

Challenges and changes to the contemporary fashion product development process

PARKER-STRAK, Rachel

University of Manchester, UK

Abstract

There have been many challenges and changes within the fashion industry in the last decade with the introduction and development of new technologies, extended supply chains coupled with outsourcing, increased consumer demands and changing consumer behaviour. In the last year alone, the pandemic has proven that more than ever how important flexibility and agility are when faced with an unpredictable environment.

Changes have disrupted many business models within the fashion supply chain, and this has been reflected in research, for example in the areas of; consumer expectations, retail formats, product assortment, speed to market and manufacturing (Christopher, Lowson and Peck, 2004; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Doyle, Moore and Morgan, 2006; Tyler, Heeley and Bhamra, 2006; Goworek, 2014; McCormick et al., 2014).

This paper focuses on the limited research in the field of Fashion Product Development (FPD), specifically addressing the relatively few theoretical models that examine the process (Pechoux, Little and Istook, 2004; Goworek, 2010; d'Avolio, Bandinelli and Rinaldi, 2015; Silva and Rupasinghe, 2016; Moretti and Braghini Junior, 2017). Goworek (2010) proposed that to work effectively, FPD processes involve co-operation rather than mere co-ordination, mirroring practice in the domain of engineering design as suggested in the work of Boujut and Laureillard (2000). This idea has formed the basis of this research. This research aims to challenge the traditional Fashion Product Development Process and presents a more accurate reflection of the actual context in which the business is operating in, by furthermore underpinning the study through drawing on literature derived from project management and new product development.

This research critically investigates product development in the context of high street retailers who are developing 'own label' fashion clothing and distribute these 'own label' garments through both physical stores and online sales channels. This research proceeds with a focus upon inputs, outputs, planning and management in order to comprehensively map the interplay of people, processes and the procedures of the product development process adopted.

Corresponding author's email:

rachel.parker-strak@manchester.ac.uk

This study is exploratory in nature and adopted a qualitative research design, by conducting face-to-face semi structured indepth interviews with key informants from market leading retailers. The major findings of this research surround the current product development process and the challenges, changes and solutions that have influenced how these retailers develop fashion products successfully and effectively. As a result, this research presents a reflection of a more appropriate process model that is specific to these types of retailers. It also identifies the links and parallels from New Product Development (NPD) process model structures and Project Management (PM) business approaches and theories, which in the past has not been addressed. Thus, this research explores the necessity of product development theoretical models that are specific to business and retail type within the fashion industry and contributes to the nascent theory specifically on fashion product development.

Keywords: fashion industry, new product development, project management, change , process

ISBN: 978-989-54263-2-4