Design as a source of Competitive Advantage

Design as a value creation process and its role

in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions

Master Thesis

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Abstract.

This study aims at analysing the role of design in consumers' lives and within successful organizations. Design is considered in its broadest meaning, both as an aesthetic phenomenon and as a source of competitive advantage. The focus of this study and its ultimate goal is to explore how design, meant as a value creation process, influences consumers' purchasing decisions and market trends.

Relevant findings have been collected through the implementation of an empirical deductive approach applied to a qualitative research method. A critical discussion of the data collected is implemented through an in-depth analysis of interviewees' responses, with the ultimate goal to establish the nature of the relationship between design and the average consumer.

Significant research contributions are developed through the application of existing theories and frameworks to the given topic. The study finds similarities and differences in the way consumers react to a product's design, revealing how culture is a key determiner in consumers' purchasing decisions.

The importance of design as a source of competitive advantage which impacts consumers' behaviours is confirmed by the success of products developed through strategic processes in which design has a predominant role. Consumers are found to be often not aware of how design heavily influences their everyday life and purchasing choices. An indissoluble bond is proven to exist between a product's aesthetic appearance and its intangible features; consumers are found to build emotional links with objects they interact with, giving birth to personal meanings they associate with the product itself and its surroundings. The tasks of design in anticipating consumers' needs and in performing its role as a problem solver through the attribute of functionality are also underlined by the research.

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1. Introduction.

"There is a way of doing design that is giving people what they ask, which is never something innovative.

And there is a way of doing design that is more *artistic* and *poetic*."

Alberto Alessi

The word "design" derives from the latin *de + signare*, which means to mark out, set part, give significance by assigning it to a use, a user or an owner.

Design has the same origin as "sign" and "designate", calling attention to something other than its observer-independent existence: meaning. Based on these original meanings, one could say: design is *making sense of things* (Gasparin, 2014).

Design is not only about styling or creativity: when taking on a broader meaning, design can be considered as an innovation strategy aimed at, quoting Verganti (2009), "manage innovation that customers do not expect but eventually love".

Companies that effectively manage the process of the creation of meanings of products and services which anticipate customers' tastes and needs actually create a competitive advantage, which comes to be hardly imitable from the competition.

This conception of design is processed in the theory developed by Professor Roberto Verganti, a theory called *Design Driven Innovation*.

Firms like Apple, Alessi, Kartell present a recipe for success having its milestones in an industrial strategy in which design has a fundamental or, better saying, a predominant role. The processes implemented by these firms are lead by "interpreters" who patiently study society trying to find room for new meanings (Verganti, 2009). Consumers' needs and behaviours are here analysed not in order to make the firm meet them, but to *anticipate* them.

Everyone in the organization is involved in this process, in which top management and executives have a fundamental role in leading the firm with a brilliant and revolutionary mindset toward the creation of radical new meanings.

The focus is here on the term "revolutionary": the Design Driven Innovation approach is considered to go *beyond* the traditional strategies of technology push and market pull. However, we will see how Verganti's (2009) approach is user-centred as well (a feature which typically belongs to the market pull approach).

In fact, we should keep in mind that the role of consumers is fundamental from the first stage of any new product development project: consumers are the ones who, often unconsciously, represent the key for firms to access a competitive advantage which is hardly imitable from the competition.

What do we mean for *competitive advantage*?

A firm creates a competitive advantage when it implements a strategy which creates value, and this strategy is not simultaneously being used by any current or potential player.

If we consider the traditional concept of competitive advantage developed by Porter (1985), we may place Design Driven Innovation processes in the differentiation source of competitive advantage.

In fact, Design Driven Innovation strategies do not belong to a cost leadership strategy. The products born through the implementation of this revolutionary process, such as Kartell *Bookworm* and Alessi *Kettle 9093*, had followed without any doubt a differentiation strategy aimed at the creation of something which embodies the character of uniqueness. When this character distinguishes a certain product, consumers are willing to pay what we call a premium price.

Every consumer, even those who give more importance to product characteristics such as price and utility (or, better saying, consumers who *think* they consider these factors more important compared to characteristics such as meaning or aesthetics) seems to be influenced, often unconsciously, by design and by processes in which design has had a predominant role.

For example, the average consumer is not aware of the fact that his Samsung Galaxy is the result of an internalization strategy implemented by the Korean firm – a strategy which focused on establishing policies and structures that embedded design thinking in all corporate functions, building design competency in-house rather than import it (Yoo and Kim, 2015).

In addition to the definition of design characterizing Verganti's (2009) theory, a second statement of meaning is here provided, which can be said to integrate the one previously stated.

Design can be defined as, quoting John Heskett (2005), "the human capacity to shape and make our environment in ways without precedent in nature that serves our needs and gives meaning to our lives".

Nowadays the common trend seems to be, especially in Scandinavia, to follow an idea of design

which mostly focuses on meanings.

However, design products always have to fulfill their duty as "problem-solvers", satisfying their utilitarian function in our everyday life.

This concept of design is the one pursued, for many years now, by the designers Perry King and Santiago Miranda. Design is considered, in their perception, a mean to harmonize the user with the surrounding environment.

Quoting Perry King on the occasion of an interview in Milan during Fuorisalone 2015: "The relationship with the object to the person is the key to the future of design.

We have always been designing for people. Since objects become part of the interiors of a person's house, we have to be able to imagine how these objects behave and harmonize with the architectural environment, being one with the surrounding architecture."

The idea of design pursued by the two designers is embodied in their works: new technologies and new materials with a high technological impact have been used in order to satisfy consumers' practical needs. The results are extremely discreet design products, almost "invisible", which blend with the surrounding environment and architecture.

We can see how, in both interpretations of design, the concept of *relationships*, meant as *networks* which come to exist in our daily life among different "actors", has a fundamental role in creating opportunities to add value to the firm's strategies and processes. These networks involve all the company's stakeholders, among who, of course, consumers.

There is no need to point out the importance and the influence of the role of consumers on the overall process of design thinking.

In order to enable the user better to understand and satisfy his needs, the designer in business must know a lot about the user and the relevant context (Kristensen, 2015).

As previously stated, a consumer may be willing to pay a premium price for a user-experience that enrich and stimulate him from both a "practical" point of view (we are here talking about the *function* of the design object) and from an intellectual and sentimental point of view (the product *meaning*).

The processes of ideation, creation and production of these design objects and, overall, an appropriate exploitment of what can be called a "good design" directly influence the firm's economic flows, giving birth to tangible value and assets from a financial point of view.

In particular, the value generated by the implementation of Design Driven Innovation processes is a value that is not immediately visible and recognizable. It requires time and, especially, an open-

minded approach which has to characterize the firm's executives and investors: Design Driven Innovation is a long-term strategy (Verganti, 2009).

Design is not merely an aesthetic phenomenon.
Design is a networking activity and a tool to communicate which requires top management devotion. Design influences us from both a physical and an intellectual point of view, affecting our feelings and emotions in our everyday life. It influences our relationship with the surrounding environment and with the modern society.

2. Literature Review.

2.1. Introduction to Literature Review.

The Literature Review chapter is divided into two main sections. The first one focuses on the role of design in value creation processes, i.e. design meant as a strategic tool in order to implement an effective competitive advantage. The second section focuses instead on the impact design has on consumers' purchasing decisions.
These two separate sections have been conceived in order to facilitate the reader in being introduced to the relevant literature. I however point out how sections 2.2. and 2.3. are clearly connected and have to be interpreted with a fully comprehensive approach which considers design in its broadest meaning.

2.2. The role of Design Thinking: design as a strategic approach and the role of management.

The role of design in the processes of value creation within organizations has been analysed by different experts on the topic; professors, designers, managers elaborated different theories and frameworks on the wide role of design within organizations.

My choice, while navigating the waters of design thinking, is to focus on a theory that considers design as proposals of new meaning. This frame has been developed by the Italian professor Roberto Verganti in 2009.

Before focusing on this particular point of view, I would like to present a more general approach which looks at the role of design in contributing to the creation of value in multiple ways.

An overview of the role of design management in processes of value creation is proposed by Marta Gasparin and John K. Christiansen in "How Managers can benefit from multiple perspectives on design management" (2014).

Different definitions of design are listed; among the most relevant:

- Design as a rational decision making process: design is here considered as a process of problem solving. The role of design in serving our everyday needs is made explicit by John Heskett (2005).

- Design meant as industrial - or product – design; indicating a plan, a project, a specific style. The role of executives is mainly to hire the right designers and strategically positioning them in the organizational structure. The role of design is here not regarded with a fully comprehensive approach: this definition is therefore limited to what can be defined as an "old" and incomplete interpretation of the topic.

- Design as "making sense of things". The role of management is here to "create a network of actors to involve them in the process" (Gasparin and Christiansen, 2014). The value generated through design is present in the revolutionary meanings the firm has been able to create. This definition of design is the one proposed by Verganti (2009) in his book "Design Driven Innovation".

According to Verganti (2009), companies are able to create and sustain an inimitable competitive advantage by identifying and interacting with the right interpreters. Design is the key to access a process of value creation in the firm.

This process consists mainly of three stages in which executives never lose their role in sustaining in an active way the ongoing process of value creation. Since "culture is one of the most precious gift of humanity" (Verganti, 2009), the role of the management's personal culture in heading the whole process of value creation to the building of effective and tangible economic value is fundamental in the Design Driven Innovation theory. This is made clear by Verganti (2009) while analyzing the sources of success of excellent Italian firms such as Artemide and Alessi. The companies' executives,

Ernesto Gismondi and Alberto Alessi respectively, and their culture applied to the processes implemented by their organizations, have been the key in creating unique processes and product offerings driven by design, characterized by a huge success worldwide.

At a time when in the USA executives were mainly focusing on a user-driven type of innovation, where analyzing consumers' needs was the key for success, the Italian pioneer Gismondi, stating "Market? What market?!", was implementing a radical strategy based on the creation of new revolutionary innovations of meaning; the *Metamorfosi* lamp by Artemide is one of the most remarkable example of the implementation of a Design Driven Innovation strategy (Verganti, 2009). *Metamorfosi*, released in 1998, let the consumer control and change the colors emitted by the lamp through an advanced system that releases a particular atmosphere created by colored light.

Figure 1. Artemide *Metamorfosi* Tian Xia 500 Led, designed by Carlotta de Bevilacqua, 2004.

The two pillars of Verganti's (2009) theory are the following:

- Radical innovation is one of the major sources of long-term competitive advantage;
- People do not buy products, but *meanings*.

The "positioning" of DDI (i.e. Design Driven Innovation – indicated with the acronym DDI in the following paragraphs and chapters) compared to the traditional approaches of technology push and market pull is represented in Table 1.
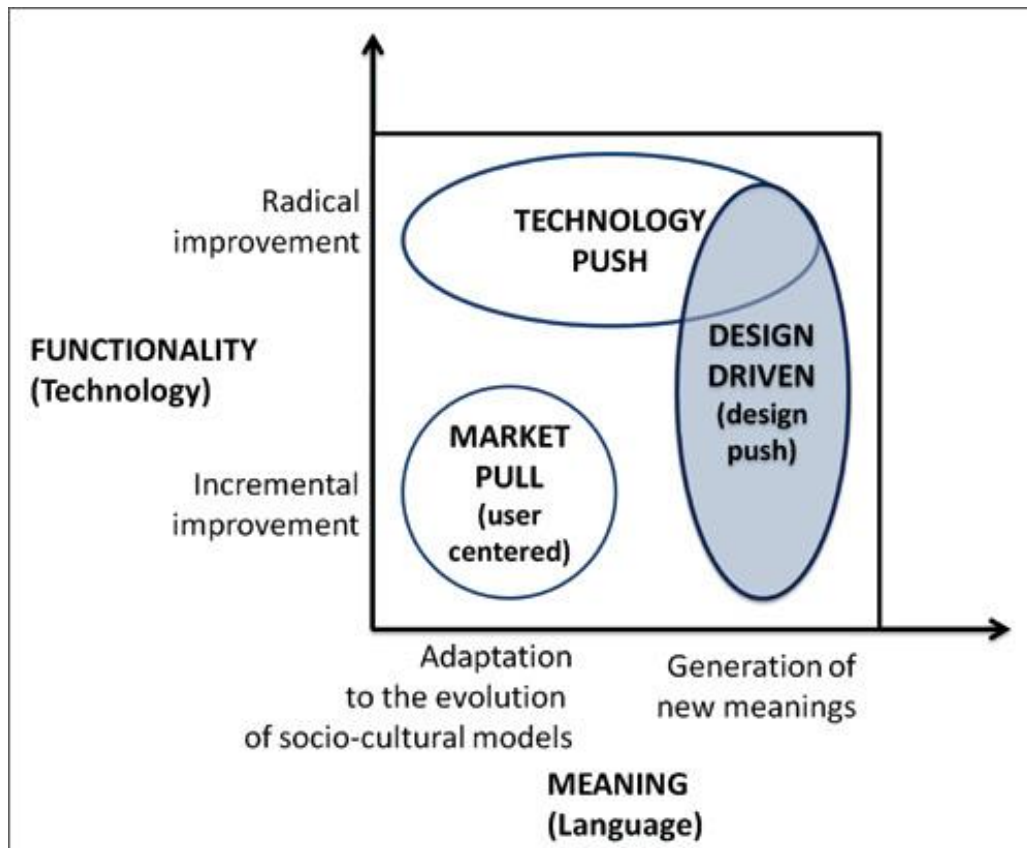
Table 1. *Design Driven Innovation*. Roberto Verganti, 2009.

Firms that develop DDI are projected to the future: to understand and predict how people give and will give meanings to things, the firms interact and hire who Verganti (2009) calls "interpreters". Interpreters represent the bridge between the firm and its consumers: they study the context in which people live is evolving (both in sociocultural terms and in technical terms), they analyze how the current context *could* change, and last but not least they try to get the potential role of the firm in the changing environment of existing trends. They wonder if the way people give meaning to things will change and how (Verganti, 2009).

Even if the DDI process can't be codified into steps, Verganti (2009) identifies three stages which have to be followed, exploiting the relationships with interpreters:

1. Listening: the act of gaining access to knowledge about possible new product meanings by interacting with interpreters.
2. Interpreting: internal process in which the firm recombines the knowledge gained in the first phase with its own resources, in order to create an effective system which exploits all the available assets.

3. Addressing: creating radical innovation of meaning. These revolutionary innovations initially confuse people: to prepare the ground for this kind of radical proposals, firms leverage the seductive power of interpreters.

In other words, the process of DDI is mainly based on investing in relational assets with a network of key interpreters (Verganti, 2009). This process directly involves the firm's executives and top management. These relationships can seldom be replicated by competitors and are therefore the main sources to build and maintain a competitive advantage with a long-term horizon (Verganti, 2009). Firms have to pay attention to obsolescence: quoting Alberto Alessi *"We need to continuosly search for new talents if we want to create radically new languages and stay ahead of the competition"*. Alessi *Family follows fictions* (1991) is another good example of a very successful implementation of DDI.

Figure 2. Alessi *Family Follows Fiction*, 1991.

In the 1990s Alessi started to work more with plastics; *Family Follows Fiction* is a collection of playful kitchen tools which radically changed what kitchenware meant for people. The creative potential of plastic is here used to help customers in satisfying emotional experiences and need such as tenderness, delicacy, intimacy and a throwback to their childhood. Kitchenware goes beyond functionality reaching symbolic values and giving birth to a radical innovation of meanings.

Here we see how this radical innovation of meanings is not requested by the current market, but is instead proposed by the firms themselves. Alessi was able to state the importance of "emotional design" and the impact that it can have on consumers' purchasing decisions.

The implementation of DDI requires open-mindedness and a remarkable level of flexibility by the company executives (Verganti, 2009). In an interview released in 2009 to Maria Capozzi and Josselyn Simpson, Alberto Alessi explains his relationship with designers. "Basically" he stated "it's like two sides of a coin. One side is the classical way of working with designers: to have them come to the company for a new product briefing. When we have an idea, I start thinking about whom I could ask. Usually I come up with two or three people. I discuss it with them. If the designers are interested, they start. After a few months, I receive their reactions and then I decide whether to continue or not. But there is another way. All of the 200 designers who work with us know they can call me and say, "Alberto, I have a fantastic idea for you." Then we start talking about it, designing it by telephone. If something interesting comes out of this, we start developing it over fax or through the mail. Then we meet. Over the past 20 years, half of the interesting items from Alessi came from the second way, half from the first."

A different approach toward the role of design in building a competitive advantage is proposed by Robert Blaich in his book "Product design and corporate strategy" (1993).

The focus is here on product design meant as a driving force to improve product quality and maintain a competitive edge. The importance of the role of management in achieving success through the implementation of design strategies, translating them into profitabibilty, is here underlined as well.

Initiatives to actively introduce design into the companies' processes went through a remarkable success especially at the end of the 80s, in Europe and the Far East. An example is Japan, which invested assets and resources to introduce design programs in every aspect of industry and society; 1989 was explicitly declared a "Year of design" (Blaich, 1993).

Blaich (1993) states how "Describing design and its management in terms such as *strategic, competitive weapon*, and *value-added advantage* might understandably cause reactions of bemusement, if not skepticism. After all, in the minds of most people, including business managers, design has something to do with how things look."

For Blaich (1993) as well the role of designers in the "design discourse" (terminology used by Verganti, 2009. The design discourse is defined as a "collective research laboratory" through which firms, designers, artists are involved in a continuous dialogue) is nothing without a proper commitment to design thinking implemented by the top management of the company. The design policy is defined as a "framework for action", where the goals of the implemented design activities are made explicit and guide the directions toward which the company realizes his strategic

movements (Blaich, 1993). The fact that "the benefits of a well-managed design program can contribute significantly to [the companies'] competitive success" (Blaich, 1993) is effectively demonstrated by real cases I decided to focus on, in order to introduce the reader to a couple of significant examples on the importance of the role of design as a strategic process.

The first one is the Philips case, presented by Blaich (1993) in his book, while the second case is about Samsung. The choice to focus on a European company and on an Asian one is not random: it is supposed, on the contrary, to show the active contribution of design in completely different cultures and environments.

Robert Blaich became Philips managing director of corporate Design in 1980. This let him be able to provide the reader with an insider view of the entire design process implemented by the Dutch company: he had an active role in redirecting the so called CIDC (*Concern Industrial Design Center*) toward new horizons. At that time, the electronics company presented a crucial problem, identified by John Heskett (1989) as a major obstacle to the strategic contribution design could make to Philips: "The organizational plan for CIDC specified a management process with the design group, but did not identify *a pattern of linkage* to other functions in the company. […] The managers [of the product divisions] often continued to regard design as a late, superficial addition to the process of product development."

Blaich's goal as the director of the design department was basically to connect all these company divisions under the same umbrella through an effective implementation of design processes, preparing the organization for the macroeconomic changes that at that time were pressuring Philips to restructure itself from a multinational to a global company.

A new effective design policy was elaborated, which "firmly anchored design with the corporate strategy framework by defining CIDC's responsibility as the group with the corporate task for conducting the product design function in the product development process and for overseeing the quality of design of Philips products, product systems, packaging, and graphics worldwide" (Blaich, 1993). Among the most effective changes Blaich implemented in his career at Philips, the proposal of annual agreements with the board of the company to accomplish specific objectives and improving professional standards by rejuvenating the design organization with new talents. This implied a process of maintaining close relationships with design schools in order to implement a new "fresh" recruitment program for the design division (Blaich, 1993). Furthermore, since the concentration of Dutch designers working in CIDC was considered to be too high by Blaich, he struggled in order to

obtain a more international staff, with the aim of designing and developing products conceived with an international approach. Philips design division developed projects with famous international designers as well: this was also possible due to the participation to, quoting Verganti (2009), the so called "design circles".

A study by Michael Farrell (2003) on collaborative circles demonstrated how breakthrough thinking often derives and benefits from the interaction in "circles" composed by different creative minds who bring to major shifts in literature, art, science. These "circles" provide an environment in which pioneering minds can explore new revolutionary cultural paradigms. A company can therefore gain a significant advantage by identifying promising circles in their early stages and developing privileged relationships with their members (Verganti, 2009).

Discussions of trends and how these would have affected Philips were implemented worldwide through workshops aimed at communicating information and conceptualizing and designing new products; this technique "encouraged cross-fertilization of ideas and thinking well beyond the day-to-day task work. Designers from various groups and world locations were brought together, stirring the pot of creativity both in terms of different professional approaches and in the cultural diversity" (Blaich, 1993).

It may therefore be noticed how open mindedness was one of the fundamental ingredients for the new CID (CIDC was renamed in 1990 "Corporate Industrial Design"). Blaich's effort to create a strong corporate identity through a harmonization program which aimed at the appropriation of the rightful corporate role of design was characterized by the focus on a centralized strategy involvong all the different company divisions and all the international subsidiaries.

The Korean firm Samsung Electronics began to focus on design in 1996, when Lee Kun-Hee, the chairman of Samsung Group, frustrated by the company's lack of innovation, realized the need for Samsung to focus on design, which he believed would have become "the ultimate battleground for global competition in the 21st century" (Yoo and Kim, 2015). He started thinking about a strategy which could have led the organization to create a design-focused culture in order to support innovation. The innovation process began with research conducted by multidisciplinary teams formed by "designers, engineers, marketers, ethnographers, musicians, and writers who search for users' unmet needs and identify cultural, technological, and economic trends" (Yoo and Kim, 2015).

We may make reference here to Verganti's (2009) DDI and to the importance of design circles.

The company focused on building design expertise inside the organization. This process was nothing

but easy, with managers attached to old routines who had to be persuaded to invest into new revolutionary visions of the future (Yoo and Kim, 2015). Lee focused on nurturing internal designers who would have focused on the company's long-term interests: Samsung hired designers from well-known design schools and created three training programs as part of its investments in developing an organization-wide design capability. Developing in-house expertise through teams formed by designers with a remarkable capacity for strategic thinking was supported by experiments in the marketplace (Yoo and Kim, 2015). An example are the improvements applied to the appearance of Samsung TVs. When ethnographic research revealed that in most homes TVs are considered and used just as pieces of furniture, Samsung designers team wanted to concentrate on the visual characteristics of the TVs, instead of technical qualities such as the power of sound (Yoo and Kim, 2015). They proposed a new, very aesthetically appealing TV, which presented hidden speakers below the screen in order to satisfy the consumers' aesthetic needs.

Figure 3. Samsung *Bordeaux TV*, 2003.

However, Samsung managers were skeptical. Therefore, the design team suggested to experiment their idea in the European market. The first release of the TV was a huge success, and after additional aesthetic modifications Samsung sold a million units in the first six months the product was launched in the market (Yoo and Kim, 2015).

Nowadays, the company's CDC (Corporate Design Center) continuously interacts with Samsung executives through strategic design review meetings that take place twice a year. In this way, design thinking processes which support the entire firm are embodied in a consistent way in the whole organization (Yoo and Kim, 2015).

The traditional concept of design perceived as a process applied just to physical objects has clearly underwent an evolution in the past twenty years. Design tools are now shaped by avant-garde companies in helping and supporting strategies and innovations implemented by the whole organization. However, since "new products and systems often require people to change established business models and behaviours", "they encounter stiff resistance from [...] the people who have to deliver or operate them" (Brown and Martin, 2015). Because of this, as we may notice as a shared point of view among the previously mentioned authors, the company design staff always has to be supported by the active role of top management who presents the open-mindedness necessary to start to implement an effective value creation chain. Consumers as well have to be educated in order to be ready to accept and to understand new revolutionary meanings and ways to interpret design; as previously stated, in Verganti's (2009) opinion, this is one of the tasks of the so called "interpreters".

2.3. The role of Design in giving birth to *meanings* through aesthetics and functionality: how good design can influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

When talking about the importance of a "good design" in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions, there is a common trend to think about design as merely an aesthetic phenomenon. However, design does not only lie at the heart of products (usually in a very discreet way, being part of value creation processes), but also means aesthetics and functionality. This idea of design is the one strongly supported by the designers Perry King and Santiago Miranda.

What do we mean with the term "*aesthetics*"? I provide here the reader with a definition of the Dansk Design Centre. Aesthetics is an "expression and content of a solution, an object or a service. Aesthetics is not just about whether something 'looks nice'. Here, aesthetics is about whether both the visual expression and the content of a solution, an object or a service *appeal to the users' positive emotions*." (Melander, 2015).

The focus on users' experiences, especially their emotional ones, and meanings is at the core of design

thinking strategies. On this issue, Roberto Verganti (2009) and Jon Kolko (2015), the founder and director of the Austin Center for Design, seem to share a common point of view. "To build empathy with users", Kolko (2015) states, "a design-centric organization empowers employees to observe behavior and draw conclusions about what people want and need. Those conclusions are tremendously hard to express in quantitative language. Instead, organizations that "get" design use emotional language (words that concern desires, aspirations, engagement, and experience) to describe products and users. Team members discuss the emotional resonance of a value proposition as much as they discuss utility and product requirements."

Along with a promise of utility, a good design promises an emotional value proposition as well. Design-centric companies manage to make, quoting Kolko (2015), "a promise of feeling" through strategic conversations continuously implemented in the organization, aimed at determining how a specific business strategy or change in the company's decision making processes would influence users' experiences.

When interviewed about value creation strategies, Indra Nooyi, the PepsiCo's CEO who invested in design thinking as the main drive for the company's innovation in the past nine years, stated: "A well-designed product is one you fall in love with. Ideally, it's a product you want to engage with in the future. There is much more than packaging: we have to rethink the entire user experience while purchasing and using the product" (Ignatius, 2015).

Revolutionary executives such as Alberto Alessi, who has always been loyal in following a Design Driven Innovation strategy, goes even beyond strategies used by average firms that employ design as a strategic thinking embodied in the organization as a whole. Talking about his firm's relationship with consumers, Alberto states: "Our approach, like that of other Italian design factories, is very different from that of a mass production company. I sometimes compare the process of making a new car with the process of making a Pablo Picasso painting.

When a car company sets out to make a new car, what do they do? First of all, the top person asks for market research to understand what the customer is thinking. So market research people go around asking the consumers, "What would you like?" And what do the customers do? They look around at the existing cars and say, "Ok, I like this part of that car," or, "I like this part of another car." And so on. The research people put all this together in a shaker. They shake. Then they pour out the recipe for the new car design and give it to the car designers.

Our way is closer to the way of Pablo Picasso. Imagine Picasso waking up in the 1920s on a nice,

sunny morning in a village on the Côte d'Azur and feeling strongly the wish-the need-to start painting. So he starts painting. But he's not asking himself, "To what target customer will I address my new painting?" Picasso shows us a completely different approach: starting from yourself, as a creator, and using your sensibility and your intuition in order to touch other people's hearts or sensibility or intuition […] All the designers working with us are like little Picassos: their creation process starts from intuition, not from market research."

Alessi's idea is to be a "mediator" between a good design and the final customer.

"To do this" Alberto says "we make use of some qualities that are more and more rare in industrial culture today, such as sensibility, intuition, and the desire to accept a bit more risk." The main tool employed by the Italian design company in order to achieve such revolutionary and innovative results, is called "the formula." The formula is a mathematical model used to understand what the reaction of the final customers could be toward a new product; this strategic process was at the basis of huge successes such as Alessi *9093 Kettle*, designed by Michael Graves in 1985, and Alessi *Juicy Salif*, designed by Philippe Starck in 1990.

Figure 4. Alessi *9093 Kettle*, designed by Michael Graves, 1985 and
Alessi *Juicy Salif*, designed by Philippe Starck, 1990.

Marie E. H. Creusen and Jan P. L. Schoormans show how the appearance of a product influences consumer product choice in "The Different Roles of Product Appearance in Consumer Choice" (2005). Product design is here recognized as an opportunity for differential advantage in the market place.

"A product's appearance can have aesthetic and symbolic value for consumers, can communicate functional characteristics and give a quality impression (functional value), and can communicate ease of use (ergonomic value)" (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005).

In the implemented qualitative study, six appearances "roles" which proved to be relevant for consumers were considered by the authors to be sufficient to describe the influence of product appearance on consumers' product choice. The appearance roles and their influence on consumers are specified in the table below.

Appearance Role	Influence on Consumers
Attention Drawing	Draw consumer attention in-store
Categorization	Influence ease of categorization Offer possibility for differentiation from the product category
Functional	Show features/functionalities Serve as a cue for features/functionalities Serve as a cue for technical quality
Ergonomic	Show parts for consumer-product interaction Show consequences of use of overall appearance aspects (e.g., size, roundedness)
Aesthetic	Serve as a basis for aesthetic appreciation Fit with home interior and other products owned
Symbolic	Serve as a basis for symbolic product associations Communicate brand image

Table 2. *"The Six Roles of Product Appearance for Consumers"*. Marie E. H. Creusen and Jan P. L. Schoormans, 2005.

"The design of a product determines consumers' first impression of the product and quickly can communicate product advantage. In addition, the design of a product will generate consumer inferences regarding several product attributes" (Berkowitz, 1987; Bloch, 1995; Pilditch, 1976). Furthermore, "product appearance can provide value in itself; many people like to buy a product that looks aesthetically pleasing" (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005). These characteristics of the relationship between the consumer and the product design are mainly embodied by the following appearance roles: functional, ergonomic and aesthetic.

The aesthetic value attributed by consumers to a specific product depends on the category to which

the product belongs: durable products, i.e. the ones used for many years e.g. furniture, are the ones which are more subjected to a judgment about their aesthetic characteristics in the moment of consumers' purchasing decision (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005). However, some people who are particularly sensitive to beauty and aesthetics, often prefer to buy aesthetically appealing products even in everyday life choices for those goods that are not durable (e.g., packaging of food). This category of extremely sensitive customers is usually willing to sacrifice money saving and functionality in favor of a more attractive product design (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005). Meanings associated to purchased products are another fundamental variable influencing customers' choices: several complex associations connect memories and social groups influences with a certain product appearance (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005).

As far as it concerns the relationship between aesthetics and functionality, Creusen and Schoormans (2005) noticed how, in their qualitative study, more subjects based their choice more on aesthetics than on functionalities. "This may indicate the importance of aesthetics in consumers' product selection. However, the relative importance of the appearance roles will differ between product categories and consumers." (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005).

Blaich (1993) also states: "Effective design contributions go far beyond the simple selection of color or trim to core issues like performance, durability, intelligibility, usability, and an appearance that not only pleases but informs." The author points out how, given the (almost) infinite purchasing options that nowadays characterize every product category available offering, it is design (more than price and quality) which assumes the role of differentiating products and influencing purchasing decisions (Blaich, 1993).

Peter H. Bloch (1995) gave his contribution to the topic by proposing the following model, which is supposed to describe consumers' responses to design (here called "product form").
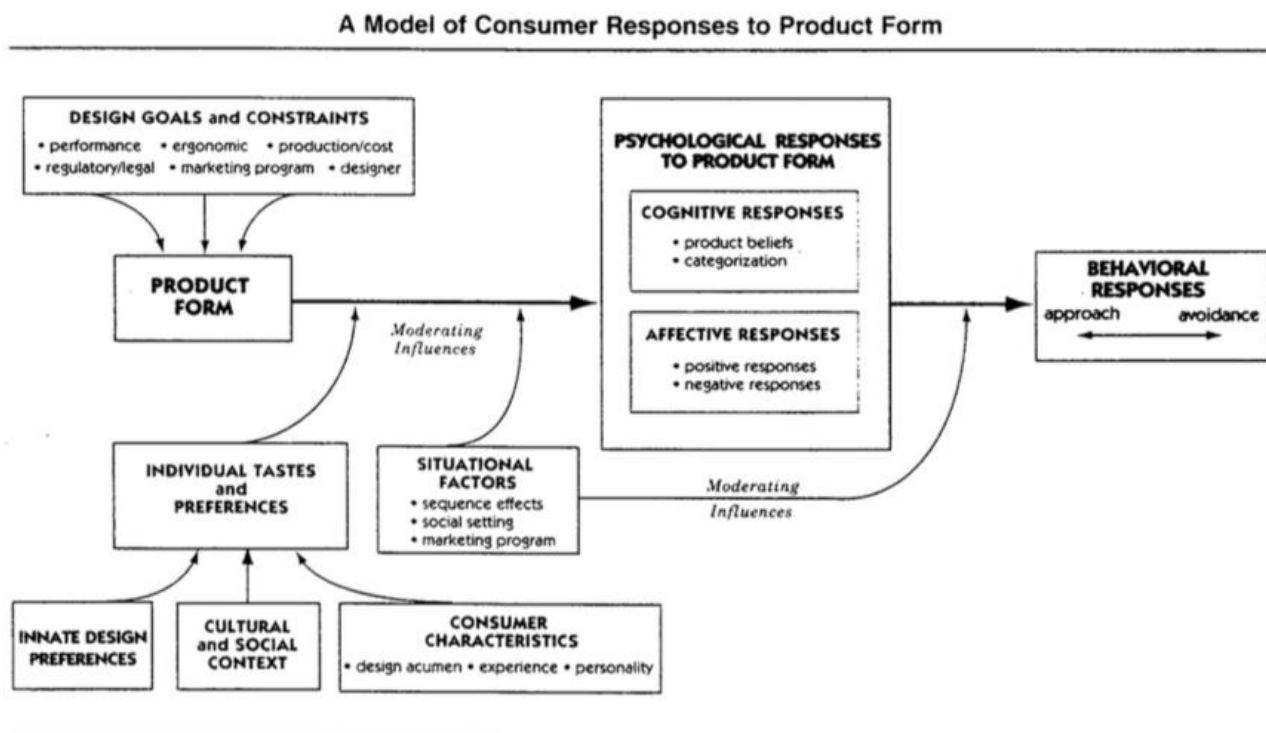
Table 3. *A model of Consumer Responses to Product Form.* Peter H. Bloch, 1995.

The model helps to explain the importance of the physical form of a product in determining its marketplace success. When given the choice between two products, equal in price and function, target consumers buy the one they consider to be more attractive (Kotler and Rath, 1984; Nussbaum and Port, 1988). According to Bloch (1995), the exterior appearance of a product contributes to its success in different ways: first of all, the form of the object has to be noticed by the target consumers. In order to make this happen, it is fundamental that the company develops proper Points of Differences (Keller, 2008) in order to distinguish the product appearance from the competition. Then, the product form communicates information to consumers (Nussbaum, 1993) and affects the quality of our everyday lives: quoting Bloch (1995), "the perception and usage of beautifully designed products may provide sensory pleasure and stimulation". Product appearance can also have a significant impact for a long time (I am here referring at durable products) on consumers' lives and environments.

Based on the proposed model, Bloch (1995) states how "the ideal form is that form which is superior to alternatives in its ability to evoke positive beliefs, positive emotions, and approach responses among members of the target market. This form will be sympathetic with consumers' aesthetic tastes and will complement their existing assortment of goods."

Product form is also discussed by Verganti (2009) in his book on Design Driven Innovation. Here, the author considers product form as just only one of the aspects constituting a product's "language",

along with other elements such as material, texture, smell, name and sound. Product language is the mean that permits the interaction between the product itself and the consumer. Since the psychological and cultural reasons people buy and use a product imply an individual and / or a social motivation, the value of products created through a DDI process is not about the object itself nor in its function, but rather in the owner's personal interpretation and personal meaning that he gives to the design product (Verganti, 2009). A very good example provided by the Italian professor is Kartell *Bookworm*, the flexible bookshelf. The curvy bookcase assumes any desired shape, without compromising functionality: unlimited shapes can be formed, limited only by personal creativity.
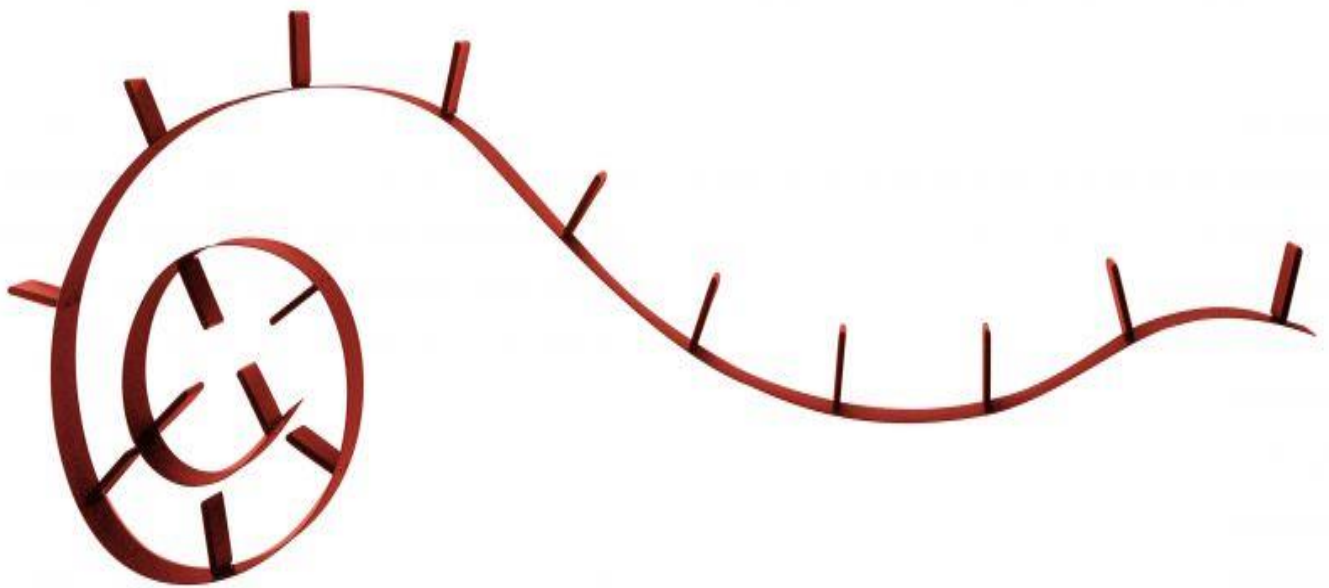

Figure 5. Kartell *Bookworm*, designed by Ron Arad, 1994.

The interaction between the user and the product is therefore what actually gives birth to the product meanings: meanings are not an intrinsic part of a product, but depend on the individual who uses it and on his personal culture (Verganti, 2009).

3. Methodology.

3.1. Introduction to Methodology.

The Methodology chapter is organized into three different sections. The first one makes explicit the Research Design, i.e. the thesis overall research approach, the research design, the study hypothesis and the research question.

The second section of the chapter focuses instead on the data collection techniques, while the third one presents the data analysis methods and a brief introduction to the research contribution.

3.2. Research Design.

The study has been conducted with an empirical deductive approach and a theory testing research design. The empirical approach has been preferred over the theoretical one because of more suitable to the purpose of the entire research: the research question relates to real organizations, markets and consumers and to the active role of design in all the relationships between companies and their stakeholders. The preferred research design, i.e. the theory testing design, has been implemented by using both literature and collected empirical primary data. The starting point of the whole process and the main theory tested and applied is Roberto Verganti's theory on Design Driven Innovation (2009).

The hypothesis tested by the empirical deductive approach is the following:

"Design, if effectively exploited, can be the key to create an inimitable competitive advantage".

Addressing the hypothesis will be part of the conclusion and implications section of this master thesis. The research question is summarized as the following:

"How does design, considered both as a tool in the processes of value creation within organization and an aesthetic phenomenon, *influence customers' purchasing decisions*, when Verganti's Design Driven Innovation theory suggests that design, if effectively exploited, can be the key to create an inimitable competitive advantage?"

The logic behind the research question is here explained: the level of knowledge chosen is a descriptive one ("How"), while the analysed perspective is the consumers' one. Consumers are influenced by design while they are involved in purchasing decisions, that is the empirical focus. Design meant as both a tool in the processes of value creation within organization and an aesthetic phenomenon may be defined as the knowledge area which characterizes the research design, while the theoretical approach is mainly Verganti's DDI. The relevance of the research question resides in the hypothesis and it is therefore "Design, if effectively exploited, can be the key to create an inimitable competitive advantage".

The theoretical focus on Verganti's (2009) theory has been identified in October 2014; the research purpose was as a consequence identified in the following months. A more precise idea on how to structure the master thesis was developed in June 2015, while the collection of relevant material started in summer 2015 and went on until April 2016.

The research question has its basis not only in Verganti's (2009) theory, but has been elaborated after having analysed a wide range of available relevant material mainly from the existing literature and from personal observations of current trends related to design and consumers' behavior.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques.

The approach used in the data collection stage is the one characterizing qualitative research. The choice of this approach was considered to be more suitable to the chosen research question and to the research aim of describing a relevant phenomenon in the topic field. I chose a qualitative research design mainly because I wanted to obtain a deep understanding of the experiences and emotions of the interviewees, trying to see through participants' eyes. "Most obviously, qualitative research tends to be concerned with words rather than numbers" (Bryman, 2001). Other relevant features characterizing the nature of qualitative research are: an epistemological position described as *interpretivist*, meaning that, in contrast to the adoption of a natural scientific model in quantitative research, the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by participants, and an ontological position, described as *constructionist*, which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena "out there" and separate from those involved in its construction (Bryman, 2001). A qualitative data collection method has been employed for a theory testing research design since, even

if qualitative research is mainly used in order to let new theories emerge from the data collected, qualitative data have an important role in testing theories as well (Silverman, 1993).

The typical criteria applied to quantitative research have been here adapted to a qualitative one. More specifically, external reliability and external validity characterized the data collection process. External reliability, i.e. the degree to which a study can be replicated, can be applied to some degree even if this is a difficult criterion to meet in qualitative research, since it is impossible to "freeze" a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). However, a similar social role in applying my research methods could be taken if another researcher would like to replicate my empirical study. In order to make it possible, I paid attention to the way I implemented my interviews, trying to maintain the same approach and interviewing method toward every respondent. As far as it concerns internal validity, i.e. when there is a good match between researchers' observations and the theoretical ideas they develop (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982), I tried to effectively connect relevant collected findings with previously analysed theories and frameworks, trying to provide a tiny but relevant contribution to the existing theory on the research topic.

Among the most common recognized limitations of qualitative research methods, which have been taken into consideration before choosing this approach, the fact that qualitative research is "too subjective", difficult to replicate, it leads to problems of generalization and lack of transparency (Bryman, 2001). In particular, the research I implemented may critically present a problem of generalization. In fact, the sample I selected to be interviewed are made of thirty people, and when qualitative interviews are conducted with a small number of individuals, it is impossible to know how the findings can be generalized (Bryman, 2001). However, even if we cannot treat interviewees who have not been selected through a probability procedure or even quota sampling as representative, we should point out how the people who are interviewed in qualitative research are not meant to be representative of a population (Bryman, 2001). Instead, the findings of qualitative research have the aim to be generalized to theory rather than to populations, since it is the *quality* of the theoretical inferences that are deducted from the collected qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalization (Mitchell, 1983).

The type of sampling strategy I used in order to select the interviewees may be categorized as a purposive sampling form. This particular form of sampling is a non-probability one often applied to qualitative research. Interviewees were chosen to assure a good variety in the data collected, in order to collect different relevant consumers' points of view regarding the research topic. I chose on

purpose to conduct face to face interviews with thirty people whose nationality is mainly Italian or Danish. This choice is due to the fact that in the past years I had the possibility, living in both countries for a consistent amount of time, to notice relevant differences in consumers' tastes and behaviors between the two cultures. Therefore, I wanted to obtain a relevant variety in the interviewees' answers while noticing and observing differences and common points in the participants' behaviors and in the data provided by those belonging to the two nationalities. Furthermore, another way to maintain a good level of variety among the interviewees was to interview people belonging to different age groups and social status. Specifically, the participants of the study were 13 Danes, 15 Italians, and 2 people belonging to other nationalities; the age range of the interviewees varies from 22 to 67 years old.

As previously mentioned, the main research method employed was qualitative interviewing. The main advantage of applying this research method to my study is represented by the fact that qualitative interviewing made me able to obtain rich and detailed answers, which were necessary in order to collect relevant data. A remarkable attention was paid to the interviewees' point of view through the proposed semi-structured interview. Danish interviewees were face-to-face interviewed in quite locations, while Skype was used as a tool to interview respondents who live in Italy.

The interview guide for this study was semi structured with mainly open-ended questions, since a semi structured approach also enabled a comparison of the answers provided by the different interviewees, which can strengthen the reliability of the research. A copy of my interview guide can be found in Appendix 1. An Italian version (see: Appendix 2) has also been used in order to facilitate my interaction with some respondents, since some of them were not able to carry out a conversation in English mainly due to their age and / or level of education.

Accurate notes were taken while implementing the interviews, following the question order of my interview guide. A friendly tone and relation with the study participants was built and maintained during the whole interview; I wanted to avoid the bias because of which interviewees often have the tendency to present themselves in a way that is better than in the real life, providing distorted answers to the interviewer, if they feel the pressure of a "formal" dialogue.

The questions order I followed was exactly the same in every interview: this is mainly due to the fact that, as it can be noticed in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, my interview guide was structured in three different parts in order to slowly make the participant more and more at ease and relaxed while proceeding with the interview. The first section was conceived in order not to be too invasive at the very beginning, letting respondents talk about places and situations very familiar to them. This first

phase of the interview let me gain relevant implicit data about their relationship with design, their tastes and their purchasing behaviors. Instead, the second and especially the third part presented more explicit questions on the topic, since at this point I had usually obtained the interviewees' trust. The flexibility which characterizes most of the types of qualitative interviewing has been maintained through my active role in relating to the interviewees in a friendly and constructive way. It often happened that they asked me explanations about a certain question or topic, or about what I exactly meant for a specific concept or terminology. Explanations have been provided to them, always trying not to divert them from their spontaneous answers. Only a small part of the interview guide was showed to the interviewees, since in a couple of questions they were asked to express some personal preferences on a design product depicted in a figure. The interview guide was overall developed by using the analysed literature on the topic, without losing the focus on the research question and on the data I aimed to obtain.

3.4. Data Analysis and Research Contribution.

The data collected in my interviews notes were organized into categories through an initial stage of coding of the material. An approach of open coding was applied, generating a list of concepts that helped me interpreting the data collected and then contributing to the research topic through the development of relevant theory. The identified codes were then related to the existing literature, among which Verganti's (2009) theory on Design Driven Innovation; the findings were interpreted building relations between categories, and afterward related to the research question and the literature that guided my data collection.

This study aims at being relevant in testing part of Verganti's (2009) theory through the elaboration of relevant empirical data and through the subsequent generation of findings regarding the topic field. A particular attention is devoted to the impact of design meant as a strategic weapon owned and implemented by organizations in influencing customers' decisions and interactions with products.

Therefore, my research aims at contributing, to a certain extent, to a deeper understanding of phenomena related to the relationship between design and consumers, taken into account the role that design can have in value creation processes.

The following chapter on the collected findings is grounded in the respondents' contributions to the

topic.

My choice was to proceed with the data analysis mainly following my interview guide. As previously specified, the order of questions follows a precise structure that I developed in order to proceed in a logical way both in the data collection and the data analysis. Thanks to this approach the reader is able to easily understand the logic behind the analysed research topics and to follow my way of thinking while elaborating the data collected. Codes, categories, similarities and differences noticed and then analysed among the interviewees' answers, attitudes and behavior are clearly stated. Illustrative quotes are often provided, as significant contributions to the data analysis.

I noticed remarkable differences among Danish and Italian interviewees' responses: for this reason, I decided to put an emphasis on this finding while proceeding with the data analysis.

When an illustrative quote is provided, interviewees are identified with the interviewee number, nationality, age and gender, as the following:

The interviewee describes how the fact that her home is clean and tidy really influences her mood, stating "I need my place to always be clean and tidy. That makes me feel organized, clean, focused and relaxed, also in my head" (Interviewee 4, Danish, 25 years old, female).

When the participant's answer was provided in Italian, the original sentence in Italian is quoted, and an English translation is then provided. The interviewees are identified, as the following, with numbers from 1 to 30. Danish interviewees are identified with numbers from 1 to 13, Italian interviewees with numbers from 14 to 28, and other nationalities correspond to numbers 29 and 30. For each nationality, interviewees are numbered according to the chronological order of the implemented interviews.

Interviewee 1: Danish, 24 years old, male.
Interviewee 2: Danish, 24 years old, male.
Interviewee 3: Danish, 30 years old, female.
Interviewee 4: Danish, 25 years old, female.
Interviewee 5: Danish, 24 years old, male.
Interviewee 6: Danish, 41 years old, female.
Interviewee 7: Danish, 29 years old, male.
Interviewee 8: Danish, 25 years old, male.

Interviewee 9: Danish, 33 years old, male.

Interviewee 10: Danish, 23 years old, male.

Interviewee 11: Danish, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 12: Danish, 26 years old, male.

Interviewee 13: Danish, 23 years old, male.

Interviewee 14: Italian, 25 years old, female.

Interviewee 15: Italian, 42 years old, female.

Interviewee 16: Italian, 23 years old, male.

Interviewee 17: Italian, 24 years old, female.

Interviewee 18: Italian, 39 years old, female.

Interviewee 19: Italian, 67 years old, female.

Interviewee 20: Italian, 22 years old, male.

Interviewee 21: Italian, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 22: Italian, 63 years old, male.

Interviewee 23: Italian, 55 years old, male.

Interviewee 24: Italian, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 25: Italian, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 26: Italian, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 27: Italian, 27 years old, female.

Interviewee 28: Italian, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 29: Indonesian, 23 years old, female.

Interviewee 30: German, 25 years old, female.

I would like here to provide the reader with a brief explanation regarding my choice to identify every interviewee in such a precise way. In fact, as previously stated, the choice to conduct a qualitative research implies a preference in collecting data that are relevant to the research question because of their quality, since the people who are interviewed in qualitative research are not meant to be representative of a population (Bryman, 2001).

Therefore, the above provided counting may seem not to be necessary or relevant.

However, this choice has been made on purpose in order to both demonstrate to the reader that the reported data are real by providing relevant details on the interview sample, and to facilitate the reader in building connections and comparisons among respondents' answers. In fact, by paying attention

to the quotes reported in the upcoming chapter, the reader is able to notice some similarities in the way a specific interviewee replied to relevant questions, by comparing the answers he provided on different topics. Furthermore, personal data regarding a specific respondent (i.e. age, nationality, gender) may be useful in interpreting and understanding a certain quote.

4. Findings.

4.1. Introduction to Findings.

As a first step in the data analysis phase, I tried to identify recurring terms and frameworks in respondents' answers. I report here the most recurring terminology, since it has been very helpful in interpreting the logic behind the interviewees' answers and attitudes.

I noticed how the most recurring verbal frameworks were often very different between Danish and Italian respondents. In addition to that, a common terminology which equated all respondents, regardless of their nationality and country of residence, has been noticed. This last category of identified "common codes" has been very relevant while elaborating a theoretical contribution to the given topic, since it presents empirical findings that are hypothetically generalizable to every consumer.

Please consider Appendix 1 as a reference for the upcoming paragraphs.

Respondents also presented differences and similarities in their behavior and attitudes in particular when asked some specific questions in Part 2 and Part 3, that are the most "invasive" sections of the proposed questionnaire. In the following paragraphs it is reported whether a specific question provoked a particular common reaction among respondents.

Relevant differences among interviewees' responses have then been noticed among people characterized by a different income, social status and level of education. Furthermore, I point out how personal taste clearly influenced respondents' answers.

Noticeable points of difference have been noticed between those interviewees who explicitly

declared, in question 7, to be passionate and / or interested in design, and those who declared the opposite. Individuals who clearly stated to be interested in the topic showed a stronger awareness while responding to the questions and demonstrated to own a conception of design that goes beyond its aesthetic features. On the contrary, the majority of participants seemed to consider design as merely an aesthetic phenomenon. Furthermore, I noticed how "design lovers" presented a more relaxed and open attitude during the whole response process; in other words, they were more willing to express their opinion on the discussed topic.

While reviewing and organizing my interviews notes I noticed instead how respondents' age did not influence the collected data in a very relevant way, even if we have to keep in mind that older people are usually characterized by a higher income compared the youth. This has been noticed especially when respondents aged 27 or less declared not to be willing to pay a premium price for a specific product only because of their limited income.

Frameworks regarding the use of a specific terminology used by respondents have been developed and reported in the following tables. Here again I point out how, even if the following counting may seem not to be necessary or relevant for the applied qualitative approach, I tried to facilitate the reader by providing him with findings related to the usage of a specific terminology applied by interviewees during the response process. This approach required to report detailed data on the number of times a certain term was mentioned. The numbers provided have here the only task to facilitate the reader in the Findings and Discussion chapter; therefore, they do not have to be interpreted with a quantitative approach. Instead, they should be considered as a relevant finding which is able to support the reader's observations and opinions on the given topic.

Key terms and the number of times they were pronounced by respondents are here provided. Due to noticeable differences noticed among Danish and Italian respondents, two additional tables regarding the most recurring terminology used by interviewees belonging to the two nationalities are here also reported.

The following data have to be interpreted according to the number of people interviewed, i.e. 30 people in total, 13 Danes, 15 Italians and 2 people belonging to other nationalities. The usage of a key term by an interviewee is here reported only when spontaneously mentioned, and not when pronounced as an answer to a "close" question (e.g. question 13).

ALL INTERVIEWEES	
Term / Concept	**Number of times it was mentioned**
Aesthetics / Aesthetic / Aesthetically	37
Comfort / Comfortable	37
Utility / Utilitarian ; Functional / Functionality	33
Personality / Personalized	18
Meaning(s)	14
Cozy	13
Innovation / Innovative / Innovate	12

Table 4. *Most common terminology used by respondents*.

DANISH INTERVIEWEES	
Term / Concept	**Number of times it was mentioned**
Modern	16
Simple / Simplicity	10
Minimal / Minimalistic	9
Quality	7
Practical	6
Black & White	6

Table 5. *Most common terminology used by Danish respondents*.

ITALIAN INTERVIEWEES	
Term / Concept	**Number of times it was mentioned**
Feelings; Emotion(s) / Emotional	15
Art / Artistic / Artist(s)	13
Traditional; Classic; Vintage	11
Creative / Creativity	10
Colors / Colorful	7
Beauty / Beautiful	7

Table 6. *Most common terminology used by Italian respondents*.

These key terms will be used in the following sections of data analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, they will play a role in the development of the contribution of the qualitative research to the given topic, and in providing relevant links with the existing literature.

As shown in Table 4, the most recurring terms were the ones related to the concepts of *Aesthetics*, *Comfort* and *Functionality*. Relevant data can be noticed in Tables 5 and 6 also, which are more detailed in providing different concepts mentioned by members of the two nationalities. It can be noticed here how some of the terms characterizing the two cultures are actually opposite, e.g. "Black and White" (Table 5) vs. "Color / Colorful" (Table 6), or "Modern" (Table 5) vs. "Traditional" (Table 6).

A detailed report of the respondents' contribution and the collected findings are reported as the following. As in my interview guide I distinguish between Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3. In this way, the reader will be facilitated in following the logic structure of the interviews and be therefore more prepared to deal with the following chapters.

4.2. Findings Part 1.

Part 1 was developed in order to make respondents at ease at the beginning of the interview, trying to get at first relevant implicit data about their own personal relationship with design and design thinking processes.

After being asked to provide some personal information (age, gender, nationality, country of residence and level of education), interviewees were asked to picture in their mind their home and the surrounding atmosphere. Respondents did not have any particular difficult to reply to this particular question, especially the ones who were interviewed by Skype and who were calling from home. In this specific case, I asked respondents to have a quick look around before answering the question. Interesting differences between Danish and Italian respondents were identified from the beginning. Most Danish interviewees described their apartment as modern and minimalistic, with "not too much stuff there, and free space to move around" (Interviewee 9, Danish, 33 years old, male). The brand Ikea was mentioned several times especially by the youngest respondents, who sometimes defined their place as "modern, but randomly furnished" (Interviewee 11, Danish, 23 years old, female) and seemed not too enthusiastic about that. The terms "modern" and "randomly furnished"

were used by the youngest Italian respondents as well, while the oldest Italians usually described their place as "traditional" or "un mix di tradizione e innovazione" ("a mix between tradition and innovation" - Interviewee 22, Italian, 63 years old, male). The words "artistic" and "art" were also often mentioned by Italian respondents. A common terminology used by both nationalities is the one related to memories and a personal "touch" characterizing their homes; Danish respondents stated how their place presents a minimalistic style, but also how they added some personal memories to the basic look: "I like to have things from my life there" (Interviewee 1, Danish, 24 years old, male). The implicit analysis of the relationship between respondents and design proceeds with question 2b., when interviewees were asked to think about some changes they would like to apply to their home appearance. Comments of respondents who are still studying and / or are relatively young (i.e. 27 years old or less) revealed the desire for more quality furniture, more space and more "cosiness". The majority of them revealed how they try to live on a budget, so their income is without any doubt the major obstacle that prevents them from actually implementing the desired improvements. Some respondents, especially the male ones, seemed not to care about some potential improvements of their place, since the most important factor for them is to feel comfortable at home. This attitude was noticed even in the way they replied; when asked "Would you change something in the way your place looks like? If yes, what would you change?", they did not seem to really care: "I prefer comfort over aesthetics, so I guess nothing" (Interviewee 5, Danish, 24 years old, male). Italian interviewees often put an emphasis on desired improvements in the use of colors in their apartment, more than improvements regarding the light (which was instead mentioned by some of the Danish respondents): "Cambierei il pavimento, preferirei un pavimento più caldo e più vivace" ("I would like to change the floor; I would prefer a warmer and cosier floor, with more colors" - Interviewee 22, Italian, 63 years old, male). Some respondents related the desired physical improvements of their place with a sought emotional improvement: "Potrei cambiare aggiungendo o togliendo qualcosa se trovassi oggetti o mobili che mi diano emozioni" ("I may change something by adding or removing some furniture, if I find objects or furniture that have an influence on my feelings" - Interviewee 19, Italian, 67 years old, female).

The criteria mentioned when asked the way they selected their furniture were mainly price and product appearance for the majority of the thirty respondents. A very common word used by Danish interviewees was "functionality", usually listed as the second criteria after "price". "When we buy we go for functionality and lower price" (Interviewee 9, Danish, 33 years old, male). However, the majority of respondents set quality as one of the top criteria used when purchasing the furniture.

Again, students and more generally the youngest respondents pointed out how they had to set price as the first criteria since clearly limited by their income. As far as it concerns product appearance, most Danish interviewees used words like "simple" and "minimalistic" – these data clearly relate to the responses to question 2a.

Danish design and more in general the usage of Danish brands was also mentioned as one of the important criteria applied when furnishing their places. Italian interviewees put instead an emphasis on the fact that they try to maintain a traditional atmosphere since, they declared, some old family belongings they placed in the apartment help them in building a more familiar and warm environment. Another important criterion for Italian interviewees was the meaning associated with certain products and the need to maintain harmony and balance between old belongings and new acquired furniture. Interviewee 24 (Italian, 23 years old, female), declared how her furniture was placed by "positioning paintings and pictures to create an atmosphere of harmony, combining traditional and old elements and paintings with more modern furniture." Another important criterion was the emotional bond with the product: talking about her home's style, Interviewee 18 (Italian, 39 years old, female) stated how "c'è quasi sempre un legame affettivo con il prodotto" ("there is almost always an emotional bond with the product").

Questions 2d. and 2e. asked respondents to state feelings and sensations they feel when at home. Responses were here aligned, and all the interviewees did not present any hesitancy or difficulty in answering to these questions.

A difference I noticed among male and female respondents was the tendency of the former to indicate comfort and relax as the main reasons they feel at ease and comfortable at home, while female respondents usually consider aesthetics and a cozy atmosphere as the main reasons.

"Sitting in a comfortable sofa or bed makes me feel relaxed without too many distractions" (Interviewee 5, Danish, 24 years old, male).

"It is a place where I feel safe and warm" (Interviewee 30, German, 25 years old, female).

Personality, and more specifically the possibility to feeling one's self and see themselves reflected in their own place's style, was another important factor mentioned as a reason of comfort: "I feel at home because I can see myself in the décor" (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male). Other respondents commented "The position of the furniture, my room and wardrobe are somehow a representation of me" (Interviewee 24, Italian, 23 years old, female) and "Mi sento molto a mio agio a casa perchè sento di essere nel mio ambiente" ("I feel so much at ease at home, because I feel I am in the right place, in my own environment" - Interviewee 18, Italian, 39 years old, female).

The main terms used while describing emotions felt when back home after a tiring day were "relief", "peace", "relaxed", "grateful". Only a couple of respondents declared to have difficulties in relaxing at home; however, their additional comments revealed how this is mainly due to the fact that their job requires them to work also when at home. Answers to this questions were immediate and spontaneous as well.

When asked if they notice an improvement in their mood when their place is clean and tidy, the majority of respondents declared how they actually notice a considerable improvement. I noticed unvarying replies among Danish respondents, who did not hesitate to proclaim: "It is just nicer to know that your place is clean, and I am more relaxed" (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male) and "We prefer our place to be clean and organized. If it is messy, we feel a bit stressed" (Interviewee 6, Danish, 41 years old, female). A couple of Italian respondents declared instead that their place needs to be clean, but order is not an important element in making them feel relaxed. One of them stated how "If my place is too tidy and every object is in a studied and defined position, I feel there is almost something "fake", as if no one lives here" (Interviewee 20, Italian, 22 years old, male). However, I noticed how in general all female respondents commented without any reluctance how they feel more at ease in an organized environment: "Mi sento più tranquilla" ("I feel more relaxed" - Interviewee 19, Italian, 67 years old, female) or "When my home is clean and tidy I get a sense of calmness and order. It slightly stresses me to see a messy house" (Interviewee 3, Danish, 30 years old, female).

4.3. Findings Part 2.

Part 2 employed visual tools in asking respondents to make decisions related to design objects. Part 2 is therefore more explicit in trying to gain relevant data about participants' personal tastes and purchasing habits.

Question 3 requested the interviewees to recognize four different products. All of them were designed by famous designers and /or belong to collections of well-known design firms. Specifically, the images shown to respondents depicted (the product name is here indicated along with the brand and the designer):

a. Apple *iPod* designed by Jonathan Ive;

b. Alessi *9093 Kettle* designed by Michael Graves;

c. Nintendo *Wii Fit* designed by Shigeru Miyamoto;

d. Runtal *Folio Corner*, an innovative heating system (radiator) designed by Perry King and Santiago Miranda.

I point out how, in addition to the product images, no other information regarding the products was released to interviewees. Some of the participants tried to gain additional clues, especially in order to recognize product d., here depicted:
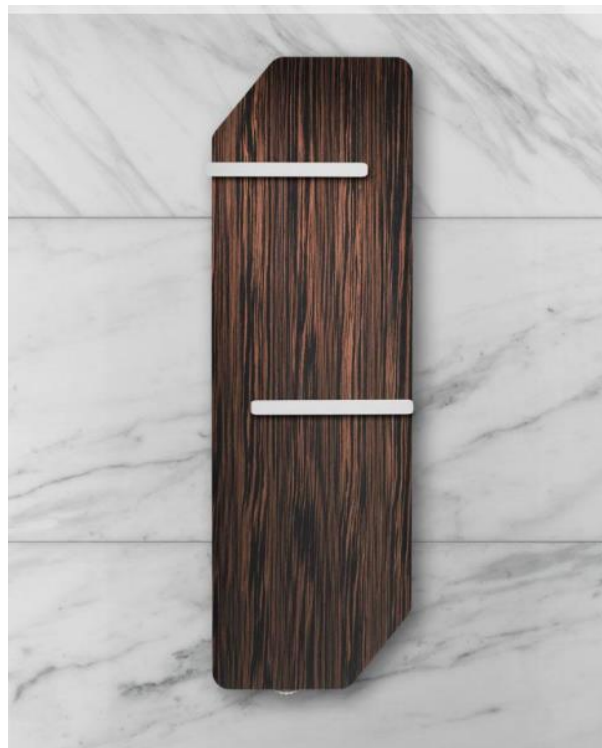

Figure 6. Runtal *Folio Corner*, designed by Perry King and Santiago Miranda, 2012.

However, I did not reveal anything about the pictures shown, letting the images speak for themselves. Almost anyone was able to recognize Runtal *Folio Corner* by King & Miranda. Only two people identified it. However, when asked to state the brand of the radiator, no one was able to pronounce the right brand. The majority of respondents replied "I have no clue" or "No idea", when asked to recognize the product.

In general, I noticed how question 3 provoked perplexities among interviewees, especially in comparison to respondents' reactions toward question 2.

The majority of respondents, 28 interviewees over 30, did not have any difficulties in recognizing Apple *iPod*:

Figure 7. Apple *iPod nano* (3rd Generation), 2007.

However, when asked to recognize Alessi *9093 Kettle*, the majority of them, especially the Danes, took some time to elaborate a possible relevant answer, demonstrating not to be able to identify the product shown. I then moved to another picture, the Nintendo *Wii Fit* balance board. An additional image depicting a woman playing yoga on the balance board was placed side by side with the board, in order to facilitate the recognition of the product by participants (see Appendix 1).

Figure 8. Alessi *9093 Kettle* and Nintendo *Wii Fit*, Balance Board.

When asked for the brand of Michael Graves' kettle in question 3b., Danish interviewees commented "I saw it somewhere, but I can't recall exactly where and when" (Interviewee 7, Danish, 29 years old, male) and "This is a teapot. It doesn't seem a common one, though." (Interviewee 13, Danish, 23 years old, male). At least one third of Italian respondents recognized instead the brand of *Kettle 9093*. I point out how those who did not make any mistake in identifying the name and the brand of products

a., b. and c. were only 3 over 30 interviewees, i.e. respondents who studied or are currently studying architecture or interior design.

Nintendo *Wii Fit* was recognized by approximately half of respondents, women in particular. Two girls declared they own and use it. However, when asked about the product brand, some respondents replied "Wii" instead of "Nintendo".

As far as it concerns question 3c., no one but one respondent (Interviewee 1, Danish, 24 years old, male) was able to identify at least one designer of the products shown. Specifically, the interviewee was able to identify Jonathan Ive as the designer of the *iPod*. All the other respondents revealed not to be able to recognize any of the designers, or tried to guess Steve Jobs as the designer of the *iPod*. Interviewees had difficulties in trying to reply to question 4 as well, when they were asked for some awareness concerning famous designers' names. Almost no one was able to recognize one single designer's name. Two people identified Perry King and Santiago Miranda (Italian respondents), while three Danes recognized Jonathan Ive. Three respondents recognized Shigeru Miyamoto, the designer of the *Wii Fit*, while Michael Graves was well-known by architecture and design students only.

Respondents presented an extraordinary brand customer awareness for the brands Philips, Samsung and Apple, when asked to state if they are aware of the existence of the brands Bang & Olufsen, Alessi, Philips, Kartell, Apple, Artemide and Samsung. All interviewees recognized Apple, Philips and Samsung. All the Italian respondents but two declared to be able to identify the Italian design brands Alessi and Kartell while, among the Danish interviewees, only one recognized Alessi and two identified Kartell. However, all the Danes recognized the Danish brand Bang & Olufsen, while only the youngest Italian interviewees were able to do the same. All respondents presented some difficulties trying to recognize the brand Artemide.

Data collected through answers to question 6 were very relevant in the data interpretation phase. I report here several quotes, since remarkable differences between the replies of Danish and Italian respondents can be easily noticed. Motivations provided for their choice, in addition to the choice itself, were also relevant for the elaboration of the empirical data.

I point out how all respondents did not show any difficulty or hesitation in replying to this specific question: interviewees' answers were provided in a spontaneous and natural way.

When asked to choose among three bookcases which are very different from an aesthetic point of view, all Danish respondents but one chose option b., a very common and linear Ikea bookshelf:

Figure 9. Ikea *Ekby Alex* shelf with drawer, white, black.

On the contrary, almost all Italian respondents (11 over 15) chose option c., a completely different type of bookcase, represented by the successful Kartell *Bookworm*:

Figure 10. Kartell *Bookworm*.

Only two people chose option a., i.e. the King & Miranda bookcase (see Appendix 1, question 6a).

Respondents who chose option b. revealed the reason of their choice to be:

"It fits with our minimalistic apartment. Both because it's more "normal" and because of the simple white and black colors. It is also more "easy on the eye" than option c." (Interviewee 1, Danish, 24 years old, male).

"This represents my idea of a clean, modern and stylish design. Nothing too complex, just classy" (Interviewee 2, Danish, 24 years old, male).

"It has simple and clean lines – the other ones are too complex" (Interviewee 7, Danish, 29 years old, male).

"Because it doesn't take a lot of space. And it looks neat" (Interviewee 30, German, 25 years old, female).

"I find the other two too flashy" (Interviewee 10, Danish, 23 years old, male).

"Because it is the simplest one" (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male).

In other words, Danish interviewees remained loyal to the concepts of essentiality, functionality, comfort, simplicity and "basic" already stood out in the answers to question 2. Some of them provided a very rational explanation for their choice. For example, interviewee 8 (Danish, 25 years old, male) stated: "Currently I would have room for b. only, which makes it the only relevant choice."

Interviewees who chose instead option c. motivated their choice using concepts like "creative", "colors", "young", "not conventional", "playful".

"I prefer c. It is more colorful and not boring. It also has a unique design which makes it cute and youthful" (Interviewee 29, Indonesian, 23 years old, female).

"I would choose c. because it fits my personality and the atmosphere I like to recreate around me: childish and playful" (Interviewee 14, Italian, 25 years old, female).

"c.: it is very colorful, flexible and easy to assemble" (Interviewee 16, Italian, 23 years old, male).

"I would choose c. since it is the most fashionable one" (Interviewee 17, Italian, 24 years old, female).

"c. because it could give colour to my apartment" (Interviewee 26, Italian, 23 years old, female).

"Sicuramente c. Innanzitutto collocabile in diversi modi, inoltre contiene curve ed è quindi più gradevole alla vista" ("Without any doubt, c. First of all, it can be used and assembled in different ways. Then, it presents curves and it is therefore more pleasant for the eye" - Interviewee 22, Italian, 63 years old, male).

"I would choose c. because of its innovative design associated to its simplicity and essentiality" (Interviewee 21, Italian, 23 years old, female).

"I choose c. because it's a simple versatile design element shaped with a single line. It's a piece of furniture that catalyses people's attention with simplicity" (Interviewee 25, Italian, 23 years old, female).

After having selected the favourite bookcase and having provided an explanation, respondents were asked if willing to pay a premium price for the chosen product. I obtained here different answers; someone replied "Yes, certainly", someone "No" and someone "It depends".

"Yes, if the quality justifies the price" (Interviewee 4, Danish, 25 years old, female).

The propensity to pay a premium price was also related to the interviewees' choice: respondents who indicated Kartell *Bookworm* as the preferred bookcase revealed to be willing to pay a premium price for a product they described as "not conventional" and "a design element".

Some respondents pointed out how their inclination to pay a premium price is clearly limited by their income. For example, when asked "Would you be willing to pay a premium price for the product you like the most?", interviewee 19 (Italian, 67 years old, female) replied "Si, se la differenza di prezzo è contenuta" ("Yes, if the premium price that I should pay is not extremely high compared to the average price of the product category"). Others revealed instead not to be willing to pay a premium price in any case. Those interviewees are the ones who stated, in Part 3, not to be interested at all in design.

When asked if willing to pay a premium price for the preferred bookshelf, interviewee 20 (Italian, 22 years old, male) commented "No, I can live without any particular of those objects". Others replied "Yes" to the question, but declared they would do that just as an investment, and not because of a personal interest in the product itself and / or for the pleasure, both visual and emotional, they would derive from owning it. "It depends if the bookcase would increase in price or value over time, giving me investment opportunities" (Interviewee 5, Danish, 24 years old, male). Another respondent (Interviewee 27, Italian, 27 years old, female) indicated how she would be willing to pay a premium price for the Ikea bookshelf since she considers it to be "easy to resell".

The question that followed overall provoked similar responses from all interviewees. When asked "If you had known that a. is designed by a famous designer, would it have influenced your choice?" the majority of respondents agreed on the fact that they do not really care about who designed the

bookcase, since they do not like the design, and therefore they would not be willing to pay a premium price for a product they do not like from an aesthetic point of view. The designer product indicated with a. was King and Miranda Man R *Monnalisa*.

Figure 11. Man R *Monnalisa*, designed by Perry King and Santiago Miranda, 2000.

"No, I follow my personal taste" (Interviewee 25, Italian, 23 years old, female).

"No because I don't like the design, and this is for me as important as the designer" (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male).

"I don't think it would have changed anything in this particular situation since I simply do not find this one" – indicates option a. – "aesthetically nice" (Interviewee 1, Danish, 24 years old, male).

The same respondent stated how "The product has to have a certain aesthetic appeal in order to make me consider it as a possible choice. If it had had this aesthetic appeal, and I had known that a famous designer designed it, it wouldn't have hurt."

Other respondents revealed as well how, despite of their answer, the fact that the bookshelf is designed by a famous designer certainly makes the product value increase.

Some interviewees' comments revealed how their answer would still depend on the quality of the designer product: "Yes, I would be influenced in my choice, since many famous designers offer better quality" (Interviewee 4, Danish, 25 years old, female). The respondent's reaction to the following

question "Would you state then to be willing to pay a premium price to own a famous designer's work?" was: "Yes, if the quality justifies it."

Respondents were then made aware of the fact that option c. (i.e. Kartell *Bookworm*) is one of the main successful products produced by a "cool" design brand. However, I did not mention the brand Kartell, even when asked "What brand?" by some of respondents.

Some interviewees replied they were already aware of that. Specifically, the ones who reacted in this way were the architecture and design students, and two other Italian respondents.

Interviewees were then asked if, once provided with this additional information, their choice would have been influenced in some way. Almost all respondents declared "No".

Some of them instead judged the fact that the product is considered "cool" not in a positive way. "I don't like that it is. It makes the uniqueness fade away" (Interviewee 13, Danish, 23 years old, male); "If that means that many people have it in their home it might make me feel like the furniture is too mainstream." (Interviewee 3, Danish, 30 years old, female).

Some respondents revealed instead to be influenced by the brand, and stated how they relate the brand with the product quality. Interviewee 18 (Italian, 39 years old, female) states how "Si, la mia scelta ne sarebbe stata influenzata, in quanto collego il marchio alla qualità del prodotto" ("Yes, my choice would have been influenced, since the brand is indicative of the product quality"). The same interviewee asserted then how she would be therefore willing to pay a premium price for a branded design product: "Penso che possa aumentare il suo valore" ("I think the brand can have an influence on the product value").

4.4. Findings Part 3.

After having gained implicit data about the interviewees' purchasing habits, the data collection stage proceeded in a more explicit way in Part 3: the last questions are straightforward in asking respondents to provide personal opinions about design meant both as a strategy implemented by firms and as an aesthetic phenomenon.

First of all, I would like to report some relevant observations regarding respondents' behaviors. Questions 8, 9, 11 and 16 in particular provoked reactions that revealed respondents' difficulties in expressing their ideas and points of view on the given topic.

Furthermore, in this last phase of the interview I was often asked for additional information regarding

some particular concepts, since some of the interviewees explicitely admitted to have difficulties in understanding what I meant exactly by using a specific terminology.

However, the majority of respondents maintained a friendly tone and an open attitude, trying to express their own opinion in the best possible way. Only a couple of respondents seemed bothered, even if they did not express their mood in an explicit way.

In question 7, interviewees were asked to simply state if interested in design and if they received an education on the topic. Mostly respondents indicated not to possess any kind of formal education on design; only three interviewees declared to be architecture or interior design students: according to the data provided by respondents, only 3 people over 30 mastered the topic. However, when asked if interested or passionate about design, 20 respondents over 30 declared to have at least a moderate interest in the topic. Five people overall, four Italians and one Dane, declared to be very passionate about it. These people were the ones who actually showed to be very interested in the discussed topics while carrying out this last part of the interview, showing to have no difficulties in replying to questions that more in general provoked doubts and a sense of confusion among respondents.

Interviewees were then asked to express their idea on the concept of design through the question "What does the word *design* mean to you?". I noticed here additional relevant differences between Danish and Italian respondents. Recurring terms in the Danes' answers were "function", "functionality", "utility", while recurring concepts in the Italian interviewees' answers were "art", "creativity".

"Functional and beautiful things that help you in fulfilling a purpose" (Interviewee 2, Danish, 24 years old, male).

"Creativity, building concepts" (Interviewee 6, Danish, 41 years old, female).

"Aesthetic and functional" (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male).

"It is art applied to furniture and to every environment. It is a combination of abstract ideas and tools which help us in our daily routine" (Interviewee 24, Italian, 23 years old, female).

"It means creativity, art, shapes, imagination" (Interviewee 20, Italian, 22 years old, male).

"Design means art" (Interviewee 15, Italian, 42 years old, female).

"Design means creating something to show a specific idea or taste, and making something for a specific function" (Interviewee 7, Danish, 29 years old, male).

Some respondents also made reference to the relationship between consumers and design.

"Design creates feelings inside people from lines and objects" (Interviewee 13, Danish, 23 years old, female).

"La gradevolezza degli oggetti ed il piacere di poterli vedere, toccare e possedere" ("The pleasure that can be derived from objects and more specifically from looking and touching them, and the pleasure derived from owning them" - Interviewee 22, Italian, 63 years old, male).

"Both the look and feel and how I engage with the product" (Interviewee 8, Danish, 25 years old, male).

Respondents were then asked if they consider design as something abstract or if they rather think it can influence them in some way. In general, interviewees reacted claiming how they do not consider it as merely an abstract concept. In fact, even those people who declared not to have any interest in the topic recognized the impacting role of design on the society. When asked for an explanation of their answer, some respondents found it difficult to elaborate a proper response. "I don't know exactly" (Interviewee 5, Danish, 24 years old, male); "Defining design is difficult yet I feel like I have an idea of what it means to me. It certainly means something to me" (Interviewee 10, Danish, 23 years old, male). Other respondents declared how "Il buon design è estremamente concreto, perchè produce oggetti che si usano nella quotidianità" ("Good design is extremely concrete, because it produces objects and tools that are used in our everyday life" - Interviewee 23, Italian, 55 years old, male) and "I have a very broad conception of design. It is in my house, out there in the streets and in the words I am pronouncing right now" (Interviewee 27, Italian, 27 years old, female).

Question 10 required respondents to consider design as a broader concept, asking them if they have ever considered design not only as an aesthetic phenomenon but also as a strategic tool employed by organizations. Almost everyone replied "Yes". All the Italian respondents reacted with a "Yes".

Interviewee 8 (Danish, 25 years old, male) admitted how "Yes, although from the structure of this interview such use of design was not what I first had in mind".

Some respondents seemed to be surprised, as in their opinion the response was something that should have been taken for granted: "Yes, naturally" said interviewee 4 (Danish, 25 years old, female). Other interviewees provided more detailed responses, such as interviewee 14 (Italian, 25 years old, female): "Yes! It is definitely a strategic tool and all the entrepreneurs should be aware of this".

Very accurate answers were stated by a couple of respondents, who were able to spontaneously

recognize the role of design in building a competitive advantage.

"I think design is the most powerful tool that a firm can use" (Interviewee 21, Italian, 23 years old, female).

"If a firm produces a product that can be defined as a design product it will, in most cases, have a competitive advantage over competitors who do have non-design products" (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male).

These two quotes were stated by two interviewees who declared to be very passionate about design in question 7.

I furthermore point out how I did not ask for further explanations to respondents, but on the contrary I let them reply in a spontaneous way in order not to damage the validity of the qualitative research through maintaining the same approach toward every study participant.

Additional comments, when provided, were spontaneously mentioned by interviewees.

Questions 11 to 14 explicitly requested respondents to talk about their purchasing habits and decisions. First of all, interviewees were asked if able to describe their attitude toward design.

This question, as the previously ones, provoked hesitancy and difficulties in replying. Then, respondents were asked to state if and how they think design is able to directly influence their purchasing decisions. Some respondents recognized the influence design may have on their purchasing decisions since, they asserted, it also has some role in the society. Furthermore, a couple of respondents asserted how not only the design of a product they buy influences their purchasing decision, but also the surrounding environment, e.g. the store, really has an impact on their choice. Interviewee 8 (Danish, 25 years old, male) stated to be influenced by the design of the product itself and by "how the things around are designed such as the environment in which it is placed and how it is structured etc.". Design was here considered as an aesthetic attribute, and the majority of respondents declared not to be willing to buy a product if they do not like it aesthetically, in spite of its function and utility. Interviewees stated how the product appearance has to match their personal taste. "I think design can affect people's decisions if they think it will create utility for their senses" (Interviewee 16, Italian, 23 years old, male) was the way one person phrased it. Interviewee 4 (Danish, 25 years old, female) explicitly admitted to expect design to affect her decisions both consciously and unconsciously. The same interviewee, when asked in the following question if influenced by product features that go beyond a product's utilitarian function in her purchasing decisions, replied "It depends on the product. Basically, for those product categories that one uses to portray something

about his personality, other factors than functionality matter".

Other respondents pointed out the same, i.e. that their response would depend on the product category. The importance of personality and social status was also stressed, with interviewees asserting that "Many are driven from the simple need to feel they are accepted and part of the group of other consumers, while others want to stand out and make a personal statement about themselves" (Interviewee 6, Danish, 41 years old, female) and "A product also needs to fit my personality" (Interviewee 1, Danish, 24 years old, male).

Italian respondents were the ones that put an emphasis on emotions that may influence their relationship with the product.

"I feel that everything that touches my feelings or moves something inside me is influencing me more than any other functional aspect of a product" (Interviewee 14, Italian, 25 years old, female).

"Si, perchè se un oggetto è piacevole e bello in sè ti può far sorridere e rendere felice anche nell'espletamento di funzioni quotidiane e utilitarie" ("Yes, because if an object is aesthetically appealing and beautiful it can make you smile and make you feel happy, even in your daily routine and from a merely functional point of view" - Interviewee 23, Italian, 55 years old, male).

According to respondents, the main aspects impacting their purchasing decisions are price, product appearance, uniqueness (mainly for Italian interviewees), meanings and brand. The variable "feelings and emotions felt while purchasing the product and while using it" was often listed in the top three criteria. Interviewees' responses were not immediate: respondents revealed to have some doubts and waited a few moments to think before answering the question. "Design lovers" indicated "uniqueness" as the first or the second most influencing aspect, while "designer" was not considered a relevant criterion but by two people over the whole respondents' sample. As far as it concerns the brand, which has been inserted among the relevant criteria (but usually not among the top three ones) by approximately half of the respondents, I report here a comment stated by interviewee 1 (Danish, 24 years old, male): "I wouldn't say that the product brand influences me. However, I have some friends who really care about the brand of the product they have to purchase. I guess they would put "brand" among the top three influencing factors, definitely". Another respondent (Interviewee 9, Danish, 33 years old, male) revealed: "I mean, if my phone breaks and I have to buy a new one, I would choose another iPhone. It is not actually better than other mobiles available in the market, but the true is that I am so used to it, to the Apple brand I mean. I have an iPhone, a Mac, an iPad. I would feel very uncomfortable if I had to buy and use another brand."

The most common response to question 14 "Are you usually willing to pay a premium price for products that are more meaningful to you?" was "Yes". "Yes I am, because the satisfaction that I would derive from the product justifies the premium price" revealed Interviewee 12 (Danish, 26 years old, male). "Yes I am willing to pay more" (Interviewee 14, Italian, 25 years old, female).

Respondents were then asked to state if a nice working and living environment may have a significant impact on their mood in their everyday life, why and how. I noticed here a terminology already used by respondents while describing their home in Part 1. Therefore, the use of the terms "clean" and "simple" was pretty common among Danish respondents, and "colors" among the Italian ones. In general, the majority of respondents asserted to be in some way influenced by the surrounding environment.

"Si, l'ambiente è fondamentale per l'umore. Chi si trova in un ambiente che gli piace, anche esteticamente, sta senz'altro meglio." ("Yes, the surrounding environment is fundamental for the mood. Who finds himself surrounded by an environment that pleases him also from an aesthetic point of view, definitely feels better" - Interviewee 18, Italian, 39 years old, female). Some interviewees stated how they manage to work or study in a more productive way in environments which please them: "Yes, absolutely, because it helps being relaxed and without worries, and therefore more creative and productive. I think a nice environment really helps in producing great ideas" (Interviewee 21, Italian, 23 years old, female). A respondent stated how "being in beautiful surroundings should affect my mood to some extent since I would derive pleasure from the exposure to these" (Interviewee 8, Danish, 25 years old, male).

The fact of deriving pleasure from beauty in general was also mentioned by a couple of respondents while replying to the last question, when asked to state if, in their opinion, art does actually influence market trends and customers' tastes.

Respondents presented here some difficulties while replying, especially the Danish ones. At least half of them asked me what I meant exactly with the term "art". My explanation was aimed at letting them better understand the question, with the ultimate goal to provide me with a detailed answer: "Art is here meant in its broadest sense. In other words, do you think culture, cultural changes and influences, and art paradigms, and artists are actually able to influence consumers' behaviors? Or are they in some way able to predict and anticipate new trends?".

I obtained very different answers. Half of the Danes replied in a positive way, others stated instead that in their opinion art is not able to directly influence purchasing decisions and consumers' habits. Some of them admitted not to have a precise idea on the topic: "It probably does. But I know too little

about art to judge" (Interviewee 2, Danish, 24 years old, male).

Italian respondents replied instead "Yes" to the question, showing a relaxed attitude without asking for further explanations.

I quote here several responses, since they are considered to be relevant in answering to the research question and in contributing to the data analysis.

"Art influences every single aspect of our life. There are people who don't see it but that's because they are not aware of what is influencing them. Art has the power to help people relax, think deeply, see different perspectives and focus on the big picture" (Interviewee 14, Italian, 25 years old, female).

"Maybe, it depends on the cultural background. For instance, in the Italian culture art is very important and affects our life every day. It isn't the same in Denmark or USA" (Interviewee 15, Italian, 23 years old, male, living in Denmark).

"Arte e tendenze culturali influenzano moltissimo le tendenze di mercato ed i gusti: le persone scelgono i prodotti rispecchiando le proprie tendenze culturali. L'arte, in ogni sua forma, influenza anche indirettamente ogni abitudine di vita e ogni aspetto sociale" ("Art and cultural trends influence a lot market trends and consumers' tastes: people choose products which reflect current cultural trends. Art, meant in its broadest sense, influences every aspect of our private and social life also in an indirect way" - Interviewee 18, Italian, 39 years old, female).

"I think art can influence market trends and customers' tastes because there is some kind of art in each one of us" (Interviewee 20, Italian, 22 years old, male).

"Si. L'arte ha proprio la funzione di essere "avanti" rispetto al normale sentire dell'oggi. In questo modo l'artista cerca di abituare i sensi del fruitore al nuovo bello, che infatti spesso dai contemporanei non viene percepito e apprezzato e che viene a volte riconosciuto solo dalle generazioni successive" ("Yes. Art has exactly the function to be "avant-garde" compared to nowadays trends and habits. The artist uses art as a means to try to accustom the observer's senses to new concepts of beauty, which are usually not understood and appreciated by people in the current time, but are instead recognized only by future generations" - Interviewee 23, Italian, 55 years old, male).

"Yes, pieces of art, including design, fashion, painting, sculpture, and architecture, can become popular and domesticate customers' tastes, becoming instruments that influence market trends" (Interviewee 25, Italian, 23 years old, female).

5. Discussion.

5.1. Introduction to Discussion.

"Design, stripped to its essence, can be defined as the human capacity to shape and make our environment in ways without precedent in nature, to serve our needs and give meaning to our lives." (Heskett, 2005).

Heskett's (2005) definition effectively synthesizes the essence of design emerged from the elaboration of respondents' answers.

While discussing the relevant findings in the following paragraphs, I tried to maintain, whenever possible, the order followed in the Findings chapter, in order to make the reading smoother and easier for the reader.

As in the Findings section, a particular attention is devoted to the usage of terminology as a key tool in interpreting the collected data, which are here related to the relevant theory.

5.2. Interpretation of the Relevant Findings.

As a first relevant interpretation of the collected findings, I would like to point out the importance of the role of personal and national culture in the respondents' answers and way of thinking. Analysing the data provided by interviewees belonging to different nationalities is clear how the significance of objects and the values attributed to them often vary considerably between different cultures (Heskett, 2005). Culture, meant as the shared values of a community and the behavior patterns learned as a consequence, allows considerations of a broader meaning of design and its role in people's lives (Heskett, 2005). After all, if we consider design as innovation of meanings as suggested by the DDI approach, we see how the differences between Danish and Italian interviewees reveal that the way we give meanings to things reflects our psychological and cultural dimensions, depending on our values, beliefs, norms, and traditions. In other words, meanings reflect our cultural model (Verganti, 2009).

Noticeable differences between Danish and Italian interviewees' responses were expected; however, such a relevant diversity was an unexpected finding which in some way shaped both the data analysis process and the data interpretation stage.

After all, problems arising from cultural differences regarding the design practice are faced from all the companies that want to extend their markets with an international approach (Heskett, 2005). We may therefore notice how culture deeply influences design meant not only as an aesthetic phenomenon but also as a process implemented by firms.

As influencing factors in the diversity between Danish and Italian respondents' answers and attitudes, i may mention the fact that successful Italian firms usually present innovation processes that are mainly tacit and based on networks directly led by the companies' top executives (Verganti, 2009), and the fact that the majority of design and avant-garde firms are located in the north of Italy. This data is without any doubt relevant since most Italian respondents declared to live in this area: therefore, their culture and education have been influenced by the surrounding flourishing and creative environment where successful firms such as Alessi, Artemide, Kartell, Cassina and Flos are based.

Designers are also concentrated in the north of Italy: Milan hosts prestigious designers such as Fabio Novembre, Perry King and Santiago Miranda.

Italian respondents' perceptions and tastes were evidently shaped by national culture and customers' trends which characterize the geographic area in which they were born and raised. Speaking of which, the usage of a specific terminology by respondents, outlined in the Findings chapter in Tables 4, 5 and 6, may present a limitation to the study since the same term may assume slightly different meanings in the respondents' mind. However, i consider the relevant collected terminology to be aligned with the definitions (Oxford Dictionary, 2016) provided below which follow the most popular understanding of the mentioned terms.

Aesthetics: "A set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty, especially in art."

Beauty: "A combination of qualities, such as shape, color, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight."

Comfort: "A state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint.";

"Things that contribute to physical ease and well-being.";

"The easing or alleviation of a person's feelings of grief or distress."

Functionality: "The quality of being suited to serve a purpose well.";

"The purpose that something is designed or expected to fulfill.".

Personalize: "Design or produce (something) to meet someone's individual requirements.";

"Make (something) identifiable as belonging to a particular person."

Meaningful: "Having a serious, important, or useful quality or purpose.";

"Communicating something that is not directly expressed".

Minimal: "Characterized by simplicity and lack of adornment or decoration."

Creativity: "The use of the imagination or original ideas, especially in the production of an artistic work."

The provided definitions may help the reader in understanding the given interpretation of the relevant findings.

The usage of the collected terminology has already been associated with design and its role in influencing customers' tastes and purchasing decisions by the relevant literature. The fact that these specific terms were spontaneously mentioned, often unconsciously, by respondents demonstrates how this vocabulary was already present in the interviewees' mind in a way that associates this specific terminology with design and related concepts. This is indicative of the fact that consumers are influenced by design.

Relevant theory has been developed on the role of design and on some of its features such as perceived quality and aesthetics, which are considered to be important in determining the success of a new product (Bruce & Whitehead, 1988). Christensen, Kristensen and Reber (2015) also state how consumer products are not only differentiated by price and functionality, but also by experiential qualities (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), such as emotional appeal (Moore & Harris, 1996), humor (Eisend, 2009), and aesthetic qualities (Holbrook, 1980).

Creativity and beauty are here considered as decisive factors in consumers' evaluation of a certain product, especially for those products that are durable and play a "visual" role in consumers' everyday life. This fact is evident while analyzing answers to questions in Part 2, in particular the ones on the choice of the preferred bookcase. The term "creative" has been consciously pronounced by a good part of respondents, especially the ones whose preferred bookcase was c. (i.e. Kartell *Bookworm*) and, most importantly, concepts of beauty and aesthetics have been often used even unconsciously by respondents, who simply stated they would not be willing to pay a premium price for a product they do not like from an aesthetic point of view, even if designed by a famous designer or produced

by a "cool" design firm.

The recurring use of the terms functional / functionality is a clear indicator of the fact that consumers connect design not only with aesthetics, but also with functionality. This is pretty evident in the answers to question 8 also. Those interviewees who can be defined "design lovers" replied in fact how design connects in some way aesthetics with functionality. Therefore, people seem to buy and use products for mainly two reasons: their functional utility and the intangible psychological satisfaction that derives from them, in order to reach the ultimate goal of personal fulfillment (Verganti, 2009).

In other words, the implemented product choice goes often beyond features, functions and performance, toward what Verganti (2009) calls "meanings".

Before continuing with the analysis of respondents' answers, i would like to put an emphasis on a possible interpretation of the interviewees' behaviour and attitudes.

Interviewees generally presented a relaxed attitude while responding to questions in Part 1, that is, as previously specified, the "implicit" part of the interview, developed in order to make respondents at ease and to gain implicit data about their relationship with design. Respondents did not have problems in replying to questions that were not "invasive" and did not require any particular mental effort to them. Speaking of which, it can be noticed how the cognitive features of the response process reveal that when a respondent is asked to answer a specific question, the accuracy of the obtained data is dependent partly on how well people perform the required cognitive tasks. (Vannette and Krosnick, 2014).

Specifically, a person has to implement a set of mental processes in order to offer a valid response: proceeding through each of these stages constitutes what is called *optimizing*. (Vannette and Krosnick, 2014).

The optimizing process is often replaced by what Simon (1957) calls *satisficing*. This process occurs when people expend only the amount of effort necessary to make an acceptable, or "satisfactory" decision (Simon, 1957). Applying this satisficing process to the way respondents replied to the interview's questions, we see how respondents may sometimes not have been sufficiently motivated to provide high-quality data because of the consistent cognitive effort required, and therefore may have been engaged in satisficing, instead of optimizing, during the response process (Krosnick, 1991). I therefore noticed some differences in the interviewees' approach while answering questions in Part 1 and Part 3. In fact, Part 3 was the one which required a much more consistent cognitive effort to respondents, who sometimes revealed to be tired, or not relaxed while providing their responses. This

is mainly due to the fact that they were required to come up with elaborate concepts and to communicate them in an effective way. Because of this reason, some respondents actually seemed to "devote little or no effort and instead seek to generate answers quickly on the basis of little thinking" (Vannette and Krosnick, 2014).

Proceeding with the elaboration of the collected data, we may notice how respondents made use of the previously outlined terminology (see Tables 4, 5 and 6) when answering the first question, i.e. while describing their homes' appearance. The usage of this specific words (the common usage of the terms "minimal" and "modern" by Danish respondents and the usage of "traditional" and "artistic" by the Italian ones) defined the interviewees' cultural orientation from the beginning of the questionnaire. The fact that the terminology characterising both nationalities concerns interviewees' memories and personal contributions to their homes' appearance demonstrates how objects and environments are used by people to express their identity (Heskett, 2005). Furthermore, building a certain identity through the usage of personal tastes and memories applied to objects used in our everyday life, can be an attempt "to create a particular image and meaning intended to shape, even pre-empt, what others perceive and understand" (Heskett, 2005). We can see here how the relationship consumers create with specific objects sometimes identifies with an attempt to make explicit, knowingly or otherwise, a given or desired social status. This need, or desire, implicitly asserted by respondents in the first part of the interview, also emerged later, in a more explicit way, when interviewees were asked if they believe design can have some role in influencing their purchasing decisions. As pointed out in the Findings chapter, a couple of respondents recognized that consumers are deeply influenced by design in their purchasing decisions, since a specific product can be a symbol of a certain social status or an indicator of wealth, demonstrating the belonging to a social group. Verganti (2009) also states how psychological and cultural reasons people buy and use a product imply an individual and / or a *social motivation*, and therefore the value consumers attribute to products is neither about the object itself nor about its function, but rather on the owner's personal interpretation and personal meaning he gives to the design product.

The way in which respondents emphasized the fact to desire improvements in their apartments' appearance, often not implemented because of their limited budget, and the fact that some interviewees connected these desired physical improvements with certain emotions, prove how products communicate with consumers with a language that lies in meanings (Verganti, 2009). We can therefore notice how every consumer builds an emotional bond, whether knowingly or unknowingly, with products used in his every day life. The product aesthetic appearance assumes

here a relevant role, even if the "design factor" which influences the consumer's personal relationship with the product is not limited to its aesthetic appearance or to its function, but is instead extended to a broader conception in which design is meant also as a strategy "embodied" in the ideation and production phases of every product creation process.

Furthermore, the fact that respondents declared to be mainly influenced, while buying their furniture and while decorating their homes, by the variables price, product appearance, functionality and brand (I am with this this last one referring especially to Danish interviewees, who stated to have the tendency to choose Danish brands or Scandinavian designed products whenever possible) shows how these are the main criteria applied while implementing their purchasing decisions: when asked the same question in an explicit way in Part 3, respondents chose more or less the same variables.

Speaking about some respondents' inclination in opting for certain brands, we notice how brand familiarity may have an important role in consumer choices (Kristensen, Gabrielsen and Jaffe, 2014).

The fact that, while describing the way they feel at home, interviewees made use of the terms "comfort" and "comfortable" related to their place's aesthetic appearance is not casual, since the feeling of comfort is affected by different factors, among which aesthetics. Changes in the visual appearance of products having the exact same function seem to affect people's perception of the products' comfort (Soares and Rebelo, 2014).

Therefore, those respondents who declared to prefer comfort over aesthetics did not actually state the truth, since the aesthetic influence of a certain product and the sorrounding environment are unconsciously incorporated in their conception of comfort. This fact is further confirmed by interviewees when declaring to feel more at ease when their place is clean and tidy.

While developing the interview structure, products shown to interviewees in Part 2, question 10 (see: Appendix 1) were chosen with a specific purpose. The product shown, i.e. Apple *iPod*, Alessi *9093 Kettle*, Nintendo *Wii Fit* and Runtal *Folio Corner*, have been designed through a Design Driven Innovation strategy and are all examples made by Verganti (2009) while explaining his theory about DDI and the competitive advantage firms originate in it. An exception is Runtal *Folio Corner*, which has been inserted in order to check respondents' awareness of a less famous and popular product (compared to the other three), designed by two famous designers (Perry King and Santiago Miranda). The fact that basically all respondents were able to recognize Apple *iPod* is extremely relevant since it demonstrates the real success Apple obtained through the implementation of a process of DDI. All

interviewees recognized the *iPod*: this means that the product, along with the Apple brand, presents an extremely strong brand awareness and image. Specifically, interviewees reached a very high level of brand recognition and brand recall, where *brand recognition* is defined as the consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given a clue (in this specific case, a picture of the product itself) and *brand recall* is the consumers' ability to retrieve the brand from memory (Keller, 2008). Apple's brand recall is evident by respondents' answers to question 3b. A very strong level of brand awareness, and more specifically brand recognition, was showed by all the interviewees also for the brands Samsung and Philips. These findings are relevant since DDI highly contributes to brand equity (Verganti, 2009), and brand awareness is one of the main sources of brand equity (Keller, 2008). Specifically, creating a radical innovation of meaning is the most powerful way to create brand value: thanks to their impact on brand equity, radical innovations of meanings are able to create a halo that enhances the company's other products, generating additional and sustained profits (Verganti, 2009). Interviewees did not demonstrate the same level of brand awareness for any other product shown. Some of them recognized Nintendo *Wii* but were able neither to give a name to the product nor to name the brand associated with it. Therefore, we can't declare respondents presented a high level of brand awareness for the brand Nintendo. The same can be stated for Alessi *9093 Kettle*: both the product and the brand were not recognized by most respondents, but the architecture and design students. Other interviewees who recognized Michael Graves' invention are Italian: this is due to the fact that Alessi factory lies in Omegna, in the north of Italy, and the brand Alessi enjoys a prestigious reputation in the country, especially among members of the wealthiest social ranks.

As expected, nobody recognized King and Miranda heating radiator: some interviewees actually had difficulties in recognizing the typology of the product itself. This is due to the fact that Runtal *Folio* does not enjoy the same level of popularity of e.g. Apple *iPod*. Respondents were also not able to recognize the product's designers, even if Perry King and Santiago Miranda are among the most successful designers in Italy and abroad.

Interviewees showed some difficulties in recognizing the product category mainly because King & Miranda's design is a very discreet and subtle design, which blends which the surrounding environment. An effective example is depicted in the pictures below, which show another product King and Miranda designed for Runtal.

Figure 13. Runtal *Velum*, designed by Perry King & Santiago Miranda, 2004.

The high level of brand awareness presented by interviewees for Apple *iPod* does not correspond to an equal awareness for the product's designer: no one but one respondent was able to recognize Jonathan Ive as the designer of the *iPod*. Furthermore, interviewees did not recognize any other designer of the products shown. This fact shows how, despite the fame of a certain product, the designer of the product itself often does not enjoy the same level of popularity. A lack of knowledge regarding designers' names was also shown in the answers to the following question by the majority of interviewees. We may therefore state how designers, in spite of the success their works may have, do not often enjoy a proper acknowledgement by the average consumer.

Relevant data were then collected through the answers to question 6, with all the Danish respondents opting for the Ikea bookcase, and the Italian ones for Kartell *Bookworm*, instead (see: Figures 9 and 10).

The contrasting answers provided by Danish and Italian respondents are mainly due to the fact that interviewees were born and raised, and now live, in two countries in which culture, customers' tastes and market trends are different.

Speaking about Danish respondents' choice, I quote Katrín Eyþórsdóttir (2011), an Icelandic designer, who defines Scandinavian design as "fairly minimalist, with clean simple lines. Highly functional, the style is effective without needing heavy elements; only what is needed is used."

Figure 14. An example of Scandinavian design: *Egg Chair* designed by Arne Jacobsen, 1958. Here depicted in a Fritz Hansen limited edition for the 50th anniversary, 2008.

Katrín Eyþórsdóttir's (2011) definition fairly corresponds to the Ikea bookcase chosen by Danish respondents. Motivations given for their choice also confirm the tendency to prefer a simple and clear Nordic design. It has to be noticed how Danes used terms such as "simple", "minimal" and "functional", which are the ones provided in Katrín Eyþórsdóttir's (2011) definition.

I would like to point out how respondents' choice was made here only on the basis of the products' picture. Therefore, the choice has been made only basing on the product's visual appearance. However, asserting so is not fully correct, since other aspects also influence the consumer while visually evaluating the object: judgements related to the *perceived* attributes of the product, such as elegance, functionality and social significance are decisive for the consumers' response (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004). Comparing users' requirements of designer products to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, depicted in the figure below, the authors suggest how "once issues of utility, safety and comfort have been satisfied, emphasis may shift towards the decorative, emotional and symbolic attributes of design" (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004).

Figure 15. Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, 1943.

The design of a product, meant as its aesthetic appearance, consequently influences the idea that consumers elaborate in their mind about the product itself, its function and the benefits they would be able to derive from it. In other words, the product form communicates information to consumers (Nussbaum, 1993).

Danish respondents did not choose Kartell *Bookworm* also because, in their perspective, the design of that particular bookcase did not correspond with their idea of how a bookcase should be formed. This is based on the theory of cognitive consistency, according which the visual appearance of a specific product should be consistent, in the consumers' mind, with how they think a particular product or object should be formed (Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Zaichkowsky, 2010).

Probably, such a difference among Danish and Italian respondents would not have been existed if interviewees had been asked to choose among three objects belonging to a different, more "basic" product category. As Heskett (2005) states, "problems seem to be fewer and of lesser intensity if products are simple and utilitarian, which minimizes the possibility of cultural conflicts".

While choosing the preferred bookcase instead, respondents were heavily influenced by their cultural context. Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson (2004) state how designers and consumers of a given product are separated by time, place or social group. Therefore, the context of consumption within which the consumer operates is an important consideration: it is within this context that the design message is interpreted by consumers (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004).

Speaking of which, Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson (2004) propose a theory that identifies consumer response to product appearance as one stage in a process of communication that starts from the source (i.e. the designer) to be finalized in the consumer's response. The model developed by Crilly,

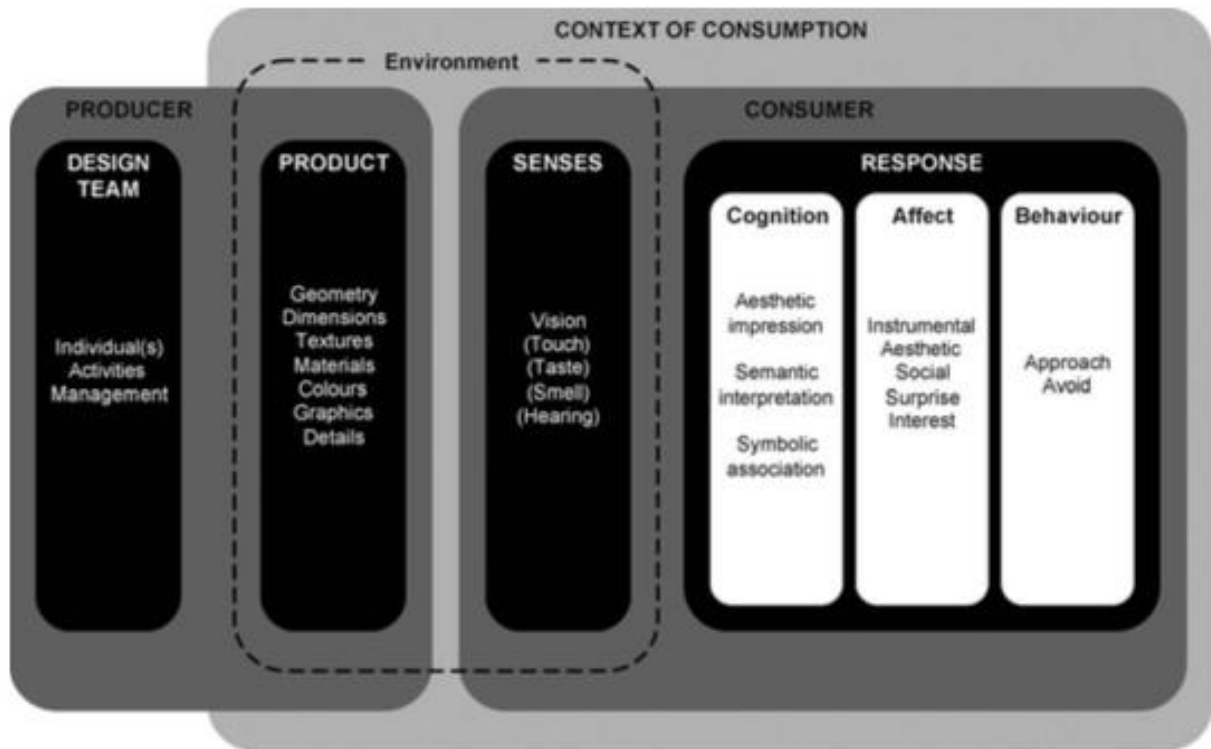Moultrie and Clarkson (2004) is depicted below.

Table 8. Expanded framework for *Design as a process of communication*. Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004.

Consumers' response to product appearance is here identified as a cognitive response that refers to the judgements the user makes about the product based on the information perceived by the senses (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004). These judgements also include an evaluation of the product's perceived qualities. Cognitive response to product appearance implies aesthetic impression, semantic interpretation and symbolic associations implemented by consumers while making their purchasing decisions (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004). Specifically, semantic interpretation is the interpretation associated to what a product implicitly says about its function and qualities (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004), while symbolic associations represent the meanings the user associates with the product, and more specifically the personal relationship each consumer builds with the object. We can see here how meanings result from the interaction between the user and the product: meanings are not an intrinsic part of the product but depend on the individual who uses it (Verganti, 2009).

This is also relevant in the Italian respondents' choice, who seem to worry about meanings and emotions they associate with the product more than the function of the product itself. This is evident from the fact that the majority of them chose bookcase c., which objectively is neither very practical as a bookcase, nor corresponds to the traditional idea of bookcase that the average consumer has in mind. However, Kartell *Bookworm* is without any doubt the bookcase which expresses the higher level of creativity among the proposed three ones, since it assumes any desired shape and unlimited structures can be formed. This also means that *Bookworm* makes a very high level of customization possible, an important criterion for Italian respondents. The brilliance of Kartell *Bookworm*, a playful object that reminds Alessi *Family Follows Fiction* (see: Figure 2) in its role of helping users in satisfying emotional experiences and needs related to their childhood, has not been understood or in any case preferred by Danish respondents. Speaking of which, Verganti (2009) states how products created through a revolutionary process such as DDI anticipate consumers' trends, and for this reason are often not comprehended by contemporary consumers, especially when they did not receive a proper education which prepared the ground to accept such innovations. In other words, consumers demonstrate to have difficulties in understanding new revolutionary meanings if a proper background has not been provided by the so-called "interpreters" (Verganti, 2009). Therefore, another relevant observation that has to be made regarding respondents' favourite bookcase is the fact that Italian interviewees received in some way an "education" that prepared their tastes in accepting design styles such as the one of *Bookworm*.

Respondents who chose Kartell *Bookworm* were also the ones who often stated to be willing to pay a premium price to buy this particular product, mainly because of its being "not conventional", "creative", a "design element", "unique".

We may therefore notice how non-functional attributes increase consumers' preference when consumers seek to buy uniquely designed products which give significance and meanings to their lives, to either express their own identity and personality or to signal their role in the society (Gabrielsen, Kristensen and Zaichkowsky, 2010).

The fact that nearly all respondents declared not to be willing to pay a premium price for a product they do not like from an aesthetic point of view, despite the fact that it was designed by a famous designer (Man R *Monnalisa*) or produced by a popular design firm (Kartell *Bookworm*) demonstrates how visual appeal is the first criteria in their purchasing decision, when not provided with further information about price and quality.

The fact that some respondents declared to be willing to pay a premium price for a certain design

product only if they could consider it as an investment demonstrates how consumers are aware of the fact that famous designers' works, as works of art, can increase their value over time, and therefore be resold for a higher price in the future. If provided with customer delight, elegance and enduring value, products may acquire increasing value over time (Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti, 2006).

While answering to questions in the third part of the interview, respondents demonstrated to have some difficulties in effectively expressing their point of view on the given topic. This attitude is due to the fact that the proposed questions entailed additional effort and concentration required to the interviewees, and a higher level of consciousness in looking at themselves. "Design lovers" did not instead show any difficulties or hostility while replying to questions that more in general provoked doubts and a sense of confusion among respondents, probably because this specific section of the interview gave them the possibility to express their opinion about an issue they are very fond of.

When asked "What does the word *design* mean to you?" the majority of respondents related the term design to the concepts of functionality, utility, art, creativity. Again, Danish respondents mainly used a terminology related to functionality, while Italian interviewees made reference to concepts such as art and creativity. However, Italian respondents also put an emphasis on the utilitarian function of design products. Design has to effectively support and execute certain tasks (Heskett, 2005) and has to be considered as a process of problem solving (Gasparin and Christiansen, 2014). This does not imply that design does not play an extremely important role also in giving pleasure to the viewer's senses: design products often unite efficiency and visual expression in "an astonishing range of combinations" (Heskett, 2005).

Respondents did not explicitly mention design meant as a process of value creation, at least not while answering to this specific question regarding their opinion on the role of design in their everyday life. However, they recognized the role of design as "making sense of things" (Verganti, 2009), meant as a strategic process involving the whole organization, when explicitly asked to consider design from this particular perspective in question 10.

This is due to the fact that, from a conscious point of view, design is often considered by the average consumer merely an aesthetic phenomenon, related to a certain specific function.

Design meant as a strategic weapon and value-added advantage might understandably cause reactions of bemusement and skepticism (Blaich, 1993). "After all, in the minds of most people […] design has something to do with how things look" (Blaich, 1993).

However, the role of design in the creation of competitive advantage is implicitly recognized by respondents when declaring to be influenced by product attributes that go beyond its utilitarian function, and when stating non to consider design as merely an abstract concept. Furthermore, respondents declared to be willing to pay a premium price for products that are more meaningful to them. This confirms Verganti's (2009) theory, according to which design directly impacts a company's economics, sales and profits. Verganti (2009) states how DDI may act as a major source of profits mainly because of the creation of a competitive advantage: products with a strong and unique personality boost a company's sales volume and yield higher profit margins per unit, since consumers are willing to pay more than a product's utilitarian value.

Furthermore, products conceived and produced through an effective implementation of design thinking present a life cycle definitely longer than average non-design products (Verganti, 2009) as shown in the model depicted in Appendix 3.

Also, innovations in design processes have implications for the companies' assets, investments and shareholder value (Verganti, 2009). The influence of DDI on corporate assets and brand equity has been already examined when discussing about brand awareness, while as far as it concerns the impact on the company's investments, Verganti (2009) states how the major investment needed to effectively implement a Design Driven Innovation strategy is without any doubt the one required for building relationships and networks, since relationships with interpreters are the starting point of the whole process of Design Driven Innovation.

An interviewee (Interviewee 12, Danish, 26 years old, male) explicitly stated how design products have in most cases a competitive advantage over competitors, compared to average non-design products. What the respondent defined "design products" are defined "design-inspired products" by a theory developed by Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti (2006) on design-inspired innovation. Innovation processes involving design, or better saying in which design plays a fundamental and sustaining role, lead to competitive advantage by balancing technology and available resources with market trends and customers' needs, and meanings (Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti, 2006).

Interviewees explicitly stated how what matters, in addition to functionality, is the product's emotional and symbolic value. In a perspective considering design as a complex communication process aimed at satisfying the user's different needs and necessities (see Maslow's pyramid in Figure 15), functionality satisfies the "operative needs of the customer" (Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti, 2006), while the product's meaning aims at satisfying the

consumer's emotional and socio-cultural needs.

A respondent asserted how "Design is the most powerful tool that a firm can use" (Interviewee 21, Italian, 23 years old, female). In order to be the key for success, design should not be an isolated function in the company, but should instead be part of every aspect impacting on the organization. Verganti (2009) and Blaich (1993) agree on this. The product itself is only a part of the whole design process (Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti, 2006). In other words, value is effectively created through design only when innovation is consistently implemented in every part of the firm.

When asked if in their opinion design influences in some way their purchasing decisions the majority of respondents, explicitely considering design as mainly an aesthetic phenomenon, recognized how design has an impact on their purchasing habits. Interviewees demonstrated however to be influenced by design meant in a broader sense, since while evaluating a product we often unconsciously associate the product's visual appearance to other features such as the product function and its emotional appeal. "A product's appearance can have aesthetic and symbolic value for consumers, can communicate functional characteristics and give a quality impression (functional value), and can communicate ease of use (ergonomic value)" (Creusen and Schoormans, 2005). This also explains why some respondents made reference to the product quality while talking about the influence a certain product design may have on their purchasing decisions, stating how the visual appearance of the product is indicative of its quality.

While implementing their purchasing decisions, consumers are also influenced by the surrounding environment. Only one respondent (Interviewee 8, Danish, 25 years old, male) explicitly recognized this fact, which can however be extended to all consumers. Environment plays an important role in consumption settings: the impact of a specific design or atmospheric change on consumers is a key determiner in defining the degree to which a purchase is successfully conducted (Hoffman and Turley, 2002).

Given the fact that the influence of design on consumers' purchasing habits goes far beyond the products' aesthetic attributes with "an appearance that not only pleases but informs" (Blaich, 1993), and taken into account the impact that the surrounding environment can have on consumers' choice, we may notice how the effect design has on consumers' behaviour also depends on the category to which the product belongs.

Some respondents clarified this while describing the influence design may have in their purchasing habits. Durable products are the ones which are more exposed to an aesthetic judgment by consumers.

However, Verganti (2009) points out how meanings associated to products are equally important in the consumers' evaluation of durable products and in the evaluation of non durable products such as food. "Meanings are not restricted to particular industries. Some people, for example, think that emotions and symbols are relevant only in fashion. Nothing could be more wrong. […] Food has meanings; anthropologists and sociologists often investigate people's identity and culture through their gastronomy" (Verganti, 2009).

Furthermore, people who are particularly sensitive to aesthetics prefer to buy aesthetically appealing products even in their everyday life choices, and are willing to pay a premium price for products that are more meaningful to them or for environments which please their senses. This is due to the fact that the satisfaction and pleasure of the senses they would derive from the use of a certain product or from the exposure to aesthetically pleasing surroundings would justify premium prices. Therefore, this category of who we may call "sensitive customers" are usually willing to sacrifice money, and also functionality, in favor of a more attractive product design, since "the perception and usage of beautifully designed products may provide sensory pleasure and stimulation" (Bloch, 1995).

Another relevant data collected through respondents' answers is the brand loyalty they demonstrated to have toward certain brands. Brands like Apple were able to create brand loyalty and resonance by making sure to surpass consumers' expectations. Furthermore, "the strongest affirmation of brand loyalty occurs when customers are engaged […] in the brand beyond time and energy they expended during purchase or consumption of the brand" (Keller, 2008). Apple *iPod* is an effective example of consumers' engagement: "The device itself is nicely designed, but its most important competitive advantage is its seamless integration with more important aspects of the customer experience, such as the iTunes website where content is easily made available to the user." (Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti, 2006).

Respondents' comments revealed then, implicitly or explicitly, how consumers are strongly influenced by beauty through the pleasure they derive from the exposure to it.

Reber, Schwarz and Winkielman (2004) define beauty as a "pleasurable subjective experience that is directed toward an object and not mediated by intervening reasoning." Accordingly, they use the words "beauty" and "aesthetic pleasure" interchangeably.

This is relevant related to the last question of the interview, when respondents were explicitely asked if in their opinion art is able to influence market trends and customers' tastes. The fact that some respondents showed to be hesitant or to have difficulties in replying does not mean that art does not

have a role in influencing current markets and consumers' tastes. Respondent themselves indeed admitted that meanings influence their life and purchasing decisions.

As far as it concerns the influence and contribution artworks give to humankind, Verganti (2009) asserts how there is not so much difference between scientists and artists, since they both do research and help us "shape our worlds of objects and products" (Verganti, 2009). "Without this research on reduction and simplification by abstract artists, who dared to challenge dominant assumptions about aesthetic language accepted for centuries, computers would have Victorian decoration (as did many machines in the nineteenth century). If every morning we wake up and turn on a computer with a sleek minimal design, or we drive a car that does not look like a Louis XVI wagon, we can thank Mondrian" (Verganti, 2009).
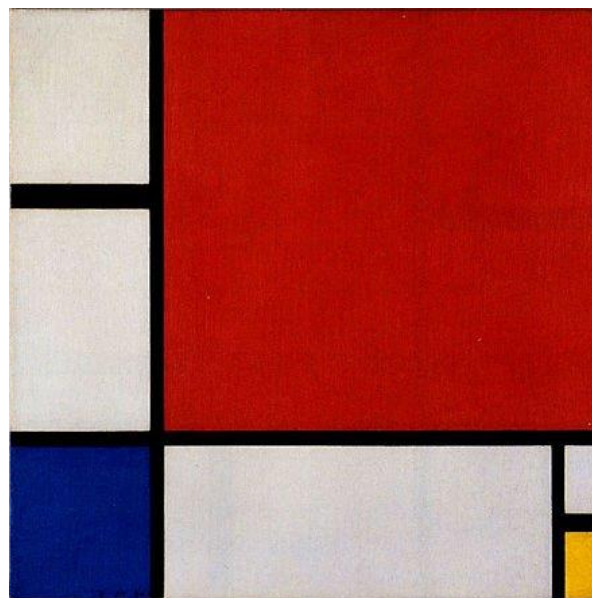
Figure 16. *Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow*. Piet Mondrian, 1921.

"From the perspective of Design Driven Innovation, painters, writers, filmmakers, musicians, and choreographers are among the most powerful symbol creators in our society" (Verganti, 2009).

All Italian respondents recognized the key role of art and cultural paradigms in the current society: this is due to the fact that avant-garde Italian manufactures and firms often make reference to artists and artistic trends, even if not in an explicit way and not relating directly to the industry they belong to. This influence of art, culture and tradition has always had a great importance in shaping Italian consumers' mind.

Furthermore, breakthrough thinking often derives and benefits from the interaction in "circles"

composed by different creative minds who bring to major shifts in literature, art, science (Farrell, 2003); these "circles" provide an environment in which pioneering minds can explore new revolutionary cultural paradigms (Verganti, 2009). A company gain a significant competitive advantage by identifying promising circles and by developing privileged relationships with their members (Verganti, 2009).

However, the previously stated elaborations do not imply that art and design are the same thing.

Even if in ancient Greece the same world τέχνη (*téchne*) was applied to both art and design as a unique discipline, works of art are given a freedom and intensity of expression that is denied to design, mainly because design also has to be associated with functionality, in addition to aesthetic appeal (Rawsthorn, 2013). Dunne (1999) compares the relationship between art and design to that of science and engineering, with the former being devoted to pure research and the latter to applied research.

6. Conclusions and Implications.

6.1. Introduction to Conclusions and Implications.

This study was set out to explore the concept of design in its broadest meaning. Specifically, the strategic role of design and its impact on consumers' behaviours has been examined, presenting the revolutionary approach proposed by Verganti's (2009) theory which considers design as a tool for anticipating market trends and consumers' expectations. The thesis has identified the approach consumers have toward design, proposing frameworks which suggest future research on the given topic. A theory testing research design has been applied with the ultimate goal to confirm the study hypothesis, which expresses Verganti's (2009) theory: *"Design, if effectively exploited, can be the key to create an inimitable competitive advantage"*. An empirical testing of the Design Driven Innovation theory has been provided by the research, which was able to confirm the study hypothesis. The study has sought to examine the relevant literature by proposing a new approach, considering the DDI theory mainly from the consumers' point of view and not, as proposed by Verganti (2009), from the companies' executives point of view. The focus on consumers made it possible to emphasize the

active role of design, meant both as a process and as an aesthetic phenomenon, in our everyday life, with the ultimate goal to try to reach a greater awareness by the public concerning the impact of design in every aspect of consumers' behaviour.

The chapter is organized into two different sections. The first one seeks to provide a thorough answer to the research question by describing how design influences consumers' purchasing decisions. Theoretical implications and directions of further research are then presented in the final section of the chapter.

6.2. Discussion Summary.

The discussion summary here provided makes explicit the data interpretations which are considered to be relevant in answering to the research question.

Design is often consciously considered by the average consumer merely as an aesthetic phenomenon. "In the minds of most people […] design has something to do with how things look" (Blaich, 1993). However, consumers consciously connect the concept of design with functionality, proving that other aspects in addition to aesthetics influence them while visually evaluating the object. The *perceived* attributes of the product, such as functionality and social significance are decisive for the consumers' response (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004).

Speaking about social significance, it can be stated how the *relationship* consumers create with certain objects identifies with an attempt to make explicit a given or desired social status.

The product meaning lies indeed in this relationship the consumer builds with the product; therefore, it is not an intrinsic characteristic of the product itself (Verganti, 2009).

The average consumer is aware of the fact that design influences in some way his purchasing decisions. However, the power of design in impacting on his purchasing habits and on every aspect of his everyday life is often underestimated.

Judgments underlying consumers' choice reasons are formed often unconsciously and incorporate an accurate evaluation of the product emotional value. This emotional value includes feelings felt while buying and / or purchasing the product, recalled memories, and the emotional link created with the product itself.

The appearance of a product also influences consumers' choice in other ways, e.g. communicating functional characteristics and giving a quality impression, or communicating the product's ease of use (ergonomic value). Furthermore, consumers' choices are influenced by the extent to which the product's aesthetic and symbolic value can express their identity and personality.

Price, product appearance, functionality and brand are the main criteria consciously applied by consumers while implementing their purchasing decisions. Meanings are also a criterion since consumers are willing to pay a premium price for products that are more meaningful to them, but are often limited in doing so by their constrained budget.

Meanings are not restricted to particular industries: since also food has meanings (Verganti, 2009), consumers are influenced by a product's intangible significance in their everyday life and while relating to every kind of product category. However, this fact is almost always not consciously admitted by the average consumer, who thinks to be influenced by a product's design only while interacting with specific product categories.

Consumers are aware of the fact to be deeply influenced by a product's aesthetic value: some of them are often willing to give up functionality in favor of aesthetics. Furthermore, the average consumer is not willing to pay a premium price for a product he does not like from an aesthetic point of view, even if designed by a famous designer or produced by a "cool" design firm.

This also depends on the consumer's national and personal culture. Culture is an extremely important determiner in influencing consumers' choices. The way we give meanings to things reflects our psychological and cultural dimensions, depending on our values, beliefs, norms, and traditions (Verganti, 2009).

Consumers belonging to different cultures also present differences in their cognitive patterns which deeply influence their purchasing choices and product evaluations.

Speaking of cognition, consumers' response to the product appearance is a cognitive response that refers to the evaluation of the product - evaluation they make constructing on the information perceived by the senses (Crilly, Moultrie and Clarkson, 2004).

Senses are also involved when deriving pleasure from the exposure to aesthetically appealing surroundings. These also include consumers' living and working environment.

More in general, beauty meant in its broadest meaning influences consumers' tastes, industries and markets. Those who contribute in creating beauty, such as painters, writers, filmmakers, musicians, and choreographers, "are among the most powerful symbol creators in our society" (Verganti, 2009).

Nevertheless, consumers have difficulties in understanding new revolutionary meanings which anticipate market trends by implementing advanced innovation processes such as DDI. They are however deeply influenced, often unconsciously, by design meant as a strategic process, which is able to create a remarkable competitive advantage by balancing technology and available resources with market trends and customers' needs, and meanings (Utterback, Vedin, Alvarez, Ekman, Sanderson, Tether and Verganti, 2006).

The power that such a competitive advantage can have is made clear by the extremely high level of brand awareness consumers present for the companies which employed design as the key means in developing an inimitable value creation chain.

6.3. Theoretical Implications and Direction of Further Research.

This study has shown the importance of the role of design, mainly meant as a value creation process implemented by successful organizations, in building a competitive advantage which impacts consumers' purchasing decisions. The theoretical contribution of the research seeks to enrich the existing literature, even if my contribution to the topic will be very limited due to the extent of the subject.

Speaking of which, among the most relevant limitations of this study, I could mention the following: limitations due to the employment of a qualitative research method, limitations related to the extent of the given topic, and limitations concerning interviewees' behaviors.

The relevant literature applied to the research represents only a portion of the available material that can be consulted, due to the impossibility to refer to all the existing theories and frameworks developed on design and related fields because of the massive extent of the subject.

The Methodology chapter previously outlined limitations on qualitative research, among which a significant limitation regarding respondents' difficulties in implementing a proper optimizing process while answering to the interview's questions. This limitation has impacted the quality of the empirical data collected.

Furthermore, issues concerning copyright and patents, and more in general legal implications caused by a not proper conduct toward design companies and designers, among which e.g. counterfeiting, have not been analysed in the thesis.

Despite the study limitations, the research can contribute to the examination, in addition to consumers' approach toward design, of how cultural differences may heavily impact consumers'

behaviour. This could be useful in order to develop further theoretical contributions and to implement marketing studies and strategies on consumers' behaviour in different markets and countries. Specifically, it would be useful to practically apply the given topic in understanding and anticipating needs and expectations of different groups of target consumers. Therefore, the study presents also a possible application in reality, mainly thanks to the noticeable differences noticed among Danish and Italian consumers.

As this study is based on a restricted application of qualitative research and presents the previously outlined limitations, further in-depth studies on the topic are recommended, especially regarding the relationship between consumers and design meant as a strategic weapon. It would be appropriate to develop relevant theory on the consumers' perception of design meant not as an aesthetic phenomenon but as a value creation process embodied in products and services. This would enrich the current literature on design meant as a source of competitive advantage with a new, fresh approach. The ultimate goal of further in-depth studies could be a greater awareness of the average consumer on the given topic and a practical contribution to strategies implemented by firms, which would be able, by applying significant design processes to the whole organization, to better understand and anticipate market trends and consumers' behaviour. □

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8. Appendix.

Appendix 1.

Part 1

1. Interviewee's personal information.
    Age:
    Gender:
    Nationality:
    Country of residence:
    Level of education:

2. Think about the place you live and spend time with your family and friends: your home.

    2a. How would you describe your apartment's appearance (e.g. modern, traditional, artistic, randomly furnished...)?

    2b. Would you change something in the way your place looks like? Why?
    If yes, what you would change and why.

2c. Did you furnish your place by your own, or did you contribute in some way to furnishing it?

If yes, please name the criteria, among the following, you followed when purchasing and/or placing the furniture:

price, product appearance, brand, "meanings" you associate to the product (feelings and emotions felt while purchasing and/or using the product, furniture which used to belong to family members...), designer, product uniqueness, other (specify).

2d. Do you feel comfortable at home?
If yes, what exactly make you feel comfortable?

2e. How do you feel when coming home after a tiring day (e.g. relief, inner peace...)?

2f. Do you notice a change/improvement in your mood, when your place is clean and tidy?
If yes, how does it influence your mood?

Part 2
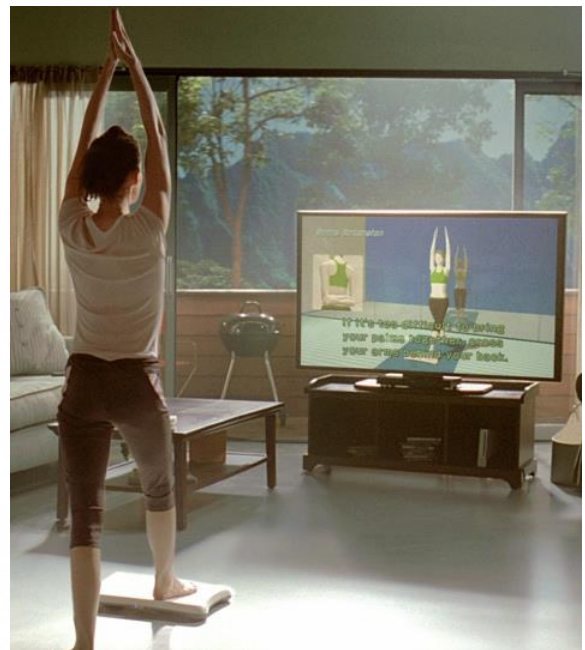
3.

3a. Do you recognize these products?

a.

b.

c.

d.

3b. Would You be able to tell me the brand of the products you recognized?

3c. Would you be able to identify at least one designer of the products you recognized?

4. Do you know the following designers?

   a. Michael Graves
   b. Perry King & Santiago Miranda
   c. Shigeru Miyamoto
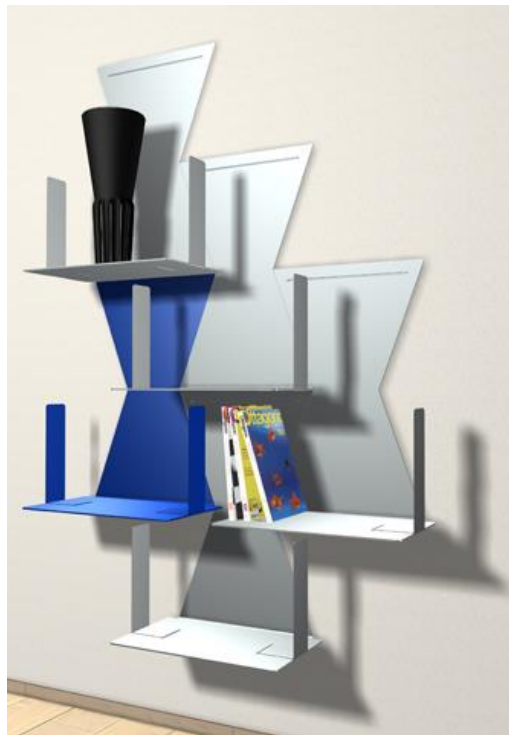   d. Jonathan Ive

5. Do you know the following brands?

   a. Bang & Olufsen
   b. Alessi
   c. Philips
   d. Kartell
   e. Apple

f. Artemide

g. Samsung

6.

6a. You have to buy a bookcase. Which one among the following would you choose? Why?

a.

b.

c.

6b. Would you be willing to pay a premium price for the product you liked the most?

6c. If you had known that a. is designed by a famous designer, would it have influenced your choice? Why?
If yes, would you be willing to pay a premium price to own a famous designer's work?

6d. If you had known that c. is among the most successful products of one of the "coolest" Design brands, would it have influenced your choice? Why?
If yes, would you be willing to pay a premium price for that?

Part 3

7. Do you have any previous education and/or working experience in the field of design/Design thinking?
   Do you have any passion/interest in the topic?

8. What does the word *Design* mean to you?

9. Do you consider Design as something abstract, that does not "touch" you in any way? Why?

10. Have you ever considered Design not merely as an aesthetic phenomenon, but also as a strategic tool exploited in processes implemented by firms?

11. What is your attitude toward design?
Do you think it is able to influence, in some way, your purchasing decisions? How?

12. While making your purchasing decisions, do you think you are influenced by product features that go beyond its utilitarian function? Why?

13. Which aspects, among the following, do actually influence your purchasing decisions?
- Price
- Product appearance
- Brand
- Packaging
- Product "popularity"
- Feelings and emotions felt while purchasing the product and while using it
- Opinion/feedback of people you know (friends, family members...)
- Other influencers (celebrities, bloggers..)
- Designer
- Product uniqueness

14. Are you usually willing to pay a premium price for products that are more meaningful to you? E.g. the ones that positively influence your mood.

15. Do you think a nice working and living environment (from an aesthetic point of view) can have a significant impact on your daily life and on your mood? Why and how?

16. In your opinion, does *art* actually influence market trends and customers' tastes? How?

Appendix 2.

Parte 1

1. Informazioni personali dell'intervistato.
   Età:
   Sesso:
   Nazionalità:
   Nazione di residenza:
   Formazione scolastica, titolo conseguito (e.g. scuola primaria, laurea triennale, laurea specialistica):

2. Pensi al luogo in cui vive e spende tempo con la sua famiglia e I suoi amici: la sua casa.

   2a. Come describerebbe la sua casa / il suo appartamento? (e.g. moderno, tradizionale, artistico, arredato a caso...)?

   2b. Cambierebbe qualcosa? Perchè?
   Se sì, cosa cambierebbe e perchè.

   2c. Ha arredato la sua casa da solo/a, o ha contribuito in qualche modo ad arredarla?
   Se sì, per favore nomini quali criteri, tra i seguenti, ha seguito nell'acquistare e/o collocare il mobilio e addizionali elementi decorativi:

   prezzo, estetica dell'oggetto, marca, "significati" associati al prodotto (emozioni e sensazioni provate nel comprare e/o usare il prodotto, mobilio appartenente a membri della famiglia..), designer, unicità del prodotto, altro.

   2d. Si sente a suo agio nella sua casa?
   Se sì, che cosa esattamente la fa sentire a suo agio?

   2e. Cosa prova quando torna a casa dopo una lunga e stancante giornata (e.g. sollievo, pace

interiore…)?

2f. Nota un cambiamento/miglioramento del suo umore, quando la sua casa è pulita e ordinata?
Se sì, in che modo il suo umore ne viene influenzato?

Parte 2

3.

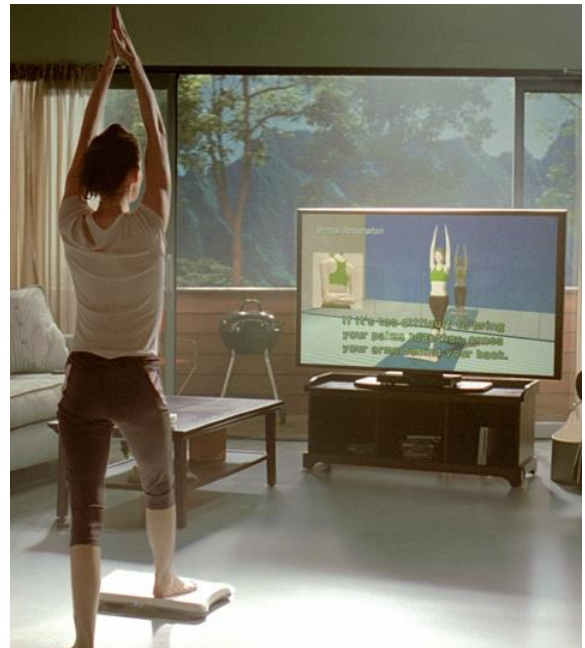3a. Quali tra seguenti prodotti è in grado di riconoscere?

a.

b.

c.

d.

3b. E' a conoscienza della marca dei prodotti che ha riconosciuto?

3c. Sarebbe in grado di riconoscere almeno un designer dei prodotti che ha riconosciuto?

4. Quali designers conosce, tra i seguenti?

a. Michael Graves
b. Perry King & Santiago Miranda
c. Shigeru Miyamoto
d. Jonathan Ive

5. Quali marche conosce, tra le seguenti?

a. Bang & Olufsen
b. Alessi
c. Philips
d. Kartell
e. Apple
f. Artemide
g. Samsung

6.
6a. Deve comprare una libreria. Quale sceglierebbe tra le seguenti? Perchè?

a.

b.

c.

6b. Sarebbe disposto a pagare un prezzo più alto per il prodotto che le piace di più?

6c. Se fosse stato/a consapevole, prima di effettuare la scelta, che a. è il lavoro di un famoso designer, la sua scelta ne sarebbe stata influenzata? Perchè?
Se sì, sarebbe disposto a pagare un prezzo più alto pur di possedere l'opera di un designer famoso?

6d. Se fosse stato/a consapevole, prima di effettuare la scelta, che c. è tra i prodotti di maggior successo di uno dei più popolari marchi di design, la sua scelta ne sarebbe stata influenzata?

Perchè?

Se sì, sarebbe disposto a pagare un prezzo più alto per questo prodotto?

Parte 3

7. Ha esperienza (accademica e/o lavorativa) nel campo del design?

   Ha passione e/o interesse nell'argomento?

8. Che cosa si intende, secondo lei, con il termine *design*?

9. Considera il Design come qualcosa di astratto, che non la "tocca" in nessun modo? Perchè?

10. Ha mai considerato il Design come non solo un fenomeno meramente estetico, ma anche uno strumento strategico sfruttato dai processi implementati dalle aziende?

11. Qual è il suo approccio verso il design?

    Pensa sia in grado di influenzare le sue decisioni e il suo comportamento nell'acquistare prodotti e/o servizi? In che modo?

12. Nell'acquistare un nuovo prodotto, pensa di essere influenzato/a da caratteristiche del prodotto che vanno oltre la sola funzione utilitaria? Perchè?

13. Quali, tra i seguenti aspetti, la influenzano concretamente nel scegliere un nuovo prodotto?
    - Prezzo
    - "Estetica" del prodotto
    - Marca
    - Packaging (i.e.: come il prodotto è confezionato)
    - Popolarità del prodotto
    - Sensazioni ed emozioni provate nel comprare e/o usare il prodotto
    - Opinioni e consigli di persone che conosce (amici, membri della famiglia...)
    - Altri soggetti che possono influenzare la sua scelta (celebrità, bloggers..)

- Designer
- Unicità del prodotto

14. È solitamente disposto a pagare un prezzo aggiuntivo per quei prodotti che hanno per lei maggior valore intangibile? E.g. prodotti che influenzano positivamente il suo umore.

15. Pensa che un ambiente gradevole alla vista possa avere un impatto significativo sulla vita di tutti i giorni e sul suo umore? Perchè e in che modo?

16. Secondo lei, arte e tendenze culturali influenzano concretamente le tendenze di mercato e i gusti dei consumatori? In che modo?

Appendix 3.