

## Chapter 3

# CREATIVE DESIGN AS THE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY OF TURKISH APPAREL SECTOR

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### INTRODUCTION

Creative industries are the markets that added-value is mostly driven by the design of the output. They play important role in the development of today's knowledge economies. Advertising, architecture, antiques, handicrafts, film making, performance arts, music, interactive entertainment software, and fashion design are examples of creative industries. The distinctive feature of these sectors, which adopt creativity based production processes, is that the value of the final product is largely dependent on customer perception rather than the meta value of manufacturing (Weckerle, Page, & Grand, 2013). In these industries where the boundary between aesthetic and commercial value is ambiguous, economic structuring redefines the areas of activity of the creative industries, which are found outside the classical categorization. In short, aesthetic creativity becomes economically measurable (Demir, 2014).

In Turkey, fashion design is one of the most significant fields in creative industries. The country's established production areas in textiles, apparel and leather products constitute important leverage in the economic activity (Eraslan, Bakan, & Kuyucu, 2008). The reason for that is mostly rooted in the contextual changes during the near history of the sector.

The socio-economic transformations and economic policies, especially since the 1980s, shaped the new consumer profile in Turkey, which gave the design phenomenon a privileged position in clothing. This period is the transition to freer market structure adopted in many parts of the world that shifted the customer demand for more quality products. The capacity of Turkish producers, which were mainly supplying to European markets and regarded as having high quality craftsmanship by the end of the 1970s, became insufficient to compete with

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Customs Union with the EU. Despite newer entries into global trade arena from Asia, following the termination of textile quotas, and the economical downturn during the Great Recession, Turkish companies could recover the overall market share. In the post-2000s, the sector continued to grow by involving professional designers, advertising agencies, event organizations, education institutions, occupational associations, fashion critics, content providers, and so on. These were the essential elements for the development of a creative industry.

An interesting point is the evolution of brands in the sector. Unlike the common pattern in which a brand is embedded in a designer's identity and creativity as mostly seen in Europe; in Turkey, the brands are built on the manufacturing know-how and quality production of the companies. After accumulating the necessary capital through contract manufacturing, firms start investing in their own brands and internationalization. This is also encouraged by the State, as the country has factor endowments in textile and apparel industries to compete globally. There are numerous public incentives to support young designers and brand building efforts of the companies. Investing public resources in this manner seems viable due to the fact that Turkey is already a prominent actor in world apparel trade. Especially the European countries are likely to retain as the major partners because of the nearshoring advantages in comparison to East Asia.

The overall insight of this review would be that there is an obvious push toward branding through creative design in the sector. The multi-cultural environment that is inherited from the long history of the land composes a fruitful ground for creativity. These elements indicate that Turkey is sufficient in terms of necessary elements to establish brands. Endowed with the favorable factors, it is likely that Turkey has more potential to capture additional value in world fashion business.

Theoretically, further studies can explore the e-business trend in the industry, which brings trade opportunities even for small firms. Practical implications for the upcoming era is to adopt sustainable supply chain for digital transformation, apply agile design for fast moving fashion trends, and establish strong networks with retail chains around the world. These steps can be well taken by persistent industrialists with global mindset.

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