

Daniel Muñoz Navarro

*The virus of fashion. Democratization of luxury
and new commercial strategies in early modern Valencia*¹

It is not new that fashion was a widespread phenomenon in eighteenth-century European cities. In addition, the social and cultural approach has prevailed in the study of this topic during the last decades (Roche 1991; Belfanti 2008). However, it is worth asking about the economic effects of this phenomenon, so it is necessary to return to case studies, such as the one presented in the following pages. This study is situated within the current research on «retail revolution», which has valued the role played by changes in supply and commercialisation systems in the process of modern economic growth (Stobart and Hann 2004; Dewilde 2015; Blondé and Van Damme 2015). However, a brief examination of the specialized literature confirms that this approach has been limited to the more developed regions of north-western Europe (Mui and Mui 1989; Cox 2000; Stobart 2005, Benson and Ugolini 2005; Blondé, Stobart et al. 2006; Blondé, Briot et al. 2005).

One of the questions this research seeks to answer is to confirm that this process, closely linked to fashion and the diffusion of new consumption patterns, was not exclusive to the more urbanised areas of Europe, and can also be extended to the context of southern Europe. Mediterranean cities experienced similar processes of diffusion and imitation of new fashions, developing their fixed textile commercialisation systems, in response to renewed consumption behaviors in which colourfulness and design of garments were dominant qualities above durability. In doing so, it will be provided a diachronic analysis of the textile supply in one of the main cities of the Spanish Mediterranean façade, asking when the first substantial changes in retail systems took place, who were the protagonists and what were the channels of diffusion of the new fashions in eighteenth-century Valencia.

For the Spanish case, Pierre Vilar highlighted the role *botigas* (shops) and retail trade played in the economic development of Catalonia in the eighteenth century. The author pointed out that «the *botiga*, when it acquires a certain importance, almost always has a “company” that finances it». The capitalist nature of these companies entailed, on multiple occasions, «the formation, frequent indeed, of individual fortunes and the rise of certain families» (Vilar 1988, 159-60). Through the abundant information provided by private Catalan documentation, Vilar

¹ This research has been funded with support from the project «Privilegio, trabajo y conflictividad. La sociedad moderna de los territorios hispánicos del Mediterráneo occidental entre el cambio y las resistencias» (PGC2018-094150-xB-C21).

underlined the transformative nature of these commercial establishments, the role of their protagonists in shaping the Catalan eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, and, finally, the contribution of shops (together with other essential business models, such as the «*barca*» or the «*compañías*») to the merchant capital accumulation and, ultimately, to capitalist economic growth. All this was crucial in the Catalan policy of *redreç* – the implemented measures to reactivate the economy of Catalonia in the final decades of the seventeenth century.

However, this process was not exclusive to the Catalan area but also stood out in other cities in Mediterranean Europe, such as Barcelona (Torra 2003), Naples (Clemente 2011), Rome (Ago 2006), and Valencia (Muñoz 2015; 2018). Fashion undoubtedly stimulated economic growth in the more developed regions of northwestern Europe. In addition, it also did so in the Mediterranean area since this economic and social transformation was also present there (Yun and Torras 1999; Muñoz 2011; Nigro 2015). The city of Valencia participated very actively in this transformation, developing an important sector of the merchant petty bourgeoisie and changing consumption patterns in most of the population. However, it is necessary to study in-depth how the influence of fashion in eighteenth-century Spain transformed the commercial structure, making the petty bourgeoisie the main protagonist and shops the central scene of the changes. The case study is eighteenth-century Valencia, a dynamic city that experienced remarkable economic development during that century (Franch 1986; 2000). The main challenge to analyse this process is the fragmentation of the sources, requiring complementary archival collections to piece together the evolution of retail strategies implemented by cloth *botigueros* (shopkeepers) established in Valencia in the eighteenth century.

1. Taxation, Consumption and Textile Supply in Valencia at the Turn of the eighteenth century

Tax records of the *General del tall* help to know the retail trade in Valencia at the end of the seventeenth century (Muñoz 2012). Thus, it is reconstructed the textile supply of some of the main families of shopkeepers, considered representative of the whole sector of the commercial petty bourgeoisie, that remained active for several decades. The goal is to define better the nature and characteristics of this emerging transformation process in the ongoing textile commercialisation during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Specifically, to confirm the initial hypothesis, it is analysed the commercial activity of three families of shopkeepers: the Sumbiela, the Casamayor (of French origin) and the Luesma (probable natives of Valencia) in 1683, 1693 and 1704, based on the tax records of the *tall* in those years.

As was relatively common, these families were perpetuated for decades in the retail textile business, taking advantage of the context of the city's economic recovery, beneficial tax and administrative reforms, and the boom in consumption. Some even made the leap to wholesale trade, much more lucrative and socially better regarded than direct selling («*al corte*»). Merchants were regularly involved in leasing municipal or manorial taxes and rights, trying to consolidate their

socioeconomic status and perpetuate trade in their shops, even if they let *mozos*, *factores* or *socios* run the business.

Textile shops, concentrated in the Puerta Nueva neighbourhood, maintained their activity for several generations, usually because the business partners were relatives or from the same region (Muñoz 2015). Although documentation provides numerous examples of this commercial inbreeding that prevailed in Valencia's textile retail trade, sometimes it is difficult to trace the activity of a family for decades since the surnames could change. Despite this, several families remained active for decades, especially the Sumbiela, who were present in the retail textile trade for almost a century (Muñoz 2008).

There were three families of cloth shopkeepers that continued in the cloth retail business between 1680 and 1705. Hence the goal is to compare variations of the textile supply of the shops over almost three decades when the change started. Specifically, we analyse the sales registered in 1683, 1693 and 1704 according to the tax records of the *tall*, focusing on the families mentioned above. They all had a considerable volume of business and an uninterrupted sale of textile products, based on kinship ties and the prevalence of inbreeding in this social sector.

We reconstruct their textile supply and commercial activity over almost three decades by analysing sales in those years. This section will allow us to define better the revitalisation and transformation process in early and gradual commercialisation systems, which can hardly be considered revolutionary.

Tab. 1. Analysis of the textile supply of three cloth shops in Valencia (1683-1704)

	No. of sales	Yards Sold	Value in pounds	Average extension	Average price/yard
CASAMAYOR					
Year 1683	1.456	3.210,63	2.026,70	2,21	0,63
Year 1693	2.000	4.030,00	2.542,80	2,02	0,63
Year 1704	1.694	5.258,00	4.067,20	3,10	0,77
SUMBIELA					
Year 1683	808	1.509,38	1.092,30	1,87	0,72
Year 1693	1.222	2.104,31	1.503,95	1,72	0,71
Year 1704	1.945	5.869,50	4.519,25	3,02	0,77
LUESMA					
Year 1683	717	1.896,13	1.189,25	2,64	0,63
Year 1693	1.489	4.376,13	3.164,85	2,94	0,72
Year 1704	2.114	6.339,13	4.603,95	3,00	0,73

Joint analysis	Year 1683	Index	Year 1693	Index	Year 1704	Index
Yard per sale (average)	2,24	100,00	2,23	99,55	3,04	135,71
Price per yard (average)	0,66	100,00	0,69	104,55	0,76	115,15

When analysing the evolution of the commercial activity of these three families, one can say that all the data point to a substantial increase in turnover and a transformation in textile supply. Each of the mercantile companies that ran these three shops started from a different scenario. Francisco Casamayor's shop was already consolidated in 1683, while Luesma's and Sumbiela's had a more modest activity.² However, by 1704, Casamayor's shop had increased in turnover, but at a slower rate than the rest, while the other two had significantly increased trade, surpassing it in the number of sales and *varas* (yards) sold.

However, all the data point in the same direction despite the differences common in the cloth sector. This group of «*mercaderes de puerta abierta*» or «*mercaderes de vara*» («open-door» or «yard» merchants, names that began to be used in the late seventeenth century to define this group of the commercial petty bourgeoisie linked to the retail of textiles in Valencia) increased trade volume, thanks to greater flexibility in activity, modifying textile supply to adapt to demand and expand the customer base. Thus, this sector was increasingly controlling the market, diversifying the textile supply, something that artisans could not do due to the structural limitations of the workshops and the rigid guild regulations they had to comply with. The sale «*al fiado*» (on credit), a common practice among cloth retailers, who acted almost like lenders risking a good part of their capital to guarantee a steady clientele also contributed to this process. Not surprisingly, this was one of the arguments Valencian authorities put forward in 1723 to defend the fixed sale against the itinerant activity of Savoyard peddlers: «because neighbouring merchants use cash sale and credit sale, thus facing locals' shortage, while foreign street vendors only sell what is paid to them in cash».³ Thus, shopkeepers risked part of their capital in active debts, which were difficult to collect, to reinforce the commercial activity.

Notarial protocols of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are full of deeds of obligation between cloth dealers and their customers, who undertook to pay the debts they had incurred within a certain period. For example, on 4 May 1685, Manuel Bello, a citizen of Valencia, recognized he owed Pedro Sumbiela the amount of 32 Valencian *libras* (pounds), «*debitas ex pretio et valore tot raupe per me ex domo vestra empta, habita et recepta, de cuius bonitate, pretio et valore sum contentus et plenarie satisfactus*».⁴ There are many other examples, but of little use, as they only indicate the overall value of the debt (a result of multiple purchases) without offering additional information about the clothes purchased.

Thus, shops began to predominate over other retail systems, consolidating a broader customer base. Social sectors that have traditionally remained outside the

² In 1683, Pedro Sumbiela ran the store, while his brother, Juan Bautista, was probably a *mancebo* (an apprentice or an auxiliary employee). Shortly afterwards, Juan Bautista Sumbiela managed the cloth shop, while Pedro engaged in other activities, such as leasing manorial rights, like those of the village of Gestalgar, or the credit business through censuses sale.

³ Archivo Municipal de Valencia (AMV), Repeso, box 1, file 1.

⁴ Archivo de Protocolos del Patriarca de Valencia (APPV), Notary Francesc Escamilla, sign. 2282. Deed of obligation, dated on 4 May 1685.

market were beginning to satisfy their desires for consumption. When analysing the sales made by these three families, one can observe how, between 1683 and 1704, the average extension of the sales increased. However, it is not just a question of buyers buying more and more fabrics, but also that the average price had risen considerably.

Focusing attention on the sales made by these three families, one can conclude that the average extension of fabric sales rose from 2.24 to 3.04 yards between 1683 and 1704 (a positive growth rate of 35.71%). Also, the average value of a yard of cloth rose from 0.66 to 0.76 Valencian pounds in the same period (+15.15%).

However, the rise was not due to the higher cost of purchased textiles, but to lower consumption of traditional fabrics (especially *camelote* [camlet]) and increasing demand for specific fabrics (such as *estameña* [a simple and rough woollen fabric], *bayeta* [baize], satin or *pelusa* [a kind of napped fabric]) in tune with new tastes but more expensive. Concerning textile supply, there was a significant increase in the number of fabrics sold in each shop. More yards were being sold, and the supply was diversifying, incorporating different silk and wool fabrics. In addition, the range of qualities, colours, origins and prices also increased, favouring greater consumption for those social sectors that previously had hardly frequented clothing stores.

As can be seen in the following tables, the textile supply of the three families coincides in the process towards greater diversification, despite the differences between them. Particular situations influenced the sales recorded in each shop: the availability of capital to acquire wholesale goods and distribute them at retail or other ups and downs, such as the death of one of the partners and passing the business to heirs. However, despite these differences, some common trends can be seen in the transformation of textile supply. Before the analysis, it should be noted that, in the tables detailing the textile supply of each family between 1683 and 1704, the criterion followed when ordering the range of fabrics sold is alphabetical, to make it easy for readers to track any fabric included in those years.

In 1683, a limited range of fabrics, which in two of the three cases analysed here were no more than 20, characterised the textile supply. However, a decade later, the increasing textile supply in the Luesma shop (+52.94%) and the Casamayor shop (+42.11%) is very noticeable. In turn, the Sumbiela shop seems to be going through a slump in 1693, with a slight reduction in the number of fabrics sold (-15.38%), although this is a short-term issue. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the three shops increased their supply, selling more than 30 fabrics, as can be seen in the tables. Combining the data, the textile supply increasing of these three shops is 67.74%, going from an average of 20.67 fabrics in 1683 to 34.67 fabrics in 1704.

Similarly, if analysed by fibres, a very similar process is observed. New fabrics began to be sold in both fibres. This increase is standard for wool (+57.14%) and silk (+90.00%) but is more intense for silk, as the initial values were much lower. However, despite this greater diversification of the textile supply, wool fabrics predominate widely over silk. Unfortunately, as in previous analyses, no data are available for linen or hemp fabric sales due to tax exemption.

Tab. 2. Analysis of the textile typology of sales made by the three analysed shops (1683-1704)⁵

	No. of fabrics	Index	Wool	Index	Silk	Index
CASAMAYOR shop						
Year 1683	19	100,00	15	100,00	4	100,00
Year 1693	27	142,11	20	133,33	7	175,00
Year 1704	37	194,74	23	153,33	14	350,00
SUMBIELA shop						
Year 1683	26	100,00	15	100,00	11	100,00
Year 1693	22	84,62	18	120,00	4	36,36
Year 1704	36	138,46	21	140,00	15	136,36
LUESMA Shop						
Year 1683	17	100,00	12	100,00	5	100,00
Year 1693	26	152,94	19	158,33	7	140,00
Year 1704	31	182,35	22	183,33	9	180,00

Joint Analysis	Year 1683	Index	Year 1693	Index	Year 1704	Index
Wool fabrics	42	100,00	57	135,71	66	157,14
Silk fabrics	20	100,00	18	90,00	38	190,00
No. of supplied fabrics	62	100,00	75	120,97	104	167,74

Between 1683 and 1704, camlet and baize prevailed among wool fabrics. However, the consumption of these materials followed opposite trends. The more traditional camlet was bought less and less due to the interest generated by other fabrics. In turn, baize became a new option due to a greater variety of colours and diversity in quality and price. As baize was better adapted to demand, it was being consumed more and more. Something similar happened to *estameña*, *sarga* (serge, a type of twill fabric) or *lanilla* (a low consistency fabric made with fine wool). The joint analysis shows that the fabrics with the greatest diversity of colour, external appearance, origin and price were more consumed.

Silk fabrics were increasingly present, evidencing the progressive incorporation of this fibre into the textile supply of Valencian cloth shops during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. However, it was still less important than wool. Only taffeta had a significant presence in 1683, increasing in the following decades. Along with this fabric, satin also stood out, absent in 1683 but widely sold in 1704. To a lesser extent, other silk fabrics such as *setinela*, *felpa* (a kind of plush), damask or sateen began to be part of the textile supply of fabric shops. Overall, the increase in the number of fabrics sold is 67.74%, an unequivocal indicator of the diversification of textile supply and the emergent consolidation of retailing in Valencia between 1675 and 1705. This fact supports the hypothesis raised in these

⁵ Index 100: 1683.

pages. According to available data, it was still an early-stage process intensified after the War of the Spanish Succession.

2. The Sumbiela. A family of shopkeepers in eighteenth-century Valencia

To corroborate the trends in the textile supply of Valencian shops during the first half of the eighteenth century, we have considered it convenient to focus our attention on a paradigmatic example: the Sumbiela family. This family was closely linked to textile commercialisation during the second half of the seventeenth century and, at least, until the mid-eighteenth century. Juan Sumbiela, a shopkeeper by profession, appears mentioned in the record of French merchants' certificates of 1674, but not his address. Likewise, the tax records of the *General del tall* include a good number of cloth sales registered under the surname Sumbiela, without indicating the first name. Although from other documentary references, we know that Pedro Sumbiela and, later, Juan Bautista Sumbiela worked in the retail sale of textiles in Valencia. These brothers, whom we have already referred to previously, were most likely sons or, at least, close relatives of Juan mentioned above, succeeding him in the family business. In the same way, after the death of Juan Bautista, the shop was run by his widow, Serafina Gallent, who kept it working until at least 1728, helped by one of her sons. Josep Sumbiela y Gallent was a *mancebo* in the shop of another Frenchman, Francisco Bordanova, replacing him at the head of the business around 1727, after Bordanova's return to France.

In addition, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, around 1706, another member of this family, Bernardo Sumbiela, joined the record of «*mercaderes de puerta abierta*», starting his commercial career in the shop he ran at Puerta Nueva Street until the moment of his death, in 1745. From this moment on, the Sumbiela surname disappears from the registers and merchants' certificates records, which does not mean that the business has closed. The will, the post-mortem inventory and the property administration deed show us how, in the absence of direct heirs, the company's partners, all of them of French origin, was used to keep working the shop's commercial activity.

This continuity and the information provided by the sources allow us to compare the evolution in the supply of cloth shops managed by the Sumbiela between the final decades of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth century, taking it as a representative example of the changes produced in the textile commercialisation of Valencia during this period. To do this, we have the 1745 post-mortem inventory of Bernardo Sumbiela's cloth shop, which allows us to extend our comparative analysis to the first half of the eighteenth century. Like most French retail merchants settled in Valencia, this shopkeeper was originally from Moneny, Province of Bearne, in southern France's Atlantic Pyrenees. At least since 1709 and until his death, Bernardo Sumbiela had maintained an active retail fabric trade in Valencia, which means more than thirty years of commercial activity.

Compiling these inventories implied making a specific list of the genres in stock in the Sumbiela shop, allowing us to compare with the information we have for the beginning of the century. Focusing attention on the textile supply of Bernardo

Sumbiela's shop in 1745, one can appreciate essential differences regarding the textile supply of Juan Bautista Sumbiela in 1683, 1693 and 1704, with that of Serafina Gallent, his widow, in 1706 and, in general, with that of cloth shopkeepers at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In Bernardo Sumbiela's shophouse, there were 15,051.63 yards of fabrics distributed among different types of wool, linen and silk cloths, and other types of haberdashery products such as galloons of different qualities and other several products. The total value of the goods in stock in this shop amounted to 13,307.84 pounds, a high sum indeed, which shows a dynamic and prosperous commercial activity continued by the company's partners after the death of Bernardo Sumbiela.

Suppose one establishes a comparison with the situation at the beginning of the century. In this case, the textile supply in the Sumbiela shop in 1745 is much more heterogeneous, evidencing the transformation process that has been discussed throughout this chapter. The diversity of inventoried textile products stands out. No longer exclusively fabrics are included, but also galloon goods and other items intended for personal adornment, included in the haberdashery category.

Tab. 3. **Textile supply in Bernardo Sumbiela's shop (1745). Analysis by fibres**

	Wool	%	Linen	%	Silk	%	TOTAL
Yards	7.703,00	51,18	4.865,25	32,32	2.483,38	16,50	15.051,63
ValorValue	5.896,42	54,57	1.609,35	14,89	3.300,13	30,54	10.805,90
Average price (in pounds)	0,77		0,33		1,33		0,72

Tab. 4. **Comparison of wool and silk fibres from Bernardo Sumbiela's inventory (1745)**

	Wool	%	Silk	%	TOTAL
Extension in yards	7.703,00	75,62	2.483,38	24,38	10.186,38
Joint value (in pounds)	5.896,42	64,12	3.300,13	35,88	9.196,55

The inventory analysis allows us to affirm that the number of fabrics in the shops of the Sumbiela family increased significantly between 1704 and 1745. By mid-century, we can distinguish up to 49 different fabrics (19 wool, 14 silk, 13 linen and three unidentified), although this information is misleading. In 1704, Juan Bautista Sumbiela sold 36 different fabrics, but only wool and silk. In 1745, Bernardo Sumbiela had a similar number in his shop, 33 fabrics of these two fibres. The specific analysis carried out, exclusively comparing the wool and silk products, allows us to observe that, even though wool continues to predominate, in 1745, silk has consolidated its presence in cloth shops. The number of yards represents 24.38% of the total, a slight increase compared with 1704 (21.30%). However, to its value, the percentage shoots up to 35.88%, evidencing an increase in the specific importance of silk fabrics over Sumbiela's textile supply as a whole.

Thus, the increase in the number of fabrics supplied occurs especially in linen products, a fibre gaining ground due to its good adaptation to new consumption

patterns (a light, colourful and inexpensive fabric). As we already pointed out when analysing the seizure of Sumbiela's widow in 1706, linen was scarce. There were three types of linen fabrics, so the growing specific importance of this fibre is evident. However, it is not only a question of a more significant number of fabrics supplied but of the differences in the typology of these fibres, their origin and purchase price.

Firstly, the 7,703 yards of wool fabrics stored (51.18% of the total) were worth a total of 5,896.42 pounds (54.57%). Thus, the average value for each yard was 0.77 pounds. A price somewhat lower than 1704 (0.80 pounds), a slight decrease, although significant. As can be seen in the following table, among the wool products, we find some varieties, such as the imported cloths –baize and *grana*, the latter dyed with the pigment obtained from cochineal– that far exceed the price of 1 pound/yard. More modest cloths, such as *chalón* (a lightweight twilled fabric of wool or worsted fabric), *filipichín* (a printed wool fabric), *lila* (a woollen fabric of various colours) or *sarga*, did not reach 0.50 pounds. The main novelty of wool fabrics Sumbiela supplied was their origin since most were made in France or the Netherlands. New European cloths, lighter and showier, were more in demand displacing the domestic manufacture. Some of the imported fabrics had a high price, such as *carro de oro* (a very fine iridescent woollen fabric) from the Netherlands or Amiens (1.80 and 1.60 pounds/yard), baize from Alconchez (2.00 pounds/yard), cloths from Sedan, Beauf or Carcassonne (3.50, 3.40 and 2.30 pounds/yard), while others were more economical, such as *barragán* (similar to camlet) from Brussels or *estañema del Príncipe* (both at 0.55 pounds/yard).

Secondly, there were 2,483.38 silk yards (16.50%). Its global value is 3,300.13 pounds (30.54%) since the average price is higher, standing at 1.33 pounds/yard. However, the price of these fabrics had increased a lot, compared to 1704 (the average price was 0.70 pounds). This increase is especially notable in taffeta, which goes from 0.51 to 0.98 pounds/yard. However, it does not correspond to the general trend. The great variety of qualities and the incorporation of luxury items, such as the threads of gold and silver, can explain this situation. Diverse and lively colours predominate among the 14 fabrics on supply, just like the beginning of the eighteenth century. We can also distinguish between qualities, especially in taffeta (simple, double or *entredoble* –said of a cloth type that it is neither double nor as simple as another of its kind) and *espolín* (brocade adorned with gold or with gold and silver). Although the importance of imported silks is less than that of wool, some fabrics of French origin were also supplied, such as French taffeta of various colours (1.20 pounds/yard) or taffeta of *manto de lustre* (1.70 pounds/yard). The French shops predominantly marketed these imported goods, despite the large production of Valencian silk.

The third group would be linen fabrics, a fibre of plant origin, with lighter and more affordable fabrics for most eighteenth-century Valencian society. This fibre is the one that increased its specific importance the most in 1745. With 4,865.25 yards, it accounted for 32.32% of the total yards of the Sumbiela shop. However, concerning the overall value of the fabrics, it represents only 14.89% (1,609.35 pounds) since the average value of the yard of this fabric was 0.33 pounds. These data indicate the existence of a large group of consumers of modest social

extraction, demanding cheaper fabrics, but new and more colourful, trying to adapt to new fashions. Among these types of fabrics, we find different qualities. In general, they are fabrics of ordinary quality, such as *cambray* (0.33 pounds/yard), *linetes* (0.30 pounds/yard), *lienzo naval* (0.40 pounds/yard), *ruán* (0.30 pounds/yard) or *granoble* (0.43 pounds/yard), among others. Although not explicitly stated, many of these cloths were imported from different regions of Northwest Europe, as their names show (Chambray, Rouen, Grenoble). The variety is more significant than in 1704, and they are no longer loosely woven linen fabric but finished fabrics of different colours. The consumption of this fibre of plant origin spread enormously in Valencia during the first half of the eighteenth century, but not before. Throughout this century, wool gave way to imported linen and cotton fabrics, much lighter, more colourful and more fashionable than traditional cloths. The consolidation of these new fibres in fixed commercial systems is a slow process that had to wait until the mid-eighteenth century, later than the one traced in Mallorca or Catalonia (Bibiloni 2011).

Finally, we must mention the fourth group of textiles inventoried in this shop, the haberdashery. Inside it, we find many galloons (860 *onzas* [ounces] valued at 1,999.30 pounds, 2.32 pounds/ounce) of various qualities, plus some raw silk, linen, cotton, and a few pounds of cochineal, valued at 439.34 pounds.

The expansion and diversification of the textile supply in cloth shops were not limited to fabrics. The consolidation of fixed retailing systems lied on this flexibility. It allowed incorporating new goods, such as finished garments, decorative elements (scarves, stockings, fans, hats), lace, galloons and other haberdashery products, which competed with all the craft trades related to textiles, generating not a few legal disputes. The comparative analysis of the Sumbiela family between 1704 and 1745 is a representative example of the transformation process of the textile supply that took place in Valencia throughout this period, in which the traditional seventeenth-century fabric shops were transforming into showcases of fashion.

3. Textile prices. A critical element in spreading new fashions

Finally, when analysing the success of the new commercial strategies of Valencian fabric shops, we must consider a key factor: textile prices and their direct influence on the purchasing power of Valencian consumers. To do this, we analyse the evolution of textile prices throughout the eighteenth century, establishing a comparison with the price series of different essentials and victuals, marked by a persistent inflationary trend (Hamilton 1988; Palop 1977). To verify this fact, we have calculated the average value of each product, starting from the available archival and bibliographic sources.

For wheat, we have the study carried out by J.M. Palop, who reconstructed the price series for this and other victuals, mainly using the records of the General Hospital of Valencia.⁶ Through them, we can know its evolution, year by year, from

⁶ In the case of wheat, the price provided was in pounds/*barchilla*. The *barchilla* was a unit of capacity equivalent to 16.75 litres. In turn, the value of fabrics was expressed in pounds/yard. The Valencian yard was equivalent to 0.91 centimetres (Vidal 1862).

1719 to 1805. However, for the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was necessary to resort to E. J. Hamilton's classic work, more imprecise than the previous one since the price evolution in Valencia, between 1651 and 1800, does not indicate the product's specific value but the value in annual and five-year indexes. Despite this, combining both references, we have calculated an indicative price for a *barchilla* of wheat in 1700-1705.

On the other hand, to know the average value of fabrics, distinguishing between wool, linen and cotton, we have resorted to the databases created for the author's doctoral thesis, which determine the chronological divisions, based on the available archival sources (Muñoz 2018). For the beginning of the eighteenth century, we used tax records of the *tall*. At the same time, since 1730, we already have a sample of inventories and seizures of goods from cloth shops large enough to calculate the average price of each fibre analysed.⁷

As a whole, we can affirm that, throughout the eighteenth century, the fabrics supplied in Valencian shops maintained a much more enduring value than that of essentials. In a conjuncture of inflation, this meant an actual decrease in prices, making acquisition more affordable for the poorest social groups. Nevertheless, before starting to reel off the data obtained, there are several issues to be highlighted. In the first place, to make this comparison, we have discarded the possibility of comparing the evolution of the value of a specific fabric. Instead, we have calculated the average price of all the fabrics manufactured with the same fibre in each period, using the extensive databases that we have compiled to analyse textile supply. Thus, we avoid falling into specific cases, given the significant differences in prices in each fabric (depending on quality, colour, external appearance and origin). This fact allows us to assess the overall evolution of each fibre in contrast with wheat, the basis of the Valencian diet in the modern age.

Likewise, we dispensed silks among the analysed textiles since they had little presence in the shops of «*mercaderes de vara*» and were instead sold through other sales channels. Hence, it is impossible to calculate a reliable average value for this fibre in the different periods considered. Something similar happens with cotton fabrics, which did not begin to have a notable presence in the textile supply of the Valencia cloth shops until the 1760s. This is why we lack data on the prices of these fabrics in the first two periods.

Finally, the stages established in the following tables and graphs come to terms with the archival sources used and the historical context they belong to. For this reason, we avoid referring to the period of the War of Spanish Succession due to the economic repercussions and the inflationary imbalances it caused. Hence, we divide our analysis into seven specific periods. The first would be the one covering 1700 to 1705, before the succession conflict, subsequently giving a chronological jump to 1730. This second stage lasts until 1759 due to the low sample of inventories gathered for this period. The analysis is decade-divided up to 1800 due to source availability, which allows us to have much more substantial knowledge of

⁷ As linen goods were exempt from the payment of the *tall* tax, their average price in 1700-1705 has been calculated from the information extracted from judicial collections since the beginning of the eighteenth century.

prices evolution. The last period analysed is somewhat shorter to coincide with the established chronological limit of this research, sticking to 1800-1805.

For reflecting the data in the following tables and graphs, we have used two comparison systems. The first shows the actual product price for wheat (in pounds per *barchilla*) and wool, linen and cotton textiles (in pounds per yard). Thus we can establish a direct comparison between the price evolution of an essential product and that of these consumer goods and capture the different dynamics according to the fibre they were made of.

Not surprisingly, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, a yard of wool (0.80 pounds) cost more than a *barchilla* of wheat (0.58 pounds). This situation reversed from the mid-eighteenth century, especially from the 1760s, coinciding with the Esquilache riots, as seen in the graph. Likewise, it is worth highlighting the low value of coarse and ordinary linen cloths in this same period. The substantial increase in this average fibre price from 1760, due to the quality of these products throughout the second half of the century, is equated with the other plant raw material, cotton. Cotton was always more affordable than wool but not as inexpensive as linen.

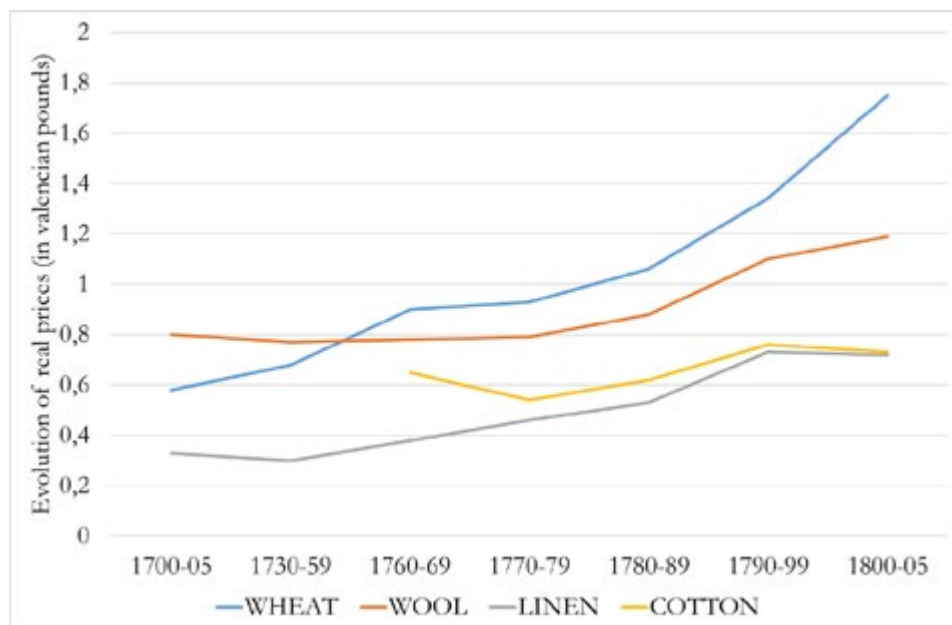
Tab. 5. Comparison of wheat and textile by fibre prices (1700-1805)⁸

	1700-05	1730-59	1760-69	1770-79	1780-89	1790-99	1800-05
Wheat	0,58	0,68	0,90	0,93	1,06	1,34	1,75
Wool	0,80	0,77	0,78	0,79	0,88	1,10	1,19
Linen	0,33	0,30	0,38	0,46	0,53	0,73	0,72
Cotton ⁹	-	-	0,65	0,54	0,62	0,76	0,73

⁸ The actual price was in pounds per *barchilla* (wheat) and pounds per yard (textile fibres).

⁹ As we have already mentioned, cotton fabrics did not have a significant presence in the textile supply of Valencia's cloth shops until the 1760s. For this reason, we lack data on the prices of these fabrics in the first two periods.

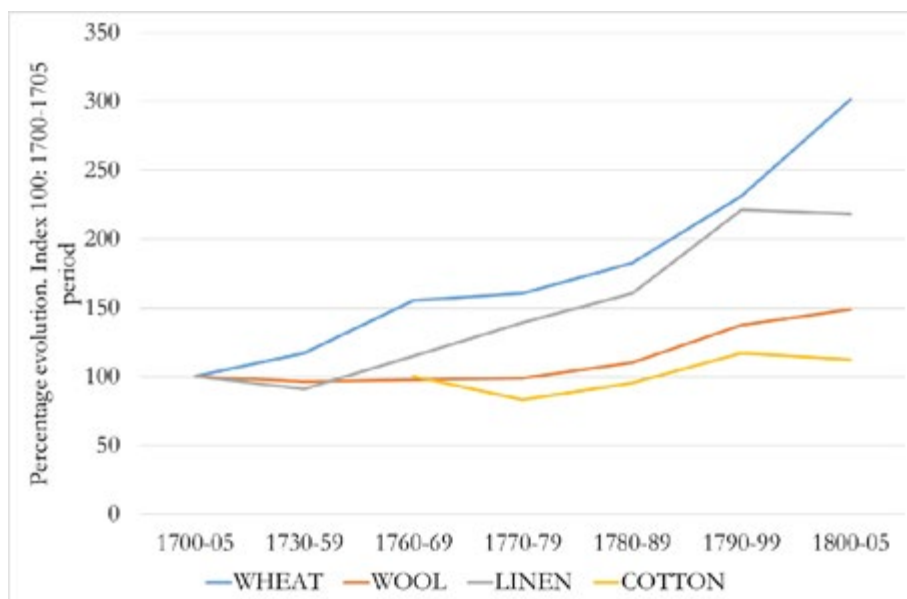
Graph 1. Comparison of wheat and textiles by fibre prices (1700-1805)

Tab. 6. Comparison of wheat and textiles by fibre prices (1700-1805).
Percentage evolution¹⁰

Wheat	100,00	117,24	155,17	160,34	182,76	231,03	301,72
Wool	100,00	96,25	97,50	98,75	110,00	137,50	148,75
Linen	100,00	90,91	115,15	139,39	160,61	221,21	218,18
Cotton ¹¹	-	-	100,00	83,08	95,38	116,92	112,31
	1700-05	1730-59	1760-69	1770-79	1780-89	1790-99	1800-05

¹⁰ Index 100: 1700-1705.¹¹ In the case of cotton, as we do not have data for those years, we have set the index 100 in the first available data, 1760-1769.

Graph 2. Comparison of wheat and textiles by fibre prices (1700-1805).
Percentage evolution



In any case, to establish a more detailed comparison, which allows us to compare the evolution of the prices of these products, we have resorted to representing it, not in absolute terms, but based on percentage value. We have assigned an index value of 100 to 1700-1705 prices, reflecting the fluctuations in the later stages based on this. Thus, all prices start from the same point, and we can more graphically represent their different evolution throughout the century. Only in cotton products, for the reasons already mentioned, we lack an average value for the first two stages, so the index value of 100 is assigned to the first data available, that of the period 1760-1769, estimating its evolution from this moment onwards.

The data and the comparisons confirm our initial hypothesis and correspond with the evolution of the textile supply in Valencia, analysed previously. The fabric prices in Valencia, in real terms, fell significantly during a good part of the eighteenth century, especially in the consolidation stage of the shop as a fixed retailing system.

As seen in the tables and graphs, the prices of wool and cotton fabrics remained relatively stable throughout most of the century, even decreasing at certain times. These fibres followed very similar trends. The percentage distance for wheat grew more and more due to moderate fabric price increase in these two fibres (+48.75% in wool and +12.31 % in cotton), concentrated mainly in the period after 1790. It was a period of fluctuation and price increase due to the constant warlike confrontations and social tension.

Among textile fibres, only linen fabrics follow a different pattern. Since 1760, the value increased at a very high rate, sometimes even more than wheat, multiplied

by two at the end of the eighteenth century (linen had increased by +121,21 % in 1790-1799). This fact is explained if we take into account the deficient levels from which it started. As mentioned, the linen fabrics were characterised by their poor quality at the beginning of the eighteenth century, alien to fashions and showy consumption. Hence the low price, around 0.33 pounds per yard. However, this situation began to change from mid-century, reaching 0.72 pounds at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The incorporation into shops' supply of higher quality imported linen fabrics, more elaborate, light and showy, was accompanied by an increase in prices. In this regard, this plant fibre stopped being an ordinary fabric and became part of new consumers' ostentatious consumption and tastes. Linen's affordable price was added to the qualities already outlined. Despite the substantial percentage increase, linen fabrics continued to be much more inexpensive than wool or silk and very similar to cotton. Therefore, different price dynamics in front of wool and cotton was not due to the general context of inflation, but the low initial price and changes in the textile supply of the shops. Despite being made of the same raw material, these newly incorporated linen fabrics were much more elaborate and refined than the previous ones.

If we carry out an overall assessment, we can affirm that the upward trend affecting primary products hardly influenced the value of textile goods in Valencia. At least, this was the case until the 1780s, since in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, textile prices rebounded significantly, although always at a lower level than wheat. On the other hand, linen goods increased in price, but not due to an actual increase in prices, but somewhat improved quality. Not surprisingly, it is significant that the value of these fabrics stagnated between 1790 and 1805. The supply was already completely renewed, following a trend similar to cotton fabric prices.

Intense commercial competition within this sector of the merchant petty bourgeoisie also contributed to a moderation in textiles value for most of the century. Several factors influenced this fact, but one of the most important was the growing presence of Maltese traders in the Valencian textile market. At first, they were street vendors and later *«mercaderes de varas»*, whose supply was more affordable, threatening the French hegemony in this retail trade (Franch and Muñoz 2012). Likewise, the actual reduction in the average prices of the fabrics sold in Valencian shops is related to new commercial strategies of the retailers and the process of diversification of their textile supply to attract a more heterogeneous clientele, including sectors of the middle and lower classes, eager to consume but with little purchasing power.

It seems logical that prices would remain low, despite the general inflation context, in a textile market with better stock and a broader and more specialised supply, as was the case in Valencia. Only at the end of the eighteenth century did the prices of textiles slightly increase. In any case, it was a specific juncture. The actual value of textiles in Valencia would decrease during the eighteenth century, favouring conspicuous consumption beyond the elites and consolidating fixed shops as the leading textile retailing system.

4. Final conclusions

Commercialisation systems and textile supply were profoundly transformed in Valencia throughout the eighteenth century as a result of the consolidation of new consumption patterns among large urban groups, which tried to imitate new trends coming from Europe. The *botigas* played a key role in showcasing new fashions, producing a whole range of qualitative and quantitative changes in the commercial activity of the petty bourgeoisie – mainly of foreign origin, French and Maltese–established in the city. The diachronic analysis of the textile supply for some of the main lineages of shopkeepers allows us to confirm that this transformation process had already begun in the final decades of the seventeenth century. It took place in an emerging context of economic recovery in Valencia, which promoted an extension of retail trade and a progressive democratization of luxury.

The growing specialization of the textile supply in Valencia reveals a context of parallel change in consumption patterns, which adapted to the European fashion standards. This fact prioritized the external qualities of the fabrics (colourfulness and design), compared to other traditional criteria such as thickness or durability of the garments. Consequently, textile supply in Valencia expanded typologies, features and prices, which considerably diversified the range of textile fabrics for sale in these fixed shops. In addition, there was a development of marketing and credit sales techniques that tried to encourage the consumption of fabrics among local and foreign customers, who bought and redistributed these genres in other areas beyond the city.

In this regard, the continuity in the Sumbiela family's retail trade provides us with a privileged study framework to understand the nature of these changes and their influence in Valencia. By mid-century, textile shops in the city had considerably modified their commercial activity, offering not only a more diversified range of textiles but also a great variety of personal adornment (handkerchiefs, stockings, fans) or home decoration (curtains, bedding, table linen), which allows to compare them with the European fashion shops of the time.

From an economic point of view, these new commercial strategies reinforced the consolidation of a social sector of the petty bourgeoisie specialized in textile commercialisation, which contributed to stimulating processes of capital accumulation and social progress, in the same line pointed out by Pierre Vilar for the Catalan case. The rise of retail trade and the creation of specialized commercial networks, predominantly of foreign origin, made it possible to increase the social cohesion of this sector (which was able to create a new guild). In addition, it generated a process of commercial specialization and the emergence of new consumption spaces, structured and hierarchical among themselves, dedicated exclusively to the textile retail business, around the economic heart of the city, the Market Square in Valencia.

Despite the upward trend in the prices of victuals (mainly wheat) throughout the eighteenth century, the preparation of price series for textiles, distinguishing between fibres of animal origin (wool) and fibres of plant origin (linen and cotton), confirms another of the initial hypotheses. The rise of retail trade and the process of democratization of luxury in Valencia was accompanied by a trend towards

moderation in the prices of textile products, the result of a more heterogeneous supply and growing competition between different commercial sectors, which contributed to the fact that prices for textiles were clearly growing at a slower rate than those for commodities. This trend, together with a much more extensive network of shops and the generalization of credit sales, contributes to a better understanding of the economic impact of this process, encouraged by a process of social and cultural modernization, linked to the spreading of the culture of the appearances.

All things considered, this study shows that there was a transformation of textile commercialisation systems in Valencia that can be framed within the concept of «retail revolution», as a consequence of the emergence of fixed shops, the consolidation of specialized areas in retailing within the urban space and the development of a renewed and fashionable textile supply, along with new marketing techniques. However, this process – which could spread to other urban contexts in Mediterranean Europe – did not have a revolutionary nature, as has been pointed out by Blondé and Van Damme in the case of Antwerp. This should be understood as a secular process of evolution, rather than revolution, closely linked to a trend of social modernization and economic growth slowly eroding the structures of the Ancien Régime in Europe long before the Industrial Revolution took place.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ago, Renata. 2006. *Il gusto delle cose Una storia degli oggetti nella Roma del Seicento*. Roma: Donzelli.
- Benson, John, and Laura Ugolini, ed. 2005. *A nation of shopkeepers. Five centuries of British retailing*. London-New York: Tauris.
- Bibiloni Amengual, Andreu. 2011. “Cambios en el consumo textil en la España del siglo XVII: el auge del lino y el algodón”. In *Comprar, vender y consumir. Nuevas aportaciones a la historia del consumo en la España moderna*, ed. Daniel Muñoz Navarro, 77-98. Valencia: PUV.
- Blondé, Bruno, and Ilja Van Damme. 2015. “Beyond the ‘Retail Revolution’. Trends and patterns in 17th- and 18th-century Antwerp retailing”. In *Il commercio al minuto: domanda e offerta tra economia formale e informale, secc. XIII-XVIII*, ed. Giampiero Nigro, 219-39. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- Blondé, Bruno, Eugénie Briot, Laura Van Aert, and Natacha Coquery, ed. 2005. *Retailers and consumer changes in early modern Europe: England, France, Italy and the Low Countries*. Tours: Presses Universitaires François Rabelais.
- Blondé, Bruno, Peter Stabel, Jon Stobart, and Ilja Van Damme, eds. 2006. *Buyers and sellers. Retail circuits and practices in mediaeval and early modern Europe*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Clemente, Alida. 2011. *Il lusso ‘cattivo’. Dinamiche del consumi nella Napoli del Settecento*. Roma: Carocci.
- Cox, Nancy. 2000. *The complete tradesman. A study of retailing, 1550-1820*. Farnham: Ashgate.

- Dewilde, Brecht. 2015. "Expanding the Retail Revolution. Multiple guild membership in the Southern Low Countries, 1600-1800." In *Il commercio al minuto: domanda e offerta tra economia formale e informale, secc. XIII-XVIII*, ed. Giampiero Nigro, 91-112. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- Franch Benavent, Ricardo 1986. *Crecimiento comercial y enriquecimiento burgués en la Valencia del siglo XVIII*. Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim.
- Franch Benavent, Ricardo 2000. *La sedería valenciana y el reformismo borbónico*. Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim.
- Franch Benavent, Ricardo, and Daniel Muñoz Navarro. 2012. "Minorías extranjeras y competencia mercantil: franceses y malteses en el comercio valenciano del siglo XVIII". *Minius: Revista do Departamento de Historia, Arte e Xeografía* 20: 61-92.
- Hamilton, Earl J. 1988. *Guerra y precios en España: 1651-1800*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Mui, Hoh-Cheung, and Lorna H. Mui. 1989. *Shops and shopkeeping in eighteenth-century England*, Montreal-London. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Muñoz Navarro, Daniel. 2008. "Comercio de tejidos al por menor en la Valencia del siglo XVIII. Los Sumbiela y los Solernou. Dos linajes de botigueros de ropas". *Estudis: Revista de historia moderna* 34: 285-302.
- Muñoz Navarro, Daniel, ed. 2011. *Comprar, vender y consumir. Nuevas aportaciones a la historia del consumo en la España moderna*. Valencia: PUV.
- Muñoz Navarro, Daniel. 2012. "Oferta y consumo textil en Valencia (1675-1718). Los registros fiscales como fuente para la historia del consumo". In *Apariencias contrastadas: contraste de apariencias: cultura material y consumos de Antiguo Régimen*, ed. Juan Manuel Bartolomé Bartolomé, and Máximo García Fernández, 139-56. León: Universidad de León.
- Muñoz Navarro, Daniel. 2015. "Sistemas de comercialización y oferta textil en la Valencia preindustrial (1675-1805): la consolidación del comercio estable y el surgimiento de nuevos espacios de consumo, más allá de la ciudad". In *Il commercio al minuto: domanda e offerta tra economia formale e informale, secc. XIII-XVIII*, ed. Giampiero Nigro, 385-411. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- Muñoz Navarro, Daniel. 2018. *Los escaparates de la moda. Sistemas de comercialización, espacios de consumo y oferta textil en la Valencia preindustrial (1675-1805)*. Madrid: Sílex Ediciones.
- Nigro, Giampiero, ed. 2015. *Il commercio al minuto: domanda e offerta tra economia formale e informale, secc. XIII-XVIII*. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- Palop Ramos, José Miguel. 1977. *Fluctuaciones de precios y abastecimiento en la Valencia del siglo XVIII*. Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim.
- Stobart, Jon. 2005. "Leisure and shopping in the small towns of Georgian England: A regional approach", *Journal of Urban History* 31, 4: 479-503.
- Stobart, Jon; and Andrew Hann. 2004. "Retailing Revolution in the eighteenth century? Evidence from North-West England", *Business History*, 46-2: 171-94.
- Torra Fernández, Lidia. 2003. "Las botigues de teles de Barcelona: Aportación al estudio de la oferta de tejidos y del crédito al consumo (1650-1800)". *Revista de Historia Economica-Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History* XXI: 89-105.

- Vidal y Polo, José María. 1862. *Tablas de reducción de las antiguas medidas, pesas y monedas de Castilla, Alicante, Castellón y Valencia, al nuevo sistema métrico-decimal*. Valencia: Imprenta El Valenciano.
- Vilar, Pierre. 1988. *Cataluña en la España moderna. Vol. III. La formación del capital comercial*. Barcelona: Crítica.
- Yun Casalilla, Bartolomé, and Jaume Torras, ed. 1999. *Consumo, condiciones de vida y comercialización: Cataluña, Castilla, siglos XVII-XIX*. Valladolid. Junta de Castilla y León.