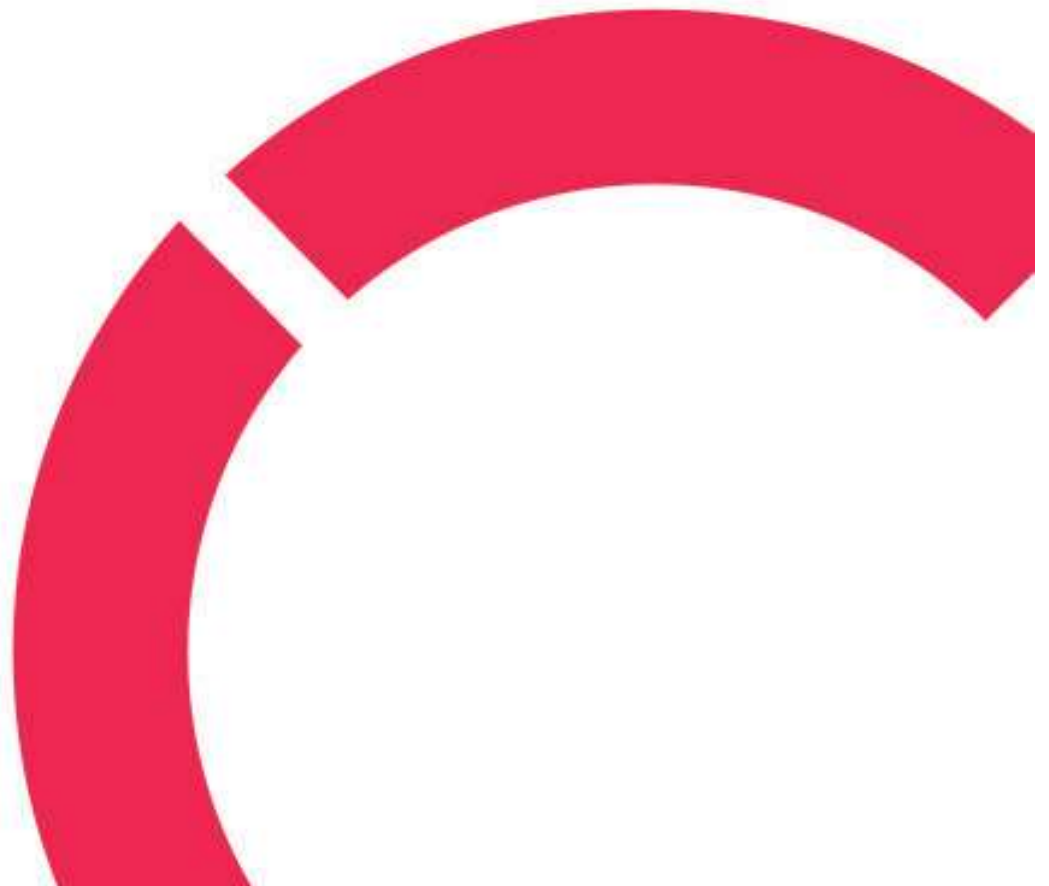


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**ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECT OF THE
FASHION INDUSTRY IN FINLAND**

**Thesis
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ABSTRACT

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<p>Fashion design has been a growing industry in Finland. Over the last few years, progress has been made but there are prospects in economic gains in fashion design amidst the challenges; this is what inspired the current study. The objective of the study was to analyze the state of fashion design in Finland, particularly as it relates to understanding the State's regulatory structure for fashion design and the need to promote the fashion industry as an economic development instrument.</p> <p>The study was done using the assessment method of research and through the instrument of questionnaire primary data was collected from a sample of 116 respondents drawn from the Marimekko fashion. According to the study literature, industry-level challenges have an impact on the ability of Finnish fashion enterprises to profit from their innovations.</p> <p>The study found that, the fashion industry in Finland has been experiencing some growth; this is however the challenge that Finnish Government has had little interest in fashion and so policies that will guide the growth of fashion industry were not developed overtime. The study also found that the lack of startup funds, poor government support and high cost of production of fabrics and clothing are among the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland. The study recommended that government's support for the fashion industry in Finland is significant, as it will help to close the financial gap that is harming the industry</p>		

Key words Fashion, Finland, Industry, Marimekko etc.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Finland's fashion has received renewed international attention in recent years. Finnish enterprises have the potential to reach international success and financial viability while also dominating Western Europe's market (Salimaki & Gabrielsson, 2015). There are several high-quality fashion education schools in Finland, and the business has a lengthy history. Many Finnish designers work for some of the world's most important fashion houses, and they have recently competed in the Hyeres International Fashion Festival, the world's most prestigious fashion competition. The Finnish government defined design as one of the primary subjects in its design policy and pledged to promote the industry in order to discover innovative ways to increase national competitiveness in the global economy (Design Finland Programme, 2014). As a result, it looks like Finnish fashion has all the characteristics to be a global hit. For whatever reason, this hasn't occurred.

Despite what appears to be a strong base, the Finnish fashion industry is confronted with difficulties. Finland, like the rest of the Nordic countries, has an SMOPEC, or small and open economy (Luostarinen & Gabrielsson, 2016), which means that the domestic market for Finnish fashion designers is small and volumes are low. Because their local market is swamped with huge overseas brands, little Finnish fashion enterprises struggle to thrive commercially. In addition to a difficult market, institutional factors such as a low level of networking, insufficient knowledge base and education, and ineffective institutional setup (Lille, 2020; Power et al, 2016;), changing retail structure (Jensen, 2015), and challenging intellectual property rights could all contribute to a lack of international success (Derclaye, 2020; Falay et al, 2017).

The product life cycle in the fashion sector is quite short (Holton, 2014; Rautiala & Sprigman, 2016), and the commerciality and branding of Finnish fashion have been questioned as well (Lille, 2020). General emotions and a lack of government support (Lille, 2020), as well as the global economic situation influencing client behavior (Wu et al, 2013; Joule, 2017; Aversa & Condon, 2020), are all barriers that Finnish fashion enterprises must overcome on their way to global success.

In the light of this, the purpose of this study is to look at fashion design in Finland, specifically as it relates to understanding the state's regulatory structure for fashion design and the need to promote the fashion industry as an economic development instrument.

1.2 Research Problem

Fashion has recently been identified as a strategic economic resource tool for global development by researchers (Lewis et al. 2017). Various state-related bodies have taken a genuine interest in the fashion design and clothing industries, and are developing policies to support them (Riegels, 2017b). This is a paradoxical situation, because fashion is a business that is subject to market forces and consumer choices, rather than governments using public funds. National fashion industries do, however, continue to exist, each with its own distinct characteristics (Aspers & Godart 2016), and national governments can contribute to their development.

Different models of government-fashion industry connections have been described by academics. The main question is whether the government should have a policy and support for the industry. In the early 1990s, the Swedish government decided to abolish textile and clothing industry support (Lee & Ostberg 2016). In Denmark, on the other hand, after France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the government chose to make the country the fifth global cluster and this became the country's first official fashion policy (Riegels, 2017b). Despite this distinction, the Swedish fashion miracle (Lee & Ostberg 2016) as well as the economic success of Danish fashion, is well known in Scandinavian countries. The economic success for New Zealand (Larner et al., 2017) and failure for Australia (Weller, 2018) of attempts to create a fashion policy have been examined. Regional and local policies, in addition to federal policies, have been discussed, as in the cases mentioned above; for instance, for the city of Antwerp (Martinez, 2017).

The concepts of integrating fashion to culture as a business have gained traction among policymakers in Europe, the United Kingdom, and Finland, where this research will be carried out. The creative economy is based on the concept of the creative sector as a spring of economic dynamism in the new information era, in which creativity is a crucial factor in achieving economic success for both individual enterprises and entire economies (Throsby, 2019). Policymakers see culture first and foremost as a money-making machine from this perspective.

Furthermore, Finland has already seen the harmonizing of the creative economy ideology - that is, the interpretation of the worth of arts and culture primarily through economic value (Pyykkonen & Stavrum, 2017). Rather than using the creative economy and fashion sectors as analytical tools, this research examines them as economic development resources.

As a result, the purpose of this research is to ethnographically examine fashion policy in Finland as a collection of players, networks, discourses, and rationalities. Using Finland as an example, the research will look into how fashion is governed and should be governed. The study adds to the growing body of knowledge on fashion by arguing that the fashion industry must be viewed as a development economic resource (Skov, 2017).

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study: What is the current state of the fashion design industry in Finland? What policy governs the fashion design industry in Finland? How can fashion design be utilized as a tool for economic development in Finland? What are the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland and how can the challenges be addressed?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate fashion design in Finland in relation to policies of government and the impact of fashion design on the Finnish economy. The specific objectives include: To find out the current state of the fashion design industry in Finland; To understand the policies that governs the fashion design industry in Finland; To ascertain how fashion design can be utilized as a tool for economic development in Finland; To evaluate the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland and to suggest possible ways of addressing the challenges

1.5 Significance of Study

The study has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the study will contribute to existing theoretical framework discussing fashion design as an economic tool for development. While, practically, the study will be significant to the government of Finland as it will identify the need for government policy system to coordinate the fashion design industry for optimum utilization of its economic development potentials. The study will also be beneficial to fashion entrepreneurs as it will serve as a framework for establishing the challenges faced by fashion designers in the country of Finland.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

These chapter reviews literatures relevant to the study and provides a greater understanding on the concepts and variables of the study. The study relied on scholarly works and experiences of published literatures to bolster the knowledge base and analytic framework of the study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

Under the conceptual review, the study will attempt to provide a detailed explanation on the concepts used in the study. In undertaking the review of concepts, the study will rely on the views of scholars who have provided definitions and meanings to the concepts.

2.1.1 Concept of Fashion

In and of itself, the term "fashion" is ambiguous. Barnard (2016) defined fashion as "any object or event that develops over time and is based on the collective choices of individuals." According to Crewe (2017), one of the most important characteristics of fashion is that it is by definition ephemeral and elusive - a moving and changing target. This also makes it a fascinating case to investigate, as well as a difficult one to assess in monetary terms. Fashion is seen to arise through a social process, in which people form collective tastes through their selections among various competing styles, according to Hemphill and Suk (2019), who researched the intellectual property protection of fashion design.

2.1.2 Fashion Design Concept

Fashion design can be defined as a subfield of design that combines the terms fashion and design. When used in conjunction with design, the phrase is frequently linked with clothing or garments (Aakko 2016; Finn 2014; Kawamura 2017). A deeper comprehension, on the other hand, necessitates a

thorough research, as the concept of fashion introduces a whole new level of intricacy beyond its seven-letter phrase. According to Nixon and Blakley (2018), fashion design research has been undeveloped, and Finn (2014). They argued that in order to maximize the potential of fashion design, it is critical to recognize its domain-specific knowledge and methods.

Meanwhile, a number of previous studies have identified a flaw in the overgeneralization of design subfields (Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg & Cardoso, 2020; Kimbell, 2017). According to Visser's cognitive perspective (2019), depending on the situation, the designers, and the item, various subfields of design have both similar and different qualities. On the one hand, regardless of the design situation, common characteristics such as problem-solving, ill-defined problems, and pluralistic approaches exist (Visser, 2019).

Meanwhile, fashion study tends to focus on the social and symbolic aspects of the industry rather than the actual practice of fashion designers (Finn, 2014). The term dressmaking is used in this study to refer to the practice of individual fashion designers in order to emphasize the aspect of designing in fashion while also distinguishing it from generic design practice. Using the term dress has a lot of advantages, including avoiding culturally biased terminology and contextualizing usage, among others (Kawamura, 2017).

2.1.3 The fashion sector has its own unique qualities

The fashion industry is difficult to define precisely because there is no single definition for the term in the literature. It's also not an accepted phrase in industrial categories around the world (European Commission, 2012a). The fashion sector sits at the intersection of creative industries, well-established manufacturing industries, and service industries (European Commission, 2012a). The industry is a complex web of interconnected value chains that may be researched and analyzed from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Fashion can have a wider impact on a nation's economy through interconnected value chains and networks, resulting in beneficial spill-over impacts. It can also encourage innovations and produce value for other industries because it is a highly information demanding and reactive enterprise (Aspers, 2020; Hauge, 2017; European Commission, 2012a).

The British Fashion Council listed a number of economic sectors in which the country's fashion industry can be recognized to contribute and have an impact. Fashion is a business with high immaterial value since the actual items can be linked to design developments (Hauge, 2017). Value creation and profitability are reliant on the ability to produce original design, brand value, and maintain efficient marketing channels, logistics, and distribution, especially for enterprises in high-cost areas like the Nordics (Hauge, 2017). These elements lay the groundwork for effective manufacturing and supply chain management, as well as effective branding and marketing strategies, as well as the optimization and balancing of cash flows and inventory.

Fashion is a business that emphasizes both tangible and intangible aspects: it relies on both creative and intangible inputs, as well as multinational manufacturing and day-to-day business practices. In the fashion industry, Hauge (2017) identified a dual structure, with two parallel systems influencing company success and operations. The first system is concerned with the tangible aspect of things, i.e. the manufacturing of actual goods. The alternative method emphasizes intangible qualities, such as generating and producing immaterial value that would eventually distinguish goods from others on the market. According to Kawamura (2015), the industry's economic structure is founded on the creation of actual commodities on the one hand, and symbolic and aesthetic value on the other. As a result, the ability to turn a plain garment into a stylish item is the key to success.

2.1.4 Branding's Importance in Creating Value

Fashion, without a doubt, is more about emotional appeal than it is about necessities. Clothing can be purchased for a very low price, but there appears to be no limit to how much individuals are ready to spend to meet their emotional demands (Hauge, 2017). In the fashion sector, brands play a crucial role: consumers frequently base their consumption and purchasing decisions on the emotional conceptions and links that come with being a part of the brand experience. Naturally, design as an aesthetic contribution is vital, but branding, as Hauge (2017) argues, is assuming a substantial lead as a creative arena and a strategic instrument. Branding allows items to be personified and captures a balance between economic values (such as quality and utility) and symbolic and cultural value (Hauge, 2017). Lille (2020) added that a strong brand as well as inventive and dynamic business processes, are currently the most vital assets for a fashion company.

2.1.5 Creating a profile of a fashion entrepreneur

The role of entrepreneurship in the development of jobs and national growth has long been recognized (Berger & Udell, 2018; Wetzel, 2017). This indicates their importance in terms of economic growth and contribution. Because of its unique hurdles relating to both business skill and financial needs, fashion entrepreneurship varies from that of other creative businesses. Entrepreneurship frequently necessitates a just do it attitude on the part of the management or entrepreneur. In the fashion industry, however, doing it necessitates a seamless integration of the creative design process with business operations, requiring two distinct sets of abilities and mindsets (Mills, 2020).

Mills (2020) conducted research on fashion entrepreneurship in New Zealand and discovered that fashion businesses face two sets of demands: those related with operating in a creative industry and those associated with functioning in a tough and competitive business environment. This also represents the industry's dual structure (Hauge, 2017). In line with the current study, the challenges affecting fashion design in Finland will be critically examined.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

This section will provide empirical review of literatures for the study. The review will be done based on the objectives of the study; each of the objective will provide the basis for the empirical review. This is to avail the study clear and concise knowledge development for better understanding.

2.2.1 The Finnish Fashion Industry

Following a successful period of massive exportation to the Soviet Union, the Finnish fashion and textile industry has faced difficult times in terms of financial figures relating to industry growth, production, turnover, and export, as well as in terms of the industry's respectability and credibility. Since the crisis of the 1990s, the number of active businesses and entrepreneurs in Finland has decreased, although demand for apparel and fashion items has increased, aided by increased imports (Lille, 2020).

The industry's employment has dropped dramatically in recent decades, and it now ranks among the lowest in the EU (Finatex website, 2016).

However, there are a few exceptional, young Finnish fashion enterprises that are demonstrating significant development in turnover and demonstrating great promise. International interest in unique and peculiar Finnish fashion exists, however it appears that business issues are impeding the industry's development. Would these businesses be able to achieve the same level of worldwide success as other neighboring states if they could establish and thrive in a healthy environment with access to the necessary pools of knowledge, networks, support, and financing? This study aims to answer this question by evaluating the business environment of the fashion designers in Finland especially as it relates to the availability of the right tools needed for them to succeed.

2.2.2 History of the Finnish Fashion Industry

After WWII, the Finnish garment industry began to expand, as rising urbanization resulted in increased demand and an increase in the number of clothing companies (Kasvio, 2017). Marimekko was started in 1951 and is still one of Finland's most successful design and fashion firms today. Marimekko's success in the 1950s set a precedent for subsequent Finnish fashion and apparel companies, establishing a distinctive and distinct image for Finnish designer clothing (Heikkila-Rastas, 2014). Other firms followed suit with bright colors and geometrical motifs. The Finnish textile and fashion design industry began to reinvent its lines and techniques in the 1950s and 1960s, partially as a result of Marimekko's success in local and foreign markets, and partly as a result of changes in the international fashion business. Since the mid-1960s, efforts have also been focused on exports and globalization of the textile and clothing industry: in 1966, the textile and apparel industry accounted for 3.8 percent of overall exports, with nearly half of those going to the Soviet Union. Clothing had established itself as part of the Finnish design concept by the end of the 1960s, which was still riding high on the buzz and success of the 1950s (Heikkila-Rastas, 2014).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the government aided and promoted the design industry and its exports, for example, by sending tiny Finnish fashion enterprises to international fairs and exhibitions. The designers gained trust and confidence as a result of the public's backing (Nikkinen, 2018). The Finnish fashion and garment business began to flourish fast around the turn of the 1960s-1970s (Kasvio, 2017), and

the 1970s were the industry's golden years (Heikkila-Rastas, 2014). The industry was at a crossroads at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. Employment in the sector peaked at 35 000 in 1979, accounting for 6% of all jobs in domestic production. Kasvio and Heikkila-Rastas both use the term new-exports to refer to the growth and importance of apparel and textile exports to the Soviet Union, which peaked in 1981 (Heikkila-Rastas, 2014). Domestic and international demand for Finnish clothes remained strong, with exports outnumbering imports by four to one (Kasvio, 2017).

Between 1970 and 1990, the Finnish apparel sector saw significant changes (Tikkanen, 2014), resulting in differences between Finland and the rest of the Nordic countries. Since the 1960s, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway have been in steep decline due to rising costs and imports, compelling them to relocate production to lower-cost countries at an early stage. In the 1970s, Finland's economic and political situation, combined with a cheap labor force, created a unique situation: production and exports continued to grow until the 1980s, and as a result, Finland's production capacity in the 1970s was nearly equal to that of the rest of the Nordic countries combined (Kasvio, 2017).

However, the Finnish garment and textile sector suffered a severe collapse in the 1980s, resulting in volume reductions and widespread layoffs. Several factors contributed to the quick decline: first, domestic demand fell, and rising imports increased competition, reducing revenues and profits for Finnish businesses. The fall of the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of the world's largest export market. The Finnish enterprises' offerings were also based on disadvantageous product portfolios: collections that were primarily supplied to Eastern European markets could not be sold in the more demanding western markets.

Furthermore, western-market products were positioned in the low-to-mid price range, i.e. in the segments with the most fierce competition (Kasvio, 2017). The ease with which Finnish enterprises could succeed in eastern markets also meant that they didn't have to put much effort into marketing or sales: whatever was created and exported could be sold. As a result, Finnish enterprises' marketing and branding skills were lacking.

2.2.3 Current state of Finnish fashion industry

In the past, the clothing and textile industry was successful in Finland since the 1950s - they employed up to 35,000 people and were significant part of the economy. At the most, there were around 520

clothing and textile companies in the country, and trade with the Soviet Union was extensive, which guaranteed full-time employment for the Finnish companies. In the beginning of 1980, export of textiles and clothes was four times the amount of import (Flanders Investment and Trade, 2017: 6). The situation drastically changed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was a principle trade partner for Finland (Korvenmaa 2001: 9). Simultaneously, during the 1990s, a new global division of labour shaped a novel model for a global fashion industry as production moved to countries with a cheap labour force. As a result, the clothing and textile industry in Finland declined and the country had to build a new industry (Lille, 2020). Since then, Finland has been incorporated in global value chains with production in south-eastern Asia and in Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), export to European countries and to Russia, import from south-eastern Asia and from Europe, and with design and product development in Finland.

According to statistics, collected by Finnish Textile and Fashion, in 2018 the overall clothing and textile industry consisted of 3400 companies, employed approximately 22,000 people and had a turnover of 4.4 billion euros (Mikkonen 2020). The value of Finland's export of textile and fashion goods in 2018 was 700 million euros, which was significantly less than the country's import of 2.4 billion euros. Finland's industry mostly consists of medium- and small-sized companies. Even the turnover of the biggest Finnish clothing companies is not more than 100-200 million euros per year. For instance, L-Fashion Group (the owner of brands Luhta, Rukka, etc.) had a turnover of about 246 million euros in 2016 (Largest Companies 2020a); Marimekko, ca. 102 million euros in 2017 (Largest Companies 2020b); and Reima, ca. 74 million euros in 2016 (Largest Companies 2020c). Hence, these companies can sustain themselves, but they are not big enough to support and push forward Finnish fashion ecosystem as the companies in Sweden (H&M) and in Denmark (Bestseller) can do. Young companies such as Makia and R/H are growing at the moment, but they are relatively small. One of such small promising companies, Samuji, had almost gone bankrupt in 2019 and was bailed out from debt by a crowd funding campaign (Yle, 2019). It is a typical situation in the industry that companies struggle to find investors. Overall, the clothing and textile industry is not big in Finland. It had bright moments in the past, but has struggled in the 2000s.

2.2.4 Fashion policy network in Finnish fashion industry

The difficulty in defining the assemblage of key actors responsible for fashion policy is due to the fact that there is no single individual or body in Finland who coordinates the actions of the fashion sector and distributes information about it to society and the government. Fashion is occasionally the subject of direct and indirect policies of ministries (Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment; Ministry of Foreign Affairs), as well as governmental organizations or agencies working under the ministries' auspices. For example, the Arts Promotion Center Finland is a government-funded organization under the Ministry of Education and Culture that promotes fashion as an art form and offers grants and subsidies to individuals and groups involved in the arts. Tekes and Finpro, which combined in 2018 to form Business Finland, operate under the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and fund research and innovation, as well as helping Finnish companies expand internationally.

The Academy of Finland is a government-funded research organization. Sitra (The Finnish Innovation Fund) is a think tank and investment business that works under the auspices of the Finnish Parliament to fund projects that promote economic growth, international competitiveness, and cooperation. Research and educational organizations, such as universities and research institutes (for example, VTT) financed by public and private funds, are viewed as part of the fashion policy network because they are involved in policy as experts. Aalto University has been the most influential school in the world for fashion designers and other professionals (fifth place for BA programme and 14th place for MA programme in 2017 according to the rating of *The Business of Fashion 2017*). The Design Museum in Helsinki, for example, plays a significant role in establishing national identity through fashion. In terms of the private sector, there are non-governmental groups that actively interact with the government, such as the trade unions Finnish Textile and Fashion and Ornamo, which advocate for the fashion industry.

Furthermore, commercial firms like as marketing and public relations firms (for example, Juni Communication & Production) play a role in how fashion is managed because they are heavily involved in government-funded fashion programs. According to Ryynanen (2016), all of these actors can be called policymakers when they are working toward a single goal or a common-spirited intent in creating fashion-related issues in Finland. Participation in state-sponsored programs and (co-)funding of these actors using public funds were also used to include the actors in my study.

As described, the fashion sector in Finland is seen as immature and fragmented by industry actors, particularly in comparison to Sweden and Denmark. Fashion is not regarded as a business; or a money-making device (Ryynanen, 2016). Nonetheless, state officials are paying attention to and supporting fashion at the moment, but this could change at any time and may not be renewed. The justifications given are that the fashion industry's contribution to the country's GDP and employment is insignificant; hence it is not worth paying attention to. Miller and Rose's (2020) method assumed that the state is made up of networks of people who aren't necessarily united. Simultaneously, there is a strong argument for the necessity for policy development and consolidation.

There is a view that there should be a specific person in charge of the fashion policy, who would be responsible for coordinating policy actions for the fashion industry among policymakers; such an organization should take the lead in this and begin coordinating all of the small things that are going on all of the time in order to have such a powerful impact. The key problem would be to develop a government system that identifies fashion as a distinct policy target, rather than portraying it as a generic outcome of other policy sectors like culture or the economics (Pratt, 2012). This person might coordinate the drafting of a fashion policy paper, similar to what happened with design policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Korvenmaa 2017). Fashion, like design in the past, would gain a stronger position in the governmental system, greater visibility, and higher recognition among actors, including the general public, if such a strategy were implemented (Valtonen, 2015).

CHAPTER THREE

CHALLENGES OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY IN FINLAND

This chapter provides a review of literature on the challenges faced by the fashion industry in Finland. The aim of the review is to espouse the factors that may be affecting the growth and development capacities of fashion in Finland with the aim of addressing the challenges as provided by scholars.

3.1 Policy Challenge: Lack of government supports and long-term development strategy

On a strategic policy level, entrepreneurship in the creative sectors is encouraged. The World Design Capital year in 2012, in particular, sparked a flurry of new projects and interest in the creative and design industries. Nonetheless, the general public's perception of the fashion sector is negative (Lille, 2020), and public bodies in Finland have made no systematic efforts or taken specific actions to assist the business. In Finland, similar public determination and development activities have not been undertaken as they have been in Denmark and Sweden. The government has not regarded the industry as credible or realized its potential, and no single politician has taken the initiative to start a public debate. Fashion industry representatives have been pressing for the creation of a better support structure and organization, but their efforts have so far achieved no practical results.

3.2 Challenge of Finance: General environment for small company financing in Finland

Due to the current macroeconomic crisis, obtaining private investments is difficult (Sitra, 2016). There is a shortage of finance for startup and growth companies, according to the widespread view on private equity and private investing in startups and growth companies. Debt and leveraging have already been used by fashion enterprises in Finland. Private equity and investments, on the other hand, were considered as vital to bridge the equity imbalances and truly develop the companies. This would allow businesses to have equity on their balance sheets rather than having to increase the amount of liabilities they owe. Financing conditions differ by industrial category, and several interviewees mentioned a general investment trend that favors the IT and software industries. There was no particular desire to invest in the fashion or creative industries (Sitra, 2016).

3.3 Institutional factors

The Finnish fashion sector is highly fragmented, with both large and small businesses. A design sector that is fragmented in terms of company structures is susceptible (Power et al, 2016). Small fashion businesses lack adequate networks with other companies in the industry, in addition to the resources required for worldwide expansion (Lille, 2020). Small design firms, according to Power et al (2016), require collaborative networks to generate complicated design packages in order to remain competitive in worldwide marketplaces. It is possible that a lack of this type of networking hurts the competitiveness of the Finnish fashion sector and its businesses in global marketplaces. Clusterization and networking inside an industry are inextricably linked. Clusters are geographically connected businesses and organizations that pool their technological expertise, information, skills, competencies, and resources (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2019).

Clusters, according to Navickas and Malakauskaite (2019), can help businesses thrive and grow, particularly in the SME sector, by giving them new ways to reach worldwide markets and lower production costs. Small businesses could increase their competitiveness in international marketplaces by taking use of cluster-related externalities (Zyglidopoulos et al, 2016). Clusterization has benefited both businesses and the whole economy in Denmark (Macoun et al, 2017).

In Finland, there is no such robust fashion industry cluster comprised of industry associations, educational and research institutes that provide assistance to entrepreneurs and businesses. Aside from the lack of clusterization, the Finnish fashion industry's institutional architecture is weak and dispersed. In contrast to Sweden, where many fashion industry associations are grouped under Moderadet, the Swedish Fashion Council, Finland lacks such an umbrella body (Lille, 2020). With no unified representative bodies, political lobbying and promotion of such a sector is challenging (Power et al, 2016). As previously said, the textile and clothing industry is clearly separated into large textile and apparel producers and small designer-entrepreneur-driven businesses. Despite this, the government's business development assistance is essentially the same for all businesses, ignoring the fact that businesses of all sizes require different types of assistance (Lille, 2020).

However, there have been some advancements. Finpro and its Luovimo program, which is a creative industries internationalization program, host workshops and growth programs for small and medium-

sized fashion and lifestyle businesses. In the governmental sector, some efforts have so been done in the right direction to improve the internationalization of Finnish fashion enterprises. However, as suggested by Power et al (2016), the Finnish fashion sector should continue to work to enhance the institutional framework by carefully coordinating its organizations to ensure that its requirements are considered in government decision-making.

The educational system must also be improved. It is currently focused mostly on arts and crafts, and it frequently fails to offer designer students with a necessary perspective on the commercial side of the fashion industry (Lille, 2020; Power et al, 2016). As a result, the knowledge foundation is insufficient for successful entrepreneurship (Power et al, 2016), and fashion students should collaborate with business students, for example, to improve their understanding of commercial elements (Lille, 2020).

Another issue that frequently arises in the fashion business is intellectual property rights (IPR). Despite measures such as national copyright and competition legislation, as well as the European Union's Design Directive and Design Regulation, IPR is generally regarded insufficient in the fashion sector, as Holton (2014) and Derclaye (2020) contend. Copyrights do not protect the real clothing, only the sketches of them, while trademark practices only protect the firm emblem (Holton, 2014). Inadequate legal protection is a problem, particularly for small fashion businesses, who often lack the means to prevent imitation (Falay et al, 2017). However, the problematic nature of copying in the fashion industry may be questioned. Copying can actually increase a company's visibility, as it did for Marimekko when it sued Dolce & Gabbana for utilizing a floral pattern identical to the Unikko motif created by the Finnish textile maker (WWD, 2018). Fashion designers have been inspired by each other's creations throughout history, and as is well known, fashion is always changing, with the same trends resurfacing every few years.

According to Raustiala and Sprigman (2016), fashion innovators gain from copying since it shortens the fashion cycle and so generates more revenue through faster turnover. As a result, copying might be viewed as a challenge that can also be beneficial.

3.4 Product

The quick fashion cycle, which also shortens the product life cycle, is one of the characteristics of the fashion business. To be competitive, fashion companies must quickly bring creative products to market, which requires a lot of resources (Holton, 2014; Raustiala & Sprigman, 2016). Fashion is constantly changing due to the aforementioned copying and variation of seasonal trends. To stay up, designers are literally forced to release new collections many times a year, which necessitates a significant amount of time and resources. Even though it is definitely necessary for a fashion house to set itself apart from its competitors, in Finland, this is mainly accomplished through unconventional product design, frequently at the price of the garment's wearability (Lille, 2020). Design education also emphasizes individuality. It should be appreciated, according to Lille (2020), while keeping in mind that garments are utilitarian items. As a result, originality should be applied to developing new business models, as commercial aspects of design are a significant part of the job (Lille, 2020).

The issue of adaptation is a specific aspect of the industry, in addition to being manifested at the firm level. When it comes to foreign markets, companies often have two options: build broad items for worldwide markets or develop products that are adaptable to different regions (Powers & Loyka, 2020). Changes in the product's or packaging's characteristics and attributes are made to adapt it to different markets (Cavusgil et al, 2016), which can be costly.

According to Lishchenko et al. (2017), products that are adapted to a certain market also respond to the needs of the market's clients, making adaptation more beneficial in the long term. Distinct cultures have different perspectives on design, which calls for local adaptation in order to achieve international success (Moalosi et al, 2020; Salimaki & Gabrielsson, 2015). However, fashion enterprises' competitive advantage is frequently predicated on the product's unique nature, and altering the product could result in the firm's distinctiveness being lost (Lishchenko et al, 2017). To internationalize successfully, fashion companies must strike a balance between product adaption and standardization initiatives.

3.5 Market

Finland is a hard local market that forces businesses to internationalize due to its small size and hence restricted volume (Falay et al, 2017; Gabrielsson, 2015). During the last two decades, Finland's retail structure has seen significant changes. Since the 1990s, the hypermarket category has increased its share of clothing sales, resulting in the closure of many small, independent businesses (Council of

State report, 2016). The market is too restricted due to the tiny number of possible retailers (Lille, 2020). The local market is therefore difficult for fashion companies, and it may be argued that many fashion entrepreneurs sacrifice their limited resources in the domestic market, making it more difficult to succeed in international markets. Finland's consumer base makes it a difficult domestic market as well. Finnish consumers might be defined as traditional and trend-following rather than trend-setting, making the Finnish market a difficult platform for inventive designers: enterprises with unique and trend-setting items struggle to make a profit here (Falay et al, 2017). Investing in clothing has not always been regarded favorably in Finnish culture. Customers in Finland spend less money on fashion and clothing than consumers in other Western European countries (Happonen, 2014).

This makes profiting in the domestic market difficult, which can be a barrier to successful internationalization. Customers in overseas marketplaces, in addition to the local market, can be difficult to come by. Design preferences fluctuate and shift within and between customer groups, posing a challenge for companies in design-intensive industries (Falay et al, 2017). A fashion company must define its foreign consumer segments in order to succeed outside of the domestic market. It's difficult for a fashion house to produce products that are both distinctive and appealing to multiple market segments (Falay et al, 2017).

3.6 Foreign networks

Foreign networks that are appropriate can also help a fashion company succeed in globalization. According to Lille (2020), finding acceptable partners in foreign markets is one of the most critical problems in the internationalization of Finnish fashion enterprises. Firms can locate essential co-operators as well as get insights into a certain market through overseas networks, which can also help overcome cultural gaps. A company can avoid the risk of outsidership by leveraging the knowledge of its international partners, which can be gathered through network exchanges (Johanson & Vahlne, 2019). It might thus be claimed that Finnish fashion enterprises are having difficulty internationalizing since they are exposed to the risk of foreignness due to a lack of foreign networks. Lack of links to particular authorities in the fashion sector can also be caused by a lack of international networking.

According to Falay et al. (2017), the taste elite operate as gatekeepers in the fashion industry. They edit major fashion publications and judge fashion competitions: the jury of the Hyeres International

Fashion Festival 2015, for example, featured the head designer of Chanel and the former editor-in-chief of Vogue Paris (Sykko, 2015), both of whom are powerful figures in the fashion industry. Given the importance of references, exposure, and reputation in the fashion industry, having links to these authorities might be critical for a fashion entrepreneur looking to expand internationally.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 METHODOLOGY

The research methodology will be a review of articles, websites and books of existing literature on the subject. The survey method research will be adopted for this study. The study shall use Marimekko Fashion industry as its case study, and data shall be collected from its employees and members of staff. Quantitative research methodology will be utilized in gathering primary data from respondents through questionnaires. These selected respondents will be employees, and stakeholders; whose views would be subjected to data analysis for this study. The adoption of the survey method research is to avail the researcher the chance to gather large amounts of data.

4.2 Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions (or other types of prompts) for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire was invented by the Statistical Society of London in 1838 (Gault, 2017). Usually, a questionnaire consists of a number of questions that the respondent has to answer in a set format. A distinction is made between open-ended and closed-ended questions. An open-ended question asks the respondent to formulate his own answer, whereas a closed-ended question asks the respondent to pick an answer from a given number of options. The response options for a closed-ended question should be exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Robinson, 2018).

The questionnaire designed will be in two parts: the first part will be composed of questions requiring demographic information on the respondents such as age, sex, business specialization, and other personal information on the respondent. The second part will contain questions relating to the subject matter of the investigation. The questionnaire will be of both open and closed ended questions. On the open ended questions, the questionnaire will provide the respondents with the opportunity to have the freedom to decide the aspect, detail and length of the answer. In responding to questions the respondents will be expected to answer appropriately by ticking [✓] on the responses suitable to the questions.

4.3 Piloting

A pilot study is the pre-testing or ‘trying out’ of a particular research instrument (Baker, 2018). It is used to assess the practicalities of the main study in respect of its implementation and utility and often includes an assessment of resources, such as time and costs, for the main study. Several types of pilot studies exist according to Vogel and Draper-Rodi (2017), and they are often connected to the use of randomized studies to have insight on possible challenges of the research.

For this study, a pilot study will be conducted on the recruited population of study. The essence of the pilot study is to help measure the strength of the instrument chosen for the study and to identify the limitations they present. The researcher will visit the office and business premises of would be respondents and distribute the questionnaire to few (just about 10) respondents to answer; the processes will last for just 10-15mins.

4.4 Sampling

The method of purposive sampling will be used to develop the sample of the research under discussion. According to this method, which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, sample members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject (Freedman et al., 2017). In the current study, the sample members of 150 respondents who will be selected has special relationship with the phenomenon under investigation, sufficient and relevant work experience in the field of fashion business, active involvement in several business initiatives and partnerships, as well as proven research background and understanding of raw data concerning the fashion industry. Within this context, the participants of this study will be owners of fashion business outfits in Helsinki the capital of Finland operating both locally and internationally. The respondents will be identified and will be purposively selected to respond to the questionnaires for the quantitative data.

4.5 Recruitment

Recruitment of research participants takes many forms that involve presenting potential participants with information about the study, prior to their enrolment, to help establish interest and willingness to serve as a research subject. For this research work, the identified population of study will be visited and presented with a letter of introduction explaining the aim of the research and the need for their participation. Those who would willingly oblige to participate will be selected and informed on the date for actual interview.

4.6 Data Analysis

Traditionally, as noted by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), Data analysis in mixed methods research consists of analyzing the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods. The quantitative method of data analysis that will be utilized for the study will be computational technique of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), while the qualitative data technique will be thematic analysis; this can be pretty useful for finding out about people's experiences, views, and opinions. The open ended questions will be analyzed using theming, as this would be appropriate in merging responses with objectives.

4.7 Ethical considerations

The current study will be subjected to certain ethical standards. Basically the ethical standards of research that will guide this study will be in line with BERA (2018) ethics for educational research. These ethical considerations shall include: consent, transparency, right to withdraw, incentives, harm arising from participation in the research, privacy and data storage and disclosure. The researcher shall ensure that this ethics are brought to the knowledge of participant in the research and are observed to the latter. The essence of this will be to ensure that participants in the research do so willingly and it also places on the researcher the need to protect and respect the rights of the participants (BERA, 2018).

4.8 Foreseen limitations

Every study has its own set of limits and challenges. The limited resources available in a setting of peer review on fashion in Finland, which might be substituted by internal reports and survey findings, would provide a barrier to the smooth study. Another constraint would be selected respondents of fashion business owners and consumers refusing to take part in the surveys and interviews mainly because of confidentiality issues. It may be difficult to organize interviews, and the quantity of people who respond to surveys is not guaranteed. As a result, the researcher may not be able to perform certain study owing to time restrictions or participant availability (Creswell & Plano, 2017).

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data collected with regard to the research objectives from the Marimekko Fashion industry in Finland. In collecting the data for the research, the study made use of simple percentage parameter to draw up the population sample size for the study. Questionnaires were administered to one hundred and fifty (150) members of the sample frame; one hundred and thirty eight (138) questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher, but twenty two (22) were not properly answered, and so were rejected. In the final analysis, the researcher used one hundred and sixteen (116) of the properly completed questionnaires for data presentation and analysis.

5.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

TABLE 1: Distribution of respondents by their Socio-demographic characteristics

Sex	Frequency	Percentage[%]
Male	50	43.1%
Female	66	56.9%
AGE		
Below or up to 25	36	31.0
26 – 40	72	62.1
41 and above	8	6.9
Marital Status		
Single	36	31.0

Married	45	38.8
Divorced	23	19.8
Separated	12	10.3
Educational Qualification		
No formal education	17	14.7
Formal education	48	41.4
Postgraduate Higher education	12	10.3
Vocational education	32	27.6
Others specify	7	6.0
Total	116	100

Source: field work [2022]

The above table shows that out of the 116 respondents' sampled, 43.1% were males and 56.9% were females. The implication of this is that there were more females in the sample frame organization and such aptly represented on the sample frame of the study.

From the table above, the age distribution of respondents was also analyzed. Respondents below or up to 25 formed 31.0%, those between the ages of 26–40 formed 62.1%, and those between the ages of 41 and above formed 6.9%. The implication of this age distribution is that, the majority of the respondents was between the age of 26–40, and are old enough and experienced to provide adequate responses on the study.

The table above also shows the educational qualification of the respondents. 14.7% had no formal education, 41.4% formed those that completed formal education, and 10.3% were those that completed postgraduate higher education, while 27.6% attended vocational education. The implication of this is that the majority of the respondents have had one formal education or the other.

The table also shows the marital status of the distribution of respondents; 26.5% were single, 58.1% are married, 10.7% are divorced while 4.7% are separated. This shows that the majority of the respondents were married.

5.2 SECTION B: Analysis of Survey Responses

TABLE 2: Respondents awareness of the state of fashion industry in Finland

Awareness	Frequency	%
Aware	83	71.6%
Not aware	33	28.4%
Total	116	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2022

The state of fashion design and the fashion industry in Finland and the respondents' knowledge of the concept were ascertained from table 2. Respondents affirmed that they are aware of the state of the fashion industry in the country, as they have been part of the system for years including the different developmental stages of Finnish fashion industry; this is because the majority of the sample frame of 71.6% made the claim.

TABLE 3: Responses on if Fashion design has been on the ascendancy over time

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	83	69.8%
No	33	18.1%
Total	116	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The result on table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents believes that the fashion industry in Finland has been on the ascendancy over the years. 69.8% of the respondents claimed that, over the past few years, there has been noticeable growth in the fashion industry in relation to the expansion of fashion designers and fashion material productions. The implication of the responses is that, Finnish fashion industry has experienced growth and has continued to improve over the years.

TABLE 4: Responses on how long respondents have worked with Marimekko Fashion firm

Responses	Frequency	%
The last 1 year	42	36.2%
The last 2-5 years	19	16.4%

The last 6-10 years	53	45.7%
Over 10 years	2	1.7%
Total	116	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2022

Table 4 shows the result of the periods respondents have worked as fashion designers or administrators at the Marimekko fashion firm. From the result, it can be deduced that 45.7% of the respondents have worked with the firm for the last six to ten years, while a few 1.7% has worked for over 10 years. By implication, the sample was composed of people who were experienced enough to respond to details concerning fashion.

TABLE 5: Responses on whether or not the Finnish government policy system influence the development of the fashion industry

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	34	29.3%
No	68	58.6%
I can't say	16	13.8%
Total	116	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2022

The response on table 4.5 shows that the Finnish government has rarely evolved their policy system that will influence the development of the fashion industry. 58.6% of the respondents stated that the government has not been particularly interested in the fashion industry as it is perceived as individual economy.

TABLE 6: Responses on if fashion design be utilized as a tool for economic development in Finland

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	73	62.9%
No	6	5.2%
I have no idea	37	31.9%
Total	116	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Table 6 shows that 62.9% of the respondents suggested that the fashion design/industry can be utilized as a tool for economic development in Finland. The respondents affirmed that the fashion industry is a large economic hub that can boost the economy of Finland through job creation and employment.

TABLE 7: Responses on the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland

Responses	Frequency	%
Lack of startup funds	3	2.6%
Poor government support	7	6.0%
High cost of production	8	6.9%
All of the above	98	84.5%
Others	-	-
Total	116	100%

Source: Fieldwork 2022

Table 7 shows the distribution of responses on the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland. The results showed that 84.5% of the respondents claimed that a lack of startup funds, poor government support and high cost of production of fabrics and clothing combine to pose challenges to running an effective fashion business in Finland.

5.3 Discussion of findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

The study found that respondents were well aware of the concept and practice of fashion and the fashion industry in Finland. Most of the respondents (71.6%) have this high level of knowledge because they have been part of the fashion industry as workers with Marimekko Fashion; majority (45.7%) of them had worked with the fashion firm for six to ten years.

The result of the study also showed that respondents' believe the fashion industry in Finland has been on the ascendancy over the years. 69.8% of respondents claimed that, over the past few years, the industry has grown in several facets.

The study also found that the Finnish government has rarely evolved a policy system that will influence the development of the fashion industry. 58.6% of the respondents stated that the government has not been particularly interested in the fashion industry as it is perceived as an individual economy.

This is despite the fact that the fashion industry constitutes the highest employer of labour and contributing to the Finnish economy.

Finally, it was also discovered that the lack of startup funds, poor government support and high cost of production of fabrics and clothing are among the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the research work and the process or organization of the study. The conclusion of the study is also stated based on the findings of the study, and thereafter the recommendations are made to provide the contribution of knowledge to the study.

6.1 Summary

The study focused on examining fashion design in Finland particularly as it relates to understanding the state's policy system for fashion design. The study employed a five chaptered process to carry out the study, the study in chapter one provided the background to the study and research objectives; chapter two offered a literature review on related literature relevant to improve the understanding of the subject matter. In chapter three, the study adopted a case study method, where through documentation reviews and questionnaire, data was obtained for the study. In chapter four, the data derived from the field work was analyzed using quantitative methods and in chapter five the summary, conclusion and recommendations were made.

6.2 Conclusion

According to the study literature and practical evidence, industry-level challenges have an impact on the ability of Finnish fashion enterprises to profit from their innovations. Indeed, the difficulties in profiting from innovation appear to be linked to the industry-level characteristics and challenges of Finnish fashion. As a result, industry-level challenges make it difficult for businesses to profit from their inventions. The industry-level issues and features have a significant impact on the complementary assets of Finnish fashion enterprises, and it appears that the challenges in capturing value stem from the industry-level challenges. One of the most important complementary assets for a fashion company is adequate financing. Funds are required to create and commercialize a product.

6.3 Recommendations

The government's support for fashion in Finland is both important and crucial, as it will help to close the financial gap that is harming the industry. Simultaneously, further attempts to bring industry actors together and stabilize networks are required - for example, through an institution that performs the function of communication, such as the Danish Fashion Institute or the Swedish Fashion Council. This role for communicating the fashion industry's requirements might potentially be handled by an existing organization. Further government efforts in the aim of developing a policy paper for fashion in Finland could aid in stabilizing and progressing the industry. This is thought to boost the end fashion industry's chances of success..

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Appendix 1**Questionnaire****Section A: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Sex	Responses (√)
Male	
Female	
AGE	
Below or up to 25	
26 – 40	
41 and above	
Marital Status	
Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Separated	

Educational Qualification	
No formal education	
Formal education	
Postgraduate Higher education	
Vocational education	
Others, specify	

SECTION B: Survey Questions

2. Are you aware of the state of fashion industry in Finland? Aware [] Not aware []
3. Has fashion design has been on the ascendancy over time in Finland? Yes [] No []
4. How long have you worked with Marimekko Fashion firm? The last 1 year [] The last 2-5 years [] The last 6-10 years [] Over 10 years []
5. Does the Finnish government policy system influence the development of the fashion industry? Yes [] No [] I have no idea []
6. Would you say fashion design can be utilized as a tool for economic development in Finland? Yes [] No [] I have no idea []
7. What are the challenges faced by fashion designers in Finland?
 - a. Lack of startup funds []
 - b. Poor government support []
 - c. High cost of production []
 - d. All of the above []
 - e. Others []

