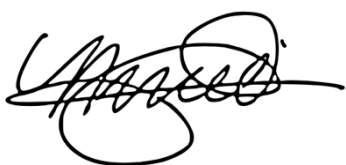


Disruption to Destruction: Exploring the Effects of Digital Disruption on the  
Value Creation Processes within the Field of Fashion through the lens of  
Service Dominant Logic

Submitted by Nina Van Volkinburg to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies, July 2020.

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acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nina Van Volkinburg', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

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Thank You.

## Abstract

Digital platforms have democratised the fashion industry; once notoriously shielded by gatekeepers. Today, fashion's end consumers rely less on such gatekeepers who hold industry specific knowledge, but instead, "follow" social media influencers who have shifted control from the sender (e.g. fashion brand) to the receiver (e.g. consumer). Together with a growing dependence on other boundary breaking technologies, the relevance of traditional gatekeepers is questioned, as is the holistic process of value creation within this ecosystem. Building upon contemporary service dominant logic (SDL) literature on service ecosystems, as well as the composition of value codestruction, this thesis zooms into the empirical context of the global fashion industry. To capture the complexity of individual and group behaviours within micro, meso and macro network contexts, an ethnographic research strategy was conducted, spanning over 18 months and including participant observations and self-reflexivity, a focus group, and 17 semi-structured interviews with influential fashion intermediaries.

Through thematic analysis, results were presented in a series of narrative stories, which ultimately, help shine a new light on how we view SDL in regard to operant resources, the complexities of diverse ecosystem actors, and value extraction. Our theoretical contribution is to add to SDL literature with what we call the co-abduction of value and the democratisation of primary value creation. The importance of this finding is to highlight how the micro and macro level processes of a field can lead industry actors to manipulate value creation in what was previously a highly territorial industry. Our contribution highlights the mechanisms through which value creation can be appropriated, destroyed and reconfigured.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

*Clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us. - Virginia Woolf from Orlando (1933; p. 131)*

Within her biography of the time-traveling Orlando, Woolf describes the, all too often ignored, power of clothes. She alludes that such mere arrangements of fabrics **go beyond their duty as tangible goods and instead provide services** as grand as altering our worldviews. Additionally, Woolf hints at the symbolic qualities injected into clothes where, as in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, clothes continue to construct our individual and collective identities, as well as culture. However, unlike the Post-Edwardian age, the identity clothing lends us is being digested, altered, and discussed in revised forums due to ongoing digital disruption, including social media platforms such as Instagram. In an instant, one image of an individual wearing a particular garment can reach a global audience of millions, simultaneously breaking boundaries around communities, as well as the conventions of traditional value creation processes and complimentary practices.

The consequences of digital disruption have transformed society, as well as industries and individual organisations, with **information and communication becoming increasingly accessible and generated by the hands of decentralised figures** (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). The purpose of this thesis is to explore such consequences of digital disruption in relation to the field of fashion; a field

traditionally rooted within exclusivity and aspiration (Priest, 2005). Hence, this introduction will firstly outline both the empirical and theoretical research context of this thesis, where focus will be placed on contemporary developments in service dominant logic. This will be followed by the aim and consequent objectives, which will be presented alongside a rationale justifying the relevance of conducting this research. Finally, this dissertation's structure will be included, framing the content for the upcoming chapters.

## 1.2 Research Context

### 1.2.1 Empirical Context

The worth of the global apparel market is estimated at £2.3 trillion, amounting to 2 percent of the world's GDP (FashionUnited, 2019) and reflects a steady increase in demand for apparel and footwear worldwide (O'Connell, 2020); in particular in Eastern markets, with the Asia-Pacific region accounting for 38 percent of sales (McKinsey and Company, 2018). Within the UK, fashion has contributed £32.3 billion to GDP in 2017 and employs over 890,000 (Oxford Economics, 2018, as cited in The Creative Industries, 2019). Additionally, the fashion industry's growth has increased by 11% between 2015-2016 (DCMS, 2017 as cited in Fashion Roundtable, 2018).

The characteristics of what constitute fashion, include its inherent dependence on imitation and distinction, as well as short life cycles, high impulse purchasing, low predictability, and high volatility (Christopher, Lowson, and Peck, 2004). Such volatility is particularly poignant today as the global fashion industry has experienced unprecedented change over the past 20 years (Deloitte, 2017).



Change within the fashion industry is largely composed of the predominant oligopolistic ownership of fashion organisations by conglomerates and the globalisation of markets for cultural products (Crane, 1997), the decline of the department store, boom in fast fashion, emphasis on the experience economy, sustainability concerns, and most notably, the digital disruption of Web 2.0 and consequent social media platforms (Quelhas-Brito et al, 2020; McKinsey and Company, 2017b). Such digital platforms can be seen as vehicles of democratisation (Anduiza et al., 2009; Boulianne, 2009; Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2010), as they are regarded to invite increased access of knowledge and a heightened ability for individuals to exchange views and collaborate actions (Kyriakopoulou, 2011). Such collaborative action may include the creation of user-generated content which is described as the various forms of digital media content that are publicly available and created by end-users (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Due to their potential for generating collaboration, this dissertation too takes the stance that they are vehicles of democratisation.

The perceived democratisation has thus impacted the strict hierarchy, notoriously shielded by gatekeepers, which once defined the fashion industry (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006). Such gatekeepers, often cultural intermediaries, include publication editors and fashion designers, regarded today as the industry's Establishment. Today, fashion's end consumers rely less on such Establishment actors who hold specialist knowledge of their craft, nor on the authority of conventional branding campaigns for individual consumption knowledge (Holt, 2016). Instead, to acquire information and inspiration, consumers are able to proactively take part in value creation activities within the fashion industry, such

as watching a fashion show from the perspective of the “front row”, interacting with other online spectators in real time through social media (Crew, 2013). One example would include the Italian luxury fashion label Gucci, which attracted over 14,000 viewers to watch its presentation of its Autumn Winter 2018 fashion show Live, streaming via Instagram Stories. It attracted a further 30,000 viewers to watch the show retrospectively on the platform (Instagram, 2018); a stark contrast to the couple hundred invited guests present at the show offline.

Often through electronic word of mouth (eWOM), consumers hold the newfound power to determine the legitimacy and worth of a fashion brand by influencing their own networks (Kim and Johnson, 2016). This suggests that companies today are regarded to co-direct and co-brand their business (Jin, 2012), suggesting fashion has thus evolved to become a cocreated dialogue amongst a range of different stakeholders. Such developments are a sharp contrast to former centrally controlled discourses (Amed, 2010). As respected former *Herald Tribune* Fashion critic Suzy Menkes acknowledges, “fashion has gone from a monologue to a conversation” (Amed, 2010). The consequences of such rapid change include a strategic shift towards consumer-centric practices (de Silva, 2018), higher staff turnover (Abraham and Mellery-Pratt, 2016) and a recognised lack of cultural ingenuity (Rabkin, 2018). As a result, scholars have characterised digital disruption to cause turmoil within the business ecosystem (Weill and Woerner, 2018).

Digital technologies have significantly quickened the pace of fashion and shattered traditional product development cycles in the industry, with production

lead times often within two to three weeks (Parker-Strak et al., 2020). Between 2014-2017, sales within this fast fashion sector have grown by more than 20% (McKinsey and Company, 2017a) racing to catch up with consumer demand. Due to the customer's heightened desire to display their participation of fashion trends online amongst peers, this "Instagram generation" of proactive individuals is driving the need for purchase immediacy through social media behaviour. In turn, this has sparked a rise of "see now buy now" fashion presentations, where consumers increasingly have the option to buy garments straight off a designer runway instead of waiting 6 months after a collection is presented. Additionally, fashion organisations have started to explore how new collaboration opportunities can increase the speed of productivity (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010), one example being between retail platform Farfetch and Gucci. Through the collaboration, Gucci offers delivery in selected cities including London, from the store to a customer's home in 90 minutes or less, again satisfying the consumer's appetite for immediacy (Farfetch, 2017).

The fashion consumer is increasingly tech savvy and, as previously stated, has access to much more information, thus impacting their consumer purchase journey; evolving from a traditional linear model towards a complex series of online and offline touch points (McKinsey and Company, 2017b). Consumer purchase decisions are increasingly influenced by eWOM (Thoumrungroje, 2014), peer reviews (Riegner, 2007), and influencer marketing (Chetioui et al., 2020). Esteban-Santos et al. (2018) state that influencers within fashion represent "the progressive democratisation of fashion and communication" (p.420) where such individuals participate in shifting control from the sender (e.g.

fashion brand) to receiver (e.g. consumer). Brydges, Hracs, and Lavanga (2018) additionally highlight how the phenomenon of fashion “street-style” influencers, labelled as “‘ordinary’ or ‘real’ people are facilitating a growing sense of democratisation in the fashion industry” (p.367). Social media influencers can be seen as part of the “digital revolution” (Sheehan, 2010) which has led to the growth of social media becoming a vital marketing medium. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as:

“a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. (p. 61)”

Such social media can be divided into text-based, picture-based, video-based and network categories (Berthon et al., 2012) and become hosts to virtual brand communities. Social media platforms provide marketers with an extensive set of tools, enabling them to reach current and potential consumers directly through emotional engagement and storytelling, proven effective when providing captivating narratives (PWC, 2017). Through social media, consumers have constant access to diverse opinions, thoughts, experiences and other forms of content from other consumers (Dhar and Chang, 2009). Social media thus “comprises both the conduits and the content dissemination through interactions between individuals” (Berthon et al., 2012, p. 263). Social media and digital platforms such as blogs help facilitate interactions between a firm’s internal experts and outside actors including end-consumers, thus giving rise to

cocreation (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). Therefore, through such ease and pace of information exchange between internal and external actors, brands and retailers failing to meet a brand promise are punished quicker.

With consumers empowered by the tools of social media, business strategy is increasingly consumer-led, and technology driven (Rooney, Krolukowska and Bruce, 2020). For example, retail giant Amazon has created its first Artificial Intelligence designer, through the development of an algorithm which designs clothes by analysing images, copying popular styles and using them to build completely new designs (Knight, 2018). Here big data is harvested largely through customer behaviour online which dictates retail strategy, as well as design. Such digital technologies are impacting new ways of creating value for those employed in the fashion industry, where it is predicted that 20 to 30% of current jobs performed by fashion designers today could be made automated (The Business of Fashion, 2018). Hence, AI enhancements will evolve past traditional machine tasks into creative and customer interaction processes, marrying technology with creativity (Venkatesh, 2006). With the elevated role of the consumer and a growing dependence on boundary breaking technologies including AI and social media platforms within fashion, the relevance of traditional cultural intermediaries comes into question (Molloy and Larner, 2010), as does in turn, the holistic process of value creation which forms the basis of an interdependent fashion ecosystem.

### 1.2.2 Theoretical Context

With the value creation processes within fashion being disrupted by digital technologies, especially in relation to the rise of consumer participation (Crewe, 2013), heightened focus is placed on cocreation and service exchange. Hence, the theoretical context of this thesis lies in service dominant logic (SDL), which assumes that at the root of all organisations, markets, and societies there is a fundamental dependency upon the exchange of service. Vargo and Lusch (2004) define service as “the application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills), through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself (p.2),” which can apply to both actors within and outside of the fashion industry.

SDL is viewed as the process of service, as opposed to a singular output in the form of a product offering that is exchanged (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). In this process of service exchange, an actor’s resources, which can be tangible or intangible, are joined together with another actor’s resources, thus emphasising the notion of cocreation. Such resources are a function of human appraisal and are therefore often dynamic and potentially infinite as they are a function of how something is or could be used (Lusch and Nambisan, 2015). These include *operand resources*, being resources which an actor acts upon to obtain support (often tangible goods), and *operant resources*. Operant resources act upon other resources rather than being operated on and are therefore difficult to transform and dynamic (e.g. human physical or mental skill). Additionally, operant resources can provide a source of sustained competitive advantage (Lusch and Nambisan, 2015) such as industry know-how, and in an era of social media can

be particularly useful, due to the acceleration and ease of communication. As SDL proposes, innovations are not developed exclusively from inside an organisation, thus drawing a link to open innovation, which is regarded as being an innovation process involving purposive knowledge flows across organisational boundaries for monetary or non-monetary motives (Chesbrough and Bogers, 2014).

Thus, innovation evolves from the joint action of actors, inside and outside an organisation, which has been described as a network centric focus as well as acts of cocreation (Romero and Molina, 2011). Within cocreation, actors are fluid participants and have the freedom of being added, dropping out, or form new connections with other resources, which suggests that value creation is dynamic. Viewed through an SDL lens, the notion that actors have defined roles is deemed irrelevant, such as being viewed as a producer, another as an intermediary and another as a consumer, which implies that one actor produces value, the other communicates it and the other destroys value. SDL instead supports a generic actor to actor (A2A) perspective (Vargo and Lusch, 2011). However, it is argued that the A2A perspective lacks an appreciation for the particular role of individual actors and their own capital sets including economic, social, or cultural, as well as being placed in specific fields. SDL provides an opportunity for further research due to the digital developments, which will continue to impact the way actors exchange, experience and innovate through increased interaction, information sharing and thus knowledge generation (Berthon and John, 2006; Lusch and Nambisan, 2015).

Since SDL's official inception in 2004, it has undergone a gradual evolution resulting in an enormous impact. Hailed as the root of service science (Spohrer and Maglio, 2008), its influence has consequentially sparked research in different fields such as an application to branding (Merz, He, and Vargo, 2009), health care management (Joiner and Lusch, 2016), hospitality management (Shaw et al. 2011), logistics (Randall et al, 2010) and within education (Jarvis et al, 2014). It has also played a large role in consumer culture theories (Arnould, Price and Malshe, 2006) and has resulted in various managerial implications further explored by Benttencourt, Lusch and Vargo (2014), highlighting its strategic advantages.

Despite a degree of continuity, focusing on value, processes, and customers, the evolution of SDL can be divided into three stages distinct on their core focus. Upon its establishment, SDL was centred upon a discussion of "what is value" with the understanding of value being placed within service processes. After 2008, focus within SDL shifted towards "who creates value", specifically spotlighting cocreation with the customer and their interactions among different actors; a shift from studying firms to studying customer's roles within value creation. Consequently, the distinction between customer and firm eroded, thus adopting the previously outlined **democratised actor to actor orientation**. In this period, new themes emerged, including social, brand, change, practices, performance, and technology as documented by Wilden et al. (2017). Today, **SDL has moved towards "where is value created"** highlighting the social and structural context of value creation through an examination of institutions, networks, and more specifically ecosystems.



Since 2008, change, development, and performance have become central elements in SDL discussion (Wilden et. al, 2017), reflecting a transition from focusing on the study of customer value to more fully understanding value creation ecosystems and innovation through practices, and social structures. This shift in themes reflects a more dynamic and holistic approach to thinking about value creation from an SDL perspective (Vargo and Lusch, 2011). Akaka et al (2019) state that the evolution of SDL towards an ecosystems view can advance the development of a systematic approach to studying value cocreation and innovation within and among multiple service systems. Thus, further research in SDL includes understanding open innovation, dynamic capabilities, organisational micro-foundations and service systems, including social capital and consumer culture theories, which will enhance value creation in service ecosystems. Thus, it is argued that zooming in within the ecosystem of the global fashion industry will allow us to better understand service dominant logic in an empirical context and ensuing value creation processes in the digital age.

### 1.3 Aim and Objectives

Having outlined the empirical and theoretical context, the aim of this thesis is to explore the effects of digital disruption on the value creation processes within the global fashion industry. This overarching aim was divided into three objectives, spanning from a micro (individual) to macro (fashion ecosystem) level.

Objective 1 will identify how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion

industry. The first objective centres on micro-level, individual industry actors. Objective 1 will focus on an individual's resources, in particular, which technologies individual actors are using and by using these technologies, how their strategies for value creation contrasts from Establishment actors.

Objective 2 will examine how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem. The second objective zooms out from a micro-level towards a meso-level social context, examining a network composed of multiple industry actors. Objective 2 examines shifts within the fashion ecosystem as a consequence of digital disruption, such as reshuffled hierarchies, practices, and fluid boundaries separating inside and outside actors.

Finally, Objective 3 will analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes within the field of fashion. The third objective will centre on the macroscopic effects of digital disruption on fashion's value creation processes, through a lens of value codestruction. Following calls from various scholars (Echeverri and Skálén, 2011; Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017; Järvi, Kähkönen and Torvinen, 2018) the objective will further elaborate on value codestruction within an empirical interorganisational context, differentiating from other conceptual studies examining SDL ecosystems.

In order to meet these three objectives, an ethnographic research strategy has been chosen, which captures the complexity of individual and group behaviours within an empirical context. The ethnographic strategy will lead towards a rich understanding of a specific phenomenon (O'Reilly, 2012) within micro, meso and

macro network contexts. The ethnographic study (Table 1.1) within the global fashion industry spanned over 18 months (January 2018- July 2019), and included participant observations and self-reflexivity, a focus group, and 17 semi-structured interviews with fashion intermediaries.

*Table 1.1 Thesis Research Strategy*

<b>Research Strategy</b>	Participant Observations (18 months)	Self-Reflexivity (18 months)	1 Focus Group	17 Semi-Structured Interviews
<b>Focus</b>	“Looking outwards (industry actors)”	“Looking inwards (myself)”	“Interaction (us)”	“Interaction (us)”
<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Offline:</b> Fashion weeks, Trade shows, Launch Parties, Press events, invite-only activities  <b>Online:</b> Instagram	Self-reflective field notes capturing own thoughts on own experiences as a member of the value creation process in fashion	1, 1-hour focus group with 8 participants working at PR firm	17, 1-hour interviews with fashion intermediaries
<b>Documentation</b>	Fieldnotes, media, artefacts, documents, emails, screenshots		Transcriptions, Audio recordings,	

Source: Author

## 1.4 Rationale

The originality of this thesis is that instead of “zooming out” of value creation processes, a trend in contemporary SDL literature, this research will instead “zoom in” within a specific empirical field. This research will explore disruptive practices within the global fashion industry as well as consequences of what has not yet been adequately explored within SDL; value codestruction. According to Chandler and Vargo (2011) and Meynhardt et al. (2016), the research of micro-

level characteristics can help better understand macroscopic properties, including shared world views; justifying our objectives of examining individuals (micro), networks (meso), and codestructive phenomena (macro) within a specific industry. Equally, zooming into an empirical ecosystem also responds to Greenwood, Hinnings, and Whetten's (2014) call for research to shift away from the "organisational field" and large-scale social transformations, and instead closely examine the relationships between industry actors, some themselves being disruptive forces.

Ultimately, SDL emphasises how embedded levels (micro, meso and macro) of social contexts (i.e., institutional structures) within an ecosystem, influence and are influenced by value cocreation processes within and among systems of service exchange (Akaka et al, 2019). This research will offer a unique theoretical contribution as it centres instead on value codestruction within dynamic ecosystems, impacted by digital disruption. Additionally, with this research being an empirical study, findings will compliment to the largely conceptual body of literature within SDL. Next to a theoretical contribution within SDL, this thesis will also aim to provide a managerial contribution supporting industry actors within the global fashion industry.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 will provide a systemic literature review which will present the theoretical underpinnings of this research. It will outline, discuss, and analyse influential secondary research, prominent to both the historical foundations and ongoing evolution of service dominant logic. We

will begin by outlining the shifts towards SDL, including the emphasis on the holistic process of marketing, demand-side thinking, and the separation and gradual unification of services and goods. Next we will outline the significant contributions of Vargo and Lusch's seminal paper (2004) which sets the original foundational premises of SDL, as well as its ongoing revisions. A discussion on service ecosystems will be provided with the intention being to unravel elements within the complex context of value creation processes. The core foundations of service ecosystems will be reviewed, in particular, actor to actor exchange within multi-level networks and the deep influence of institutions, which constrain and enable such exchange. Institutional change and types of innovation will also be included, highlighting the potential of conflicting institutions and entrepreneurs who deliver effective value cocreation. Additionally, a discussion on value codestruction will additionally be provided signifying a fruitful opportunity for further research. Finally, the gap in the literature will be highlighted, justifying the rationale for this research.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the empirical research context, and will begin by defining fashion, the fashion product, as well as the industry's inherent tensions of distinction versus conformity. Next the inner workings of the fashion industry will be discussed, focusing on its forms of operation and practice including fashion market segments, seasonal cycles, global fashion weeks, fashion capitals, and internal actors within the creative class (Florida, 2005). Additionally, an analysis of the creative economy will be provided, examining the economic and environmental impact of fashion and the wider creative industries internationally, as well as within the UK.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to outline and justify the chosen qualitative research methodology. The chosen research strategy of ethnography will be described as well as acknowledgment to its post-modern developments. We will also discuss researcher reflexivity, with ethnographic research being radically relational and shaped by the lens of the researcher's orientation, values and personal qualities (Wertz et al. 2011). Next, how research access was achieved will be outlined, as well as the research design of participant observations conducted over 18 months, 17 semi-structured interviews and focus group. Methods of data analysis, data presentation, research design validation, and ethical considerations will also be discussed.

Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 will reflect thematic analysis results within the form of ethnographic narrative stories, which correspond with the three thesis objectives. Chapter 5 is focused on disruptive industry actors, Chapter 6 is focused on multi-layered networks within the fashion ecosystem, and Chapter 7 is focused on the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes. Throughout the chapters, analysis includes interview extracts and fieldwork which have been divided into dominant themes.

Finally, Chapter 8 will present the research findings, which ultimately shine a new light on how we view SDL in regard to operant resources, the complexities of diverse actors, and value extraction. To do so, we will begin by outlining our theoretical contributions, which will be solidified through what we define as *the co-abduction of value* and the democratisation of primary value creation. We will

discuss our three analytical categories, which include 1) the re-evaluation of operant resources 2) dynamic ecosystems and 3) value in social (media) context. Managerial contributions will additionally be included, along with limitations and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provides a systemic literature review which will offer the theoretical underpinnings for this thesis. The chapter will outline, discuss, and analyse influential secondary research, prominent to both the historical foundations and ongoing evolution of service dominant logic (SDL), which have inspired the research aim and subsequent objectives. In order to contribute to contemporary debate in SDL, it is first worthwhile to review its history based on the developments of service marketing throughout the 20th century. Before the official launch of SDL in 2004 by Vargo and Lusch, there was a range of significant paradigm shifts in the field of marketing which placed an increased attention upon service. Such paradigm shifts will be reviewed and divided into five themes.

Firstly, we will outline the shift of marketing's lens; from one being informed by economics towards one informed by behavioural science, as championed by Alderson (1957). Secondly, we will discuss the transition of "zooming out" (Alexander et al, 2018); from previously looking at individual firms towards, instead, a holistic value-creating context. Here, emphasis is placed on better understanding the holistic process of marketing. Thirdly, we will review the rise of demand-side thinking, where the consumer plays an increasingly significant role within value creation. Next, we will discuss the shift from prioritising tangible resources towards accepting intangible resources, thus triggering the notion of operant and operand resource distinctions (Constantin and Lusch, 1994). Lastly,



the separation and gradual unification of services and goods will be discussed, born largely from contributions stemming from the Nordic School of thought (Gummesson and Grönroos, 1987). Together, these paradigm shifts in the field of marketing are described to lead to the launch of SDL.

Next, we will outline the characteristics of Vargo and Lusch's seminal paper (2004) which sets the original foundational premises of SDL. Although still considered to be in its infancy stage (Vargo and Lusch, 2017), the continuous revision and consolidation of SDL's foundational premises since 2004 are discussed, highlighting the avid contributions of other authors. Major paradigm shifts in SDL are considered into two time periods, 2004-2009 and post-2008, in order to appreciate the evolving logic's continuous formation.

We build upon our discussion of SDL with an examination of service ecosystems, with the intention being to partially unravel elements within a complex context of value creation processes. The focus on ecosystems compliments recent contributions within SDL which have called for the modification of "value in use" towards "value in context" (Chandler and Vargo, 2011) and in particular towards better understanding value in "social context" (Edvardsson, et al., 2011). Here, the core foundations of service ecosystems will be reviewed, in particular, actor to actor exchange within multi-level networks and the deep influence of institutions, which constrain and enable such exchange. A discussion on institutional change and types of innovation is also provided, followed by a focus on value codestruction, which has recently attracted the attention of SDL contributors. Finally, a conclusive summary of the literature chapter will highlight

key points and shed light upon the uncovered theoretical gap which serves as a considerable opportunity for further research; namely “zooming in” on the processes of value codestruction when attaining disruptive innovation.

Relevant literature was largely determined by the criteria of targeted keywords and journal rankings, and was sorted thereafter by publication date as this literature review is divided into three timeframes. Firstly, keywords for finding literature included service dominant logic, cocreation and/or codestruction of value, open innovation, service systems, and/or service ecosystems. The researcher would primarily use Google scholar to search keywords. Secondly, relevant literature stemmed predominantly from 4-star journals including the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Academy of Management, and Journal of Service Management. In addition, the researcher was guided to subsequent literature from the reference lists and citations of previous literature. Once collected, literature was organised within three timeframes, 1) pre-2004, being the historical foundations of SDL starting with the works of Wroe Alderson (1957), 2) between 2004-2009, being the introduction and initial criticisms of SDL, and finally 3) post-2008, being the ongoing and contemporary discussions of SDL. Finally, literature was captured in a spreadsheet highlighting the research title, authors, year of publication, research objectives, research methodology, similar to Table 2.1, as well as a summary commenting on links to complimentary literature. The researcher used software Mendeley to assist with reference organisation.

Table 2.1 captures the key research of this literature review chapter and is divided by “historical foundations” predating the launch of SDL in 2004, and contributions reshaping SDL from 2004-2009 and post-2009. The table reflects the current direction of research within SDL and points towards potential theoretical gaps. Equally the table informs the methodology discussed in Chapter 4, justifying the employed qualitative research design. Furthermore, the table emphasises the opportunity for additional empirical research within SDL, due to the overwhelming dominance of conceptual studies.

*Table 2.1 Literature Review Key Research*

Research Title	Author(s)	Year	Research Objectives	Research Methodology
<b>Historical Foundations Pre- 2004</b>				
Marketing Behaviour and Executive Action - A Functionalist Approach to Marketing Theory	Alderson	1957	To introduce a functionalist approach to marketing, extending economic roots to that of sociology, consumer behaviour, and ecology	Conceptual
A Service Quality Model and its Marketing Implications	Grönroos	1984	To develop a service quality model	219 questionnaires with Swedish service firm executives
The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing	Morgan and Hunt	1994	To conceptualise relationship marketing and discussing its ten forms.	To theorise that successful relationship marketing requires relationship commitment and trust, model relationship commitment and trust as key mediating variables, test this key mediating variable model using data from automobile tire retailers, and compare their model with a rival that does not allow relationship commitment and trust to function as mediating variables.
Co-opting customer competence	Prahalad and Ramaswamy	2000	To examine the role of the consumer in business value.	Conceptual
Psychological Implications of Customer Participation in Co-Production	Bendapudi and Leone	2003	To address customers' potential psychological response to production participation.	Empirical methodology with two studies to examine the effects of participation on customer satisfaction.
<b>Between 2004- 2009</b>				
Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing	Vargo and Lusch	2004	To illuminate the evolution of marketing thought toward a new dominant logic	Conceptual
Extending the service-dominant logic: from customer centricity to balanced centricity	Gummesson	2008	This is a contribution to the reorientation of marketing. It aligns the service-dominant logic with other developments in marketing and	Conceptual

			management. It claims that the marketing concept and customer-centricity are too limited as a foundation for marketing and have not—and cannot—but partially be implemented in practice.	
An expanded and strategic view of discontinuous innovations: Deploying a service-dominant logic.	Michel, S., Brown, S. W., & Gallan, A. S.	2008	To demonstrate that many discontinuous innovations can be understood better within a S-D logic.	Conceptual
Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution	Vargo and Lusch	2008	To explore the major issues surrounding S-D logic and to offer revisions to the original FPs	Conceptual
The emergence of service science: Toward systematic service innovations to accelerate co-creation of value.	Spohrer, J. and Maglio, P.P.	2008	To describe the emergence of service science, a new interdisciplinary area of study that aims to address the challenge of becoming more systematic about innovating in service.	Conceptual
On value and value cocreation: A service systems and service logic perspective	Vargo, S.L., Maglio, P.P. and Akaka, M.A.,	2008	To explore the intersection of two growing streams of thought, service science and service-dominant (S-D) logic.	Conceptual
<b>Post- 2008</b>				
Toward a transcending conceptualisation of relationship: a service-dominant logic perspective	Vargo, S.L.	2009	To propose and elaborate on a service-dominant-logic-based conceptualisation of relationship that transcends traditional conceptualisations.	Conceptual
Not always cocreation: introducing interactional codestruction of value in service-dominant logic.	Plé, L. and Chumpitaz Cáceres, R.	2010	To demonstrate that, even though Service-Dominant (S-D) logic has essentially considered value cocreation so far, it should not overlook the risks of value codestruction either.	Conceptual
Contextualisation and value-in-context: How context frames exchange.	Chandler, J.D. and Vargo, S.L.	2011	To explore the role of context in service provision and, more broadly, in market cocreation.	Conceptual
Cocreation and codestruction: A practice-theory based study of interactive value formation	Echeverri and Skålén	2011	To identify interaction value practices, theorise how interactive value formation takes place, and how value is assessed by actors in provider-customer interface.	Empirical Study on Swedish Public transport organisation and their customers through 55 interviews.
Expanding understanding of service exchange and value cocreation: a social construction approach.	Edvardsson, B., Tronvoll, B. and Gruber, T.	2011	To expand understanding of service exchange and value cocreation by complementing these central aspects of S-D logic with key concepts from social construction	Conceptual

			theories (social structures, social systems, roles, positions, interactions, and reproduction of social structures).	
Value cocreation in service logic: A critical analysis	Grönroos	2011	To analyse value creation in the context of a service perspective on business and marketing (service logic), and specifically to analyse the value co-creation aspect of value creation and the roles of the customer and the firm, respectively.	Conceptual
Towards a theory of marketing systems.	Layton, R.A.,	2011	To outline a number of propositions that might serve as a basis for a theory of marketing systems.	Conceptual
Key dimensions of service systems in value-creating networks.	Mele, C. and Polese, F.	2011	To identify the key dimensions of service systems and to describe how they interact in the process of value cocreation.	Conceptual
The nature and processes of market cocreation in triple bottom line firms: Leveraging insights from consumer culture theory and service dominant logic.	Penaloza, L. and Mish, J.,	2011	To contribute to the theoretical and practical understandings regarding market cocreation by cross-fertilising insights from consumer culture theory (CCT) on the production of meaning with service-dominant logic (SDL) on the cocreation of value.	Depth interviews with strategy-level managers from 9 firms.
Understanding value cocreation in a co-consuming brand community	Pongsakornrunsilp and Schroeder	2011	To provide insights into value creation by demonstrating how individual consumers play distinct roles in the value creation process.	Netnography
It's all B2B... and beyond: Toward a systems perspective of the market.	Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F.	2011	To discuss the systems-oriented framework and elaborates the steps necessary for developing it further into a general theory of the market, informed by the marketing sub-disciplines, marketing practices, and disciplines external to marketing.	Conceptual
Characterising value as an experience: implications for service researchers and managers.	Helkkula, A., Kelleher, C. and Pihlström, M	2012	To address this deficit by presenting a conceptual characterisation of value in the experience.	Conceptual
The complexity of context: A service ecosystems approach for international marketing	Akaka, M.A., Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F.	2013	To address the need for developing a stronger theoretical foundation for International marketing, by highlighting the applicability of an S-D logic, service ecosystems view and	Conceptual

			proposing a framework for conceptualising the complexity of the contexts that frame international and global exchange.	
The value codestruction process: A customer resource perspective	Smith	2013	To adopt a conservation of resources (COR) theoretical approach to examine the process of value codestruction (VCD) emanating from the misuse of customer resources by organisations.	120 structured interviews
Value in marketing: Toward sociocultural perspectives	Karababa and Kjeldgaard	2014	To address recent debates in marketing research on the elusiveness of the notion of value, with the aim of starting a dialogue on the possibility of developing a comprehensive and culturally informed understanding of value and value creation processes.	Conceptual
Inversions of service-dominant logic.	Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F.	2014	To review the inversions of SDL and extend on new opportunities.	Conceptual
Consumer dominant value creation	Anker et al.	2015	To provide an analysis of the ontological and semantic foundations of consumer-dominant value creation to clarify the extent to which the call for a distinct consumer-dominant logic (CDL) is justified.	Conceptual
The context of experience.	Akaka, M.A., Vargo, S.L. and Schau, H.J	2015	To explore the social and cultural aspects of the context that frames service exchange to better understand how value and experience are evaluated.	Conceptual
Value codestruction between customers and frontline employees: A social system perspective.	Kashif, M. and Zarkada, A.	2015	To incorporate a social system perspective to study in detail customer misbehaviour incidents from the perspective of frontline banking employees and customers.	Structured interviews with 33 frontline banking employees and 22 customers, 55.
The role of embeddedness for resource integration: Complementing SD logic research through a social capital perspective.	Laud, G., Karpen, I.O., Mulye, R. and Rahman, K.	2015	To explore what roles do social interdependence and an individual actor's degree of embeddedness play with respect to resource integration in service ecosystems.	Conceptual

Service innovation: A service-dominant logic perspective.	Lusch, R.F. and Nambisan, S.,	2015	To offer an integrated framework, one built on S-D logic that brings together diverse theoretical themes and concepts in innovation management, and that explicates the nature and structure of a broadened view of service innovation. Secondly, to develop a rich and fruitful agenda for future research in IT that emphasises its dual roles—as an operand resource (facilitator or enabler) and as an operant resource (initiator or actor)—in service innovation.	Conceptual
Innovation through institutionalisation: A service ecosystems perspective.	Vargo, S.L., Wieland, H. and Akaka, M.A.	2015	To explore the role of institutions in innovation processes from a service-ecosystems perspective. To argue for institutionalisation as a central process of innovation for both technologies and markets. To view innovation as a collaborative recombination of practices that provide novel solutions for new and existing problems.	Conceptual
Innovation in service ecosystems—Breaking, making, and maintaining institutionalised rules of resource integration.	Koskela-Huotari, K., Edvardsson, B., Jonas, J.M., Sörhammar, D. and Witell, L.	2016	To examine how innovation in service ecosystems unfolds through multiple actors' efforts to break, make and maintain the institutionalised rules of resource integration.	4 case studies and (21 in-depth interviews)
Institutions as resource context.	Koskela-Huotari, K. and Vargo, S.L	2016	To examine the role of institutions and institutional complexity in the process through which resources-in-context get their "resourceness."	Conceptual
Systemic principles of value cocreation : Synergetics of value and service ecosystems.	Meynhardt, T., Chandler, J.D. and Strathoff, P.	2016	To examine what the systemic principles of value cocreation are in service ecosystems	Conceptual
Institutions and Axioms: An Extension and Update of Service-Dominant Logic	Vargo, S.L., and Lusch, R.F.	2016	To extend SDL with a focus on cooperation and coordination, an 11th premise is included.	Conceptual
A service-ecosystem perspective on value creation: Implications for international business	Kaartemo V Akaka M Vargo S	2017	To explore the service-ecosystem perspective, to understand how context influences and is influenced by value creation in International Business.	Literature Review Analysis
Why Do We Need Research on Value Codestruction?	Plé, L.	2017	To present the limitations of the terminology used when studying value and value cocreation; (b)	Conceptual

			emphasise the need for further research on value codestruction, especially in ecosystems and (c) suggest evolutions concerning the value-related lexicon.	
Service-dominant logic 2025	Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F.	2017	Exploring the future direction of marketing, discussing research frontiers for SD logic.	Literature Review Analysis
Knowledge cocreation in Open Innovation Digital Platforms: processes, tools and services	Abbate, Codini, and Aquilani	2019	To determine how Open Innovation Digital Platforms can facilitate and support knowledge co-creation in Open Innovation processes.	A qualitative, case study (12 semi-structured interviews)

SOURCE: AUTHOR

## 2.2 The Evolution towards Service Dominant Logic

The literature review starts with a discussion on the gradual formation of SDL, capturing its historical foundations in service marketing, extensions, amendments and contemporary debate regarding future directions. The discussion will start by reviewing the key paradigm shifts within the field of marketing, in particular service marketing. After identifying and reviewing the five major paradigm shifts, Vargo and Lusch's paper (2004) will be outlined.

### 2.2.1 The Marketing Lens: From Economics to Behavioural Science

The seeds of the field of marketing first grew from the distribution of agricultural products and physical goods, thus based on calculated economics and transactions. Alderson, dubbed the father of modern marketing (Shapiro et al., 2007), shifted marketing's predominantly economic lens towards one that was more accepting of integrating social science. Alderson (1965) stated how,

“marketing as a field of study does not rest comfortably  
under the label of applied economics ... marketing



[academics] are working in an applied segment... of a general science of human behaviour (p.302).”

Here, he emphasised that while economic theories are indeed necessary, they alone are not sufficient for a theory of marketing. Exemplifying his acceptance for behavioural science when researching marketing is the functionalist approach (Smalley and Fraedrich, 1995). Alderson’s functionalism is related to a general systems theory as it “stresses the whole system and undertakes to interpret the parts in terms of how they serve the system” (Alderson, 1957, p. 16). Alderson’s approach incorporates a systems theory as well as social sciences, including organisational behaviour, anthropology, and social psychology.

Alderson introduced a focus on cultural ecology when viewing marketing strategy, concerned with the adjustment of organised behaviour systems to changes in their dynamic environments (Shapiro et al., 2007). Specifically, Alderson (1957, p.32) researched the two organised behaviour systems of households (based on accumulating goods to sustain lifestyles), and firms (based on producing or distributing products and services to survive and grow). He described “organised behaviour systems” look “at a systemic structure to determine the present relationship between inputs and outputs” (1965, p. 11). Alderson argued that to survive within an organised behaviour system, each actor must continuously adapt to both the needs of other complimenting actors, as well as the fluctuating changes in the external environment (Hunt, 2013).

Firms, for example, are able to grow and survive within a market based on the actions and reactions of internal managers in adjusting marketing mixes to react to environmental opportunities and threats, thus constituting an ongoing process that produces dynamic marketing behaviour. The environment is also said to be dynamic as opportunities and threats tend to proliferate through both external macro variables and within systems. For example, one firm's success in developing a segment of demand creates opportunities for additional firms possessing different capabilities to act upon. With every individual firm being unique in its resources and capabilities, it faces its own distinctive set of opportunities and challenges in the marketplace (Shapiro et al., 2007).

### 2.2.2 Marketing as a Holistic Process

Alderson's functionalism, which serves particularly relevant within service marketing, takes as previously noted, a total systems approach to marketing (Shaw, 2010). This holistic approach acknowledges the relevance of the entire marketing system from production to consumption, opposed to homing in and isolating a specific activity within marketing practice (Brown, 2002). Within an organised behaviour system, Alderson proposed the term transvections, defined as the grouping together of multiple individual exchanges. Through transvections, it is argued that there is more to gain when actions are regarded as a collective entity, opposed to being regarded as individual bursts (Brown, 2002). Unlike a transaction which considers a singular part of the marketing process, a transvection summarises the entirety of the approach, again reinforcing Alderson's holistic appreciation of marketing practice. When considering the marketing process in its entirety for creating utility, value is regarded to be

generated whilst “in use”; a stark contrast to the “value in exchange” perspective as proposed by Beckman (1957) which challenges the holistic process.

Building upon Alderson’s functionalism is Fisk (1967) who demonstrated how marketing can be conceptualised in terms of system hierarchies. Fisk argued that firms represent one level of analysis, and interactions may be studied within and among multiple levels in order to organise the infinite interrelationships between production, marketing and consumption into a coherent and unified perspective from the standpoint of the consumer, marketing managers and/ or nation (Fisk, Brown and Bitner, 1993). This extension of functionalism is further expanded on by Dixon and Wilkinson (1989) who have drawn attention towards two dimensions vital for systems: namely, process and structure. Here, the process within systems consists of transforming inputs into outputs, while the structure consists of the organised interactions among the system’s components, which make a transformation process possible. A system may interact with other systems at the same hierarchical level by taking inputs and offering outputs in return (Fisk, Brown and Bitner, 1993).

### 2.2.3 Prioritising Demand Side Thinking

Additionally, one of Alderson’s key contributions was shifting the discipline’s needle from a distribution orientation, where goods are moved linearly from producers to consumers, towards a perspective that seeks to better understand the problem-solving behaviour that creates those markets (Shapiro et al., 2007). Alderson contributed in “revolutionising” the role of the consumer from passive, towards an information processor, contributor and problem solver within the

consumption behavioural process (Tamilia, 2007) which sparked a subsequent rise in literature on consumer participation in production (Fitzsimmons, 1985; Mills and Morris, 1986). Day (1994) also suggested how value creation is about value cycles rather than a linear value chain, which gives primacy to demand side thinking opposed to supply side. When implementing Alderson's holistic view on marketing processes, the role of the consumer in the marketing system grows in significance. This notion is further extended by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) who called for an increase in market orientation in order to actively respond to current and future consumer needs. Popularised in the late 1970's, Lovelock and Young (1979) concluded that consumers can be a source of productivity gains.

When adopting a service centred view on marketing, it is inherently customer centric (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000) and market driven. A market driven approach takes being consumer oriented a step further, as it is about collaborating with and learning from customers (Day, 1994) and becoming adaptive to the customer's individual and dynamic needs. Taking this market driven approach suggests that value is defined by and cocreated together with the customer, rather than embedded in the output through exchange. This links to Haeckle's (1999) research which shifts from practice being based on make and sell, towards one of sense and respond (in Fisk, Brown and Bitner, 1993). Here, firms act as value facilitators who provide processes for consumers by offering value propositions (Grönroos and Voima, 2013).

Another prominent stream of research elevating the role of the consumer relates to service experiences and "moments of truth" (Carlzon, 1987). The underlying

assumption reads that consumer perceptions of service encounters are important elements of achieving customer satisfaction, perceptions of quality, and long-term loyalty. Additionally, attention grew in exploring the management of customer and employee interactions during service encounters, which generated a greater understanding of how customers evaluate individual service encounters (e.g. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault, 1990; Solomon et al., 1985). Further research on the consumer's role in service production and delivery also grew (Goodwin and Smith, 1990) with foundations of this research stemming from self-service customers (Bateson, 1983). Complimenting research focusing on service encounters includes Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) who have analysed the role of tangible goods and the physical environment in the consumer's evaluation of encounters.

Service researchers since the early 1980's have drawn attention to the need to retaining, as well as attracting, customers (Berry, 1983). Here relationship marketing recognises the value of current customers and the need to provide continuing services for existing customers so that they will remain loyal (Grönroos, 1999; 2000; 2002). For marketers, this is a defining shift from more traditional marketing approaches. Since the late 1980's, even more research has been directed at customer retention issues (e.g., Grönroos, 1990) where research on relationship marketing and customer retention has taken various forms including emphasis on trust and relationship commitment (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and how such constructs relate to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles, 1990). As Brown, Fisk, and Bittner (1994) highlight, consequent research has focused on innovative strategies in retaining

customers, such as building an effective recovery strategy for service failure situations (Hart, Heskett, and Sasser, 1990) or offering service guarantees to reduce risk and build loyalty (Hart, 1988).

In the late 1980's and 1990's, Grönroos (1997) argued for the relational aspects of service marketing and demonstrated that relationship marketing is dependent on a service perspective. The research by Storbacka, Strandvik and Grönroos (1994) examining customer relationship profitability and the link between perception measures and action measures, concludes that if offerings and relationships are not profitable enough and have limited prospects of improvement or none at all, there is no foundation for long-term development. This research emphasises that not all customer relationships have the same value-creation potential. Kowalkowski (2011) expands on this by stating:

“From the provider’s perspective, it is therefore vital to review them, and identify how to allocate resources in such a way as to enhance the interactions and consequent value creation. From the customer’s perspective, it makes no sense to allocate resources to collaboration with a provider whose offerings focus mainly on value-in-exchange if it is possible to derive more value-in-use from a similar collaboration with a more competitive provider (p.287)”.

Here, contributions from the Nordic School do not assume that all relationship investments and interactions will increase customer value, however they do

emphasise mutual value creation. In particular, internal marketing (Grönroos, 1978; 1981) empowers the role of the customer declaring that each actor within an organisation has a customer. This approach emphasises that it is not only customer facing personnel who are concerned with satisfying their customers. Instead, everyone within an organisation has a figurative “someone” whom they must serve (Lewis and Entwistle, 1990; Bowen and Lawler, 2006). Internal marketing highlights that internal customers (i.e. employees) must be satisfied with their service and confident in their roles, before they can effectively and authentically serve the end-customer.

Day (1994) also discusses the customer-linking capability, which consists of the skills, abilities, and processes needed to achieve collaborative customer relationships. The aim is to make individual customer needs apparent to all functions of the firm, where consequent procedures are put in place to respond to them. Woodruff (1997) too suggests the need for looking externally for competitive advantage opportunities, looking beyond quality of outputs and towards customer benefits. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) contributed to a second wave of customer participation research by suggesting to view customers as “competencies”. Bendapudi and Leone (2003) furthered the concept by investigating the psychological implications of customer participation in co-production, as well as concluding that they can act as well as coproducers of “meaning”. In sum, internal marketing suggests that satisfied employees will result in satisfied customers (George, 1990). Extending this notion proposes that marketing tools and concepts can be used both externally and internally with

employees (Berry, 1981) and signals a removal of actors' roles within the marketing process from an SDL lens.

#### 2.2.4 Towards Intangible Resources

Intangible products or services were rarely mentioned in early marketing literature, which took the view that value was embedded into tangible products, based on economics. Whilst services were only implemented to support with the distribution of goods, this primacy of goods when examining resources shifted in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Zimmermann (1951) and Penrose (1959) were two of the pioneering economists to document this shifting outlook on resources, which became increasingly rooted in service. Zimmerman (1951) stated how, "resources are not; they become" (p. 14) whilst Penrose (1959) proclaimed "it is never resources themselves that are the inputs to the production process, but only the services that the resources renders (pp. 24-25)." Such developments helped give rise to the distinction between operand and operant resources (Constantin and Lusch, 1994).

Constantin and Lusch (1994) first define operand resources, being resources which an operation or act is performed on, in order to produce an effect. Operand resources are usually tangible, static in nature, and enable or facilitate. Operant resources on the other hand are resources that produce effects (Constantin and Lusch, 1994) and are often invisible and intangible, dynamic and difficult to transform. They produce effects, by enabling or constraining action and can be applied as a source of sustained competitive advantage. Operant resources are also considered to be core competences. Core competences are not physical



assets, but are regarded as intangible processes, being bundles of skills, knowledge and technologies (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994). They are also actions, routines, and operations which are tacit, ambiguous, and idiosyncratic (Nelson, 2009). Hunt and Lambe (2000; in Lusch and Vargo, 2014) refer to core competences as high order resources because they are bundles of basic resources.

The relative role of operant resources began to emerge to the forefront in the late twentieth century, with contributors acknowledging that skills and knowledge were the most important types of resources. Resources are a function of human appraisal and thus are often dynamic and potentially limitless; operant resources are a function of how something is or can be used (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). Additionally, Akaka and Vargo (2014) highlight technology to be an operant resource which suggests that innovation is as a process for doing something, as well as an outcome of human action and interaction.

#### 2.2.5 Interlinking Goods and Services through the Nordic School

Throughout civilisation, human activity has been largely centred upon agriculture, animal life, plant life, minerals, and other natural resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Those who held control over such tangible resources, including tribes and nations, were considered wealthy. By prioritising physical goods, a goods-centred dominant logic was developed and held superior to intangible resources. However, throughout the latter part of the 20th century, the field of marketing witnessed a shift (Kotler, 1970) - from examining tangible goods towards the

value of examining the intangible – in line with the rise of the service economy (Buera and Kaboski, 2012). Here, academic debate firstly called upon the distinction between goods and service, later followed by arguments reuniting them under a service dominant perspective.

During the 1970's, the overwhelming majority of services marketing literature (e.g. Levitt, 1972; Thomas, 1978; Bateson, 1979; Lovelock and Young, 1979) argued how services marketing should be distinct from goods marketing (Fisk, Brown and Bitner, 1993). Johnson (1969) was the first to ask the question, "Are goods and services different?" and thus helped launch a goods versus services debate (Fisk, Brown, and Bitner, 1993). Writing the first services marketing article highlighting the value of the service economy to the U.K. was Blois (1974), emphasising the lack of service focused literature, as well as an approach to services marketing based upon buyer behaviour theory. Additionally, Donnelly (1976) who had examined service distribution channels proposed that marketing channels for services significantly differ from those for physical goods. Shostack (1977) promoted increased attention into service marketing by questioning how marketing could be "myopic" when it had failed to create relevant paradigms specific to the service sector. She explained how service industries lagged behind when integrating marketing into mainstream decision making as then, contemporary marketing failed to provide adequate guidance, terminology, or rules for services. In the paper entitled, "Services Marketing Is Different", Berry (1980) expressed the fundamental differences between goods and services. Within this preliminary stage of service marketing, the key features of services were established: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability,

which provided the underpinnings for the case that services marketing is a field distinct from goods marketing (Möller, 2013).

However, approaching the late 1980's, this perspective began to again pivot calling for goods and service marketing to be purposefully intertwined. Gummesson (1995), as well as other contributors from predominantly the Nordic School (Wyckham et al., 1975; Gummesson and Gronroos, 1987; Langeard and Eiglier, 1987; Normann, 2001), helped blend both physical and the intangible goods, stating consumers do not buy either goods or services; they purchase offerings which deliver services. Ultimately, it is this service which creates value. This perspective returns to Norris (1941) who was one of the initial scholars to recognise how consumers only desire goods because they deliver services (p. 136). Thus, approaching a new millennium both intangible activities and physical goods were appreciated in producing services, with tangible goods being the physical vessels of one or more competencies (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994). Achrol and Kotler (1999) documented how this paradigm shift within marketing, which rested on the notion that goods are not; goods become, connected to previous literature including Zimmermann (1951), with value determined by how and what the increasingly empowered consumer uses them for.

Our discussion reviewed the major paradigm shifts within the field of marketing, in particular highlighting contributions made by Alderson and contributors from the Nordic School. We have first outlined the shift from marketing informed by economics towards one of behavioural science led by Alderson. Secondly, we have discussed the transition from looking at the individual firm towards its holistic

context and a greater prioritisation of better understanding the whole process of marketing. Thirdly we have reviewed the empowerment of the consumer in marketing, thus emphasising demand side thinking. Also, we have outlined the shift of prioritising tangible resources to intangible resources, discussing the distinction between operant and operand resources. Lastly, we have reviewed the purposeful unification of services and goods, led by contributors from the Nordic School, which ultimately provided the fundamentals for a service dominant logic. When examining the accumulation of service research throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one can determine that it has created a foundation for a shifting paradigm in the field of marketing. As a result, the shifting paradigms of separating and later again reuniting goods and services, has paved the way for the introduction for a service dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

### 2.3 The Introduction of Service-Dominant Logic

Influenced largely by the Nordic School, the paradigm shifts shaping contemporary marketing have led towards a service dominant logic. Based on these foundations, we will progress by introducing Vargo and Lusch's seminal paper (2004) "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing," which sets the original foundational premises of service dominant logic. The following discussion will introduce the eight original premises and distinguish the difference between service and goods dominant logic.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) define service as "the application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills), through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself (p.2)." When adopting a service dominant perspective, it is assumed that at the root of all

organisations, markets, and societies there is a dependency upon the exchange of service. Formalising the content of a service dominant perspective are the foundational premises (Vargo and Lusch, 2004):

- FP1: The first foundational premise of SDL reads that the application of specialised skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange, thus prioritising the implementation of operant resources and the exchange of specialised skills and activities.
- FP2: The second premise describes how indirect exchange masks the fundamental unit of exchange. Through this premise, actors exchange their often collective and distributed specialised skills for the individual and collective skills of others within monetisation and marketing systems. Money, goods, organisations, and vertical marketing systems become only the vehicles for exchange, emphasising the importance of intangible resources.
- FP3: Thirdly, a transfer of knowledge can be activated either directly through education and training or indirectly, embedded within tangible goods; again, reiterating that tangible products can be embodied carriers of knowledge. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, p. 84) refer to such carriers as vessels, being “artefacts, around which customers have experiences” drawing links to the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) or even Jensen’s (1996) dream society where, “people buy... mostly stories, legends, emotion, and lifestyle (p.9)”. Additionally, Gutman (1982)

has pointed out that tangible products are “means” for reaching “end-states,” or “valued states of being, such as happiness, security, and accomplishment (p. 60).” Therefore, the third premise considers goods [being] distribution mechanisms for service provision.

- FP4: The fourth original premise proposes that knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage, being an essential operant resource, which can be applied to efficiently navigate fluctuating and fierce markets. Vargo and Lusch (2004) argue that value chains are collections of dynamic information flows, within the boundaries of an organisation, as well as between an organisation and suppliers, distributors, existing or potential consumers and other stakeholders. Evans and Wurster (1997) too claim that every business is an information business and that the various types and quality of information is dependent on commitment and trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), process coordination, and degree of loyalty. Knowledge is a key resource in innovation in the service sector as a whole (Hipp et al., 2000) and its importance has increased due to intensified competition and technological changes (Rycroft and Kash, 2004). Chesbrough (2003) highlights the benefits of perusing open innovation where firms are able to appreciate both external and internal ideas and move beyond set boundaries, in order to exchange knowledge with external actors and leverage complementary resources to speed innovation.

- FP5: An additional premise is the notion that all economies are service economies. Whilst services have always been important within societies, within service focused economies they are transparent and thus dominant, inviting exchange of knowledge and skills (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Specialisation of the workforce breeds micro specialisation, meaning citizens are moving towards more distinct specialities (Iversen and Wren, 1998) and depend on service exchange.
- FP6: The customer is always the co-producer, reads the sixth foundational premise. From a service point of view, marketing is a continuous process and therefore the customer is always part of that process involved in the production of value. Hence internal production is an intermediary process. Normann and Ramirez (1993) state that “the key to creating value is to coproduce offerings that mobilise customers” (p. 69). Hence, the customer shifts from being a target towards becoming an active coproducer, implying opportunities in integrating mass customisation and further relationship marketing reacting to customer’s unique, changing needs.

Normann and Ramirez (1993) have highlighted how successful companies do not simply add value, they reinvent value where different economic actors, suppliers, business partners, and customers, work together to coproduce value. A company’s relationship with outside industry actors, including customers, becomes an access channel to the actor’s ongoing value-creating activities, leading simultaneously to the success of the organisation. From a customer perspective, a wide range of inputs are injected in order to create value. An

organisation's propositions only have value to the degree that customers can use them as inputs to leverage their own value creation (Normann and Ramirez, 1993). Hence, the organisation doesn't profit from customers, they profit from customers' value-creating activities.

- FP7: The seventh premise states that an enterprise can only make value propositions. The notion suggests that value creation only comes from the consumer and is only determined when a good or service is consumed and in use. Thus, an unsold good has no value and cannot produce anything, as supported by the work of Grönroos (1994) who stated value for customers is only created throughout the relationship by the customer. Focus here should not be placed on the products, but on the value creating processes, where value emerges for customers as perceived by them.
- FP8: The final original premise proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) is that a service dominant perspective is customer oriented and relational with an inherent focus on interactivity, integration, customisation and coproduction. Hence, an inanimate object cannot alone lead to relationships and the customer will never be freed of relationship participation; they extend their relationship beyond a transaction. In a service centred model, individual actors are the centre in the exchange process being active participants linking SDL with consumer centric theories (Arnould, 2006).



The original SDL foundations argue that organisations who neglect a service perspective risk accumulating additional costs, as standardised goods produced without consumer involvement are often stagnant and non-responsive to dynamic consumer needs. Moreover, being limited to only focus on tangible goods hinders total growth and is a limiting factor suppressing total marketability. Through the introduction of the foundational premises, Vargo and Lusch (2004) cement the view that markets and organisations have 1) shifted from a focus on tangibles to intangibles, including skill and knowledge competencies and 2) have moved towards a dynamic process of interactivity, connectivity, and ongoing relationships, both internal and external to the organisation. Also, the gaze of orientation has shifted from that of the producer towards the customer, and the object of being exchanged becomes secondary to the process of exchange. Taking this stance, marketing becomes an organisational philosophy dependent on networks, relationship building, and collaboration as opposed to competition. Additionally, the practice of marketing evolves into a consumer consulting role by supporting communication processes and involving them through dialogue in order to better understand and react to their needs.

During this official launch of SDL, dominant themes include products (goods vs. service), experience (value in exchange vs. value in use), resources (operant vs. operand) and most importantly, the construction of value. Vargo and Lusch (2004) however emphasise that SDL is indeed “a work in progress” and remains dependent on the contributions of others for it to fully eclipse a traditional goods dominant logic.

Miles (2014) established that the considerable influence of Vargo and Lusch's paper (2004) within marketing rests upon known rhetorical techniques which "revolutionary" movements in academia, management and politics have implemented. The paper rejects old terminologies, establishes new ones, re-frames foundational narratives, caters to the appeal of audience assumptions and prejudices, and demonstrates a careful use of powerful metaphors. Whilst the theory itself seeks to devalue persuasive communication in the practice of marketing, it is ironically called out for still implementing a top down approach in dictating a new paradigm. Having outlined Vargo and Lusch's (2004) eight original foundational premises, the following discussion will outline the major developments towards SDL between 2004 and 2009 based on significant contributions.

### 2.3.1 Developments in SDL between 2004-2009

The second stage of SDL formation takes place between 2004-2009 (Wilden et al., 2017). Once SDL was published in the *Journal of Marketing* (JM), the then editor, Bolton (2004, p. 18), stated how it holds "important implications for marketing theory, practice, and pedagogy, as well as for general management and public policy... and will undoubtedly provoke a variety of reactions." International reactions and contributions towards the original Vargo and Lusch (2004) publication revolved around service terminology, a focus on networks and interaction, resource integration, experiential nature of value, and the commonalities of actors.

During this preliminary phase, criticisms arose due to the over-reliance of a managerially focused GDL lexicon (Lusch and Vargo, 2006), generating a movement to distance itself away from such terminology, referred to in the adapted Table 2.2. Amendments to the vocabulary directly impacted the subsequent rephrasing of the original foundational premises. In regards to “the application of specialised skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange” of FP1, Ballantyne and Varey (2006) criticised that “unit of exchange” refers to a GDL perspective, which suggests that what is being exchanged are units of output, whereas SDL, in contrast, revolves around a more holistic process. Additionally, since the “application of skills and knowledge” (operant resources) for the benefit of another party is defined as a “service” the FP has been altered to “service is the fundamental basis of exchange” (Vargo and Lusch, 2006). This places a more direct and central role of service in exchange (Vargo et al., 2007). For identical reasons associated with the word “unit” (of exchange) being an inappropriate choice for FP1, “unit” was not suitable for FP2. Thus, “unit” is altered to “basis”, reading “Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.”

Additionally for FP4, Ballantyne and Varey (2006) have argued for an alteration regarding “knowledge” to “knowledge renewal”. They state how knowledge renewal processes operate at a micro (firm, employee) level and are primary to competitive advantage when activated by communication and dialog (Ballantyne, 2004). Thus knowledge renewal processes are linked to operant resources, where now FP4 becomes: “Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.

*Table 2.2 GDL versus SDL Terminology*

<b>Goods Dominant Logic</b>	<b>Service Dominant Logic</b>
Goods	Services
Products	Experiences
Features/ Attributes	Solutions
Value Added	Cocreation of value
Profit maximisation	Financial feedback/learning
Price	Value Proposition
Equilibrium Systems	Complex Adaptive Systems
Supply Chain	Value Creation networks/ constellation
Promotion	Dialogue
To Market	Market with
Product Orientation	Service Orientation

Source: Adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2006)

FP6 rests heavily on the GDL lexicon through “coproduction”. As SDL is predominately about value creation, rather than “production” making units of output “coproduction” was deemed inappropriate. However, Vargo and Lusch (2006) do argue that coproduction is a distinct component of cocreation of value and captures “participation in the development of the core offering itself” (p. 284), especially when goods are used in the value-creation process. This adheres to the suggestion that there needs to be more emphasis on the interactive, networked nature of value creation. Vargo and Lusch (2006) argue that value is obtained in conjunction with market exchanges and cannot be created unilaterally. On the other hand, the involvement in “coproduction” is optional and can vary from none at all to extensive co-production activities by the end user. Therefore, FP6 evolves to state “the customer is always a cocreator of value.”

In addition to GDL vocabulary shifts during this period, there becomes a clearer distinction between customers and consumers, which have been used interchangeably. Here, the term consumers comprise concepts such as

economic, goods, and tangible exchange which create a strong connection between the term with GDL thinking. The term customers however comprises concepts such as cocreation, relationship, and the brand (Wilden et al., 2017).

The original FP7 has caused controversy, with interpretations inferring that it means that once an organisation has made a value proposition, it has completed its part of the value-creation process (Ballantyne and Varey, 2008). Vargo and Lusch (2008) however counter that the FP was always intended to convey that an enterprise cannot alone deliver value. “Value cocreation” (FP6) and “relational” (FP8) imply that it is both the offeror and the beneficiary of service who collaborate when creating value. Thus, FP7 evolves to become more explicit in value, proposing: “The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions.”

Several marketing scholars (e.g. Grönroos, 2006; Gummesson, 2006) have highlighted that interaction and networks play a more central role in value creation and exchange than was immediately apparent within original SDL premises. One of the distinguishing features of SDL, in contrast to GDL, is the former’s treatment of all customers, employees, and organisations as being operant resources, which are endogenous to both the exchange and value-creation processes (Skálén, and Edvardsson, 2015). Since exchange of service implies all parties are value-creators and value beneficiaries, the implication is that the producer/consumer and supply/ demand distinction disappear.

In the consideration of value creation within GDL, the customer and the organisation are considered separate, with the organisation being the creator of value and the customer the destroyer. Through SDL however, value creation becomes an interactive process and, thus, the firm and customer are viewed in a relational sense. Furthermore, SDL is inherently customer oriented as value is always determined by the beneficiary of service. Edvardsson et al. (2005) view service as a perspective on value creation rather than a category of market offerings. Therefore, the focus of the outcome is the cocreation process in which customers and stakeholders play a key role with value ultimately being socially constructed. Likewise, in SDL “relational” is a fundamental element, as when considering the “cocreation of value” premise (FP5), value cannot be created any other way. The customer is never freed of relational participation, hence FP8 is altered to “a service -centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

In 2008, a ninth FP was added to state that organisations exist to integrate and transform micro specialised competences into complex services that are demanded in the marketplace (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The addition of this FP is relevant as the resource-integration role of the organisation (e.g. firm) is equally applicable to individuals and households as argued by Arnould (2006). Here, all economic entities are resource integrators. Moreover, as the division of labour increases, another important development occurs, being the connectedness of individuals where for example Venkatesh, Penaloza, Firat (2006) argue that SDL should be placed in a more social and cultural context, foreshadowing service ecosystems. As each individual specialises, they become more dependent and

connected to one another. Thus, both the extent of the market and the density of the network of interconnections is a function of the division of labour in society. The term chosen to represent resource integrators and individuals alike is “actors” linking back the term to Snehota and Hakansson (1995). Therefore, the revised FP9 reads: “All social and economic actors are resource integrators” implicit of the network structure for value creation.

As Kowalkowski (2015) has reflected the notion of “density” proposed by Normann (2001) aligns with the SDL concept of value creation through resource integration. Density and SDL depend on interactivity and networks, also suggested by Grönroos (2006) and Gummesson (2006). Normann had introduced concepts including “dematerialisation”, “liquidity”, and “density” to explore the shaping and fluidity of markets through reconfiguration of value-creating systems (2001).

During this stage there were also criticisms of the original FP that Vargo and Lusch were not explicit enough about the experiential nature of value. Thus, a tenth FP was added, ultimately implying SDL’s contextual nature, where “value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary”. Both the newly added FP9 and FP10 represent a movement from a single-minded concern with restricted, pre-designated roles of producers, consumers, customers, and firms towards a more dynamic generic and fluid actor orientation. This is a subtle distinction with wide ranging implications, as it signals that all actors are fundamentally democratised, carrying out similar actions. All actors are able to integrate resources and engage in service exchange, throughout the

process of cocreating value. Hence, in SDL there is no distinction for roles being strictly producers or customers but, rather, that all actors can be beneficiaries engaging in interaction. Here actors (equally firm or customer) may free themselves from predesignated roles leading towards an actor to actor (A2A) orientation.

Thus, SDL discards a firm/customer distinction and focuses instead on the interdependencies between these actors and their commonalities, rather than the differences (Grönroos, 2006). This A2A, as well as A4A (Polese et. al, 2017), orientation implies a dynamic component within networks, as each integration or application of resources (e.g. service) changes the nature of the network (Vargo and Lusch, 2011). Hence, Vargo and Lusch (2015) suggest that a network understanding alone was deemed inadequate, pointing towards the necessity of a more dynamic systems orientation. When applying a dynamic systems orientation, focus is placed on the existence of processes to facilitate needed resource integration and service exchange through the coordination of actors. SDL synthesised these ideas to broaden the understanding of marketing and consumption as a relational cocreative process where value is continuously negotiated throughout an entire span of interactions (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006).

When analysing SDL development, between 2004- 2009 emphasis is placed on the narrative of value cocreation, which is resource-integrating and includes reciprocal service-providing actors who cocreate value through holistic, meaning laden experiences (Toivonen, 2016). Major contributions include a shift from



goods dominant logic terminology to one that is more service accepting. Also, value is born through interactions and networks, resource integration is vital, an actor's own experience determines value, highlighting value in use, and that the distinction between customer and firm no longer applies, drawing on an actor to actor perspective.

### 2.3.2 SDL Developments Post- 2008

Building upon developments and contributions between 2004-2009, the foundational premises set by Vargo and Lusch (2004) continue to evolve as exhibited in Table 2.3. One primary development post-2008 is the consolidation of 10 FPs to 4 axioms. Additionally, there are revisions to the updated premises with a sharpened focus drawn to cocreation and the context of value creation though a newly added premise, FP 11 which additionally becomes a representative axiom (Lusch and Vargo 2014).

*Table 2.3 Foundational Premises 2004-2016*

Foundational Premise	2004	2008	2016
1 AXIOM STATUS	The application of specialised skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange.	<b>Service is the fundamental basis of exchange</b>	
2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental unit of exchange.	<b>Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange</b>	
3	<b>Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision.</b>		
4	FP4 Knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage.	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.	<b>Operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit.</b>

5	All economies are service economies.		
6 AXIOM STATUS	The customer is always the co-producer.	The customer is always a co-creator of value.	Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.
7	The enterprise can only make value propositions.	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions.	Actors cannot deliver value but can participate in the creation and offering of value propositions.
8	Service-centred view is customer oriented and relational.	A service-centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational.	A service-centred view is inherently beneficiary oriented and relational.
9 AXIOM STATUS		All social and economic actors are resource integrators	
10 AXIOM STATUS		Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.	
11 AXIOM STATUS			Value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.

Source: Adapted from Lusch and Vargo (2016)

During this period, SDL scholarship has drawn increased criticism including the ambiguity between goods and service marketing (Brown and Patterson, 2009), pushing the consumer into free labour (Cova et al., 2011; Zwick et al., 2008), challenging the superiority of operant resources (Campbell et al., 2013). O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2009) also argue how SDL's promotion as the supreme perspective for marketing is regressive and is too broad to lend valuable operational meaning. They additionally claim that Vargo and Lusch dilute the service perspective by stretching it to additionally cover goods, which in turn adds no information and reduces total meaning through generalisation (Brown and Patterson, 2009). Hietanen, And  hn and Bradshaw (2018) also find SDL ill-equipped in understanding consumer culture and promotes "misguided

and simplistic views (p.101)” of value in commodity markets. Such criticisms have however helped morph the FPs further and clarify key elements of SDL.

Attributed to scholarly contributions, FP4 has thus been revised to: Operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit, as the former term “strategic advantage” held managerial GDL undertones (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). The term “benefit” is considered more SDL friendly and implies that a service provider can also play the role of beneficiary and is given reciprocal service exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Moreover, FP6 is also updated where value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary. Here, value cocreation involves multiple actors sometimes unaware of one another other, contributing to each other’s wellbeing, including those involved within an exchange as well as others (Lusch and Webster, 2011; Yan et al, 2010). The updated FP reinforces that in human systems, composed of specialisation and thus interdependency, value must be cocreated. Cocreation contrasts to coproduction which has been outlined as being an optional activity to join, dependent on an actor’s knowledge and desire of the beneficiary, as well as a provider’s existing knowledge of customer preferences (Vargo and Lusch, 2016).

Hence, cocreation of value, unlike coproduction, is not optional, it is considered the purpose of exchange and, thus, foundational to markets and marketing. Grönroos and Voima (2013) argue however that cocreation is a function of interaction. The SDL lens shows that the collaborative competencies and dynamic capabilities of customer orientation and knowledge interfaces influence innovation outcomes and firm performance (Lusch and Nambisan, 2015).

Consequently, direct and indirect interaction will lead to different forms of value creation and cocreation.

Additionally, building on the actor to actor (A2A) perspective introduced earlier FP7 is modified, with the term “enterprise” becoming the implied generic “actor”. Here, whilst “actors” are not able to deliver value alone, they can participate in its formation and offer value propositions. As with FP7, the modification of FP8 also adheres to an A2A perspective where FP8 evolves into “a service-centred view is inherently beneficiary oriented and relational”. As a customer is too managerially oriented and rooted in GDL terminology, “beneficiary” is applied as it centres the discussion on the recipient of service and the referent of value cocreation (Vargo, 2015).

Lusch and Vargo (2014) also describe the shift from a GDL to an SDL perspective through a change in the professional identity of employees and how employees regard themselves in their role within the value creation process. Through SDL the identity of employees alters, where instead of being perceived as distant and passive in relation to consumers they become inclusive, interactive and relationship focused, thus referring back to internal marketing discussed previously (Grönroos, 1978). The advantage of this shift is observed in the adoption of value creation practices which make better use of both the employees’ and customers’ knowledge and skills to reach individualised outcomes. Thus, rather than employees within firms being informed to market to consumers, they are instructed to market together with consumers, as well as other value-creating actors in a firm’s value network.

Additional to the amendments of the FPs, an extension was added with the eleventh premise reading: value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). This FP captures the totality of the shift from coproduction to cocreation of value, emphasising actor to actor interactions in the context of specific institutions.

When taking a holistic view of recent developments in SDL, discussions have called for a modification from “value in use” towards “value in context” (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Additionally, as Edvardsson et al. (2011) suggest, “value in context” should extend to “social context”, as a service system is embedded in a social system. Later, Vargo and Lusch (2016) claim that value should indeed be understood as value-in-social-context and as a social construction. With a focus on value-in-social-context, emphasis is placed on the structure of institutions, which include rules, norms, meanings, symbols, practices, and similar aides in collaboration, as well as institutional arrangements (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Hence, recent SDL literature (e.g. Akaka et al., 2013) has increasingly identified institutions and institutional arrangements as the “foundational facilitators” of value cocreation in markets and elsewhere (Vargo, 2015). With networks regarded to be self-governed, “self-adjusting service ecosystems engaged in value cocreation at various levels of aggregation (Vargo, 2015; p.6)” are introduced and thus lead discussions in addressing the implications of broader ecosystems. Hence, the service ecosystem is established defined as, “relatively self-contained, self-adjusting systems of resource-integrating actors that are

connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange” (Lusch and Vargo, 2014; p.240).

The shift towards broader service ecosystems has led research towards a holistic social phenomenon of dynamic systems perspectives, where actors influence each other yet are restricted by their structural context (Giddens, 1984) in developing their own value creating processes. Hence, value creation is considered to be a fluid, unfolding process with no ultimate end state to optimise or toward which to move (Vargo, 2014). This contemporary stage in the SDL timeline is categorised by a general zooming out, triggering a more “holistic, dynamic, and realistic perspective on value creation, through exchange, among a wider, more comprehensive configuration of actors” (Vargo et al., 2015; pp. 5-6).

To summarise SDL’s evolution, it can be divided into three stages distinct to their core focus. Upon its establishment, SDL was centred on a discussion of “what is value” with an understanding of value placed within service processes. Emphasis was placed on an actor’s diverse resources, both operand and operant. Post 2008 focus within SDL shifted towards “who creates value”, specifically upon cocreation with the customer and their interactions among different actors. This signifies a shift from studying firms to studying the customer’s role in value creation. As a result, this distinction between customer and firm eroded, thus leading towards a more democratised actor to actor orientation. In this period, new themes also emerged, including social, brand, change, practices, performance, and technology as documented by Wilden et al. (2017).

Today, SDL has moved towards “where is value created” highlighting the social and structural context of value creation through an examination of institutions, and more specifically ecosystems. Here, change, development, and performance have become key elements in the SDL discussion (Wilden et al., 2017), reflecting a transition from focusing on the study of customer value to more fully understanding value creation systems and innovation through practices, and social structures. This shift in themes reflects a more dynamic and systems approach to thinking about value creation from an SDL perspective (Vargo and Lusch, 2011; Gummesson et al., 2010). Thus, further research in SDL includes understanding open innovation, dynamic capabilities, organisational micro-foundations and service systems, including social capital and consumer culture theories, which will enhance value creation in service ecosystems. Kaartemo, Akaka, Vargo (2017) argue that advancing the understanding of multiple levels of social and cultural context and contextual change will provide a higher understanding of market cultures as innovation is a result from service ecosystems. Nonetheless, a degree of continuity has remained throughout its evolution, with a focus on value, processes, and value-creating actors.

Ultimately, there is the shift from marketing management to questions on how actors enact routine practices to create value benefits and it is the future of SDL which will broaden and escalate these perspectives even further. SDL remains a catalyst for further research (Ostrom et al., 2010) especially with the emergent role of digital technologies, which, as stated by Lusch, Vargo and Gustafsson (2016), are to be viewed as operant resources, where we must now consider

more than human actors. Ironically, the journey of SDL leads scholars onto new developments looking into institutions and service ecosystems, reverting back to Alderson (1965) who was the first to advocate an ecological framework for the study of marketing systems.

## 2.4 Service Ecosystems

Having outlined a series of paradigm shifts in the field of marketing and the developments of SDL, attention will now be placed on examining the composition of service ecosystems. Our aim is to shed light onto the complexity of the context for value creation processes. The focus on service ecosystems builds upon contemporary contributions within SDL, which have called for the modification of “value in use” towards “value in context” (Chandler and Vargo, 2011) and in particular towards better understanding value in “social context” (Edvardsson, et al. 2011).

The section begins by briefly reviewing the core foundations of service ecosystems, including actor to actor exchange within multi-level networks and the deep influence of institutions which help influence such exchange. The intended consequences of value cocreation and innovation through service exchange within ecosystems will be discussed, touching upon literature within open innovation. Finally, focus will be placed on value codestruction which is deemed a viable area for further research (Cao, Alford, and Krey, 2017), especially within an empirical context.



### 2.4.1 Ecosystem Foundations

Since its inception in 2004, the evolution of SDL has moved towards a shift from prioritising units of outputs towards processes; from emphasising production to emphasising value cocreation. As stated, recent SDL literature has called for an increased “zooming out” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016; Alexander et al., 2018) when examining value creation processes in order to adopt a wider perspective, thus further extending the limiting firm- customer service exchange.

This development is exemplified by the most recent extension to the SDL foundational premises and fifth axiom: “Value co creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). This addition is significant as it suggests that value creation can only be fully understood within a given context (Akaka et al., 2013), including the institutions and institutional arrangements which enable and constrain processes, as well as within the integration of resources applied for another actor’s benefit. Thus, SDL continues to evolve into an even more general and transcending theoretical framework (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). This conscious “zooming out” has resulted in a major shift towards focusing on a more dynamic, systems-based orientation. This orientation encompasses a multitude of actors who are considered essential within a value creation process, as implied in the revised foundational premises where “All social and economic actors are resource integrators” (F9) and “Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary” (F6) (Vargo and Lusch, 2016).

Consequently, Vargo and Lusch (2011) adopted the term “ecosystems” when referring to this orientation as it best represents the complex multi-actor-environmental interactions based upon mutual service provision when creating value (Laud, Karpen, Rahman, 2015). Here, service ecosystems are defined as:

“Relatively self-contained, self-adjusting systems of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange” (Vargo and Lusch, 2014; p. 240).

Complexity, emergence and self-organisation are predominant characteristics of service ecosystems (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). The term originally stems from biology literature, where it is defined by Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020) as a complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space. In both biological and service systems, actors engage in symbiotic interrelationships, dependent on the capabilities and resources of one another. With or without precise measurement of what is exchanged, whenever a system works together in order to enhance another’s capabilities it can be described as creating value (Vargo, Maglio, and Akaka, 2008). From a service ecosystem perspective, the role of context in value creation is a complex phenomenon emanating from a few central constructs of value cocreation, service exchange, and the integration of resources (Akaka et al., 2013).

Service ecosystems have been likened to Layton's conceptualisation of marketing systems (Frow and Payne, 2018). Such marketing systems possess characteristics including:

- Being viewed as networks of individuals, groups and/or entities
- Being embedded within a social matrix
- Linked directly or indirectly through sequential or shared participation in economic exchange
- Through shared participation, collectively creates economic value with and for customers, through the offer of products, services, experiences and ideas, which emerge in response to or anticipation of customer demand (Layton, 2011; p. 259).

Although complimentary to SDL due to its root in exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2016), unlike ecosystems, Layton views the operant resource of knowledge and institutions as exogenous to marketing systems, as exhibited in Table 2.4. Additionally, the ecosystems perspective draws parallels to “service systems” which capture how complex configurations of resources create value within and across firms (Spohrer et al., 2008). Service systems are grounded in SDL and are defined as “a configuration of people, technologies, and other resources that interact with other service systems to create mutual value” (Maglio et al. 2009; p. 159). However, service systems prioritise the role of technology whereas service ecosystems highlight a more general role of context; specifically, institutions. Vargo et al., (2015) bridge both systems by linking institutions with technology,

as technology is broadly defined as useful knowledge (Mokyr, 2002) and knowledge is a part of an institutional structure.

*Table 2.4 Ecosystems Comparison*

<b>Types of Systems</b>	<b>Symbiotic Relationship</b>	<b>Organic</b>	<b>Technological</b>	<b>Dependent on exchange</b>	<b>Exogenous operant resources</b>
<b>Biological Ecosystem</b>	X	X		X	
<b>Service System</b>	X		X	X	
<b>Marketing System</b>	X			X	X
<b>Service Ecosystem</b>	X			X	

SOURCE: AUTHOR

#### 2.4.2 Actors within Ecosystems

Having revisited the core foundations of service ecosystems, we will proceed by examining the actors within ecosystems. We will firstly examine multi-level actor networks with emphasis on micro, meso, and macro social contexts. Focus will be placed on how these distinct levels interact with one another and deliver value, suggesting that one level cannot remove itself from another. Although a service ecosystem may encompass organisations, machines, technology and certain operand resources as “actors”, “actors” in this thesis will be predominantly human actors. Human actors possess an original combination of operand resources and thus carry the potential to contribute to a service ecosystem in a distinctive way able to differentiate resources from resistances (Akaka et al. 2013). Additionally, their unique melange of operand resources including knowledge and skills help elevate operand resource efficiency and drive value creation in society, industry, global and local markets (Akaka et al, 2013).

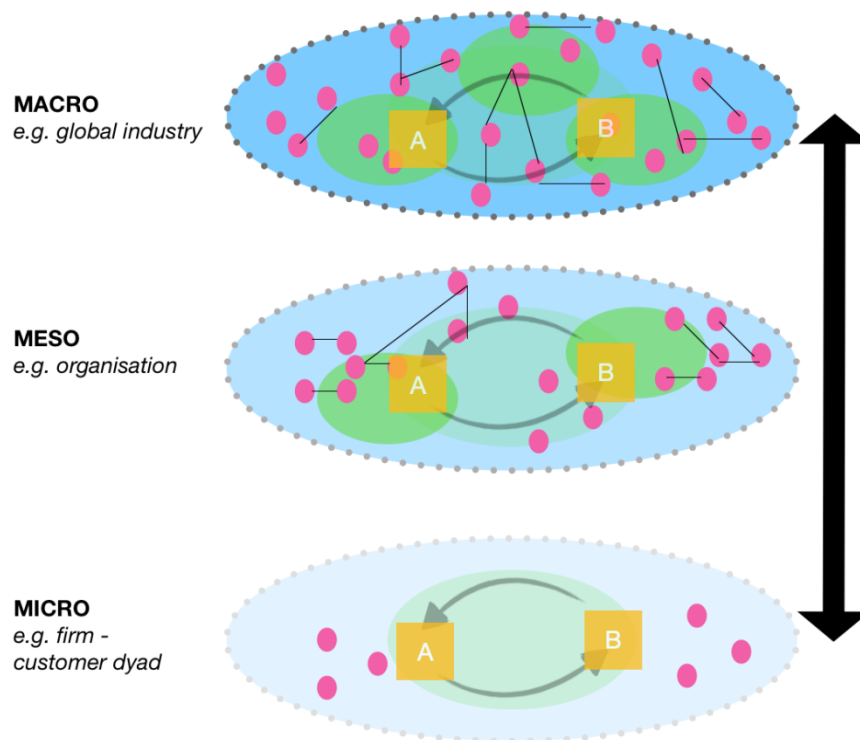
The service ecosystems perspective regards society as a tangled web made up of interrelated resource-integrating, service-exchanging actors who cocreate value in systems ranging from small systems, such as households, to large systems, such as nations (Koskela- Huotari, et al., 2016). Such actors cannot deliver value alone and can only participate in value creation by offering value propositions, thus underscoring the essential interdependency of others (Tronvoll, 2017). Organisations, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders take part in service ecosystems as actors who perform value-creating activities by taking on the role of providers, beneficiaries, or partners in the market, in order to reach desired outcomes (Mele and Polese, 2011).

As stated, value is created through the active participation of all actors (also regarded as individual service systems) engaged in exchange (Barile, Pellicano, and Polese, 2018). Hence, the participation and perspectives of these actors in value creation processes is a priority to examine as it emphasises the social aspects of value cocreation, in particular the influence of webbed networks of actors (Akaka and Chandler, 2011). A multi-level network of actors articulates the dynamic quality of service ecosystems through which value is created collaboratively (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). Value creation emerges through the act of service exchange at three different levels: a micro, meso and macro levels. A service ecosystems approach proposes that microlevel interactions constitute meso and macrolevel contexts. The micro level represents two actors in a dyadic exchange, which frames the integration of resources by each actor, as well as the value derived and evaluated from this particular encounter (Chandler and

Vargo, 2011). Throughout a microlevel interaction, each actor engaging in exchange is guided by institutions (Williamson, 2000), where the exchange success is seen to be dependent on mutual compatibility (Solomon et al. 1985). In the context of international marketing, Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch (2013) have highlighted that actors who share similar institutions may be more successful when entering an exchange encounter. Simultaneously, if institutions are incompatible between the actors, an interaction may be less successful with reduced ability for value creation.

When regarding divergent institutions, which may spark changes to an actor's expectations, one can appreciate that each microlevel interaction is rooted within a broader, meso level context. The mesolevel context represents three actors, in the context of a triad, not all necessarily connected with each other (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Figure 2.1 illustrates how microlevel actor interactions are embedded within a mesolevel, which itself is embedded in the macrolevel. Macrolevels represent a sample of numerous actors all exchanging directly or indirectly with one another in the context of a complex network (Vargo and Akaka, 2012).

Figure 2.1 Service Ecosystem Networks



SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM AKAKA ET AL. (2013)

To restate, the microlevel focuses on the dyadic exchange and is embedded within the mesolevel, which is itself embedded simultaneously in a macrolevel (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Hence, due to this intertwined, interdependent nature, causal relationships between actors at one level may trigger outcomes at another level (Lusch and Vargo, 2014). As the mesolevel focuses on the collective, intersectional relationships between individual actors, the microlevel and the macrolevels are continuously moulded by a fluctuating environment. The mesolevel helps interconnect microlevels and macrolevels of value in order to provide meaning. Vargo and Lusch (2011), suggests that taking a holistic macro level view can make the microlevel phenomena more understandable, where:

“We must move toward a more macro, systemic view of generic actors in order to see more clearly how a single, specific actor (e.g. a firm) can participate more effectively” (p. 182).

Simultaneously, macroscopic properties, such as shared world views can be better understood when examining microlevel characteristics (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Therefore, through an interconnecting mesolevel, one is able to appreciate how bottom-up emergences and top-down enslavements unfold within service ecosystems (Meynhardt et al., 2016).

Tensions among actors within service ecosystems occur because actors are connected and embedded within multiple networks, and thus their roles in value creation may vary depending on the resources and relationships they have access to in a given context (Akaka and Chandler, 2011) and the institutions which guide them (Vargo and Lusch, 2011). Thus, as actors draw on different roles, relationships, and institutions to exchange and integrate resources and cocreate value, the micro, meso, and macrolevel contexts continually change consequentially (Edvardsson, Tronvoll, and Gruber, 2011). It is however worth noting how divergent actor institutions can be regarded to be an opportunity, as observed by Wenger (1998) who concluded that the crossing of network levels by knowledge-bearing individuals creates opportunities for unusual learning. Despite the potential of initial tension, being located amongst different knowledge or cultural institutional systems, may lead to hybridity (Lowe et. al., 2012), which can be a source of creativity and radical innovation.



The universal properties of micro, meso, and macro levels cannot be understood separately, but can instead be viewed simultaneously through the concept of a “meta layer” which provides insight into how these three levels of interaction relate and evolve (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Taking this perspective, Meynhardt, Chandler and Strathoff (2016) are justified in proposing that when appreciating value, it is evident that value as a whole equates to more than the sum of its parts. Hence, in order to understand the emergence of how value is created, one must actively “zoom in and out” through these complex network layers in order to understand how an actor’s actions may affect one another and thus the (un)intended result.

Being part of an ecosystem, networks are powerful and potentially long-lasting structures often invisible to most observers (Powell, 1990). As discussed within multi-levelled networks, actors are interdependent upon one another’s resources with gains perceived to be had by the pooling of resources. Throughout micro, meso and macro layers, information can be passed throughout a service ecosystem, but this is dependent upon efficient communication channels, vital in generating new connections and meaning. The effectiveness of networks are dependent on trusted relationships, mutual interests and on the established reputation of actors (Snehota and Hakansson, 1995). The reputation of an active participant is the most visible signal of their reliability and helps establish trust; fundamental in lasting economic exchange (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The most useful information is obtained from a proven reliable actor, where Kaneko and Imai (1987) (cited in Powell, 1990) have suggested that when information is

passed through networks, it is regarded as “thicker” than obtained from a transaction-based market structure.

The success of functional networks is based on strong relationships amongst actors, which take time to establish and sustain (Powell, 1990; Snehota and Hakansson, 1995). As Macneil (1985) suggested, the “entangling strings” of reputation, friendship, interdependence and altruism become integral parts of such relationships. Powell (1990) extends that networks are most common in settings where participants share a common background, whether ethnic, national, ideological, or professional as he argues the more homogenous a group, the more trust is able to be established. Equally, actor diversity in ecosystems – whether biological or in service- has proven to be more effective when adapting to environmental fluctuations and continue to survive (Ely and Thomas, 2001).

Networks operate by creating a sense of indebtedness and reliance between actors and are very reciprocal in order to achieve preferential, mutually supportive actions (Powell, 1990). Axelrod and Hamilton (1981; as cited in Godwyn and Gittel, 2011) have stressed how reciprocal action implies returning “ill for ill as well, as good for good (p.36)” and is consistent with the pursuit of an actor’s own benefit. A measure of imbalance during an exchange motivates a continued relationship, prompting further exchange and interdependence, thus leading towards a long-term perspective. Deepening relationships and bonds of allegiance shape the value creating processes, however when establishing enduring patterns of repeat exchange, networks built on value creating

relationships restrict access and opportunities to newcomers who may not yet have established such trust or reputation (Powell, 1990).

Networks provide the advantages of a reduction of uncertainty, fast access to information, reliability, and increased responsiveness when sharing information and tacit knowledge (Powell, 1990). Powell (1990) additionally argues how industries especially dependent on networks are those which prioritise intellectual capital or craft-based skills (i.e. operant resources) which are accumulated through years of education, training, and experience, such as cultural production. These activities require less physical, operand resources, but prioritise the know-how and detailed knowledge of the talents of others who possess similar or complimentary skills to reach certain goals. Know-how is often based upon a type of tacit knowledge (Osterloh and Frey, 2000) that is difficult to codify and are intangible and are highly mobile resources which exist in the minds of actors who are highly trained and talented. Therefore, they do not like to work in a restraining, structured setting that is imposed or dictated on them from above and are seen to prefer network forms of organisation. Such forms emphasise lateral forms of communication and are well suited for a highly skilled labour force, where knowledge is not limited to a specific task but applicable to a wide range of activities. Networks are most likely to arise and proliferate in fields in which knowledge and operant resources are not restricted by monopoly control or expropriation by the wealthiest (Powell, 1990).

Cultural industries, highly dependent on tacit knowledge, and are also characterised by high variance and great unpredictability which breed high rates

of social reconstruction. Such industries (e.g. film, fashion, and the wider arts) are defined as “project markets” and are complex, dynamic and uncertain (Jeffcutt and Pratt, 2002). However, as Faulkner and Anderson (1987) observed in an examination of the film industry, the participation of actors was surprisingly stable, with recurrent contracting of those actors with established reputation. Even in volatile industries, networks of participants were concluded as stable and enduring as these actors have generated trust and have proven to be reliable.

In addition to providing stability in turbulent industries, the open-ended quality of networks provides 1) relationships and cooperation of actors to be sustained over the long run 2) a continuous incentive for learning and 3) a highly feasible way of utilising and enhancing intangible operant resources, such as tacit knowledge and technological innovation, through information exchange (Powell, 1990). Networks lead to effective sharing of information, which often leads to common values (Buckley and Casson, 1988) where repeated activities in networks can create, and are created from institutions.

Networks are also capable of being self-organising (Lowe et al., 2012). Self-organising networks are defined as networks comprising of individuals who voluntarily choose to participate within shared practices for mutual advantage (Wasko and Faraj, 2005) and are “bound together by common work histories and who use face to face as their most important *modus operandi*” (Gertler, 2004; p.88). Lowe et al. (2012) highlight how social capital plays a significant role when understanding informal self-organising networks, as well as network flexibility and

mutual trust in order to pivot and adapt within turbulent and fiercely competitive environments (Voets and Biggiero, 2000).

As Rycroft and Kash (2004, p.189) explain, “a key reason innovation networks are able to learn and self-organise is because they develop mutual trust and informal relationships”. Lowe et al. (2012) outline that “knowledgeable” individuals are at the centre of such self-organising networks, complimenting Baker et al.’s (2005) conclusion that those with entrepreneurial competencies are embedded in networks. Opposed to being viewed as solitary innovators, knowledgeable individuals should be regarded with a relational lens, who create, accumulate and redistribute knowledge across multiple other sites in turn fuelling innovation (Howells and Roberts, 2000). Thus, interactions and network linkages among multiple actors is essential for knowledge to travel.

In summary, we have examined actors within ecosystems by placing them in the context of multi-level actor networks. The networks which emphasise on micro, meso, and macro contexts were examined, highlighting how each layer interacts and influences one another to deliver value. Ultimately, one level cannot remove itself from another. Although interactions of actors possessing conflicting institutions may lead to tension, this can however lead to creativity and innovation especially through the actions of “knowledgeable” individuals.

### 2.4.3 Institutions in Service Ecosystems

Within the context of service ecosystems, we have already looked at the network characteristics and actor interdependencies within multi-level networks. However, in addition to networks, institutions play another central role in ecosystems (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Therefore, the following section will discuss the characteristics of institutions and how they lead to change with particular focus on boundary and practice work, thus putting the network into context. With regard to institutions, Hofstede and Pedersen (2002, p. 800) argue that “institutions are the crystallisations of culture, and culture is the substratum of institutional arrangements”, implying their tremendous impact on practice.

As exemplified in the multi-level networks, particular actor exchange takes place in the context of numerous other relationships and are influenced by institutions (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). In SDL, institutions are considered “humanly devised rules, norms, and beliefs that enable and constrain action and make social life predictable and meaningful” (Scott, 2001, in Vargo and Lusch, 2016; p.11). They are the “rules of the game” (North, 1990; p. 4) and together with higher-order institutional arrangements, institutional logics and institutionalisation they are considered the keys to understanding the structure and functioning of service ecosystems. When similar institutional arrangements guide actors entering an exchange encounter, value cocreation is considered more likely to occur (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Institutions and institutional arrangements can more fully inform an understanding of networks by conceptualising them as resource integrating, service exchanging actors that constrain and coordinate activity.

Institutional thought in marketing has been previously explored (Handelman, and Arnold; 1999; Hunt, 2012) with the earliest contributions stemming from Revzan (1968) who concluded institutions represent “collective human action in control of individual action” (p. 99).

Within service ecosystems literature however, institutions and institutional arrangements have received little attention (Vargo and Lusch, 2016), despite being foundational when facilitating value cocreation. Institutions and institutional arrangements are seen as the constitutive elements of service ecosystems (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) and are multifaceted, durable social structures; both symbolic and material. They act as coordinating mechanisms within service ecosystems (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) and cannot exist independently. Human actors are guided by value assumptions, cognitive frames, rules, and routines set in institutions (Simon, 1997) which are dynamic and impact actors’ roles (Edvardsson et al., 2011).

Moreover, markets can also be viewed through an institutional lens, and opposed to being static or pre-existing, they are an accumulation of performances driven by the meaningful actions and interactions of market actors (Harrison and Kjellberg, 2010). These institutions are composed of human actions and interactions in the beforementioned micro level. Meso and macro level systems and structures are thus formed and reformed through individual actions and the reproduction of relationships and shared meanings (social norms and cultures). Institutions provide insight into the understanding the dynamics of exchange relationships in multi-level markets.

Institutions inevitably go through periods of marked change as well as stability, and restabilisation (Green et al., 2008; DiMaggio, 1988). Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) highlighted how actors' thoughts and actions are both constrained and enabled by institutions, which also hold the potential to affect and transform those same institutions. Change is linked to institutional work with "the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining or disrupting institutions" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 215). Contemporary research has exemplified shifts in institutional logics and consequently shape the evolution of fields over time (Glynn and Lounsbury, 2005; Thornton, 2004). For example, Gawer and Phillips' (2013), case study on Intel had determined that the computer industry's macrolevel changes in institutional logics both *affected* and *was affected by* microlevel organisations. The authors provided an account of Intel's actions – its institutional work – in working to influence and adapt to field level changes. The study catered to contemporary calls (Thornton et al., 2012) to place attention onto the institutional logic and the micro-dynamics behind macro-level processes.

Institutional change is regarded to be built upon two significant factors: boundaries and practices. Boundaries and practices are labelled as distinct yet interdependent, neither reducible to the other, and point to different features of a social scene (Goffman, 1974). Boundaries are the distinctions among actors and their groups, while practices are shared routines of behaviour (Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). Within the study of organisations, a dominant boundary of interest is the organisational field, which is described as "a community of organisations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose



participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field” (Scott, 2001; p. 56). At a practical level, they act as tools where actors and groups morph and construct definitions of reality to help distinguish categories of objects, people, and activities. Strong boundaries strengthen a collective identity of a field; however they are put at risk in being “isolated from or unresponsive to changes in their external environments” (Seo and Creed, 2002; p. 226 cited in Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). Armstrong (2002) concludes that boundaries not only define membership of actors but can crucially shape the sets of practices of the community. Practices are defined as shared routines (Whittington, 2006) and “recognised forms of activity” (Barnes, 2002) which guide behaviour according to the situation (Goffman, 1959). Hence, for a practice undertaken by an individual or group to be recognisable by other actors and distinct to other practices, actors must, as a group, conform to certain social expectations (Edvardsson et al., 2014).

Underpinned by specific patterns of boundary and practice work that operated recursively, Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) established four distinct cycles of institutional stability or change; (1) institutional stability: involving boundary and practice maintenance; (2) institutional conflict: involving breaching versus bolstering the boundary and disrupting versus defending practices; (3) institutional innovation: involving establishing experimental boundaries that were protected from institutional discipline and inventing new practices; and (4) institutional restabilisation: involving cross-boundary connecting and practice diffusion. Boundary and practice work shift the various states of institutional stability. Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) concluded that three conditions were

associated with the move from an institution's initial stability to conflict, including: disputed practices, intact boundaries protecting those practices, and the existence of outside actors who hold the capacity to challenge those practices and boundaries (Table 2.5). An actor disadvantaged by existing boundaries of an institution may be especially motivated to disrupt the boundary or practices.

*Table 2.5 Institutional Stability Fluctuations*

<b>Towards institutional conflict</b>	Institutional stability will shift to institutional conflict when (a) the legitimacy of central practices becomes disputed, (b) boundaries protect those practices from disruption, and (c) a motivated outsider exists with the capacity to engage in boundary work and practice work to challenge those practices and boundaries.
<b>Towards institutional innovation</b>	Institutional conflict will shift to institutional innovation when (a) practices are disrupted, (b) the boundaries that protect those practices are compromised, and (c) there is a motivated insider with the capacity to establish new boundaries to protect experiments from institutional discipline.
<b>Towards institutional restabilisation</b>	Institutional innovation will shift to institutional restabilisation when (a) new practices are created that are broadly considered legitimate, (b) previously legitimate boundaries are compromised, and (c) a coalition of outsiders and insiders exists that has the capacity to cooperate to diffuse the new practices and legitimise a new boundary or delegitimise the compromised boundary. Thus, a combination of boundary and practice work which provided actors opportunity to experiment with new ideas and develop new ways of working together results in innovation of institutions.

Source: Author based on Zietsma and Lawrence (2010)

Development, such as an institutional change, is not an automatic process and must be deliberately and actively promoted by an agency within an ecosystem. Such motivated outside and inside actors who have the capacity to influence practice and boundary change can be linked to the “knowledgeable individuals” at the heart of self-organising networks (Lowe et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2003) and the notion of Schumpeter’s entrepreneurs. Schumpeter’s entrepreneurs are disruptive forces motivated to take over unusual tasks, look at new options, and realise new combinations in the production process. While the characteristic of managers is that they act through the basis of routines and respond on adaption, entrepreneurs are proactive and respond creatively (Schumpeter, 2017). Such entrepreneurs do not necessarily need to start a business, but they bring about changes in business methods and practices; whether putting forward new organisational approaches, launching new products or establishing new production techniques.

The entrepreneur is an actor who provides economic leadership that in turn changes the initial conditions of the economy and causes discontinuous dynamic changes or disruption. The entrepreneur is able to envision alternative modes when reaching objectives similar to Miles and Snow’s (1978) prospector, who may look outside boundaries for new products and markets. The deviation from institutionalised forms of behaviour through innovation increases the uncertainty in subsequent rounds of interaction and may increase environmental uncertainties in the organisational field. Such innovations destroy traditional practices, by providing alternative ways of fulfilling a task leading to creative destruction. Schumpeter (2017) has argued creative destruction is the driving

force of economic progress; whereby the process of industrial mutation revolutionises the economic structure from within by destroying the old one and creating a new one.

Schumpeter's characterisation of the entrepreneur's activities who creatively destructs, points to a parallel process in which institutional disembedding leads towards the emergence of new institutional structures (Aghion and Howitt, 1990). The high uncertainty and volatility created by the entrepreneur's activities become filled once again through re-embedding and "institutional restabilisation". Oliver (1991; p. 170) states, "when the environmental context of institutional influence is highly uncertain and unpredictable, an organisation will exert greater effort to re-establish the illusion or reality of control and stability over future organisational outcomes," with actors relying on emerging substitute institutions to fill the space of uncertainty. The process of institutional re-embedding and restabilisation is not smooth and is met by friction, but it is deemed as necessary (Beckert, 1999). Block, Fisch and van Praag (2017) highlight how entrepreneurship may not only affect innovation, but innovation may, in turn, affect entrepreneurship outcomes and access to critical resources.

Greenwood, Hinnings, and Whetton (2014) call for researchers to shift their gaze away from the "organisational field" and large-scale social transformations, and instead focus more closely towards the relationship between institutions and between the myriad of actors who populate them, some of them being disruptive forces, including entrepreneurs. This approach will spark a more holistic account of institutional action that moves beyond simple dyadic relationships and discrete

logics, towards the assumption that actors are continuously affected by pressures from many different institutions and are often responding locally, creatively, incrementally, and reflexively. In doing so, the construct of institutional work defocalises agency by shifting attention away from dramatic actions of the individual heroic entrepreneur towards unnoticed pockets of institutional resistance and maintenance (Lawrence et al., 2011). Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca (2011) highlight that institutionalisation and institutional change may be enacted in the everyday through networks of individuals who reproduce their roles, rites, and rituals at the same time that they challenge, modify, and disrupt them.

Within the context of service ecosystems, we have discussed the characteristics of institutions and how they lead towards change, with particular focus on boundary and practice work. Focus was placed on “motivated individuals” (Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010), likened to Schumpeter’s entrepreneurs and “knowledgeable individuals who have the ability to devise institutional change and innovative practice through creative destruction”.

#### 2.4.4 Service Ecosystem Innovations

Having discussed the composition and significance of multi-levelled networks and institutions constituting service ecosystems, it is now worthwhile to turn our attention to the [un]intended outcomes of innovation. The following section will discuss the types of innovation and how innovation may be achieved through

tensions, drawing links back to “creative destruction” and the opportunity for actors interacting through conflicting institutions.

Vargo, Wieland, and Akaka (2015) state that innovation is based on the institutionalisation of novel resource integration. From a macro perspective, innovativeness captures the capacity for a new innovation to create a paradigm shift within, science, technology, and/or the market structure of an industry. From a micro perspective innovativeness captures the capacity for a new innovation to influence an actor’s existing resources (operand and operant) including skills, knowledge, capabilities and strategy (Garcia and Calantone, 2002). Innovation comes in form of ideas, practices, or material artefacts perceived to be new by the relevant unit of adoption or audience (Zaltman, Duncan and Holbek, 1973). However, this definition does not emphasise that innovations vary in the degree of newness and impact on an adopting unit, with a key distinction being made between radical and incremental innovations (Dewar and Dutton, 1986). Incremental innovations are small developments or simple adjustments in current technology (Munson and Pelz, 1979). Examples of incremental innovations are product improvements such as features, benefits, price and process improvements such as manufacturing. Between the spectrum of radical and incremental innovations are “really new innovations” which result in market discontinuities or technology discontinuities where new technologies are introduced to existing markets (Garcia and Calantone, 2002).

In contrast, radical innovations are fundamental changes that represent revolutionary disruptions in technology and depict an obvious departure from

existing practice (Garcia and Calantone, 2002). Although oftentimes built upon a series of incremental innovations, radical innovations could describe a new product, launched in a new market. They are disruptive to actors as they introduce new products and value. Because they are disruptive to both outside and inside actors (i.e. consumers and producers), such innovations are rarely driven by demand. Markides (2006) states how disruptive innovations in technology are fundamentally different from a disruptive business model innovation or a disruptive product innovation. For example, to qualify as a business model innovation, it must enlarge the existing economic pie, by either attracting new customers into the market or by encouraging existing customers to consume more. Different innovations trigger different consequences and require different responses from an adopting unit (Henderson and Clark, 1990).

Markides (2006) criticises the disruptive innovation process Christensen (1997) had outlined as many of the provided examples of disruptive innovations are considered to be examples of companies scaling a niche market into a mass market (e.g. Honda motorcycles). Markides (2006) proposes that established companies should not attempt to create disruptive innovations and should instead leave the task of creating such innovations to smaller, entrepreneurial firms who have the flexible skills and motivated attitude to do so. For established companies to exploit disruptive product innovations, they should “instead, concentrate on what they are good at—consolidating young markets into big, mass markets (p.24)”. Opposed to sacrificing valuable resources and managerial talent in hopes of developing disruptive innovation, an established firm should “aim to create,

sustain, and nurture a network of feeder firms” (Markides, 2006; p.24) who are characterised as young and entrepreneurial.

Younger firms receive resources, power, marketing, and distribution to scale innovations through established firms, while bigger firms in turn reap benefits of disruptive innovation. Complimenting Markides’ (2006) point are Dushnitsky and Lenox (2005) who confirm that incumbent firms, even if highly innovative, benefit by cooperating with innovative start-ups in order to survive in a dynamic ecosystem. Incumbent firms often face the “innovator’s dilemma” (Henderson, 1993) and while superior in incremental and sustainable innovations, face challenges with radical or disruptive innovations.

Innovation occurs when social and economic actors are involved in resource integration and service exchange but are enabled and constrained by institutions and institutional arrangements which establish the nested and interlocking service ecosystems of value cocreation (Lusch, Vargo and Gustafsson, 2016). Innovation, as an institutional change in service ecosystems, is born from a multi-actor effort where existing and especially new actors join forces to create new resource constellations in order to develop novel and fruitful forms of collaboration (Michel et al., 2008), linking to the necessity of open innovation.

Chesbrough and Bogers (2014) define open innovation as “a distributed innovation process involving purposive knowledge flows across organisational boundaries for monetary or non-monetary reasons (p.17)”. Through the use of open innovation, organisations can use the respective inflows of knowledge from



external actors to accelerate their own internal innovation processes. Equally, they can support outflows of knowledge to outside actors in an attempt to expand their markets or help partners to innovate (Chesbrough, 2006). Contemporary studies on open innovation, including Hossain and Lassen (2017) and Nambisan, Siegel, and Kenney (2018) focus on the use of digital platforms, as well as advanced web technologies and tools, in order for organisations to collaborate with external sources to acquire and develop ideas, technologies and knowledge. From this perspective, digital platforms represent “an important carrier for searching external knowledge” (Hossain and Lassen, 2017; p. 55). Digital platforms are particularly important when engaging with outside actors including customers who are no longer passive “receivers,” but engage as active cocreators of value (Hennig- Thurau et al., 2010).

Abbate, Codini, and Aquilini (2019) address Open Innovation Digital Platforms which function as “cocreator intermediaries” which define, develop and implement dedicated processes, specific tools and appropriate services for supporting knowledge cocreation activities. The authors suggest that organisations can neither control nor manage knowledge flows. Such flows develop autonomously following a participating actor’s interests and goals and are nurtured by individual experiences and contributions. To stimulate knowledge cocreation, Open Innovation Digital Platforms must act as an engagement platform (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2014) and must create specific tools and services supporting the key processes of “defining”, “finding participants” and “collaborating” (Abbate, Codini, and Aquilini, 2019).

Applied to an empirical context, Chesbrough (2020) has connected the urgency for increased open innovation in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. He has cited various successful examples, including Medtronic which has opened up its ventilator design for any user to make, waiving its IP rights, as well as fashion conglomerate LVMH, which has converted a part of its manufacturing processes to produce hand sanitiser. Chesbrough (2020) concludes how open innovation can accelerate an organisation's internal innovation processes, and allows inside actors to take advantage of the knowledge of outsiders (outside in). Equally, outside actors may exploit an inside actor's knowledge in their businesses (inside out).

Randhawa, Wilden, and Hohberger (2016) call for a need for research to enhance focus on customer cocreation and conceptualise "open service innovation." It is suggested that marketing (i.e. service-dominant logic), organisational behaviour (i.e. communities of practice), and management (i.e. dynamic capabilities) would offer suitable theoretical lenses to address this gap. Additionally, insights from SDL would also provide managers with guidelines to better design open innovation processes for better collaboration across an entire value chain including customers, suppliers, and other partners.

Within networks, actors may stem from overlapping or sometimes conflicting institutions, such as stemming from incumbent firms or business start-ups. This influences their evaluations of experiences, suggesting that a similar experience may be evaluated differently by different actors, or even by the same actor within a different spacio-temporal place. When conflicting institutional arrangements

coexist, they can provide actors with alternative frames of sensemaking and enable the combinatory emergence of new innovative instances of “resourceness” (Koskela- Huotari et al.; 2015). Koskela- Huotari et al. (2015) argue, that in order to make new innovations, one needs to break them, linking to creative destruction and institutional destabilisation. The authors demonstrate that in order to successfully innovate, it is not sufficient to simply break old rules of resource integration, but one must establish new ones. Firstly, established rules need to be partially maintained to make the new rules more recognisable as it is important for actors impacted by the reconfigurations to simultaneously feel comfortable, whilst equally being challenged in being invited to a new experience. Some of these activities can be highly visible and dramatic, but most of them are almost invisible and often mundane day-to-day adjustments (Lawrence et al., 2009).

Likewise, divergent institutions risk negative consequences. As stated, from an SDL perspective, “value” is cocreated by a “reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). However, what is considered as a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship can strongly differ from one actor to another (Koskela- Huotari et al.; 2015) and may lead to asymmetrical value outcomes (Edvardsson et al., 2011). This complex phenomenological characteristic of ecosystems thus inevitably invites tensions, regarded as disagreements between two actors who do not share the same worldview or the same common world (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). Tensions arise due to dissimilar perspectives influenced by an actor’s past experiences, expectations and the position of where an actor is embedded. Additionally, according to

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), depending on an actor's own perception of worth, two actors can perceive what is more or less worthy very differently. Worth refers to what an actor considers as nobler and superior from a symbolic perspective and not necessarily to what is more valuable from a mercantilist perspective (Banoun, Dufour, and Andiappan; 2016).

According to Thévenot, Moody, and Lafaye (2000), agreement and discord between individuals or groups of individuals arise from seven “common worlds,” which are defined as frameworks of coherent principles of evaluation. The seven “common worlds” are the civic, fame, market, industrial, domestic, inspired, and green worlds. They provide universal principles of logical coherence that individuals rely on in order to justify how things should be done and determine what is right or wrong, fair or unfair and to judge what is more valuable or less valuable (Patriotta, Gond, and Schultz, 2011). Thus, the institutionalisation process of the service ecosystem is non-linear because the actors of the service ecosystem only agree on common rules and guidelines within these worlds through multiple and recurrent exchanges. When two actors are in conflict because two common worlds oppose each other, a compromise can be found by introducing a third world that will become the common reference often through the emergence of a new institutional logic and can provide value through innovation (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006).

#### 2.4.5 Value: Cocreation and Codestruction

Based on the discussion of actors integrating service within networks, influenced perpetually by institutions, one can view the process of value creation as the

hidden glue and core organising principle which holds the dynamic levels of a service ecosystem together (Vargo, Akaka, and Vaughan, 2017). The process of value creation both prompts and gives meaning to any particular interaction.

In general, value is perceived as the outcome of an exchange between benefits and the costs (e.g. financially, time, effort) incurred to obtain them (Ple, 2017) implying that value may be either positive (where benefits exceed costs) or negative (where costs exceed benefits). However, as pointed to throughout this chapter, when applying an SDL perspective, value has a deepened meaning (Vargo, Akaka, and Vaughan, 2017). Firstly, value is elevated to be phenomenological, which is at the root of the SDL framework. Value is seen to be unique and determined phenomenologically by the beneficiary and therefore depends on context and their perceived experience. Hence, the value of a good or a service does not simply exist, but it is a function of the way an actor perceives the contextual experiences enabled by a good or service (Woodruff and Flint, 2006). As Edvardsson et al. (2011) conclude, an individual's value perceptions are dependent on their relative position within the wider social context.

Second, value is always cocreated as expressed in the reviewed foundational premises. Hence, value can never be created in isolation by a singular actor, which in turn strengthens the need for actors to be interdependent amongst each other. Thirdly, value is multidimensional, derived through an intersection of multiple institutions. This emphasises not only phenomenological elements, but cocreative elements, which are “coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016, p. 8). Thus, the social

and cultural contexts of value (Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch, 2013) are integral to what value is, and how it is created. Value is the outcome of the interactions of actors and can be seen as a “function of collective wellbeing” (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). When there is an emphasis on the context of value, there is the suggestion that value is impacted by the sustainability of a social system. Finally, value is regarded to be emergent (Vargo and Lusch, 2017).

Through complex interactions among multiple actors, shaped by various institutional arrangements, value is continually cocreated and codestroyed and cannot be determined ex-ante (Vargo, Akaka, and Vaughan, 2017). In this way, value is an emergent property that comes into view in a temporal and contextual manner. The result of value is not achieved until it meets the needs of the intended beneficiary and depends on the capabilities a system has to survive and accomplish other goals in its environment; value is fundamentally subjective as it depends on the perception of the beneficiary (Ng and Smith, 2012). Because value is multi-dimensional and emergent, the determination of value differs throughout an ecosystem and is always interpreted differently. Taken together, phenomenological, cocreated, multidimensional and emergent characteristics of value converge on the idea that value is a holistic system-level construct (Vargo, Akaka, and Vaughan, 2017). Therefore, value can be simultaneously an individual and a collective phenomenon, built from the micro, meso, and macro levels of a service ecosystem characterise its emergence (Chandler and Vargo, 2011).

Akaka, Vargo and Schau (2014) propose that value cocreation suggests that the evaluation of experience is dependent on varying views and collective forms of value (Penaloza and Mish, 2011), past and anticipated interactions (Helkkula et al., 2012), and broader social contexts through which value is derived (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Thus, the consideration of dynamic interactions and the nature of the context of value creation (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) are essential to better understand and enhance value creating experiences. However not every outcome of an experience is positive, and thus, negative experiences might lead to negative value creation or value destruction as the process of creating value leads to both intended and unintended consequences (Giddens, 1984).

Plé and Chumpitaz (2010) argue that value may equally be destroyed through such an interactional process described within service ecosystems. Plé and Chumpitaz (2010) introduce value codestruction, which is defined as a decline of the wellbeing for at least one of the integrating actors within the service ecosystem. This decrease in wellbeing is due to a discrepancy between at least one of the actor's expectations of the integration of their resources by the other actor with their own resources, and the actual or perceived integration of these resources by this other actor (Plé, 2016). Value codestruction can occur for all actors or just one of the parties involved during an interaction. Woodruff and Flint (2006) suggest that the level of cocreated value may be imbalanced and it depends whether an actor intends deliberately or accidentally to generate such value imbalances. An actor may prioritise their own benefits by integrating, non-integrating or mis-integrating resources when interacting with another actor

causing deception and opportunism (Plé, 2016). Such behaviours may have strategic consequences such as generating organisational costs for firms (Plé and Lecocq, 2015).

Additional scholars have attempted to define and specify what constitutes value codestruction. Echeverri and Skålén (2011) state value codestruction is inevitably phenomenological and occurs when the elements of practices are incongruent, for example, when providers and customers do not agree on which procedures, understandings and engagements should inform a specific interaction. Smith (2013) has defined codestruction to be (1) the failure of an organisation to deliver on its value proposition, due to an inability to offer expected resources; (2) the customer had failed to gain expected resources during the resource integration process; (3) the customer had encountered an unanticipated loss of accumulated resources; (4) a blend of the aforementioned scenarios. Moreover, Zhang et al. (2018) found that codestruction occurs through negatively valenced engagement behaviours including rude employee actions, indifference, confrontation with company representatives, technological failure, the lack of complaint outlets and customers' desire for revenge.

Chandon et al. (2016) highlight the challenges of web platforms, which give rise to “masstige” (mass + prestige) brands, who risk value codestruction by losing a balanced image of exclusivity by adhering to the mass market. In contrast to other studies prioritising the consumer perspective, Järvi, Kähkönen and Torvinen (2018) have examined value codestruction from a provider's vantage point, finding that codestruction emerges due to the absence of information, an



insufficient level of trust, mistakes, an inability to serve, an inability to change, the absence of clear expectations, customer misbehaviour and blaming. Chowdhury, Gruber, and Zolkiewski (2016) suggest that value cocreation and codestruction exist simultaneously.

As far as SDL itself is concerned, Plé and Chumpitaz (2010) have argued that the lack of research on value codestruction is the result of an overly optimistic standpoint adopted in the wording of foundational premises, where for example, the definition of service (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), considers that it is “at the *benefit*”, or “doing something *beneficial*”. Additionally, SDL defines value as “an *improvement* in a system’s well-being” and is measured in terms of “a system’s *adaptiveness* or ability to fit in its environment” (Vargo et al., 2008). In doing so, the SDL foundational premise definitions adopt an overly optimistic, bias, and artificial reality regarding value processes, which seemingly only lead to value cocreation. The overwhelming majority of previous SDL research exclude examining value codestruction processes, thus providing a ripe opportunity to further explore how exchange within ecosystems can codestruct value; both accidentally and intentionally by actors including radical entrepreneurs in an attempt to trigger innovation.

Whilst codestruction remains a relatively unexplored area in SDL, there has been a rise in both conceptual and empirical contributions. Daunt and Harris (2017) have explored value codestruction in regard to showrooming, considered a form of multi-channel shopping, where consumers intentionally benefit from the information and services of one retailer in one channel, before subsequently

purchasing from a different retailer in another channel. Hence, authors suggest that consumers regularly and knowingly engage in codestructive behaviours with both offline and online firms for their own benefits. In such cases, the consumer gains value but this interaction between firm and consumer is not mutually beneficial.

Moreover, Quach and Thaichon (2017) have conducted an exploratory study which examines the processes of value cocreation and codestruction between luxury brands and consumers, from the consumer perspective using the social resource theory. Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) build on the concept of an actor's habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) and introduce the notion of "no-creation of value" exemplifying a neutral meaning of indifference for the actors involved. Buhalis, Andreu, and Gnoth (2020) apply SDL and transformative service theory to explore value cocreation and codestruction in the accommodation sharing economy to investigate the role of individual stakeholders in the complex sharing economy service ecosystem. The author's reveal that these new forms of value cocreation affect the wellbeing of individuals and entire communities. Cocreation, as well as codestruction, within the accommodation sharing economy was additionally observed to disrupt the roles and boundaries of community actors, impacting their citizenship and psychological ownership.

Overall, the intention of networks, institutions and the building of relationships within ecosystems is to achieve innovation and move forward, meeting the needs of a beneficiary. The previous section highlighted the different types of innovation which can be achieved through established firms collaborating with

entrepreneurial firms, open innovation, institutional tensions, which sparks innovativeness, and value codestruction. A summary on value was provided pointing out that the process of value creation is the glue which sticks all of a service ecosystem's elements together, as it is this collective process which creates value. However, it is pointed out that whilst value cocreation has dominated the literature, the focus on the opposite, value codestruction, presents an opportunity for further exploration, due to a lack of robust contemporary literature.

Expanding upon SDL, this third part of the literature review has explored the complexities of service ecosystems, reviewing its core foundations of actor to actor exchange within multi-level networks and the deep influence of institutions which influence exchange processes. The characteristics and constellation of networks were discussed, as was institutional change. Together, better understanding the process of value creation has shifted the perspective of value, from being phenomenological, cocreated, multidimensional and emergent towards a holistic system-level construct. This service-ecosystem perspective has helped to move SDL's evolution "beyond the bifurcation between value-in-use and value-in-exchange towards value in context" (Vargo, Akaka, Vaughn, 2017, p. 123). There is however a further need to better understand the complexity of context to enhance knowledge on how value is determined and derived in order for practitioners and academics to better predict instances where value can be created or simultaneously destroyed, as only a handful of researchers have begun to view this alternative side to value cocreation (Cao, Alford, and Krey, 2017).

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter 2, in form of a systematic literature review, has discussed the development and ongoing evolution of service dominant logic, touching upon other complimenting areas including open innovation, networks, and institutional logics. The literature review outlined the foundational context for future research directions as well as having led to the aim and objectives of this thesis.

The chapter was divided into three parts, where we began by outlining the key paradigm shifts in the field of marketing, prior to 2004. Firstly, we have outlined the shift of marketing's lens; from being informed by economics towards one informed by behavioural science championed by Alderson (1956). Secondly, we have discussed the “zooming out” transition; from previously looking at individual firms towards, instead, the holistic value creating context. Here greater emphasis was placed on better understanding the macro processes of marketing. Thirdly, we have reviewed the rise of demand side thinking, implying that the consumer has a proactive role within value creation. Next, we have discussed the shift from prioritising tangible resources towards accepting intangible resources, thus triggering the concept of operant and operand resources (Constantin and Lusch, 1994). Lastly, the separation and gradual unification of services and goods were discussed, born largely from contributions stemming from the Nordic School of thought (Gummesson and Grönroos, 1987). Such shifts led to the transition from a goods dominant view to one that is based on services, leading towards service dominant logic which was officially launched in 2004.

Consequently, we have outlined the eight original foundational premises by Vargo and Lusch (2004) and defined their ongoing developments based on contributions of other scholars. Key developments were divided by 2004- 2009 and Post-2008, where in the former timeframe major developments included a revision from goods dominant logic terminology to one that is more appropriate for services, a prioritisation of interactions within networks, resource integration, value in use based on the beneficiary's experience, and the commonalities of actors where the distinctive roles between, for example, the firm and consumer become irrelevant. The following time period post-2008, revolved around better understanding cocreation processes with increased interest on the context of value creation, leading towards a renewed focus on service ecosystems.

Part three of this literature review focused on service ecosystems. Service ecosystems were discussed by providing the foundational underpinnings built largely on the trend of zooming out "to allow a more holistic, dynamic, and realistic perspective of value creation, through exchange, among a wider, more comprehensive configuration of actors" (Vargo and Lusch, 2016; pp. 5-6). This was followed by an outline of actors active in an ecosystem throughout porous, interdependent multi-level networks, as well as a discussion on the characteristics of networks and self-forming networks. The characteristics of institutions were also described, followed by the developments in institutional change, often triggered through the actions of entrepreneurial actors (Beckert, 1999). Such change, namely through institutional de and re stabilisation, is often triggered through innovation, which can be incremental or radical and can be born through open innovation as well as actor tensions. The actions of such

entrepreneurial actors and consequent institutional de and re stabilisation, form the basis of our first and second objectives, identifying how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes and to examine how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.

Finally, focus was placed on the composition and complexities of value codestruction which offers a considerable opportunity for further research, due to a lack in both conceptual and empirical literature, thus linking to our third objective, analysing the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes within the field of fashion. Robertson, Polonsky, and McQuilken (2014) call for a specific examination of value cocreation and codestruction in a technology-enabled environment, particularly relevant due to the growth of e-commerce and interactive media. Additionally, Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) have called for further elaboration of value codestruction within other empirical interorganisational contexts, emphasising business-to-business and business-to-public sector relationships. Järvi, Kähkönen and Torvinen (2018) state that studying value codestruction in different industries will provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon, whilst Echeverri and Skålén (2011) propose that future research needs to study whether or not their conclusions on interactive value practices which may spark codestruction are generalisable to other contexts. They suggest that future research must not rely solely on quantitative data but should be based on case studies of other types of organisations operating in other fields.

We concur with Vargo and Lusch's (2017) claim that “S-D logic is still in its infancy (p. 64)” and it is indeed well-equipped to provide further guidance on developing a “more specific, empirically testable and practically applicable, midrange theory” (Vargo and Lusch, 2017, p. 64). When morphing the contemporary developments of cocreation in codestruction, the context of value creation through service ecosystems, the fluid nature of networks and how innovation may be born from institutional tension, an opportunity for further research is found. It is worthwhile to undergo oscillating foci (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017; Chandler and Vargo, 2011) by zooming in within a specific empirical context to explore the practices of interdependent network actors and their disruptive consequences, as well as the impact on networks which lead to potential value codestruction.

## Chapter 3 The Global Fashion Industry

### 3.1 Introduction

The characteristics of what constitutes fashion, include its inherent dependence on imitation and distinction, as well as short life cycles, high impulse purchasing, low predictability, and high volatility (Christopher, Lowson, and Peck, 2004), as displayed in Table 3.1. Such volatility is triggered by the increased pace of the industry through the “fast-fashion” phenomenon, an emphasis on sustainability and ethics, and the restructuring of oligopolistic ownership of fashion organisations (Crane, 1997). In addition, the decline of the department store, Web 2.0 and consequent social media platforms which have disrupted fashion’s value production and consumption (Quelhas-Brito et al., 2020) have also been credited to transform the industry. In order to better understand these volatilities, in particular digital disruption, the aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of our empirical research context, which will zoom into the depths of the global fashion industry, justified in the previous Chapter 2.

The discussion starts by defining the field of fashion, the fashion product, as well as its inherent tensions of distinction versus conformity. Next we will examine the inner workings of the fashion industry, focusing upon its current forms of operation and practice including fashion market segments, seasonal cycles, global fashion weeks, and fashion capitals. After discussing where value creation practices happen addressing the physical environment of fashion capitals, we will also centre upon the individual actors present within the industry. Such actors are largely members of the “creative class” (Florida, 2005) and are found inside



geographic creative clusters, due to their innate dependence on informal networks for knowledge exchange. Finally, we will shift our gaze towards the creative economy, examining the economic and environmental impact of fashion and the wider creative industries internationally, as well as within the UK.

*Table 3.1 Characteristics of the Fashion Industry*

<i>High volatility</i>	Product demand is unstable and often unpredictable, influenced for example by weather, films, and celebrity culture.
<i>Low predictability</i>	Due to demand volatility, forecasting with accuracy is challenging.
<i>High impulse purchasing</i>	Many buying decisions by consumers for fashion products are made at the point of purchase, underlining the need for “availability”.

Source: Adapted from Christopher, Lowson, and Peck (2004)

### 3.2 Defining Fashion

Scott (2000) highlights that the general notion of cultural products is to function as “personal ornaments, modes of social display, forms of entertainment and distraction, or sources of information and self-awareness (p.3)”. Hence, the function of a fashion product can be regarded as both an operand (e.g. personal ornament) and an operant (e.g. source of information) resource. Famed French fashion designer Coco Chanel stated how, “fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening” (Madsen, 1991; p.124). In 1978, Diana Vreeland, then editor in chief of US *Vogue*, colourfully declared that “fashion is part of the daily air and it changes all the time, with all the events” (LeTrent, 2012). Specific to garments, she continues stating how one can foresee “the approaching of a revolution,” suggesting the substantive symbolism woven within the tangible product of fashion. Additionally, categorising fashion as an intangible operant

resource would be Simmel (1957), who stressed that fashion is symbolically representative of the zeitgeist and refers to the manner in which specific forms of culture disseminate.

Simmel also argued that fashion is used to describe highly visible styles of clothing, as well as other forms of material and immaterial forms of culture, which are valued (or shunned) at a particular point in time. Blumer (1969) maintains that fashion plays a dominant role within all societies, where:

- Fashion provides aesthetic order, narrowing down infinite supplies of choice,
- Fashion distinguishes the past, present, and future catering to individuals “prepared to move into new directions,”
- Fashion trains individuals for the immediate future, thus giving consumers control over their own circumstances (pp. 290-291).

It can be summarised, that the fluid phenomenon of fashion is based on dualities (Lizardo, 2019). Fashion is both an output and input of culture, it represents both an individual and collective aesthetic, and it provides both tangible and intangible value.

A paramount duality of fashion is highlighted by Simmel (1957), who claims fashion is fundamentally based upon the inherent tension of, on one hand the need to imitate others, while on the other hand, the need to distinguish oneself. Individuals, including inside industry actors, find themselves at different points

along this imitation versus distinguishing spectrum, with some more drawn to conformity, while others are more drawn to distinction. This duality links to consumption and social function attitudes (Shavitt, et al., 1992) of self-expression and self-presentation. Self-expression is displayed when an actor aims to embrace their individuality, communicating their own tastes, values or beliefs (e.g. distinction). Self-presentation however revolves around conformity, for an actor to gain acceptance in social situations (Shavitt et al, 1992). The desire of distinguishing oneself from the masses, yet conforming to a desired group, can be exemplified by the snob effect (Leibenstein, 1950), where individuals purchase exclusive goods to exhibit social and economic status. Consequently, the demand for a deemed exclusive good falls once the number of buyers increases, due to a lack of distinction (Veblen, 1899).

Bovone (2003) also adds in seeing clothing as a medium for class distinction, stating that:

“dress...defines which person she wishes to be, freely opt[ing] for one of her ‘multiple self- identifications’, or rather, decid[ing] which self-identification to favour in that particular situation. (p. 208)”

Additionally, fashion acts as a filter between a person and their surrounding social world and helps construct the core of a personal identity (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004; p.382), which is formed through the symbolic values attributed within their clothes. The consumption of material goods can be seen as an expression of

certain types of symbolic values, which are added throughout the process of communication in material culture, as well as in the process of production. In contemporary fashion, diverse media forms play a primary role in adding symbolic values to clothes, where added symbolic values have become as important as the physical garment and their functional purposes (Scott, 2000). Although, fashion lends such desired distinctions, relevant for example within hierarchical structures, it can raise complications if an individual wishes to present themselves differently at the same time (e.g. an individual's offline versus online identity) or may be perceived differently by an audience than originally intended. As clothes are pressed against the body, they intimately align with one's perceptions of self (Crane and Bovone, 2006).

Fashion must however embrace this imitation versus distinguishing duality in order to exist,

“As... the distinctiveness which in the early stages of a set fashion assures for it a certain distribution is destroyed as the fashion spreads, and as this element wanes, the fashion also is bound to die” (Simmel, 1904; pp. 138-139).

The diminishing of distinction may be mapped on the traditional fashion product lifecycle, which includes the introduction and adoption by fashion leaders; growth and increase of public acceptance; mass conformity; and finally, the fall and obsolescence of a fashion (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010). Hence fashion is

regarded as an ephemeral, cyclical phenomenon adopted by particular individuals for a particular time (Sproles, 1979) and is rooted in novelty (Blumer, 1969).

### 3.3 Inner Workings of Fashion Industry

Having defined the fashion product and its complexities, the discussion now concentrates on the inner workings of the industry in order to better understand operations within the empirical research context of the thesis objectives. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) have summarised that the biggest changes to the modern fashion system include 1) the rise of mass production, 2) the increase in the number of fashion seasons, and 3) the structural characteristics in the supply chain, which have forced retailers to prioritise low cost, and flexibility regarding design, quality, delivery and speed to market. An additional change to the modern fashion system is the dominance of conglomerates (Figure 3.1) who rose to power in the late 1980's, thus catapulting marketing and capital investment to be the driving forces of competitiveness within the industry (Sinha, 2001).

In an effort to combat the high volatility of consumer demand that defined the fashion market in the 1980's and 1990's, conglomerates (e.g. LVMH) invested and built up the image of their roster of individual brands, as possessing a strong identity helped attract capital in financial markets (Arvidsson, Malossi, and Naro, 2010). The dominance of conglomerates defined the transformation of the fashion industry's business logic, which throughout the span of the 20th century evolved from emphasising the craft of niche couture products, towards an emphasis on shrill communications and mass production (Dion and Arnould,



as an official Haute Couture house, members selected by the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode (2020) must 1) design made-to-order clothes for private clients, 2) with more than one fitting, 3) using an *atelier* (studio) that employs at least fifteen full time staff. They must also have 4) twenty full time technical workers in one of their ateliers. Finally, Haute Couture houses must 5) present a collection of at least 50 original designs, including day and evening garments, to the public each season, in January and July. Despite stringent rules to qualify, French haute couture garners no more than 1,000 clients around the world (Godart, 2014), and serves a primary purpose for creating the image for the brand's entry level goods (e.g. make up and leather accessories), again emphasising the intangible value behind products.

Ready to wear (RTW) collections join haute couture in the luxury segment, with some luxury brands offering both RTW and couture (e.g. Chanel), however RTW products are often industrially manufactured and are largely not made by hand. Brands within the luxury segment, known also as designer brands, are presented at global fashion weeks, typically in September and February, and produce seasonal designs, which are then adopted and translated by more affordable fashion segments for the mass market. These segments include affordable luxury, premium, mid-market, and value, which include fast fashion brands. It is important to note how trends in one segment (e.g. luxury) are adopted by other segments (e.g. value). The discount segment includes collections from previous seasons or excess stock from a range of fashion segments.

*Table 3.2 Diverse Fashion Market Segments*

<b>Fashion Segment</b>	<b>Brand Example</b>
Luxury	Chanel (RTW and HC)
Affordable Luxury	Michael Kors
Premium/Bridge	Polo Ralph Lauren
Sportswear	Adidas
Mid-Market	Reiss
Value	Zara
Discount	T.K Max

Source: Author

97% of economic profits for the whole fashion industry are earned by just 20 companies, mostly from the luxury and value segment, suggesting a fierce consolidation and competition within the market. In 2018, those companies able to differentiate themselves based on price point or brand image have performed best, with luxury and value segments advancing while the mid-market continues to be indeed “stuck in the middle”. Hence, investment into brand image and operational efficiencies are considered to be contemporary, key drivers of growth within fashion (McKinsey and Company, 2018).

### 3.3.2 The Annual Fashion Calendar

The traditional fashion calendar, which influences practices and operations within the fashion industry is divided into seasons, with Autumn/Winter collections shown at global fashion fairs in February, and Spring/Summer collections presented in September (Figure 3.2). The two-season cycle continues to hold the structure of the fashion calendar, although increasingly in a purely symbolic manner (Skov, 2006) and to gain publicity due to their global reach. During the 3



months after presentations (e.g. runway show), selected pieces from collections are then bought through wholesale and then delivered into store 6 months after presentation. The time between presentations and in-store delivery is used for production, and leaves press and publications time to photograph sample pieces in creative spreads for editorial and advertising material.

Première Vision and other global textile tradeshow connect textile producers with garment manufacturers, which take place 18 months before a fashion good reaches the end consumer. The annual fashion calendar, however, starkly changes dependent on segment and has been disrupted due to various technologies. Firstly, while many luxury brands take up to 6 months from presentation to store, many affordable luxury, premium, mid-market and especially value brands may have a turnaround time of less than two weeks, from design to store (Segre, 2005). This presents a challenge for larger luxury brands as what they present on the catwalk can be reinterpreted and brought to market by a value brand quicker, and at a fraction of the economic price (Segre, 2005). Second, through social media platforms, brands are able to sell direct to consumer through “drops” on social media, where product releases are announced and on sale for a limited time (von Busch, 2019). Whilst drops have been popular in sportswear and lifestyle brands such as Adidas and Supreme, luxury labels such as Burberry and Louis Vuitton have also started introducing product drops, mimicking strategies of disruptive, non-traditional labels. In the instances of “drop” culture and the challenges of fast fashion copies, large, heritage established brands are regarded as reactionary within a volatile market.

Figure 3.2 Annual Fashion calendar (Luxury Segment)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				PRE-FALL IN STORE							
								SPRING Presentatio ns			
								FALL IN STORE			
											PRE-FALL Presentations
										RESORT IN STORE	
	FALL Presentation s										
		SPRING IN STORE									
				RESORT Presentatio ns							

Source: Author

Next to mainline collections of Autumn and Spring, are preseason collections; namely, Pre-Fall collections which are presented in December, and Resort (Pre-Spring) collections shown typically in May, where often luxury brands invite clients to attend presentations in remote destinations (e.g. LVMH owned French brand Christian Dior inviting clients to Marrakech for its Resort 2020 collection). Preseason collections are considered more commercially driven and wearable than the more publicity-driven pieces shown at main season presentations (Fig 3.3).

*Figure 3.3 Main versus pre- season collections*



Sources: Images by Filippo Fior, retrieved from [voguerunway.com](http://voguerunway.com)

Other brands are intentionally presenting their collections for end consumers, who are able to directly purchase goods via a live catwalk presentation under a practice called “see-now-buy-now” (Brun, Castelli, and Karaosman, 2016). Participating brands include Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger, whilst others are choosing to present “off-season”, rejecting participation at a scheduled fashion week, such as the privately-owned label Alexander Wang. Such diverse strategies again highlight the uncertainty and fluctuations within the industry.

### 3.3.3 Global Fashion Capitals

The existence of global fashion capitals is a way to reduce such uncertainties which exists in the fashion industry, as it allows participating industry actors to be in touch with one another routinely and easily (Godart, 2014). Despite the

existence of hundreds of fashion weeks and a current gaze drawn to Eastern Europe and East Asia as clusters for creativity, New York, London, Milan and Paris remain recognised as leaders in global fashion, with each capital possessing its own distinct flair (Martínez, 2007). Gottdiener (1994) and Sharon (1995) suggest that the identities of cities are a social construct, characterised by an omnipresent feeling that influences its inhabitants and visitors, and also lends symbolic characteristics to the cultural objects which originate from it (Table 3.3; Godart, 2014).

*Table 3.3 Global Fashion Capitals and connotations of local fashion*

<b>New York</b>	Commercial, functional, sportswear, puritan
<b>London</b>	Rebellious, chaotic, DIY, fun
<b>Milan</b>	Ready to Wear, sharp tailoring, serious, mature
<b>Paris</b>	Haute Couture, craftsmanship, chic, glamour

Source: Author based on Godart (2014)

New York, which is the first destination on the traditional fashion week calendar is associated with sportswear and functional brands driven by leisure and wearability. New York displays an intra-urban model of economic development as the city exhibits a full production system as well as a significant market (Godart, 2014). The *Council of Fashion Designers of America* is the professional association which institutionally regulates the industry, and New York is home to brands including Marc Jacobs and Ralph Lauren.

Milan is celebrated for its high quality ready to wear fashions, due to the concentrations of artisans and textile production near the city (Breward, 2003) especially in the Veneto and Emilia-Romagna regions. Milan fashion is championed by the *Camera della Moda* and boasts labels such as Prada and

Gucci. Paris, remains the epicentre of the global fashion industry, being the home of haute couture and the world's most influential luxury conglomerates (LVMH and The Kering Group). The *Federation de la Haute Couture et de la Mode* is its governing body and champions brands including Yves Saint Laurent and Christian Dior. Paris has benefited from what Krugman (1993), labelled "path dependency", as it remains successful because it was successful in the past, and industry actors believe it will still be in the future (Godart, 2014).

London is the fashion capital where the majority of ethnographic observations for this research were conducted. The city is praised by industry professionals for being more open-minded than other fashion capitals, as well as eccentric, youthful, and rebellious in spirit (d'Ovidio and Haddock, 2010; Dagworthy, O'Byrne, and Worsley, 2009). Due to its cultural history in the contemporary arts (e.g. music), high concentration of arts universities and substantial support from its governing body, *The British Fashion Council*, London is a hub for emerging designers who receive regular funding opportunities and support (e.g. the NewGen Award).

32% of the UK's creative industry jobs are based in London (The Creative Industries, 2019). In 2015, London's gross value added (GVA) of the creative industries was estimated to be at £42 billion, accounting for 11.1% of London's total GVA, and 47.4% of the UK total for the creative sector (GLA, 2017). D'Ovidio and Haddock (2010; p. 124) have mapped London's creative clusters to be Notting Hill, the district between Brick Lane and Hoxton Square, Clerkenwell, the district around Oxford Circus, and the district from Knightsbridge to Sloane

Square, although this is constantly changing with members of the creative class moving towards the city's periphery, due to high living costs, with Hackney becoming increasingly popular.

#### 3.3.4 Fashion Weeks

Taking place within these global fashion capitals are biannual fashion weeks, which stimulate both global and local demand for new seasonal apparel presented at trade and catwalk shows. They are described as large-scale exhibitions, displaying a fashion designer's work, and are heavily covered by the world's press (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006) thus reaching individuals who may not possess the budget or interest for purchase (Skov et al., 2009). The publicity-creating function is prioritised over commercial gain during a global fashion week, while other lesser known fashion fairs are oftentimes presented to a mid-market group of buyers from local department and high street stores (Skov et al., 2009). The composition of a fashion fair relies on 4 intersecting axes. The first axis indicates the category of clothing, for example women's or menswear; the second axis indicates the market segment, such as luxury or value; the third axis indicates the position in the value chain, for example textiles, leather or wholesale; and the fourth axis refers to the geographical dispersion of this global industry (Skov et al., 2009).

Fashion weeks bring together industry actors including designers, journalists, and other cultural intermediaries, who share a common purpose to produce, reproduce, and legitimate the field of fashion and the positions of those individuals within it through promotional activities (Entwistle and Rocamora,

2006). As the collections presented are largely for the following season, fashion weeks catapult industry actors six months into the future. To gain entry, individuals wishing to attend must apply for accreditation in order to be granted access by a series of gatekeepers (Skov et al., 2009). Gatekeepers, often being PR agents, traditionally maintain the hierarchy within fashion, through carefully constructed seating arrangements and selective invitations for presentations, often based upon an individual's social capital (Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006).

Maskell et al. (2004) argue that fashion weeks can be regarded as temporary culture clusters that share a variety of functions with permanent clusters, such as information exchange, learning processes and networks. Skov (2006) adds that through knowledge exchange, fashion weeks lead to a formation of trends. When people see and are seen by others, they imperceptibly adjust behaviours to one another, responding to the affirmations given by others, and thus volatile trends can be formed (Skov, 2006; p. 773). Individuals engaging in common social interactions and experiences, develop common tastes (Davis, 1992) which develop from an initial state of ambiguity towards, refinement and stability.

Through recent technological advancements of real-time image sharing on social media platforms and live streaming of fashion show presentations on websites including *VogueRunway*, the fashion show, and by extension a fashion week, has become a hype-driven media spectacle, where brands communicate directly with the end consumer, capturing media attention through extravagant staging. Godart (2014) predicts a future where fashion shows, could become dematerialised or be made redundant as they constitute a major cost for brands

and no longer serve their original purpose of information sharing for an exclusive set of cultural intermediaries including press and buyers. Godart (2014) argues that if fashion shows would become purely online events, brands could keep their appeal and save costs, however fashion weeks would lose their relevance and the associated jobs would be in jeopardy.

### 3.3.5 Fashion's Creative Class

The final product of fashion involves a series of multiple interactions from interconnected actors, with the value creation process categorised as a “contact sport” (D’Ovidio and Haddock 2010; p.126), a “complex open system” demonstrating high levels of “chaos” (Christopher, Lowson, and Peck, 2004; p.367), and as a broad reference to culture, a transactional activity (Lash and Urry, 1994). Fashion production requires a substantial set of relationships between creators, collaborators, cultural intermediaries and increasingly consumers, which in turn generates a complex cycle of knowledge flows, from the creation of original ideas to their eventual realisation as products or performances (Kawamura, 2005). Central within this tangle of knowledge flows and exchanges are the individuals active within this creative industry. Florida (2005) refers to these individuals as the “creative class”, being:

“An agglomeration of exceptionally talented individuals whose function it is to produce new ideas. The creative class are those who are mainly motivated by the search for abundant high-quality experiences, an openness to diversity



of all kinds, and above else the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people (p. 36)".

Although in reference to the art world, Becker (1982) has categorised such creative individuals as mainstreams, mavericks and misfits. Mainstreams, also considered to be industry actors from the Establishment, are those trained and integrated professionals within the industry who are distinguished by their status. Mavericks are those who may not be trained originally within the industry and are consequently considered more avant-garde. They often feel constrained by existing field conventions and wish to challenge them by pushing out field boundaries and may be seen as disrupters. Misfits are outsiders who are unable to mobilise collaborators from within the boundaries of an ecosystem, such as the art world.

A significant proportion of the creative class include intermediaries, defined by Bourdieu as:

"Hallmarks of the new petite bourgeoisie, occupations involved in: the presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services (2013; p. 359).

Intermediaries are regarded to be the new middle class of knowledge workers or symbol analysts (Table 3.4) who shape regulate, and organise the creative

economy (Pratt, 2008; Maguire and Matthews, 2010). They link actors from different creative and non-creative fields and actively transform flows of knowledge that are being transferred (Jakob and Van Heur, 2015, as cited in O'Connor, 2015). Bourdieu highlights that intermediaries hold “control over the mass media” (2013; p. 325) which suggests, if savvy, intermediaries may manage media to accomplish their own promotional-work or activities such as contributing to the celebrification process, uniting the spectacular with the everyday, by for example, framing “ordinary people” into celebrities (Driessens, 2013; p. 643).

*Table 3.4 Members of Fashion’s creative class*

<b>Promotion</b>	<b>Design</b>	<b>Retail</b>	<b>Publications</b>
Publishing Director	Creative Director	Managing Director	Editor in Chief
Artistic Director	Production Manager	Buyer	Managing Editor
Advertising Director	Designer	Associate Buyer	Fashion Features Director
Photographer	Pattern Cutter	Human Resources Manager	Fashion Critic
PR Agent	Garment Technologist	Merchandise Planner/Allocator	Bookings Director
Fashion Copywriter	Supply Chain Manager	Trend Researcher	Social Media Editor
Model	Sales	Store Manager	Contributing Editors
Graphic Designer	Market Research Analyst	Sales Associate	Video Producer
<i>Paid and unpaid Interns</i>			

Source: Author

Arvidsson, Malossi, and Naro (2010) cite the severe inequality of power within the fashion industry, “with a small elite commanding high levels of market power and a growing mass of workers whose skills are generic and in constant oversupply” (p. 296). This growing mass is consequently, forced to accept low

pay, or in many cases no monetary pay, as well as unstable forms of employment through freelance work and short-term contracts. With such fluid employment, there is a lack of centrality for a considerable proportion of the creative class meaning traditional features of work life are eliminated such as the clarity of “going up the career ladder” (p. 303), narrative sociality in a secure workplace such as “ties of kinship” and community (McRobbie, 2002; p. 518). Although “set free” from workplace structures (Giddens, 1991), project-based employment typically forces individuals to bear the costs and risks of insurance, social security, sick pay, and maternity leave (Gill, 2002). With the stability and structure of centrality crumbling in creative industries, creative workers are therefore highly reliant on informal networking (Ross, 2009).

McRobbie (2002) has described how this lack of centrality has affected the process of recruitment for projects and jobs within creative industries. Oftentimes, an opportunity for contracted creative work depends on informal knowledge and a fluid network, thus emphasising the factor of nepotism and “who you know” in order to gain entry to the right places, at the right time, such as “being on the guest list” (p. 519) of a certain event. Also, access to executive positions in fashion largely “depends on belonging to the right kind of networks” (Arvidsson, Malossi, and Naro, 2010; p. 303). Hence, when on the quest for furthering one’s career and the result of increased security, many industry actors must blend private and professional networks into one, thus lacking no true “social” life (Latour, 2007). This informality of networking may explain the distinct elements of youth culture and the fleeting, fast pace of work in creative industries. This dependency of being in the correct networks has led industry actors to

increasingly having to become their own marketable entities, which requires constant practices of self- monitoring, reflexivity and intense self-promotion across diverse media to achieve access to future opportunity.

Despite the lack of stability and financial rewards, work within the creative industries have nonetheless been described as “profoundly satisfying” and “intensely pleasurable” (Gill and Pratt 2008, p. 15). Many creative individuals, including intermediaries, are observed in having achieved harmony between the personal and the professional, with their jobs becoming a defining element of their identity (Maguire and Matthews, 2010).

### 3.3.6 Cultural Capital

The creative class, highly dependent on informal networks and information exchange has led to the development of cultural capitals. Zukin (1995) argues that a culture capital is where a cultural product (e.g. art) is not only produced, but is also sold and consumed, and whilst also having a large infrastructure of individuals whose job is to translate the work of producers for a larger public, thus emphasising the role of intermediaries. Within a cultural capital, there are creative “clusters” or “quarters”. Wynne (1992) defines these to be “geographical area[s] that contain[s] the highest concentration of culture and entertainment in a city or town” (p. 19). The development of clusters is built on the previously mentioned needs of a formal and informal network society (Castells, 1996), due to the reduction of transactions costs and an accelerated circulation of capital and information (Hitters and Richards, 2002).

Additionally, being positioned within a cluster allows for better communication, especially through increased possibilities for face to face communication (d'Ovidio, and Pacetti, 2019). Storper and Venables (2004) argue that face to face communication is the richest communication medium due to the ability to transmit complex, unmodifiable, and tacit knowledge. With creative clusters attracting members of the creative class, the clusters also attract non-members who wish to be near a bohemian cluster (Bagwell, 2008). Pratt (2008) argues that creative industries offer a sense of prestige versus ordinary culture, and offer “mobile fairy dust” (p.109) to the modern city, with the creative class being the “magic ingredient that generates contemporary urban growth” (p.112) by attracting innovative CEOs and individuals in high earning jobs, such as in high-tech. Hence, creative clusters, which support creative industries, can equally be broader growth engines in cities (Wynne, 1992). The relevance of creative clusters suggests that despite a shift towards adopting online platform, physical place remains important for industry actors.

### 3.4 The Creative Economy

Having discussed the inner workings of the fashion industry, attention now turns briefly onto the wider creative economy. Here, the impact of the fashion industry will be outlined in regard to the economy and environment. The creative economy, which includes the fashion industry, is composed of, “people with creative occupations working in the creative industries, as well as workers with creative occupations working in any other industry, and people in a non-creative job working in a creative industry” (Greater London Authority, 2017). Being a subset of the creative economy, the UK’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport

(DCMS), has defined the creative industries such as fashion as: “activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property,” (2016).

The shift of terminology, from “cultural” to “creative” industries in the late 1990’s, has invited considerable criticism within academic discourse (Pratt, 1997; Jeffcutt, 2000) as the revised term emphasises operations and economic, commercial, and individual dimensions (Pratt, 2008) when producing novel cultural “output”. Kong (2014) suggests the turn from “cultural” to “creative” industries is problematic due to (i) the difficulties in defining and scoping the creative industries; (ii) the challenges in measuring the economic benefits creative industries bring; (iii) the risk that creative industries neglect genuine creativity/ culture; (iv) the utopianisation of “creative labour”; (v) the risk of valorising and promoting external expertise over local SME enterprises in the building of “creative industries”; (vi) the danger of overblown expectations for creative industries to serve innovation and the economy, as well as culture and social equity; and (vii) the fallacy that “creative cities” can be designed. It is argued “Creative” industries may be aligned with GDL terminology, highlighting output, whilst the former “cultural” industries may have been more aligned with SDL terminology highlighting processes.

As well as driving social and cultural innovation, creative industries stimulate considerable economic growth, employment growth (Ross, 2007), diversification strategies, prosperity and wellbeing (UNCTAD, 2019). Recently the UNCTAD

report (2019) has stated how the creative economy leads to both “commercial and cultural value” and helps “generate income through trade and intellectual property rights, and create new opportunities, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises.” Within the UK, creative industries additionally include advertising, architecture, design, TV and film, createch, games, publishing, music, and arts and craft. Of all jobs in the UK, 1 in 11 are involved in the creative economy, producing an estimated Gross Value Added (GVA) of £101.5 billion in 2017. Between 2010 and 2017, the UK’s GVA in the creative industries rose by 53.1 per cent- compared to a 29.7 per cent increase in the economy as a whole during the same period (DCMS, 2018 as cited by The Creative Industries, 2019).

Being a significant segment in the creative economy, the estimated value of the global fashion industry is worth £2.3 trillion, amounting to 2 percent of the world’s GDP (FashionUnited, 2019). Additionally, the global fashion industry employs approximately one-sixth of the world’s population who work along the expansive fashion supply chain (Cheney, 2016). When specified to the UK economy, the UK fashion industry had directly contributed £32.3 billion to GDP in 2017, representing a 5.4% increase since 2016; a 1.6% growth rate higher than the rest of the economy. Moreover, the fashion industry employs 890,000 people, nearly attaining the total amount of jobs provided by the financial sector (Oxford Economics, 2018 as cited by The British Fashion Council, 2019). Specific to design and designer fashion, there are 160,000 jobs in the UK, an increase of 57% between 2011 and 2017. Also, within design and designer fashion, 23,400 UK businesses were recorded in 2017, exhibiting an increase of almost 3 per cent, year on year (DCMS, 2018 as cited by The Creative Industries, 2019).

Although the industry significantly contributes to economic growth globally and within the UK, the consequences of current fashion practice leads to environmentally adverse effects. The fashion industry contributes to 10% of global carbon emissions, 20% of industrial water waste (UNFCCC, 2018), and creates an estimated 21 billion tons of textile waste per year (EPA, 2018, as cited by GCU, 2019). Driven by a rising middle-class across the globe and an increase in per capita sales within mature economies, clothing production has nearly doubled (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019) over the past 15 years. As apparel consumption is set to rise by 63%, from 62 million tons today to 102 million tons in 2030 (Global Fashion Agenda & The Boston Consulting Group, 2017), the industry finds itself grappling with alternative strategies in order to adapt to such outstanding sustainable challenges.

### 3.5 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the empirical context for this research, which explores the depths within the global fashion industry. First, it defined fashion and the fashion product in relation to socio-cultural drivers, as well as inherent tensions regarding distinction and conformity. Next, it has discussed the inner workings of the fashion industry, including the control of conglomerates, fashion market segments, the annual fashion calendar, fashion capitals and global fashion weeks, as well as the creative class and creative clusters. Finally, it has addressed the impact of fashion, an element of the creative economy, in regard to the economy, as well as the environment.



## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

In order to reach the aim of exploring the effects of digital disruption on the value creation processes within the global fashion industry in an attempt to further our understanding of SDL, a qualitative research methodology was selected, which will be outlined and justified in this chapter. Our aim was divided into three research objectives, exhibited in Table 4.1, along with their corresponding research methods.

*Table 4.1 Research Objectives and Methodology*

	RESEARCH FOCUS	RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHODS
1	Micro: Behaviours of <b>Individual</b> Actors in fashion industry	To identify how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Semi-structured interviews</b> with 17 London-based creatives in the fashion industry (e.g. designers, journalists, stylists and photographers)</li> <li>• <b>Focus Group</b></li> <li>• <b>Participant observations</b> within the global fashion community</li> </ul>
2	Meso: Composition and structure of <b>Networks</b> in the fashion Industry	To examine how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.	
3	Macro: Ongoing Value creation/ destruction <b>processes</b> in the fashion industry	To analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes within the field of fashion.	

SOURCE: AUTHOR

Highlighted in Chapter 2, the research aim and subsequent objectives have been established through a theoretical gap. Whilst SDL scholars have tended to take a macro, field-level view of value creation processes, we have determined that it was worthwhile to “zoom in” within the micro, meso, and macro levels of a specific

empirical context in order to explore the consequences of an evolving phenomenon composed of disruptive practices. As the aim was based on exploring a specific phenomenon, it was decided to undertake a qualitative research approach, which boasts the advantage of highlighting the various qualities of entities, processes and their meanings, in contrast to the calculated measurements of quantities (Flick, 2018). Applicable to this research aim, qualitative research helps achieve a better understanding of a group's social reality, culture and diverse phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Built upon the intention of addressing the three sets of objectives, and to provide relevant empirical evidence to the largely conceptual body of literature within SDL, we have completed a longitudinal ethnographic study within the global fashion industry over a time span of 18 months (January 2018- July 2019). Due to our research design, which included participant observations, a focus group, semi-structured interviews, and self-reflexivity we were able to achieve a holistic sense of the global fashion industry's value creation process. Additionally, we were able to interact with disruptive industry actors, and reflect upon personal experiences due to the researcher being herself being an inside industry actor. Moreover, in order to deliver meaningful research on cocreation (and codestruction) within SDL, it was deemed important to cocreate findings with participants within our empirical context.

The core epistemological underpinnings are identified as phenomenology and interpretivism. To carry out our research design, we have adopted a phenomenological lens, as it aims to develop a comprehensive, complex and

articulate description of a particular phenomenon or human experience (Groenewald, 2004). The knowledge gained from this research has stemmed from the researcher's own direct experiences, which have been captured within ethnographic fieldnotes (Appendix 10).

This primary focus when carrying out this research was to become involved in the global fashion industry's daily value creating processes and activities in order to understand and explain what is happening, opposed to proactively change it (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). Therefore, the lens for conducting this research stems from an interpretivist philosophy, which assumes that knowledge is generated through interpreting and understanding the meanings that humans attach to their actions (O'Reilly, 2012).

Also, as the three objectives required observations of human actors within a specific field, forcing a rigid external logic upon the candid complexities of human behaviour was deemed unsuitable. Both individual and collective human action is guided by sets of values, intentions, attitudes, and beliefs and cannot follow a causal model. Human actions have internal logics of their own, which must be regarded and understood in order to make action meaningful (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Epistemologically, the rich insights of complex worlds would be tragically lost if unpredictable complexity is erased, all to fit into a series of prescribed law like generalisations (Vasilachis, 2009).

Whilst stemming from induction, our chosen methodology is not purely inductive, as we embarked on this research journey with a general research direction, initial

aim and an understanding of key theoretical literature. Additionally, with the researcher holding a pre-existing relationship as a writer within the field of fashion, she was already embedded in this context. Hence, we were able to foreshadow problems, whilst simultaneously keeping an open mind towards observations. Sophisticated inductivism (Noaparast et al., 2011) has therefore been applied; while the research did emerge from the “bottom up” without a hypothesis, it did stem from a basic appreciation of theoretical literature involving SDL and an aim of targeting the global fashion industry.

The chapter firstly describes the chosen research strategy of ethnography as well as its ongoing post-modern developments. It will subsequently address researcher reflexivity as ethnographic research is considered “radically relational and is shaped by the lens of the researcher’s orientation, values and personal qualities” (Wertz et al., 2011; p. 84). Next, it will outline how research access was achieved and maintained. The research design of participant observations conducted over 18 months, 17 semi-structured interviews and focus group will also be outlined. Finally, methods of data analysis, data presentation, research design validation, and ethical considerations will be included.

## 4.2 Research Strategy

In order to uncover the necessary depth required for achieving this thesis aim and objectives, we have chosen to employ ethnography as a research strategy. According to Van Maanen (1988),

“Ethnographies...pose questions at the margins between two cultures. They necessarily decode one culture while recoding for another. This is an interpretive act that occurs with the writing of texts, and as with any form of writing certain constraints determine what is written” (p. 4).

Ethnography offers substantial advantages for achieving the thesis research aim. Firstly, ethnography takes into account the often disorderly and unpredictable complexity of group and individual behaviours present in a specific context (Behar, 2007). It can reveal and spotlight subtle interrelationships among several dimensions of group interactions and helps uncover the context of observed behaviours. Secondly, ethnography helps uncover the often-complex characteristics of a collective group experience (Coffey, 1999). Additionally, through its flexible approach, the uncovered data can help inspire a series of future research questions, which can be adapted to the changing nature of field relations over time. Ethnographic findings also offer authentic and credible stories stemming from both the researcher's and participant's perspective, which ultimately lead towards a rich understanding of a specific phenomenon (O'Reilly, 2012); in this case, the effects of digital disruption within fashion.

One key feature of ethnography as a research methodology is that its practice has evolved and, in particular, has experienced postmodern influences. Davies (2012) describes such postmodern developments within ethnography to be based upon the erosion of boundaries, rejecting the autonomy of different

domains. The first example of boundaries breaking down is the process of producing ethnographies based on interpretivist fieldwork, which intrinsically links the researcher and the ethnographic study. Here, the ethnographic researcher is not viewed as separate to their research but is regarded to be deeply ingrained within it. When directly ingrained within the research, the position of privilege is reduced, and the ethnographic findings become one interpretation with no superior claim to validity. This postmodern development stresses equal validity from all perspectives who contribute to the research. Hence, we see an overarching denial of authority.

A second boundary breaking down is the distinction between the ethnographic researcher and the participants studied. Here, the researcher is encouraged to shine a light on participants as opposed to giving an impression of “discovering” them, signalling a position of power. This postmodern perspective emphasises that the researcher produces a body of knowledge together *with* participants, prioritising the process of cocreation when constructing ethnographic representations. Knowledge is therefore constructed together with participants, where the researcher and the participant exert a mutual influence on one another. Hence, the “ethnographic enterprise is not a matter of what one person does in a situation, but how two sides of an encounter arrive at a delicate workable definition of their meeting” (Crick, 1982: p.25). Ultimately, this ethnographic research strategy was informed by a post-modern tradition, where the researcher and the participants within the field of fashion have continuously engaged with one another in cocreating results. The findings were the fruits of joint cooperation, appropriate for this research of examining cocreation in an empirical context.

### 4.3 Researcher Reflexivity

As previously described, ethnographic research is shaped by the researcher's lens of the orientation, values and personal qualities (Wertz et al., 2011). Regardless of taking a positivist or interpretivist approach, all researchers are connected to their research (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2017), however, especially as a phenomenologist, the researcher cannot be detached from their own presuppositions (Hammersley, 1995). Despite producing a body of knowledge together with participants, it remains worthwhile for the researcher to acknowledge their own position within a particular context, being the main research tool for collection and analysis (May and Perry, 2010). Reflexivity lends "analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research" (Gouldner, 1971, p. 16, as cited in Dowling, 2006) and is considered to be both a concept and a process (Palaganas et al., 2017).

Palaganas et al. (2017) expand that as a concept, reflexivity refers to a purposeful level of consciousness and entails a high level of the researcher's self-awareness, by being actively involved in the research process. As a concept, it is about the recognition that the researcher inevitably influences the social world that they wish to study (Ackerly and True, 2010). However, as a process, reflexivity addresses the role of subjectivity and demands constant and consistent self-referencing (Parahoo, 2006). Here, the researcher must recognise, examine, and understand how their "social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17, as cited in Palaganas et al., 2017).

Teh and Lek (2018) suggest that the researcher should declare their position of being an insider or outsider within a field or whether they have shared experiences with the study participants. Additionally, Berger (2015; as cited in Dodgson, 2019) states that researchers should also consider “political and professional beliefs, social position, immigration status, sexual orientation, linguistic tradition, personal preferences, theoretical orientations, and emotional responses to participants (p. 220)”

Addressing the researcher’s own reflexivity is Table 4.2, which provides an insight of who was collecting the ethnographic data. The researcher was an insider within the global fashion industry due to working as a journalist (e.g. writing articles for publications and video commentary), a blogger (e.g. writing articles and managing her own online website), and consultant (e.g. developing marketing plans for various organisations). Hence, she was able to achieve research access to the field (see 4.4), understand the practices and behaviours, and speak the cultural language of industry actors including particular terminology, jokes, and industry specific references. Whilst being a millennial female and fitting into the youth-oriented feminine culture (Friedman, 2018) of fashion, she maintained a periphery position within the ecosystem due to diverging priorities from other industry actors. Many participants observed and interviewed found deep connections with one another due to experiencing common struggles such as transphobic, homophobic or racist attacks, as well as the challenges and uncertainty employment in creative fields brings (with many working on zero-hour contracts or without pay). Although the researcher sympathised with participants, she did not experience the same struggles as they



did, resulting in largely professional relationships opposed to social, thus affecting perceptions of trust.

*Table 4.2 Researcher Reflexivity*

<b>Gender</b>	Female
<b>Sexuality</b>	Heterosexual
<b>Language</b>	Native English Speaker (non-British)
<b>Socio-Economic Class</b>	Middle Class Background
<b>Race</b>	Caucasian/ European
<b>Age</b>	23-26
<b>Geographic Background</b>	Cosmopolitan (London)

Source: Author

## 4.4 Research Access

### 4.4.1 Maintaining Role as a Journalist

In order to successfully reach the aim and objectives, the researcher was highly dependent on securing access within the notoriously exclusive field of fashion, where research access was constantly being negotiated throughout 18 months of fieldwork practice. The first step to securing research access was for the researcher to maintain her role as an industry insider, which allowed her to attend private industry gatherings and partake in various rituals. She maintained her role as an active journalist through continuous self-branding on and offline, relationship building with other inside actors, remaining informed on current

events, and most importantly, regularly writing articles for her own online platform and various publications.

Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher wrote on average two articles per month for her own website, which included seasonal fashion collection reviews and analytical commentary pertaining to the business of fashion. This extended credibility to the researcher when interacting with other insiders. Next to published articles, she would purposefully interact with her own social media audience and provide fashion commentary via photo and video, using the social media platform Instagram on a daily basis. Mimicking the practices of other influential industry actors, she adopted a signature “uniform” (e.g. a black shirt, black blazer, white trousers and a flamboyant neck scarf) with the intention to be more easily recognisable by peers, further developing trust; vital for meaningful semi-structured interviews.

#### 4.4.2 British Fashion Council Press Accreditation

Field access was achieved through validated Press Accreditation granted by the British Fashion Council (BFC). To achieve accreditation, the researcher had to submit an application via an online registration portal in January 2018, August 2018, and January 2019 (to the BFC prior to each London Fashion Week). As the researcher had been working primarily as a freelance journalist since 2014, she had to apply as a “blogger” or “digital influencer”. Here, accreditation requirements included having either 1) over 15,000 monthly unique visitors to a website 2) an Instagram following of at least 35,000 or 3) an average of 50,000 views per fashion related video and a minimum of 80,000 subscribers on

YouTube. Additionally, all platforms must exhibit regular content that shows a clear interest in British fashion and design. The accreditation application required a submission of 1) a Google Analytics Report displaying monthly unique users to her website 2) three examples of published work 3) Social Media handles, and 4) a photo portrait of herself. Because the researcher had less than the stated minimum requirement of blog “monthly unique visitors”, in addition to her application, she directly emailed the BFC press officer to provide supplementary evidence of journalistic work with fashion publications.

#### 4.4.3 PR Introduction Emails

Although the researcher’s confirmed Press Accreditation pass (Appendix 6.6) provided access to the London Fashion Week showrooms (located at 180 The Strand, London), it did not guarantee any invitations to catwalk shows or events throughout the year. At the start of the participant observations in January 2018, she emailed 20 leading global PR firms her journalist media kit via her blog email address, in order to personally introduce herself and register her keen interest to be involved in covering fashion related events.

#### 4.4.4 Invitation Requests

Next to establishing relationships with PR firms, in order to attend London Fashion Week presentations, she emailed each brand individually one month prior to their catwalk show to request an invitation. Information required for invitation requests included: 1) Full Name and Job Role 2) Associated Publication 3) Full UK Address and 4) Confirmation of Press Accreditation, exhibited in the sample email below (Figure 4.1):

*Figure 4.1 Press Invitation Request*

Dear XXX,

I hope you are doing well! As a BFC accredited journalist, I would like to request 1 invitation to attend the XXX presentation. This season, I will be covering London Fashion Week for the online magazine XXX (+12,000 subscribers).

**My Confirmed London Address is:**

XXX

As every season, I very much looking forward to the collection and in the meantime, wish you and the team all the best for the preparations!

Kindest regards,

Nina Van Volkinburg

Source: Author

Each season, she would request on average 80 invitations for presentations and events, be confirmed invitations to 50, and attend 30. Due to overlaps in the show schedule at London Fashion Week, confirmed events were prioritised by their potential on generating the most fruitful ethnographic fieldnotes; those that were considered more exclusive, high profile, and influential.

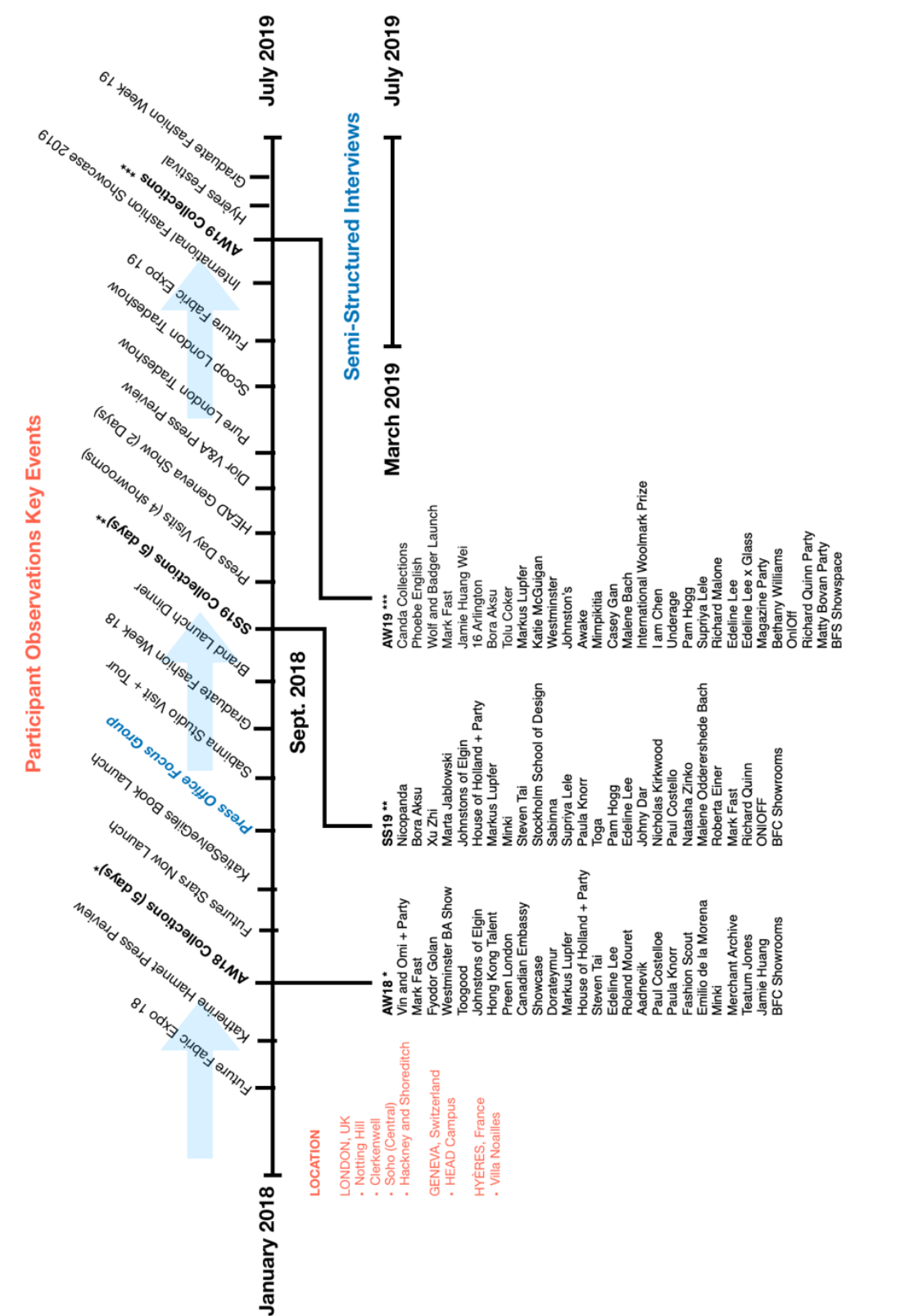
## 4.5 Participant Observations

### 4.5.1 Sites of Observation

Figure 4.2 exhibits the timeline of the ethnographic research, with participant observations lasting from January 2018 until July 2019, and interviews taking place between March 2019 and July 2019. For observations, the researcher

visited over 100 different sites which included various showrooms, studios, and presentation venues. Sites of observation were primarily based in London, UK especially within the creative clusters of Clerkenwell, Shoreditch, Hackney, Notting Hill, Soho, and Southbank. As part of the observational research, Geneva, Switzerland and Hyères, France were also visited. In addition to attending presentations during three seasons of London Fashion Week, the researcher attended industry events throughout the 18 months including 1) press-only days in either brand or agency showrooms 2) tradeshow and fabric fairs 3) brand launch or anniversary parties 4) annual fashion festivals and graduate shows 5) as well as studio visits of London based designers.

Figure 4.2 Key Events for Participant Observations (January 2018- July 2019)



Source: Author

#### 4.5.2 Participants Observation

Although the researcher kept an open mind, referencing all relevant inside actors present within sites of observation, she was predominately interested in fashion intermediaries; those who translate the language of the mother tongue, e.g. fabric, into fashion (Barthes, 1967). They are responsible for the transition from physical garment to become a meaningful representation. These actors legitimise clothes and give added symbolism to fashion; they can be seen as the middle(wo)men between producer and consumer. As the members were active in their natural setting, behaviours were relatively natural, and allowed results to be reliable, proving a high degree of validity (Hague, n.D).

#### 4.5.3 Gatekeepers

When attending observational sites, the researcher not only collected fieldwork, but also continuously renegotiated her access into the field by nourishing relationships with prominent, established industry gatekeepers. Gatekeepers to the field, or those with the authority to control site access (Lindgren, 2014) included PR representatives and security guards, as well as influential participants. Although, most participants could be qualified as holding a degree of authority depending on occasion, the researcher relied on three particular gatekeepers to gain access and direct both covert and overt research.

The first gatekeeper, referred to as Diane in Chapters 5-7, is an influential senior fashion critic, writing for a high-profile household name magazine. A relationship was established with her due to the researcher sending a direct message via the social media platform Instagram and introducing herself as a researcher. This

initial online contact was followed up with a face to face conversation at a press event in January 2018. Having explained to Diane the aim and rationale of the research, she accepted the request of being involved as a participant, such as allowing the researcher to shadow her during London Fashion Week. The researcher joined her on 6 showroom visits as well as a 14 catwalk shows. Due to her renowned and well-respected status in the industry, she was able to introduce the researcher to other actors in the field, some including additional interview participants.

The second gatekeeper is a freelance journalist, referred to as Elton, and the personal assistant of another highly respected fashion journalist, referred to as Helen, who has been active in the fashion industry for over 40 years. What turned from repeatedly meeting each other at the same catwalk shows and presentations, evolved into a friendship in September 2018. Due to his high-profile social network and being an active subject in the media, he helped provide research access for the researcher to accompany him to exclusive events. The researcher remained transparent with the research aim and would always clarify “on the record” discussions, clearly stating when she would document a particular statement or observation to avoid any form of deception or personal exploitation.

The third gatekeeper is the founder and CEO of a renowned global PR company. This relationship was established in January 2018 after the researcher introduced herself at a panel discussion at the Hearst Publications headquarters, where the gatekeeper was speaking about the future of sustainable fashion. After explaining the research aim, the gatekeeper confirmed her interest in contributing and



introduced me to other members of her firm including the Head of Global Fashion. Throughout the research process, she and the researcher remained in email contact.

#### 4.5.4 Fieldnotes

Participant observations are a highly qualitative data collection technique in which the researcher observed the ongoing behaviours of participants within a natural setting of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). This approach in ethnography allowed the researcher to “live” amongst those participants we intended to study in order to produce detailed accounts of their culture, beliefs, behaviours, interactions, language, rituals and events which shape their lives.

Observations were documented by using a descriptive analysis approach of each event, noting the lighting, music, what interactions took place, how people behaved, conversations heard, and the positions and behaviours of actors. Additionally, fieldnotes included visual approaches, mapping networks, and multimedia elements (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). When physically present in the field, the researcher would write in her notebook or record messages verbally on a mobile device. Afterwards, the researcher would expand on these initial notes within 24 hours on her laptop, providing supporting details as the original notes were largely in bullet point format (Appendix 10).

Fieldnotes were comparable to “memoing” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 69) as the researcher fully recorded what was heard, seen, and personally experienced, in addition to complimentary comments and reflections. Fieldnotes additionally

included the researcher's first impressions, sweeping observations, facts and memory triggers, pictures and drawings, diagrams, charts, insider sensitivities, emerging analyses, significant events, and raw quotes recommended by Wolfinger (2002) amongst others. Notes also described elements of sensory ethnography, where "observations" engaged the senses of taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing as well as emotions. While the purpose of field notes was to capture all information relevant for achieving objectives, they additionally served as an audit trail (Roldán, 2002) and added to legitimacy where future researchers could understand how conclusions of this thesis were established. Notes were equally descriptive and reflective, capturing the researcher's own feelings and impressions. The four types of notes employed within fieldnotes included:

- **Descriptive observations:** Notes describing what was seen, heard, felt and how events unfolded
- **Theoretical Links:** Notes linking theory outlined in the literature review to empirical data
- **Methodological notes:** Notes on carrying out the research design, including reminders and instructions
- **Reflections:** Notes capturing the researcher's candid thoughts on observations and daily summaries to provide transparency and a paper trail.

The electronic fieldwork file was password protected to ensure security and anonymity of participants. Photos were taken of physical documents and artefacts and such media, including photos and videos (Appendix 6), were

additionally uploaded electronically using the software NVIVO next to the expanded fieldnotes.

#### 4.5.5 Self- Reflexivity

Accumulated fieldnotes also included a self-reflective element, where the researcher considered her own behaviours, experiences and feelings, being an active participant in the value creation process. Despite being a relatively fledgling member in the fashion industry at the start of this research project, she too was pushed to proactively adapt to the changing environment and needed to navigate through changing networks and institutions. It was relevant to reflect why she felt certain ways (Adler and Adler, 2007) and to describe her own experiences as a cultural intermediary. When taking her own experiences, behaviours, and emotions into consideration she was not only able to sincerely empathise and build authentic rapport with participants, but she was also able to add an extra layer of validity to research findings. Throughout the research design, she shifted between being a participant, a journalist active in the fashion industry, as well as a passive spectator, taking detailed fieldnotes on observations. Being both an ethnographer and a journalist, covert and overt, practicing in academia and within industry, the researcher was forced to adapt to different situations best described by Geertz (1988) “living a multiplex life; sailing at once in several seas” (p. 77).

#### 4.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

Next to participant observations, the researcher conducted 17, in-depth, semi-structured interviews to achieve triangulation when reaching objectives. Here, it

is possible to combine data of what participants say they do with what they actually have done in a phenomenological context (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The researcher was active within the field of fashion for approximately 1 year before interviews took place, which allowed her to become more familiar with the field as a researcher and develop stronger relationships with interview participants. Being in the field prior to interviews allowed her to develop more relevant questions for the topic guide (Appendix 2.2). The method was dependent on the articulate skills of both the researcher and the participants who provided the information (Rubin and Rubin, 2011). Kvale (2006) states that a qualitative interview is truly an *“inter view”*; being an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. The purpose of conducting interviews was to understand the participant’s point of view and for meaning to unfold thereafter.

Here, the intent was to understand a phenomenon through the participant’s own voices and to consequently provide a description of a lived human experience. Interviews do not generate direct access to “facts”, but instead, “representations” (Silverman, 2015) which are based on the participants’ experiences. Semi-structured interviews provided detailed accounts of “lived” situations rather than abstract, hypothetical data (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989). Additionally, interviews also welcome analysis of primary observations including kinesics, and an insight into depth-probing for detailed responses of beliefs, norms, attitudes. (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

#### 4.6.1 Interview Sampling and Recruitment

To carry out interviews, a judgement sampling approach was taken. Hence, the sample was based on the researcher's judgement and the aim of the research, looking for those who have had the experiences relating to the researched phenomenon (Kruger, 1988). This method is the most common sampling technique and targets members of the population who have specific experiences and relevant backgrounds (Marshall, 1996) suitable for reaching aims. In addition to experience and background, the selection of participants was chosen based on built relationships and time availability (Heyl, 2001). A rapport between researcher and the participant was vital in order to create an atmosphere of trust as through such developed rapport, more valuable information was assimilated (Hague, n.d).

Interviews were conducted with fashion intermediaries, following the definition of Bourdieu's (1984) "cultural intermediaries", defined as those who,

"perform the tasks of gentle manipulation of tastes...  
shaping tastes for particular goods and practices and  
defining and defending group positions within society (p.  
365)."

These participants are placed between the production and consumption of goods and services, adding value to the physical goods of fashion through communication, storytelling, and aspirational qualities. Within the fashion industry they include actors such as designers, journalists, stylists, and photographers, among other creatives. The rationale for having targeted

intermediaries was that, through participant observations, it was established that it was their job roles which had changed most overtly; through digital disruption consumers and producers directly engage with one another without the need for many middle figures. The inclusion criteria of participants disregarded age, gender, and national background, but prioritises work experience and influence within the fashion industry (Table 4.3). Interview participants must:

*Table 4.3 Interview Participant Criteria*

	<b>Interview Participant Criteria</b>	<b>Criteria Justification</b>
1	Be a <b>fashion intermediary</b> : Designer, Journalist, Stylist, Photographer, Influencer	To be an active participant in the value creation process in fashion
2	Have <b>press</b> written about them personally	To prove influence within the industry
3	Have over <b>5 years of experience</b> actively working within the fashion industry	To have experienced recent digital disruption the industry
4	Regularly <b>attend seasonal global fashion weeks</b> , including London Fashion Week	To remain up to date with industry events
5	Have a <b>social media</b> presence (Instagram Profile).	To be able to refer to their own digital representations

Source: Author

Recruitment was first conducted by establishing a relationship with the participants at an industry event. The researcher firstly informed herself regarding which participants would be present at specific events, often through social media and press releases. Then she was prepared with questions about their own professional work in order to form the basis of a relationship and introduced herself as a researcher, thus remaining overt. After developing this initial relationship, and reflecting on past conversations, the next occasion the researcher would see the participant at another event she would informally ask

for a future interview, explaining why they would bring considerable value to the research project. Dependent on their response, which was always positive, she formally sent an interview request via email, directly stating the aim of the research, key points of discussion, interview schedule, as well as the consent form. Not all potential interview participants replied, even after a follow up email. Out of 30 requests, 17 respondents agreed to be interviewed, followed by the researcher suggesting three dates and times between March and June 2019.

#### 4.6.2 Interview Data Collection

During the interview, the researcher and interview participant would first briefly engage in informal niceties, which oftentimes led to a tour of the place of work (e.g. a designer's studio). Secondly, the researcher shared the physical consent form (identical to the one submitted via email previously) and gave the participant the opportunity to read the form again. The researcher verbally restated that the interview participant could choose to leave the interview at any time and have any data destroyed upon request. Participants confirmed their contribution and consent by signing their signature on the consent forms (Appendix 2.4).

The researcher encouraged participants to ask questions, aiming to construct a positive environment where they were made to feel comfortable enough to be able to interject, wander off, pick up with the interview at another time, and/or change their minds. Also, the researcher encouraged participants to provide feedback before, during and after the interview. Once signing the consent forms, the researcher gave them a physical copy of the interview guide (also identical to the copy submitted via email previously) which featured the interview's main

discussion points. Each interview guide was tailored to each participant, dependent on their job roles, such as adapting questions to a designer or journalist to make it more relevant and meaningful. Regarded as a highly qualitative interview method (Patton, 1990), the Interview Guide (Appendix 2.2) facilitated a semi-structured nature of the interviews by providing more focus than a standard conversation, while at the same time allowing for a degree of freedom and adaptability in achieving information. Interview Guide questions were complemented with several additional open-ended questions, which were used as probes whenever participants were reluctant to elaborate or when breakthrough moments occurred. No closed questions were presented as this would restrict the depth of participant response (Bowling, 1997).

#### 4.6.3 Interview Transcriptions

Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were held either in the various workplaces of professionals or in another quiet space with limited distractions or interruptions, such as a café. The interviews were all recorded with by a password protected mobile phone using the “voice memos” App. Recordings were all transcribed verbatim within 24 hours and were combined with observational fieldnotes handwritten during the interviews (Appendix 11). Such observational research complemented the interviews, for example noting the subtle body language of participants. To protect anonymity, interview participants were renamed.



#### 4.7 Focus Group

In addition to semi-structured interviews and participant observations, a focus group with 8 participants was conducted, all of whom worked at a PR company in the fashion department which represents house-hold global brands in the luxury segment. The focus group was conducted after the researcher established an amicable relationship with the previously described Gatekeeper 3 (4.5.3), the CEO of a leading London-based PR company. The gatekeeper referred the researcher to the firm's head of global fashion partnerships who also expressed her willingness to partake in the research. The introduction led to a rare interview opportunity with her and her entire team (Appendix 4.1). Although it was not planned to conduct interviews or focus groups until later in the year (2018), the researcher could not refuse this opportunity. After arranging a date in May 2018, the researcher emailed each participant with a consent form and Interview Topic guide. The focus group took place within the boardroom at the firm's headquarters based in Kensington, London, which was quiet and offered minimal distractions. The focus group lasted 1 hour and was audio recorded. The researcher transcribed the focus group verbatim within 24 hours. The discussion sharpened our focus to consider certain aspects in our observations, and also led us to develop relevant questions for the semi-structured interviews.

#### 4.8 Methods of Data Analysis

It is worth noting that it is uncritical to see ethnographic fieldnotes as simply "raw data" (Madden, 2010). The data has already been partially "cooked" by the choices the researcher has made (Madden, 2010; p. 140). Whilst simultaneously writing the literature review and collecting data, the theoretical context was

continuously informed and framed by observations. Strauss and Corbin (1998) recognise that a literature review can “stimulate our thinking about properties or dimensions that we can then use to examine the data in front of us” (p. 45), suggesting that analysis took place throughout the ethnographic data collection process. As the researcher had undergone an iterative process, whereby data was compared with previously found data, the constant comparison approach (Glaser, 1965) was applied. Analysis did not take place at the end of collected fieldwork but was integral throughout ongoing fieldnotes. The constant comparison analysis informed next steps in research as well as previously unplanned directions within the field (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001). This approach corresponds with the idiographic philosophy and often links together with inductive reasoning (Silverman, 2015) with research findings being contextual, opposed to being broad generalisations (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004).

However, once participant observations were completed after 18 months, ethnographic fieldnotes were combined with the verbatim transcriptions from semi-structured interviews, shifting focus from what was observed to what would be communicated. At this stage, the researcher prepared 340 pages of raw data files into a common format (e.g. into electronic files, with a standard font, margins and layout) for more efficient analysis. Secondly, the researcher read all raw data in detail to gain an overview and familiarise herself with the results, until she felt confident with her understanding of the described observations. Here, she established initial links between the objectives and the summary findings.

Next, themes and analytical categories were defined, consistent with thematic analysis which highlights, examines, and records patterns within data through coding (Saldaña, 2009). Here, coding is a technique described as a critical link between data collection and their explanation of meaning resulting in upper and lower level categories. Upper level categories were more obvious, while lower level categories only emerged after multiple data readings. Afterwards, within each category, subtopics or contradictory points of view were highlighted. Next, the process was repeated again with an established vocabulary of initial codes. This led to a substantial roster of open codes and then focused codes which were later combined with others, and meaningful quotations from fieldnotes or interviews were chosen to be representative. This coding process was consistent with the data analysis described by Miles and Huberman (1994; p. 10-11) which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data analysis was also consistent with Turner's (1983) seven stages which include: familiarisation of data, reflection, conceptualisation, cataloguing concepts, recoding, linking and re-evaluation.

#### 4.8.1 NVIVO Software

Although Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: p. 203) state, "there is no mechanist substitute for those complex processes of reading and interpretation" the computer software NVivo was employed to assist with data analysis and search requests. Nvivo became a key tool for data storage and retrieval, where transcripts from semi-structured interviews, as well as ethnographic evidence including fieldnotes, videos, and images were uploaded. Once uploaded, we were able to assign codes to various segments, which complimented the sorting

and coding process. Moreover, various forms of data visualisation were conducted on NVivo.

#### 4.9 Methods of Data Presentation

Displayed in the following Chapters 5-7, thematic analysis was translated into a series of narrative stories which captured the underlying processes and results evident in collected data. The stories were composed of results within participant observation, self-reflexivity, and interviews, which merged to create three layers of perspectives regarding dominant themes in order to provide legitimacy. Holstein and Gubrium (2008) state narratives stories are not simply reflections of an ethnographer's experience, nor are they static descriptions of observations. They are comprised of an interplay between experiences, evocative storytelling practices, descriptive resources, the audience, and the characteristics of observed environments. Narrative stories featured both the researcher's own subjectivity and the subjectivities of observed participants.

##### 4.9.1 Presentation of Analysis Chapters

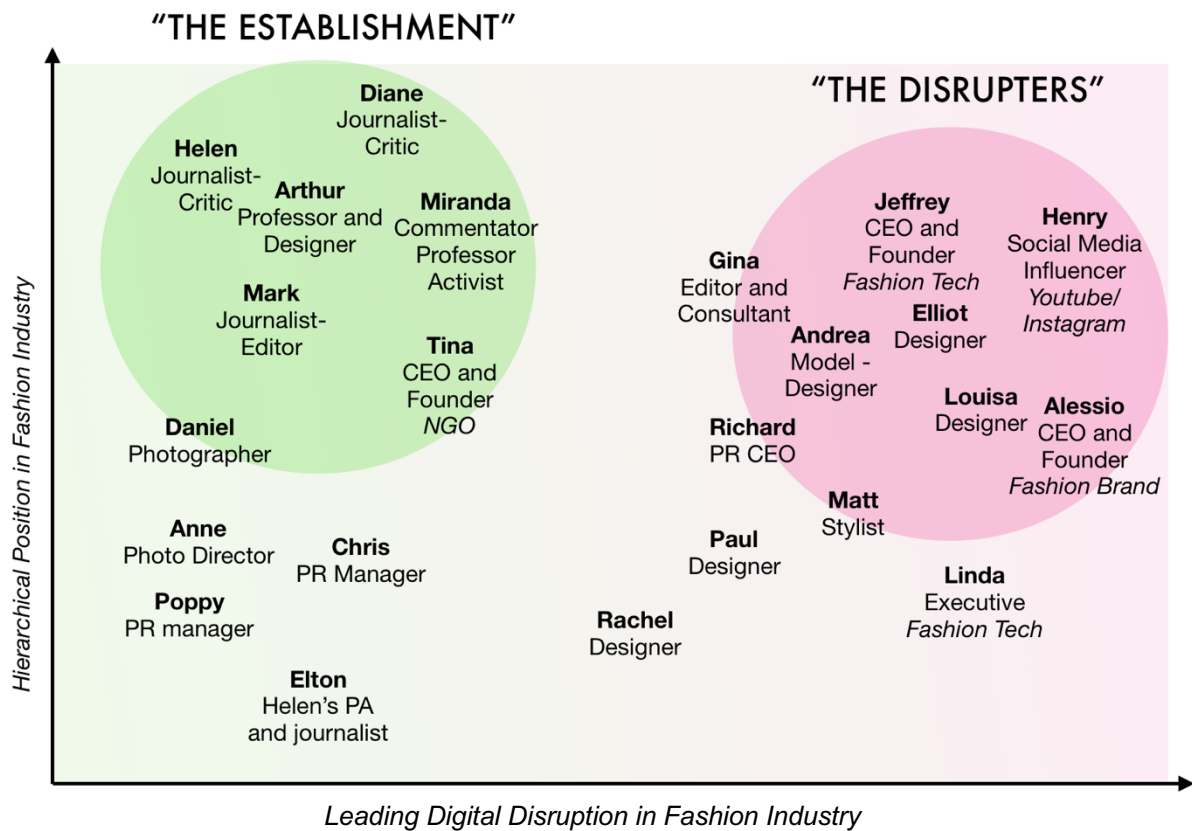
Results based on thematic analysis are presented in Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 through a series of narrative stories and interview extracts divided into dominant themes. Each chapter corresponds to a research objective:

- Chapter 5 focuses on exploring the first objective from a micro-context; identifying how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry.

- Chapter 6, linking to objective 2 from a meso-context, examines how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.
- Finally, Chapter 7 will centre on the thesis's third objective from a macro-context, being to analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes within the field of fashion.

Figure 4.3 reflects the hierarchical positions, disruptive natures, and job roles of interviewed participants (names changed to ensure anonymity). They are loosely divided as “The Disrupters” and “The Establishment”, with added detail about participants in Appendix 3. Firstly, disrupters are likened to mavericks (Becker, 1982), prospectors (Miles and Snow, 1978) and entrepreneurs (Schumpeter, 1942) and stray from traditional industry systems and behaviour. The Establishment on the other hand include mainstreams (Becker, 1982), gatekeepers (Gemünden, Salomo, Hölzle, 2007), and Bourdieu's (1984) cultural intermediaries who those trained and integrated professionals within the fashion industry, distinguished by their habitus. Additionally, the appendix provides detail on specific sites of observation (Appendix 13), an interview extract example (Appendix 11+ 12), and complimenting media (Appendix 5+6).

Figure 4.3 Interview Participants: Disrupters v. The Establishment



Source: Author

Although summary diagrams such as Figure 4.3 are largely contrary to interpretivist research due to their simplistic dichotomy, the hierarchical positions of both Establishment and Disruptive figures, as well as their influence on digital disruption, are based on interpretivist participant observations conducted by the researcher. With the researcher being ingrained within the field of fashion before and throughout the research process, she was able to discern who disruptive and establishment actors were; directly witnessing or experiencing their impact within the ecosystem. She was able to observe their actions in an empirical context, as well as confirm observations through feedback with additional actors. It was not the intention to capture all actors who were deemed disruptive within the

ecosystem, but to achieve depth and meaningful triangulated findings which composed the observed phenomenon.

#### 4.10 Research Design Validation

Firstly, the research design was appropriate as it addressed the objectives of this research, which aimed to capture a particular phenomenon. Secondly, as it targeted the fashion industry, the research offered unique empirical research to the largely conceptual literature in service dominant logic. Thirdly, it catered to the ethnographic turn and reflexive postmodern developments which are becoming increasingly popular in marketing research (Table 4.4).

*Table 4.4 Design Validation (a)*

<b>Reliability</b>	The research design of semi-structured interviews and participant observations are not repeatable, since they reflect a reality at the time they were collected (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). However, 18 months' worth of field notes and full-length interview transcriptions are available to provide transparency. The self-reflexive element of participant observation was highly reliable as the researcher documented her own experiences regarding the phenomenon of digital disruption within fashion.
<b>Generalisability</b>	The research design of interviews and observations cannot make sweeping generalisations about the entire population; however, this was not the aim of the research. The data strived to build upon existing theories and provide complexity, depth and richness (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012) which are what the set objectives required.
<b>Validity</b>	The methodology boasts a high level of validity as interviews allowed for clarifications, probing, and exploring key themes from different angles (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012), while observations were thoroughly documented.

Source: Author

Additionally, the research design has taken inspiration from previous ethnographic studies centred within the fashion industry, which looked for depth and ways to better understand people, culture, and behaviour displayed in Table 4.5.

*Table 4.5 Design Validation (b)*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Method</b>
<i>The Field of Fashion Materialised: A Study of London Fashion Week</i>  <b>Sociology (40.4)</b>	Entwistle and Rocamora	2006	To gain understanding on the processes of cultural mediation; how buyers and journalists act as intermediaries between the production and consumption.	1) Semi-structured interviews with 32 fashion journalists 2) Shadowing one journalist during London Fashion Week 3) Participant observation, over the course of one month, of the editorial production of a fashion magazine
<i>The Cultural Economy of Fashion Buying</i>  <b>Current Sociology (54.5)</b>	Entwistle	2006	To examine the qualification and mediation of fashionable clothing by fashion buyers at Selfridges, London	1) Participant observations between March and September 2002 in the women's wear department at Selfridges on Oxford Street in London. 2) Participant observation



				of “buyers” at fashion week in London, Paris and Milan between September and October 2002
<p><i>Fashion and the city. Social interaction and creativity in London and Milan</i></p> <p><b>Brand-building: the creative city. A critical look at current concepts and practices</b></p>	d'Ovidio and Haddock	2010	To explore factors of creative production by comparing social interactions among fashion designers based in London and Milan	<p>1) 2 three-month periods of participant observations in spring 2004 and summer 2004</p> <p>2) Geographic cluster mapping of fashion houses in London and Milan</p> <p>31 semi-structured interviews with fashion designers, industry experts and journalists</p>
<i>Street Style: an ethnography of fashion blogging'</i>	Luvaas	2016	<p>1) To capture the evolution of street-style photography</p> <p>2) To explore the structural shifts in the global fashion industry triggered by “street style”</p>	3 years of auto-ethnography being a “fashion blogger”

<p><i>'Absolutely free'? The role of relational work in sustaining artistic innovation</i></p> <p><b>Organization Studies (37. 6)</b></p>	<p>Montanari, Scapolan, and Gianecchini</p>	<p>2016</p>	<p>To increase the understanding of the process by which artistic innovation can be actively sought out and sustained over time by an artist.</p>	<p>1) Direct observation of participants between November 2009- April 2010 (12 days in field)</p> <p>2) 16 in-depth semi- structured interviews</p> <p>3) 4 informal Industry expert interviews 153 articles and documents reviewed</p>
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Source: Author

#### 4.11 Ethical Considerations

Although the risk of generating harm to interview and observed participants was minute, there were various ethical concerns which needed to be addressed. The researcher firstly ensured to avoid any possible physical or psychological danger to participants. For interviews, participants were provided with consent forms which outlined exactly how the data from the interview will be used (Appendix 2.3). Interviewees were required to explicitly give consent by signature. If material was to be published or preserved as a public resource, then permission would again need to be explicitly given by the participant in writing. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and were free to have any data destroyed by their request. They were free to take part without coercion or penalty and were able to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without the threat of any adverse effect (Ransome, 2013).

Secondly, confidentiality of participants was ensured, where personal data was unknown to all but the research and her thesis supervisors. Any recorded contribution, in written form, on tape, or in notes taken from the interview by the interviewer, was to be used in accordance with the wishes of the participant. Participants were not named, unless their permission had been explicitly sought and their name was essential for the pursuit of the research in question. Anonymity was also preserved also in fieldnotes, as interview and observed participants were renamed. Additionally, fieldnotes were locked and password protected.

Thirdly, the researcher has maintained a high level of integrity by remaining as transparent as possible, declaring any actual conflicts of interest and thoroughly documenting the entirety of the research process. Throughout participant observation, the research has been mostly “overt”. The researcher remained vocal about the intended aim and intentions as an ethnographer by having shared research objectives with participants. However, as many industry events pooled together often thousands of fashion industry actors, it was impossible to share research motivations to everyone present. Also, to gain access into events, the researcher had to rely on her role as press and gained entry by being initially covert and then once within a site of observation acted overtly. Additionally, when wearing a press badge, the researcher was able to observe and document how participants acted in their natural setting. Simultaneously, via her own social media profile the researcher stated that she was an ethnographer so relevant industry actors could better understand her background.

A fourth ethical concern affected the researcher and her relationships. She strived to avoid any personal exploitation of friendships by being transparent and by continuously communicating any intended documentation of an overheard comment or conversation. Also, as all ethnographies affect researchers personally, she consciously wrote all of her experiences into a journal and tried to create distance between herself and the research. There were elements of the study which became mentally overwhelming, affecting her emotionally due to pressures felt as a journalist and ethnographer however, she was sure to reduce any stress through wellbeing practices.

Although the researcher has ensured good research practice by following the University of Exeter's Ethical Guidelines (University of Exeter, 2018) throughout the entirety of this research, there was a single bureaucratic oversight by the research team. Whilst the researcher began her fieldwork immediately once starting the PhD programme in January 2018, as she was already immersed within our observational field, she did not formally submit the finalised Ethics Form until January 2019. Despite the oversight, the University of Exeter Ethics Form was submitted in January 2019 and was approved without the need for alterations. As the submitted form described in detail the procedures of what the researcher has done throughout her fieldwork no added risk was perceived. Additionally, the researcher always adhered to ESRC ethical research protocols and the General Data Protection Act of 2018. This informed how participant's personal information was stored and processed, ensuring confidentiality.

Finally, the researcher has followed the Research Councils UK Code of Conduct

(UK Research and Innovation, 2013), avoiding unacceptable research conduct including any form of:

- *Fabrication*: Including the creation of false data documentation, participant consent, and other features of research.
- *Falsification*: Including inappropriate and misleading manipulation of data, imagery, and consent.
- *Plagiarism*: Including any misappropriation or use of others' ideas, intellectual property or work without credit or permission.
- *Misrepresentation*: Including any misrepresentation of data as well as inappropriate claims to authorship or denial of authorship.
- *Mismanagement or inadequate preservation of data*: Including the failure to keep transparent, clear and accurate records of research procedures and results, as well as the requirement to make relevant primary data and research evidence accessible to others for 10 years after the completion of the research.

Throughout this project, the researcher has upheld a responsibility to firstly the participants, her supervisors, the University of Exeter and other institutions including the British Fashion Council, as well as the law and to herself.

#### 4.12 Chapter Summary

The intention of this chapter was to explain and justify the methodological strategy of this research. We first outlined the chosen research strategy of ethnography, addressing recent post-modern shifts. Next the researcher's

reflexivity was addressed in relation to data collection. Research access was also described along with specific elements of how the research was able to remain present within the field of fashion. Additionally, the research strategies of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus group were outlined, followed by methods of data analysis and presentation. Finally, research design validation was included along with final ethical considerations. The results of this methodology are displayed in the following three analysis chapters.

## Chapter 5 The Performance of Industry Actors

### 5.1 Introduction

*F\*\*\* the velvet rope, everyone major is going through the back door.*

– Andrea James

Granted a crude declaration, Andrea James, a prominent model and the first transgender designer to present at *London Fashion Week* (February 2019), stresses the notion that today's influential actors within the fashion industry do not adhere to institutionalised practices and norms. Instead, they capitalise on opportunities to “go through the back door” applying innovative strategies by using various digital technologies. Chapter 5, the first of three analysis chapters, will focus on this thesis's first objective identifying, how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry. Reaching this objective, relevant findings are divided and presented into three themes titled: *Idolatry of Self*, *The Prioritisation of the Image*, and *Direct Dialogue*.

*Idolatry of Self*, documents how industry actors, including social media influencers, designers, stylists, and photographers, have been observed in *engaging offline and online displays of self-promotion* and diverse forms of celebrification. The interview extracts and narrative stories reflect how actors seek and draw attention to themselves as individual entities, providing evidence of being part of status-validating networks which supports their own brand. The

interview extracts and narrative stories also point towards the significance of **quantifiable influence and social capital** based on one's social media following. A discussion on **"demi-god" actors** will additionally be provided, along with their disproportionate leverage granted through their own personal brands. It was observed that the traits and marketability of an actor's celebrity has eclipsed the traits of a finalised original fashion product when creating value.

*The Prioritisation of Image* outlines how actors, as well as luxury brands and other fashion organisations, are focusing on communicating to a mass audience through **imagery-based content, bypassing the geographic constraints of experience-driven initiatives**. Findings outline how the basis of meaningful storytelling is rooted in technology. Here fashion shows are communicated via imagery and through increased implementation of augmented reality, where there is a shift towards the dematerialisation of fashion.

The final theme, titled *Direct Dialogue*, outlines how actors, including organisations and social media influencers are disrupting value creation processes by **engaging directly with their targeted audiences, bypassing traditional gatekeepers**. Engaging in direct dialogue include *ATM*, the world's first explicitly cocreated fashion brand, an emerging designer rejecting reliance on traditional actors, and a social media influencer who is held accountable for his actions by his hundreds of thousands of followers.



## 5.2 Idolatry of Self

The first theme outlining the *Idolatry of Self* begins with an extract from ethnographic field notes, which describes a bustling scene outside London Fashion Week in September 2018. The central characters are social media influencers, considered to be Disrupters, who were observed to intentionally attract attention from photographers, amongst others. Interview extracts exhibit the scepticism of Establishment actors, including editors, on increased self-promoting behaviour. Next, focus is placed on the quantifiable influence, where an individual's capital and influence is based on calculated variables including one's social media following. Lastly, we discuss the dominance of the demi-god actor, who exemplifies celebrification, and their reliance on their own celebrity brand for meeting objectives. It was found that an actor's crafted self-image was regarded to overshadow the traits of the fashion product, implying the authority of the individual over the collective industry.

### 5.2.1 Seen at the Right Place

#### **The Entrance at London Fashion Week**

*London: September 14, 2018 (8:15am)*

In preparation for Day 1 of London Fashion Week, I pay increased attention to my sartorial choice in anticipation for the hundreds of lenses, which accompany the media-driven festivities spread across the city. I select an all-black outfit with lacquered tan boots, mimicking the style I have witnessed respected journalists in the field wear. Whilst travelling on the London underground to Temple station, I spy a cohort

of slim, young, urbanite women, draped in a myriad of established and emerging luxury labels and am convinced they too must be *en route* to the Spring collections. With my assumptions confirmed, the six of us marched along the pavement to a chorus of clacking heels towards 180 The Strand, the current headquarters of London Fashion Week. Here is the pulsing heart of the UK's catwalk shows and designer showrooms, attracting a global audience via social media as well as local and international guests. The building's front facing exterior is protected by scaffolding; dusty slabs of plywood, exposed pipes, and a gigantic sheet of black plastic, labelled with the towering London Fashion Week logo masking the obvious ongoing construction underneath.

As I had not yet been emailed my Digital Press Pass by the British Fashion Council (this being the first season without a physical press pass) I must wait until 9:00 am to enter the designer showrooms, by way of face to face registration. Whilst waiting, I retreat to the neighbouring *Pret* café to observe the outside scene. Looking ahead past the grey, rain-soaked sidewalk, there is a glossy fleet of black Mercedes V-Class busses parallel parked next to a huddle of suited, heavily set chauffeurs chatting amongst themselves, disposable coffee cups in hand. They are waiting for the VIP opening ceremony inside to conclude, in order to drive their international clients off to their next destination. Last season, it was reported that a total of 32,000 miles were driven between shows and events by this Mercedes fleet.

Pacing in front of the chauffeurs are groups of eager, lone photographers, wearing robust outerwear, worn sneakers, and darting glances anticipating the impending arrival of well-dressed and high-profile guests. A pack of presumably Gen Z fashion students stand next to the maze of steel barriers, which guard the Fashion Week entrance, and form a circle with cigarette laden arms protruding from its sides. Some of them wear *Eastpack* “bum bags” slung across padded shoulders. Others wear bulletproof type vests. Faces are hidden behind slim black sunglasses, as well as balaclavas or mouth-masks, which spark intrigue. They are consequently shot by the invasive photographers. Dozens of suited security guards and police officers keep watch of the rapidly ballooning crowd.

Two tall, young women I recognise from the social media platform Instagram adorned in the latest fashions step out of a parked black Land Rover, roughly 50 meters from the barricaded entrance. They strut fiercely towards The Strand in heeled thigh-high boots, arms linked together, exuding exaggerated laughter. Close to 20 photographers capitalise on the influencers’ approach and charge towards them. The influencers stop and pose with expressionless faces, chins slightly raised, exchange a few inaudible words with the photographers, then walk back approximately where they were dropped off and repeat the ritual. I hear a journalist next to me, also absorbing the scene, ask her colleague if they [the social media

influencers] ever get embarrassed? Contact information is seemingly exchanged between photographers and the influencers through their mobile phones, by way of sharing respective social media handles...

One executive in fashion technology, named Linda, later explains to me during our interview that “now [fashion week] is more about the influencers who go. People care more about what people are wearing on the street”, hence the contemporary relevance of such influencers.

... A separate huddle of photographers form a semi-circle around a new target: a young woman with long blonde hair dressed head to toe in the Fendi “F” logo motif. This Fendi woman gives her iPhone to a male dressed in black. He purposefully photographs not only her, but also the other photographers snapping her. I assume he is her friend or colleague. Two other well-dressed women seize this photographic opportunity, break into the circular formation by air kissing the Fendi woman and then the three of them face the surrounding cameras. Simultaneously, another young woman dressed in bright orange and fluorescent pink hues poses in the middle of The Strand thoroughfare. She looks tranquil and holds a concentrated gaze towards photographers despite frustrated car drivers honking behind her as traffic starts to build. Police, stationed next to their parked van wave arms and aggressively blow their whistles to signal she must move out of the road immediately. Another photographer takes a picture of a casually clad elfin girl leaning against a wall, speaking on her iPhone.

Having triggered interest, other photographers follow suit and suddenly there are roughly 15 DSLR cameras snapping a seemingly candid moment.

This example of group mentality exhibited by the photographers is labelled as “funny” by one former fashion communications executive, “because when you come out of a show and there is someone... either they are a fan...or because they don’t know who you are, but they like what you are wearing, then everyone else will come and snap”. She continues to say that “[influencers] are waiting for the photographer”, with the aim to further their careers by building a credible brand, by being featured in wide-reaching, status lending platforms such as Getty Images or Vogue. The BFC (FashionUnited, 2018) has reported that Getty Images Photographers shoot 45,000 images on and off the runway over the 5 days of London Fashion Week. Before the start of a catwalk show, one influencer reveals that being shot by David Bennet, a photographer for Getty Images, is “an honour”.

... Arriving for the first show of the season, I sit next to my friend who was seated on the front row. According to my invitation, my seat was located on the second row, so I felt a pang of guilt as he insisted, I sit next to him so we can “catch up”. Being early, the sterile white benches filling the BFC Show Space were still largely unoccupied – all four rows of them parallel to the catwalk. Several reality TV stars entered the open space, with a flock of photographers walking in front of them along with the clicks of unforgiving cameras. One star is from the British

reality TV series *Love Island* wearing “street style” trainers, and a casual jacket. As the starlets were seated on the front row to the right of us, the score of photographers continued to “shoot”. An editor with a blonde cropped bob, carrying a notebook and other paraphernalia, seems to intentionally cut between the photographers and their targets. After taking their pictures, they leave towards the photographer’s pit at the far end of the catwalk to arrange their equipment. Most of the photographers here are men with chunky equipment – most in trainers, black jeans and understated t-shirts.

The influencers in the previous extracts were observed as actively engaging in the “celebrification” process, drawing media-attention upon themselves, transforming from “ordinary people” into “celebrities” (Driessens, 2013). With more opportunities of instant communication, such as diverse social media platforms including Instagram, Youtube, Snapchat, and TikTok, individuals have more avenues to gain prominence. “Wear[ing] crazy clothes around long enough, you can be photographed for street fashion,” and be featured on such a platform, scoffs one well-respected editor named Helen as we discuss observations from inside and outside The Strand. A second editor also condemns the attention-seeking “circus” culture outside of fashion weeks, where you “just wear stupid clothes and hang around until enough people photograph you.” Due to the media attention of such fashion weeks, individual actors capitalise on their own self-image to promote themselves, with the intention as Linda says, to be, “an individual brand. To be seen.”

Despite the influencer spectacle and emphasis on self-branding, one junior editor commented how in February 2019, “there is not as much hype this season”. She continues stating, “I remember there used to be hundreds of bloggers filling the streets for attention. This season, not so much. I guess the really successful bloggers don’t really need to be at fashion week anymore. It’s expensive to come and a hassle. They can just work with their own photographers and shoot throughout the year... Isn’t that funny?” Here we notice how influencers, first used fashion week as a platform to elevate their own status, being associated with certain brands and events. Now due to their prominence in largely online communities, they are no longer dependent on such constant validation from industry figures or the need to be physically present in a cultural cluster such as a London Fashion week.

Speaking with Andrea after London Fashion Week had concluded, she laments on the pressures she faces on the need to “constantly document” her personal activity through film and photographs via social media to her content hungry audience. However, she additionally enjoys sharing her experiences with others when she has been to a high-profile event, stating how:

“There is an intense pressure to post and show that you have been at a certain event, such as an exclusive fashion show. I went to the Christopher Kane show and I did, I filmed the finale because I think that was quite nice. That is quite helpful for other people, right? Plus, you know I wanted people to know I was there!”

Providing such evidence of being at an “exclusive fashion show” lends credibility and social status to the individual by association. Images, however, only reflect one dimension of reality, leading to the risk of deception as documented by Daniel, a photographer with Condé Nast publications. When speaking about an exclusive event in London, he shares his own observations, where influencers prove they are at events, yet do not participate:

“I was the only person allowed to photograph [the event] and obviously all of the great and the good turn up. Some major influencers turned up...who actually I am friends with, and the next day her [Instagram posts] went up and went ‘*oh, that was such a fantastic night, Jane thank you!*’ and I know as a fact she came for the drinks, she did *not* see the gig because she had a dinner to go to and it was all fakery. And I was like fine, and everyone believes you - but you didn’t see one of the best gigs in London! Jane Birkin with seven musicians from the London Philharmonic. An incredible event and you are just sort of, just for the sake of showing you were in 3 places in 1 night. It is just whatever.”

Here, the described influencer provides evidence of how she was part of three events yet does not actively engage in the live experience. In order to provide evidence of how one was present at various events, actors are dependent on each other, such as an influencer on the photographer who takes the pictures and supplies this photographic verification. Daniel explains his frustration on this dependency:



“You know we have long days. Shooting all day and all evening and sometimes I get home at midnight, and so wired, I can’t go to sleep. So, I open a bottle of wine or whatever and I sit there and almost like that - my phone lights up. All of them, not all of them, but a lot go and ask, ‘I know it’s late, it’s very, very late, but is there any chance for the picture I can post? Can I post?’ Oh my god. And then sometimes I’m like- I’ve got my favourites- so I will, but sometimes I’m like *oh for god’s sake*. And in the morning, when was it, on the last day of Men’s [fashion week] I just had 2 events in the day. From 9:00 until lunchtime I was like God alright, I’m not kidding, just going here you go, here you go, sending pictures to them so they could post [on Instagram]. It is *insane*”.

Daniel explains that this is not only a laborious chore which fills his limited time, but the financial rewards for him are disproportional, as the digital photos being distributed are free of charge.

“There is this weird grey area, because years ago it was print. [Influencers] would have gone, ‘Can I have a print?’ They would have had to have paid and we’d send the picture. Nowadays you, if I was cold hearted, I’d go: ‘Buy it’. And in a weird way, some of these influencers are paid to go to these events, right. They live or die by our pictures in a way. I’m being a bit cold here, but – ‘pay me’. Pay me for that picture. **You know without my picture, you weren’t there.**”

What are you going to do? There are all these new jobs because of social media right, without me, your new weird job doesn't exist. You can obviously do selfies, but you won't have a picture with Edward [Enniful – British Vogue editor], whatever and some photographers go, 'no'. But again, because the world I work in is such a tiny club, if you mess up, everyone knows or if you are good everyone knows, so it would be almost insane for me to start going 'pay me'. But it is a weird grey area, which I think is sort of, Jesus Christ how many people want these pictures?"

Photographs taken professionally by Daniel or by the disruptive individual themselves, such as Andrea at the fashion show, are **documented evidence of being a part of an "exclusive" network**. The need to be seen, and thus symbolically **associated with an exclusive network**, was observed to also be translated to an online space, where actors being members of certain social media platforms also lends them **credibility**. Speaking to one young stylist named Matt at a press dinner, he explained why it was important for him to be on *Raya* – an exclusive dating app, dubbed "the Tinder for celebrities" where acceptance to join is based on "fame, looks and Instagram followers".

"God, no I'm not on [the app] to meet anyone. Obviously, lots of great eye candy, but **I am just on it to be seen**. Like if people see you are on there when they swipe through, it's really impressive. It gets my name out there and as a stylist I need that. The more people who see you the better."

Achieving a certain amount of status and reinforced visibility can enable individuals, such as stylists like Matt, to find employment opportunities, demand higher fees and ultimately earn more financial rewards. Such actors are self-branding themselves to reap new opportunities, build their reputations and expand their networks, resulting in newfound attention for the individual. Anne, a former Vogue editor based in New York confirms the ongoing display of self-promotion:

“With stylists... they use [social media] to promote...People actually know who they are [now]. [Before digital] people didn’t know who most stylists were, and now people do. [Social media] definitely has changed the entire industry”.

Through self-promotion on social media platforms, **the celebrification process has been decentralised** and actors who are media-savvy are able to achieve considerable “influence” over their audience and thus have the ability to alter traditional value creation processes. Demonstrating media-savviness is an encounter with a prominent social media influencer at the Hyères Fashion Festival.

## Hyères, France

*April 2019*

... At the afterparty celebrating the 34<sup>th</sup> Hyères Fashion competition, Elton walks towards me with Brandon linked to his arm, one of the first prominent social media influencers who rose to fame in the early 2000s. Fashion designer Marc Jacobs named a handbag after him. Brandon doesn't introduce himself to me but asks directly if I can take a picture of them. I agree and I take 6 pictures. Swiping through the results, Brandon voices how none of them are quite right. Now holding two iPhones in one hand, Brandon turns on the flashlight of one, which lights up their faces and snaps numerous selfies. Afterwards, I tell Brandon about my research and as a reply he asks if I want a photo with him. I reply, "sure".

### 5.2.2 The Calculated Influence

One's degree of influence within the fashion ecosystem has been observed to directly stem from one's social media following, which provides access, such as receiving invitations to fashion shows or to be granted press accreditation as a "blogger" to London Fashion Week (requiring a minimum of 35,000 followers). However, as reiterated by multiple interview participants, one's social media following can easily be bought. As one editor named Mark from the *Evening Standard* explains,

“I’m not inadvertently opposed to influencers. I am inadvertently opposed to fakes. So, people who buy their followers- and we all know how easy that is to do. I was doing a job just a while ago in the Canary Islands for a lady who is opening a boutique over there, a curated thing, and I had been invited by the PR as a kind of fashionisto from London and a friend from New York was invited and she came flying in and I came flying in and we looked at this over a period of days and we discussed again, and she wanted, this lady to have a kind of fashion gallery, everything in her store would change on a monthly basis and it would be once it’s gone, its gone. And she said, I really feel we should be getting influencers, gifting influencers with more than 20 thousand followers. We can gift them a designer dress and the PR, a London lady said OK just give me 2 seconds. Tick, tick, tick, and she showed her, her Instagram and there were her 25 thousand followers. ‘So, do I get a designer dress’? And it was like wow - how did you do that? This is the simplest thing in the world! You can buy followers! So that is what I am against, I’m against fakes, I am against bots- half of these people who are talking and engaging aren’t real at all! This is the rise of AI. It’s very, very easy to be ‘liked’ by 10s of thousands of ‘people’ – ‘oh my god, this is sensational’, ‘omg’, emoji, emoji, emoji whereas in fact this is simply generated.”

Despite the ambiguity of how followers are obtained, the number of an individual's **social media following impacts interactions between industry actors**, where we have oftentimes witnessed an "I'll Follow you, if you follow me" approach with the aim being to gain social leverage. Only one example of experiencing such behaviour was at an exhibition preview of the deceased artist Richard Hambleton's work.

### **Richard Hambleton Retrospective**

*London: September 18, 2018 (20:00)*

As I walked around the low-lit gallery with my friend Liz, a musician whom I invited due to her work in the arts, a man approached us and asked to take our picture. We assumed he wanted to take a picture for the event but no, he asked for one of our smart phones. He phrased it like he was doing us a favour, one we didn't ask for. Nonetheless, I handed him my phone, and he took some photos. 'Now it's my turn!' he exclaimed as he took out his own phone. Liz and I looked at each other with puzzled glances. 'Why, what are the pictures for?' I asked. He explained he was a photographer, covering the event and needed to put photo evidence onto his Instagram stories.

Convinced, we glance into the phone's lens and smile. 'Why were you invited to the party' he asks us. I say I am a writer

and Liz is a musician. He immediately posts the photo of us onto his Instagram and asks for our social media handles. He looks us both up, typing frantically into the app's search bar. Having found my profile, I see his eyes scan at how many followers I have, and I see him tap on the list displaying who is following me. Recognising a handful of names, he says he can only pass on the photos to us if we follow each other. Hence, I must "follow him". He peers down at my own phone screen as I go onto his profile. 'I haven't received a notification that you've followed me yet?' he asked, concerned. I reluctantly press "Follow" but unfollow immediately once we leave the gallery space. 'Isn't it annoying that people nowadays just come up to you and ask for your Instagram, so they get more followers?' asks Liz.

This extract reflects how individual actors interact with one other and various resources to improve their own circumstances, such as in this case increasing their own social (media) status. The number of followers one has accumulated on social media is regarded as important as it seemingly brings influence, access, and additionally has been observed to lead to employment opportunity, based on which actors follow you. Daniel makes this point by referring to his own experience of finding employment through his "silly Instagram pictures". He reflects,

“I haven’t got that many followers. I’ve only got about 5 and a half thousand right. I don’t cheat by getting likes, but once we were waiting to start a job and there was a person from the Evening Standard, and I won’t mention names, and a lovely editor from Vogue. And then we are killing time and the conversation is about followers on Instagram, and so the one from the Evening Standard is going yeah, we use what’s his name, he’s got 50,000 followers whatever. How many have you got? And I went I don’t really got that many, I’ve only got la de da. *What?! You’ve only got what?! How many?! And then X from Vogue went: ‘Yes but, the thing is with Daniel’ - It is so insane- She said, ‘he is a micro-influencer’... I went what?! Even the girl from the Evening Standard went, ‘what?!’ She said, ‘it is not the quantity, see who follows him’. So, I don’t want thousands of young girls, young boys following me, that doesn’t mean anything to me. I quite like seeing who likes my pictures. The people who follow me are people from Vogue, so what turns it on its head for me is that I get work because of my silly Instagram pictures”.*

Rachel, a London designer sighs that “[today] there is too much emphasis on Instagram”. She carries on to say that through social media, “it is a lot more about quantity than quality” as exemplified by her own social media following having grown exponentially, after being recently featured on the social media page of *Diet Prada*, the industry macro-influencer duo who have over 1.7 million Instagram followers. Due to the dominance of this image-based platform, I ask her if success today is based on the quality of imagery? She answers,



“I don’t think it is purely about the image. That is possibly what irritates me the most. Like it is, it is all about the image and who is ‘in and who is out’, like that sort of stuff. Someone really twatty can get a million likes for a sh\*t image. It is more about the capital that people have, than about the image that they create.”

Arthur, Professor of Fashion Design at a London based arts university, argues that the industry’s growing tendency of prioritising the quantified influence through social media and published images, **is a liability for creative development.** Arthur states,

“It is interesting. It came up in the course maybe twice now. Last time was about a month ago, about *what goes on our Instagram feed?* And ‘*should it be this or that?*’ and I was thinking, it has nothing to do with you! It’s edited maybe for various reasons. I’m not necessarily looking at the analytics and thinking ‘oh, [the audience] like this, I’ll put more of that up’. You show a breadth and a range of things that maybe won’t be ‘liked’ and that’s fine. But I think **[students] are driven by more ‘likes’ means ‘better’.** And I was looking at Instagram this morning thinking- we have got a menswear archive- and I was thinking, I wonder who would be good to engage to get them in. So, I put in the biggest influencers [into the search] and I don’t understand. The biggest influencers, 7 million [followers] or whatever, they are people endlessly doing posed photos of nothing. I mean I’ve done a

whole section of people holding coffee looking into the middle distance! And it is such an artifice. You think, who has taken the picture? This is such a creation of what has meant to be a moment and yet that has become the norm.”

Arthur’s reflection points towards a discrepancy between taking actions based on analytics and reacting to one’s audience, (e.g. “oh, [the audience] like this, I’ll put more of that up”) versus taking a more experimental, proactive strategy (e.g. demonstrating “a breadth and a range”) guided by the individual.

### 5.2.3 The Demi-God Actor

Leveraging one’s calculated influence, being seen in the right places on and offline, and displays of self-promotion have been observed as necessary in obtaining access to powerful positions within the fashion ecosystem. Speaking about the evolution of powerful positions in fashion design is Helen, the former head of fashion at the *Daily Telegraph*. She comments,

“The old fashion couturier who is at a house for his life or her life has kind of been phased out...because of luxury brands wanting to maintain sales, to increase growth, to get more publicity and if you look at the kind of musical chairs that has been going on say at Balenciaga, YSL, Louis Vuitton, Dior, in the last sort of 10 years, every time you turn around there is a new designer. And in a way it is quite sad because I don’t think a designer can hope to perhaps

make their mark or establish a proper signature in just 4 or 5 collections”.

Arthur adds how, “the obsession with one person” is unlikely to disappear “even if that person is dead”. He goes on to state,

“It is so easy to market...The length those people have stayed in those roles as creative directors has got shorter and shorter, so now I think they will become more like guest editors. Like this person will be doing it for 2 seasons. Or maybe just a season, because actually they have realised, they have a value, but that value fades very quickly. Like Hedi Slimane at Celine, will that end in a couple of years because they have got enough out of that? And if that is not about the product, it’s about hype, that hype naturally dies doesn’t it?”

Both statements from Helen and Arthur underline the symbolic significance of an influential individual, where in this case, the designer’s value is not dependent on the final product, but on the “hype” of one’s self, which “fades very quickly” and results in increased job turnover likened to “the kind of musical chairs”. As one PR executive named Chris states, “creative directors often have more power on social [media] than the brands themselves... Arguably, that is why they have been brought in... Also, it frees them up to give that personality to the brand that otherwise the corporation struggles to approve that tone of voice.” Hence, the

celebritised, demi-god actor, in this case designer, can be brought into a brand in order to add desired personality, which places attention onto the individual.

A prime example of a fashion designer that is valued for her own brand has been the rise of the Barbadian pop-singer Rihanna and her dominance within apparel and beauty. Her projects include lingerie brand Savage x Fenty, Fenty Beauty, and in the Spring of 2019, she launched the luxury fashion brand **Fenty as part of the LVMH conglomerate**. The newly minted label is unique, as collections are communicated direct to consumer via social media and are available to buy through a series of product drops announced online, opposed to traditional seasons. Also, each released collection will not be linked to the following or preceding one and are thus individual narratives. Gina, the former communications director at Louis Vuitton has explained the power of the popstar in relation to the industry's establishment,

“[Rihanna] doesn't need you, you need her... I'm in awe with the fact that true to who she is, she is doing it in a modern way through drops. And she already said there will be no continuation from one collection to another, but 'It's what I feel at the moment'. Fine. The fact that she knows that she is not a designer and so she gave interviews where she said she went around to understand about fabric, and she said she discovered things... Of course, she's got help, but the bottom line is that today it matters more who you are than what you studied. I don't say that designers and pattern cutters or whatever doesn't matter, because it does, not everyone

can be a designer, however if you are very creative and you are very talented in any kind of creativity and you have such a big name, why not? So again, the real designer, whatever that means, need to be very careful because these people are taking over.”

Gina’s statement alludes that market success is not based on the mastered technical skill or “what you studied”. To be a designer today, “it matters more who you are” which can radiate from one’s personal brand or celebrity. This has also allowed a figure like Rihanna to transcend across numerous industries and obtain considerable influence in fashion: “Anna Wintour [American Vogue Editor]... is not the style maker [anymore]. It is Rihanna at the moment, and that is where fashion is changing. That editorial dictating which used to exist, doesn’t really exist anymore,” adds Arthur. Rihanna is granted access into diverse social fields by capitalising on her own celebrity status and personality.

Although not as world-famous as Rihanna, Louisa, a respected London-based designer, has also confirmed her need to play a more public-facing role as a designer to attract attention:

“I realise people are craving to know who is behind the brand and that is something I started to change in the last year, because I was more hiding as well. I also have a private Instagram account, a personal one, and one for work. But I realised people want to know you. They are buying into the story, buying into the brand, buying into you.”

Louisa's comments suggest that her profession is not only based on fashion design, but also requires self-branding and storytelling, emphasising the intangible facets and processes of value. Similarly, to Louisa's perspective on new tasks, one exhibiting designer at the 2019 International Fashion Showcase at Somerset House had expressed the fluid nature of job roles today. Asking him to elaborate he explains, "I am not a designer. We are creatives. It is no longer about *just* fashion. Not about clothes anymore. It is about outreach, about making a difference in a community and in lives. Fashion gives us that platform". Another designer, named Elliot and celebrated internationally for his engagement with sustainability states how he considers himself to be "a PR agency, disguised as a designer".

With less focus on fashion's tangible product, influence can be used in various ways and be reinforced by quantifiable social media followers. Hence, a movement of volatile status over objective craft has been observed. One MA student at Central Saint Martins named Paul worries about the seemingly diminishing value of art in fashion through, "the blurring of the celebrity culture...due to influencers, and that is really scary". Paul states "there is a difference between the brand and the designer," which is a distinction also relevant between artist versus celebrity and style versus fashion, which draw's a parallel to Ritzer's (2003) something versus nothing distinction. Also concerned by this dominance of self-idolatry and self-promotion, Arthur worries how "students are increasingly told creativity is about self-expression rather than skills," which again impacts the output produced by the fashion industry.

To summarise the first theme, actors are leveraging notions of self-idolatry in order to gain opportunities, access, and break through set structures and practices, which have traditionally defined the fashion industry. Individual actors are displaying idolatry of self through on and offline celebrification practices, being seen as part of exclusive networks, a calculable influence, and attention on crafting powerful own brands, which shift heightened focus onto the individual, not the industry collective.

### 5.3 Prioritising the Image

The second theme begins with an interview extract from Jeffrey, the CEO and Founder of a creative technology agency in London, who argues that at **the root of meaningful storytelling is effective technology**. This focus on storytelling links with various observed fashion week presentations and catwalk shows, which are oftentimes large-scale experiences. Evidence was found however, that the motivation for staging grand experiences equipped with substantial physical evidence are intended to inspire the physical audience in order to translate the **experience into imagery and share online to their own individual audiences**. Hence, it was observed that the image of the experience holds more value over the lived physical experience, as the image is created to speak to the mass-audience. Due to this prominence of mass-imagery, the relevance of attending the fashion show is questioned, followed by a discussion on the dematerialisation of fashion through the increased use of augmented reality when presenting collections.

### 5.3.1 Storytelling's Root in Technology

Jeffrey, although described as the “Willy Wonka of technology” by various publications due to his involvement in unconventional projects, emphasises he does not see the company as a “tech agency”. Instead the agency focuses on delivering convincing stories through AR, VR, and other digital tools.

“I think at the heart of what we do is we tell stories. So we are interested in communication and narrative and using technology to build empathy, build relationship, and if you can build relationship, then you can build stories and I can illustrate that by saying it is not about technology, although every brand thinks it is. Every brand thinks it is all about the tech, but you can have the world’s most amazing, expensive, high quality television- if you are watching poor content then your experience is sh\*t or, and likewise on your mobile, if we watch I don’t know like *Casablanca* or something and have a cracking time, because it is about stories and it is about how do we communicate emotion. And now technology doesn’t communicate emotion, storytelling does and because brands really are no more than a collection of stories. You know if you think about luxury, so fashion and beauty, but particularly in luxury you know Louis Vuitton doesn’t market the handbag, it markets the brand, it markets the persona, it markets the culture, it markets the sort of ineffable feeling of either being part of a herd or being successful or being international you know, whatever those ideas are it is not about the hinge of the handle on the handbag or the



durability of the zip. It's not about the rational bits, it's emotional. That is storytelling and at the heart of it. That is what we do here”.

Such elements of storytelling are prioritised at the tech agency and its consequent strategies are oftentimes translated into collection presentations and fashion shows, which Jeffrey continues to reflect upon. One project the agency recently completed was its collaboration with British Label Dunhill in Shanghai, where Jeffrey explains:

“We deliberately turned the dial away from the boom, boom, boom of a fashion show to telling a story... we used all of the storytelling techniques, we sort of raised spirits, lowered them, plateaued them, and then finished with a finale. We used all of those sort of classic storytelling ideas and then we had happy music and sad music and we were doing things like pumping scent into the air, like cut grass, that sort of stuff, and put a show on and it had an impact... the head of *Vogue* in Asia... was crying, she was having sort of a quiet little teary moment.”

Jeffrey's anecdote underlines the emotional power of a sensory experience with evidence of narrative transportation, defined as the act of being transported into a story world as a result of becoming involved in a tale (Phillips and McQuarrie, 2009). Although emotionally powerful touching upon the senses, Richard the founder and CEO of a global fashion and design PR firm, doubts that such presentations today are primarily staged for the physical experience. He argues

that today such experiences are constructed for the primary purpose of producing sharable images and a supply of content. Richard argues a staged experience is ultimately “more how [the show] is going to look on an Instagram feed”. He explains,

“The rules are broken within the fashion media sphere, more than the fashion industry per se. They are evolving towards different cycles and different ways of consuming and different ways of producing and different ways of offering to the consumer, but it still has to be following certain rules...People are consuming the image of the brand. Almost as much as they are consuming the product itself nowadays. It’s the whole brand world. The whole image around the brand and the product that is conveyed and distributed through various platforms is an object of consumption.”

Richard’s extract suggests that the value within the fashion sphere lies in the image of the brand, which in itself is an “object of consumption”. One example, highlighting the dominance of communicating imagery through experience is when I was invited to join Diane, the chief critic at the leading global fashion publication, to the Nicholas Kirkwood fashion show in September 2018.

### **Nicholas Kirkwood Fashion Show**

September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (17:00)

The show was meant to start at 5:00. It is now 10 past 5:00. I'm starting to get nervous if I have missed Diane. Luckily, I spot her stepping out of the black Mercedes along with a cohort of other well-known international editors. I reach out to Diane and she immediately introduces me to the editor she is walking next to. We enter as a group. Unlike other guests, who wait in line, invitations in hand, this group I am part of for a moment, goes directly through the entrance and do not show their invitations as they are already recognised. Naturally, I am not recognised, and I hear a security guard call to me... 'Excuse me...!' 'No, no she's fine', says the PR as she sees I am linked with Diane.

We enter down three flights of concrete stairs; entering an open, grey, industrial space. Multiple garbage tips are bursting with cardboard scraps and mountains of Nicholas Kirkwood shoeboxes, which also display the #NK19 hashtag and show title, "Interference", foreshadowing what is to come. We walk towards a set of doors around the corner and a hologram 2 meters above the ground awaits. It flickers between two images, a high heeled shoe in icy blue and white and a rebellious raised fist holding a shoe suggesting revolt. Through the entrance's heavy plastic curtain, we enter a massive show space with a stage in the middle with at least 500 seats surrounding it. The atmosphere is extremely dark and smoky, and upon arrival you immediately see a raised stage to represent a hacker's den. There is a desk, refrigerator, a scruffy couch - all the

amenities of home, but severely dystopian. We are “underground”; the den of a criminal.

Floating above the stage are a series of flat TV screens and dozens of CCTV cameras pointed at the audience. My group is mingling with other members of the front row including the former president of Dior and current chairman of LVMH. Diane suggests I go up to the back for the best view. After 5 minutes of chatting with my seat neighbour, the music blasts and strobe lights flicker. The TVs play a parody of a TV shopping channel and “Fake News” setting the show narrative. The “News” communicate that this society was being “taken over by a crazy tyrant named Z” and it was “against the law to dress as an individual”. “If you don’t conform you will suffer the consequences”. The hacker in the den is dressed in white, wearing a balaclava. She struts with confidence. She takes off her face covering, and it is revealed it is Rose McGowan. Her fists are raised. Almost everyone in the audience records this moment on their handheld phones- I am one of them. Then a parade of models emerges all in white, symbolic perhaps of the suffragettes, wearing neon digital chords in their hair, remarkable shoes and accessories. The spotlight then turns onto the audience, indicating the police are searching for one of us. During the finale, the models are escorted by the “anti-fashion police”. Once this 10-minute show is complete, the crowd floods out and heads backstage. Here, the *mis en scene* continues as the backstage is dressed as a sterile interrogation room with the

accessories covered in plastic and labelled in neon as “sealed evidence”. Flyers are spread all over the room, the “anti-fashion” police are lined up in a row where individuals take selfies with them. Dozens of cameras and hundreds of phones capture the scene.

The relevance of this fieldnote extract is not only to show the presence of hierarchy and the status of Establishment actors in the ecosystem. The fieldnote exemplifies that this “dystopian world” along with its artefacts including “garbage tips...filled with cardboard scraps and NK shoeboxes” and “accessories labelled in neon as sealed evidence” served the purpose to be documented and virtually shared by guests for their global audiences. “[The fashion show] is probably even bigger and better...they have become much more of a kind of spectacle, a real entertainment. I mean this was a direct result of Instagram,” says Helen. Although the pomp, excessive scale and nature of fashion shows have been linked to the dominance of Instagram and reaching a global audience, Arthur highlights that not all experiences can be only communicated via diverse medias:

“I think there is something to be said about things that you can only experience through other people because then that creates myth and storytelling and all sorts of other things. That elevates things. There is something that happens in that shared moment that you can’t replicate by photo or any other processes.”

Arthur emphasises the need for the experience and physically being present, however reflects that those present are oftentimes not absorbing what is

happening in an effective way. He states, “when you look at the audience, they are mediating it through the phone. [At the show], there was one person who was it, watching it. Everyone else is looking down [at their phones] ...And I’m thinking, that’s problematic because the framing is all from media, there is a medium there”. His comments suggest a diminished need for inside actors to attend a fashion show as images are digested through screens. In addition, Anne believes they are no longer necessary nor particularly desirable to attend:

“Editors would have to go. People who advertise, expect an editor to sit in the show and they’d go. And it’s of interest, but do I think people go and write down the looks to say that they like it? Or take notes? Absolutely not. People go, and like a million people whom I worked with would go ‘Ugh, I have to go to the show’. I’ll go to that and whatever and then I’ll go onto style.com and then take actual notes, so it’s like people are going for the sake of going, but they were really then going online and then looking at all the looks and then figuring out what they wanted to write. I mean I am sure they got an impression from the show, about what they wanted to write about, they focused on floral prints or I don’t know something, but then they would go back and look at it. I think it is more about the backstage now. I remember when that first started in 2008, 09, 10, like around then when people would go backstage and I even did some video stuff backstage, no one really covered backstage, you got the models before you saw them when they came out. So now it is more about the makeup artists and the hair teams”.

To support Anne's point, one regular fashion week attendee explains that while she likes going to shows for the "energy and the experience of, who am I sat next to, people watching", she argues that "if it's about product, I actually would argue you can probably see it better from looking at it online because you know you get to see all of the images, pinch and zoom". She says she would "quite happily see that collection online and still get a really good appreciation for it, without necessarily having to be in the audience". Due to this increasing preference of seeing clothes online and being able to grasp a better understanding and view, the format of presenting collections has changed. Diane, chief critic at Vogue, explains to me over email (Appendix 12) that,

"There was a Style.com [now voguerunway.com] look: to make images legible on the site, all images had to be full length, against a white background, and it happened that black did not show up well. The site didn't impose these rules, but PRs soon caught on. Shows and design began to fit the digital photography - it became colourful. There was only one camera angle".

Hence, not only are experiences crafted for sharable imagery, **the actual fashion product, clothes, are also adjusted in design for effective imagery.** This development is applied to commerce where one luxury e-commerce CEO stated that the success behind of the first e-tailers, Net-a-Porter, was that they presented "crazy, coloured clothes, and the images struck the consumer in a way that black and white clothing didn't".

It is argued that we have evolved from focusing on prioritising the product to prioritising experiences to now, prioritising sharable, mass-audience reaching imagery. With this focus on image, we begin to see a dematerialisation of fashion, where on one level, fashion consumption is moving to the AR realm as explained by Linda, a manager at a fashion-tech agency:

“You can virtually try on [clothes]. The technology is there now. We will be able to create our own avatars and will be able to see how things look on our avatars- fit might not be perfect. In time that will be addressed, but the ability to just get a quick snapshot of how you will look in something virtually will be really good. And then there is this whole other kind of realm of digital clothing which I think is fascinating and something that John has been talking about for the past couple of years. And you know the idea of in the future you will have your own virtual representation, and you will try digital garments to dress your digital self. So, you know, whether it is you not physically buying a shirt, to tak[ing] a photo of yourself so your friends can see what you look like on Instagram. Actually, the idea that you will be able to dress your digital avatar and it will look so real you won’t know if it is real or not real - that is happening. They have digital influencers at the minute, so Lil Miquela, Shudu and you’ve got Balmain, Fendi, Chanel - they are dressing these digital models”.



An example of the dematerialisation of the fashion product was also observed at designer Steven Tai's Autumn 2018 London fashion week presentation, held at the UK's Foreign Office. Tai, in collaboration with the Fashion Innovation Agency and Lucas Studios, presented his physical collection on real-life models, who stood on an elevated stage, as well as two digital garments, worn by a connected live model, which were projected onto a screen by way of her own CGI avatar. Projected on the screen, the real-life models and the avatar interacted with one another, and in one instance through dance. The screen was behind the stage and implemented various layers of augmented reality as the watching audience was also filmed in real time and could see themselves on the projection, which represented a street scene in Macau along with elements of magical realism, such as an active waterfall or steadily growing foliage on projected buildings. On the stage in front of the screen were physical representations of Macau including a street food stall, as well as a trio of women playing Mah Jong. The presentation represented an innovative live performance which bridged digital real-time visual effects with live human action, leading to a beyond-physical experience.

To summarise the second theme, addressing how actors are exploiting technology to disrupt value creation processes, emphasis is placed on the prioritisation of imagery. It was observed that large-scale experiences such as fashion shows are born in order to motivate the live audience to capture and share imagery for their own networks and thus reach a global network. Due to the importance of mass-imagery, the relevance of attending the fashion show was questioned, also suggesting that it is more efficient to view products via a screen. The focus on imagery additionally links to the dematerialisation of fashion

due to the increased use of augmented reality when presenting collections and the rise of digitalised clothes.

## 5.4 Direct Dialogue

Following the idolatry of self and prioritisation of imagery, the final theme addressing our first objective revolves around actors engaging with their audiences through direct dialogue. This theme will begin by highlighting the strategies of the brand, ATM, being the world's first explicitly cocreated fashion label. Here the CEO, Alessio, explains the motivations for starting a cocreated brand and how this gives the organisation an advantage over other competitors. Next, we will discuss how actors are rejecting gatekeepers as explained by Arthur regarding one of his students. Finally, we will draw attention to Henry, a well-known Gen Z social media influencer and how he sustains the relationship with his audience and remains accountable to them, and less so to other actors in the industry.

### 5.4.1 Purposefully Cocreating with the Audience

Founded in 2015, ATM is a premium fashion brand based in London and is “100% user-created” where its growing community of 15,000 users can collaborate on collections by uploading their own designs, commenting on other user's work, and creating group mood boards. The brand's ethos is based on access to all, via an online open-innovation platform. Alessio's motivation for starting the company is based on witnessing shifts in consumer behaviour:

“I think consumers are ready for a new model. We see Everlane, a brand that doesn’t have a celebrity, it is about the business, and the ethical aspect and the democratic and the transparency, so I think ATM was going more to that side. Not connecting, not being aspired by the public because we are celebrities...But because we have a connection and we want to work together, and we all want to do our best...[we] are representing a group of people.”

The fashion product, the seasonal collection, is thus representative of the tastes and voices from all collaborators choosing to be involved. Apart from collaborative design, ATM’s global community steers off various risks:

“That motivated me to create ATM also to create a multi-cultural designing team. People, all over the world. It is not like Gucci, they are all Italians and of course they are going to have the black face issue- there are no black people there. Someone would have raised their hand and said, ‘This is wrong. We should not be doing that’. In that way, ATM is quite different because we have like 15,000 people and all the public would raise their hand and say this is complete bulls\*\*\*, don’t do that!”

A growing list of fashion brands have caught onto the potential of design led cocreation and are collaborating with ATM, to benefit from their growing community’s diversity and shifting values. Being able to collaborate with big brands is also regarded as an advantage for ATM and the individual designers

as it brings in “cash” and they can “use all the brand awareness from other brands that have been in the market for 60 - 70 years”. Additionally, Alessio explains that this provides “the freedom to test different models in the community”. Currently, one specific “freedom to test” involves its to-be launched collaboration with a luxury heritage Italian brand, where in one capacity the community continues to submit their ideas and in another, the community consequently will be able to select the most popular ones. However, an added element to this collaboration involves AI, where during the design stage, “AI will see the ideas that were submitted and do a mix”. Based on the uploaded designs submitted by human actors, the AI will create new designs from the uploads and the output will then be transferred to the platform and submitted under a fake name. Alessio says that no one from the community will see which output is AI generated, but the result will lead to interesting findings, especially to see if the community will find the output worthwhile.

In terms of his long-term vision, Alessio envisions the company to be a,

“network for design, so not just for fashion, but any kind of product, design, that is kind of my place. And I want brands to come to us to get inspiration to, any kind of brand to go to ATM and [say] ‘I have a problem, I have a challenge’ and then they put it to the community to fix this challenge. So, I don’t know my plan. My investment mind, my exit plan for ATM is to be bought by H&M, ASOS, or LVMH or Gucci Group, all of these things, to be the creative cell inside lots of different brands”.

Alessio's vision thus emphasises the value of open innovation with outside actors when creating value for organisations in different market segments (e.g. value and luxury).

#### 5.4.2 Rejecting Gatekeepers

When speaking with Arthur, I ask him about any disruptive fashion designers he has recently followed, due to his role as professor in fashion design. He immediately refers to one of his own students who has strayed from the traditional promotional practices in fashion, of specifically showcasing a collection to the public, through a catwalk show and subsequently obtaining press opportunities by liaising with gatekeepers. Arthur tells me,

“When we had [fashion] show-selection back in February, he said ‘I actually don’t want to be in show selection. I don’t want to be part of the show’. And he’s amazing. Really talented in menswear. And I said, ‘But you’ll be really good, I’m sure you’ll get in!’. It’s not me who selects, and he went, ‘it’s not for me’. And I tried everything like to persuade him, and no! ‘You don’t have to do it, but maybe just to get the feedback and see what people think?’ No. He didn’t take part, then when we went to Paris. ‘No, I don’t want to be part of the showrooms!’ And then Diane came to look at the collections and she asked which one is the star. And I said well, Adam is really good, and she said, ‘Oh I haven’t seen his!’ And I said no...because he didn’t want to be in the showroom. She was like, ‘It is amazing!’ and

I explained what he's done. She said, 'I want to meet him!' And I said, 'I don't think he would want to speak to you!' I said not in a rude way, [but] he's just not interested! He is disengaged because he worked for a big conglomerate, saw what it meant to be turning over billions, and just became very disenchanted and said 'no, I actually want to go to Ghana and work with women, teach them skills', and yet, he's the most exciting one. So, you see, everyone I tell that to, like I also told someone in Paris and they were like *gasp!* And I thought yeah, that is also how you make yourself exciting and interesting in a way if you actually did want to do it."

This approach represents how a disruptive actor goes directly to their targeted community, (e.g. to Ghana), not via the gatekeeper, (e.g. Diane) to reach goals. Additionally, this approach suggests that having an element of mystery can "make yourself exciting and interesting", a stark counter argument to those who exhibit celebrification and "lay everything bare," an act Andrea sees "people [to be] inherently repulsed by".

#### 5.4.3 Influencing Others

Henry, a New York based fashion influencer who operates predominately on Instagram and YouTube, regularly engages in fashion commentary such as reviewing collections. His YouTube biography reads:

Fashion communtur [*sic*] and meme queen. [Henry's platform] makes the fashion industry and fashion brands digestible and understandable for the average person.

He found and capitalised on an underserved niche as,

“There was nobody actually really like talking very much about fashion and the history of fashion [on YouTube]. There are definitely people that do it, it's just that they are not mainstream, and I don't think that they've been able to capture the essence of how to make this, how to make it, what people really want to watch. So...I think that the more that I tuned into mainstream YouTube media, then I understood what they are doing, this is how they do it. How can I adapt that to what I do, and kinda figuring out like, the thumbnails and the titles and like all that kind of stuff and once that all came together, that's when it kinda started to like pop off.”

The extract suggests that by adapting to the desires of the mainstream audience, Henry was able to succeed as an influencer – informative and entertaining. Henry explains that what differentiates him and other influencers, compared to more traditional critics from the Establishment, is by being “attached more so to our audiences” which includes “the average person”. He continues,

“I always keep in mind that I have to stay true to you know my audience. I mean that's why they watch my videos or look at my

Instagram because, I say what is real and so if I was to dedicate my life to taking money from advertisers, you lose that. You lose the ability to be free and speaking and saying what you feel. So that is something I am trying to institute now so that for brand deals, so for this ad I would say what you want me to say, but please understand that if you do something wrong or if I don't feel a certain way about something in the future like it's nothing personal, but I have to say what I have to say and I don't think that should necessarily affect our relationship all that much because I'm doing it, because I think it is going to help you in the long run".

There is a direct relationship between Henry and his audience, opposed to more traditional actors who have to react to advertisers, their workplace, and other stakeholders internal within the ecosystem. Such actors like Henry thus have more flexibility and autonomy. By directly commenting with the audience, Henry has expressed his "annoyance with the industry" because here "nobody really looks at YouTube, they don't understand that I'm the bridge between your brand and the audience and the only audience in the YouTube space that actually cares about fashion". He continues to say, "that the industry is still consumed by older people that don't really understand us". Since starting his YouTube channel in 2015, Henry now sees himself as an insider due to the "status of having a certain amount of Instagram followers and YouTube followers... hitting a 100K followers on YouTube was really big for me" reiterating the importance of previously outlined calculable influence.



In terms of the dominating power of social media, Henry says that it is positive as,

“otherwise nobody would have had their hand put to the fire in a way and I think, I definitely think that the old people in the industry aren’t going to stop doing what they have been doing no matter how many times I @SuzyMenkes [Vogue Editor] for sitting at a Dolce and Gabbana show [after a global controversy where the brand was accused of racist behaviour], she’s going to keep going and be pretty positive, so I mean I definitely think it is a good thing that it is happening”.

Hence, Henry is part of a new set of gatekeepers attempting to hold other actors accountable. Thus, by directly communicating with his audience, influencers like Henry bring outsiders into the industry as his audience contributes to his platform and can use their own voices to hold other actors accountable. Simultaneously, there is tension between such influencers and Establishment actors such as editors, where Elton, a journalist outside of a fashion show, rebuffed, “God! If I hear the word influencer one more time, I will go mad!” Designer Louisa adds how, “press hates influencers... [as] influencers bring the outside to the inside”. As a result, she continues, “the fashion industry is...trying to protect the border and be on the inside”.

Louisa argues that influencers bring a level of authenticity and relatability, being “an online friend of someone who asks you for advice, how can I get there, how

can I do that". Choosing to no longer present at London Fashion Week, Louisa instead has chosen to work with influencers to present her collection via social media, allowing their audiences to "Swipe Up Buy Now" through the Instagram platform. Being able to track engagement and feedback, Louisa is "definitely not scared to continue working with [influencers]...even though there is still this beef between press and influencers." The level of authenticity described by Louisa is however also described to be waning as one PR executive states,

"I think consumers are getting quite wise...and are not engaging in that content because it is clearly paid for so I think whilst everyone was talking about paid for partnerships a couple of years ago, until sort of nowish I think the shine is coming off that...Like oh she looks amazing but if its paid for you think meh, you know, you don't engage with that content. It doesn't feel raw enough, it feels like an ad".

To summarise the final theme for this thesis's first objective, actors are exploiting technology by engaging in direct dialogue with their audiences. Disruptive actors, such as Alessio, Arthur's fashion design student, and Henry reject gatekeepers and engage instead directly with their targeted communities. Through such direct contact, the audience is invited to take part in industry value creation through, in the case of ATM, design or in the case of Henry, through his social media channels. These actors are disruptive as they are bringing outside actors, into the fashion industry's core, which results in considerable tension.

## 5.5 Chapter Summary

To summarise, based on interviews and observations it has been found that industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry through 1) rigorous self-promotion and celebrification processes 2) delivering intangible image-led experiences and 3) engaging in direct dialogue with their audiences. Linking together these three themes of idolatry, image prioritisation, and direct dialogue, is the disruptive actor's sharpened focus on attracting and entertaining a mass audience. As increased care is placed on self-promotion and self-presentation, supplying streams of imagery and intangible content, and through continuous dialogue with one's audience, the attention on media-savvy communication is greater than product creation and production development. Therefore, one can link findings towards the prominence of mediatisation within fashion. Hence, those that are media savvy can reach access and increased opportunity for individual gains opposed to traditionalists who excel at a craft; "today it matters more who you are" and how you crafted your image, opposed to "what you studied". With the tangible fashion product (i.e. output) being a decreased priority, emphasis on the value creation process within fashion industry increases. Having analysed behaviours and strategies of disruptive actors, the following chapter will zoom out from a micro-context to a meso-context, centring on the thesis's second objective which examines the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.

## Chapter 6 Outside Actors as Gatekeepers

### 6.1 Introduction

*They all want everything now. All, “Give me the right influencer,” Gina Leglozia*

Following Chapter 5, which examined how industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes in the global fashion industry, focus will now zoom out from examining individual actors towards industry-wide networks and the variables which are transforming these fluid networks. This chapter will reach this thesis’s second objective of: examining how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.

The introductory quote by Gina, former communications director at Louis Vuitton, introduces the context of this chapter. “Wanting everything now” captures a newfound sense of urgency expressed by actors within the fashion industry, and points towards a dependence on disruptive actors, in this case referring to social media influencers who directly communicate with a mass audience. As discussed in the previous chapter, reliance on the increasingly powerful “influencer” is becoming more prominent, as they are part of the new set of cultural intermediaries speaking directly to the end consumers, and their engagement can be directly measured through data analytics. The themes this quote touches upon will be documented in this chapter, and are titled: *The Need for Now, Contested Hierarchy and Data Dominance*.

*The Need for Now* captures how digital disruption has led to a newfound sense of immediacy within the fashion ecosystem, in regard to both producing and consuming value. The theme will begin with a discussion on various technologies, which trigger the ability for actors within and outside of the industry to collaborate together in real time throughout the supply chain – from transforming garment samples to promoting via social media. This will be followed by a description of a fashion show today and how there is an increased need for instant gratification, shifting how value is interpreted and absorbed. Additionally, the theme will outline how the pace of work within the fashion industry has radically accelerated leading towards a perception of less depth and critical shallowness in intermediary interpretation, and an increased degree of competition. Finally, the heightened pressures actors face when coping with such a fast pace will be discussed.

The following theme, *Contested Hierarchy*, outlines how hierarchy remains central in the fashion ecosystem yet has been transformed, becoming even more distinct through social media transparency and analytics. The theme begins with an exploration of motives for actors to participate in the fashion community. This is followed by a discussion looking at hierarchies and internal cliques. Following this macrolevel discussion, the dependence on other actors and the importance of relationship building will be explored. The final theme, titled *Data Dominance* outlines how technologies are accelerating the speed of value creation processes and reshuffling network structures. Results suggest the industry has adopted trend-based perspectives, which are rooted in data analytics. The theme will conclude with a discussion on who today holds the power in the fashion

ecosystem. Together, the themes suggest that the value creation processes within the fashion ecosystems have been dramatically shortened and quickened, impacting the structures of internal industry networks.

## 6.2 The Need for Immediacy

The first theme addresses immediacy; the ability for actors to immediately cocreate along the value creation process due to digital innovations, as well as the industry actor's consequent expectation for immediate gratification. This theme will begin with an interview extract from an industry leader in developing fashion technologies, speaking on emerging innovations which realise real time cocreation throughout the supply chain. This is followed by a description of the quickened pace of promotion through social media and the developing need for instant gratification, consequently shifting how value is interpreted and absorbed online and offline. Finally, focus will be placed on the pace of work within the fashion industry, increased competition amongst actors, and the various consequences including toxic pressures.

### 6.2.1 Real Time Collaboration

Based on discussions with innovators active within the fashion and technology fields, attention has been centred onto today's most disruptive technologies dramatically impacting the industry; those which make immediate collaboration among multiple actors possible. In particular technologies involving augmented reality and 3D pathways, which are not dependent on an actor's geographical location. Expressing her enthusiasm for these disruptive technologies, Linda a manager at the London based Fashion Innovation Agency states,

“I am really excited about 3D and the pathway to 3D. How that is going to impact the industry...on sampling, on the supply chain, shortening the lead time, co-collaboration with people in different locations, being able to visualise something, whether that is through something like a mixed reality headset or like a 3D garment. Something really visual, you can tweak and it's instant. It's not *“I've made this alteration, I've fit it on a model, I'm going to send you the fit comments, send you the sample, you are going to review it, then you are going to send it back to me, you are going to make these adjustments, then send it back to me, I'll review it again”*. That's the buying cycle, that sampling stage is so laborious, it takes ages, and there is so much [time, effort, and material] associated with it”.

This quote provides a direct comparison as to how the fashion supply chain has traditionally operated in the past, based on **“laborious” stages versus the opportunities of working with 3D samples**. Here, Linda brings attention to the shortening of the “lead time” and the ability for cocreation to take place throughout “different locations”. Continuing her explanation of the opportunities 3D pathways hold, she continues:

“That is going to be revolutionary when people start thinking in 3D, designing in 3D and I do think that is going to be massive. It is going to be a big shift in mindset, because I think a lot of

brands are like, oh [customers] wouldn't like that, they need to feel the garment- a bit like that customer-thing we were talking about earlier on, they need to feel it, need to see it. It's like you can still feel it, still see the swatches- I think when they realise the implications of being able to make really rapid decisions. Hang out, lengthen that, lengthen that arm hole, bring the hem up a couple centimetres. To be able to do that in real time and see it happen from a designer who is really skilled in 3D design is just going to be revolutionary and then I kind of think what that can then do in terms of the post purchase, production side of things".

Here, Linda acknowledges the observed scepticism of some industry actors in adopting new technologies, but argues that the benefits outweigh the concerns, especially in terms of the ability to make rapid decisions and working in "real-time". Although the technology exists today, the mainstream adoption is described to be "revolutionary" also by Jeffrey. Slowly, the 3D pathway technology is being adopted by various organisations including universities, such as the University of Bournemouth at their Graduate Fashion Week 2019 showcase in London. Helen, a leading figure at Graduate Fashion Week and a veteran fashion critic and editor, was deeply impressed with the technology stating it was,

" An amazing thing...I don't know if you would call it an avatar or a robot [on a screen]... and it was wearing the



clothes and it was walking towards the camera like a model and it would stop and move, and it spun around and you could stop it. And if you decided that the pocket was in the wrong place you could move the pocket on the screen, or you could change it to another fabric completely. If you thought, *oh the fabric is not hanging or draping, I wonder what it looks like in crepe?* Then suddenly that would change and the avatar, or the robot, you could take the collar off. You could have 6 buttons instead of 3, and I thought that was extraordinary.”

Here, Helen, an Establishment figure within the industry shares her excitement for the disruptive technology and the consequent opportunities **it invites, regarding real time cocreation between multiple actors; those within as well as outside of the fashion industry.** The 3D pathway does not only reduce excessive time and design inefficiencies, for example sample material waste, but invites participation from a variety of actors, **leveraging their contributions onto an equal playing field.** Through such developments based on immediacy, Gina adds how, “today one hour it is like one year, 10 years ago - I mean things change very fast... this is the new normal”.

### 6.2.2 Instant Exposure

In addition to the ability to cocreate on a sample design in real time through 3D pathways, the rate of downstream media promotion has also been described as increasingly immediate, due to the ease for actors to discover the content of other

actors through social media. When reflecting on his observations of his fashion students, Arthur, says that the pace of an actor being able to promote a designer can be instantaneous, a substantive difference from the past. Arthur explains,

“It is harder [today] for young students and designers - it is that “instant”. Someone was saying with pop stars- the student was suddenly messaging [a pop star] and go back to the 90s, that would have taken someone to see a photo [of the designer’s work] in a newspaper, someone then to maybe phone Louise [Wilson – course leader of Central Saint Martin’s fashion design] then Louise [would contact the designer]- that would take like a week. So, there was a chance to adjust to things and rather than this immediate *\*finger snap\** within an hour. And that is hard. And also, I think the reverse is true- And then people move on, and then- *now* what?”

Arthur’s reflection outlines a process of promotion which has been reduced from a collaborator going through multiple gatekeepers - in this instance “Louise” – towards directly to the designer. Hence, a collaboration can occur immediately, as all information may already exist online such as a collection’s digital imagery posted onto social media by the designer and/or other actors. As stated, the ability for actors to discover collaborators, such as designers, via social media can be instant, where Arthur further outlines the consequences of instant discovery. One specific example Arthur refers to is Central Saint Martin’s Masters

graduate who presented his graduate collection in May 2019. The graduate's collection grabbed global headlines, due to his unique fashion collection composed entirely from inflatable balloons. Arthur explains,

"The inflatable balloon... there's endless versions of [images from that collection] and so, which is the one [the designer] want[s] to [display]? I don't know. I always think that as a designer your job is to edit. Edit fabric choices, colour choices, edit it down, but if there are multiple [images] of everything and you are not controlling [the image] - now is that a problem or not?"

As Arthur's extract suggests, through social media, there is an immediate production and absorption of images from diverse actors, including the designer and audience at their fashion show. This exemplifies a shortening of the value creation process as these images are not necessarily edited or interpreted but are intended to be immediately catapulted to the masses. Linking to Chapter 5 regarding the prioritisation of imagery and reaffirming his argument about the lack of interpretation from other industry actors, Arthur discloses his own promotion practices stating,

"[A fashion show has] just become about image making hasn't it? Because I know when I am with students, even the MA, we were discussing, whatever is the first collection, there are about 8 collections, the first photo, [which] will be the first

photo on *style.com* - do we want it to be that? What does that [image] say about all of it, if you are making decisions based on how it is going to be received, whereas before it would have been someone like Suzy Menkes saying, *actually it is that 30th outfit that is the one*. So, you are also making decisions on how it comes out, which collection first. We've got an issue of *oh gosh that first outfit, will they even print it?* So then you are actually self-editing what you want to present, because you imagine [intermediaries] saying *oh well we can't use that, we'll use a different one or not use it at all...* people are very rarely doing that in a way that is a thoughtful or considered version. Which obviously if garments went out to a photographer, that photographer is thinking how he is representing that person. Reinterpreting that work is taking time. And so, you [did] end up with something that had value because it is was an interpretation of something."

The extract explains how the posting of a singular image online represents the entirety of a collection, and cuts past the traditional interpretations of intermediary actors such as the "photographer" or fashion critic "Suzy Menkes". A collection is reduced to one representative image, with a lack of layers of meaning and interpretation. In turn, the process of communication has been shortened, due to a lack of analysis from a series of industry actors. This shortened process also has consequences of how a fashion show is absorbed by an audience. Continuing his reflection on the graduate's work, Arthur states,

“The first [garment] comes out [onto the catwalk], everyone is going yay! And then because of the time in which the rest of [the catwalk show] takes, and also because [the audience has] seen, that big reveal, they know what to expect. So, then the excitement has dissipated. And you think, god that’s happened in 4 minutes! People have moved on, which I see a lot of at the Saint Martin’s shows because I do the show production. I think oh dear, I love that as an image, but now it has to travel all the way down here and all the way back [around the show space]... I was thinking, people aren’t patient anymore, they have processed that image. They want the next one... You are creating something that has to be instantaneously digested and understood and dismissed. Where it used to give us time for people to analyse and think and contemplate. There used to be the length of the show, 30 minutes. Well, it’s already been discussed and digested by the time you’ve got to the 5th outfit, because it is on *nowfashion* [fashion website]. Journalists aren’t even [reviewing]- they are live tweeting stuff and *reacting*.”

With a collection’s excitement “dissipated... in 4 minutes”, as Arthur suggests, one can interpret that people’s attention spans are short-lived and the hype of novelty is short-lived. The shortened attention span of industry actors leads

towards a sense of urgency and an unquenchable thirst for continuous novelty, mirrored also by outside actors including end consumers. Chris, states how, “people will have seen that campaign and then it is done. There needs to be constant conversation. There needs to be thought on social [media] first, rather than just trying to make a campaign image that feels very distant to a consumer.” Helen adds that consumers, “[if they] bother to buy Vogue, or read something on a website, they are looking at something just *flick, flick*, like that. So, for a brand to remain in the limelight or at the top of people’s recognition, there’s got to be a constant turnover of images, of excitement, of names, or a party or something”. This push to remain relevant pushes fashion into other fields in order to provide effective image making. Digital disruption has invited the need for immediacy to the value creation process, impacting production and consumption thus transforming the roles and relevance of certain actors. The roles and relevance of many actors have transformed, in particular in regard to keeping up with the increased pace of work- an increased pace being a cause and an effect of heightened competition. Reminiscing on the late 1990’s Arthur describes the work ethic of one fashion critic stating,

“I remember Suzy Menkes in the late 90s would go to one show in the tents, and she went to the next show. And she sat there, whilst waiting for the [next] show to start, typing her review of the last show. And I thought *oh my god that’s amazing* that she can do all of that from what she has seen, make the references to other shows, and historical things in that amount of time. *And now?!*”

Arthur's hypothetical question insinuates that although keeping up with the speed of fashion was a challenge in the "late 90s", the ability to effectively work as a fashion critic today such as a "Suzy Menkes" is considered almost unimaginable. Diane has underlined these challenges of working as a critic today stating,

"As I remember it, there were many fewer shows, but they were much longer. And, incredibly, we had time for lunch and dinner! There is no time allowed for that now. We are expected to report a show online within three hours. I write on my mobile in the car or try to find a cafe to sit at. Apparently, it's a race now."

Diane's extract suggests a severe time deficiency in her job role. Examples of competition amongst actors, who take part in this described "race", include posting collection reviews, as well as posting photos onto social media platforms such as Instagram. Helen, being a fashion critic herself, explains:

"I mean if I take photographs, I take them to put on Instagram, because if I can post a picture within say 20 seconds, or sometimes even 10, then it is the first. It is a bit like with a newspaper, you want to be the first with a story so that competitiveness is still there. To try and get a picture on Instagram before anyone else, which is a bit ridiculous but it's fun."

As the quote describes how certain actors are competing against each other to upload pictures, this suggests they're not looking at the entirety of a fashion show which is happening simultaneously. Referring to images on social media, Daniel the photographer, introduced earlier in Chapter 5, has linked the rapid pace of work and immediacy with feeling increased pressure stating,

"It is all like throwaway isn't it?... That is why I have an editor with social media. Everyone has a social media team and as I'm shooting, Dave is getting the pictures, and while he's editing, he will also have to ... send [them] straight away to the Cartier social media team so they can put the pictures up [on their platforms]. When I'm doing Vogue, the other day we did a Vogue and Cartier thing and they literally want the pictures up before [the event] is over. So even before it goes anywhere else, they need them straight up. So, like the pressure is always on".

Having delved into these industry networks, it was observed that there is an extreme sense of pressure faced by actors, as "everything is becoming very, very fast and quick moving". Observations have included colleagues suffering nervous breakdowns and excessive alcohol and drug use, where one stylist even stated, "you can't do this job without being on drugs." Expanding on pressures felt by industry actors, Richard the CEO of a London based PR agency explains,



“There is a lot of pressure on the creative directors to sort of release collections in a pace that is inhumane. There’s like financial pressures on emerging designers to be able to be part of the fashion world, because you know, between your sales campaigns, your shows etc, how do you actually do that? And just people, the ethos and the way people interact with each other, work with each other sometimes is a little bit toxic”.

This quote firstly speaks about the fast pace of the industry, which is “inhumane”, financial pressures, and interactions which can be “toxic”. This lifestyle is referred to as “horrible” by Rachel due to the busy schedules of journalists and buyers whom she regularly interacts with. Regarding fashion weeks and the industry schedule Rachel comments,

“It is a month, two times a year, [you are] on the road away from everyone you know. Living in hotels, seeing 4 shows a day minimum- like how exhausting is that? And also, there is so much saturation [of product]. How can you appreciate it when there is so much? To me, that is horrible- there is no freedom in it. Everyone is constrained. Everyone is exhausted”.

Next to being too “saturated” Rachel also stated the industry is too “concentrated” to the degree where “the [collections] can’t be appreciated”. She adds, “they can’t

because, [the buyers and journalists] are all exhausted and there is something else to look at. There is a feeling of being overwhelmed with content". The extracts suggest that taking part in this "microcosm" is difficult, however the opportunity to contributing to it has been described as "addictive" and even compared to by multiple participants "like heroin" or being on drugs. One designer concluded that to contribute to this industry one must be obsessed with their work stating, "obsession is a real thing and I think healthy obsession and unhealthy obsession are incredibly close and the line is very hard to toe, because you need to be obsessed... it is really hard". Miranda, former editor of *I.D* and host of a popular BBC fashion programme however warns of the dangers when being obsessed with one's work and dedicating all of one's energy into being part of this network stating,

"I have heard so many people on panels say to a young audience - you have got to live and breathe fashion. And I am thinking, so where do they recharge their batteries to look after their mental health?... You know, that is what people at the top have recognised, that if everyone is aiming for the dream jobs, well John Galliano, Raf Simons, Lee McQueen and a whole load of other people will tell you, would have told you [McQueen committed suicide in 2010], actually that doesn't reward you in the way that you have been told it will".

To summarise, the first theme has addressed the need for immediacy including the ability for actors to immediately cocreate along the value creation process due to digital innovations, as well as the industry actor's consequent expectation for immediate gratification. The theme captured the quickened pace of work within fashion and the developing need for instant gratification, consequently shifting how value is interpreted and absorbed. Finally, the theme has discussed the increased competition amongst actors, and the various consequences including toxic pressures.

### 6.3 Contested Hierarchy

The chapter's second theme discusses the nature and role of hierarchies within the fashion ecosystem and how they have evolved due to digital disruptions. *Contested Hierarchy* will firstly address the characters and motivations for actors to partake in the fashion ecosystem, reflecting in particular on the desire for finding a sense of belonging and family. Next, the structure of fashion hierarchies will be presented, as well as evidence suggesting they are more distinct due to social media transparency. Here the formation of social cliques will be highlighted, including their underlying roots in elitism, with one fashion influencer describing, "fashion [being] pretty much a derivative of royalty and aristocracy". After discussing the strength of hierarchy and the interwoven fashion network, the necessary interdependence of other actors will be discussed including the importance of relationship building. The theme will conclude by emphasising that whilst hierarchies have shifted, they remain and have become more distinct through technologies. The significance of the theme is that despite levels of increased cocreation, the fashion industry has not been completely

democratised, but its hierarchies have become contested due to the introduction of new actors.

### 6.3.1 The Makeshift Family

Through participant observations and conversations with industry actors, it has been established that working within the fashion industry is, for many, not considered as “only a job”, but has been described as “a way of life.” Andrea has called working in fashion as “my philosophy, my religion”. For Daniel, the significance of partaking in fashion’s ecosystem is fundamental to his personal identity. Reflecting on the sacrifices he has made in order to take part of this fluctuating industry Daniel explains,

“I lost my wife, lost my house, lost my friends...but I made that decision. You know about the blues guitarist who went down to the crossroads and made a deal with the devil? *If I could play brilliant guitar you can take my soul?* I feel sometimes, I also went down there and went “*if you let me go all around the world and just have the best time, you can have my soul later*”. It defines what I am. I love it, I mean I just love it”.

Daniel’s quote directly reflects how for many inside actors, contributing to the fashion ecosystem becomes a central variable to an actor’s identity. Actors are prepared, as demonstrated in this example, to make an ultimate sacrifice – not only losing friends, financial security, and family- but one’s “soul”. Richard adds,

how the “desire of belonging is much stronger in the fashion industry” in comparison to other lines of work, as he referred to his previous experience working in finance and advertising. He states,

“I think that fashion is something that allows people to express themselves, to differentiate themselves, to understand who they are to some extent. At the same time, it is a way to be part of a crowd. It is a way somehow to obtain social validation. Especially nowadays with social media and various platforms. And I believe that some people are really seeing that as a way to shine- to present and to get some recognition. So, I believe that fashion has this kind of magic and tension, there is a sort of a dramatic tension within the fashion industry that is both daunting and extremely exciting. It goes back to our fears and our most, fiercest excitements. That goes back to the doubts and the confidence we have about ourselves”.

Richard’s quote touches upon feelings of vulnerability, the desire to belong within a network, and operating in an environment rooted on tensions of fear and “our most, fiercest excitements”. Gina expands on the characteristics of this “crowd”, referring to it as a close-knit community, highly dependent on one another. She says,

“In the fashion industry, they don’t know anybody else. I mean think of those journalists that go everywhere. 4 fashion weeks, plus couture [weeks] plus now all the cruise [collections], and they cannot *not* go, they would feel FOMO [fear of missing out] to the fever if they are not invited. They do all the events and all the openings, and they live among each other. And if you follow them [on social media] you see that they comment on each other. I feel so sorry for them. Some of them are like older, 60s and 70s but it’s like, do you have a life outside of this? They don’t. But that is a choice - it is not necessary”.

As events are broadcasted through social media and are made transparent, an actor’s sense of “FOMO” is observed to have increased as such events are regarded as opportunities for validation and cocreation. This extract suggests that actors are dependent on attending events to secure further opportunities and “live among each other”, merging professional and personal responsibilities. Former editor Miranda confirms that those attracted to the fashion industry have unique characteristics and oftentimes search for a sense of belonging. She explains,

“The type of person that fashion attracts...is a very emotional, sensitive creative. You can’t be creative without being sensitive or emotional and so these people are drawn to an industry in which they hope they will find a family. And so they become very keen to please and seek approval to be part of

that family and to be rewarded with promotion and the opportunities that fashion has shown and delivered and so, because we have the extremities of extremely fast turnover, very high pressure to achieve high levels of creativity, and turnover, people are often running on empty. They aren't able to replenish in a way that they should. And they begin to lose sight of their own values and they begin to take on what is needed from their leaders, they look at pleasing their leaders and staying afloat and keeping their jobs and keeping that sense of I am. I am worthy of working at this place. And that lack of certainty produces fear and fear leads to, to lack of empathy for other people".

Not only does this extract highlight the industry actor's search for belonging and to be part of a makeshift family, but it also highlights operating in an environment of high pressure, outlined in the previous theme due to immediacy in the value creation process. Apart from obtaining a sense of belonging and a family-like community, establishing trust and relationships with certain actors can lead to opportunities and reaping benefits. For example, Daniel shares his photos directly with friends, which they can immediately use for their own communications. Daniel says,

"And then we get back to the fashion family, you know it is lovely to be in Paris or New York [tapping on shoulder] and you turn around and it's Ryan or Michel. Like *oh!* So see,

they are my friends so the minute I take a picture of them, Dave [the assistant] gets it, he edits, and he will send Ryan the shot straight away so they can - they always hold hands - so they can put [the photos] up [on their social media pages]”.

Without Daniel’s relationship rooted in friendship, “Ryan or Michel” may not even have photos to share on social media or they would have to wait longer for the edits, thus impacting their own status. Hence, close relationships likened to family can lead to additional opportunities for actors such as jumping ahead of typical value creation processes, such as immediately receiving a picture to post online which in turn reaches a mass audience. Additionally, being part of the community addresses inherent needs of companionship which can only be experienced by those within the networks due to empathy. Anne states, “it is that feeling of when you are part of it, you made it...we’ve all been through the trenches...Everyone knows you have been through it all, people are empathetic in that way...It is kind of like there is a bond [amongst inside actors] just based on that, even if you don’t like each other, like we’ve [all] suffered”. Rachel also describes this comfort of friendships within the fashion ecosystem by “being in the same boat”. Additionally, Linda compliments this notion reflecting,

“You lean on each other so heavily. You are under so much pressure, you work really long hours and it is really intense, [but] you get through it, through that camaraderie. You know



having a laugh and really bonding. That sort of spills over into other sorts of aspects of the fashion industry”.

The “camaraderie” and having “been through the trenches” again underlines the importance of relationships and community within the fashion ecosystem. This intense development of community within fashion has been pointed out by Arthur to stem from the physical fashion collections – the garments- where it is “the objects [which] are actually facilitating that community” and that “those objects become transactional in terms of what they are doing for lots of different people”. Thus, a community, a sense of family, a sense of belonging, is linked to operant resources being born from operand resources.

### 6.3.2 Distinct Hierarchies

This community in fashion, referred to previously as the “fashion family” is rooted in rigid structures of hierarchy. Due to the transparency on social media, it has been observed that hierarchical structures have been reinforced. Rachel concludes that “[social media] has reinforced [hierarchies] in a way, because they are so much more visible, the boundaries are less blurred, and these are the people who are here together...yeah I think it is more distinct.” This distinction is based on one’s transparent social media analytics including how many followers have subscribed to an actor, who is virtually following them, and the degree of influence they hold which today can be swiftly measured. This transparent distinction contributes to determining one’s hierarchical position within the fashion ecosystem, where for example, fashion show invitations are often divided by colour dependent on social status.

In one instance at the Pam Hogg Autumn 2019 catwalk show in London, actors holding blue tagged invitations were able to enter the show venue before green or red invitation holders. Those with blue tagged invitations were observed to be those with substantial social media followings and held a higher status. Linda describes the cut-throat nature of deciding someone's hierarchical position at a fashion show explaining,

“It is like peacocks, pruning. I just think the PRs must have such a nightmare when the [fashion] show is almost ready to start and they are like sh\*t, I've got to get this person on the front row, all of these kinds of people [influencers] on the front row, but *there's no room here, no room here - who is more important?* It's quite awful the way people feel like they are second rate if they are not [on the front row], like 'sorry, *could you just move because this person is really important?*' It is really hierarchical.”

The quote indicates that not all actors are deemed equal, neither online on social media nor offline at a fashion show. Another example of separating actors within the ecosystem based on status was at the Burberry show held at London's Tate Modern in February 2019, which separated its audience through gold or silver invitations. With a gold ticket, guests were invited to sit onto large upholstered chairs. Here celebrities and influencers with large social followings were sighted. The adjacent space, raw and industrial, was intended for guests with a silver

ticket and were consequently seated on uncomfortable cubes or leaned against the scaffolding. Diane called the divide “puzzling”. Although in the press notes, it was described that Burberry wanted to represent the complexity of British culture – the establishment and street life. One seasoned journalist told me of her frustration due to reinforcing class divisions. Referring to being seated in the industrial space, she expressed that she felt disheartened to be considered “second rate” despite working in the industry for multiple decades at well-known publications, whilst some “twenty-somethings... with heaps of social media followers are waited upon hand and foot”. Adding to the notion that hierarchies remain fundamental in the fashion industry, Richard states how,

“There are still people in certain positions who still are holding the reins, but there is a permanent change. I think what defines our era is that especially in the fashion industry, especially in the fashion media, is that the platforms are changing so fast that you know, you need to be able to adapt constantly, to rethink how you are working. Not completely, but to some extent you need to adapt because you can become obsolete quite easily. Much more easily than before...I think the hierarchy is still very present. If you think within publications, editor in chiefs and editors, and all the people. These are ecosystems that are functioning around a certain hierarchy”.

Hence, whilst there are still actors who “still” hold power within the industry, one “can become obsolete quite easily” due to the changes in fashion media. Those that adapt more swiftly to media innovations can capitalise on this power. For example, Henry the New York based influencer describes his recent experience of attending a show at New York Fashion Week stating,

“I went to the Oscar de La Renta show and it was really weird, because there was like the runway down the middle and there were two sides. So, I was on the influencer, client side and across on the other side was the like Anna [Wintour], Hamish Bowles and Derek Blasberg and all those editor people. So, it was very clear to see this separation... I don't think that we're waiting for fashion to be democratised, especially in a digital sense which is really where it all goes down. [There] it is really democratised...I'm not super sure that fashion like needs to be democratised in a level in person...We don't need to scare the sh\*t out of Vogue editors with like random people who pay a lot of money to go to a fashion show”.

This quote firstly shows that Henry, a social media influencer, has entered the ecosystem by adapting to new fashion media and is invited to high-profile events along with more established figures such as an “Anna [Wintour]”. Additionally, the quote points towards a “clear” distinction between the fashion establishment “on the other side” and across, the new, disruptive actors such as Henry “on the

influencer, client side". It also suggests that the hierarchy is not as obvious online where anyone with a social media account has the ability to add to a particular conversation. Also, Henry insinuates that the Establishment, of in this case Vogue editors would feel annoyed if "random people who pay a lot of money" would attend, diluting their power and influence. Additionally, runway shows such as the "Oscar de La Renta show" are regarded to be more hierarchical versus fashion presentations which Tina, founder of a sustainable fashion NGO states, are "more like installations... [they are] more an art show, than just walking down the catwalk. Because...so much is dictated by walking down the catwalk".

Referencing her own experiences when attending a catwalk show, Gina describes the fashion industry as "very closed, very elite". Gina reflects on how actors within the industry have treated her based on her changing job role – from being a high-profile communications director at Louis Vuitton to becoming a freelance agent stating,

"There are some people who are much more known, that really like me and so they would come up to me [at a show]. When I was a top executive in the [Gucci] Group I was liked by everybody, and then when I wasn't anymore, I would say 3/4 of people and brands they stopped knowing me... However, if tomorrow, my face was becoming known for something bigger than *ShowStudio*, or I was getting editor in chief of one of the *Vogue's* then they would all be my friend. You see what I mean? It's very elitist. It's very stupid,

it is like, for most of them, not everybody, most of them, it is not the person, but what they represent in the industry. That matters and then other's that would be genuine, they are not, because they are like '*Oh, if such and such doesn't say hi to her, then maybe I don't*'. It is as stupid as this. And that is why when I go to shows, which I don't even like doing, I like seeing what is happening, but not the waiting, the people looking where you are sitting. Because it matters you know where you are sat".

This extract firstly suggests that the industry is regarded as closed and elitist, distinguishing itself from other social groups. The evidence suggests that people are highly dependent on one another, which is why "it is not the person, but what they represent in the industry" which matters for an interaction. However, such distinctions do not play an important role when actors are not aware of what one represents in the ecosystem. This is exemplified through fieldnotes, where one powerful industry actor, Helen, was almost not let into a fashion show, however I, a peripheral industry actor, was able to enter even without an invitation. Access is dependent on the actors themselves and relationships with other actors.

### **Barriers at Richard Quinn**

*September 2018; London 16:00*

For the final collection of London Fashion Week, by designer Richard Quinn, I do not hold an invitation. It is a very high-

profile event, as last season the HRM the Queen attended the show. My friend who is a journalist was waiting in the lobby at 180 Strand in front of the entrance to Richard's show. I thought that if I can see her then at least I can observe the crowd entering for the sake of my research observations. I walk to the lobby's entrance and show my press pass. The guard is stern and reluctant to let me enter as I don't have a show invitation. "I just want to go into the Lobby" I say. "Yeah that's not for the show though" he counters. "Well, I was just inside- can I not just meet my friend who is inside?" I point to her. "No that's not going to work, you will have to go from that entrance" – "I just came from that entrance!" I protested. I call my friend to come out, and as she does the other guard hesitantly lets me in past the glass doors.

My friend and I approach the charging tables, close to the entrance. "Oi!" He screams after us as we moved 2 meters towards the wall with a socket. "Just charging!" I exclaim holding my phone in the air. We sit there and talk; fully aware we are being watched as if we were criminals under investigation. The security guard with this unpleasant manner is then met with Helen at the entrance. She is an OBE and one of the most respected figures in the fashion industry. She shouts at him- "Let me in! Let me IN! I am MISSING THE SHOW! Do you not know who I am?! Let me IN!" She roars

ferociously and I start to get up to vouch for her as this young man is unaware of who she is. He protests and he roars that he won't let her in. She tries to wriggle her way past him, despite being half his size. Next, two PR girls rush towards the row and exclaim, "let her in! It's fine!" Helen runs past them- scarf trailing behind her and into the show venue. The security chief addresses the guard saying, "Don't worry you did the right thing. Sorry you had to go through that". After this high voltage moment, my friend and I decide that we should grab dinner, but I suggest we wait a couple minutes to charge our phones. We wait and then a different security guard - one I had introduced myself to earlier in the week- asked what are we doing? Are we not bothered in going to the show? I say of course, but we don't have invitations. He points that the back doors are still open, and he says "well go, go! Go now!" My friend and I are the last two people to get into the show, standing. Once inside, the lights dim, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra starts playing Rossini's *William Tell*.

### 6.3.3 Interdependence on Other Actors

Despite actors being able to directly communicate with a mass audience through various digital platforms, it was observed that in order to become part of the fashion ecosystem, actors still rely on acceptance from established actors within the industry. As Anne describes it,



“Connections are everything in fashion... they like to keep it all in the family... I think it would be almost impossible to get a fashion job... if you didn’t have connections. It would never happen. And you can still be really talented, it is just you need a way in”.

Hence, relationship building is fundamental in order to secure “a way in”. Henry argues that the need for connections within the fashion industry is a tremendous threat, as nepotism and tight-knit cliques remain dominant. Speaking on being hired based on who is in one’s network, Henry states,

“I truly feel that this is an industry that is pretty much based on who you know and how you can get somebody a job and get something; it’s all based on cliques. Cliques not in the digital form, but in the school bully form, so I think that unless we break down that cycle of actually like working with people because they deserve to be worked with not necessarily because of who they know and who their parents are and where they come from. Unless that is broken down, I think the industry will just be a different generation of the Anna [Wintour]s and Mario Testinos and the Nick Knights of the world.”

Henry says that through social media, he was able to distinguish himself and gain a loyal following, not dependent on the approval of an established actor. Whilst

he was able to reach a high-profile status, he acknowledges there remains a need to maintain relationships with industry actors. Poppy, a luxury PR manager states,

“[Finding a job in fashion] is literally all about who you know.

I literally got all of my jobs that way, through connections.

That’s just how it is done. That’s why you always have to put

in 110% because you are building your reputation.

Reputation has two sides though, if you really mess up you

will be blacklisted from the industry and no one will work with

you. Like one assistant once lost a Roberto Cavalli fur coat

in transit from London to New York. Done”.

Additionally, “without the belief from the industry, you are not going very far” says disrupter, Alessio. Alessio continues saying how he sees the industry as “if you are not part of the cool people, it is very hard to get in”. Alessio voiced his frustration of various fashion media outlets saying, “I get really sick when I read all these articles and it is all their friends and where are the new people coming?” His approach for his team and company in “getting in” is “to work strategically, eating from the side”, in particular by collaborating with bigger, more established brands and establishing relationships with industry figures, which boost credibility by association. Alessio explains,

“[The fashion industry is] very sceptical of companies that

are trying to create a new way, a new vision and I can say

from my side, ATM took us so long to convince people and then you need some help. Then you need people - we only broke into *Vogue* when we had Suzy Menkes saying yes. We need these people. Even if, I don't know we are doing the most amazing thing, everything awesome happening and the most beautiful clothes, if we didn't have the stamp from those people. We couldn't move through the industry. It was very funny we had to get Missoni to get all of the conference, luxury people to see if this idea works for other people before investing or risking their opinion on us."

Apart from renowned critic Suzy Menkes, another actor repeatedly referenced to hold the power into the industry, is fashion critic Diane. Rachel compares Diane to be "like a mythical figure... the spider in the middle of the spider's web of London Fashion." Additionally, Andrea has commented on a show she was collaborating on that "the show could have gone amazingly and the first few shows really did... but [the creative directors] were waiting for Diane's review." Despite being young, innovative organisations, this emerging seemingly disruptive generation still is dependent on the approval of a powerful established figure. Hence, due to this dependence on other actors such as a Diane or a Suzy, there is a huge amount of time spent on relationship building within the ecosystem. Alessio says from his experience that,

"You have to be there, and you have to be so insistent about everything, as you know, I have to send 300 emails in order

to get one answer from somebody. [Luxury store name] took us 18 months to close a deal. [Luxury Italian brand] took us 20 months to close a deal. It is so long but our investors, they all come from tech they don't understand why it takes so long [in fashion], it is an investment. I went to Italy to see [luxury Italian brand] probably 9 times, 10 times, 10 trips to go and convince them."

He continues describing his relationship building experience where "the first meeting you present [your proposals], the second meeting you are invited for a coffee, the last meeting we had a lunch together, big Italian family, it is a relationship. It is hard to be in a relationship with people from the industry". This is however expressed as difficult and emotionally exhausting as one is constantly engaging in developing rapport with other actors. Work is constant, where Alessio concludes that "fashion is one of the industries where you go for a drink, you are working, you go for a party you are working. But you are just killing yourself all the time".

To summarise, the second theme of this chapter titled *Contested Hierarchy* has discussed the structure and characteristics of hierarchies within the fashion ecosystem and how they have evolved due to digital disruptions. The theme addressed the motivations for actors to partake in the fashion community as well as the formation of fashion hierarchies. After discussing the role of hierarchy and the interwoven fashion network, the interdependence between actors has been discussed including the importance of relationship building and its consequences.

The theme emphasises how hierarchies remain firm but have become more distinct through technology and transparency. Due to the levels of increased cocreation, the fashion industry has been democratised, which has restructured its hierarchies, shifting power between gatekeepers.

## 6.4 Data Dominance

The final theme of Chapter 6 will centre around data dominance and how relying on data analytics has influenced practices and perspectives within the fashion industry. *Data Dominance* begins with a discussion on how the industry's trend-based thinking has hampered the adoption of tech innovations, in comparison to other industries, such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and automotive among others. Additionally, it will reflect the ephemeral nature of the industry which inhibits the execution of longer-term strategies. Next, data-based value and metrics will be outlined where fashion has been described to be "90% science, 10% art", affecting the composition and results of certain value creation processes. Finally, the theme concludes with a discussion as to who holds the power in the industry. Whilst access to data provides accountability, efficiency, and power, its dominance reduces the relevance of certain actors and traditional practices.

### 6.4.1 Short Term Vision

Throughout interviews and participant observations, it has been found that one of the biggest hinderances to adapting to technological innovation in the fashion industry was that as a whole, it operates by looking into the future, often in 6-month intervals, and does not effectively act on the present opportunities and

challenges. PR manager Chris declared that compared to other industries, such as music, fashion, an industry celebrated for setting trends, is ironically a late adopter. Chris says,

“Fashion generally reacts a bit late to technology in general. It seemed, if you look at music, they realised there is a problem here, we are going to develop ways that you can’t listen, there’s going to be upstreaming, we are going to make sure there are people that are focusing on downloads, we are going to get away from the fact that people are not buying CDs and pirating and we are going to solve it. But fashion which is always focused on newness is always about what is next- not necessarily about what is happening [now]. So, what is next? Oh, we need to use AI. What’s next? Oh, we need to do Google glass”.

Chris’s extract suggests evidence of reactionary decision making in fashion and linking innovations to being trends. Unlike the music industry, which was described to have solved challenges using technology, fashion is using technology as a means to adapt to “what is next” opposed to addressing a problem. Jeffrey adds to this frustration and industry-wide inefficiency stating,

“Every day it’s this brand did this project and ‘it’s incredible’ and he did this and they did that and Gucci did this and they teamed up with X to do Y, but there is never any view about

whether it is any good or not! It is implied that because it is technology and it is 'in' and it is doing something slightly different it must be good. So, I get really fed up with this".

Digital innovations are thus regarded as "one offs" and applicable in the short term, where such projects, as described by Jeffrey, "occur like a match". Jeffrey expands that this short-term thinking is problematic where innovations,

"flair up and there is lots of PR and excitement about them and then the match dies, but technology isn't like that. That is one of the issues that brands have. I think in terms of understanding technology, I don't think [fashion companies] appreciate what technology is yet. I think they look at it like communication, like fashion, I mean fashion reinvents itself every year and so their mindset is in this newness. So, I think they feel technology is exactly the same as whether it is fur one year or mauve another year or hessian one year or whether it is military cut, tight crops or cargo or whatever sort of key trends are, they sort of see technology as being that".

Here, Jeffrey highlights the perspective that technology is regarded as a trend by various actors linking to an ephemeral quality intrinsic to the fashion industry, which in turn stifles long term development. Richard describes how a fashion trend "doesn't last for a very long time," and also that "it doesn't follow any

rule...Something that has been known to be great for quite a sometime, will be wrong the next day and something completely unexpectedly off will become absolutely fantastic". Gina also adds that due to the short-sighted nature of the industry, she as the head of communications for a fashion conglomerate was not able to effectively implement a longer-term strategy as "everything only lasted 5 or 6 months". Hence, if a strategy did not work, actors could start again on something new. Commenting on fashion's ephemeral nature and lack of long-term strategy, Louisa criticises her peers stating, "no wonder no one takes fashion people seriously, because we do not take each other seriously. We look ridiculous to people outside of the industry because it is ridiculous how brands, reputations, and careers are built. There is no logic and fairness".

#### 6.4.2 Data Based Value and Metrics

However, with various practices in fashion labelled as "ridiculous", "doesn't follow any rule," and as Gina says in reference to spending budgets in the early 2000s, being "out of control", Chris describes how as a response, the industry has become more data-based in order to act more accountable and measure impact. Chris explains,

"A lot of people [in the industry] assume value because, like ok we know we had the editor in chief at this event, that was value, or having this piece with these many pages. I think when marketing budgets got a bit more stretched, people wanted to know actually where are we measuring that? How many? Because you can measure. Even though people



were shifting to use different formats, I think from a business perspective, people wanted to know how their spends were being quantified and that is another reason why I think digital became more of a focus because you can easily measure what our spend was. I think that is not always the reason to make decisions, but it was another way to say OK I have X amount of budget, if I spend it here, I will make X amount back. That is safer than saying OK, I'm going to do an event that maybe no one comes to. You can't put your finger on what the value was. I think being able to be accountable to how people are spending probably started to shift the change".

As represented in the quote, digital disruption therefore has provided a more rigorous method of accountability in the industry, a contrast to the "shameless bribery" in the 1990s where Mark, an editor from the *Evening Standard*, referred to such days as "chartering a jet to fly to Paris, staying in the Intercontinental Castiglione, Hermès giving you ties, cologne, and scarves..." Additionally, due to the ability to measure engagement and other analytics many business leaders within the industry look towards practices which lead to an immediate quantifiable result such as the use of social media influencers. Gina explains that "[managers] all want everything now, all 'give me the right influencer'", however there is no consensus that the use of influencers impacts the bottom line. Alessio states, "I don't see the conversion happening that much. I think there is a lot of hype around influencers, that is another panic word that people say, influencer marketing!"

Next to providing accountability for strategies, another application of data analytics on the value creation process in fashion is in making the process more efficient through time and financial resources. In regard to using Artificial Intelligence when designing collections, Linda sees an opportunity for the industry explaining,

“[AI] will enhance creativity because [designers] will spend less time, maybe not the creative directors, but their designers and their teams will spend less time trawling through archives trying to look for particular things. I think with visual recognition tools and the ability to access information more readily can then free up their time to think more creatively about the garment itself. And I think also, if you have already solved one of the problems through AI, being able to identify what type of product will sell in what type of areas. Yes, it is kind of constraining the designer if they are thinking, *but I want to design a floor length black dress, but the data that is coming back is suggesting actually that is limiting the amount you can sell then*, ok, it’s almost like giving them a bit of a brief saying this length in this market is much more successful. It’s kind of like, it might force them to be more creative within a brief if that makes sense...I would like to think through the AI, you have a better understanding of what is going to sell so, almost like

you're ready to wear collection for sales will have a lot more impact and more value for business and it's almost like the icing on top is the creative direction on the catwalk and how that is presented and the brand communication, marketing, and those kind of things."

This quote firstly emphasises that through the adoption of artificial intelligence there will be less time spent by designers to research references for collections, again alluding to a shortened value creation process. Although Linda believes this will enhance creativity, one MA student from Central Saint Martin's states that it, "is sad, [this] ease to discover content... that is maybe what has lowered the value of fashion." Here, the reliance on data metrics makes the process more efficient, but this removes the need for certain actors and filters the process of creation. Additionally, artificial intelligence has been described to dictate to the design team a brief of what a particular market requires thus reducing the power of a creative director. Linda describes how the creative direction and human autonomy is added like "icing on top" in form of "brand communication [and] marketing".

#### 6.4.3 Who holds the power?

As it has been discussed that the rise of certain technologies can reduce the power of certain actors, such as the autonomy of a creative director, it is now worth reviewing who holds power in the fashion industry today as a consequence of various developments through digital disruption. The first example of examining who holds power in today's fashion ecosystem is centred on fashion

media and publishing, where Miranda draws from her experience as the former editor of *I.D* magazine stating,

“In the 80s we thought that [editors] were in service to ideas and creativity and ways of being human. But now from everything I understand from friends who still work, we are in service to the big corporate industrialists. When I was working in magazines, I remember an advertiser saying to us, Levi’s, saying to us OK so we are going to be advertising for the next 12 months. *We are really pleased to be working with I.D and can we take it that you will feature our product?* And I said no. I said you can show it to me, but if it doesn’t fit with what we are doing, then we can’t agree to do it, because that means you are going to dictate. And I thought I was well within my rights. No fashion editor would dare to do that to an advertiser now. In fact, advertisers pay fashion editors and compete with other advertisers. They now have people go, *we have gone through the magazine and so and so who is advertising with you has had 10 separate mentions in the magazine, we have only got 6. We are withdrawing our advertising if you don’t make sure that you are giving us equal footing.* I had editors tell me that they get PowerPoint presentations or decks sent through, showing exactly how the clothes should be styled. And now advertisers are pushing for one whole outfit. Not *we are making this look, here is this individual.* They are saying *no it has got to look exactly as we say.* And so, where is the creativity in that? Where is the individuality and the expression?”

Miranda brings attention to the reduction of autonomy for certain actors, including a stylist or an editor, as advertisers demand an image to be styled a specific way or needing a specific amount of mentions. It also questions the role of such actors today. Regarding the power of sponsorships within the fashion industry, the autonomy of events has also been reduced as Daniel's comments state how, "the sponsors putting up the party want it to be publicised, want it to be whatever, all the branding goes out and everyone is happy, but sometimes it just kills the spontaneity of a good party". One editor at London Fashion Week also criticises that "good fashion parties no longer exist today as we all bow to the throne of the brand... and can no longer just have a laugh."

However, the ultimate variable for power in the industry, apart from influence, is data; a fundamental asset of knowledge, accumulated through artificial intelligence. On the most successful players within the fashion industry, Linda explains,

"the retailers that are doing really well, they are the ones who have their logistics in order... these tech giants are going to just come in and gazump a massive portion of that sector. And it is happening already. Amazon is the second biggest clothing seller in the US after Walmart and you know 10 years ago it buys a brand and then it learns from that and it's like *right, that's how a fashion brand work. Hey, let's launch fashion.* Then they launched their own brand, in 2017

and then last year, I had to double check, I remember it was over 100, something like 127 they launched within a year. That is crazy. That is crazy and you don't hear about that do you? All you hear about is like high street retailers, doom and gloom, going into administration and it's because you have people just buying online, because it is convenient and people don't want to spend time walking down the high street unless it's going to give something really exciting back. It's kind of like what excites people now, it's the technology and it's the access they can get, and I think wow that's crazy."

Linda's observations suggest that it is a player who can harvest data efficiently and learn from previous strategies who will dominate the fashion market. It is the learning from artificial intelligence which allows "tech giants" such as Amazon to continuously expand its portfolio of brands and threaten established fashion organisations. Today, the actors who integrates and acts on data metrics, holds the power in the fashion industry, as well as the outside actor due to the industry's democratisation, which will be explored in the following analysis chapter.

## 6.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has addressed this thesis's second objective exploring how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion system. *The Need for Now*, documented how digital disruption has led to a sense of immediacy within the fashion ecosystem. The following

theme, titled *Contested Hierarchy*, captured how hierarchy remains integral in the fashion ecosystem, yet has been contested due to new power structures by actors who hold “influence” over the mass audience. The final theme, titled *Data Dominance* has outlined how technologies have accelerating the speed of value creation processes and reshuffled network structures. The industry is engaging in short-term practices which are rooted in data analytics, where the more data a player is exposed to, the more power they hold.

Together, the themes suggest that through digital disruption, the value creation process in fashion has been shortened, the pace of work has accelerated, and practices have become consolidated where various job roles are deemed less relevant and less autonomous. However, whilst digital disruption has allowed certain actors such as Henry the influencer to develop his own audience via social media, disrupters remain largely dependent on influential, established actors when progressing further into the fashion ecosystem.

## Chapter 7 The Shift in Focus for Primary Value Creation

### 7.1 Introduction

*We are creating our own kind of new codes that are much more fluid and they are not imposed by the industry. They are actually brought by the consumer themselves. – Richard Castelli*

Building upon an examination of fluctuating industry-wide interdependent networks (Chapter 6) and individual industry actors who are exploiting technology to transform value creation (Chapter 5), attention will now be placed onto the disrupted processes which have initiated radical field-level changes. This final analysis chapter will address this thesis's third objective, being to analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction process within the field of fashion. Here, the codestruction processes revolve around seemingly democratised practices, which provide non-industry actors, including consumers, unprecedented access into the industry. The proliferation of new actors contributing to fashion's value transformation has triggered various consequences, which Richard has alluded to in this introductory quote. Through digital disruption, codes are no longer "imposed by the industry", but "brought by the consumer themselves" emphasising the significance of outside actor contributions. Through digital disruption, the outside actor transitions from being a passive recipient, or target, towards an active participant dominant in the value creation process. Chapter 7 captures the dominance of the outside actor, and will be divided into three themes, titled *The Ubiquitous Turn*, *Co-Transforming Value*, and the *Age of Uncertainty*.



The first theme, *The Ubiquitous Turn*, will outline the composition of value codestruction, which is based on ethnographic evidence highlighting the opportunities and purposeful initiatives targeting outside actors to become active participants within the fashion industry. *Co-Transforming Value* will address initial consequences of opened access into the industry, where outside actors have increased power to collaborate, appropriate brand image and hold others, including inside actors, accountable for their actions. With outsider-actors (e.g. consumers) increasing their influence on value transformation, they have become a primary focus and therefore attention is drawn more to the periphery of the industry, with less value placed onto the fashion product and those actors directly involved with creating the fashion product. As outside actors increase their power, various industry practices and behaviours have become disrupted, and the professional roles of certain actor have become irrelevant. Such changes have led to a sense of fear and tension amongst established insider-actors, as well as a high degree of uncertainty for the future outlined in the final theme: *Age of Uncertainty*.

## 7.2 The Ubiquitous Turn

The first theme of this chapter outlines the composition of value codestruction, which is rooted in the ability for outside actors to become increasingly integrated within the fashion industry through technology led open access. The theme will address how digital disruption has provided industry access to a mass audience and the consequences of such developments. Moreover, the theme will discuss how the fashion industry, with particular focus on London, has intentionally

become more ubiquitous and consumer facing, straying from its traditional state of exclusivity. Finally, the theme will touch upon collaboration practices with outside actors, indicating how various barriers to entry have shifted.

Through a series of interviews and dialogues during the ethnographic fieldwork, industry actors have repeatedly commented on the increased ease and opportunity for interested individuals to enter the industry due to technology, where one participant stated, “technology has brought consumers *into* the industry [by] providing access”. Previously outlined examples have included individuals having the ability to actively cocreate fashion collections on web platforms such as *ATM*, the self-publishing of user generated content and conducting direct dialogue with influencers via social media (Chapter 5), or in a more covert way, providing organisations with personal data, informing business strategy (Chapter 6). The increased ability for outside actors to directly partake in the industry is what Richard considers having been “a needed solution to a problem”, as previously, brands had to rely on sets of interdependent intermediaries in order to reach end-consumers. Richard states,

“[Today] you can open the doors of every single fashion house to the world in seconds. We’ve improved the way we can communicate fashion in a way that is absolutely unprecedented. The whole world can see fashion- that was not the case before”.

Richard's quote suggests that transparency has increased and access to a "fashion house" is immediate. Not only can outside individuals access such fashion organisations, but organisations can reach outside individuals learning from their behaviour and preferences, oftentimes through harvested data. Jeffrey has described that through digital tools, including social media platforms, brands are available to more people, with such open access being described as "a genie out of the bottle" suggesting the industry has been forever transformed. Jeffrey explains that with digital tools available,

"[the industry] has to be democratised...That is one of the things digital has done to the fashion show- it has democratised it...And I mean these are really powerful statements. They are powerful statements, because it is basically saying 'you the customer see the fashion before Anna Wintour, Leonardo DiCaprio and anyone else that is on the front row'. So, I think these are about ideas. It is about saying it is not a closed world and everybody can get involved...but it is still, quite a closed world."

The extract suggests that through technology, an industry event like a fashion show has become democratised where "everyone can get involved" and can receive information at the same time, or possibly before, traditionally perceived high-status Establishment actors such as an "Anna Wintour". If the customer sees the fashion show simultaneously as inside actors, the relevance of certain actors' roles is questioned. Such democratisation is a "powerful statement" as this

transforms the roles of actors, as well as redefines the criteria of hierarchical power. Barriers however remain prevalent with the industry being “still quite a closed world.” The increased access and transparency are regarded to have resulted in the industry being “less exclusive than it was”, as Chris states.

He elaborates on his point commenting how, “we’ve [now] got the Editor in chief of *Vogue* instagramming from the front row”, directly speaking with his own personal audience, mimicking the behaviour of a social media influencer who directly communicates with her audience via her platforms. Here, the editor mediates an image directly to the consumer, oftentimes with a lack of interpretation. Although influencers and industry actors seemly break hierarchical barriers by directly sharing content to their respective audiences, demonstrating behaviour that is inclusive, this in turn increases their own social capital due to rising social media engagement and follower numbers, thus providing them access to more exclusive events.

Commenting on another consequence of immediate fashion show exposure, Chris states, “the consumer is ‘*well, I want to buy that, but I can’t wait 6 months*’, because no one has that patience anymore” and the desire for a product can’t be satisfied. As today consumers see a collection immediately through predominantly social media platforms, Louisa the designer explains how she has therefore adapted to the current environment to quench the observed desire of consumers. Instead of staging a runway show, she has introduced intimate “see now buy now” presentations, where both consumer and industry actor simultaneously take part in a curated event and have the opportunity to directly

purchase goods instead of waiting 6 months for release. The product is directly presented to the customer without the intermediary of press or buyer. Louisa states that,

“Everyone is equally important. Everyone sees [a show] on social media. People want [the clothes now], they don’t want to wait for 6 months. And it always works well. We do the event, where people come together. We have drinks with the team, I’m there as well, I can explain to you the whole research and the storytelling behind it.”

Already introduced as a disrupter in Chapter 5, Louisa has observed and adapted to democratised practices and is thus able to directly interact with stakeholders including clients and press. For Louisa’s presentations, there is a reduced consideration of an actor’s social status, and the emphasis of the event is directly on “selling clothes” and collecting feedback, as opposed to “building hype” which is what the primary purpose of runway shows are. Describing one of her presentations in September 2018, I reflect;

### **Louisa Spring/Summer 2019 Presentation**

*London, September 2018*

Louisa’s presentation is not listed on the official London Fashion Week schedule, where I have learned that to be part of it costs the designer £2,000. Being directly invited by

the designer makes the event intimate, however I perceive it as less glamorous as it is not supported by the British Fashion Council. For her presentation, the designer rented a glossy penthouse apartment in Borough, worthy to be featured in any interior design magazine. Stepping out of the chrome elevator I arrive into the open plan penthouse, which was flooded with sunlight courtesy of the floor to ceiling windows.

The apartment's colour scheme featured plush millennial pink (carpets), mint green (drapes and couch) and features of gold, oak, and white marble with one guest in her mid-twenties commenting how everything was "so instagrammable!" The apartment certainly was, as I observed multiple guests taking selfies on iPhone X's, posing in front of the house plants, or commenting on to their mobile devices how beautiful the space was, which I assumed would be footage for a soon to be edited YouTube video. Brass clothing racks were featured along the sides of the penthouse, separated by colour palette. This season, pottery and crocheted accessories were also available for purchase, and they were carefully positioned on the velvet couch, almost craving to be photographed. Inside the kitchen was a selection of vegan nibbles, champagne and

other sparkling drinks with members of the team volunteering to serve guests.

I was encouraged by the designer to try on a couple of the dresses, which I happily did, as they were beautiful. After stepping out of the makeshift dressing room and examining myself in front of the mirror (in the midst of about 30 onlookers) the designer encouraged me to buy the dress as they were indeed *see now buy now*. She whispered that she would give me a discount and warned me that the dresses would sell out really fast; they are already sold out on the website. I said I would think about it, however this gesture made me question if I was invited to report on the clothes or to buy the pieces. Hanging the dress back on the brass rack, I proceeded to eat a vegan doughnut.

The extract emphasises how the sensory experience was curated to be captured in an image and spread across the audience's online networks. Secondly, it shows how a design disrupter has benefited from the platform of London Fashion Week, attracting international press and journalists, and staging her own separate event. Additionally, the extract reflects how directly purchasing the dress was perceived as more important than reporting on the collection; suggesting a commercial, consumer centric turn. With an increased focus on consumer involvement, the industry finds itself to have shifted, breaking down traditional structures of internal exclusivity and distinction. Mark, an editor and a member of the board at the British Fashion Council (BFC), suggested that it is

ubiquity which is the “most noticeable [change] about London Fashion Week”. He elaborates stating how,

“one of the things that has always characterised the role of the BFC, whoever the chair, was to enlarge the appeal of it. We wanted it to be more like New York. In New York, everyone knows when it’s fashion week. In America, everyone knows when it is New York Fashion Week!”

Here, Mark suggests that it is important to build hype around the traditional trade events in order to reach a wider audience. Observed examples include the livestreaming of runway shows onto the screens of Piccadilly Circus and promotional competitions for outside actors to attend events such as the annual *Fashion Awards* at the Royal Albert Hall. Additionally, he suggests London has attempted to mimic New York, due to its consumer centric nature. Independently challenging this perspective is one high profile editor, who has stated that she no longer attends New York or London Fashion Weeks because “they are no longer interesting”. Asking for her to elaborate, she answers that they have become overcrowded, “circuses”, and “simply less credible” than Milan and Paris. On the other hand, a well-known British plus-size model stated that she is only interested in attending London and New York fashion weeks as they are more “inclusive” “open-minded”, “cater to a diverse audience”, and “less elitist”. Continuing to speak on the subject of ubiquity, Mark states,



“Because [New York Fashion Week has] successfully been able to PR it so that the girls- it tends to be the girls- will make their pilgrimage to New York. They want to be very *Sex and the City*. They want to dress up, they want to go to the shows. Well no, they can’t, those are invitation only events for us in the press, or there for buyers. At least that was the traditional fashion show model. But these people still were fascinated. Why? Because the role of the press was to make those occasions punch far, far above their weight. [Fashion Weeks] are no longer just a trade show, they are huge entertainment and is it about the clothes? Of course it is, but nowadays...they are about so much more. They are about who is on the front row. They are about that group protesting outside about fur, or latterly about wool or about a lack of ethnicity on the catwalk or about fat shaming or skinny models or whatever the peripheral bug bearer is. So, there has been this enormous change, and interest in not just fashion, but the *periphery of fashion* [author’s emphasis]”.

Mark firstly observes that fashion show attendees make a “pilgrimage” to take part of the event, likening their attendance to a religious obligation. This suggests that despite a heightened emphasis on digital platforms, fashion show attendees physically partaking in an offline event remains desirable. Secondly, an indirect sense of division is described; whilst prospective outsider attendees do hope to

take part of the industry experience, they are not fully able to participate, as these remain to be “invite only”. Thirdly, Mark suggests that the events are no longer primarily about clothes, the original fashion product, but about “periphery” activities including the celebrity status of attendees (“on the Front Row”) and the “protests” of various causes. Through ubiquity, the focus has shifted from inside the industry, or on the runway, towards the outside. He is suggesting that the industry has evolved, becoming “bigger than the sum of [its] parts” and that “people have recognised the power of fashion” – whether that be for self-branding (e.g. celebritisation), using the industry as a platform (e.g. protesting), or to be part of a collective group (e.g. pilgrimage). Addressing the mass audience’s newfound intrigue of the industry, Mark explains,

“There has just been a much greater awareness, and again this is something that has transitioned from a limited little group... to a much wider thing...It’s ubiquitous and that is particularly the case in cities and even more so if that city happens to be London, Paris, Milan or New York because there you have the experimental. There you have gone to that city, male, female or anything in between to be themselves. The anonymity of cities grants you that luxury and so they are not scared to try something which in their little hometown in Wales or wherever would turn heads and cause them to be ridiculed...They will try on the outrageous outfit, the outrageous heel...those cities are big enough to attract sufficient numbers of those people for little groups to

form. And those are the groups that you see now enjoying London Fashion Week, and *they can't get into the shows*. They stand outside the shows! I mean I saw in the fashion week just gone, a little group of transgender folk walking and doing their own little catwalk show. Good for them! I really applaud them, that is fantastic! There's enough of them to make it an event, to make it interesting, to get our photographers out there and *go yeah you know what, that's pretty cool!* They are doing their own thing! So yes, I think that is something you would never have seen back in the day. Fashion has become a language now, something that more people speak".

Here Mark suggests that the awareness and knowledge within the industry is no longer limited to a restricted cohort of actors but is universally accessible and can be appropriated by interested groups. He brings attention to outsiders being drawn into cities seen as fashion forward and using the platform that the industry offers for their own individual purposes. Again, such outside actors have adopted the "language" of fashion and created something for themselves, where the value creation is not only within the fashion tents for insiders. Having witnessed the staged catwalk show outside of the London Fashion Week venue that Mark described, I refer to my ethnographic fieldnotes:

### **Trans-Rights Protest at London Fashion Week**

*February 2019*

As I approached the exit of the designer showrooms leading towards the pavement of The Strand, I could hear wild cheering and the 80's song *Vogue* by Madonna. The suited security guard opened the doors and commented how "they are having a blast" before wishing me a nice rest of the day. Between 180 The Strand and the thoroughfare, a crowd of at least 100 spectators circled around an improvised catwalk. Here, a dozen flamboyant transgender models strutted along the pavement to the beat of the music and posed in front of the sea of mobile phones. Cardboard signs were also held by some of the models declaring "trans inclusivity now" and similar messages. Onlookers, including tourist groups, students from the neighbouring King's College, and industry colleagues pouring out from The Strand came together to support the group – whether that be clapping or documenting the scene with their phones. Two camera crews were spotted at the edge of the spectacle, each with a respective broadcaster commenting on the street catwalk.

With attention being placed increasingly on the periphery of fashion, such as this documented form of activism, it was observed that more voices are informing trends for the industry. Linda comments on the role of streetstyle, which involves both inside and outside actors, stating:

“Somebody would be snapped outside a fashion event and then it would appear in a magazine... but now it is just instant. Like straight onto *Instagram*, straight onto *Stories*... People want to see these images whereas it used to be ...*that is what the catwalk would be dictating*. Closed door, buyers and press, they saw the show and 6 months later those clothes would be in store. Press would be writing about it, this trend is coming, that trend is coming. So they were the authority of having this kind of inside knowledge of what is going on. Because of the democratisation and the spilling out to the masses through livestreaming, through social media, people don’t have to listen to the voice of the designer. The trends are being developed from the attendees not just the designers, so the whole industry plays a part in dictating what the next trend is going to be”.

Not only does Linda’s quote connect to the theme of *Immediacy* in Chapter 6 and how the process of value creation has been shortened – from an image appearing in a magazine to “just instant”- but also, how adopted trends are developed by both the designer and the attendee. Striving to actively involve the end consumer in a greater capacity, the British Fashion Council has merged *London Fashion Week* (trade event) with *London Fashion Weekend* (consumer-facing event) thus merging insider and outsider actors. Mark describes the initiative stating that,

“We for the first time at London Fashion Week last season launched the festival at the same time as fashion week, because normally it was a few days after when everyone decamped to go to Milan for their shows. So, it gave [outsiders] a flavour of being involved with it being held in the same place where fashion week is held but it wasn’t actually fashion week. But now [the festival] is happening at the same time as fashion week, in the same venue as fashion week, and anyone in the public can put their hand in their pocket and pay to go. So OK, they are not seeing the same shows that we are seeing, but they are much closer to it. There is a designer sale there which is carefully curated, and they can buy the merchandise”.

Starting in February 2019, the newly formatted festival brings insiders and outsiders together in the same physical space. Access to outsiders is given by paying for a ticket, which is divided into different categories, such as charging a premium price for a front row ticket (£245, opposed to a £135 standard ticket). As with consumers immediately able to purchase Louisa’s collection at a presentation, purchasing access to fashion week emphasises commerce. The inaugural initiative was observed to cause difficulties for industry attendees, as the press lounge, which included the canteen, was at full capacity. This caused frustration for members of the press who required a place to work in between shows. Various outside actors, distinguished by their LFW “goodie bags”, were taking pictures of the interior and the scene leaving some inside actors feeling

awkward. One slender woman working as a buyer stated she felt as if she were “trapped in a zoo”. Additionally, long queues formed for food and bathrooms, which was a challenge for individuals facing demanding time pressures due to their schedules. Speaking with one buyer from Spain who was seated next to me at the Bora Aksu catwalk show, she found the consumer facing *Weekend* merger “to be the worst idea ever”. She said the intentions for attendance are “obviously” different for customers and industry, adding that the customers “don’t understand” the industry.

In addition, she commented how there needed to be “some mystery left” to ultimately create desire, which she viewed was the role of insiders such as herself. She found it to be a “shame” how “every part of the industry was being commercialised”. One jewellery exhibitor from Turkey expressed remorse as the influx of guests would try on her handcrafted pieces in the designer showroom yet would not return them back properly. In addition, she worried about potential copycats, due to the excessive photography of her pieces. Between 2018-2020, various designers have additionally been observed to trial ticket sales for their shows including British brand Mary Katrantzou who was reportedly selling front row tickets for £5,000. Henry the influencer approves of the direction stating,

“that is the way fashion shows should be working in reality.

If your customer wants to pay to come to your production of a fashion show then yeah, I think that is the way that it should be. I don’t think having every sisboomba editor of blah blah blah magazine [is needed]...If somebody is paying

you to be there, and they actually are paying good money, that's going to help forward your brand. I think that is what people should be doing. So, I think it is definitely changing in a capacity, I just think we are in the very early stages of it."

As fashion week becomes an increasingly ubiquitous experience, it can be regarded as something which is likened to purchased entertainment. Explaining this shift of fashion shows, Gina reflects,

"At the beginning, fashion week was really a working thing. Then with the digital era, it became more public, because now you can watch it at the same time as me there. Say I was commenting on it live on showstudio. So, all my audience was listening to what I thought whilst [the show] is happening, so people thought *oh now it is not needed anymore because anybody can see [the show]*. But I think [the fashion show] is even more [relevant] because there are so many more people interested in that. That's why, this set that costs 6 million - that I think is a disgrace for humanity- but you know, these competitions between brands, *I'm bigger than you and so I'm going more secret place and building something more expensive*. It is so unfair for the young starting designer that might be very talented, but they certainly cannot afford to fly everyone".



Here, Gina emphasises how fashion shows have evolved to become a paid-for entertainment and how the experience and thus imagery of fashion is increasingly important. Outsiders, such as consumers, have open access which is why the shows are evolving to the scale of mass entertainment to attract attention. One prominent example was Rihanna's Savage x Fenty fashion show, presented at New York Fashion Week in 2019 and later presented on the video platform Amazon Prime. Such fierce competition makes it difficult for smaller brands to attract attention. As a consequence, it was observed how smaller brands in London have scheduled and arranged their presentations near the location and times of larger brands in order to attract their audience, thus piggybacking. Competitors may not be solely differentiated by the fashion product, but by the messaging and hype behind it, which again supports the argument that the periphery of fashion is increasingly important.

The first theme of this chapter outlined the composition of value codestruction, rooted in the ability for outside actors to become increasingly integrated within the fashion industry through technology led access. The theme addressed how digital disruption has provided industry access to a mass audience and the consequences of such developments, in particular, industry ubiquity.

### 7.3 Co-Transforming Creativity

Focus will now centre on the consequences of collaboration and co-transforming creativity. The theme will firstly outline the types of collaboration between those working inside the fashion industry and outside, as well as how this impacts the

product. Secondly, the theme will touch upon a grassroots focus, where outside actors have the power to appropriate a brand's image and hold insiders accountable. Lastly, focus will be placed on the dominance of co-transformative teams and the dilution of a singular creative field, which now merges with other fields. The theme implies that the consumer has the power to dictate to brands, designers, and media, and how those acting within the fashion industry are no longer the sole bearer of trends and novelty.

As previously outlined, through the digital revolution there are increased opportunities for individuals to be involved in value creation within the fashion industry, which has quickened the pace and possibilities for collaboration, especially between insiders and outsiders. Due to more availability to contribute, there is increased talent acquisition through social media platforms such as Instagram, highlighted by both creatives and managers. Chris stated that when working on campaigns or projects, "there is so much more talent and it is so much easier to find this talent...With social media, there are so many people that want to do this". This is a positive development as it provides perspectives and contributions from a larger pool of voices. However, as more individuals are expressing their willingness to work in "exchange for individual promotion", opposed to financial compensation, there is as Miranda has stated an "infinite stream of talent". The saturation of the industry leads to difficulties in maintaining fair work wages (e.g. unpaid internships), increased employee stress and instances of exploitation. As one freelance writer has described the state of the working environment, "you are competing with everyone today" leading to her

own “severe anxiety”. Addressing the ease of finding collaborators today, Chris states,

“You can now discover all. You can find an interesting creative to collaborate with via social [media]. I think it has kind of expanded on how fashion can get a lot more representative of people who are starting new. Even the way shows are being cast via social, people are able to put their hand up and say *I want to be involved in the activity*. People can see how collections get made so I think it has become more collaborative. I think there is still hierarchy there because somebody makes the decisions, but I think the creative can come from a lot more different areas. That’s where it has become a lot more democratic... Places like Burberry [are] finding influencers who have not necessarily big followings but the reason they found them is because they have been archiving their stuff for years and years and years and that’s now made them relevant. I like the way the collaborations happen”.

This extract implies how social media has invited the opportunity for more representation and diverse voices into the fashion conversation. The contribution of diverse voices has for example impacted the perception of beauty and widened the conversation to not only apply to a restricted segment. Secondly, outsiders are able to be proactive and participate with less dependence on others, as they

are able to promote themselves via their own individual platforms. Thirdly, Chris states that whilst hierarchy does exist, practices are regarded as much more democratic, and creativity emerges from different areas. Finally, he suggests that a heritage British fashion house such as Burberry takes inspiration from diverse influencers who are not as dependent on their social media followings, but on their unique creative offerings. As a designer, Rachel additionally has explained how social media does allow for increased collaboration, acting as “a creative hub for many” and has allowed the industry to become “a lot more diverse”. She gives a personal example of collaborating with a loyal customer. She states,

“I really like him, he already wants custom stuff, and I can imagine selling him stuff for years and I can imagine him on the front row for a show looking amazing in my stuff and like being a real benefit. That’s the same with Erykah Badu that, it is good to have those personal relationships with people who really show off with what you are about. It is really about collaboration”.

Hence her customers, some who may be high profile such as Badu, represent her brand by wearing her designs – they become part of Rachel’s overall messaging. Capturing this shift of increased democratic collaboration, Jeffrey reflects,

“When I started out, pre-digital brands talked at, spoke at customers. They created this brand world. They kind of

invited you in, very much on their own terms, they told you what to wear, how to wear it, when to wear it and then you bought it and the conversation finished, as soon as you walked out of the door. The conversation had gone. You never really bought from Gucci as an equal, it was always you know, you were always talked down to, and digital I think has completely changed that because Kate Moss or Karl Lagerfeld may very well be a strong driver of your personal trend, but so too is your best friend.”

In terms of value creation, influence is brought about from different catalysts, whether that is a “Karl Lagerfeld” or a “best friend” and not dictated by a singular figure. Jeffrey explains this point further by summarising a recent discussion he had with the now deceased Karl Lagerfeld, former creative director of Chanel, Fendi, and his own eponymous line. Jeffrey states,

“[Lagerfeld] made his name telling women what to wear before they realised that they needed to wear it. And that feels crass- that kind of comment just feels crass in the way that Donald Trump feels crass, Philip Green feels crass. It feels like another world of old white men telling us how to behave. [It] doesn’t feel right in today’s generation. And he said something very interesting - and it is not happening- but he said *if* I was ‘ever to go’ it will never happen, but *if*, he was saying that Chanel might not appoint another leader.

They might not appoint another designer. And what he said is, spring summer might be you know a DJ club, rap star and a bunch of students in [Central] Saint Martins, an architect. And then later on in the year they might use something completely different and what he was sort of talking about is this notion that maybe Chanel will become an umbrella for ideas, and I think that is really, really interesting and that's digital. Because we are exposed to so many different ideas and I think just to sort of build on that".

Jeffrey's extract suggests that the notion of inside actors dictating trends to outside actors is no longer "fashionable", stating it feels "crass", not aligning with the needs of today's consumer. The designer recognised this and expressed his openness to the possibility of not reinstating a head designer, but having the brand become an "umbrella of ideas". In this instance, there would not be an overarching creative head, nor would the brand be restricted to the field of fashion. A breakdown of the field is being suggested and could be further appropriated in diverse ways linking to music or architecture for example. Being so diversified, the brand could communicate immediately to diverse audiences interested in diverse fields. This strategy is already being used by other brands, such as London label Burberry. Commenting on their work Jeffrey continues,

"What [Burberry] are trying to do with their social media is they are commissioning lots of content- content all fundamentally different. They might have something that is

really edgy, a bit sexy, a bit risqué, but very modern, something a bit more cultural and sensitive, something that is more traditional and heritage, something that is more about the check, maybe an image of Cary Grant wearing Burberry, and then you metaphorically shove it all on the table, all of it out there and then different customers pick up [different] bits. So, you might pick up those bits, my mum might pick up those bits, everyone picks up different things. Then you get in your mind this idea of a brand which you can almost pick up and has got multifaceted and means different things to different people and if you kind of go back to analogue days where the brand was everything, Harrods, all you could do was look at the logo, look at the store, and go look at the corporate colour, and say do I trust, feel, that brand, but it didn't really have any personality. The personality was sort of staged and now I am really interested in the idea of brands being amorphous and nebulous and reshaping themselves to make them appealing to different types of audiences".

The extract suggests that as a brand communicates directly to an unsegmented mass audience, they must simultaneously appeal to different tastes and therefore find content, which is significant to diverse groups of people. Individuals thus decide to accept or reject brand offerings and mould the brand for themselves. Here, Burberry means "different things to different people", as would the Chanel

brand depending on who it was collaborating with. In addition to increased collaboration, access into the fashion industry has resulted in the consumer having the ability to hold brands and insider individuals accountable and also hold the power to appropriate the value of a brand. This firstly comes down to increased availability of information. As Helen explains, individuals today are more fashion literate and have the information in front of them as they can access it easier through social media. She states,

“People are becoming more informed. I mean just a few years ago, walk out onto the street there and say name me 5 fashion designers. They would say Giorgio Armani, Versace, and so forth, the big, big names. Now they are more likely to say someone like Peter Pilotto because of the royal wedding dress or much smaller, so they are much more, as we would say label literate”.

Because of the access of information through digital, such outsiders have the ability to call out behaviour and hold brands and individuals accountable. As Richard explains,

“The fashion industry is much more open and accessible. Many people are becoming also much more savvy. They know more about what is wrong, to what extent a creative director you know can play the marketing card. There are people calling off the designers and *saying guys you just,*



*you are lying, you are bullsh\*tting us. This is not right, this is not sustainable, this is something we have seen designed by smaller designers. Like there are a lot of platforms that are also rising to call these people out and say wait a minute, I don't agree with this".*

The most prominent influencer duo on the social media platform Instagram holding fashion brands accountable is *Diet Prada* who have grown exponentially in the past 4 years, now boasting over 1.7 million Instagram followers. They have recently called out brands such as Dolce and Gabbana, Gucci, and Prada, as well as drawn attention to industry problems such as model exploitation. Other influencers also use their platforms to call out behaviours of insiders such as Henry. Henry reflects on his own experience of holding a brand accountable via social media stating,

"It was Zimmerman and essentially Zimmerman *liked* something [on Instagram] that was anti-abortion and somebody sent [the post] to me and I posted about it because I was like *oh yikes a woman's brand-* you know that's selling this you know, for women all that kind of stuff- is *liking* these posts on the sly on their brand account? That's weird. Why would you do that? I think they came out and said oh this was a mistake we are so sorry, blah blah blah, but I think once it happens, it happened, and people are going to remember that. But I can only do so much - I

obviously [said] they retracted that, and they apologised...but I just think, even myself, I'm trying to be more and more thorough in citing sources and making sure things are real before I post them. I think with social media, it's kind of easy, myself included, to just throw things up there, but I think, thinking more and more about things is definitely becoming a weight on our shoulders".

Henry's statement shows how easily a brand's reputation can be tarnished. Additionally, he adds how brands are not very receptive to criticism because "[he doesn't] think fashion has really had too many very vocal and looked at critics". Moreover, there is greater pressure to report accurately as the consequences can be extremely dire for an actor. Also, his information and the accountability of brands are coming from his audience. Speaking about vocal outside actors, Henry states,

"There is this developing group of people that say how they feel about the industry. I think brands are scared a little bit and don't know how to deal with it. I don't mean to tear anybody down, I'm just trying to say what I think so that you understand where I am coming from and where somebody in my shoes that is looking at the brand in their early twenties is seeing and interpreting their perspective that they are putting out there".

Through social media there is a heightened degree of transparency meaning, as Henry states, one must “cover all the bases because, YouTube is a great place where people love to put their opinion so if you get something wrong, people are going to comment about it,” immediately tarnishing reputations. This however is difficult as the influx of voices can lead to misleading information. Referring back to Louisa’s presentation, I spoke with the designer and a prominent Austrian journalist who commented on the difficulty of freely speaking one’s mind in the “viral environment of social media”. Louisa stated, “You cannot say or do anything wrong, as you will be skewered by everyone on social media. I have to be careful with everything I say because anyone can take what I say out of context and then I am immediately a bad person”. The journalist also agreed stating, that when she was interviewed – a rarity for her- she came out of the interview feeling “horrid”, because she “shouldn’t have said all of those things”. Fortunately, she stated the interviewer put her “in a good light and there was no scandal”. Both designer and journalist reflected on this being “a shame for authenticity” and those in the media’s eye are cautious to speak their minds because of the perpetual threat of backlash. As Louisa says, “you can work as hard as you can reach a certain point and then because of a stupid sentence out of context, you can become public enemy #1”. Henry adds to this point stating that an outsider’s perspective can influence the success of a brand or individual. He says,

“The perception of a brand by the public is the thing that in reality sells the clothes [today]. It gets people in a store. It gets people to really want to figure out, *oh can I afford this* and all that kind of stuff so I think if brands don’t listen and

don't care about what the audience actually thinks, well then people can say... *they don't actually make clothes that I like or that I think are important or they have had these many controversies. I'm not going to shop from them anymore.* Because fashion is based off of perspective- the perspective of the people that can't necessarily afford the clothes matter just as much as the people that can afford the clothes, because if people start to treat you [badly] because you are wearing Gucci on the street, well you are not going to buy Gucci, you are not going to wear it. So, it's like those opinions do matter because it is pretty much an industry based on perspective. So, if the perspective of a brand isn't good in the public eye, well people are going to stop buying it because it doesn't reflect well on them".

This extract suggests that an outsider's perception of a brand impacts the brand's performance, and this can be appropriated by the consumer. It is not the physical product, but the symbolic value it represents. From her perspective as a PR manager Poppy adds how,

"It's so crazy, Instagram has changed everything. Everyone has a voice now. Everyone has an opinion and it's really difficult as PR person. With the royal wedding, we obviously had to check all of the main sources, but also those accounts with 30k followers. Even if you have no idea about

the designer, you can completely influence the brand. Instagram is the best thing for fashion, you can communicate directly with your customer – I probably shouldn't say this as a PR person.”

With more voices being able to influence the perception of those within the industry, Gina addresses today's grassroots movement in value transformation within fashion and how power has shifted from insiders to outside actors. She states that, “the power of the people can start a trend on Twitter anywhere. You can be lucky or not, but I mean, this movement I don't think it will change. It will always get bigger.” Addressing the influx of the new voices, Diane comments how, “The advent of the mobile phone camera and Instagram changed everything...everyone can film shows, interview people, shoot detail and sets, and everyone beyond can appropriate that material and comment”. The result of new voices leads to a change of fashion production, as well as the approach to her individual job role. Via email, Diane wrote:

[Digital] has changed the form and format of the shows again, and the detail-laden nature of shows. There's a shift to 'experience' and multiple viewpoints and the inclusion of more voices - including that of models. As a reporter I still always try to concentrate on what the clothes are saying. I try to hold onto the fact that what I can offer is context and comparisons- I try to see patterns emerging and to gauge the spirit of the times as I go along. I try to hover over the

scene like a journalistic drone - drawing back to see it as a phenomenon. I think that's the value of 'being there' - as well as the personal relationships you have with designers; those conversations. Of course, I wish I had more time to do this - but we are also told not to write too long "people don't read". Not sure how true that is. And not sure that it is all-important to reach a mass of hundreds and thousands of readers (although this is how 'success' is often judged).

The extract highlights how perceived success today is judged by reaching a mass audience and the quantity of readers, thus impacting the approach of how content is produced, such as not "writ[ing] too long". Moreover, Diane reflects how fashion today includes more voices and there is a shift away from the tangible product towards "experience". Also, she suggests there is a lack of time to carry out her professional duties, a reference back to Chapter 6 and the increased pace of the industry. Due to the influx of voices due to digital, Richard advises his clients to adapt to this new climate. Richard states,

"You do what you want- we are not saying you absolutely need to have a [presentation] set up that is going to be looking good on Instagram, but - we can recommend it. Why? Because the media are not only the expert media- they are not only *Vogue* and you know the traditional media. People, influencers, are guests to your shows [they] are also mediums in their own right and will carry the image and the

experience of your show through their phone and their Instagram. So somehow that is more the shift that I've seen happening in the last, let's say 10 years. In terms of experience actually, I don't think it is necessary".

This is a significant statement as Richard firstly suggests that focus is not placed on primarily creating an experience for purely sensory reactions, but in creating an experience in order for it to be communicated on a visual platform through a shareable image, linking back to Chapter 5's *Image Prioritisation*. Moreover, he suggests that brands can no longer solely target the expert media or traditional "insiders", but instead formerly regarded "outsiders" such as influencers. Ultimately, influencers and/or consumers have the ability to appropriate and construct the image of a brand communicating with their own respective audiences simultaneously affecting their own social status.

In summary, the theme centred on the consequences of collaboration and co-transforming creativity, outlining the types of collaboration between those working inside and outside the fashion industry. Additionally, the theme touched upon the power of grassroots, where outsiders have the ability to appropriate a brand's image and hold inside actors accountable.

#### 7.4 Age of Uncertainty

Having outlined the ubiquitous nature of the industry and the co-transformation of creativity, the final theme of this chapter will address the consequences of various forms of digital disruption for inside actors. The consequences will focus

on the uncertainty felt by inside actors and the sense of fear observed within the fashion ecosystem, stemming from technologically driven change. When faced with such change, Jeffrey suggests that the fashion industry has been reluctant to adopt various technologies as it is perceived to eclipse the power and influence of certain individuals. He states,

“[Fashion insiders] were convinced that everything was about the designer- they set the trend, they set the market, technology doesn’t do it, it is about the creativity and the insight of the sort of demi-god and there is a huge amount of ego in there. And any view that technology was denigrating that by even a fraction of a percent was resisted. It was all about the stitchery and the product and the real, and also that closed world of the fashion show and “we don’t want [you]” - just the sheer ignorance and also not a little bit of fear in there”.

Expanding on Jeffrey’s reflection highlighting the industry’s resistance towards technology, Gina describes her own observations of the current fashion ecosystem, stating,

“The new guard of people are coming up and there are all the new brands that are by young people. So, you know even the huge brands, the ones that are succeeding and doubling their revenues and success, people as old as me -



but they are brave enough to accept that ways change. But the ones - my example is always Prada. Miuccia [Prada] is one of the best designers that the world has seen and yet they had so many problems in the past because she and her husband were not accepting the change. They thought they could still dictate so they didn't connect to a new generation of potential customers. *'No, they will listen to us'* and [the consumers] didn't. So, now they are changing, or they try to adapt and connect in their language and their ways of communication, but you can feel it is not sincere, not completely sincere, I can see it in Miuccia's interviews. She is angry, she is a bit bitter and you know that is a pity because design-wise she is still one of the best...If you think about what happened with Rhianna or what happened with Virgil Abloh or JW Anderson, who are not designers originally, but they are so successful because they speak the language that [consumers] want to hear.

Gina's extract reflects how there is not a correlation between being the "best designer" and a commercial success, but by being "brave enough to accept that ways change". The described winners today are those who may not necessarily have a design background (e.g. Virgil Abloh being the creative director of Louis Vuitton Menswear with a background in civil engineering and record production), but who "speak the language that [consumers] want to hear". This again emphasises the value of communications and the symbolic elements of fashion,

and less so the tangible product. Also, the perceived winners are brands who are changing and adapting for the evolving expectations of outsiders. While Gina has addressed how the tension within fashion “comes from the establishment who is fearful”, Alessio additionally states how he has witnessed a lot of “panic” in the industry from his perspective as a business leader. Alessio states,

“All of the conferences I go, people are worried about so many things. They are worried about sustainability, about mobile first, about blockchain, about lots of things. But at the same time, I see my experience as an immigrant trying to break into a European traditional business is that there is a lot of traditional people that do not want these changes to happen”.

The fear here not only stems from new technologies and challenges around sustainability, but from in this case, a young, foreign disrupter altering traditional practices. Anne also has observed panic in the industry, reflecting on her role as a photo director, stating,

“No one knows what they hell to do because everything is changing, and people are doing crazy things like going to LA and going here and there... It was a day before I came [to London] and literally everyone on set, the hair, the makeup [teams], someone was like *I’m thinking of going to LA, I’m going back to Europe...* no one knows what to do

and it's just a bit of panic, what to do next and people are just trying to figure it out."

The high levels of uncertainty are causing those within the industry to adapt their strategies. Due to the ongoing shift of power, Louisa has summarised what she has observed in the fashion industry where actors are,

"Forgetting that there are so many people outside the fashion industry and those make the biggest part of your customer. The fashion industry gets stuff for free anyway, they are not my customer [base]. They are the viewer, they absorb it they enjoy, hate it, whatever, they have a professional opinion on it, but they are not my customer. So, the problem of the industry - they are so much on the inside, they forget to think about the outside. And influencers bring the outside to the inside. They are at the same events, showing from the inside to the outside. Look at magazines, *Vogue*, what changed with *Vogue*? Nothing changed with *Vogue*. Well now they changed a bit to bring diversity in, but for many, many, many years it was the same type of title page, same information inside, pushing the same type of brands until they are really big and then they sold it and then they can get money for advertising from them. An influencer is a human being who is alive, who is evolving."

Louisa's quote is relevant because it shows that firstly there is a division between outsiders and insiders and that those "on the inside" are actively trying to protect this distinction. Those that are breaking this distinction down are considered to be "the influencers who invite outsiders to the inside". Louisa makes the point that it is the outside actors who are more relevant for disrupters, as they in this case make up the "customer base" and should therefore be listened to. She additionally criticises publications such as *Vogue* for not being authentic and therefore less relevant, whereas a digital disrupter like a social media influencer is perceived as relatable and more "human".

Technology has been regarded as reducing the power of various inside actors, breaking the exclusivity of fashion and thus breaking down a defining characteristic of the industry. As fashion evolves to become more democratic through technology, it seemingly goes against its original premise which Arthur describes:

"More and more people have gotten interested in fashion and also see fashion as being problematic. But the very thing that makes fashion what it is, is problematic! It is elitist. It is about people not being in fashion. That is always going to be problematic to people isn't it? It is always divisive I guess isn't it? Some people think fashion can be this socialist utopia, well it won't be because people will always use how they dress and present themselves as a means to say they are different and better than other people. We are

weirdly in a way in a moment where it's about being more worthy or more woke.”

Arthur's statement suggests that as fashion is targeted to everyone and can be the result of a collective effort, through a more democratic approach, fashion becomes less “elitist”. It is hence being co-transformed into a revised form, highlighting a fundamental discrepancy between fashion based on exclusivity towards inclusivity. Because of this shift, various actors have demonstrated nostalgia for an exclusive past and being a part of a restrictive ecosystem. Anne, who belonged into such an inside space, stated, “Instagram has made [fashion] less of an insular world, which you can look at as a good thing, but as someone in the insular world I liked that it was kept small and wasn't kept public for the entire world”.

Apart from nostalgia and contributing within an exclusive bubble, various individuals recall having felt a lack of control due to the dominance of social media. In addition, whole organisations have been perceived as exhibiting fear due to the lack of control through social media, in regard to dictating their message to the audience. Chris states, “many luxury fashion brands still don't have e-com[merce] so that's completely the control issue, they didn't want that accessibility to it!” He additionally states that the industry is “shying away from social [media] slightly” due to the negative effects of losing control of their brand narrative. He explains:

“Because the control of the aesthetic is getting into other people’s hands and therefore when you think about what fashion is about, it’s about image and really delivering what an image is from a designer’s point of view- a [fashion] house’s point of view. And social came along and it’s like *oh they are doing something via image that we didn’t necessarily want, and we are quite slow to move*. So...I do think the control piece is relevant *because you are not controlling your aesthetic [anymore]*...I think there was a little bit of a resistance of not having that control. So rather than having the opportunity for people to come to shows it’s like, oh - I remember overhearing a line -*oh they’re digital. They can just watch the livestream*. And it was like having so much control that they thought *I’m not going to invite you to the show in case you take a picture I don’t like!* Or can we see pictures before you post them, or can you come to the press day but don’t take a picture? So, it is like having those elements of control, that kind of meant that we [in fashion] were slow to the party, late to the party”.

Chris’s statement explains why fashion was late in comparison to other industries, such as music, in adopting technology and was not open to including outside voices, primarily due to a lack of trust and fear in losing control. There has been a fundamental shift from dictating to outsiders, towards more

democratic, collaborative processes which transforms the core of the fashion industry and its historical tradition of dictating to outside actors.

## 7.5 Chapter Summary

Following the analysis of transformed industry-wide interdependent networks (Chapter 6) and how certain individual industry actors are successfully exploiting technology to transform value creation (Chapter 5), attention in this final analysis chapter was placed onto the disrupted processes which have initiated radical field-level change. The chapter has addressed this thesis's third objective, being to analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction process within the field of fashion. Here, the codestruction processes revolve around seemingly democratised practices, which allow outside actors, including consumers, increased access to participate within the industry. Through digital disruption, the outside actor transitions from being a passive recipient, or target, towards an active participant dominant in the value creation process. Chapter 7 has addressed the dominance of the outside actor, in the form of three themes, titled *The Ubiquitous Turn*, *Co-Transforming Value*, and the *Age of Uncertainty*.

The first theme, *The Ubiquitous Turn*, has captured the composition of value codestruction, based on the purposeful initiatives targeting outside actors to become active participants within the fashion industry. *Co-Transforming Value* addressed initial consequences of increased access into the industry, where outside actors have the ability to collaborate, appropriate brand image and hold others, including inside actors, accountable for their actions. With outside actors (e.g. consumers) increasing their influence on value transformation, they have

become a primary focus and therefore attention is drawn more to the periphery of the industry, with less value placed onto the fashion product and those inside actors directly involved with creating the fashion product. As outside actors increase their power, various industry practices and behaviours have become disrupted, and the professional roles of certain inside actor have become disputed. Such changes have led to a sense of fear amongst Establishment inside actors, as well as a high degree of uncertainty regarding innovation adoption outlined in the final theme: *Age of Uncertainty*.



## Chapter 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was justified in Chapter 2's literature review, where we identified a theoretical gap, as predominant attention was placed on macro, field-level shifts on value creation processes. Additionally, SDL literature has largely neglected codestructive processes. Hence, it was deemed worthwhile to “zoom in” within a specific empirical context (i.e. global fashion industry) across micro, meso, and macro levels in order to explore the consequences of an evolving phenomenon composed of disruptive practices. According to Chandler and Vargo (2011) as well as Meynhardt et al. (2016), the research of microlevel characteristics can help better understand macrolevel properties, such as shared world views. Zooming into an ecosystem also responded to Greenwood, Hinnings, and Whetton's (2014) call for research to shift away from the “organisational field” and large-scale social transformations, and instead closely examine the relationships between industry actors, some themselves being disruptive forces.

Hence, the aim of this thesis was ultimately to explore the effects of digital disruption on the value creation processes within the field of fashion. This overarching aim was divided into three objectives as follows:

- Objective 1: To identify how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry.

- Objective 2: To examine how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.
- Objective 3: To analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes within the field of fashion.

Built on the intention of addressing the three set objectives, and to contribute relevant empirical evidence to the largely conceptual body of literature within SDL, an ethnographic study within the global fashion industry was conducted over 18 months. Consequent results have been documented in the preceding three analysis chapters through narrative stories. Building upon thematic analysis and the subsequent results, this concluding chapter will outline research findings (Table 8.1), which shine an added light on how we view SDL in regard to operant resources, the complexities and roles of diverse ecosystem actors, and value extraction.

*Table 8.1 Meeting the Thesis Objectives*

Research Objectives	Corresponding Analytical Category	Thematic Findings
1. To identify how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry.	<i>8.3.1 Re-evaluating Operant Resources</i>	Through mediatisation and celebrification practices via social media and other technologies, disruptive industry actors are prioritising operant resources (e.g. celebritisation and relationships with outside non-industry actors), whilst establishment actors are prioritising operand resources (e.g. physical garment).
2. To examine how digital disruption has affected the interdependent multi-	<i>8.3.2 Dynamic Ecosystems</i>	Hierarchy remains prevalent within fashion ecosystems; however outside industry actors have the newfound power of being gatekeepers. Through digital

layered networks in the global fashion ecosystem.		disruption, outside actors are able to push actors into or higher up within an ecosystem.
3. To analyse the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes within the field of fashion.	<i>8.3.3 Value in Social Media Context</i>	Through the shortening and democratisation of the value creation processes, value is able to be co-abducted by outside actors leading to inter-industry collaboration and hyper decentralisation.

Source: Author

We will begin this concluding chapter by presenting our key theoretical contribution, which symbolises the effects of digital disruption on the fashion ecosystem including boundaries, practices, and value creation. Moreover, we introduce and define the co-abduction of value and the democratisation of primary value creation. Next, we will provide the underpinning evidence for our theoretical contribution by discussing our findings, divided into three analytical categories emergent from first-order concepts and second-order themes (Figure 8.1). They include 1) the re-evaluation of operant resources 2) dynamic ecosystems and 3) value in social (media) context, linking directly with our research objectives.

Rooted in empirical evidence, such categories will be presented in relation to our three objectives and previously outlined literature; supporting, building upon and challenging SDL assumptions. Finally, managerial contributions will be included, along with limitations and recommendations for further research.

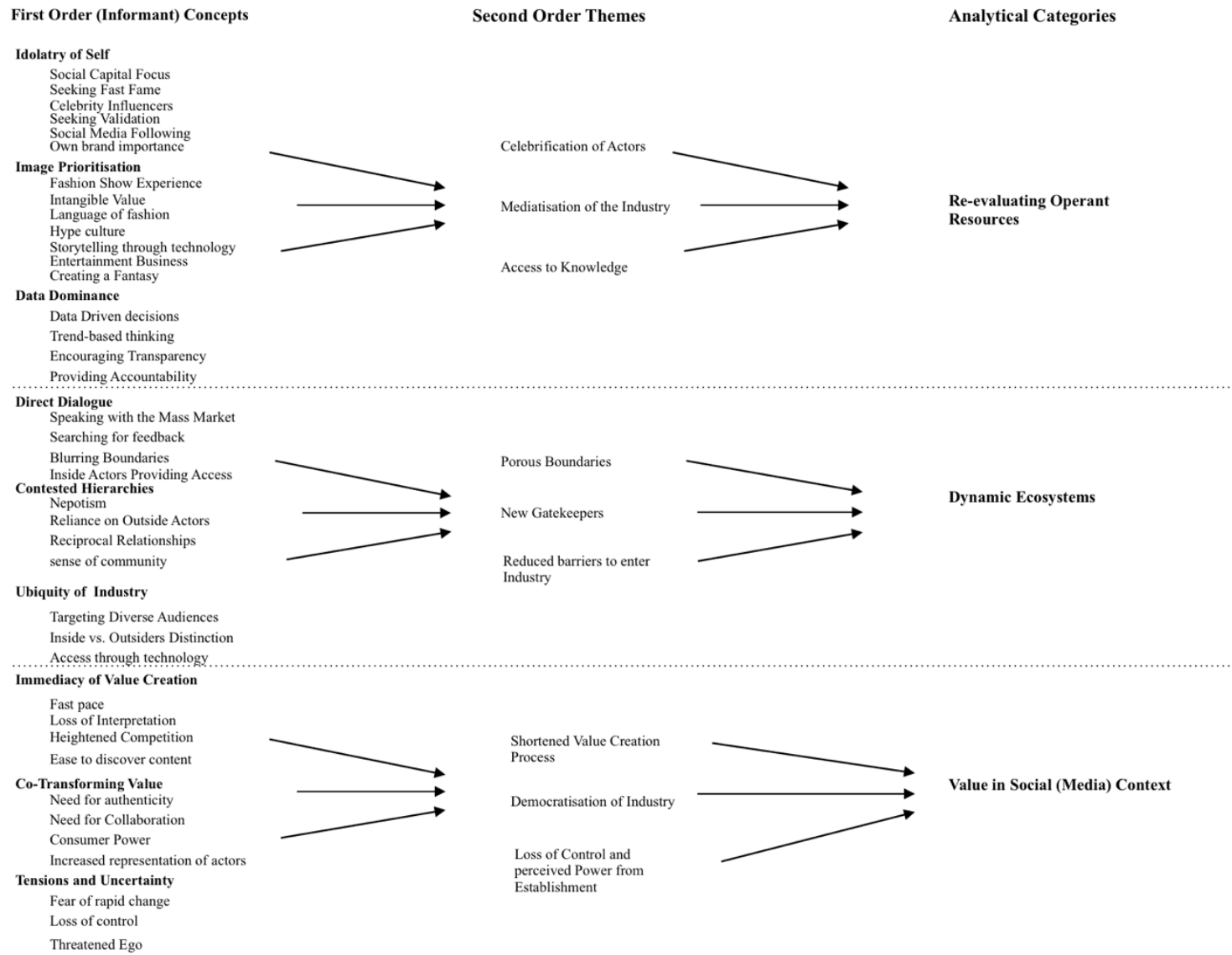


Figure 8.1 Levels of Thematic Analysis

## 8.2 Key Contribution

### 8.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

Our research findings suggest that looking at digital disruption through the lens of the micro, meso and macro, researchers have not fully captured cocreation of value processes. Our research highlights how **empowered outside actors (e.g. an end-consumer) have the newfound power**, rooted in digital technologies, to extract cocreated value from its intended context (e.g. communicated by a fashion organisation). Importantly these empowered actors have the ability and audience to appropriate it and legitimise their value creation for their own advantage. These actors effectively shift the value creation process and create new value, which is created within the micro (where value is created within content producers), the meso (where value is created within the networked community), and the macro (where value is created at field levels of practice that are outside of traditional value creators). Equally, we do not propose that the empowered outside actor automatically leads to a codestruction of value within an ecosystem, as value is not necessarily destroyed. Again, value is placed elsewhere within a new context, addressing a new audience.

Instead we propose that the effects of digital disruption, including democratisation of communication, have led to a co-abduction of value, where cocreated value still remains (e.g. the symbolic quality, such as prestige) but is injected elsewhere. Whilst Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 16) state the cocreation of value is where “the consumer and the firm are intimately involved in jointly creating value that is unique to the individual consumer,” we suggest that the co-abduction of value is where the consumer extracts this cocreated value and injects it into a

new context, irrespective of the organisation, for their own individualistic gains. Additionally, abduction differs from transaction, as a transaction is a willing extraction of an exchange whereas abduction is achieved without the control from the original cocreators (e.g. the fashion organisation). From the perspective of the fashion organisation, value co-abduction is not planned or intentional, but led by external individual beneficiaries. Here, in agreement with SDL the result of value is not achieved until it meets the needs of the intended beneficiary and depends on the capabilities a system has to survive and accomplish other goals in its environment; value is fundamentally subjective as it depends on the perception of the beneficiary (Ng and Smith, 2012). Findings therefore compliment SDL's FP10 where value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.

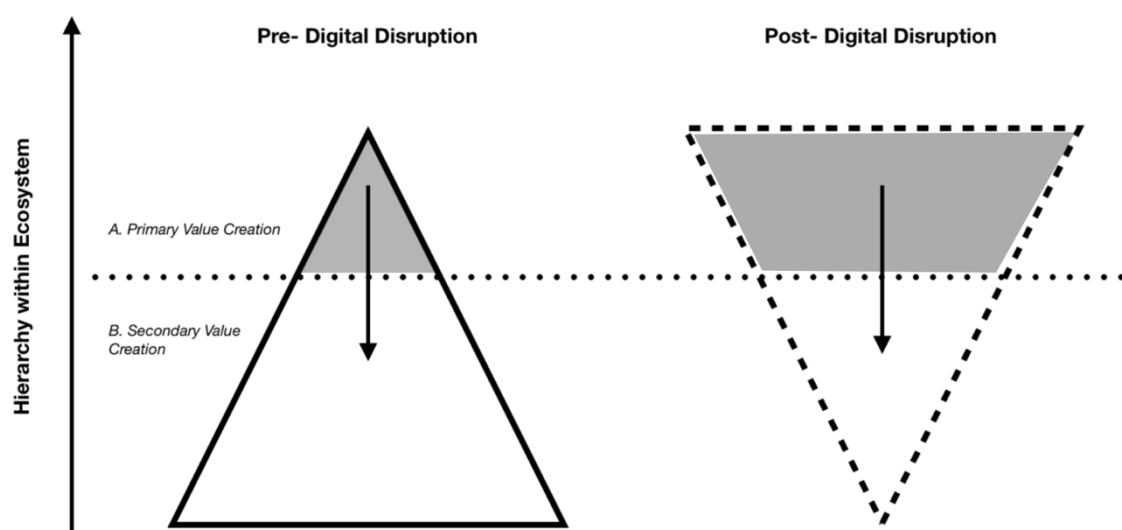
Through value co-abduction, the cocreated value is extracted from its intended context and injected into another context, causing on one hand tension and uncertainty, whilst on the other hand causing increased collaboration, democratisation, and opportunity for inter-boundary exchange. For example, the symbolic value of a luxury brand can be co-abducted by a performative social media influencer due to her performance and celebritisation rituals. Whilst she is associated with the brand's prestige by wearing the cocreated product, she abducts the product's meaning for her own audience. Here, the process of abducting meaning bestows a legitimacy and authenticity that this actor is now a creator of meaning.

Likewise, the prestige of an event like a London Fashion Week can be co-abducted and placed into a staged protest or an off-schedule catwalk show, where such value is placed onto the ecosystem's periphery. The value is not destroyed but is taken from its original context of the establishment (e.g. London Fashion Week) who prioritise the operand resource of physical garments towards the disrupters (e.g. off-schedule catwalk show) who prioritise the operant resources – such as the relationships and dialogue with outside actors. It is argued that value is only able to be co-abducted due to the newfound power of outside actors; they are the new set of ecosystem gatekeepers who have traditionally existed outside of its boundaries. Collectively, they are no longer in a peripheral position; the act of abduction and appropriation at a micro level, situates them into the meso level of community that bestows the legitimacy for value creation. In turn, they are able to justify the positions of other actors (both internal and external actors) and can reject or accept value offerings.

Whilst our findings do support SDL'S FP 11, which states that value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements, value co-abduction places less focus on institutions and more focus on the motivations of the individual beneficiary and their individual networks. Thus, our findings also compliment Heinonen et al. (2010) who propose a customer-dominant logic of service where “instead of focusing on what companies are doing to create services that customers will prefer...focus should be on what customers are doing with services and service to accomplish their own goals (p.534).”

Symbolic of our findings is Figure 8.2, which visually reflects the effects of digital disruption on the value creation processes within the fashion industry. Digital disruption has turned the value creation processes within the fashion industry upside-down.

*Figure 8.2 The Effects of Digital Disruption on the Value Creation Processes*



Source: Author

Here, both pyramids represent value cocreating ecosystems with the flow of value moving downwards, suggesting that hierarchical power remains within the empirical context of the fashion industry and continues to further the value perceptions of other actors. The ecosystems are divided into primary and secondary value creation segments, where primary value creating actors (present in the shaded area) are those who are considered powerful in the hierarchy and interact with a product directly, such as a fashion designer and her garments. Such actors are regarded to hold more power than those actors who are indirectly contributing to value creation (e.g. those with less social capital).



Notably, through digital disruption and the increased democratisation of the ecosystem, through for example social media platforms, the pyramid structure post-digital disruption becomes inverted. As a consequence, there are comparatively many more primary value-creating actors post-digital disruption, many of whom are outside actors. Value creation has become decentralised and fluid.

Moreover, unlike the dense barrier surrounding the ecosystem pre-digital disruption, the ecosystem post-digital disruption shows a porous boundary representing the dialogue and increased ease of information exchange between inside and outside actors. The shift towards post-digital disruption demonstrates that we have moved away from an apex structure which was representative of limited cultural intermediaries dictating to a mass-audience. Through diverse digital platforms, value creation is regarded to become more democratic, decentralised and has the means to be co-abducted into diverse contexts.

Figure 8.2 is representative at a macrolevel (e.g. the global fashion ecosystem) as well as at a microlevel (e.g. the inside actor) where pre-digital disruption, the value creating actor would take the approach of dictating to outside actors whereas post-digital disruption, collaboration and nourishing relationships with outside actors is necessary for value creation. Being the underpinnings of our theoretical contribution, we will now elaborate on our research findings based on the three analytical categories: Re-evaluation of Operant Resources, Dynamic Ecosystems, and Value in Social (Media) Context.

## 8.3 Research Findings

### 8.3.1 Re-evaluating Operant Resources

The first analytical category which will be discussed, titled *re-evaluating operant resources*, has been determined by a series of second order codes including the celebritisation of actors, mediatisation of the fashion industry, and data dominance. The celebritisation of actors has captured how industry disrupters were observed to engage in offline and online displays of opportunistic self-promotion. Mediatisation of the industry addressed how actors, including luxury brands and other fashion organisations, are focusing on communicating to a mass audience, opposed to targeting traditional intermediaries, through image-led content, bypassing the geographic constraints of experience-driven initiatives. Data dominance highlighted how technologies are purposefully accelerating the speed of value creation processes and reshuffling network structures, due to consumer analytics. The three outlined second order codes can be categorised as skills (celebritisation and mediatisation) and knowledge (data) which are deemed to be the most important of operant resources (Madhavaram and Hunt, 2007) in achieving an organisation's competitive advantage.

To discuss our first analytical category, we will begin by revisiting discussions and terminology from previous literature regarding operand and operant resources. Next, we will present how research findings support previous literature and will additionally argue how findings have led to a re-evaluation of operant resources, specifically in regard to FP4 which states how “operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit”. Whilst we agree with FP4, we have

observed that a strategic benefit for an individual actor may in turn harm collective organisations. Additionally, the heightened focus on intangible operant resources can reduce the quality of the tangible operand resource, which is the original foundation of an industry.

As discussed throughout, it has been argued that marketing has evolved towards a service-dominant logic perspective. Here, focus lies upon the intangible and dynamic resources, which form the core of competitive advantage and performance (Vargo and Lush, 2004), with resources being:

“tangible and intangible entities available to the firm that enable it to produce efficiently and/or effectively a market offering that has value for some market segment(s)” (Hunt, 2000; p.138).

SDL differentiates operand versus operant resources (Constantin and Lusch, 1994), where operand resources are those which an operation or act is performed on, in order to produce an effect. They are considered to be resources that an actor acts on to obtain support; they enable or facilitate. Operand resources are mostly physical, tangible as well as static in nature (e.g. raw materials). Operant resources, on the other hand, are resources that act or operate on other resources to produce effects; opposed to being operated on. Operant resources are often intangible and dynamic and are difficult to transform. Examples include human (e.g. the skills and knowledge of employees), organisational (e.g. practices, culture, competences), informational (e.g. knowledge through big data), and relational resources (e.g. relationships with consumers) (Madhavaram

and Hunt, 2007). SDL regards consumers as active operand resources, due to their roles as cocreators of value. Hamel and Prahalad (1994) connect operand resources with core competences, which are not physical assets, but are regarded as intangible processes, including bundles of skills, knowledge and technologies. This approach shifts the focus on the preservation or the accumulation of limited operand resources, towards the integration and generation of adaptive operand resources, which can reduce resource depletion and create alternative service solutions. Ultimately, SDL emphasises that service is the basis of all exchange, value is always cocreated, and operand resources are central to value creation.

Vargo and Lusch (2012) state that an inanimate object, including operand resources, cannot alone lead to relationships. Products, as described by Gutman (1982), are “means” for reaching “end-states,” or “valued states of being, such as happiness, security, and accomplishment”. We agree such objects or “vessels of knowledge” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) are “distribution mechanisms for service provision” as outlined in SDL’s FP3. An operand resource such as tangible clothes on a catwalk are soaked in operand resources, including symbolic codes through cultural or status-signalling references, which can lead to potential end-states such as achieving validation as an individual or assembling together networks within an ecosystem.

Whilst Lusch, Vargo and Gustafsson (2016), view digital technologies to be operand resources, our findings show that intangible products such as digital clothes can be both operand and operand resources; liminal in an anthropological sense. They can be operand resources because firstly, they were observed to be

used such as their tangible counterparts on visually focused social media platforms, as layers of meaning and interaction can be built upon them. Additionally, digital clothes were integrated at a catwalk presentation, again blending in with their physical counterparts. Simultaneously, they operate on other resources (e.g. other technologies and equipment) to produce effects, being a combination of skill and knowledge. With the operant resources able to be extracted from the operand “vessel”, such as the symbolic values communicated through imagery, all actors who have access to the operant resource (e.g. through a livestreamed fashion show on Instagram) have the ability to consume and thus redefine or appropriate that intangible value (e.g. repurposing such content). Indeed, technology helps blend physical and the intangible goods, and operand and operant resources, thus referring back to the Nordic School of thought. Here consumers do not buy either goods or services; they purchase offerings which deliver services with the services in turn creating value. However, with less focus on the operand (the product) and more focus on the operant (the image of the product) the consequence at best boldens the process of intangible mass-communication and decentralises ecosystem access, and at worst, devalues the process of primary creation of the original product.

Linking towards this emboldened process of mass-communication, an example of an operant resource, is the celebrification of individual disruptive industry actors who were observed to transform into celebrities through media rituals uniting ‘the spectacular with the everyday, the special with the ordinary’ (Dyer, 2007; p.35). Such actors were observed to engage in offline and online displays of self-promotion with examples including livestreaming fashion presentations,

documenting their attendance at high-profile events and performing, such as posing for photographs. Such actors include social media influencers who were observed to intentionally attract attention from photographers and thus draw attention to themselves as individual entities. Through engagement of media-driven rituals, such social media influencers successfully provided evidence as being part of a status-validating network which supported their own brands, allowing them to move up the hierarchy and obtain greater social capital through the validation from their audiences.

The influencers were observed as actively engaging in the “celebrification” process, drawing media-attention upon themselves, transforming from “ordinary people” into “celebrities” (Driessens, 2013). With service defined as “the application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills), through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; p.2)” a link can again be drawn between SDL and celebrification through *performance*, as described previously. The disruptive actor’s performance suggests the dominance of mediatization within the fashion industry, where media shapes the processes, discourses, societies, and industries where communication takes place (Lundby, 2009). Additionally, celebrification connects with SDL foundations, which argues that individual actors (e.g. a social media influencer) interact with one another and various resources (e.g. their online audience) to improve their *own* circumstances, such as in this case increase their own social (media) status. Here, the number of followers one has on social media was observed as significant as it brings influence, opportunity, access, and additionally has been observed to lead to employment.

An actor's performance can be transferred via social media benefiting another entity (e.g. the audience of an influencer) and the entity itself (e.g. the social media influencer) such as gaining social capital and a positive reputation. Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggest the reputation of an actor is the most visible signal of their reliability and helps establish trust which is fundamental in a lasting economic exchange. However, our findings diverge from Morgan and Hunt (1994) where trust and cooperation have signalled stability; findings point towards social visibility, speed to market, and immediacy which leads to reputation. Here, operant and operand resources are deployed with immediate effect with little room for nostalgia. Due to digital disruption, value creation processes move quickly, to the point of immediacy, and in order to maintain one's capital and positive reputation, it is the adaptability of the actor to deploy their resources, receive acknowledgement and move on.

Through performance and the access provided by digital platforms, a reputation can be built where individual actors are thus able to capitalise on increased social and economic capital (Driessens, 2013). Through self-promotion on social media platforms, the celebrification process has thus been decentralised, where individual actors who are media-savvy have the heightened opportunity to achieve considerable authority (Driessens, 2013) and have the ability to alter traditional value creation processes, previously dependent on higher status gatekeepers.

In a previous analysis chapter, singer now fashion designer, Rihanna was one highlighted example of celebrity migration (Driessens, 2013), where celebrities, or individuals engaging in celebrification, are granted access into another social

field by capitalising on their own status and personality which can be regarded as operant resources. Benefits of such migration include developing a longer lasting career by diversifying in various fields, reducing risk of working solely in one “project market” which is regarded as complex, dynamic and uncertain (Jeffcutt and Pratt, 2002). Driessens (2013) argues that such celebrified actors do need a degree of knowledge and high degree of involvement to enter a new field, however it is argued primary knowledge stems from effective self-promotion and representation (e.g. communication), not necessarily field level specific knowledge (e.g. fashion design).

This suggests that operant resources remain priorities in SDL, however while they may benefit the individual, they could destroy traditional value creation processes and networks. Through the increased focus on the celebrified-self, there is an increase of celebrified high status outside actors who directly interact with the original fashion product including social media influencers. Such actors engaging with the fashion product may not necessarily work in fashion as “insiders” within the ecosystem but are performative and attract the attention from their audiences which increases their own influence.

SDL assumes, that to improve the wellbeing of oneself one must improve the wellbeing of others. Hence, disrupters have placed a greater emphasis on intangible processes and improving the “wellbeing” of others, which may be access to new information or events, inspiration, or entertainment. Disrupters provide diverse social media content and focus on relationships with their audience, and in turn, improve their own “wellbeing”, which as determined through our findings, is about power; increasing their own social status and



gaining access to new opportunities. Digital disruption has elevated the practice of celebrification as it leads to power domination, as recognition leads to social capital, which leads to monetisation. Likened to SDL, findings suggest that disrupters are regarded to focus on operant resources, for example the intangible, platform of fashion, and appropriate it into something new, such as appropriating it to launch a company, protest a cause, or further one's own career.

In summary, it was observed that disruptive actors are focusing on operant resources such as interactivity, integration, and dialogue with outside actors. The establishment actors on the other hand are focusing on the inanimate operand resource, e.g. clothes, and less so on outside actor relationships. Findings thus strengthen the relevance for SDL and link to Objective 1 of identifying how influential industry actors are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry. Hence, it is agreed that operant resources are the fundamental source of strategic benefit for the specific actor, however an actor's image can be prioritised over the original fashion product, whereby intangible qualities such as influence, and status overshadows the tangible product and tangible craft. As a consequence, the failure to differentiate types of such operant resources reduces the complexities, where individual actors benefit, but traditional value creation systems may collapse or see a destruction of value.

### 8.3.2 Dynamic Ecosystems

The second analytical category based on the thesis findings is titled *dynamic ecosystems*, and through digital disruption, their fluid nature. The analytical

category of dynamic ecosystems is constructed by the second order themes of porous boundaries, reduced barriers to entry and new gatekeepers. Porous boundaries emphasise the direct dialogue between inside industry actors and outsiders, who operate outside of the fashion ecosystem through the use of social media platforms. Reduced barriers to entry include the increased access opportunities for outside actors to be involved as active participants within the ecosystem. New gatekeepers refer to the newfound power of outside actors, where due to their increased access into the ecosystem have the ability to influence internal hierarchical structures. Together, these codes suggest that the ecosystem is no longer supported by strong boundaries and is in an evolving state of flux due to the increased element of democratisation. We will first discuss findings which compliment existent SDL literature, in particular in relation to compromised boundaries leading to institutional innovation. This will be followed with a discussion on findings which surpass current literature challenging the notion of actor to actor (A2A) assumptions and point towards a revived dependency on outside actors who are deemed ecosystem gatekeepers.

Boundaries are regarded to be the distinctions among actors and their groups, while practices are shared routines of behaviour (Whittington, 2006). At a practical level they act as tools where actors and groups morph and construct definitions of reality to help distinguish categories of objects, people, and activities. Whilst authors argue strong boundaries strengthen the collective identity of a field, they risk the field becoming “isolated from or unresponsive to changes in their external environments” (Seo and Creed, 2002: p. 226 cited in Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). Additionally, practices are “recognised forms of

activity” (Barnes, 2001) which guide behaviour according to the situation (Goffman, 1959). For a practice undertaken by an individual actor or group to be recognisable by other actors and distinct to other practices, actors must conform to certain social expectations. Underpinned by specific patterns of boundary and practice work that operated recursively, Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) determined four distinct cycles of institutional stability or change: (1) institutional stability involves boundary and practice maintenance; (2) institutional conflict involves breaching versus bolstering the boundary and disrupting versus defending practices; (3) institutional innovation involves establishing experimental boundaries that were protected from institutional discipline and inventing new practices; and (4) institutional restabilisation involves cross-boundary connecting and practice diffusion. Such boundary and practice work shift particular states of institutional stability.

Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) have concluded that three conditions were associated when an institution’s initial stability moves towards conflict: 1) practices are disputed 2) intact boundaries remain protecting those practices and finally 3) the existence of outsiders who hold the capacity to challenge those practices and boundaries are present. Here an actor disadvantaged by existing boundaries may be particularly motivated to disrupt current boundary or practices. The research findings suggest that the fashion industry sees itself to be shifting from institutional conflict to institutional innovation, where (1) practices have been disrupted, (2) the boundaries that protect such practices have been compromised, and (3) there are motivated insiders who hold the capacity to establish new boundaries to protect experiments from institutional discipline.

Hence, the fashion industry itself, as a unit of analysis, is an institutional form that is undergoing both endogenous (e.g. roles of designers, stylists, editors) and exogenous shock (e.g. social media influencer influencers) that are driving institutional change and innovation. The fashion industry with its compromised boundaries and practices is crumbling.

Such motivated insiders are likened to the disruptive actors presented throughout the results chapters, which included designers, entrepreneurs, stylists and photographers who have adapted their behaviours to macroenvironmental shifts. Additionally, motivated insiders can be compared to Miles and Snow's (1978) prospectors, who look outside boundaries for new products and markets, or Schumpeter's entrepreneurs being knowledgeable individuals who have the ability to devise institutional change and innovative practice through creative destruction. Creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1942) is regarded as the driving force of economic progress, where the process of industrial mutation revolutionises the economic structure from within by destroying the old one and creating a new one. Such disruptive actors are motivated to take over unusual tasks, look at new options, and realise new combinations in the production process, such as prioritising relationships with their individual audiences via social media.

The deviation from institutionalised forms of behaviour increases the uncertainty in subsequent rounds of interaction, which has been observed in the industry through tensions amongst establishment and disruptive actors. Innovations and new methods of value creation have been seen to destroy traditional practices

and routines, thus affecting various job roles and ways of working. Findings have outlined how motivated insiders, including social media influencers, engage directly with their targeted audiences, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. This suggests that the boundaries around the ecosystem are compromised, thus allowing for fluid interaction between those within and outside of the ecosystem. Through digital disruption there is an increased ease of entry for outsiders into the industry, due to social media platforms and the intentional ubiquity of the industry targeting the mass-audience. Hence insiders who engage with outside actors in forms of direct dialogue compromise the traditionally strong boundaries and as a consequence, as individuals and as an ecosystem, they are more likely to be able to adapt successfully to macro-environmental changes. Additionally, as the original SDL foundations argue, firms or individuals who neglect a service perspective risk accumulating additional costs, as standardised goods produced without consumer involvement are often stagnant and non-responsive to dynamic consumer needs thus justifying actions taken by disrupters.

With SDL literature assuming that everyone within an organisation has a customer, engaging with outsiders is important as an industry insider. This can be confirmed with our findings, as disruptive actors engaged in direct dialogue with their audience via social media and were not viewed as solitary innovators but have acted as knowledgeable individuals. Such knowledgeable individuals hold, as Lowe et al. (2012) state, a relational lens, and help create, accumulate and redistribute knowledge across multiple sites, thus fuelling innovation.

Through their relationship-driven actions, these knowledgeable individuals are often at the heart of self-organising networks, including social media influencers

who, for example, through their media-savviness have gained the ability to appropriate a brand's image and hold other established actors accountable (Lowe et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2003). The knowledge of such individuals may not stem from the tangible craft of the operand resource (e.g. the garment) but stems from the knowledge of effective media-savvy communication; connecting to outsiders and "bringing them to the inside" in reference to the ecosystem. Through the dynamic ecosystem and its porous boundaries, such knowledgeable individuals are able to be located within multiple knowledge or cultural institutional systems, which can lead to cross-industrial hybridity (Lowe et al., 2012) and further disruptive innovation.

As previously outlined, one of the distinguishing features of SDL is its treatment of all customers, employees, and organisations as being operand resources; endogenous to both the exchange and value-creation processes. This implies that all parties are value-creators and value beneficiaries leading towards the assumption that the distinctions between producer versus consumer, and supply versus demand vanish. Thus, SDL's FP9 and FP10 emphasise actor to actor (A2A) exchange, where actors are fundamentally democratised; from pre-designated roles of producers, consumers, and firms towards a generic actor orientation who carries out similar actions. Here, all actors are able to integrate resources and engage in service exchange, throughout the process of cocreating value. Through SDL the identity of an organisation's actors alters, where instead of being perceived as distant and passive in relation to consumers they become inclusive, interactive and relationship focused, thus referring back to internal marketing (Grönroos, 1978).

Our findings from this research suggest however that without such actor distinctions we are unable to appreciate ongoing field level shifts; through digital disruption, the power of a defined group of actors (ecosystem outsiders) has increased. Defining who actors are (e.g. distinguishing knowledgeable individuals from their online audience) captures the major effects of digital disruption on the value creation process, where post-digital disruption those who hold power are not necessarily those at the top of the hierarchy or even within the ecosystem. Through digital disruption there has been a democratisation of voices whereby outside actors, oftentimes including knowledgeable individuals, are able to appropriate value as well as hold Establishment inside actors accountable.

Outsiders collectively hold the power, not only the Established industry insiders who were once conditioned to dictate information. Through digital disruption those who hold power is the collective of followers, end consumers, and the empowered mass-audience who have the ability to transform status, behaviours and practices of actors within the ecosystem. Through the access provided via social media platforms and other technologies, digital disruption has redefined gatekeepers being the ecosystem outsiders; the mass audience who both actively and passively interact with the fashion ecosystem through direct dialogue, appropriation of value, or more covertly supply data. Through digital disruption's democratisation of voices, outside actors have the ability to push other actors (further) into the ecosystem and/or raise an actor's hierarchical status (e.g. influencers) by directly supporting initiatives (e.g. likes or follows).

In relation to Objective 2, examining the interdependent multi-layered networks, results have shown that within the fashion ecosystem the hierarchy within the

fashion ecosystem does remain and has even become more of a focus, due to the transparency granted by social media where we can immediately determine one's calculated influence. This dependency on an individual's social status and increasing one's social media following dictates how certain actors behave. For example, some of the inside actors have been seen to mimic the celebrification rituals of disruptive actors whose actions were deemed more performative. Lovelock and Young (1979) concluded that consumers, part of ecosystem outsiders, can be sources of productivity gains and have the ability to impact collective perceptions and value through social media. In reference to Alderson (1957) the consumer is described to have shifted from a passive actor, towards an information processor, contributor and problem solver and through digital disruption they have been elevated as an ecosystem's gatekeeper. This development of outsiders pushing actors up within an ecosystem is a contrast to the dependence of solely relying on traditional insider actors who held the ability to pull in newcomers. The findings help us better understand SDL because by referring back to differentiating actors, we are able to understand the field level complexities - where power which was originally held by those within the ecosystem has shifted towards those actors outside of the ecosystem.

### 8.3.3 Value within a Social (Media) Context

The final analytical category explores value in social, as well as social media, context which reflects the phenomenological attribute of value which congregates the mass-audience. The analytical category relates to Objective 3, in regards to the composition and consequences of the value codestruction processes. It is supported by second order themes which include the shortening of the value



creation process, the democratisation of the industry, and the loss of control felt by industry actors. Together this emphasises the power of outside actors and how they are the target of communication, as opposed to traditional intermediaries.

The shortened value creation process refers to the newfound sense of immediacy within the fashion ecosystem, in regard to both producing and consuming value, seen to lead towards critical shallowness of intermediary interpretation and an increased degree of competition within the ecosystem. The democratisation of the industry represents the dominance of co-transformative teams and the dilution of a singular creative entity, whilst the loss of control represents the consequences of such democratisation on industry practices, behaviours and professional roles for various Establishment actors. The second order codes support SDL's assumption of value determined within its social context, however when placed in a social media context through digital disruption, value is more readily able to be extracted and appropriated by both inside and empowered outside actors. Explored within SDL literature, value is regarded to have shifted from "value in exchange" towards "in use" towards "value in context" (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Additionally, "value in context" (Chandler and Vargo, 2011) has evolved towards "value in social context" (Edvardsson, et al. 2011), which labels the value integrating customer "as an intersubjective actor and resource integrator rather than as an individual actor." Edvardsson, et al. (2011) suggest,

“[Here] social context constitutes a system in which service is exchanged for service and for how value is cocreated. Different customers may perceive the same service differently, and the same customer might perceive the service differently between occasions in a different social context (p.328)”.

The ongoing evolution of SDL has sharpened the focus on “where value is created” which highlights the social and structural contexts of value creation through an examination of institutions, and more specifically ecosystems (Akaka et al. 2013). When regarding where value is created, our findings suggest that the primary focus of value creation has shifted from a high hierarchical position inside an ecosystem, where power was held by influential establishment actors, towards a more inclusive position of outside actors including the mass-audience, who operate largely outside of the physical cultural clusters such as a London Fashion Week. Here the voices of the mass-audience may not directly operate within the ecosystem, implying a shift of value creation focus placed onto the periphery of the ecosystem. For example, less interest of the actual clothes (e.g. operand resources) on the catwalk was observed, as opposed to increased interest of developments off the catwalk, including celebrities sighted on the front row or influencer-led streetstyle. Fashion itself has evolved to become a fluid form of entertainment communicating stories through technology. As Edvardsson et al. (2011) conclude, an individual’s value perceptions are dependent on their relative position within the wider social context and is thus phenomenological,

suggesting each actor has the ability to appropriate the platform of fashion, for example, for their own needs.

Furthermore, with SDL being inherently customer oriented and value always determined by the beneficiary of service, this logic in turn was observed to challenge the roles of established actors inside the ecosystem who originally acted to define the value. This integration of SDL in practice was observed to dilute the relevance of the original role of such actors which in turn caused inherent tensions towards empowered outside actors. Whilst the cocreation of value amongst diverse actors constitutes the purpose of exchange and is thus fundamental to markets and marketing, this has caused resistance from various inside actors who viewed their role was to dictate to consumers via a traditional GDL approach. Such inside established actors were observed to regard the increase in outsider involvement to reduce the exclusivity and desire of the consequent product.

Tensions arise due to divergent perspectives, influenced by an actor's past experiences, expectations and the position of where an actor is embedded, thus supporting value in context. Additionally, depending on an actor's own perception of worth, two actors can perceive what is more or less worthy very differently, again causing tension. Worth refers to what an actor considers as nobler or more superior from a symbolic standpoint and not necessarily to what is more valuable from a mercantilist perspective (Banoun, Dufour, and Andiappan; 2016), an example being a consumer who wants to buy a product versus an intermediary who wants to interpret information.

A customer's perception of worth from a service offering is found to stem from "moments of truth" encounters (Carlzon, 1987) which are important elements of achieving overall satisfaction, perceptions of quality, and long-term loyalty. However, through social media these encounters happen constantly – often in real-time when live streaming - leading to an immediacy in value creation within the industry and a loss of control for service providers. Additionally, tensions among actors within service ecosystems have been observed to occur because actors are connected within multiple networks, and thus their roles in value creation may vary depending on the resources and relationships they have access to in a given context (Akaka and Chandler, 2011). Equally, those in similar institutional arrangements support actors in entering an exchange encounter, meaning value cocreation is more likely to occur (Vargo and Lusch, 2016). What is considered as a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship can strongly differ from one actor to another (Koskela- Huotari et al.; 2015) and lead to asymmetrical value outcomes (Edvardsson, et al. 2011) leading to value codestruction and tension.

Overall, Vargo and Lusch (2004) cement the view that markets and organisations have 1) shifted from a focus on tangibles to intangibles of skill and knowledge competencies and 2) have moved towards a dynamic process of interactivity, connectivity, and ongoing relationships, internal and external to the firm. Also, the focus of orientation has shifted from the producer to the consumer, and the object of being exchanged has turned into the process of exchange. Taking this stance, marketing has become an organisational philosophy instead of a functional area;

dependent on networks and relationships, moving from competition to collaboration. Additionally, the practice of marketing evolves into a consumer consulting role by supporting communication processes and involving them through dialogue in order to better understand and react to their needs. Whilst our findings support these notions, this does not automatically constitute value (co) creation. On one hand outside actors are able to be involved and take an active role in cocreation and represent their own audiences. However the focus on the intangible and on the process of interactivity suggests the tangible product becomes less of a priority thus, codeconstructing the process, despite being part of a more inclusive ecosystem.

#### 8.4 Managerial Contribution

Having outlined this research's theoretical contribution within the analytical categories, we will now present practical recommendations in form of a managerial contribution, not solely limited to the fashion ecosystem. Firstly, findings determined that successful ecosystem disrupters were observed to focus on relationship building and maintaining an open dialogue with other actors, in particular their unique audience. By benefiting actors in their own networks, they themselves have benefitted. Such disrupters placed less focus on the object they were creating or delivering, but more so on the skills prioritising the mediatisation of the industry and the knowledge of communication. Secondly, findings suggested that hierarchy within ecosystems are still is relevant, but the hierarchy structure is determined by outside actors no longer only by those inside an ecosystem. Hence, communication and relationship building with one's audience

is important as this collective has the newfound ability to push an actor further up the ecosystem's hierarchy or access further opportunities.

Thirdly, actors, whether individual or collective, should allow for value co-abduction, encouraging consumers and actors within their respective networks to appropriate cocreated codes, products, and services, which is consequently passed onto their own networks linking to diverse and unexpected industries and fields. It is recommended that actors should embrace and act upon this loss of control, sparked by digital disruption. Additionally, disruptive actors were observed to display a heightened focus on the individual self, their performative qualities and mediatised routines through celebritisation. Hence, an individual can connect effectively with their audience leading to increased access opportunities, for example showing more of their personality, sparking authenticity and relatability. Due to less dependence on inside intermediaries, all actors are interpreting, digesting, influencing one another where emphasis is on the self, and with a dependency on the needs of one's own audience. Finally, due to the immediacy of value creation and the increased pace of the industry, it is recommended actors should focus on developing relevant language, driven by the mass-audience and be flexible to adapt to rapidly changing preferences. This is a stark contrast from the traditional fashion industry, which was rooted in exclusivity and a top down hierarchical approach.

## 8.5 Limitations

Although the research has reached its intended objectives and provided theoretical and managerial contributions, we have encountered limitations.

Firstly, our undertaken qualitative research design of ethnography, including participant observations and semi-structured interviews, has been criticised for being biased, where the researcher may be unintentionally blinded by her own subjective views on the observed events or situations. However, as researchers we can never completely remove ourselves from a social world suggesting a level of bias is inevitable (O'Reilly, 2012). Regarding participant observations, if there was perceived doubt in our fieldwork findings, we have directly contacted informants to confirm if observations made sense to them. Additionally, we have ensured to document all observations with rigorous fieldnotes which included times stamps, photos, and other signals which justified and legitimised the research. Secondly, ethnography is time consuming as it has taken time to build trust with participants in order to facilitate necessary access and honest discourse. However, only through built trust and relationships can meaningful results emerge. A third limitation is that our approach of pursuing ethnographic research is not representative of their populations and therefore there is the weakness in decreased generalisability. It is however important to address that the purpose of ethnographic research is not to generalise, but instead to go into depth within a subject. For ethnographic research we are going above the individual case and the selection of participants.

Additionally, there are further limitations regarding our participant observations. On one hand it was superior in reaching ecological validity since we have had the ability to directly engage with the social actors and social phenomenon within a specific ecosystem. On the other hand, problems may have emerged through unintended observer error where we may not have been familiar enough with the

context and proceed to misinterpret a particular situation. Simultaneously, as the researcher has been integrated within the fashion industry for almost 5 years prior to this research start, she may have been too familiar with the context and was therefore blinded to certain distinctions in behaviour or practice. In regard to semi-structured interviews, there is a lack of standardisation which leads to concerns in reliability. Interviews also lead to potential bias, including 1) interviewer bias where the researcher's own comments, tone and non-verbal behaviour can alter the participant's answers, 2) response bias where perceptions about the researcher influences data, and 3) participation bias dependent on the nature of the individuals (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Hence, it was important for the researcher to be equipped with the interview guide (Appendix 2.2) and to be aware of recording potentially bias responses. Moreover, out of necessity for various participants, we continued ethnographic conversations over email and over social media platforms. This was necessary as various participants were busy and could not follow up to respond over face to face due to largely work commitments. Also because of the fast pace of the industry and intermediaries having less free time and under more pressure due to the consequences of the explored digital disruption it was difficult to organise appropriate timings.

## 8.6 Further Research

Building upon the findings of this research, it was recommended that focus be placed on consumer behaviour (e.g. the previously referred to as outside actors) in diverse value creation processes. Specifically, it is suggested to explore how consumers are co-abducting value using social media and other digital platforms, as well as motivations and consequences on the fashion ecosystem impacting



marketing strategy. Due to the lack of generalisability in ethnography, it is recommended such further research take a mixed-method approach applying a combination of netnography and a survey targeting a specific demographic. Moreover, it is recommended to apply co-abduction to other empirical contexts, in particular within the creative industries to confirm that such effects of digital disruption are not exclusive to the fashion industry.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Research Ethics Form Confirmation



**UEBS**  
University of Exeter Business School  
The University of Exeter  
Streatham Court  
Rennes Drive  
Exeter  
EX4 4PU

+44 (0)1392 722523  
Web: [www.exeter.ac.uk](http://www.exeter.ac.uk)

### UEBS Research Ethics Committee

Dear Nina Van Volkinburg

#### **Ethics application - eUEBS001895**

Disruption to Destruction: Exploring the Impact of Digital Disruption on the Value Creation Processes within the Fashion Industry

Your project has been reviewed by the UEBS Research Ethics Committee and has received a Favourable opinion.

The Committee has made the following comments about your application:

**An interesting project and one in which the ethical considerations have been considered and mitigated with suitable assurances to participants regarding the terms of their participation. The only issue I can foresee is that you ensure to obtain permission from publishers to reproduce images that you are photographing. Other issues may pertain to the publication of photographs where you do not have explicit permission from individuals. I would suggest that where individuals are identifiable in group**

- Please view your application at <https://eethics.exeter.ac.uk/UEBS/> to see comments in full.

If you have received a Favourable with Conditions, Provisional or Unfavourable outcome you are required to re-submit for full review and/or confirm that committee comments have been addressed before you begin your research.

Please contact your Ethics Officer.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'A. R. Bailey'.

Dr. Adrian R. Bailey

Date: 12/04/2019

UEBS Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix 2 – Interview Participant Information Pack

### Appendix 2.1 –Research Brief

University of Exeter Business School | Department of Management

*The following document includes: The Research Brief, Interview Topic Guide, & Interview Consent Form*

#### 1. Research Brief

**PhD Candidate:** Nina Van Volkinburg

**Supervised by:** Dr. Alex Thompson and Prof. Gareth Shaw

**Expected Completion:** 2020

**Research Aim:** Exploring the Effects of Digital Disruption on the Value Creation Processes within the Fashion Industry

- To identify how **industry actors** are exploiting new technologies to disrupt value creation processes within the global fashion industry
- To examine the interdependent **multi-layered networks** within the global fashion ecosystem
- To examine the composition and consequences of **the value co-destruction process** within the field of fashion.

**Research Methodology:** Ethnography

- 18 months of participant **observations** within global fashion industry (e.g. fashion weeks, tradeshow, press days...)
- **Interviews** with both established and emerging cultural intermediaries\* within the global fashion industry

**Empirical Contribution:** Documented through narrative stories, I aim to capture the underlying tensions and shifts triggered through digital disruption, which are currently restructuring a cultural field. By bringing together voices of both established and emerging actors within the fashion industry, I hope to uncover opportunities to collectively adapt and evolve practice -preserving creative ingenuity with commercial acumen.

*Key Words:* knowledge networks, service ecosystems, value codestruction, creative destruction, ethnography

\*Sets of occupations and workers involved in the production and circulation of symbolic goods and services in the context of an expanding cultural economy (Bourdieu, 1984)

## Appendix 2.2 –Interview Guide

University of Exeter Business School | Department of Management

### 2. Interview Topic Guide

*The nature of an ethnographic interview is conversational based - below however are a series of key discussion points*

1. **Personal Introduction**
  - How did you **start your career**?
  - What were your **motivations** for working in fashion?
  - Could you please describe the moment when you felt you really **became part of the fashion industry** (or something bigger)?
2. **The Fashion Ethos**
  - How would you **describe** the fashion industry today?
  - How has the fashion industry **changed** from when you first started?
  - Do you find the **value of fashion** is within the product? Is it a feeling? An experience?
  - Within the industry, is there a sense of **community**? How would you describe it?
3. **Job Role**
  - Please describe your **job role** and its day to day activities
  - How has your **job role evolved** over the past 10 years?
  - Do you feel pressure to maintain a **personal brand** (e.g. on social media)?
  - Is it difficult to separate your **private/ professional life**?
4. **Shifting Network Structures**
  - Do you think fashion still maintains a strong **hierarchy**? (e.g. Does it thrive off of boundaries of being “in” and “out”?)
  - Do you believe social media has **democratised** the industry?
5. **Blessing and Curse of Social Media**
  - Has **image** eclipsed the craft/ **cultural substance**? (i.e in design and journalism?)
  - What are the biggest **dangers of social media** for the fashion industry?
  - What have been the **benefits** for the fashion industry because of social media?
6. **Implications of Fashion Technology**
  - Will there always be a tension between **luxury and tech**? Why/Why not?
  - We have moved from couturier to designer to **creative director** - what is next? (i.e. the end of the “Star Designer”?)
  - Do you see **Social Media influencers and fashion critics** being equally important for today’s end consumer?
7. **Importance of Physical Place**
  - How important is **face to face** communication with your peers?
  - How important is being **physically present** at events (e.g fashion weeks)?
  - Will fashion weeks continue to be **relevant**?
8. **Future of the Industry**
  - Could you please describe how you see the **future of the fashion** industry?

## Appendix 2.3 –Consent Form (Pre-Signature)

University of Exeter Business School | Department of Management

### 3. Interview Consent Form

*The interview will take approximately 1 hour. I don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of this doctoral research project!*

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and are informed how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary, to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore please read the accompanying information sheet and by choosing to partake you certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be audio recorded and a transcript will be produced
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Nina Van Volkinburg as research investigator
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Nina Van Volkinburg and academic colleagues with whom she may collaborate with as part of the research process
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be **anonymised** and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- The actual audio recording will be kept until 3 years after thesis submission (expected 2020)
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

*All or part of the content of your interview may be used;*

- In Nina Van Volkinburg's doctoral thesis
- Academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- Spoken presentations
- In an archive of the project as noted above

#### **By partaking in this interview I agree that:**

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Interview Consent Form;
4. I don't expect to receive any payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

#### *Contact Information*

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Exeter Research Ethics Board. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

**Nina Van Volkinburg**  
+447444718381  
[nv253@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:nv253@exeter.ac.uk)

## Appendix 2.4 –Signed Consent Form Example

*\*All consent forms available upon request*

**Interview Consent Form**

**Research Project Title:** Exploring the Effects of Digital Disruption on the Value Creation Processes within the Fashion Industry

**Research Investigator:** Nina Van Volkinburg

**Research Participant's Name:**

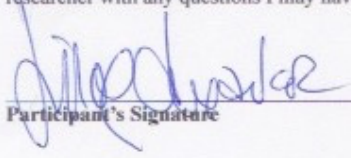
*The interview will take approximately 1 hour. I don't anticipate any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my doctoral research project!*

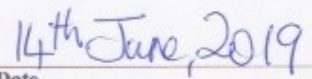
Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and are informed how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary, to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. **Therefore please read the accompanying information sheet and sign this form to certify that you approve the following:**

- The interview will be audio recorded and a transcript will be produced
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Nina Van Volkinburg as research investigator
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Nina Van Volkinburg and academic colleagues and researchers with whom she may collaborate with as part of the research process
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified
- The actual audio recording will be kept until 3 years after thesis submission (expected 2020)
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

**By signing this form I agree that:**

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the Interview Consent Form;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.


  
Participant's Signature

  
Date

**Contact Information**

*This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Exeter Research Ethics Board\*. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:*

Nina Van Volkinburg  
+447444718381  
[nv253@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:nv253@exeter.ac.uk)





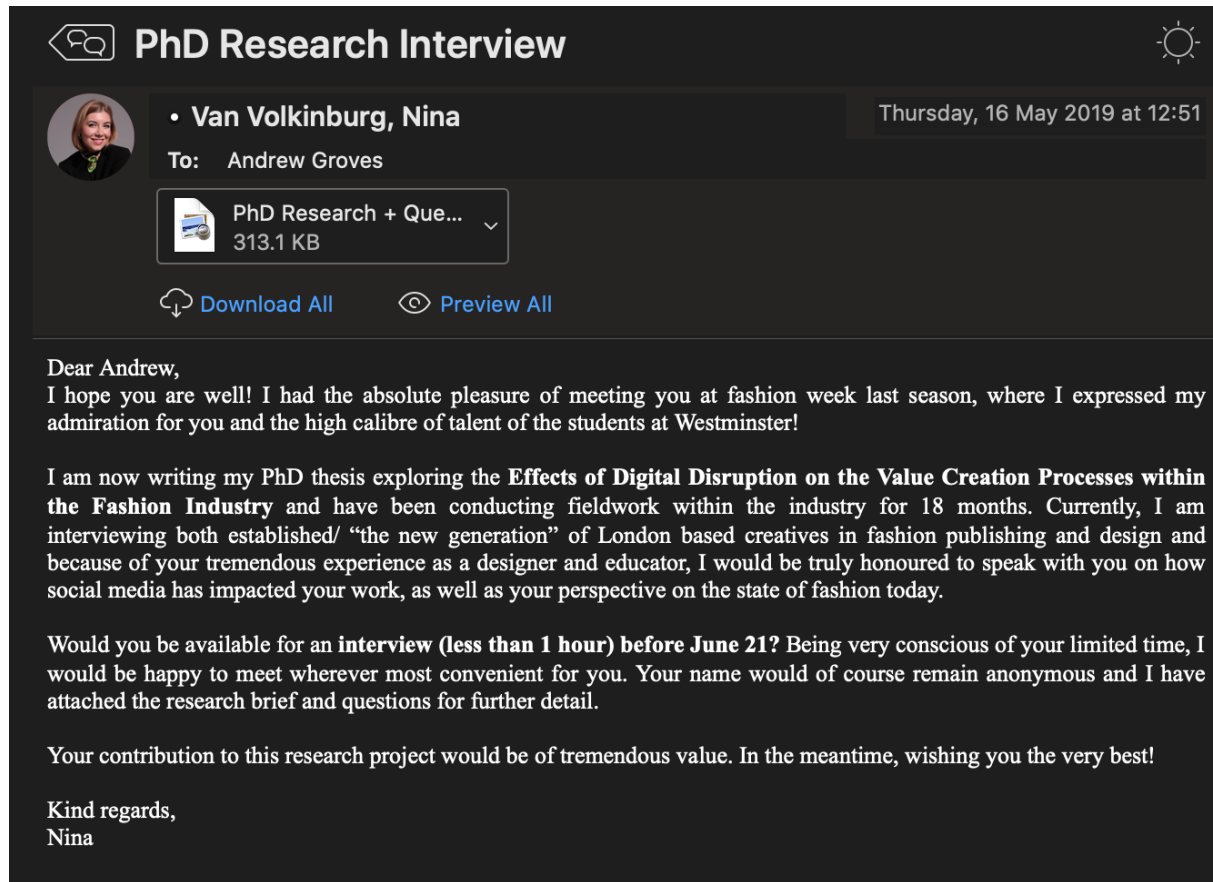
### Appendix 3 – Interview Participants

<b>NAME</b> ( <i>changed for anonymity</i> )	<b>Occupation</b>
Alessio	Founder and CEO of London based Fashion Tech Start-up
Andrea	London based designer of namesake brand and Model
Anne	Photo Director (formerly at Vogue Magazine)
Arthur	Designer and Professor of Fashion design at London based Arts University
Chris	Executive at London based Fashion and lifestyle PR Agency
Daniel	Fashion photographer; works with <i>Conde Nast Publications</i> , <i>Cartier</i> amongst others
Diane	Chief Fashion Critic at <i>Vogue Magazine</i>
Elton	PA to Helen and freelance fashion journalist
Gina	Editor at Large Fashion Media Organisation and former head of communications at leading French fashion conglomerates
Helen	Former head of fashion at large British newspaper, author, figurehead of Graduate Fashion Week
Henry	Youtuber and Fashion Influencer; 150k followers on Instagram, 406k subscribers on Youtube
Jeffrey	CEO and Founder of London-based tech agency
Linda	Executive Manager at Fashion Innovation Agency
Louisa	Founder and Creative Director of namesake brand
Mark	Senior position in Fashion and Luxury department at <i>Evening Standard</i>
Miranda	Former presenter at a popular BBC fashion programme and Editor at ID Magazine; Professor of Diversity and Activist at UK based University

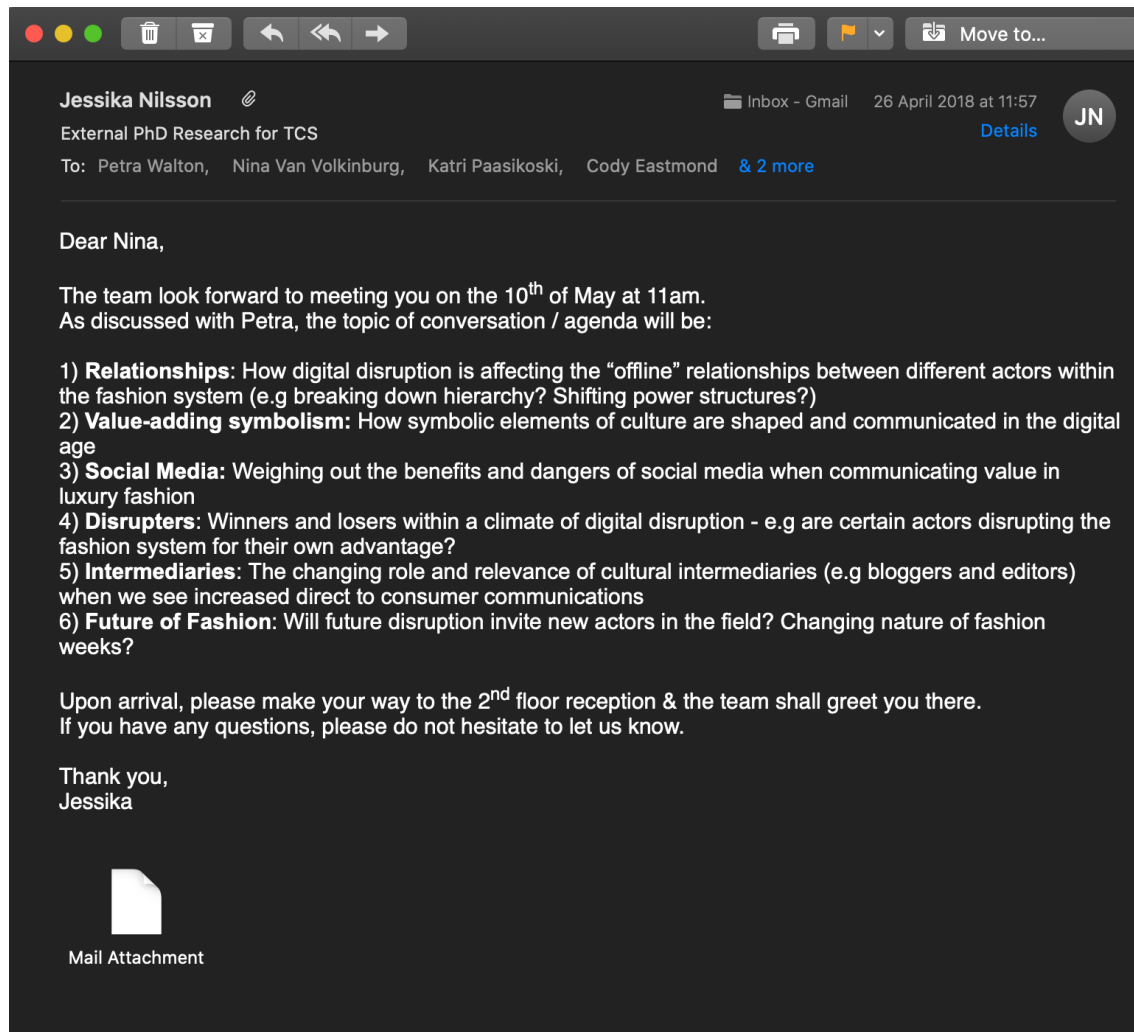
Paul	London based designer and Central Saint Martin's MA alum; exhibitor at London Fashion Week; featured in Vogue
Rachel	London based designer, RCA alumna, exhibitor of London Fashion Week; featured in Vogue, Dazed, I.D amongst others
Richard	CEO and Founder of PR Agency; represents premium to luxury fashion and designer brands in London, Milan, Switzerland, and China
Tina	Founder and CEO of London based sustainable textile NGO



## Appendix 4 – Interview Participant Email Outreach



## Appendix 4.1 – Focus Group Email Confirmation



## Appendix 5 – London Fashion Week Schedule (AW19/20)

**LONDON FASHION WEEK WOMEN'S COLLECTIONS**  
**FALL WINTER 2019-2020 / FEBRUARY 2019**

**BFC SPACE** - The Store Studios 180 Strand WC2R 1EA  
**Connaught Rooms** 61-65 Great Queen St - WC2B 5DA - London  
**Freemason's Hall** 60 Great Queen St - WC2B 5AZ - London  
**(DiscoveryLAB)** \* Out of map See invitation

**FRIDAY FEBRUARY 15 FASHION SHOWS & PRESENTATIONS**

9.00 AM <b>MARK FAST</b> - 9.30 AM - 11.30 AM * <b>BFC SPACE</b>	4.00 PM - 6.30 PM <b>ZILVER</b> (by appointment only)
9.30 AM - 11.30 AM <b>GAYEON LEE</b>	5.00 PM <b>UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER BA</b>
10.00 AM <b>JAMIE WEI HUANG</b> - 10.00 AM - 6.00 PM <b>CHANG HAKELEY</b>	5.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>JOHNSTONS OF ELGIN (M&amp;W)</b>
11.00 AM <b>ASAI</b>	5.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>POSTER GIRL</b> * - 6.00 PM <b>MATTY BOVAN</b> BFC SPACE
11.30 AM - 1.30 PM <b>16ARLINGTON</b>	6.30 PM <b>JAYNE PIERSON</b> Freemason's Hall
1.00 PM <b>BORA AKSU</b> - 1.30 PM - 3.30 PM * <b>ISOSCELES LINGERIE</b> BFC SPACE	7.00 PM <b>SYMMONS PEARMAIN</b> - 8.00 PM <b>ASHLEY WILLIAMS</b>
2.00 PM <b>RYAN LO</b> - 3.00 PM <b>KIRO KOSTADINOV</b>	9.00 PM <b>CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS MA</b> BFC SPACE
3.30 PM - 4.30 PM <b>XU ZHI</b>	9.30 PM - 10.30 PM <b>FASHION HONG KONG</b>
4.00 PM <b>MARTA JAKUBOWSKI</b> BFC SPACE	<b>The College</b> 12 Southampton Row - WC1B 4AP C1

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 16 FASHION SHOWS & PRESENTATIONS**

9.00 AM <b>EUDON CHOI</b> - 10.00 AM <b>A.W.A.K.E.</b>	2.00 PM <b>MOLLY GODDARD</b> - 3.00 PM <b>HALPERN</b>
11.00 AM <b>MIMPICITA</b> Freemason's Hall	3.30 PM - 5.30 PM <b>SMYTHSON (M&amp;W)</b>
11.00 AM <b>PORTS 1961</b> - 11.30 AM - 1.30 PM <b>ALICE ARCHER</b>	4.00 PM <b>TOGA</b> - 5.00 PM <b>HOUSE OF HOLLAND</b>
12.00 PM <b>ALEXACHUNG</b>	5.00 PM <b>ROCKY STAR</b> Freemason's Hall
12.00 PM - 1.00 PM <b>CASSEY GAN</b> Freemason's Hall	5.30 PM - 6.30 PM <b>ADIDAS X JI WON CHOI</b> - 6.00 PM <b>SIMONE ROCHA</b>
12.30 PM - 1.30 PM <b>MALFET THEORHOMES CASH</b>	6.00 PM <b>STORIES FROM ARABIA</b> Connaught Rooms
12.30 PM - 2.00 PM <b>ROBERTS / WOOD</b> - 1.00 PM <b>JASPER CONRAN</b>	6.30 PM - 8.30 PM <b>STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY</b>
1.30 PM - 3.30 PM <b>KATIE ANN MCGUIGAN</b> * BFC SPACE	7.00 PM <b>INTERNATIONAL WOOLMARK PRIZE</b>
1.30 PM - 3.30 PM <b>MARKUS LUPFER</b>	8.00 PM <b>MARY KATRANTZOU</b>
2.00 PM <b>JOLIN WU</b> Freemason's Hall	8.30 PM <b>ATELIER ZUHRA</b> (Followed by Party) Connaught Rooms

**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 17 FASHION SHOWS & PRESENTATIONS**

9.00 AM <b>NATASHA ZINKO</b>	2.00 PM <b>VIVIANNE WESTWOOD</b>
9.30 AM - 11.30 PM <b>KATIA BOULEMAN</b> * BFC SPACE	2.30 PM - 4.30 PM <b>OSMAN</b> - 3.00 PM <b>FASHION EAST</b>
10.00 AM <b>VICTORIA BECKHAM</b>	3.00 PM <b>SIMON MO</b> - 4.00 PM <b>PAM HOGG</b> Freemason's Hall
11.00 AM <b>PREEN BY THORNTON BREGAZZI</b> - 11.00 AM <b>JUNNE</b>	5.00 PM <b>BURBERRY (M&amp;W)</b>
11.30 AM - 1.30 PM <b>ANYA HINDMARCH</b>	6.00 PM <b>ASHISH</b> - 7.00 PM <b>WALES BONNER</b>
12.00 PM - 1.00 PM <b>A-JANE</b> Freemason's Hall	8.00 PM <b>PETER PILOTTO</b> - 8.30 PM <b>AADNEVIK</b>
12.00 PM <b>ROLAND MOURET</b> - 1.00 PM <b>MARGARET HOWELL (M&amp;W)</b>	8.30 PM <b>MALAN BRETON</b>
1.30 PM - 3.30 PM <b>UNDERAGE</b> * BFC SPACE	<b>The House of St Barnabas</b> 1 Greek St, Soho - W14NQ B2

**MONDAY FEBRUARY 18 FASHION SHOWS & PRESENTATIONS**

9.00 AM <b>RICHARD MALONE</b> BFC SPACE	1.30 PM - 3.30 PM <b>STEVE O SMITH</b> * BFC SPACE
9.30 AM - 10.30 AM <b>PAUL COSTELLOE</b>	2.00 PM <b>PRINGLE OF SCOTLAND</b>
9.30 AM - 11.30 AM <b>SHARON WAUCHOB</b> (by appointment only)	2.30 PM - 4.30 PM <b>EDELIN LEE</b> BFC SPACE
9.30 AM - 11.30 AM <b>WESLEY HARRIOTT</b> * BFC SPACE	3.00 PM <b>CHRISTOPHER KANE</b> - 4.00 PM <b>REJINA PYO</b>
10.00 AM <b>ROKSANDA</b> - 11.00 AM <b>ERDEM</b> BFC SPACE	5.00 PM <b>EMILIA WICKSTEAD</b>
11.30 AM - 1.30 PM <b>SUPRIYA LELE</b> BFC SPACE	5.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>HANGER</b> * BFC SPACE
12.00 PM <b>CHALAYAN</b> - 1.00 PM - 4.00 PM <b>ASPINAL OF LONDON</b>	5.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>MOTHER OF PEARL</b> - 6.00 PM <b>HUIZHAN ZHANG</b>
1.00 PM <b>JW ANDERSON (M&amp;W)</b>	6.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>PAULA KNORR</b> - 7.00 PM <b>DAVID KOMA</b> BFC SPACE

**TUESDAY FEBRUARY 19 FASHION SHOWS & PRESENTATIONS**

9.00 AM <b>PUSHBUTTON</b> BFC SPACE	2.00 PM <b>IZZUE (M&amp;W)</b> BFC SPACE
11.00 AM <b>SHRIMPS</b>	2.30 PM - 4.30 PM <b>RDX</b> - 4.00 PM <b>RICHARD QUINN</b>
12.00 PM <b>ROBERTA EINER</b> - 12.00 PM - 2.30 PM * <b>NABIL NAYAL</b> BFC SPACE	4.30 PM - 6.30 PM <b>MILÓ MARIA</b> BFC SPACE
12.30 PM - 2.30 PM <b>ZANDRA RHODES</b>	6.00 PM <b>ON/OFF PRESENTS...</b> BFC SPACE

**THURSDAY FEBRUARY 14 EVENTS** By invitation only

6.00 PM - 8.30 PM <b>A CELEBRATION OF CANADIAN DESIGN &amp; AFTER PARTY</b>
6.30 PM - 9.00 PM <b>PHOEBE ENGLISH</b>
6.30 PM - 9.00 PM <b>WOLF &amp; BADGER LFW PARTY</b>
9.00 PM - Late <b>ADIDAS ORIGINALS LFW PARTY WITH DAZED</b>

**FRIDAY FEBRUARY 15 EVENTS** By invitation only

9.00 AM - 7.30 PM <b>NEWGEN POP-UP SHOWROOM: ALIGHIERI</b> BFC SPACE
2.00 PM - 4.00 PM <b>EVENING STANDARD RECEPTION</b> BFC SPACE
3.30 PM - 5.30 PM <b>KOCCA CELEBRATES K-FASHION</b> BFC SPACE
9.30 PM - 10.30 PM <b>FASHION HONG KONG PRESENTATION &amp; COCKTAIL</b> C1
<b>The College</b> 12 Southampton Row - WC1B 4AP
9.30 PM - 11.30 PM <b>JOSEPHINE JONES BOUTIQUE</b>

**SATURDAY FEBRUARY 16 EVENTS** By invitation only

9.00 AM - 7.30 PM <b>NEWGEN : ISOSCELES LINGERIE</b> BFC SPACE
8.30 PM - Late <b>ATELIER ZUHRA SHOW &amp; MANSION SOIRÉE</b>
8.30 PM - 9.30 PM <b>KHYELI A/W 2019</b>
8.30 PM - 10.30 PM <b>POSITIVE FASHION</b>
8.30 PM - 10.30 PM <b>STORIES FROM ARABIA</b>
8.30 PM - 11.30 PM <b>VIBRANT INDIA SHOW</b>

**SUNDAY JANUARY 17 EVENTS** By invitation only

12.00 PM - 1.30 PM <b>"BRAVE NEW WORLDS"</b> BFC SPACE
<b>NEWGEN POP-UP SHOWROOM</b>
12.00 PM - 2.00 PM <b>HALPERN</b>
2.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>THE SEASON HATS</b>
8.30 PM - 10.30 PM <b>MERCEDES-BENZ FASHION TALENTS 10TH ANNIVERSARY</b>
8.30 PM - 11.00 PM <b>VICTOR WONG PRESENTATION AND PARTY</b>
8.30 PM - Late <b>VICTORIA BECKHAM PARTY</b>

**MONDAY FEBRUARY 18 EVENTS** By invitation only

<b>NEWGEN POP-UP SHOWROOM</b>
10.00 AM - 2.00 PM <b>RICHARD MALONE</b>
2.30 PM - 7.30 PM <b>SUPRIYA LELE</b>
7.30 PM - 8.00 PM <b>APIJAN AUTUMN/WINTER 2019</b>
8.30 PM - Late <b>EDELIN LEE X GLASS MAGAZINE'S PARTY</b>
8.30 PM - Late <b>FABULOUS FUND FAIR</b>

**TUESDAY FEBRUARY 19 EVENTS** By invitation only

9.00 AM - 6.30 PM <b>NEWGEN SHOWROOM: PAULA KNORR</b> BFC SPACE
7.00 PM - Late <b>ON/OFF OFFICIAL LFW CLOSING PARTY</b>

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**TRADE SHOWS**

Feb 15 to 19 The Store St - 180 Strand (O) 207 759 1999 sophia.rux@britishfashioncouncil.com

DRAG AND DROP: ELLIS MHAIRI CAMERON,



## Appendix 6 - Ethnographic Fieldwork Images



*Appendix 6.1: President of the British Fashion Council with Camilla Duchess of Cornwall and designer Bethany Williams at London Fashion Week February 2019*



*Appendix 6.2: Fashion bloggers at the Hyeres Fashion and Photography Festival*



*Appendix 6.3: The afterparty of the Hyeres Fashion and Photography Festival, sponsored by fashion house Chloé*



*Appendix 6.4: Designer Pam Hogg with friends at London Fashion Week party celebrating designer Matty Bovan (February 2019)*



Appendix 6.5: Selection of invitations to presentations and shows at London Fashion Week

londonfashionweek.com
#LFW
#PositiveFashion

# Pass




Nina Van Volkinburg

Blogger

MODERN MELANGE

**LONDON FASHION WEEK**

Appendix 6.6: Digital Press Access Pass to London Fashion Week



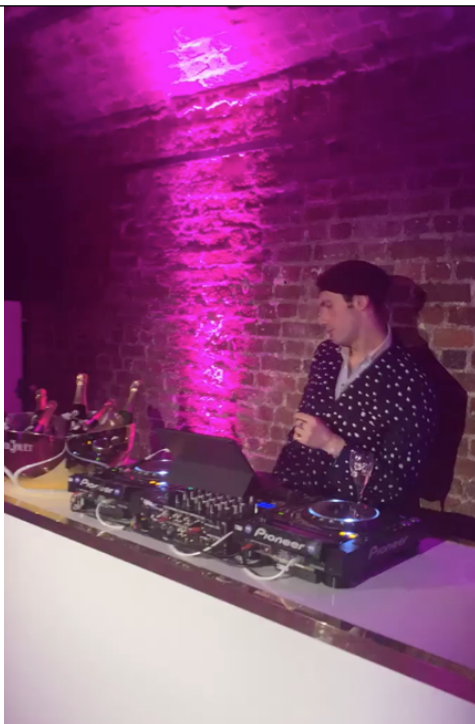
TUESDAY 19TH  
FEBRUARY  
*From 8pm-11pm*  
RSA VAULTS  
*8 John Adam Street, WC2N 6EZ*

CHAMPAGNE  
**PERRIER-JOUËT**

Maison Perrier-Jouët requests  
the pleasure of your company at  
**RICHARD QUINN'S  
SECRET GARDEN  
PARTY**  
*Inspired by the wild.*

RSVP: [clara@bacchus.agency](mailto:clara@bacchus.agency)  
[perrier-jouet.com](http://perrier-jouet.com)  
@PERRIERJOUET  
#ARTOFTHEWILD

Appendix 6.8: London Fashion Week afterparty invitation



Appendix 6.9: Designer Charles Jeffrey; DJ at designer Richard Quinn's afterparty



Appendix 6.7: The action outside of 180 Strand; bloggers, photographers, onlookers



Appendix 6.10: Inflatable guests spotted on the front row at Fyodor Golan





Appendix 6.11: Steven Tai's collection presentation, using CGI and live models at UK Foreign Office.



Appendix 6.12: Model at Steven Tai CGI Presentation

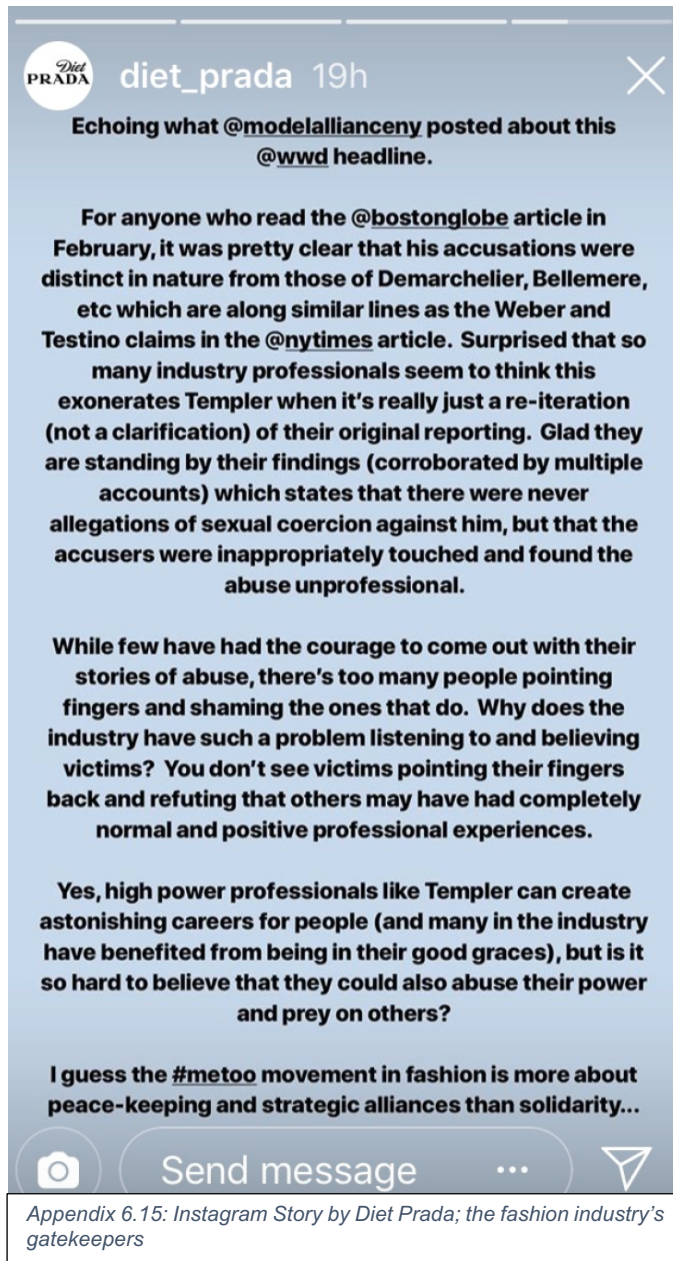


Appendix 6.13: Press and guests at Supriya Lele's presentation



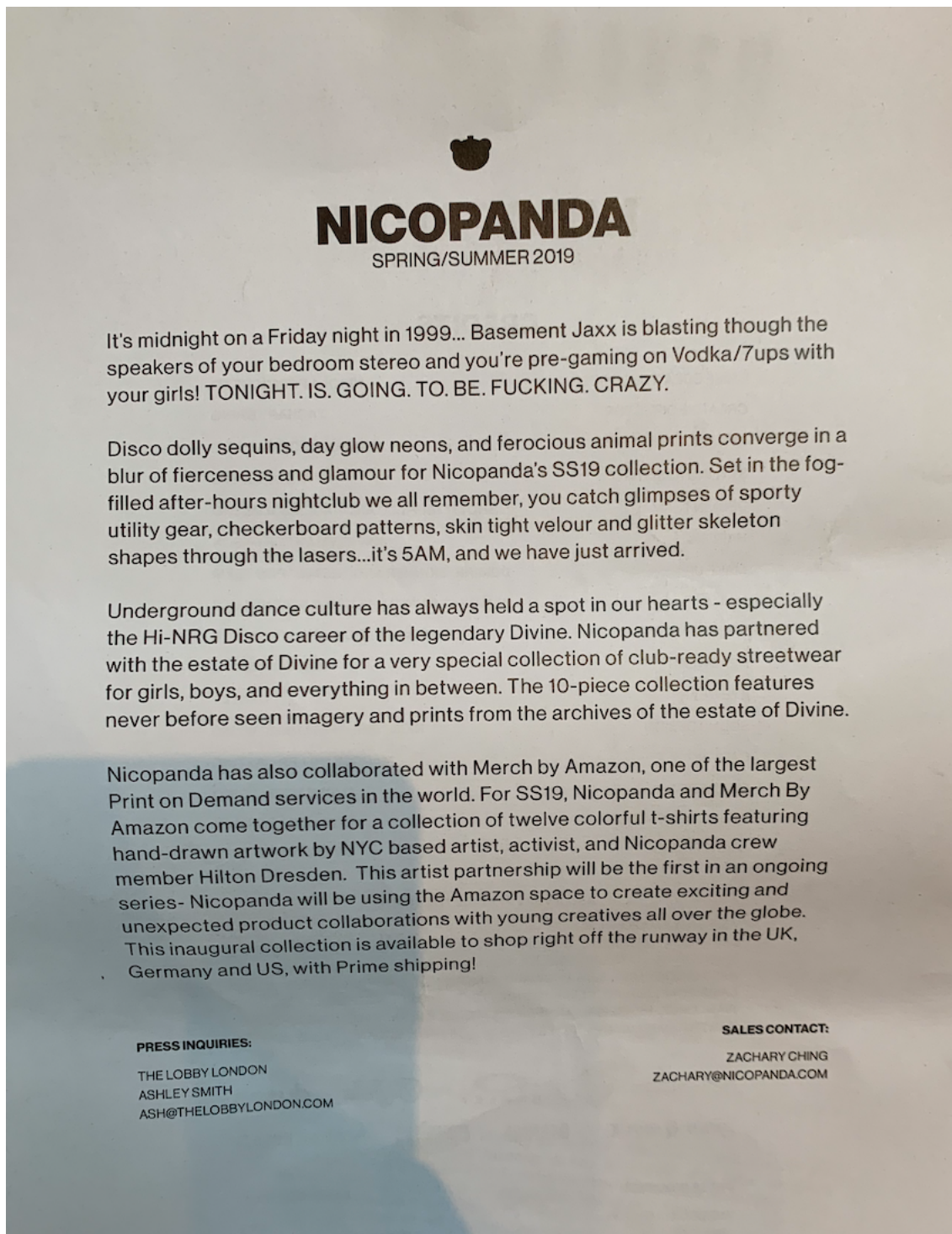
Appendix 6.14: Designer Zandra Rhodes, writer Jordan Wake, and Researcher pictured by Getty Images







## Appendix 7 – Press notes Example



## Appendix 8– Field Access Email Exchange

**Nina Van Volkinburg** <nina@modernmelange.com>  
to peterpilotto ▾

Tue, Jan 22, 2019, 10:35 AM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Dear Daisy,

I hope you are doing well! As a BFC accredited journalist, I would like to request 1 Press Ticket for myself to attend the Peter Pilotto presentation.

I will cover the collection for:

- [Modern Melange](#) (+12,000 subscribers)
- [AustrianFashion.net](#) (Austria's equivalent of the BFC)
- FASHIONSCAPE Podcast (launching February 13th, co-hosted with blogger Jordan Wake)

**My Confirmed London Address is:**  
40 Munro Mews  
W105RZ, London

As every season, I very much looking forward to the collection and in the meantime, wish you and the team all the best for the preparations!

Kindest regards,

Nina Van Volkinburg

**London FashionWeek** <lhw@tracepublicity.com>  
to Nina ▾

📧 Tue, Sep 4, 2018, 10:37 AM ☆ ↩

Hi Nina,

I hope all is well. I have allocated you for the Paul Costelloe catwalk show on Monday 17th September at 09:30am.

Tickets will be going out in the post in the next week for you and PDF attached for details.

Anything else please let me know,

Kind regards

Rob

\*\*\*

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Trace Publicity  
22 Little Russell street  
London  
WC1A 2HL

T:0207 240 9898

**Rejina Pyo** <rejinapyo@dh-pr.com>  
to Laura, Rejina, bcc: nina ▾

Fri, Feb 15, 2019, 2:18 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Thank you for your request to attend the REJINA PYO show. Due to incredibly limited space at the venue this season--mainly for security reasons--we are regretfully unable to accommodate your ticket request on this occasion. Our sincere apologies for the inconvenience and we will of course let you know if this should change in the lead up to the show.

Thank you in advance for your understanding and please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any queries.

Warm wishes,  
DH-PR

**Olivia McCormick** <Olivia.McCormick@ralphandrusso.com>  
to Ellie, Nina ▾

Thu, Jan 24, 2019, 1:05 PM ☆ ↩

Hi Nina,

Thank you for your email.

Please rest assured that we have added your details to our database and we will be processing all ticket requests in the coming weeks.

Kindly note that this email does not guarantee allocation of tickets.

Do let me know if there is anything else I can assist with in the meantime!

Best wishes,  
Olivia

## Appendix 9 – London Fashion Week Welcome

Dear Nina

# Welcome to London Fashion Week September 2018

Please find attached your digital pass for London Fashion Week (LFW), giving you access to the BFC Designer Showrooms, DiscoveryLAB, workspaces, cafes and bars from Friday 14th – Tuesday 18th September 2018. Please save this document on your phone before attending the event.

As part of our Positive Fashion initiative, the British Fashion Council has introduced a new digital registration system, which means no more printed plastic badges.

Your digital pass is all you need to gain access to the LFW main hub - The Store Studios, 180 Strand. There is no need to queue at the registration desk on arrival; please present your digital pass at the entrance to gain access to the LFW Main Hub.

To attend any on-schedule catwalk shows and presentations please contact the brands directly; your digital pass does not give you access to catwalk shows or presentations.

We look forward to welcoming you to LFW.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the team at: [registration@britishfashioncouncil.com](mailto:registration@britishfashioncouncil.com)

## Appendix 10 - Fieldnote Extracts

**Roland Mouret Show: National Theatre.** Two layers of gatekeepers, security guards then the PR girls. Although having received tickets, those with standing tickets (e.g. me) were cast aside behind a pole next to the entrance and were potential seat fillers - everyone is kind and greets the PR girls all equipped with iPads. If you know someone INSIDE the venue, standing room guests are welcomed inside and can go past the ropes. Arrivals often emerge in pairs or groups, including editor and chiefs of leading publications. Those in loud outfits are photographed at entrance. Hugs emphasised with kisses with guests between themselves. Big gestures, "how are you?!" often followed by "darling", "love", "babes". Jokes, and brief chit chat between PR girls and guests. Outsiders looking on inside (those not in fashion looking from stairs, photographers looking at bloggers, bloggers getting invitation but not invited, standing room, invited, then VIPS). Eccentric looks calling for attention, looking to gain following or capital, 1 woman had tickets for herself and daughter, some don't even have physical invitations and simply stride inside. Other guests have no invitation yet asking for people - "Perfect go straight through". Important members have assistant and PR escort. Knowing the right contacts can get you through. Power walk, moving ahead you think they are "important" but actually "only" in standing room - deception, appearance isn't everything. Hamish Bowles of Vogue going to "enquiries" booth to get seat number but PR girl runs and grabs him to personally escort to seat. Collection inside is full of dream coats, brocades, knits, geometrical, structured capes, creme suit, a striped flow, asymmetrical draping, sharp, corduroy millennial pink, yolk yellows, hyper femininity with masculine edge, cargo bomber, a draped asymmetry, patchwork elements. Most guests leave show notes on seats. I pick some up. Photographers take pictures of VIPs inside venue. Street style photographers wait outside and run towards celebrities.

**Fashion Week Protest:** Upon exit of 180 Strand, I was met with a wall of raging protesters equipped with posters, violently screaming. They were held back behind metal barriers and security guards. The protesters shouted "Shame, Shame on London Fashion week". Here was an increase in Police presence; it was said that a protester cut off part of a "fashion insider's" fur hood with a pair of scissors. R: I too am very much against fur, but the shouting and eyes peering at you made me feel incredibly uncomfortable and I was

disappointed because sustainability and fur-free fashion is on the rise, with only a small percentage employing fur today. Huge strides have been made and to conjure this reaction shouting shame at everyone walking out of the Strand felt very unfair. Distinction in style between protesters and fashion insiders.

**Front Row:** Seems that the later the guest is, the better it is in terms of status as all are already seated and you walk in front of everyone. The most important editors are often late or arrive right on time. The front row is the most important - you are there to see and to be seen. 95% of guests record the show with phone, especially at the end where you don't even hear any clapping, which is very surreal. I make a point to clap. Clapping starts only once the designer emerges after the models have left the catwalk. Behind the front row (FROW) is the second row and then standing. If front row isn't filled then standing people can be fillers as brands cannot afford a space in the FROW.

**Nervous:** In term of registration, there is a sigh of relief when your name is on the list, the line behind you can move on and you are justified to be where you are. Once inside the venues, everyone is looking at each other and listening in to conversations surrounding them. Exaggerated hellos and big gestures and hugs. Photos taken from the front row to legitimise the collection and worth of self. Much peacocking about the individual at the show but not the actual collection. This is similar in terms of reporting - the headline is who was at the show, not what was the meaning of the show (e.g. Henry Holland) Does this drive buzz or does it distract and dilute the beauty of a collection?

**Changing Nature:** How is fashion week changing? Now it is more about engaging presentations in diverse locations, capturing the spirit of the brand. Anya Hindmarsh instead of presenting at LFW set out on a love letter for London displaying "chubby hearts" all around the city capturing the world's attention. Is this the direction for fashion? An ethereal spirit less about product but about ideas and the experience of a brand. One big branding exercise? Are in that case the bloggers on to something with their self branding and strutting around with head to toe paid advertising? It is all about self-presentation? Some people who look super important end up being in standing and the ones in the front row are often dressed very basic are the world's leading editors. Do these 2 things have to be mutually exclusive? Attention to gain status vs. no need for attention - you are who you are. Some need no explanation for who they are while others struggle to justify what they can bring to the table usually through extravagant clothing.

Is everything about identity? Who exploits the digital - the established reinforce their status, others create it - justifying they were present and therefore worth an invitation. Multiple stages of gatekeepers. Deception to inflate social standing - never put it down. Access is everything. And what happens once one achieves status? Fame? Glory? Respect? Is it for the love of clothes? The quest for the new? The distinction of placing yourself as having "made it" at such a young age. Being the centre of attention a reflection of a generation. Our need to be where the buzz is at? But what happens if the buzz fizzles out? Will there be consequences if the hype is lost? Must brands bring life style?

**Gatekeepers to entrance:** 1) The physical mass of onlookers in front of the entrance 2) The queue of invited members waiting to get inside the venue 3) Snaking metal physical barriers 4) Press accreditation based off of numbers (google analytics), press kit, photo. As well as an initial accreditation one must apply and receive from the British Fashion Council. To gain access one must be 1) a buyer 2) Press with a letter from your managing editor or a 3) blogger with at least a following of 50K. 5) Security guards at entrance 6) Bag check inside building 7) Registration office inside  
September 17

**Honesty:** A friend I made, the personal assistant of a renowned fashion journalist, escorted me to the next show. The group I was with all had invitations but I didn't apply to cover this show so I was worried I wouldn't get in. We get to the entrance - it was the top of BlueBird - and I was nervous I wouldn't be able to enter. The PR lady fumbles with her list and just says go, go. I show her the email my friend sent me which had the invite on it to make sure all was ok. My friends laugh at me for being too honest for this business! I ask my new friend if he is an influencer? Influencer? GOD if I hear the word influencer one more time I will go mad!

### **Nicholas Kirkwood**

Standing in front of the Ambika 3 venue next to Westminster University, I am happy to have arrived 30 minutes earlier to observe. Immediately what strikes me is that there are passive and active actors. The passive watch, observe (like me) oggle, waiting. I feel vulnerable waiting as I should be doing something else. The active participants are either photographing those dressed nicely, there are those influencers dressed head to toe in designer clothes and are posing on the street. They get dropped off a block before the show and walk towards the photographers in order to have more photos of themselves taken. The huddle of photographers snap together at their target in the middle. Two other influencers seize the opportunity by breaking into the circle, air kissing the influencer colleague and then posing afterwards, pushing the other influencer out of the picture. In front of the entrance a queue starts to form letting people in. Cliques form with colleagues looking after one another. Introductions through friends of friends. Immediately air kisses.

Many influencers connected with PR directly. Police presence, walking back and forth - they don't look very engaged. We are on a busy road. A bus stops in front and the people on the top arch their backs to catch a glimpse of the action, taking pictures with their smart phones. People in cars also are gazing out the window to see the action. It is an unusual entertaining spectacle. What differentiates this situation? The strangely dressed people? The flurry of flashes indicating the presence of a celebrity? Some "normal" people walk slowly by, you can tell they are not fashion people as they are dressed in jeans and t-shirts. A distinction of pigeons and peacocks. All of the sudden I am very overwhelmed. I feel insecure on my own and hoping that Diane will come through. Some influencers do they power walk, target in eye, arms linked together as if they are hunted by the photographers, they equally pose so they are a bit coy. They exchange details with the photographers - it is a reciprocal relationship; I give you credit if you give me a great photo. Unpaid by social climbing par excellence. Business people are in cliques while influencers walk alone straight into show, alone. The show was meant to start at 5:00; it is now 10 past 5:00. Then all the sudden the big editors in the industry enter, well dressed not in bold colours, not linked, able to stand without linking arms. I reach out to Diane and she immediately introduces me to the editor she is with. Handshake, kind, interested in my work. Professional. We enter as a group, no invitations are needed; I hear a security guard refer to me... "Excuse me...!" No, no she's fine. I am with the true makers and shakers here- they don't need to prove themselves to anyone else. We enter down concrete stairs; it is all an open industrial space. Garbage tips filled with cardboard of NK boxes, posters indicating the show is happening. A flickering hologram in front of the entrance of a high heeled shoe and punching fists holding a shoe; similar to that of the communist sign. We enter a massive show space; dark smoky and I immediately see a stage invoking a hacker's den. There is a desk, fridge, couch, all the amenities of home but severely dystopian - underground - where a criminal lurks. Floating above the stage are a series of TV screens and CCTV cameras pointed at the audience. With my group they are mingling with other members of the front row including the former president of Dior and current chairman of LVMH. Are you OK the PR asks me, yes I am with Diane. Diane suggests I go to the back for the best view. Yes, the best view but in terms of status the "lowest". I walk up towards my colleagues - bloggers, friends of those performing in the show. I stand next to a chipper Australian blogger who was invited by the choreographer of the show. She is the co-founder of a blog but works at a marketing agency to make ends meet. She said that she was well established in Sydney with many contacts but those contacts didn't translate to London and she had to start over. Then the music blasts and the TVs show a parody of a TV shopping channel, Fake News setting the scene. This society was being taken over by a crazy tyrant named Z and it was against the law to dress differently. If you don't conform you will suffer the consequences - not a wildly outrageous plot. The white hat hacker comes dressed in white, wearing a balaclava. She struts with confidence. She takes off her face covering and it is Rose McGowan- actress and activist who called out Harvey Weinstein for the Me too movement. Then the parade of models emerge all in white, wearing digital chords in their hair, remarkable shoes and accessories. The spotlight then turns onto the audience, like the police are searching for someone. As the finale, the models are escorted by the anti-fashion police. Once finished the crowd flood out and I sadly lose Diane but head back stage to the show room. The mis en scene continues as it is staged as an interrogation room with the accessories labeled as "sealed evidence"; Rose and the designer were even in the interrogation room behind glass. I leave the magic bubble and head back to the Baker street tube station; the air is less tense and people are oblivious of the situation.

**Conversation I overhear in 180 the Strand:** So I was at Victoria Beckham yesterday and starting speaking to Derek Blasberg. You know that guy who is always posting pictures with celebrities? I think he writes a society column for Vanity Fair. Or at least he used to because now he is head of fashion partnerships for Youtube. What is that? Exactly that's what I asked. He said I basically do what you do [the person speaking was an editor], but because we have billions of views every day there's actually lot more responsibility. What the fuck..? Yeah he's a dick.

....Well you know she only let in like 6 photographers since she wanted her kids to take the pictures. Brooklyn wants to be a photographer so wanted to help launch his career. Isn't that crazy

**Evening Standard Party** At the entrance, there are three helpers. With the list. Jordan is on the list. I am not. She is with me and Maurice invited us, he says. The receptionist seems uneasy and looks to her colleague. Yes but she (i.e. me) is not on the list. Maurice waves from across the room and all is well. Access granted. Evening Standard Party with Maurice and Jordan. I was only invited because of Jordan who knows Maurice, he has been in the industry for 44 seasons (not 44 years he jokes, twice) and is the head of luxury and fashion for the evening standard. They invited industry greats for an opening apero of fashion week. Everyone says hi with kisses. You must make a move to reach out to others as no one really knows who you are at this point. Talked to Sarah Fabrege first and her assistant. What do you do? I am a researcher, a journalist, and an academic. We speak about the volatility of the industry. It is a challenge to be a timeless jeweler brand and uber luxurious over social media. It cheapens the brand. Tough times for retail. All about the experience and communicating a brand's story. She is with her assistant Jo. What do you do? Oh I am Diane's Assistant. (Who is Diane I think to myself...) Through the conversation it is established that she is from one of the iconic Dutch Jewellery companies. We drink our complimentary champagne. Maurice walks by and Diane and Jo bounce up to speak with him. Exaggerated hugs. J and I are left to head over to the food bar. We have barely eaten anything all day apart from the complimentary popcorn and the protein bars



that are handed out by nervous, attractive volunteers. And coffee, lots of free coffee. Espresso martini's are served after 16:00. Then there is always a queue.

**The Strand:** How funny that the strand is usually an empty warehouse. With scaffolding, construction. The Fashion Week headquarters used to be at Somerset house in a tent. Then it moved to brewer street, now here. Somewhat of a work in progress- a comparison to the fashion industry. The party is in the VIP entrance of the Strand. Inside there are lush green velvet couches, trendy tables and chairs, warm lighting, like a very cosy living room. Lots of greenery as well. There is also a makeshift kitchen counter with staff in white, serving cold cuts, brownies, small quiches, and yes coffee. Coffee and booze. The PRs hover around the sides of the rooms, tablets in hand, observing the situation and making sure everything is running smoothly.

I use the ladies room which doesn't seem to have been cleaned in days. Behind the scenes of the pristine, is very mundane everyday reality. Chaos.

**Thoughts:** There are those that have a passion and are there to support the designers, then there are those that want to support themselves.

Everyone moves in cliques.  
We are separated by status.

It is funny as the venue is like a high school disco, with big disco balls in the middle. People are talking in the middle - those who have a status. Those who do not have the status are on the side, looking down at them.

**FashionScout Show:** We are entering the show venue. First people with names on their tickets may enter. Next only those with Red and Orange stickers. We have green stickers. We must wait. And if you don't have a physical invite- well too bad. Thankfully my friend has extra tickets as he is friends with the designer. It is like herding cattle in here isn't it?! A sassy flamboyant man shoves his way to the front with a woman with bleach blonde hair and lots of make-up. I have no idea who this is. *Excuse me! Excuse me! I'm with Talent! Hello! I'm with talent!!* The talent makes their way through and they sit in the front row. What is their talent I wonder? What is the talent for the reality TV star for 1 season? As we arrive we are told to go stand at the back. How surreal to be front row at the previous show and now am shoved to the back behind the three rows in front. I even recognise a famous Trans figure standing next to us. No fairness in Love, war and fashion. Before the show starts, 20 photographers go up and down the runway shooting any recognisable faces. That is David Bennet. He is the original Paparazzo in his grey beard. An onlooker next to me states how it is an honour to be shot by him. The reality TV star is demoted to the second row and is squashed next to an old greasy looking man. Orange, slimy skin, slicked back, wispy and oily hair in a snakeskin suit. I told me before that no one knew what he did and that he wasn't actually part of the fashion industry. I notice he only takes photos of the scantily clad girls on the runway.

## Appendix 11 Interview Transcript

### Participant 14: "Arthur"

Date: June 5, 2019

Time: 12:00

Location: University of Westminster, London UK

Job Role: Course Director for BA Fashion Design at the University of Westminster

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N: First of all, how did you start your career in fashion? Did you want to be in fashion in the first place?

A: Yeah I suppose, in terms of studying I did a foundation and then I did a costume course at Crawley HND and at the time I was thinking I wanted to get into fashion and it was around the time of mid-eighties so Vivienne Westwood, Gaultier, and I thought a fashion course would be really boring. It would teach me how to make a blouse, I want to learn how to make corsets, I wanted that knowledge to inform what I do. I always wanted to do fashion and I always thought where would you get the tools to be able to do what you want to do and I think that is how I approached education and also I would say the difference between education between then and now, I don't remember telling my parents I was going to Saint Martins or if they were particularly interested so I thought the difference between then and now feels like it is a much more personal approach to why you are using education and what you are getting out of it, whereas now because of the fees and every else there is so many other people that have vested interests in how students do from parents, employers, the university the you know, the thing about the national student survey is so important to people that um are not much interested in what the actual outcome is. Yeah that is how I got into fashion

and that's maybe my route to education is me thinking oh that will help me get to where I want to get, so I finished that course and then I started selling things it was this shop called Bond off Newberg street um and I was just making stuff then, so no knowledge of how you, how did I know you just went in a shop? It is quite interesting isn't it? I suppose it must have been because I had seen things stocked in magazines like The Face and ID and thinking there are cool things, I'll go to them because they will appreciate this and so there was no business behind that in how much things cost or how you get the money or do production and then sometime after that, 3 years or so maybe, then I met McQueen in a pub-

N: At a pub?!

A: I suppose he saw the same in me, someone who can sew and I started working with him as well as going out with him and that was about 2 years and then I learned so much from him but then I realised I had to go to Saint Martins because I want to change what I do and what I produce, because I learned new skills where I can position myself in the market and its different, where I make more money and then I thought well he's done it by going to Saint Martins MA so I'll go there and I'll go there because you get to show in the end which means you get publicity and then from that you get a backer and then you have got a business and then I can concentrate on the creative things and this mythical other person can do stuff that I don't like! Fabulously naive! And so then then I went to Saint Martins, and yeah sort of really used that course for the show at the end knowing that would hopefully get enough press into it, to get stockists, and to get a backer.

N: So that would be the launch pad for you

A: Yeah, and not thinking I needed anything in that time in learning anything, I didn't think I needed to learn anything back then!

N: And during that time you said you met McQueen, were you working together as well during that time?

A: Yeah, so probably the very next day I met him we moved in together more or less and started, because I think at the time it was sort of just him and it was hard to imagine a time without - did we have mobile phones then? We had a rabbit phone, so we really anything done became a laborious, so you would use your landline, and then might say I need you to do this for this and this person, so there were always, projects took a lot longer, so there was the show that had to be done but would you do the special commission so it just felt because he was doing that on his own you were tagging along anyway to go meet people and now you can just be in the studio and people just send you stuff, you can do stuff without having to leave the studio. So much of it you had to go and see people meant you may as well come along to the cafe and so I think you ended up getting dragged into it and yeah that was 4 seasons.

N: So it was you, him, a team? It seems you guys were collaborating-

A: Yeah, I supposed because I was used to just making things and putting them in shops and I thought well he is doing just the same, just managed to convince the people at Vogue or wherever that these things are good and at the time I didn't realise how skilled he was. Or I just took that the talent he had was normal, it was only afterwards that you realise how rare that talent is. So it just felt a bit like a fun adventure, I mean it was interesting I saw that documentary last year and that first half I thought actually yeah it all feels like an adventure and a scam and everyone is just playing at it, until it gets to the stage where it becomes some big business that's like, oh actually this had become too big and serious.

N: During the starting stages, was it quite fun? Did you see it as "work"?

A: No because there was only 2 people and maybe 2 or 3 weeks before the show, other people came in but none of it was work because you weren't going anywhere because there wasn't really a studio, you weren't doing specific hours. It was more, if we do this then Izzy Blow or someone will give us 200 quid then we would go to the pub!

N: So there wasn't this distinction between professional life and private life?

A: I think it was a lot more naive because you know there are people in their second year at Saint Martins that are doing collections and do you know what I mean, it was more about, but also the interest in fashion was a lot smaller. In terms of the people wanting to know about the process, and what is done, and who does it and all of that. No one really cared, they just, just wanted to the things X or where that Gaultier thing, not interested in how that has happened. Which meant, it didn't matter how you got to that end result. It was just the end result and I think because also at that time I suppose all there had been before was Galliano and all of getting his success and going bankrupt, there wasn't really a plan, there wasn't Fashion East, it was the beginning of New Gen but not really a thing, it was just money they gave you, it wasn't like you applied or this is how you do it, I do this, this, and this. Even Izzy Blow, she was no Diane Mower or Lulu Kennedy, she was just oh I quite like that, she was just as chaotic as everyone else and doing it far more ad

hoc way of enjoying yourself, rather in a scheming way of this would make me money, I would get all of these other things from it. Whereas I think people now are more like brokers.

N: Do you think that is a negative thing to lose that chaos and being more on the arts side?

A: I think it is negative when people, especially students think there is only one route to success and there is only one definition to what success is and they think oh but if I get fashion East or I get New Gen or if I win the LVMH competition I think well you're now finding your success by other people's criteria and sometimes you think, why the hell you are young, why would you want to work for some huge conglomerate like LVMH? Why is that your idea of success? And why do you not also think, actually, what is really good if you are really thinking about it is put yourself in opposition because that makes you far more interesting. We had a student, I don't think he did it to be interesting, he just didn't want to do it, who when we had show selection back in February, he said I actually don't want to be in show selection, I don't want to be part of the show. And he's amazing. Really talented in menswear. And I said, but you'll be really good, I'm sure you'll get in, it's not me who selects and he went, it's not for me. And I tried everything like to persuade him and no! You don't have to do it, but maybe just to get the feedback and see what people think. No. He didn't take part then we went to Paris - no I don't want to be part of the showrooms! And then Diane Mower came to look at the collections and she asked which one is the star and I said well Sam is really good and she said, Oh I haven't seen his! And I said no, because he didn't want to be in the showroom she was like, it is amazing! And I explained what he's done, she said, I want to meet him! And I said... I don't think he would want to speak to you! I said not in a rude way, he's just not interested! He is disengaged because he worked for a big conglomerate, saw what it meant to be turning over billions and just became very disenchanted and said no, I actually want to go to Ghanna and work with women, teach them skills, and yet he's the most exciting one. So you see everyone I tell that to, like I also told someone in Paris and they were like gasp! And I thought yeah, that is also how you make yourself exciting and interesting in a way if you actually did want to it.

N: That is a really interesting point, I mean today, all of our information is out there, whether that is Instagram or Twitter and it is almost the new luxury or something that makes you stand out is when you are more anonymous and you leave a little bit of yourself. That is an interesting example of how that increases the desire.

A: Yeah and also that idea that, I think because everything is out there, you don't actually think what is out there that still makes people form an opinion of them. So there are 3 collections at the St Martins show, I didn't go, I watched it online and I thought oh that's interesting, I clicked on their instagram and every single one of them described themselves as an artist. And that infuriates me that, but I thought, oh they are creating an image for a show but they don't realise there is all this other stuff and you can just google. You can just find out so much stuff and to then not, maybe that thing about, there were points of focus when you go to interact with certain people, that you could limit and define who you were. Smaller things. You had an appointment and you would go to Vogue and show them stuff and you'd think right, what do you take, and how you what you take and how you do that defines how you are but now people don't actually have to interact with you personally. They can form a huge opinion of you because there is so much stuff already out there. I don't think that is necessarily a good thing

N: Yeah perhaps the image has eclipsed the substance of the product, so the art, and as you were touching upon earlier there is a difference when you can go up close to something, feel it, see the construction, opposed to just being drawn to the most loud picture which catches the attention. Do you think that is one of the negative effects of social media.

A: Well that is how it has changed, I never know if it is negative, so I think, I was talking to someone this week about how you had to wait for collectioni to come out in the 90s, probably 2 months after the shows to see everyone's collections and you would go to Frank's magazine shop. And there used to be, was it London and Paris and then Milan and New York. Two books, £90 each and you would buy 1 and photocopy it and go back the same day and go ugh! I got the wrong one! And they were aware of that!

N: Would they give a little wink?

A: Sometimes you got away with that sometimes you didn't! And you would meet all the designers in there. It was a bookshop slightly bigger than this room and as soon as people found out they got it in, you would meet everyone in there because everyone wanted to see what everyone else had done. Because at the time there might have been 1 black and white image in the Times so Gaultier might have done some amazing collection, you heard about it but you couldn't actually see it. If on one photo, you would read Suzy Menkes' oh he did this and you had to create that image in your head and of course now with so much imagery you think, who gets to control that imagery? That is the difficulty isn't it. So that Frederick, inflatable balloon, I was wanting to use it for a presentation I am doing next week. Well there's endless versions of it and so which is the one is the one you want to, I don't know, I always think that as a designer your job is to edit.



Edit fabric choices, colour choices, edit it down but if there is multiple versions of everything and you are not controlling that is that a problem or not? And also it has just become about image making hasn't it? Because I know when I am with students even the MA we were discussing, whatever is the first collection, there is about 8 collections, the first photo will be the first photo on [style.com](http://style.com) do we want it to be that? What does that say about all of it if you are making decisions based on how you know it is going to be received whereas before it would have been someone like Suzy Menkes saying actually it is that 30th outfit that is the one, so you are also making decisions on how it comes out, which collection first, we've got an issue of oh gosh that first outfit, will they even print it! So then you are actually self-editing what you want to present because you imagine them saying oh well we can't use that, will use a different one or not use it at all.

N: So more about pulling in someone's eyes -

A: Well I suppose also that thing about you are creating something that has to be instantaneously digested and understood and dismissed, where it used to give us time for people to analyse and think and contemplate. There used to be the length of the show, 30 minutes. Well its already been discussed and digested by the time you've got to the 5th outfit because it is on nowfashion. It's journalists aren't even, they are live tweeting stuff and reacting and saying stuff and you are thinking, I remember Suzy Menkes in the late 90s, would go to 1 show in the tents and she went to the next show, and she sat there while waiting for the show to start, typing her review of the last show. And I thought oh my god that's amazing that she can do all of that from what she has seen, make the references to other shows, and historical things in that amount of time. And now?!

N: Yeah! I was speaking with Diane and she said she used to have 24 hours and now it is 3 hours! For me writers like Suzy, Diane they add value, context to a collection and if that is broken down into maybe just a sentence, a word, an emoji! It is all kind of being funnelled down! Do you still see value in fashion critics though? Still important?

A: Yeah! And I think, you'll have to do the research, I think they've got softer and less opinionated or the opinions are hidden further in the review. I remember one review I was saying to student's, one Tim Blanks had done, and I said read it and it's this, it describes the set - at no point are the clothes being discussed! It's criticism by omission, or my other favourite is always, there was some dreadful show and then the next season they say, oh this was a return to form after last season's very disappointing show. You are thinking well you didn't say that in the last review that it was "disappointing". Whereas I can remember those reviews of Colin McDowell, Suzy, with a roundup of the week, hugely critical and piercing. Colin McDowell once wrote about a designer in London draped with all of the élan of a shop window display at Debenhams. You were able to quote them! You actually wanted, as the designer, that is the approval you wanted. Because I never, purposefully never when I was showing had any contact with Colin because I wanted whatever the review to be not clouded by any personal relationship because I valued that review. And even though they were sometimes really cutting and dismissive, um my second show I think he said bin liner chic, tailored slightly too far or something, but I thought. That is what I needed, I needed, he is the voice I value and I need that to inform my work and now I worry it is just about how many likes you've got.

N: Exactly, it is more about the quantity not the quality, that is what I wanted to ask you, just through my observations at the various fashion weeks, you see the cohort of influencers coming in and it is about the Me, me being at the show, me sitting front row, and it is not really about discussing the designer, appreciating the work. There are various tensions with the more establishment

A: I suppose our work has become what's the right work, both for the designer and the audience has become something that enables other things to happen and the work has no intrinsic value. So I was at a show last season and then some of these people sat opposite me and got up and came over and asked Oh, could you just take a photo of us. And I'm just thinking, this is not why I'm here! They had no interest in the show. They took no photos of the things that went past, it was only about we are attending. The status that comes with attending a show and a bit like I'm saying next week, you watch that thing with Fredrik but when you look at the audience they are mediating it through the phone. So actually there was 1 person who was it, watching it. Everyone else is looking down here. They're not even watching that. And I'm thinking.... that's problematic because the framing is all from media, there is a medium there.

N: It's a 2D screen, you aren't seeing the movement as well

A: Especially fashion is becoming more experiential - in fact it is so big it is touching the front row, that is doing something sculptural and yet people are wanting to not engage with that they are aware of that and I'm thinking who are all of these photos for?

N: Yeah exactly, I think the assumption is its for the consumer but how is that actually adding value? Do you think it has become democratised where the end consumer is taking more of a role in fashion or is that only what we think, which is why we are sharing these photos?

A: I don't know it is an odd one, it is that analogy with going to music gigs that again everyone is again mediating it through their phone rather than of being in the moment.

N: Yeah like everyone is taking the same video, this weekend I went to the Bon Iver concert and everyone was recording it. For who? You need to enjoy the moment! I think it is hard to digest the cultural product when you are thinking of capture this then send it on yeah

A: Yeah and my favourite, this is quite a few years ago, there had been some terrorist thing or some accident happened, Prince Charles and Camilla were visiting people in hospital. Camilla was coming towards someone and they didn't put down their phone - you are seriously ill! And there was a film crew filming this so you don't need your own

N: I guess that is a challenge though for graduates from Westminster or CSM because you have to produce something for screens and I read somewhere, outfits just in black tend to get less likes and its like hm that is interesting how that has an impact.

A: It is interesting - it came up in the course maybe twice now. Last time was about a month ago. About what goes on our instagram feed. and should it be this or that and I was thinking it has nothing to do with you. It's edited maybe for various reasons. I'm not necessarily looking at the analytics and thinking oh they like this, I'll put more of that up. You show a breadth and a range of things that maybe won't be liked and that's fine. But I think they are driven by more likes means better and I was looking at Instagram this morning thinking, we have got a menswear archive and I was thinking I wonder who would be good to engage to get them in. So I put in biggest influencers and I don't understand, the biggest influencers, 7 million or whatever they are people endlessly doing posed photos of nothing. I mean I've done a whole section of people holding coffee looking into the middle distance! And it is such an artifice you think, who has taken the picture, this is such a creation of what has meant to be a moment and yet that has become the norm.

N: And also, would you agree that when you started in the industry there was a sense of more individual style, whereas today it is more about confirming, like if you look at these influencers, everyone kind of looks the same, the same style.

A: Well I look at those that have 7 million and I can't understand why, because they are very, very bland and I can understand with people like Rhianna because that is about something else, but bland, I don't know how you would copy that, how do you do bland in a way that gets people to like? So the interesting people have far less followers, and I don't understand that either. And the people that I would want to be engaged with so me trying to think right, who - because we got different designers, so Gaultier who would be the right person on Instagram to chat about Gaultier to? It is very hard for me to find that person because, I have got to look through all the photos. It is not a numbers thing - a thousand, a hundred thousand followers, maybe they are not the right person. Um and I think going back to say the 90s, with fewer people you wanted to impress, I mean you didn't necessarily want to impress people, it was rather people were sick than bored at a fashion show. Which truly I think, coming out of that for lots of reasons, that sensation Brit-art thing of you wanted people to have a strong reaction and you didn't care what that reaction was um because that was seen as being good whereas now I think it is about people wanting to be liked. We have only got the one thing which is being liked - not annoyed, hate

N: It has been narrowed down to that,

A: And that is driven just by advertising isn't it? Because all of that data we are giving people, that they can analyse and then give us more accurate advertising to sell stuff whether its washing liquid or politics. That people are just coming into this bubble of themselves being reflected back

N: And I guess what is interesting, when you do like something a type of designer, then through that data, you are given other options that are similar to that designer, whereas you were before mentioning this book from London-Paris, were exposed to all of these different collections. I worry that through big data we are going to build walls and not be exposed

A: I think we have, politics has become so fractious in the past 5 years. Because everyone can't understand that real world, isn't the world that is surrounding them because without knowing it they have edited their lives to things that reflect themselves back. And I think it works both ways so there was that Tory MP who said the other day, well I don't see any poverty around. And I'm thinking well you won't have because you've edited your world where you won't see that poverty! And I think that is the danger and that leads to maybe very bland outcomes.

N: And maybe that leads to the hype culture? We have brands like Supreme and Palace or even Virgil at Louis Vuitton, it definitely captures the zeitgeist in a way but quite bland in terms of design and yeah it is more of a lifestyle

A: And I wonder whether that thing of replacing - there is another bit of research if you want to do it! - is the length those people have stayed in those roles as creative directors has got shorter and shorter so now I think they will become more like guest editors, like this person will be doing it for 2 seasons. Or maybe just a season, because actually they have realised they have a value but that value fades very quickly. Like Hedi Slimane at Celine, will that end in a couple of years because they have got enough out of that and then, and if that is not about the product, it's about hype, that hype naturally dies doesn't it? I keep coming back to Frederick, you see I analysed this, I was thinking god that needs, for the show production, because I've done so many shows that the first one out, everyone is going yay! And then because of the time in which the rest of it takes, and also because they have seen, since that big reveal, that they know what to expect so then the excitement has dissipated and you think god that's happened in 4 minutes! People have moved on, which I see a lot of at the St. Martins shows because I do the show production, I think oh dear, I love that as an image but now it has to travel all the way down here and all the way back so there was a guy that had a woman on a sedan

N: Yeah I did see that!

A: Great image! But now it has got to get all the way down the runway and I was thinking, people aren't patient anymore, they have processed that image. They want the next one. So we went to John Alexander Scouten's show a year and a half ago. It was purposefully a very long presentation. And you could tell the audience was restless to begin with because they wanted it now and they wanted it instant, and wanted it next, and he wasn't doing it like that. He was drawing it out and making the time his time, rather than fashion time which is now sped up that it - I find it astonishing that shows are now 5 minutes. Whereas the shows at Gaultier, Gaultier, the hasidic jewish collection that was like 30 minutes. You know what I mean? So you are allowing people to have the time to analyse and think and process.

N: Because even after the show it's onto the next one, even when you are sitting at the first show, you are thinking how am I getting to point B. So you don't have that time to digest but that is interesting, because I feel a buzzword these days is experience marketing. The experience. But there seems to have been more of experience when we look back at the 90s. I think you did various shows that really you know, it wasn't just about the clothes. I think you had the burning crosses?

A: Yes!!

N: That was also an incredible experience!

A: I think also was an interesting collection that it was, it was in Camden under the arches where the Stables market sits and a very small enclosed space and people went in. It was probably just about dusk so when they came out then the crosses had been erected, burning. It was right in front of them but they hadn't seen them, because we did it while the show was going. I almost wanted them to burn all of the clothes, in front of them at the end, but I chickened out! But I was obsessed by that idea that it was the, which comes from theatre, which I worked in previously. About the experience and an experience between a group of people. And that was what was important. Um and how they described and talked about it and reinterpreted it and I think and I don't think that was necessarily about control. It was perhaps something far more poetic, actually you have given them this and it is up to them to do that. Whereas now everyone is doing that but no one is, people are very rarely doing that in a way that is a thoughtful or considered version. Which obviously if garments went out to a photographer, that photographer is thinking how he is representing that person, reinterpretation that work, is taking time. And so you do end up with something that has value because it is an interpretation of something. But that is just thousands of pictures of almost, like you were saying with the rock group, thousands of pictures of the same thing. Who needs that?

N: You have a background in theatre you were saying - is that why fashion weeks or runway shows will continue in the future because we do crave that experience that kind of yeah theatrical element?

A: Yeah well Charlie Porter talks about, he came into the lecture, and saying when you do have those moments in a show where you know people are having the same emotional response, then you, that has an amazing value, he said that Craig Green show, everyone started crying. Which is like, and I've seen the show and I'm thinking great show, but I don't understand how they had that response. So, but they obviously did and you think, well that is why they will continue because there is something that happens in that shared moment that you can't replicate by photo or any other processes.

N: So You would say on that note that the traditional fashion weeks as we know them today they will continue in the future?

A: I don't know because the other thing I was saying to Diane when she last came in, there seems to be a fashion week every week! She was saying she used to only do so many weeks and she is endlessly saying

oh now I've got to go off to this, going to Dubai and then you are thinking when is the time to do the other stuff? That has surely got to change, in terms of sustainability, people's time, people's and like you were saying going to a show and on to the next one

N: It is incredibly stressful just considering the well-being aspect, I mean everyone has families, priorities and to always be on the go, it is very difficult and then if you don't go, it seems you are left out, you are not -

A: And it is not fun is it? I'm trying to think which shows I've been to - the best show ever was Dante McQueen easily, but which shows have I been, last season I went to a show more or less every day, can't even remember which shows they were and that was because I was checking out the venues, again with my show producer hat on, I'm thinking how have they lit this, what have they done, so I am looking at the mechanics and I suppose when you have been doing it for so long. I mean Suzy Menkes, how can she sit there and see another pencil skirt come out and find words to get excited or whatever.

N: Do you, you have incredible influence within the industry especially bringing the new talents out and about, but do you consider yourself within the fashion pack, this fashion family because people have given it different terms but there is this set group that -

A: No I did that quite a couple of years ago, I remember going to a Burberry show and for a moment you are in the same room with Anna Wintour and she is about 30 yards away but you are in two completely different worlds. Which is good because the nice thing about education is you can do lots of things that you couldn't do when you are in the business where you can't necessarily say things because there are lots of things you say with students that you have got that confidence- well that designer blah blah blah, because there is that confidential way of talking about stuff and stuff you can say publicly as well. Um whereas if you had a business you couldn't be saying stuff um yeah so I think yeah, you are sort of outside

N: But would you say there is they community within fashion and if so how would you describe it? I'm just thinking at London Fashion week there is a set group that go to the different shows and it is usually more or less the same people.

A: Yeah I don't know, funnily enough all of my teaching is about community as a practice and part of the way I look at it is the processes and the making and that, is actually just a means to have a community rather than the community is about creating the objects. The objects are actually facilitating that community um and I think that is quite valid in a way, so those objects become transactional in terms of what they are doing for lots of different people. Um and maybe that is why there is quite a bit of tension about I don't know, whether people are part of it.

N: Or does fashion kind of build off of that distinction of being in and being out. Whether that is about being at a certain show or you're in the trend, there is really this distinction.

A: I kind of think if you are IN fashion, all of that you are not really bothered about it because you are in it. It is your world, if you're outside of it, you want to be in it, because you think, like the Wizard of oz, you think there is some magic, or it is going to give you something, but that is all illusionary. I always said to design interns you can do the glamorous bit if you work out what bit it is! Because none of it is glamorous. And I think even going to shows it's like, going along to support friends or seeing people, it's not, I can't remember the last time I was excited to go to a show or let's get there early! I don't remember thinking oh god I'm dreading it but it is part of your job so it hasn't got any of that magic.

N: It might just be nostalgia coming from my end, you hear and you read about the shows up to 2002 maybe that seem to be more, exciting than how it is today, because now there is this pipeline of shows

A: I think because those shows, there is a mass photography of everything so you know the Dante show, although there is a video there's lots of things that there aren't captured so you'd feel like you're having to rely on other people's interpretation of those events rather than now you can see every single look and backstage, front row, you can see everything and sometimes they but those 360\* you know what I mean? Um and I think there is something to be said about things that you can only experience through other people because then that creates myth and storytelling and all sorts of other things. Um that elevates things.

N: So one of the big values of fashion is or are the different interpretations from the various people instead of just going this is a piece of clothing and then here you can buy it - you need that process in the middle?

A: Well clothing into fashion I said to students. I say what we have done is we've made some clothes but I don't think we have made any fashion yet!

N: It is very true and I think where we have so much over consumption I think instead of just pushing product, there needs to be more fashion to dream about to feel, experience. So how would you describe, you have done this already in a way, but how would you describe the fashion industry today, in a couple words? It is a new age, there are new challenges

A: I don't know, maybe it is a bit like politics at the moment there is tension that maybe is about globalisation towards in one thing and saying people want local and almost a nationalism that they want smaller and more intimate and that is where I think there is a lot of tension. Um because people are excited, so I guess they are excited the can buy something in Japan in a few days, everything is out there, but they realise that has some sort of impact, and actually they want that connection with people that they know and can interact with because I think that has a lot of value. I buy stuff now quite a lot from a guy who designs in Italy and only sells 99 of anything. He doesn't have a website, he only does it through social media, and I just think that is more of a personal intimate relationship that you're part of that process but it is not, maybe it is not of this bigger thing, but I am aware of those things that are um still all those things to do with status, and value and whatever else. But with a smaller group of people, so yeah. And also the fashion industry has kind of got this very problematic thing when it only thinks it is a conduit to solve all of the world's problems! Sometimes I think, can't we just see a nice dress? Rather than is it doing this and that

N: Yeah there is almost a certain list, there's a check mark when there's I don't know feminism for example, instead of making a strong shoulder that lends power, it is a t-shirt that is a bit - it doesn't seem very authentic sometimes.

A: And also because more and more people have gotten interested in fashion and also see fashion as being problematic but the very thing that makes fashion what it is is problematic. It is elitist. It is about people not being in fashion. That is always going to be problematic to people isn't it. It is always divisive I guess isn't it, but that's I don't know. Some people think fashion can be this socialist utopia, well it won't be because people will always use how they dress and present themselves as a means to say they are different and better than other people and we are weirdly in a way in a moment it's about being more worthy or more woke, well this is this this and this and quite a lot of things I think are still problematic for Z reasons. And I think students find that hard when they say right I want to do something really sustainable. And they find it overwhelming because it is not possible and I say, if H&M can't make it work, can you make it work on your own? You know. Making sure that you haven't exploited anyone or used fabrics that are organic and all of that and also it misses that point of is it, rather than clothing fashion is something that celebrates you, you're joyous or life enhancing um and I think that is a big tension at the moment and I don't know if we can move or when we can move past that.

N: You see really the changes from the design side, in your experience as an academic, have you changed your teaching in ways so your students can adapt to the world, because the industry has changed -

A: Probably not because how I teach is very much about it is student led and student focused. And allowing that uncertainty to be part of the process, not this is the right answer, do that, why have we done that in blue, it should be red. So having doubt and questioning, constant, throughout, because also you want those students to be fully informed at the end, by the end you want them to think that you haven't done anything. Which is very hard I think as a teacher, if you have got that ego that you want them to say oh my god you taught me how to do this and this. But you want them to think of you at the end as not being any good in a weird way, that it has all come from them. And that is why I don't think all those issues have been ok to address because they are the issues that students bring, we allow them to have those discussions about what if we do this.

N: And speaking of you as an educator, what made you decide, or what was the point when you decided you wanted to go from a designer to working with the university and to helping students?

A: You know what I really enjoy and I think working as a designer if you are your own brand, is really lonely. It is not that many people around you. You are - regardless of whether you have a team, you are constantly the focus and for me it's never about that ego, I find that ego thing well I don't want it to be about me. I wish I had done something where it wasn't my name as the brand because, so I love that teaching, that group thing. Monday I was doing some line ups with the MA students and I just thought oh my god this is so much fun! Because you are reacting to work, you can see problems and you are suggesting if, why don't you do that, what if you do that, and its just so rewarding when it's great - let's do it. I think that interaction of helping someone resolve their problems and discover what they can do is so rewarding.

N: And do you see that as kind of the future of fashion where you do kind of have these collaborative design teams? Instead of having this demi-god celebrity?

A: Well I don't know how we can change that though. Again, next week I am doing everyone who has been at Givenchy. From Hubert de Givenchy to Galliano to McQueen um Ricardo, Clare Waight Keller and don't

forget Julien McDonald for three years! And you think that obsession with one person. I don't know whether that is going to go away because it is so easy to market isn't it. Even if that person is dead.

N: Or even it is more relevant now, with Rhianna and Fenty. Just having this celebrity the artist -

A: As a focal point. So yeah I don't think that group thing -

N: Is that then a problem for graduates because I just came from Graduate Fashion Week and you see incredible work but there are just so many designers out there - it is hard I imagine to find a way in.

A: It is hard if they are not being taught properly, which I think is, the majority of students start thinking the only outcome is high end womenswear, and I think our duty over 4 years is to make them say. Well there are hardly any jobs and actually accessories, or children's wear or menswear or print-

N: Other opportunities

A: Much better paid opportunities um. I even had a thing at the fashion awards that I was, not the awards, they were giving out the BFC Vogue prize and I was wondering why is one called the fashion award and one called the menswear? Are you saying fashion just means womenswear? So even just how we talk about fashion. Our menswear archive, all of the architects drawings had red dresses and its menswear. There are still more pictures with red dresses. Well unless they are mens red dresses. So I think it is very hard to change 150 years of I think. Which is a shame.

N: And looking ahead now, where, if you have maybe 1 prognosis of where you see - just how do you visualise the industry? Looking ahead ten years, what is one change that is starting to develop now?

A: Well I suppose that student that disengaged from what you'd think every student would want, a runway show at fashion week and all of that and self-realising that wasn't what he wanted which I think is fantastic! Because that is what you want, for students to realise what they value or don't value. And I think people producing clothes to small groups of people - much more communal. I think all of that will happen and change. It is almost like, the 90s were the beginning of everyone starting to get interested in fashion because internet and far more media access to everything. And now that everyone has got it 24/7 I think people are getting bored, I think that is why womenswear is not selling because its like. There is just so much stuff and people aren't really that interested in it. So that has got to change and that has got to come back and be, more personal and smaller and more intimate and more about relationships.

N: Is that maybe why as you were saying with that Italian designer who sells over social media - that is personal and I mean- even some businesses with their drops, every few weeks, if you know, you know and if not - sorry we are out of stock. That creates more desire instead of having everything pushed out there -

A: Yeah and also that period when people could be sort of dictated to about hemlines and fabrics, say in the 40s and 50s, that quickly died because everyone was like great whatever I still want to wear what I want to wear and I think that idea that we can sort of force things on to people's changed um.

N: So that hierarchy I think we mentioned Anna Wintour before - arguably the most influential person at the moment - that way of working isn't very relevant in the future -

A: No, it is interesting I can tell you this because it is anonymous, I was made to meet someone last Sunday, I couldn't tell anyone who it was. And then my other half was saying who is it, who is it?! He knows nothing about fashion, he is a policeman. I said I can't tell you - ahh, is it Anna Wintour? I said no of course not it's Anna Wintour, someone more important! And it was Rhianna. And you think that is interesting - he as an outsider thought it was Anna Wintour and I'm saying, no no no, she is not the style maker its Rhianna at the moment and that is where fashion is changing. That editorial dictation which used to exist, doesn't really exist anymore

N: Are you observing that those editors might feel a bit not left out, but their roles have changed the most the past 5, 10 years, so I am sure it is quite difficult for them for how do we work in a relevant way. Because they did have that power.

A: Yeah, and now what is their value? Who actually reads reads words anymore? Because everyone just clicks through - who even enlarges the photos? Because it is on a phone or the depth of anyone's engagement I think is so shallow, how do they do anything that's more..

N: I'm not talking about reviews by Diane which have a lot of depth but the cookie cutter "this is fabulous"

A: Oh Yeah, she's got that depth there and I also think she needs to think about what is the bit, because we have got so many metrics, how many times certain photos have been looked at, which are the ones to drive content. And me thinking what the first image is, and for what end result. Is there anything for journalists, what they can tell how -

N: I mean I know journalists have to use SEO words for their articles, controlling how they express an opinion but people ironically see through that and think oh this isn't authentic, we're not going to read this.

A: Well there was something in the Guardian I was reading, it might have been fashion and it was being quite critical and then at the end there was a buy through link and it said, this is all independent but I'm thinking yeah but it feels very odd reading someone being very critical about a collection and then you then say this is the opportunity to buy.. You tell us it's rubbish but you want us to buy it. Yet all of that is odd isn't it and, I don't know what is going to happen to journalism. Because it has got a value doesn't it

N: It does! That is the question, how do we move forward? They did hold the power just 10 years ago, and now not as relevant

A: Yeah and not as relevant because people want different things out of it. Like Sam who didn't want to meet Diane which was like no I'm fine, that has certainly changed, hasn't it. And also it is because they are on so many spheres that they want to have influence over and they are the most important people for them.

N: The important people - a lot of the events, a lot of it is ego boosting, here's some champagne, make sure you feel good!

A: And also about who has got a business, that bit is always missing um and that is very hard to aostane like Prada it is how much the business is not working or working.

N: Really fascinating conversation and I just want to end discussing briefly about well-being within the industry because I think compared to other sectors and industries fashion is very personal and there is a lot of pressure and it is hard to, a lot of freelancers for example they are dependent on going to all of the parties to make those connections and you are always on this wheel. Do you think it has gotten worse in terms of wellbeing because we are always on our phones, online or do you think it has gotten better because we are more aware of the consequences.

A: Yeah, you are definitely right about that constant - a student said to me the other week, actually this week, oh my dad couldn't believe that you emailed us at 6 in the morning on a Saturday! We've tried to do it this year to send no emails to students after 5 and not on the weekends but at certain points when something suddenly happens like a speaker comes in and you think oh! And because you are aware of that you want to, I also think you also we try, how we frame fashion, because I think there's a real bad thing with students that they talk about the collection as if it is them. And I am always trying to reframe it as the collection, when we do selections, we do selections of the collections not the students. Because they say, am I in? And you know it is about your collection, not about you. But I think because it is such a personal thing and because students are increasingly told creativity is about self-expression rather than skills, oh I'm going to start a rant in a minute - and I understand why because it is expensive at secondary school to teach skills, and it is much easier to say be creative. Louise Wilson used to say that the problem she used to have is students are kids and they did crap and the parents applauded it and they had no criticism until they meet her. And they can't distance, separate themselves from the criticism. That dress is awful, that doesn't mean you're awful. It means the dress is awful. And that is hard because again with designers that name their businesses after themselves that is surely going to be problematic as you feel they are criticising you not the collection. And I think Charlie Porter was saying that is why he really admired Hedi Slimane, I hadn't thought of this, purposefully not having his own collection, that he still did his own collection, but he was doing it as Saint Laurent or at Celine and that is why it was always kind of he same thing, but he was protecting him so it wasn't you know, that thing of selling their name, they lose their name.

N: Very true and -

A: You wouldn't have that in a car, apart from Henry Ford, it's there's a disconnect isn't there? The product and the object/ separate from the creator, whereas fashion, the product kind of is the creator. You are buying their world they created, and those objects are part of that world.

N: And I was reading, some iconic figures like Karl, had his look because it was like a costume a protection of you can't really see the true him, a mask

A: Yeah! Like Warhol! One of the students worked at Karl Lagerfeld a year before in Amsterdam, and I asked if Karl ever came in and they said oh he came in a few times. And then they went, we presume it was Karl,

it could have been someone just wearing that look! And it could be, couldn't it, because it's a, almost creating a fiction of yourself to create some distance.

N: Which is one mechanism of protecting yourself but also I find, like Frederik who we were talking about, everyone is talking about him, he has achieved this overnight fame, I can imagine it is very difficult to first of - business wise you have the platform, how do you progress? But also personally it must be overwhelming!

A: But also because he must have lots of people saying uh! Now that you've got all this interest you must do something!

N: Present next season -

A: Like why? Um I had a student here and I said, how big do you want to be? And what do you want to be, who do you want to sell to, who do you not want to sell to? Start asking yourself those questions now so that when you do get presented things you can say, no I don't want to do it because you will get stuff and if you are not sure you'll say OK and you are doing someone else's career and not yours. And I think that is the problem with LVMH and all of that. It predisposes there is only one version of success which is about being this huge global mega-brand, rather than being something quite small but still um interesting and have value. And that is harder for young students and designers, it is that instant. Someone was saying with pop stars, the student was suddenly messaging him and go back to the 90s, that would have taken someone to see a photo in a newspaper, someone then to maybe phone Louise then Louise, that would take like a week. So there was a chance to adjust to things and rather than this immediate (snap) within an hour. And that is hard and also I think the reverse is true, something that is uh! And then people move on, and then now what?

N: Exactly everyone experiences that, even if you are at a fashion week, you are very in demand you are going every where, and then once it is over you almost feel withdrawn, oh I'm not needed and that's why I think it is very emotional to be in fashion

A: But also that networking it is exhausting. I don't think I network, I just go to things, but if you are really doing it that must be so exhausting.

N: Do you find it is hard to make really connections because there is this stereotype that the industry is a bit superficial

A: No I think if you are doing it on a personal level so we were talking about the showrooms in Paris the other week I met someone from Givenchy. I didn't know her and we just started chatting and, but because I wasn't looking at her thinking OH! I must be friends with her because I'll get this this and this, it was a natural chatter and it would be nice to meet her again, she was quite nice. But I think so many people think, oh my god, I must be friends with this person, this person because they will do this.

N: You can see through those intentions! And yeah,

A: And it's not fun is it?

N: No it's not and its a lot of pressure. Well I must say you have answered all of my questions really well. Any final words of wisdom which you would recommend for the future generation going into the industry.

A: It would be nice if they rethought what fashion could be - one of the things we were talking about is doing more fashion thinking. I think there is too much doing. And I think there is too much starting with doing rather than thinking. And that is why we have got so much product, so much of everything because people haven't taken the time to think and sometimes the best thing is to do nothing. There was an art strike in the 90s, there was an artist, Stuart someone who for a whole year didn't produce any art and I just think you need those people, there are all of those issues we were discussing in fashion but unless people think, we won't resolve them.

N: Just having the time to stop and pause because that is when you get the ideas, I mean if you are constantly on the wheel -

A: And it is a wheel isn't it? Cycle after cycle. Endless. I think more fashion thinking

N: Very good advice. Thank you so much!



## Appendix 12 - Email Interview Extract

*Email received from Diana June 2018*

Nina. I have been working as a fashion journalist since 1988, when I was fashion editor at the Guardian. At that time, it was typewriters and hot press. I would write one collections roundup report per week from London, Paris, Milan and New York. You'd have to phone in copy - that was a nightmare. Also: you could only show one or two photos from a selection of collections. Even when magazines came out, they didn't have space to show all the looks. As I remember it, there were many fewer shows, but they were much longer. And, incredibly, we had time for lunch and dinner! There is no time allowed for that now. We are expected to report a show online within three hours. I write on my mobile in the car or try to find a cafe to sit at. Apparently, it's a race now. The biggest change came around 2000. I was one of the first critics to move to online reporting, with the then website Style.com. I saw everything change then. It did transform the chances of London fashion designers as they could be seen on the same platform as all the major designers, and so there was no need for them to think about showing in Paris or NY to get an audience. This was very positive indeed for young British designers - cutting their expenses, fostering a culture and attracting audiences to London. Of course this escalated and the speed and ubiquity of reporting of shows has changed out of all recognition and in ways which are reshaping shows. In the beginning there was a Style.com look: to make images legible on the site, all images had to be full length, against a white background, and it happened that black did not show up well. The site didn't impose these rules but PRs soon caught on. Shows and Design began to fit the digital photography - it became colourful. There was only one camera angle. The reviews at that time were very influential in the industry. Written in the dead of night to be published next morning. At that time, it felt hard and fast. I would be seeing and reviewing six shows a day and going to sleep at 3am. The advent of the mobile phone camera and Instagram changed everything again - as everyone can film shows, interview people, shoot detail and sets, and everyone beyond that can appropriate that material and comment. This has changed the form and format of the shows again, and the detail-laden nature of shows. There's a shift to 'experience' and multiple viewpoints and the inclusion of more voices - including that of models. As a reporter I still always try to concentrate on what the clothes are saying. I try to hold onto the fact that what I can offer is context and comparisons- I try to see patterns emerging and to gauge the spirit of the times as I go along. I try to hover over the scene like a journalistic drone - drawing back to see it as a phenomenon. I think that's the value of 'being there' - as well as the personal relationships you have with designers; those conversations. Of course I wish I had more time to do this - but we are also told not to write too long "people don't read." Not sure how true that is. And not sure that it is all-important to reach a mass of hundreds and thousands of readers (although this is how 'success' is often judged). What matters to me is if it creates conversation with the Industry- and if it helps educate interested young people. Other people can be the judge of it. I realise I have now written the history of the last 18 years of fashion, show by show. The reward is when young designers and students come up to me and say "I learned everything about fashion from your reviews. When I read a reference I didn't understand, I used to think, what? And follow it up." That is the reward.

## Appendix 13: Sites of Ethnographic Observation

<b>What?</b>	<b>Where?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>About:</b>
<b>London Fashion Week</b>	London, UK (180 Strand)	September + February 2018 and 2019	London Fashion Week (LFW) is a clothing trade show that takes place in London bi-annually, in February and September. Showcasing over 250 designers to an international audience of influential media and retailers, it is one of the 'Big Four' fashion weeks, along with the New York, Milan and Paris.
<b>Hyerres International Fashion and Photography Festival</b>	Hyerres, France	April 26- 28 2019	The Hyères festival aims to support and promote the work of young creatives in fashion, photography and fashion accessories. Each year, the festival organises three contests, exhibitions and discussions. The contests gather ten stylists (since 1986), ten photographers (since 1997) and ten accessories creators (since 2017), selected by renowned juries of professionals. The creations of the chosen candidates are presented during fashion shows for the fashion contest, collective exhibitions for the photography contest and the accessories contest.
<b>Richard Quinn Runway Show</b>	London, UK (180 Strand)	September 18, 2018	Richard Quinn is the inaugural winner of the Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design, and his Fall '18 show was the first runway show that Her Majesty has

			personally attended, sitting front row next to Vogue editor in chief Anna Wintour. A graduate of Central Saint Martins, the London-based ready-to-wear designer founded his eponymous label in 2016 while simultaneously opening a studio for print development.
<b>Richard Hambleton Retrospective</b>	London, UK (Leake Street Tunnel Leake Street)	September 12, 2018	Organised by Purple PR, the retrospective showcased artworks by the sadly deceased Richard Hambleton. The event was high profile with VIP guests, a bar, and various DJs.
<b>Graduate Fashion Week</b>	London, UK (Truman Brewery, Shoreditch)	June 3, 2018	Founded in 1991, Graduate Fashion Week showcases a curated selection of over 5000 graduates from over 60 of the most influential and inspiring UK and International Universities.

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