, artists and radical people also lived in this old neighborhood. Strictly, there could be no other place for me better than Galata. I made an investment in here for my office and showroom. With this acceleration, creative people, like artists, designers, gallerists, architects began to come and rent shops, showrooms in here."

Bahar Korçan, Fashion Designer

4. Conclusion

As a result, clusters that have been shaped by the prestigious location preferences of the fashion design sector lead to create a network between space and fashion. And some places are associated with fashion directly like Nişantaşı which is a neighborhood of Şişli or as mentioned before Galata.

The interview below denotes an important clue about the location trend of a large-scale apparel company. However, in some interviews the importance and exigency for spatial proximity is mentioned between small-scale workshops and fashion designers as a result of contract manufacturing. When the production capacity is exceeded in a fashion designer firm, they prefer to work with small scale manufacturers in the city. And also some of the designers prefer to supply raw materials from the commercial units in these places.

“Our apparel company decided to carry manufacturing part to Çerkezköy in Tekirdağ Province. There are several reasons for this, but the main cause is based on some certain factors. The current place of the factory in Istanbul is closed to the transportation nodes like airport etc. So the area became much more valuable and in addition to this the labor force is much more expensive in Istanbul rather than other closed cities as a result of high income needs to maintain standards of living. Furthermore, the congestion and density in transportation effects the logistic operations badly. So it becomes a necessity to move to a place without these difficulties.”

General manager of Altınyıldız Apparel Factory

There are several ascriptions that refer to the importance of cultural industries in policies for development of Istanbul. Some of views appraise Istanbul as “overvalued” for manufacturing activities in terms of labor and land prices. However, the proximity of designers and producers also seems to be an important issue. In this context, taking all these spatial relationships into account comprehensive studies have to be realized to provide and strengthen the development of cultural industries with spatial sectoral policies.

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