Idea Generation in the Fashion Industry

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Abstract

This research explores the idea generation stage in the innovational process within the fashion industry.

The theory section states the relation of idea generation to the innovational process. It was stated that idea generation in the fashion industry is very centralised and attached to the creative director. Where idea generation comes, can be promoted and developed in multiple ways, through stimulating creativity and establishing appropriate ideation systems.

Through five semi-structured interviews and consequent analysis, it is found, that contrary to established research, idea generation towards product development happens a lot more distant from the creative director. This generation of ideas is directed by this person, but the actual generation of ideas happens through a very collaborative process rooted in the designers. The artistic direction set by the creative director is a major influencer of ideas generated. Prime influencer to this, are economic motives, which consequently make these businesses pursue copying to generate a coherent trend, where they use big data to forecast these trends. From a designer perspective ideas are primarily influenced by; experience, encouragement from top management and submersion into the target market.

The results of this research show how and where ideas are generated in the fashion industry.

Keywords: Idea generation, Innovation, Fashion Industry
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Introduction

Innovation is one of the main drivers of growth for businesses (Barringer and Ireland, 2012), it is found that established organisations periodically need to innovate in order to achieve this growth (Kelley, 2009; Amabile, 1988). Importance of innovation to the success of an organisation has been widely empirically recognised (e.g. Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004; West, 2002).

In the last decade there has been a change in realisation that businesses that want to develop or maintain their competitive advantage have a need for innovation (Teece, 2007; Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004; Elerud-Tryde and Hooge, 2014). Some processes of innovations do not account for the emergence of ideas, they often only account for idea evaluation but skip the generation stage, or “the flow of ideas is often viewed as rich and generous or is not treated explicitly at all” (Husted and Vintergaard, 2004: 300). Many businesses are found to have haphazard processes towards idea generation contrary to its relevance towards innovation (Barring and Ireland, 2012; Pinchot and Pellman, 1999), as without ideas genuine innovation is hard to reach.

Studying the fashion industry is interesting due to their economic significance being a major driver of economic growth on regional and national levels (Camelo-Ordaz et al. 2012; Potts 2009; De Felice and Petrillo, 2013). Based on the fact that the fashion industry is very competitive in combination with their short product life cycles makes the concept of idea generation thought-provoking (Richardson, 1996; Elerud-Tryde and Hooge, 2014). As it could be argued that innovation is more important in the fashion industry, due to these short life cycles and competitive nature (Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1995; De Felice and Petrillo, 2013; Elerud-Tryde and Hooge, 2014).

Much research has been performed in the field of the fashion industry, numerous in the area of their supply chain, branding, pricing and affects of their notorious short product life cycles (Christopher, Lowson and Peck, 2004). But less is known about their abilities to be innovative (Malem, 2008; Camelo-Ordaz, Fernández-Alles, Ruiz-Navarro and Sousa-Ginel,
Particularly the process by which these ideas towards innovation are generated and in what position within the organisation (Godart, Maddux, Shipilov and Galinsky, 2015; Malem, 2008; Husted and Vintergaard, 2004).

This latter question is relevant to be researched as the fashion industry has been found to be different to other industries in relation to idea generation and subsequent selection of ideas (Godart, Maddux, Shipilov and Galinsky, 2015). Ideas are most often selected by creative directors within the fashion businesses, where they “wield almost complete control over their houses’ collections, generating and implementing ideas concerning looks, colours, fabrics, or patterns” (Godart et al., 2015: 201).

“Thus, the process of generating and implementing creative ideas in fashion is very centralised, and is attached to the person of the creative director.” (Godart et al., 2015: 202)

This gives relevance to developing an insight to where and how ideas are generated within the fashion industry.

Setting the stage for the research question of this research:

**Where and how are ideas generated towards product development in larger fashion businesses?**

The *where* is the positional job title or place in the organisation where the idea comes up, the *how* is the aspects influencing idea generation which include an aspect of *why* people come up with ideas which could be seen as a third research area.

This excluded research into how these ideas are selected and developed, as there is more established research in these fields (Malem, 2008; Husted and Vintergaard, 2004; Galbraith, 1982). Product development in fashion refers to the development of new collections of clothes, accessories, apparels, shoes, bags and related products (Malem, 2008). This does not exclude idea generation towards processes outside product development, but seeks to focus on this business area. Meaning the used sample for data collection is focused towards this.

Through this research an empirical contribution is made in the field of organisational processes in the fashion industry and corporate entrepreneurship literature. Multiple
academics have requested further research due to the lack of this in the specific field of creativity and structure towards idea generation (Malem, 2008; Camelo-Ordaz et al. 2012; Husted and Vintergaard, 2004).

Furthermore a practical contribution is made in the understanding of this complex matter. As a better insight will be given into the processes that are at work in relation to innovation, where knowledge and understanding of these emergence of ideas can/might lead to more streamlined process flow and so more or better innovational performance through utilisation of the creative potential of these businesses. Improved innovative performance eventually can lead to an increased productivity and organisational performance (Laursen and Salter 2006). Moreover there is the hope that practitioners outside of the fashion industry can relate to the identified ways of idea emergence and translate the findings to their respective industries.

To develop the contribution a qualitative research is conducted to generate an insight into idea generation in different large size businesses in the fashion industry. Through five semi-structured interviews an insight is developed in how and where these ideas are generated.

The main finding of this research in relation to the where part of the research question is, that mainly designers come up with ideas towards product development, these are generally generated individually and then put into a collective team for further development. The main finding of the how aspect is that this is not impacted by the creative director to the extend existing literature states it to be. Few ideation systems, outside of brainstorming, are at work developing possible opportunity cost. Why people come up with ideas is found to be two-fold, as they are directed by the artistic direction set by the creative director and through their more intrinsic motivators and abilities. This artistic direction is found to be primarily a pursuit of economic performance, in which copying is common and ‘big data’ is used to forecast trends.

This thesis first examines the existing literature of idea generation and its relation to innovation. Second, methods of research and analysis are presented. Third, the findings and discussion of these findings are preformed. Finally, the thesis is brought to a concluding statement.
Theory of Idea Generation

This thesis looks at idea generation (in the fashion industry), this falls within the broader area of innovation, adjacent to that is the literature on creativity. Figure 2.1 presents the main areas covered in this literature review and the core literature used.

*Figure 2.1 Key literature themes and sources*

Most consistent in defining innovation in the literature is the aspect of generating new ideas and the potential of improvement through change (Mcfadzean, O'Loughlin and Shaw, 2005). Where innovation is seen to have different phases, McFadzean, O'Loughlin and Shaw (2005) identified the following phases; idea generation, research design and development, prototype production, manufacturing and sales and distribution. The scope of this research is solely on the first phase; idea generation.

The fashion industry falls within the greater creative industry, the creative industry crosses a broader range of sectors, from video games, architecture, film, TV and advertising to designer fashion. These sectors are very broad, but they all share one common demeanour, they all rely in individuals skills and talents which are based in individual imagination and creativity (Green, Miles and Rutter, 2007). The fashion industry is subset in the product design sector within the creative industry, among sectors like: graphic, furniture and web design.
The major difference between the creative industry and the fashion industry is that the average company in the creative industry is relatively small in size (Miles and Green, 2008). Where businesses active in the fashion industry often need economies of scale in order to stay competitive and due to the nature of the product require broad consumer awareness, being a very socially trend sensitive product in nature. Making them more often, larger in size (Malem, 2008).

Innovation

Not all innovation is the same, there are different levels of innovation. The continuum of incremental to radical innovation is simplest differentiation between the different types of innovation (Dewar and Dutton, 1986). Four types of innovation are defined (Heany, 1983), which are applicable across all generic industries; product line extensions, new products for either the domestic or a new market or product improvements.

Kirton (2003) states that people are inclined to solve problems (basis of idea generation, as later described) in different ways, where prior experience, international experience and education are a firm basis to this (Chua and Iyengar, 2008; Godard et al., 2015). Kirton argues for a continuum from adaptors to innovators in terms of problem solving style. Where he states that a lot of innovations are made through adaption, in case of the fashion industry this can be argued to happen more frequently, as all fashion brands take inspiration from each others styles to a certain extend (Malem 2008; Bianchi and Bortolotti, 1996).

The fashion industry is different to other industries in relation to their innovational process, as they have a unique context different to other industries in regard to their creative nature (Godart et al., 2015). Not in the way that innovation is not needed across all organisational domains, but more in a high need in a specific organisational domain, the product development (Amabile, 1996; Godart et al., 2015). As stated, innovational projects can be on the continuum of radical or incremental innovation. Need for innovation in the fashion industry is found to be most often of an incremental nature.

Innovational process

Many processes to innovation have been developed over time. Amabile (1988) provides a
good overview of all models to innovation known at that moment in time, this overview is based on an innovation process model review of Saren (1984). The author of this thesis is aware that this 31-year-old research might be considered outdated, where this is consciously used as it provides a comprehensive overview of models. Which have been subdivided into five themes. The identified types are: departmental stage models, activity stage models, decision stage models, conversion process models and response models. Of these models the activity stage models are used most frequent by far. A good example of the activity stage model is found by Cummings and O’Connell (1978: 1), they have defined the following model stages:

“(1) search for the source of the problem, (2) alternative generation, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) selection and initiation of an alternative, and (5) acceptance and routinisation”.

Idea generation in the sense to which is covered in this research (idea generation towards innovation) is actively used in step two of the innovational process, alternative generation, as at this stage active idea generation is used in order to ‘resolve the problem’ (where the problem is the need for an innovation).

Types of innovation
Bianchi and Bortolotti reviewed hundreds of objects from lamps, chairs, clothes etc. in assessing what type of innovation they were created upon. They identified innovation to be “consisting change in the product form, not necessarily associated with changes product function production process” (1996: 1). They insist on this differentiation, as the definition of incremental innovation requires a product, process, service etc. to be improved significantly in its performance due to the innovation performed. In fashion this does not often happen, as most innovation is focused on structural change of the product (58%). This change can be compared to developing new designs based on obtained inspiration from all possible influences (Malem, 2008). The second most identified innovation in Bianchi and Bortolotti review is ‘Changes in the production process’ (36%) which relates to designers using technologies or exploiting the potential of their supply chain. Third most identified (22%) is the “new uses of the same product” which is fashion relates to re-using archived material and vintage fashion, and also re-using strategies for market entry or expansion (Malem, 2008).
It has to be noted that the data presented is gathered across hundreds of different objects Bianchi and Bortolotti reviewed, an unknown portion of this are clothes. This data does provide an idea of the types of innovation but is possibly not representable of the whole fashion industry.

Heavy (1983) sees innovations related to the previously described types as the least risky, to the core business, form of innovation. As the outcome is likely to be predictable due to the incremental change and the market knowledge that the business already has.

**Idea generation**

So why is there a need for idea generation, first as this is the self-evident start of something different as idea generation is fundamental as this is the starting point of any innovation (Teece, 2007). Furthermore businesses who want to develop and maintain high levels of innovation need a consistent and qualitative flow of generated ideas (Elerud-Tryde and Hooge, 2014; Boeddrich, 2004; Björk and Magnusson, 2009). In relation to the activity stage model to innovation previously described, idea generation is used in stage one and two search for the source of the problem and generating alternatives to this. Where by far the greatest amount of ideas are generated and needed in the latter stage.

**Idea generation in concept**

Idea generation is a process, where this is process is identified as:

“Ideas’ development initially proceeding via a relatively random variation process of either completely new conceptualisations or novel combinations of existing ideas. Such a process is random or “blind” in the sense that there is no particular logic or a priori rationale for the ideas’ generation. Instead, the initial search proceeds whereby many new conceptualisations or combinations are created relatively haphazardly based on whatever different inputs are available, in the hope that something of value will eventually be produced. In the second step, that of selective retention, a subset of the most promising variations are then selected for further exploration and refinement, eventually leading to an end product that is considered both novel and useful—in other words, creative (Campbell, 1960; Simonton, 1999, 2011).” (Godart et al., 2015: 198)

In other words, ideas are generated at random, where there is a basic need for creativity to
come up with new conceptual ideas or combinations of existing ideas, seen as the first step of idea generation. The second step is that of personal selective retention, this retention is based in the person’s perception, not as organisational retention of ideas. As the person with the idea also has an intrinsic retention mechanism, one idea is perceived more valuable than another. One person can generate multiple ideas and approaches towards a problem statement, but the perceived most valuable or most effective idea will be pursued.

**Improving idea generation through idea generation systems**

“The need for considering not only the identification of ideas, but also how firms actually take an active role in stimulating the generation and explicit formulation of ideas” (Björk, Boccardelli and Magnusson, 2010).

Björk, Boccardelli and Magnusson (2010) found that large firms have started using active ideation systems to generate more ideas, which is to develop systems or practices to allow ideas to be accessible to all relevant people in the organisation. They identified three main systems: large brainstorm platforms in which employees can contribute, idea-bootcamps in which the whole company is provided with incentives to generate ideas in a particular area and idea competitions (which are different to post their ideas as there is a public ‘winner’) as ways of idea generation.

Overall the general consensus is that ideas towards innovation are rarely generated by individuals in isolation. Due to this process of innovation being very interactive suggests that people in this process rely heavily on interaction with all parties involved in this process; users, suppliers and other players in the innovational system (Laursen and Saulter, 2006).

There are many ways to improve this interactive process, for example designing the physical premises to allow cross fertilisation and removing as many barriers to information flows as possible (Pinchot and Pellman, 1999). This process of opening up the organisation to information flows, technically and physically, is labelled open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003). Subsequent to an open innovational organisation teams or people tend to come
together through informal but dense networks based on interests and former interactions (Brown and Duguid, 2000).

Outside of ideation systems companies can generally apply two internal structures to generate ideas. First, traditional R&D expenditures, which is focused on internal search. Katila (2002) states that companies, based on the technological possibilities of modern day, have an increased need to incorporate an appropriate investigation strategy and these activities should be assessed and measured accordingly. In relation to the fashion industry this might be a relevant point, as some research argues that the fashion industry is predominantly act in an adaptor/copier way towards core product innovation (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011).

Second, internal venture departments, where these are not common in the fashion industry and so less relevant to consider. Venture departments are departments existing inside an existing corporation which aims to innovate, they are often seen capable in doing so as they are not restricted by corporate politics and rulings (Husted and Vintergaard, 2004). These corporate ventures are not common in the fashion industry as the development of new products (clothes or apparels) is the core of the business and so hard to place outside of this (Wang and Ahmed, 2007).

Internal idea generation is not the only way for businesses to generate ideas, the aspect of outsourcing or bringing in external consult is often overlooked, these companies help, contribute or completely develop ideas on request of the core business (Chesbrough, 2004). The external aspect is not limited to the generation of ideas with the help of external sources, but also encompasses their ability to find and use knowledge that is created externally and is found to be critical in a companies innovational capabilities (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). Meaning that obtaining and effectively processing of outside knowledge is important, as learning is a basis of the ability to connect concepts and develop them into ideas (Laursen and Saulter, 2006; Amabile, 1988). This concept of drawing in outside knowledge and ideas in literature is included in open innovation (Chesbrough, 2004). When a business is too internally focused it is more likely to miss opportunities as many of these opportunities will fall outside of the businesses scope, where bringing in external resources will unlock this potential (Chesbrough, 2003).
Creativity in idea generation

“Innovation is built on creative ideas as the basic elements. Organisational innovation the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation” (Amabile, 1988: 3)

This statement provides a need for creativity within organisations, which is supported in other research. Where a positive correlation was found among people that perceive themselves more creatively inclined and the number of ideas they generated (Tierney and Farmer, 2002). Where it is not said that every idea generated is a good one, and subsequently means innovational improvement. A high creative level or ability within an organisation has been found to have a positive effect on idea generation in terms of breath (number of ideas (Amabile, 1996)) and depth (quality of ideas) (Hammond et al., 2010)), which do effect the number of qualitative ideas. This need for breath and depth of ideas and the need for this in innovation is supported by Burgelman (1983) in stating that businesses need a significant amount of qualitative ideas in order to make an appropriate selection.

Among academics there is little consensus about the definition of creativity (Hammond, Neff, Farr, Schwall and Zhao, 2010). Where Stein (1974) concludes that most research and academics adopt a definition which is product focused, recognising “novelty that is useful”. There is more agreement and to a satisfactory level in the differences between creativity and innovation. Creativity focuses by definition of Unsworth (2001) on the generation of novel ideas. Whereas innovation is a broader process within a company, this does include idea generation (creativity), among the generation of alternatives, selection and implementation of these (Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004). Godart et al. (2015) concludes based on research of Clegg, Unsworth, Epitropaki and Parker (2002) that per definition all innovation is creative to a certain extend whereas it is not to say the other way around, that all creativity is innovative. This as a creative idea has the potential of not being novel, like reinventing the wheel.

If the level of innovation is deemed low within organisations there are multiple ways to improve innovation, where top management recognition of this is key, as further
organisational behaviour is influenced by this (Pinchot and Pellman, 1999; Husted and Vintergaard, 2004). Innovation in essence is knowledge creation and subsequent learning (Lane & Lubatkin, 1998), which can be stimulated in various ways. Pinchot and Pellman (1999) have performed a lot of research and practical observations on ways to improve the innovational environment. Three main themes in ways to improve the innovational environment are; organisational culture, organisational structure and organisational focus.

Across literature it can be seen that the organisational focus in very important, might even be the most important (Björk, Boccardelli and Magnusson, 2010; Husted and Vintergaard, 2004; Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2011). This clear focus on activities to promote idea generation is accepted across general industries, where there is no data if this included the fashion industry (Björk, Boccardelli and Magnusson, 2010). One practical aspect that is often overlooked is the need for focus and enforcement from middle management in transmitting this pro-innovation vision to low level people in the organisation as this is the place where most ideas for innovation are generated (Husted and Vintergaard, 2004).

Idea generation and creativity in the fashion industry

In literature there is a strong divide within the fashion industry, where SME and large fashion businesses are segregated, as they operate in different ways in relation to their organisational structures and fields of expertise of their employees. SME fashion businesses (up to 250 employees) have an increased need to balance their creative and business needs as the fashion industry need to balance their creative and commercial needs, these needs are seen to contradict each other to an extent (Malem, 2008). On one side creatively inclined people tent to lose the needed business focus to make their developed innovation (ideas) commercially feasible. And on the other there are employees that focus too much on the business side and come up with non- or not novel enough ideas. It has to be stated that this balancing implication is even more pressing issue for small businesses (up to 49 employees). The major implication here is that people in small business are found to be less business driven and motivated, whereas larger fashion businesses have the capability to hire with this discrepancy in mind.
As stated, innovational projects can be on the continuum of radical or incremental innovation. Godart et al. (2015) state that all innovation per definition are, to an extent, are creative, where the level of creativity in every innovation varies to a great extent. Ideas needed in the fashion industry are most often of an incremental need, even though they have to produce new products every life cycle (Malem, 2008). This has some influence on the process of creativity and idea generation. As the changes from innovational need to innovational need (the need for products to be different from each other) implicate subtle incremental differences, where high levels of creativity could provide for a more efficient route to the solving the problem, that of creating a new innovation. Based on this there is a conceptual contradiction in the fashion industry where on one hand the theory implicates a low need for creativity and on the other hand a high need. In other words, within the fashion industry, contrary to other industries, there is a high need for variation of ideas which are of an incremental need resulting in a need for high level of creativity.

One way the fashion industry has been identified to generate ideas is through the concept of ‘coping’ or trend watching (Raustiala and Sprigman, 2006). Fashion per definition means that something is popular, this has the consequence that parties within this industry engage in ‘copying’. As otherwise there might be no such thing as a coherent trend or ‘popular style’ (Hilton, Choi and Chen, 2004). In order to be attractive these parties still have the need to differentiate themselves, as otherwise their products become too homogeneous to their competitor and no competitive advantage is developed in which idea generation and creativity are important aspects.

One aspect that was recognised to be used in spotting trend in fashion is the use of ‘Big Data’, big data are sets of data that go beyond usual set of data up to terabytes of data (Snijders, Matzat and Reips, 2012). Where analysis of this data can reveal business trend and predict where consumer preferences will go towards in future (The Economist, 2010).
Summery of the theory of Idea Generation

In an attempt to summarise, idea generation is one of the first steps in the innovational process. Ideas generation is a blind or random process in which conceptualisations are combined in an attempt to come up with an idea of value to the identified problem or need.

Ideas are needed in the fashion industry, as there is a high conceptual need in breath of ideas, as the nature of the fashion business requires a high amount of incremental innovations. Creativity is identified as one of the facilitators of idea generation. The fashion industry, contrary to other industries, has a high need for variation of ideas which are of an incremental need resulting in a need for high level of creativity.
Methods

This chapter will provide a philosophical underpinning of the research, including the research design. It will give answers to the; how, why and what questions in relation to the approach to this research (Denscombe, 2007). Sapsford and Jupp described the methodology as “a philosophical stance of worldview that underlies and informs a style of research” (p. 175, 2006). In this chapter the chosen research design is justified in the view of answering the research question most appropriately (Creswell, 2009).

The design of the research has a profound influence on the outcomes the research will have. All research design dimensions will have to benefit the answering of the research question (Creswell 2009). In structuring this research design the Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill structure flow will be applied for the first and second outside rings (2012), which can be seen in full in Figure 3.2. This as the sphere around the research will be set. After which the first inner layer (time horizons) will be identified, as this sequence is more relevant and natural in flow (Sauders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012; Creswell 2009).

*Figure 3.2 Sauders, Lewis and Thornhill’s Research ‘Onion’.*

![Figure 3.2 Sauders, Lewis and Thornhill’s Research ‘Onion’](image)

Source: Sauders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012: 160
**Research philosophy**

The most outer layer that influences the research is the philosophy the researcher operates in. Philosophical worldview take into account the view of the researcher on the world, where a set of basic believes or attitude guides to a curtain decision or action. After consideration of multiple adoptable worldview (positivism, epistemology and pragmatic worldview) the interpretivism worldview is adopted. The interpretivism view is adopted as the research really looks at people and the way they act, where this view is deemed appropriate to as research should aim to understand differences among people in their social roles (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Social roles and the way this shapes behaviour is considered important in this view. This view is deemed appropriate in business and management studies and in particular to fields like organisational behaviour, to which this research could be subjected to (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The epistemology view was strongly considered as this allows for use of methods deemed by the researcher, where this was not selected, as the human interaction side of research was not considered.

**Research approach**

The second layer to the research is the approach chosen to ground the research in, this commonly means considering inductive and deductive reasoning. In this research a hybrid approach is taken. Though primarily in inductive reasoning, this approach is chosen as this research does not seek an absolute truth linked to a theory, as there are many ways to how ideas are generated and where they emerge. Seeking to developed an absolute ‘truth’ seems not applicable, as a process to idea generation is not right or wrong (Amabile, 1988). A deductive approach has been taken in identifying the main themes from literature in order to develop a structural understanding and consequently used for the interview protocol and the coding of transcripts. Deductive reasoning finds is basis in theory, after which a top-down structure is followed where first the ‘truth’ is found in theory (Horn, 2009; Vickers, 2006).

**Research strategy**

The strategy to the research is the next stage of the research design. As stated before different research have different aims, where some aim to explore, describe or explain a
phenomena where different approaches are needed in every case (Creswell 2009). Broadly there are three groupings in terms of basis of approaches, exploratory research, descriptive research and explanatory research (Kumar, 2005).

The current research aims to develop clear insights into what is happening in the fashion industry in relation to idea generation. As previously stated in the theory section, there is very little known about this phenomena in literature. This makes this research almost per definition exploratory. As exploratory research primarily seeks to develop new insights in unknown phenomena (Robson, 2011). Where this research strategy is very appropriate when there is too little known about phenomena to make conceptual distinctions (Shields and Rangarajan, 2013). This approach is furthermore in line with the hybrid research approach adopted (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

Explanatory research seeks to explain a situation and identify a causal relationship among or between two or multiple variables. Which is not in line with the research question and the nature of this research.

Descriptive research aims to describe the subject at hand or to establish a profile of a situation, person or event. This nature of research is often used as preliminary research to exploratory research, as a clear picture of the topic is useful (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). As stated, there is little know about the phenomena discussed in this research and so adoption of this strategy is not appropriate.

**Research choice**

Research choice is the next layer in terms of research design, these are differentiations between qualitative and quantitative approaches in terms of the research strategy (Bryman 2008). Furthermore mixed methods researchers are used to use both types of research, which is also stated as triangulation (Creswell, 2009).

In this research a qualitative approach is used, this research aims to get an insight into where and how ideas are generated within the fashion industry. Where getting an in-depth understanding of this is important, specially as little is known. Using this approach is furthermore commonly used in exploratory researches, where gaining a better understanding is aimed for and this approach deemed a good method (Creswell, 2009).
It has to be stated that this decision is not on either definite side of the continuum between qualitative and quantitative as the research strategy and data collection methods will require a blend without it being a mixed method approach. As this mixed method approach would require multiple data collection methods which is not the case in this research, later described.

Qualitative research uses a less broad basis of participants, but goes more in-depth, this broader study allows for more in-depth questions through openness in follow-up questions. As well as avoiding pre-judgements as participants are able to elaborate on the answers given and are not restricted to simple closed or Likert scale questions. There are disadvantages as well, sample sizes are often smaller, there is a lower possibility for generalisation, systematic comparison is harder to make, the potential opportunity cost in terms of follow-up questions not asked and the skills of the researcher have a great effect on the outcome of the data (Kruger, 2003).

Quantitative research is basis of research where often numerical basis is given to research. Advantages in using this type of research is that there is a low number of personal bias, is easy to replicate, comparison across sources is more straightforward and more often studies a greater number of participants. One of the biggest disadvantages is that there might be a structural bias in the way questions are formulated (Creswell, 2009).

Mixed methods allow for using the best of both worlds, where biases stated in previous methods are largely cancelled and allows for developing a more extended understanding of the research problem. The biggest disadvantage, and also the prime reason why not used in this research, is that it is a costly, timely method where data might be hard to combine.

Many strategies can be selected in order to obtain this qualitative data, where experiment; survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research are identified by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) as the most commonly used strategies. Where it has to be stated that all strategies are not to be labelled to one certain research strategy, approach and method as these choices are guided by the research objectives in combination with limitations to the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Where for this research multiple were considered but only one selected.
Hakim (1987) disputes that qualitative research pre se needs to be grouped into areas of strategies, where she states that the data collection methods and the consequent use of the data in formulation of discussion, conclusion and contribution is the paramount driver of research design, which is supported in conclusions of Strauss and Corbin (1990). This way of thought is adopted in this research, as stated before the current research needs flexibility in terms of research design in order to reach the stated aim. Hakim further identifies interviews as the most commonly used form of data collection, which is used in this research. To be specific, collection will be performed using semi-structured interviews, as “individuals are interviewed in sufficient detail for the results to be taken as true, correct, complete and believable reports of their views and experiences” (Karim, 1987: 27). The biggest drawback is that due to the relative small number of respondents the findings cannot be taken as representative for the whole industry.

In this process of research choice case studies as a strategy were considered, where Robson (2002) defines the case study strategy as a strategy of researching of a phenomena in its real context using multiple sources of evidence. Advantages of adopting this strategy is that it allows for the identification or description of behaviour of a group as a whole instead of the description of individual behaviour where this would be appropriate to this research (Yin, 2013). This strategy requires data collection over an extensive period of time where with the limitations of this research there was no such a possibility, due to the time constrains of this project. Where this strategy of collection would have been appropriate and a good mean of collection within the exploratory research strategy, but due to the reason previously stated not adopted, where it could be considered in a further study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

**Data collection techniques**

Semi-structured interview will be conducted as a data collection technique, where structures interview contains a set list of questions from which cannot be diverted, semi-structured interviews are open. The researcher does guide the interview, but leaves room to open up the discussion, this in order to get an even more detailed and in-depth understanding of the matter at hand (Edwards and Holland, 2013). In this semi-structured
approach the research is allowed to word questions flexible, clarification may be made to the participant and questions may be added or deleted (Kawamura, 2011). Drever (1995) identified semi-structured interviews as a commonly used and often appropriate mean of collecting data for small to mid scale researches with the aim of completing an educational degree as this current research.

This mean of data collection is deemed appropriate to this research as the exploratory nature of the research requires the researcher to ask open questions that are deemed relevant in order to get a more in-depth understanding (and subsequent data collection), based on a question-list or range of topic that the researcher wants to cover in the interview (Edwards and Holland, 2013). This still facilitates some structure in order to subsequently compare answers across all interviewees through use of the same questions or same topics.

The approach taken in relation to formulating topics and specific question was based in high level textual analysis of the theory as presented in the theory section. In this almost abstract process the author has grouped themes that are deemed relevant (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006). These questions and themes were deemed relevant as their represented a logical reasoning in the line of idea generation. Where the participant was asked about idea generation, ideation systems and creativity after which in question form they were asked to elaborate.

The interviews were guided based on a created ‘interview protocol’, which can be reviewed in Appendix 1 (Pratt, 2009). This protocol was developed to help the interviewer create structure in the interview, where set themes were discussed every interview. It has to be noted that the single author of this research in all cases is also the interviewer. Depending on the interview and the flow of the interview the sequence of the interview questions was different and wording of question might have been different. This could have had the unconscious effect that similar questions were differently perceived by the participants. This threat comes with every semi-structured interview where this is very difficult to mitigate. Nevertheless the interviewer consciously tried to keep the questions most similar to each other in consideration of flow of the interview by letting the participants talk.
Data collection

Collection of data was performed through distance conference (Skype or telephone). As the geographical distance of the researcher to the participants was considerable and convenience through online meetings was high for both interviewer and participant. Furthermore in preparation to the interview the interviewees were provided with a list of themes that were discussed during the interview as proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012).

One consideration that needs to be made in any research method section is the ethical consideration towards the research, its purpose, the participants and the use of the data that was collected (Russell, Hogan and Junker-Kenny, 2013). The actual interviews were recorded in order to be transcribed at a later stage. Where the ethical consideration was that up front the participants were made aware that the interview was recorded and that everything they said may have been used towards the research findings. Quotes were recorded and used in discussion without personal approval from the participants, whereas the statements were made anonymous. All of the above was is the basis of informed consent (Hakim, 1987).

Sample

In order to fulfil the research question the sample that is obtained needs to be people related to the concept of idea generation towards product development within their respective company. Based on logical reasoning and prior experience of the author these people would be designers, stylists, creative directors. As these people will have a notion of where the original idea came through or should be able to retrieve this information.

In gathering data a sample size needed to be configured, as an appropriate broad sample size will create validity and reduced bias of the research (Sauders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Karim (1987) states that interviews focus on detailed in-depth data, which usually involve a small number of participants. Aiming to distinguish sub-groups as well as specific clusters of attitudes and related behaviour. The size of the sample is dependant on the design and the nature of the particular study that is being performed (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Other researchers state that the terminology of sample size is wrong as the
focus should be on data generation as a process, opposed to a quantitative end point (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman, 2007).

This research set out to reach a saturation point, which is the point at which no new themes or sub-categories are identified, which was reached in interview five. A note has to be made that the fact that no further codes were identified does not mean there are non more, as possible more interviews would have generated such. The author of this research is aware that statisticians and economics regular dispute the use of relative small sample interviews as a reliable and validated mean of data collection, in the case of this research the author deems it appropriate as little facts are known in relation to the research aim and so this research is a good first step in getting a better insight in idea generation in the fashion industry.

In initial pursuit of participants the authors personal network in the fashion industry was used, after which a snowball approach would be taken in order to fill the desired sample size, both of these approaches are in line with practice in social sciences (Edwards and Holland, 2013). This approach is taken as the fashion industry is seen as an incomprehensive network of people where getting a ‘foot in the door’ is difficult when not inside the network (Malem, 2008).

This approach was initially pursuit, but data collection in the fashion industry turned out to have certain hurdles. The authors personal network proved to be fruitless. A limiting factor is the aspect that some people in the fashion industry work under a non-disclosure agreement, as stated in the answer by participant An on question; I’m looking for more people to interview, could you refer me to some in bigger fashion companies? “The ones at the bigger companies, I don’t really think so. As these work under non-disclosure.” In order to mitigate this restricting factor the author in every communication stressed the fact that participation in this interview would be completely anonymous and that no sensitive intellectual property would be requested or required.

In order to obtain participants the social media network LinkedIn was used, this social media platform for professionals provided a strong search function in which the job title of people could be entered. This allowed for a direct approach to seeking participants, three of the participants were obtained this way. Another approach taken was based on the author’s second-level personal network, the author studied his bachelors degree at the
Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland. This university teaches a well-ranked fashion management degree, through an advert in their Facebook group the author was able to obtain one alumni who graduated 7 years ago and now has a career in the Berlin fashion industry. The last participant was researched through a second level connection after actively asking people to potentially be referred to.

All participants were screened on initial relevance through a few short questions in order to determine if they were relevant to participate in this research, this also means that a handful of people were ‘rejected’ to participate, as they were perceived to not have an accurate position or experience in the idea generation aspect towards product development. The author is aware that this is subjective and based on his personal judgement where this was needed in order to make a first screening of relevance.

Research setting

Based on the fact that this interview has been held in confidentiality, the names and companies of the participants are not revealed, table 4.1 shows all participants details what is conscious revealed and the respective code which they will be discussed by.

Table 3.1: Participant’s details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Career description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“An”</td>
<td>Current freelancer with a good notion of the industry through personal contacts and past experience in large fashion companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ch”</td>
<td>Current entrepreneur in fashion, former experienced tailor for formal wear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Se”</td>
<td>Currently stylist and trend watcher at one of the biggest online retailers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Le”</td>
<td>Extensive career in sports active-fashion, designer in performance outerwear and affiliated to lifestyle fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ji”</td>
<td>Career in various parts of the fashion industry, from writing, advertising, marketing and the last two years in styling. Working for one of Sweden’s biggest fashion brands and consulting 5 others creatively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
The companies were located in three different countries; United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden. All companies are active in main street fashion businesses, and so rather similar in business activity, except Ch who is active in the main street tailoring business. All the participants all had international experience at different fashion businesses and not every participants education was focused towards fashion.

Interviews were between 40 and 90 minutes and were all held at times convenient to the participants. The fact that these interviews were extensive in time furthermore justifies the use of a smaller sample size (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

Self-memos were developed for every interview in line with Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill’s (2012) recommendation towards qualitative analysis, this can be found in Appendix 2. These memos state the objective situation in which the interview was held, and the perception of the interviewer on the ability of the participant.

**Data analysis**

Analysis of the collected data can be performed in multiple ways, where Merriam (1988) concludes that there is no such thing as a standard technique, and is dependable on the methods used.

Analysis is performed based on a template analysis strategy (King, Cassell and Symon, 2004). A template analysis is a list of codes that shows the themes that are reviewed through the collected data. This approach is deemed appropriate as it is thorough yet straightforward in use and appropriate in use for exploratory nature qualitative studies with a primarily inductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

The first stage, ‘raw data’, was the process of transcribing, this was done manually based on audio recordings that were made from all interviews.

The second stage was to organise the data for analysis, which was the process of repeating the first stage in reading over transcriptions while listening to audio files to make sure no errors were made. Furthermore a spelling check was performed in order to ensure accuracy. The author performed the interviews in the time span of two weeks. After which transcription was done as soon as possible to ensure reliability.
The following stage of analysis was the coding of the data. Initially based on three broad categories: idea generation, ideation systems and creativity. These categories were derived from literature and also used as leading themes in the interview protocol (Appendix 1). Where the subsequent stage of theming and categorising followed based on open-coding. Further sub-categories were generated based on reading through the interviews, defining and naming these based on themes and terms that emerged from the collected data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). The full list of themes, categories and example of the transcription quotes can be seen on page 25. The table presented structures the distilled codes based on first and second order codes. Both first-order codes and second-order codes were derived inductively from the text, whereas the overarching themes were derived deductively as previously stated.

Categories were developed during this process, constant changes were performed to the categories names and descriptions based on the analysis of the data, in line with Dey (1993) and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), as they state the process of refinement of categories through integrating them or sub-dividing them, focuses the analysis and is an important part of quantitative analysis. Which was done to develop a more appropriate code-set as makes analysis and consequent findings more comprehensive and appropriate. An example of this is the addition of the ‘experience’ section to the research, in the interview protocol and coding. As through analysis of the first two interviews this indicated to be important.

The flowing stage was to relate the themes to each other to make a more compact data set. The constant refinement of the categories arguably made the ability to analyse more profound and in-depth (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This refinement was performed through realisation (whether intrinsically or through assessment of theory) that some categories should be grouped together or fall under another second-order code. As the list of codes was substantially longer at points in time but needed to be refined based on what belongs together to be made comprehensive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of Quotes (First Order)</th>
<th>Second-Order Codes</th>
<th>First-Order Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“They (designers) work more in teams, where they come up with ideas on their own.” - Se</td>
<td>Individual vs. collective idea generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would say that it (idea generation) is still quite dependant on the designer to actually like make an item that is his” - Ji</td>
<td>Creative Director</td>
<td>Positioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think its (idea generation) very fluid motion... So I think you continuously have to work on it, and when I have an idea I will sketch it out” – Le</td>
<td>Mechanism of ideas</td>
<td>‘How’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, but that for practical reasons, because it’s a business at the end of the day” - Le</td>
<td>Limitations to idea generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Implementations of new products or new designs” – Ch</td>
<td>Types of Innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We are also challenged by the head of design. To bring something new to a category, so you get a focus stimulation then” - Le</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Motivators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I tend to think in this industry a lot goes on past experience” – Le</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“(what makes people have ideas) people that go skiing every year, go snowboarding every year or surf ... I mean, (company name) do provide like, we can go like Stand Up Paddling and kite boarding.” – Le</td>
<td>Submersion in target market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With a creative nothing might happen for a couple of days and then maybe they will do a 16h day because its struck them, and they will just see it through to the end” - Le</td>
<td>Intrinsic interest and motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s definitely the commercial interest that is a driving force behind ideas” - Ji</td>
<td>Economic reasoning</td>
<td>Drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s more about copying and looking at products that already exist, and trying to make it your own” – An</td>
<td>Copying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“they really use data to create a high turnover and revenue” - Se</td>
<td>Data driven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Then we will brainstorm together” - Le</td>
<td>Ideation systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It (creativity) is vital. Also that you have less restrictions. Without creativity you will never be successful in fashion. Impossible.” – Se</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings will be presented following the identified core themes and sub-categories. Presentation of the findings is structured based on codes from the transcripts, which is in line with the template analysis strategy used in analysis (King, Cassell and Symon, 2004; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

In line with the research question; to identify where and how ideas are generated in larger fashion businesses, the majority of interview time, questions and answers were geared towards this aspect of idea generation. Where the supporting elements of ideation systems and creativity to idea generation were discussed less frequent.

In line with Pratt’s (2009) suggestions to presentation of findings of qualitative research ‘power quotes’ and ‘roof quotes’ are used. “Power quotes are the most compelling bits of data you have, the ones that effectively illustrate your points (Pratt, 2009: 860), and proof quotes are quotes for each point or argument you are making so that you have some “proof” of what you are saying.

**Reliability, validity and generalisability**

Overall the researcher should perform everything in his or her power to ensure that the data collected would be the same as when collected by other researchers asking the same questions, which could be reached by being very transparent how conclusion were developed based on the raw data (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2008).

There are threats to the use of interviews as a data collection method in terms of reliability and validity, Robson (2002) identified three most important ways. First, there may be participant bias in the way that they answer the way the interviewer would like and not state their real opinion or experience. The design of the questions asked will be in a way to ensure non-biased answers.

Second, observer error might come into play as the research will be conducted, transcribed, analysed and discussed by the single author of this research, mitigating this threat is very difficult but awareness is a first step.

Third, the observer is biased and interprets the data in a way he or so finds most appropriate. In case of multiple authors this threat would be reduced, awareness of this fact is the best way of mitigation. Where Bell (2014) states that it is very unlikely to remove bias completely, and this could even cause harm (Yin, 2013).
Furthermore all interviews were performed (at participants convenience) in the afternoon. Where this convenience was paramount, as the participants needed to be able to reflect on events which in a stressful interview environment or situation might be impaired. And guided by the interview protocol which applies structure and due cause generates reliability. Another aspect applied improve the reliability was the recoding of interviews for transcription and the constant restructuring of the codes based on the open-coding approach, which all seeks to develop a more reliable dataset for analysis.

A limitation to the generalisability of this research is the small sample as this can be presumed to not fully represent the greater fashion industry. Even though the participants all represented a relevant part of the industry this does not make it generalisable. Arguably even more as only one participants view per company was taken into account. Nevertheless, based on the exploratory nature of this study in an area that contains very little research this does provide a first insight into this area of idea generation towards product development in the fashion industry.
Findings

In this chapter the data findings will be presented and interpreted in relation to their meaning to answer the research question. What was found in this research is that idea generation is a very fluid process in which little structure is apparent from a cognitive perspective. In order to apply some structure the creative director sets an artistic direction (influenced by i.e. economic reasoning), which is to be followed by the idea generators, most often the actual designers. These designers follow a collaborative process to product development and are influenced by many aspects, experience, encouragement, submersion in the target market.

In this chapter, a story-telling picture is painted to present the previous statement. It flows naturally from the three identified pillars of the ability to generate ideas; first, idea generation and its acquainted subjects. Second, ideation systems that are used to structurally generate ideas. Third and last, creativity, which was identified in theory to be a major influencer towards idea generation.

Idea generation

The structure adopted in presentation of the findings in the idea generation section is done through inductive reasoning and comprises of four categories. First, the idea starts somewhere, but is it a collective or an individual coming up with the idea. Second, there is a job title/location of the person(s) having the idea (positioning). The third and fourth categories identify how these people came up with these ideas, also partly the why question, the ‘motivators’ of ideas and ‘drivers’ of ideas.

Individual vs. collective idea generation

This refers to whether individual come up with the idea or a group/team/multiple people. A total of 25 statements were coded, which is the most off all individual categories. When trying to quantitatively look at the data there is an almost equal divide between individualistic and collaborative idea generation statements. Not all statements are clear-cut in opinion. Having a close look and interpreting the data, looking at the (sometimes
subjective) meaning behind the statement, shows a clear message, that in the fashion ideas
starts with the individual;

“They (designers) come up with idea on their own” – Se

Furthermore strengthened by Le in regard the question if idea generation tends to be more
individualistic at his company, to which he replied a simple “Yes”.

As stated it is not always as clear cut as this statement. Where other participants stated
more complex situations. A reoccurring aspect in this are statements that it is almost
always an individual who comes up with the idea and then brings it into a team or group of
people.

All participants stated that the fashion industry works with a team based effort towards
product development. Where the most telling statement comes from Le, as he states:

“a designer often has an idea but another person has to do something with it, it’s
collaboration ... in a bigger company its more a team thing (idea generation and
design).” – Le

Le concludes this aspect in an interesting idea and statement as “I think that its more
successful if more people join in (on idea generation)”. Where this last point makes most
sense in the fact that when more people join in on idea generation there is a broader
consensus on the created idea and more broad based support is apparent in the
organisation which can see the product development through, which relates and confirms
Pinchot and Pellmans statements in this regard (1999).

In relation to the theory it could be argued that this is in line with the portrayed matter in
fashion, as ideas per definition are created by one person, “development initially
proceeding via a relatively random variation process of either completely new
conceptualisations or novel combinations of existing ideas” (Godart et al., 2015: 198). It is
very unlikely that the multiple people have the exact same idea at the exact same time.
Where ‘novel combinations of existing ideas’ can be the collaboration of teams that bring
an idea forward as a collective.

This allows for a preliminary conclusion that ideas in fashion are generally generated
individually (after which it’s rather quickly brought into a group). Which is in line with
theory, this aspect of individual idea generation becomes more relevant and interesting when the next aspect of positioning is considered.

**Positioning**

This category refers to the job title/position an idea is actually generated or most often generated.

In terms of job title towards idea generation in product development seems to be pretty clear, all participants state positioning of idea generation towards product development is a focused matter.

“The designer ... this will be it!” - An

Se and Le have arguably even stronger positions on this.

“At (company name), I think the new products come from the designer itself, definitely” – Se

“A lot of the actual product innovations comes direct from the designers” - Le

*Ji reflects how the industry (used) to work.

“when you look traditionally how fashion works. That you work from sketch, that the designer gives the pattern maker a sketch. And then the pattern turns that into an image a 3D garment. A lot actually happens there, but those are so subtle that you might never like recognizing them as ideas.” – *Ji

His statement describes a traditional manner, where drawing meaning to this statement the author recognises this positioning of ideas to be a modern day common practice. His statement must be interpreted more in the way of a classical approach instead of the common meaning of traditionally, being old fashioned. This line of thought is supported by *Le in stating:

“But generally its a collaboration between the design team, from junior designer to design manager in a discussion in how can we bring things forward” - *Le

Furthermore based in the statement of *Ji about where ideas come up

“So they are working very tight, and I think it is the buyer and the designer together with direction of the head of design” - *Ji

Even though the process is different between the two they both work in collaboration between the designer and another figure in developing this design. Where this interaction is the basis of further development of ideas in order to improve the initial one.
In general all participants state that ideas are generated in positions or job titles in which the idea generator is responsible for or primarily active.

“He (the designer) is thinking about new products and designs all the day, he is doing nothing else.” - Se

Where this is almost logical as the times spend in these areas is far more substantial being your core job. Which allows for a preliminary conclusion that ideas do not just come up anywhere, they are channelled to the position the designer is active in.

**Creative directors**

In the positioning of these ideas there is one aspect that is majorly directing and governing the aspect of idea generation. As stated in theory the creative director has a lot of influence; “thus, the process of generating and implementing creative ideas in fashion is very centralised, and is attached to the person of the creative director.” (Godart et al., 2015: 202).

Confirmed in the statement:

“There is always a creative director! Yes he has the main power, he makes the decisions.” - Se

The matter that he or she is a very influencing figure in the operations run within the fashion industry does not state that he is per se the person coming up with the ideas. Where the creative director is not the person who is the one coming up with the ideas themselves as An and Ji state:

"They don’t create all of these ideas themselves” - An

“Creative directors are working very little hands on with the product.” - Ji

In preliminary conclusion, there is a contradiction to the definition previously stated as it is not necessarily that straightforward. Yes, in terms of implementation (which this research does not look at) a tendency can be detected, based upon interpretation of all interviews, that this figure is very much the centre of this and all aspect of this goes through him or her thought the direction set.

Where generation of ideas seems to be more distant from this person, and closer the to designers themselves and their interpretation of the artistic direction the company wants to go.
This direction of the collection set by the creative director is most definitely an important director of idea generation. The initial idea of where to direct the company from the person in this position is deemed one of the most important ideas in fashion.

“The most crucial ideas are not so much about how you make the sleeve or how you make a garment. It’s rather what kind of direction we should do, and that is the most crucial idea” – Ji

The practice of the ‘lone ruler’ in fashion being the creative director does relate to the more high-end fashion where the designer is personally judged, the control of this person also tends to be more vigorous.

“For example Yves Saint Laurent, you can be sure that their creative director has personally looked at every single garment” – Ji

This decision is not always solely made by the creative director, as it is influenced by different factors

“Generally its design team let, through head of design and designers have discussions per department” - Le

In an attempt to preliminary conclude this section of idea generation it has to be stated that it is very difficult to generalise where ideas are generated, there are a lot of different companies who all work in a slightly different way. Where this research seeks to develop an initial notion of where this might be.

Based on the collected data it can be, cautiously, stated that the starting ideas towards product development are generated by the designers, based on the set artistic direction, which is developed by the creative director in collaboration with his team. Where in the process of developing the product there is a lot of interaction within the teams in which a lot of ‘follow-up’ ideas complement the initial one. Which contributes and develops a slight deviation from the existing theoretical understanding in this industry. Even though the creative director sets a direction for ideas “the process of generating ... creative ideas in fashion is very centralised, and is attached to the person of the creative director” (Godart et al., 2015: 202), the generation of ideas is more detached from the creative director.
‘How’
Ideas are generated by people in positions or job titles within the organisations as identified in the last section. This section looks at how ideas are generated and in what context ideas are generated.

*Mechanism of ideas*
Most of the participants see the mechanism of getting ideas or generating ideas as a very flowing motion that is something that is very hard to put into a structure or protocol.

“I think the idea generation process is very spontaneous ... you cannot plan to get that creative idea” – *Se*

Looking at the data there is an obvious need for flexibility in order to be able to come up with ideas, where there is a very unclear line to what extend this flexibility is needed. As there is also counter argumentation for structure.

“Having a set framework and objective is 100% crucial for creativity and generating ideas.” - *Ji*

Where there tends to be a natural balance within the fashion organisation that could potentially be the answer to an effective working environment.

“Ohviously need structured side to it, different people in business will give you that ... They are naturally inclined for organisation, I think if a business balances creative people and organised people well you get a very successful company. – *Le*

In preliminary conclusion to theory it is obvious that people should be allowed to do their job the best way possible, in the fashion industry there seems to be a natural balance. Being aware of this balance and consciously monitoring this will potentially generate a balance for creative’s and organisational structure to work effectively together.

*Limitation to idea generation*
There are also factors that limit idea generation at different levels in the organisation. Most fashion businesses work with their suppliers, where these suppliers have limits to their technological capabilities. This limits the idea generators in the way that they are not fully able to think ‘outside the box’ as they interact with these suppliers, where this inability can be on a personal cognitive level or imposed by the direction from the creative director.

The direction that is set (by the team, company or the creative director) generates limits the ability of idea generation.
“Well of course a certain direction also means your not going another way. So that does technically limit (idea generation)” - Ji

That does state that you guys are limited that in the sort of ideas that you guys can have?

“Yes, but that for practical reasons, because it’s a business at the end of the day” - Le

Some companies are limited in their ideas based on the ethical and environmental considerations the greater organisation has set out, where they were limited in idea generation of fur and use of leather.

These external influences might not always be negative limitations to idea generation, but rather refocusing imposed by an external factor.

“And when it comes back and they say it’s not feasible or works better when you do this” - Le

After which the responsible designer (team) can get on with the project that is product development.

Summarising, limitations to idea generation in fashion tends to be impacted by the artistic direction set, this in combination with external outside limitation makes some ideas not feasible. It has to be said that all other industries also experience limitation in this form.

Where these factors potentially impact the feasibility more of created ideas opposed to the ability to the generates these. Where the author is uncertain to the extend to which these factors lie within these two different aspects of the innovational process.

Where the potential feasibility of ideas is outside of the scope of this research.

Types of innovation

The theory in the second chapter presents the aspect of the type of innovation in relation to idea generation. Some might wander why this aspect was put into theory, through the collection of the data this aspect of type of innovation came up in relation to the previous described aspect of positioning of idea generation. Where as stated in the previous section ideas come up most of the time in the field in which the idea generator is active.

In relation to the data, there is no real significance to present about what kind of innovation is mostly used in fashion, where this line of questioning was pursuit as a test of the stated theory in relation to types of innovation.
First off there is too little of a sample to generalise upon, in attempt to compare to a broad quantitative study (Bianchi and Bortolotti, 1996) and statements from participants were very broad and far apart. Furthermore answers given may be very limited to the positioning of the ideas the participants have, as previously stated, idea generators primarily generate ideas towards their own area of expertise. Where they might be unable to generalise it appropriately across their organisation based on their restricted focus and view.

Overall and in preliminary conclusion, it can be stated that all the previous described aspects of idea generation (from to individual vs. collective, positioning and other described aspects), picture a complex painting. So what are the motivations and drivers of the idea generators to actually come up with the ideas that they come up with.

**Motivators**

Outside of the, from the idea generators perspective, external structures and environment around him or her there are more intrinsic motivators towards idea generation. This section will discuss aspects of the collected data in this regard.

**Encouragement**

The most coded motivator was active encouragement to have ideas from senior people in the organisation.

“We actively encouraged people to send ideas in any ideas that they have that can improve the products we offer” – *Ch*

In *Le’s* company, encouragement is guided and subjected to the set direction.

“He (creative director) initially will encourage” - *Le*

No data was retrieved in other interviews in order to generalise this.

Part of this encouragement is also empowering people to have their idea, to give them the authority to come up with their idea. But also to allow them to fail

“Like having time to think about things, to do wrong, to make ideas and that then also can be discarded” - *Ji*

The author sees this as an effective way of working, the creative director becomes the motivator and facilitator of structure that is needed as previously stated. This active
encouragement from senior people and empowering them to do their job, and sometimes fail at it, is in line with Pinchot and Pellman’s (1999) basics of effective idea generation.

This aspect in the fashion industry might be of greater importance, as stated, idea generators need organisational flexibility to generate ideas but need to feel backed in this process. Where arguably more encouragement to have ideas and come up with this might allow for greater feeling of flexibility in being allowed to be creative and come up with ideas. Where there is little basis in the data to develop a compelling conclusion in this matter.

*Experience*

Through analysis of the first two interviews the author recognised there is more to the motivators of idea generation, where this might be more focused on knowledge. Upon incorporation of this in the interview a picture distilled pretty quickly. Participants three till five were in major agreement that experience is one of the fundamentals of the ability of idea generation. *So what do you think makes these people have the ideas then?*

“I would personally say that more experience and working for a long time gives you better ideas” - Ji

This experience is not just past experience, but also the continuous development of this experience.

“I am very much experience and education. And I don’t just mean formal education” - Le

Where on the other hand a lack of this experience tends to result in less idea generation, where this can have multiple causes.

“People that have come up through freelancing for themselves or smaller operations tend to follow what’s already been let by the industry... less knowledgeable in certain areas in order to bring innovation to the table, sometimes its just less confident although they see it and are aware of it, they are not confident in how to achieve it” - Le

Not feeling confident can be intensified by a lack of experience (Morgan and Cleave-Hogg, 2002). Being aware of this aspect as an organisation might benefit idea generation, where organisational measures can be taken in order to allow these individuals to more effectively voice their ideas.

All statements are in line with existing theory, that experience, education and wide ranging perspectives allows for idea generation (Lampel, Lant and Shamsie, 2000). Where prior
experience is arguably more important in the fashion industry, due to the emotional nature of the product at hand. Where based on logical reasoning this emotional facet of the trade can be taught less easily in educational setting opposed to experience (Dewey, 1986).

**Submersion in target market**

One aspect, which could be sub-categorised under experience, is the submersion in the target market. Sub-categorisation is consciously not done, as the submersion into the target market requires a more active approach from the idea generator opposed to (sometimes) passive act of obtaining experience.

Submersion in the target market in this research means to actively seek to interact with the target market for which you develop products. Submersion can be performed in different ways, and can generate ideas in different ways.

“I think being in the front line, if you were talking to the customer and doing it well people engage well with you. Customers tell you what they want.” – Ch

“Yeah my job is to go through the streets, talk to people, and observe them and identify the latest trends” – Se

“Surrounding yourself with like-minded people.” – Ji

Brining meaning to the aspect of submersion in the target market also relates back to the aspect of experience, as the ability to generate diverse perspectives allows for idea generation. Where developing first hand experience of the need, that the product has to fulfil, will generate perspectives. The importance of this is something the participants agree upon as being important for idea generation. The process of submersion in the target market can arguably also positively contribute to the confidence level of the designer, as developing first hand experience of the product will allow you to understand the product and its needs. Where as stated this confidence is an important driver of idea generation.

An interesting way in which Le and his company use a version of submersion of the target market is the use of so called ‘team riders’. Most often-used in sport and active wear related brands, these people are (paid) athletes who test, use and promote the products of the business.

“From the technical side of things, so we have surf team, swim, you get a lot of feedback from the riders, because they are actually the ones using the product and putting it through its paces day by day. So a lot of innovation comes through them
... the riders use something for a while and think; hold on, if it was like this it would be far more convenient for me” – Le

This type of submersion might not be very relevant to the other main-street fashion as everyone uses it, where there is an element of ‘testing’ the product beforehand.

Intrinsic interest and motivation

As in a lot of things in the world, having a genuine interest in the craft that you’re performing is an important aspect in order to be productive in it (Pinchot and Pellman, 1999), where the data sees this as a supporting aspect towards idea generation.

“Really love what they are doing. And that is the most important part when you have to come up with new ideas” – Se

Also some aspects of submerging yourself in the target market come back into this aspect of genuine interest in what you do.

Drivers

Not all generation of ideas comes from the intrinsic matters of the idea generators. There are certain aspects that drive their idea generation in an (specific) area. This section will present the emerged drivers towards idea generation.

Economic reasoning

“One well-known economic theory teaches that the purpose of business is maximizing profit for the shareholders” (Rimanoczy, 2015). This is no less of the case in the fashion industry. Where all participants state that the prime reason product development is performed is to generate revenue, this also means that one of the most important aspects that influence idea generation are these economic interests.

“So sometimes they will have to curb creativity in order to ensure that everyone is still working next season” - Le

Where developing products based upon recognised market needs is also positioned under the economic interests of a business.

“First I have to identify the need, if there is one for a new product” – Se

In an attempt to conclude this it must be stated that this does not come as a surprise, companies are there to generate a return for their shareholders. Where the mean to achieve this is achieve this is to produce an attractive collection. To be able to do this the
business needs ideas, where the next parts look at what drives the idea generators from a non-intrinsic perspective.

‘Copying’

All the participants were in agreement on was that the one thing that the fashion industry does in relation to idea direction is: copying. This might be obvious where there is little known to the extend this impacts the generation of ideas. Where the participants state no objection to the practice of copying in the fashion industry.

“Where they go to Paris and go to Zara, Mango you know, all the other stores and check what they have.” – An

This copying tends to happen more among low end fashion brands.

“So that’s how it works in the low end of the price range the price spectrum, they copy the most of everyone” - An

Even though the high-end fashion brands are not excluded.

“buying things that they like abroad and use this in their collection.” - An

The only participant that was this direct about copying was An, where when reading between the lines and interpreting the data, it can be reasonably stated that all parties do so.

All other participants rather see this as inspiration. In relation to this statement it has to be said that there is a very thin line between ‘copying’ and drawing inspiration. As it is officially deemed copying when this has been identified by an independent party, where there is a lot of juridical laws and regulations to govern this. This is totally outside of this research scope. Rather, the term copying in this research is used as a driver of inspiration and the importance of this towards idea generation.

Most often identified category in relation to this aspect is watching trends;

“On the more fashion side of things its very much in keeping you eye on what the cooler people are doing on the streets” - Le

Where this is done through multiple means:

“We sit down and discuss where it relevant in our industry to go and do a trip to. Designer will go off to cities and do some research shopping ... While we do that, the design manager or more often the buyers would travel out to the suppliers” – Le
“These days people work a lot with the internet, so they use the internet, pinterest, they use whatever collections are in Vogue etc.” – Ji

“Well they do give a designing team opportunity to go on inspiration trips each season.” - Ji

When looking at these statements it can be seen that the whole industry looks at the whole industry, which is in line with theory that fashion engages in ‘copying’. As otherwise there might be no such thing as a coherent trend or ‘popular style’ (Hilton, Choi and Chen, 2004). Where it is interesting to note that high-end fashion houses tend to use less ‘copying’, this could be potentially explained by the strong influence their creative director has on the idea generation process in terms of direction. Where there is no conclusive data gathered in this research to conclusively claim this.

The data shows a widespread use of this form of idea generation drivers, where the participants state this to be one of the most important aspects to developing new ideas, as this allows them to generate more perspectives. This can be based in the fact of seeing these products and making ‘completely new conceptualisations or novel combinations of existing ideas’ (Godart et al., 2015: 198), or the experience gained from attending fairs, shows and conferences. Where these different perspectives are important as stated in the ‘motivators’ section.

‘Big data’

Another major directing force in idea generation towards product development in fashion turns out to be ‘Big Data’. This often comes together with the previously described aspects of copying and directing fashion ideas towards most likely economic winners.

“Statistics of online clicks! So for example, purple is am upcoming click thing, so they decide like, ok, 5% of our tops will have to be purple” – An

“We use big data, we analyse it and look which items are best sellers” - Se

Using this form of data analysis allows for forecasting, as data is used to predict where fashion trends are going. There is a need for forecasting this trend in advance, as

“We have to get the idea at least one or two years in advance for each season. So it very depends on forecasting and trend research” – Se

Use of this form of forecasting is used not in all parts of the fashion industry. As;

“Especially at fast fashion companies and for example Zalando or Amazon, they really use big data in combination with the designers ” – Se.
The use of this big data has been identified by An to be “definitely something that has been happening more and more”. Indicating the lack of prior theory in this is surprising and something that should potentially be developed.

A related aspect to the use of big data is the use of trend watching. These are most often third parties that establish trends based on analysis of what is happening the industry in term of trends.

“Well, it’s still based upon fairs and books. Which you can buy or go, which check ‘what are the ongoing trends’” - An

As stated in the previous statements, use of trend watchers is still common use, although to a diminishing effect.

“To a diminishing extend, because people are doing their research themselves using the internet” - Ji

The use of these trend agencies effect idea generation in the way that ideas generated are directed by an external influence. To what the designer does with this, and to what extend the creative director incorporates these in his or her vision of direction is not something that was possible to conclude from the sample. Having a notion of this could be interesting.

The use of this big data and use of trend watchers facilitates copying, in particular the first. As using big data from a wide range of external parties dilutes the fact of exact copying trends. Where the use of in-house big data must be more considered as trend-research and copying of own ideas.

**Ideation systems**

As stated in the theory part of this research, ideation systems “allow idea providers to post their ideas in a system accessible by others” (Björk, Boccardelli and Magnusson, 2010: 387). This part of the research presents the findings in relation to the identified ideation systems at work in the fashion industry. These systems are deliberate systems adopted by the organisations in order to facilitate idea generation through means of the medium (like email) or through facilitating collaboration like brainstorming sessions.
The use of brainstorming session seems a widespread system of idea generation in the fashion industry, where this contributes to the previously identified collaborative nature of idea generation in this industry.

“They do brainstorming” – An
“Yeah they work more in teams, where they come up with ideas on their own, but definitely through brainstorming.” – Se

In other industries the use of external consultants is a widely used way of generating ideas, as these people bring in ‘fresh’ and new perspectives where they often have a breath of experience as they work or used to work in other companies. The use of this mean to idea generation seems to be non-excitant or very limited.

“We don’t use external consultants” - Le
“Not really for ideas” - Ch
“You want to stay competitive. When you share your ideas with consultants there is always the danger that the new ideas are shared with other companies” - Se

Se states this to be industry wide.

“I think its industry wide! The competitive advantage is always important.” - Se

One of the stated reasons if for the fear is loss of competitive advantage, as the fashion industry is a high-competitive market they all compete for the most interesting and valuable ideas. The potential loss of these ideas through the use of external consultants seems to be limiting the use of it, in other words, the risk is not worth the potential return.

Most participants state that there is no use of structured ideation systems, as stated to be a widespread mean of idea generation in other industries, where Ch does use a structured system of idea generation.

“We had an email address which was called ideas act. And we actively encouraged people to send ideas in any ideas that they have that can improve the products we offer” – Ch

Overall it can be concluded that structured ideation systems that facilitate submission of ideas to later be distributed are not widely used. Where effective us of this might allow further cross fertilisation of ideas, which generate deeper or wider perspectives and consequently ideas.

The use of brainstorm sessions is widely adopted, where the extent to which this is so excessively used seems surprising in relation to the literature, as the literature implied
more significance to other ideation systems. For example external venturing is seen as a theoretical goldmine of ideas. Using brainstorming as a mean to idea generation is in line with the identified collaborative nature of idea generation. The fact that other kinds of more structured ideation systems are not used in fashion beckons the question if this is not a lost opportunity, opportunity cost. Being aware that there are multiple means available to the fashion industry might proof useful when currently used systems (potentially) under deliver.

**Creativity**

As stated in the theory section of this research, creativity is an important aspect of idea generation. Where this section presents the findings in relation to creativity distilled from the collected data.

Theory states that there is a need for creativity in idea generation. Where a higher level of creativity allows for idea generation.

The fact that creativity allows for different perspectives to come together in generation of an idea also has a turn side. When there are little restriction to where your creativity is allowed to go, it generates the need for more creativity in order to be able to come up with the (right) idea.

“I think it depends on the industry, because in fashion you have to be creative, innovative you have to find new ways to find solutions. In others like finance, you always have the law. You have bigger restrictions.” - Se

This evokes a need for creativity

“I think it (creativity) hugely important, because if you’re not nurturing creativity I don’t think you get new idea generation. I think creative people they provide that idea, that spark, it’s that creative spark that leads to innovation. And idea generation” – Le

“Because they are becoming big spectacles (collections). So everything needs more and more ideas basically to be executed in a good way” - Ji

There is also a collaborative element to creativity, which relates to the collaborative need for idea generation and the actual process of idea generation in fashion businesses as previously described in the discussion on individual vs. collective idea generation and the widespread use of brainstorm session as an ideation system.
“Different perspectives are something that really generates creativity. I feel that when a fashion brand collaborates with a completely different sector (Apple and Hermes). When someone with a different perspective from a different world meet and they create something together, that’s when really interesting things usually happens” - Ji

Different perspectives are as previously described important in order to develop ideas, where creativity facilitate this to happen.

In the interview with An she seems to have a negative inclination towards the level of actual creativity in the fashion industry.

“Where I would say that most people in the fashion industry don’t really work creatively ” – An

A possible explanation for this statement is that prior to these statements several discussions relating the commercial and data driven nature of idea generation were discussed. This might have influenced her line of answering, where the author still consciously presents this finding. As there is a difference between the need for creativity and the actual level of creativity in fashion.

Most participants see creativity as an essential aspect towards idea generation. To what extent do you then see the people that come up with ideas to be more creative?

“Yes, definitely! 100%” – Se

“Then I would like to come back to the point that people in fashion have to be more creative. Because when you are more creative you get more ideas and you will get your ideas very fast.” – Se

There is a tendency among the participants to see a high creative need in the industry in order to generate ideas, which is in line with theory. Where overall (except An) the participants see there is a sufficient level of creativity in the industry in order to develop these ideas.

Complacency in this matter could potentially be the case, where the industry would do well and should become conscious about the potential dangers of this. As stated, high levels of creativity are important for idea generation and idea generation is essential for the business.
Discussions

This chapter seeks to bring this thesis to an appropriate end, which is achieved through establishing this research’s key findings but also its obvious and less obvious limitations. Furthermore this chapter seeks to identify area of future research that would be valuable and interesting.

This study had the aim to identify where and how ideas are generated towards product development in larger fashion businesses. In order to achieve this aim a primary, qualitative, interview approach was taken interviewing five people in the fashion industry. As previously stated this sample is small, and so the conclusion will have to be considered a preliminary research, and in initiate insight into the concept of idea generation towards product development in the fashion industry.

Considering the question where ideas are generated within the fashion businesses it can be cautiously concluded that individual people in the job role/position of designers come up with the ideas toward product development mostly related to their area of expertise. These ideas are influenced by a range of factors, where the most important factor is identified as the artistic direction set by the creative director or head of design. This direction set by the creative director is most often performed in collaboration with the design team. Where this finding goes against current theory in which the idea generation is “attached to the person of the creative director”. This direction on one side develops artistic and idea generation limitations as “a certain direction also means your not going another way” - Ji, on the other hand his allows for focussing of idea generation in this direction and facilitating structure that is needed within the creative mind. The overall tendency of the data shows that this ‘limitation’ is perceived to be positive.

The question how ideas are generated in the fashion industry is found to be in a three-way, the first aspect being intrinsic and organisational environment facilitators, secondly external drivers and commercial interests and the third, organisational structure.
Organisational environmental facilitators are found to relate closely to the previous stated need for flexibility. Idea generation is found to be a very fluid, unstructured thing majorly influenced by collaboration and interaction with others. Ideas can come up at any moment which require a level of flexibility from the organisation, where as stated this level of flexibility (or ‘space to be creative’) tends to be naturally imposed by organisational focused people in the organisation and the set artistic direction of the creative director.

Intrinsic elements that are found to generate ideas based in a more personal aspect to the idea generator. Encouragement and empowerment are indicated as facilitators in allowing idea generation, this is in line with exciting literature. Some implication were identified in relation to the fashion industry, as encouragement and empowerment facilitate the stated needed flexibility. As people in positions that require idea generation to do their job need to feel ‘backed’ in attempting this.

Another intrinsic element that was deemed very important to drive and facilitate idea generation was experience. The fashion industry tends to allows people related to idea generation, to travel and ‘experience’ their product. This previous aspect is specific to the fashion industry, where as in other industries broad experience provides different perspectives which facilitate idea generation. This ‘emotional’ experience in the fashion industry might arguably be of greater importance due to the emotional factors a product has to supply, which were argued to solely be obtainable through experience. Adding to this experience and of great importance for idea generation in fashion in found to be submersion in the target market, where gaining essential experience of the product, its customers and the use of these product by the customers and personally proved to be a great facilitator of idea generation.

Major drivers and directors of idea generation in fashion is found to be the commercial interest, this is no surprise as it is a business after all. Furthermore the fact that fashion per definition requires some sort of ‘copying’ is not new. The surprising aspect is the way these businesses get to this ‘copying’ where they make use of big data in order to forecast future trends in order to guide their idea generation process.
A key-word search was performed after the interviews in order to pursue a further theoretical understanding of the use of big data in fashion. In major academic search-engines no relevant matches were generated, Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect and Google Scholar. Meaning that there is no to very little academic knowledge regarding this industry and the use of big data.

Due to this very limited literature developing meaningful conclusions in this matter is difficult.

The third factor facilitating idea generation is the organisational structure around this, and more specifically the intentionally put in practice processes that facilitate idea generation. Contrary to what literature suggest for maximum idea generation, the fashion industry adopts a limited number of ideation systems. Brainstorming session are found to be most commonly used, this is in line with the collaborative nature of idea generation. Concluding that a limited number of systems are used evokes the danger of opportunity cost, the fashion industry could and should look into alternative ideation systems in order to maximise their idea generation capabilities.

An overall supporting element in idea generation is the level of creativity among individuals and within organisations. Where the participants stated a widely recognised need for this in support of idea generation, but all in line with literature. The only contribution made in this regard is that the industry should be aware that complacency in assumption of having enough creativity in the organisation, could lead to potential lower idea generation.

Overall this thesis is an attempt to develop an initial insight into the world of idea generation towards product development in the fashion industry. Through the established primary research it can be concluded that the fashion industry operates in a different manner. Where high levels of interaction among designers (also through brainstorming), creative directors setting artistic directions, high levels of creativity, encouragement from senior people, submersion into the target market and data driven idea direction allow for appropriate levels of idea generation.
A practical contribution is made to the extend that practitioners in the industry are made aware of certain aspects. For instance, that there are other ideation systems that could be of use to the industry to facilitate and drive idea generation. Furthermore, as the research cover different companies a comparison from the practitioners’ perspective could be performed.

**Future research**

This study has attempted to develop some insight into the area of idea generation towards product development in the fashion industry. As stated before, this research should be seen as a preliminary study in this field. Where very little was known in current literature and this research was an first attempt into area. As stated a limited sample size was obtained, where to be able to draw more conclusive and generalisable conclusions a similar study with a larger sample size would be interesting. Furthermore this sample could and arguably should include multiple sources in similar parts of the industry and across these parts of the industry. This in order to achieve an industry wide, solid and generalisable data set.

In the view of the author one of the most interesting aspects encountered in this research is the use of ‘big data’ in fashion. As stated non or very little theory has been developed, where in relation to the significance of the topic this is odd. Research in this field could, for instance, research to what extend this aspect influences idea generation or discussion making in product development in the fashion industry. A better understanding of this could streamline the business aspect of forecasting.

A wider sample will also allow for a more in-depth study of the ideation systems, an attempt to discover which ideation systems would be best suited and appropriate could lead to an effective implementation and use of these.

Among the motivators towards idea generation several aspects are identified to contribute to idea generation (encouragement, experience, submersion and intrinsic interest). In an HR focused study the most influential aspects could be quantified. Discovering this would allow for a more effective and focused hiring process and optimisation of design team competences (i.e. through training or submersion where skills lack).
Limitations

A substantial limitation is the obtained sample size, five interviews is not a significant amount. Where the authors is very conscious of the limitation of generalisability of this research and the representation of the greater fashion industry. Where to be able to make it very generalisable a broader sample could be used.

One limitation encountered is that some of the interviewees were also in change of the idea selection process, in regard to this they might have disregarded ideas that they thought to be ‘bad ideas’ and so have not regarded them in as an idea. Even though these are relevant to the current research. This as the outcome of the ideas selected have great influence on the selectors (often creative directors) personally and on their career (Godard et al., 2015).

Another limitation is the time availability to conduct this research, where in the two month period there is assigned it might not be feasible to get every stone turned towards this subject.
Conclusion

Innovation is needed in companies in order to exist and grow. Ideas are needed within the innovational process, in this research it is argued that the fashion industry has an increased need for ideas due to their unique nature of business. They are in need of a high number of ideas to facilitate their high number of incremental innovations.

These ideas are found to be generated by individuals, most often designers, after which they are further developed within design teams. These ideas are guided by the artistic direction set by the creative director, where this research found his or her influence not to be to the extent literature suggested. This direction was found to be influenced by a lot of factors. The collaboration with the design team but also external drivers, in which the economic interest of the business seems to be paramount. This makes most fashion business engage in the act of copying, whether this is through the use of trends or big data.

More intrinsic facilitators of idea generation are concluded to be the encouragement from top management, the experience of the idea generator, their genuine intrinsic interest and motivation in fashion and its product and the submersion in the target market.
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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Interviewee initials:

Briefly describe your role (office, department, etc.) as it relates to idea generation for (if appropriate).

Probes: How are you involved in idea generation?

Can you walk me through the process of idea generation in your company from your job perspective?

Where in the organisation do these ideas come up? From whom? (job title)

Probes: Are there specific people in your organisation that often come up with the ideas?

- Are they alone? In clusters together? All together in one group?

What do you think makes them have the ideas?

(Does the variation come from people or process? Do small amount of people come up with majority of ideas versus all people come up with small number)

- In case of small amount of people? Why do these people come up with loads of ideas?

Personal characteristics, experience, education, exposure to contacts (network).

- How are they imbedded in life? Do they travel a lot? Experience or not at all (green leaves)? Location (maybe close to leading fashion brands who influence)?

How does the product development cycle (seasons) look like from its very beginning?

(This question will then politely be interrupted after idea generation stage has been displayed, where this like is taken to outtake potential bias)

In what way is idea generation stimulated within your organisation, what ideation system (formalised)?
• large brainstorm platforms in which all employees can contribute,
• idea-bootcamps in which the whole company is provided with incentives to generate ideas in a particular area,
• idea competitions
• External consultants

In the physical structure of the offices are there i.e. informal gathering rooms, long dining tables, open floor plan, flex desk. Overall promotion of cross-fertilisation of departments and ideas.

What are your thought towards these idea generation systems? Do you think they fit their purpose?

How do they think about idea generation system is different in their company different to others’

How big do you see the influence of the central figure (creative director)

To what type of innovation are most idea’s geared towards?

structural change of the product (58%). This change can be “closely related to designers reflecting new cultural influences in the way their designs are created” (Malem, 2008: 5). The second most identified innovation in Bianchi and Bortolotti review is ‘Changes in the production process’ (36%) which “are the innovative ways employed by a designer of exploiting the supply chain and technology”. Third most identified (22%) is the “new uses of the same product” which is fashion relates to re-using archived material and vintage fashion. This does not limit to the production of actual clothes but also re-using strategies for market entry or expansion where markets are found for the companies products by (international) expansion

To what extend do you think a high creativity level allows for idea generation?

What is the process around this creativity aspect of your job in your position?

To what extend to do see people who come up with ideas to be ‘more creative’?
Appendix 2

Self-memos on participant behavior.

An
Was very relaxed where she talked out freely and seemed not to be in a hurry what so ever. Came across very knowledgeable with great in-depth understanding of how the fashion industry worked. Where this is I think based in her education and broad working experience with other designers.

An displayed a negative disposition towards the fashion industry, not negative in the way she thinks it should not exist but negative in the way she feels the way the fashion industry works and operates at the moment is not in line with the way she was educated in her creative education. Her main point was that the fashion industry uses a lot of copying from other companies in order to create their products.

Ch
Felt a little bit hurried at the beginning, where this did not feel like it was uncommon to him. He felt like a person who just wants to cut to the chase, straight in what I needed from him. This made my interview protocol not too useful in terms of approach to structural categories I wanted to discuss, but was for sure very time effective. He was very very knowledgeable in the way he spoke where from out his position in the company had a good recollection and knowledge on where in the organization the ideas came up from.

Se
He felt very relaxed. Was on his day off and so was very willing and able to have a long interview. Felt very knowledgeable due to his history in different companies and his position within the idea generation process.

Le
The interviewer knew Le from his days in the fashion industry. This has no negative connotation and made it very easy and relaxed to talk. The setting was really relaxed which produced a positive atmosphere. Due to his extensive experience in different companies within the sport-fashion industry within the designer teams, he has a good knowledge and notion towards idea generation.

Ji
This was the last interview conducted. He indicated to have just returned from holiday and had all the time in the world to speak. Having worked within different aspect of the fashion industry (stylist to copywriter) made him knowledgeable in fashion and the processes surrounding idea generation.