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Creativity, design and management in Australian fashion enterprises

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Abstract

In this study a number of Australian fashion enterprises are investigated in an effort to understand how product development is managed and creativity facilitated. Of particular interest was the interaction between the various actors in the creative process and the manner in which they influenced creative output. The study was underpinned by a wide-ranging review of the literature that reflects the multidisciplinary nature of creativity and innovation in business.

The study is timely because Australian fashion enterprises are operating in an increasingly challenging market with a perfect storm of competitive drivers at play. Technology enables instant dissemination of fashion trends and easy international shopping online. Tariff reductions and free trade agreements provide less protection for local manufacturers and revenues have contracted sharply in recent years. Retail revenues have flat-lined at a time when a number of global superbrands are opening stores in Australia with aggressive expansion plans. In response, government and industry groups are promoting product differentiation and innovation as key levers for competitiveness for Australian businesses. The reason for undertaking the study was to investigate contemporary product development practices, to identify barriers to creativity and find ways that enterprises can leverage the creative abilities of employees to improve innovation practices.

Managers of six enterprises from a diverse range of markets and enterprise types agreed to participate in a descriptive study of their product development practices. The study deployed a qualitative case based methodology and used a combination of data collection types including participant observation and field observation, field interviews, documents and artefacts. The data was analysed within case for key contextual findings and across case for broader themes and patterns.

Participant enterprises employed a variety of approaches to product development as described in the innovation literature (for example, Cappetta, Cillo, & Ponti, 2006; Cillo & Verona, 2008; Dell’Era & Verganti, 2007; Payne, 2011; Perks, Cooper, & Jones, 2005; Ward, Runcie, & Morris, 2009; Weller, 2007), with hybrid approaches at work in some cases. Management were not always aware of the practice implications for the various approaches, and though all participants deemed creativity important, it was not explicitly measured or rewarded. The dichotomy between management and creativity, a prevalent theme in the literature (for example, Adorno, 1997; Caves, 2000; Townley, Beech, & McKinlay, 2009), did not present
strongly in the participant cases. Instead, more collaborative creative practices were in evidence where designers, merchandisers, sales and business managers developed and decided on product together.

The study provides rich detail about collaborative product development practices at an operational level that balances the management and leadership focus of the literature by leading creativity scholars in the field (for example, Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004; Basadur, 2004; Černe, Jaklič, & Škerlavaj, 2013; Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Similar to Tran’s (2010) detailed study on the practice of fashion designers, this study provides a window into distributed creative processes involving a variety of actors. Cross case analysis has revealed a number of themes that have implications for practice. These include the need for greater alignment of product development with strategic intent; the influence of organisational structure and reporting on creative processes; and the need to develop metrics and performance management systems that focus specifically on creativity.
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is not included in this version of the thesis
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This study would not have been possible without the kind support of many people. In the first instance, I would like to thank the research participants for their involvement with this project and to Sarah Shand, a key informant and dear friend. Of course I am deeply indebted to my supervisors Dr Janice Redmond and Dr Alan Coetzer for their patience, guidance and support, particularly in these last few months. More broadly, I would like to acknowledge the enthusiastic support of the research community at ECU, especially Ms Bev Lurie, the teams at the Graduate Research School and the Office of Research and Innovation, and the many higher degree by research students at numerous research events who have provided encouragement and a shared sense of purpose.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter begins by setting out the broad context of the study before leading to the specific area of research: the management of creative efforts in fashion enterprises. The import of the study is justified mainly on practical grounds with discussion about the conceptual framework upon which the research is based. The methodological approach is introduced before outlining the structure and content of the remaining thesis chapters.

1.1 Background

It is estimated that the Australia fashion industry generates revenues of 27 billion dollars a year and employs approximately 200,000 people in manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing operations (Hawthorn & Crafti, 2012). A central process for all fashion enterprises is the design and development of product ranges for sale, from manufacturer to retailer to consumer. Seemingly a straightforward process, those involved in product development operate at a number of levels when designing and making judgements about product. Designers, merchandisers and managers speculate about broad, socio-cultural aspects of clothing such as fashion trends, customer lifestyle and brand aesthetic, while simultaneously relying on personal attributes such as taste, creative abilities and commercial judgement as they move through the creative process. The fashion products themselves are not simple commodities because they have cultural, symbolic and economic value and traverse a complex ‘system’ of creators, producers, arbiters and diffusers before being purchased at retail by consumers (Caves, 2000).

Fashion ranges are produced in seasonal cycles of anywhere between two and twenty in a year depending on the type of operation. For example, fast fashion global retailers like Zara deliver over twenty product ranges to stores in a year, while independent Australian brands may typically wholesale two or three. Depending on the type of enterprise and the orientation of the organisation to product development, range development can be the central function of the enterprise or be but one of many functions such as finance, sales and retail operations.

Historically, Australia’s location in the southern hemisphere meant it ‘lagged’ behind the fashion centres of the northern hemisphere where fashion trends are concentrated (Weller, 2007). Payne (2011) provides compelling evidence of Australian enterprises buying sample garments at retail from northern hemisphere fashion destinations and copying them for the
Australian market (albeit with some modification). The prevalence of this practice is so widespread, there are offshore garment suppliers who believe Australian fashion is derivative and unadventurous and, as such, there is little incentive to invest in design because the work is already done by enterprises in the northern hemisphere (Weller, 2007). The notion of ‘derivative Australian fashion’ strikes a chord with many in the fashion media (Breen Burns, 2012), which suggests creativity, or the development of original product, is not a central concern for all enterprises.

Key informants in the Australian fashion industry and recent empirical studies speak of fundamental changes to the way enterprises design and develop products (Payne, 2011, 2013; Weller, 2007). Fashion diffusion takes place at a much faster rate today with live catwalk shows online and immediate image publishing made possible by technological advances and the rise of new (social) media channels (Weller, 2007). With ever decreasing life cycles and the ability for supply chains to copy (or ‘knock off’) trends within weeks, the well-established ‘lag’ model for product development is becoming less viable (Payne, 2011). A review of the Australian textile clothing and footwear (TCF) industries in 2008 provided evidence of manufacturers beginning to foster innovation capabilities at the enterprise level in the workplace (Green, 2008). A number of Australian enterprises are beginning to incorporate sustainability principles in their design practice (Payne, 2013). These developments suggest Australian enterprises are beginning to take different approaches to product development. This coincides with the rise of online retail and the steady stream of multinational fashion brands arriving on our shores.

1.2 Significance of Research

In the last five years, international superbrands such as Zara, Gap, H&M, Topshop/Topman, Forever 21 and Uniqlo have opened stores in Australia and expanded their operations (Magner, 2014). The entry of these players with their extensive and efficient supply networks and streamlined processes intensifies competition for local retailers and department stores.

Online retail (or ‘etail’) is also a threat to the Australian fashion industry, with steadily increasing rates of online spending offshore. To borrow from Porter’s (2004) generic competition strategies, managers of Australian enterprises can respond to international incursions by positioning the enterprise as: [1] a cost leader; [2] a provider of differentiated products; or [3] a provider of focused products for a particular market segment. Considering the economies of scale available to the aforementioned global brands and the relatively small population of Australia, it would be difficult to compete on price alone. Swimwear and
surfwear brands such as Zimmerman, Seafolly, Aussie Bum and Ripcurl have competed successfully in the recent past (both locally and internationally), which suggests a focused and differentiated product response is a successful competitive tactic. Magner’s IBIS World report (2014), speculates that two of the key success factors for retailers are the establishment of a clear market position and an ability to trade in favoured product. Green’s TCF review (2008) proposes product differentiation and branding as two of the key factors for successful manufacturing in Australia. In order to remain competitive in the new internationalised environment, Australian enterprises need to generate differentiated, targeted and desirable product with clear branding intentions.

The fashion trading environment in the years after the global financial crisis of 2008 has proved difficult for retailers and the manufacturers that supply them. In the past five years clothing retail revenues have contracted slightly (-0.1%), while manufacturing revenues have declined more sharply (between -5% and -11%), as imports continue to dominate the market, particularly in the mass market segment (Magner, 2014). Retail recovery and growth after the global financial crisis has been undermined by a decline in clothing prices resulting from increased competition and a rising Australian dollar (Magner, 2014).

As always, product is important to fashion enterprises. Increasingly, in a highly competitive environment attributable to international incursions (online and in bricks and mortar retail) and stagnating economic growth in Australia (Holden, Carmignani, Dixon, Guest, & Makin, 2015), differentiated product is emerging as an important driver for competitive advantage. Mimetic and derivative approaches to product development will not result in highly differentiated product, whereas enhancing and managing the creative capacities of the organisation will. This study is a small step towards understanding current management practices in product development in a time of change, with the view to guide Australian fashion enterprises towards a more conscious use of their creative capabilities.

1.3 Research Objective

The fashion industry sits at the boundary between a commercial and a creative enterprise because of the functional and symbolic aspects of clothing (Caves, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). The complexity and interdependence of the fashion system means that an examination of one aspect of the industry, such as product development, cannot ignore the influences of the many other factors at play.
At the organisational level, the product development process is governed by a series of aesthetic and commercial judgements that are linked to the performance of an enterprise and both are sensitive to socio-cultural factors. A number of enterprise functions are involved in the product development process such as design, sales, merchandising and management and it is not uncommon for the aesthetic and commercial judgement of each function to be informed by different antecedents, values and goals. Bourdieu (1984) believes that aesthetic judgement or ‘taste’ is a result of knowledge and expertise that is developed over time. Creative output is influenced by intra-individual factors such as background, education, aesthetic sense, behaviours and previous experiences (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993; Zuo, 1998). More broadly, creativity is influenced by the orientation of the enterprise towards creativity, learning and innovation (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Ismail, 2005; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Management is frequently granted greater voice in the dialogue about product development because of the tacit power relationships in the structure and culture of the organisation. Von Stamm (2008) believes that managers’ concern for efficiency, control and commerciality can be at odds with designers’ concern for the transformation of a fashion concept or trend into functional and appealing product. Within an enterprise, there are myriad motivations, influences and judgements at play in the development of a product range, made even more complex by positional power, personal taste and the brand aesthetic.

When viewing fashion from a sociological or even philosophical perspective, there is a familiar tension between art and commerce, and creativity and management, that is largely built on romantic notions of aesthetic production where the function of art (and the artist) was to distance itself and critique the society that it referenced (Adorno, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). In creative enterprises to this day, the creative process and the management function are both disciplines that draw upon different ‘canons’, reflecting this dichotomy (Townley & Beech, 2010a), which complicates research into the management of creative efforts. Until very recently, the management literature was strangely silent about creative practices at an intra-organisational level (Warhurst, 2010) and there are scant empirical studies of fashion enterprises from an Australian perspective with the notable exceptions of Payne (2011, 2013) and Weller (2007). This study endeavours to explore the dichotomy between creativity and management, if it even exists, and to investigate how this plays out in the product development process.

In the literature, creativity is conceptualised as a complex, multi-disciplinary phenomenon drawing from the fields of management, innovation, economics, psychology, sociology and cultural studies (Gardner, 1988). As a result, researchers have taken a variety of approaches to
investigating creativity in organisations. Runco’s (2004) ten-year review categorised the literature into four ‘perspectives’ comprising [1] the creative person; [2] creative processes; [3] creative products; and [4] press (or the pressures on creativity). Mumford’s (2011) review emphasised cognitive functions and behaviours, thus he categorised studies as being about [1] creative thought; [2] motivation, affect and dispositions; [3] situational influences; and [4] development. Hennessey and Amabile’s (2010) review conceptualised a multi-level systemic creativity that ranged from the neurological and cognitive domains, through to the socio-cultural domain where social norms legitimise creative outputs. This study is concerned with the practical aspects of creativity in the fashion industry. The aim is to investigate product development processes at an operational level, exploring the interaction between the roles of designers, merchandisers, sales and management personnel, all of whom are the key actors in the process. Personal (or ‘intra-individual’) factors were also explored in order to understand the motivations and antecedents that influence the interactions in the process. Creativity is considered an essential part of new product development, so embedded within this investigation is an exploration of how creativity was valued and facilitated by those involved.

1.4 Research Questions

Essentially, the study addresses two broad questions:

1. How do fashion enterprises manage product development and facilitate creativity within the process?
2. What is the nature of the relationships between the various actors in the product development process?

Question one investigates the various approaches to product development in fashion enterprises, examining the processes, the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved, and the operational interactions among the actors of a business unit. Where there are further management layers and functional units within an enterprise, these interactions are also enquired after, but within the confines of the methodology. This question also encompasses the knowledge and experience the actors draw from as they develop fashion products. At the heart of the question is creativity: the extent to which it is encouraged, resourced and rewarded by the enterprise.

Question two explores the subtle and hidden interactions in the product development process. By examining the social dynamics, and the tacit and implicit assumptions about the process, role expectations and organisational context, the intention is to reveal new meaning
and uncover attitudes held by the enterprise about creative work, and by extension, creativity, as a value-adding function.

1.5 Methodological Approach

Because of the descriptive nature of the study and the desire to reveal data about surface and hidden aspects of the product development process in natural settings, a qualitative approach was adopted. The research design was case based (in line with the overall qualitative approach) and cross-sectional to collect data from a variety of contexts. The original design was shaped and adapted to opportunity and time constraints, which led to two distinct data collection phases in 2013. Phase one data was collected at a single case in May 2013 and phase two data was collected at the remaining five cases in July 2013. Sampling was non-random and purposive with participants fitting particular enterprise categories such as manufacturer, retailer, mass-market and designer. I drew on professional contacts from industry experience as well as trade journals and fashion event websites to compile the sampling frame. Ultimately, the six enterprises that agreed to participate in the study ranged from a micro business of one to an international retail chain employing hundreds of staff.

Phase one data collection arose as a result of an opportunity to work as a designer in the field for two weeks, allowing for extensive access and participation in the product development process. As well as observation, I was also able to conduct semi-structured interviews with key staff involved in product development. Phase two data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews in the field with key staff from a further five cases. All interviews with the various designers, merchandisers, sales staff, managers and technicians were recorded, transcribed and returned to participants for verification and approval. Transcripts and survey data such as field notes and a personal journal were coded and analysed using NVivo software. Findings were drawn on a case-by-case basis to preserve the contextual factors at play, as well as on a cross-case basis to infer broader patterns and themes for theory building.

The research was conducted in full compliance with ethics approval processes as required by Edith Cowan University (ECU). At all times in this study, privacy has been safeguarded for participants and enterprises.
1.5.1 Situating the Researcher

Before concluding this section, it is important to declare my background as this may explain some of the assumptions (both conscious and unconscious) that have shaped the study. I worked as a fashion designer/product developer for over 12 years in Victoria and Western Australia from the mid 1990s through to the mid 2000s. I have worked as both an in-house designer and externally as a freelance designer in menswear, boyswear, licensed merchandise and womenswear. I have designed/developed branded and housebrand product for both manufacturers and retailers operating in mass-market and mid-market segments. I have worked with both local and offshore manufacturers as well as third party suppliers and trading houses in the design and development of garments. In summary, I have broad experience in product design and development for a number of different enterprise types with diverse product development approaches. This breadth of experience has provided the background knowledge that has shaped the thesis in the chapters that follow.

My educational background may also provide some insight into the way the problem has been framed. As a graduate from fairly traditional courses in architecture and fashion design, I am sensitive to the role of the creative worker in the development process. My experience in the industry over the years has led me to question the way fashion enterprises manage creativity and harness the skills of designers. Having experienced (and in some cases endured) a number of different approaches and business models, I am endeavouring to examine current practices in light of the recent literature on the management of creativity and innovation and in a changing industry environment where competition has intensified. This is in the hope of contributing new knowledge that may assist fashion enterprises in their product development processes.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, a review of the relevant literature is presented in Chapter Two. At the heart of the review is the conceptualisation of creativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Creativity operates at multiple levels and there are a variety of perspectives and approaches from a number of different disciplines. There are five key areas: [1] the creative economy and the fashion industry; [2] the various conceptualisation of creativity; [3] creativity in organisations; [4] leading and managing creativity; and [5] innovation, design and product development. The chapter concludes with a justification for the current study in light of the literature.
In Chapter Three the research design and methodology for this study is detailed. It begins with the main considerations that have shaped the current design and then details each aspect: [1] sampling; [2] method of enquiry; [3] data collection procedures; [4] data analysis and [5] ethics. In Chapter Four the findings on a case-by-case basis are reported in order to clearly communicate the operational context for each enterprise. As much as possible, findings are categorised into consistent sub-sections for all six cases to facilitate cross-case comparisons and differences. Each case begins with a case 'snapshot' to orient the reader.

In Chapter Five cross-case patterns and themes are detailed. It was not the intention in the study to force comparisons but field experiences and further data analysis revealed a number of patterns that have contributed to the development of three frameworks. In the chapter the findings are linked to the current theory in the field.

In Chapter Six the study is summarised and concluded with an explanation of the limitations of the study and the contribution it made to the extant literature. The Chapter also includes broad recommendations for current industry practice and provides some direction for possible future research.

### 1.7 Chapter Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, the boundaries of the research have been outlined by the research objectives and the general research questions. The methodological approach has been explained and the organisation of the thesis has been charted. Perhaps more critical for the reader, the chapter presented a sound justification for an investigation into the product development practices of Australian fashion enterprises and especially the level of creativity embedded in the process. I propose the study is distinctive because of the focus on the creative process and on the hidden and subtle aspects of the interactions between the actors in the Australian context. In the literature review that follows, the management literature for new product development will reveal a central concern for strategy, control, contained processes, outputs and efficiency in time and resources. This contrasts with the perspective of the creative worker who values recognition, autonomy, creativity and the artistic integrity of the product. A key advantage of this study is that it views the process from both perspectives, exploring the experience of both management and creative workers. It is hoped that by making the issues explicit and visible, it can provide a platform to improve Australian product development practice and recalibrate the value of creative workers and creativity in fashion enterprises.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Creativity in business is a multi-disciplinary concept drawing from the fields of economics, psychology, management, innovation, sociology and cultural studies (Gardner, 1988). This review is organised into sections where creativity is investigated at a number of levels. Firstly, fashion is situated in the creative economy and the major definitions and conceptualisations for creativity from a diverse range of disciplines are outlined. Empirical and theoretical studies about creativity in organisations are examined, followed by an investigation of the major theories for the management and leadership of creative efforts. Finally, the creative process itself is examined at a practical level, through a number of different approaches. It is here that studies focusing on the fashion industry become more apparent.

2.1 The Creative Economy and Fashion

RECOGNITION OF THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF CREATIVITY

In the late 1990s to the late 2000s governments worldwide, including Australia, embarked on research projects to better understand the creative sector and how to grow and sustain it. This ten-year period represented the dawning of recognition of the contribution the sector made to the economy both domestically and in export terms, of which fashion was an integral part. The UK led in this regard and was one of the first governments to commission a study to map the economic activity of the creative industries across the country. The initial report defined creative industries as: ‘those industries that 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’ (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2001, p. 5). The term ‘creative industries’ applied to a broad array of activities including film, video, photography, publishing, software and game development, advertising, architecture, crafts, television, radio, music, performing arts, visual arts, antiques and designer fashion. The report drew a distinction between upmarket designer fashion, which only accounted for 9% of gross UK retail sales, and the rest of the industry because the authors did not believe that mass-market fashion created value through creativity (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2001). It was an early indication that some kinds of creativity were of greater value than others, despite the mass market generating ten times more revenue than designer brands.
Richard Caves was an early leader in the creative industries literature. He refined and popularised the key economic features and principles of creative industries. Those relevant to fashion enterprises are that:

- demand is uncertain;
- creative workers care about their product (but not all creative output is produced by creative workers);
- the development of creative products require diverse skills;
- products are differentiated in the marketplace;
- skills are differentiated vertically; and
- time is of the essence (Caves, 2000).

A number of empirical studies from the supply chain literature supported the principle of uncertain demand (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Christopher, Lowson, & Peck, 2004; Pan & Holland, 2006). There was evidence that creative workers were intrinsically motivated by reward and recognition directly linked to the acceptance and quality of their output (Amabile, et al., 1996). The creation of fashion products require a number of diverse skills (machinists, printers, dyers, designers, pattern-makers, stylists, marketers et al.) and they are consumed in a highly differentiated marketplace (Tran, 2010). Fashion enterprises operating in price-sensitive markets have relocated garment production to low-cost countries (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006) thus the differentiation of skills is clear: sales, marketing and design are the specialist skills of the developed economy and manufacturing skills have been sourced in developing economies with low labour costs. A number of UK supply chain studies have described the increasing pressure on manufacturers to decrease lead times in response to rapid market changes and fluctuations in demand (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Birtwistle, Siddiqui, & Fiorito, 2004; Pan & Holland, 2006).

CRITIQUE OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES LITERATURE

Caves’ work (2000) was part of an emerging theme in the last decade that creative economies were set to increase in size and influence. However by 2005, the number of creative enterprises in the UK had dropped to 1998 levels (Warhurst, 2010). By the end of the 2000s, Warhurst and his contemporaries began to challenge many of the claims made by UK government policy makers and the creative industries literature (Oakley, 2004; Thompson, Jones, & Warhurst, 2007; Warhurst, 2010). For example, Warhurst (2010) questioned what constituted ‘creative work’ by pointing out that much of the production and distribution of the artefacts of creative work were being performed by routine workers with little creative input. Instead, creative work was being performed by college or university educated graduates and
routine workers were not given the same opportunity. Other studies have argued that women, ethnic minorities and workers of working class origin had difficulty in accessing sustained employment in creative industries and had less opportunities for advancement (Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; McLeod, O'Donohoe, & Townley, 2009), indicating that in the UK at least, gender, class and background mattered in creative careers. Warhurst (2010) claimed there were few empirical studies that documented actual creative work and how it was managed, and that UK statistics and definitions were problematic because it was difficult to discern whether the work was routine or creative. There are similar difficulties in definitions and statistics in the Australian context and these will be explored in the methodology section.

Warhurst (2010) believed there was a conceptual dichotomy in the way creative industries were constructed in the literature, split along a production versus consumption model. He suggested theorists who pursued the consumption viewpoint (for example, Caves, 2000), had little interest in the way creativity was managed. Dixon (2010) echoed this concept when he described a production-based model of the creative industry and suggested that there was a ‘conspiratorial silence’ about the artistic production process. He rallied against popular stereotypes of uncontrolled artistic process, suggesting that it was indeed possible to produce works of art in an ‘orderly, rational and manageable manner’ (Dixon, 2010, p. 48). With roots in the music industry and adapting his model from Hannah Arendt's 'The Human Condition', he described a tripartite creative process comprised of labour, work and action. By ‘labour’ Dixon characterised circular, endless tasks that begin again as soon as they are complete. Arendt described this part of human activity as not dissimilar to the work of animals. By ‘work’ Dixon described tasks that are completed with an end goal in sight. There is a termination point where the author is to some degree satisfied with the output and there is pride in the achievement of the work. Work depends upon and is preceded by labour. A work has permanence like a building, a publication or a fashion collection. By ‘action’ Dixon refers to the process of initiation: putting something in motion where the end point cannot be fully known. This is what many refer to as the ‘spark of creativity’. Even when not fully calculated, or rationally driven (accidental, even), the spark is an act of will, a leap into the unknown. For Dixon, the creative process bridges the gap from intent to the resultant work or output. It requires labour, work AND action, where action is the highest form of human activity and labour is the lowest.

Townley and Beech (2010a), while acknowledging the diversity of creative industries (with different production processes, markets, consumption patterns, distribution channels and perceived values), organised the creative industry literature by three main economic systems. Firstly, a system composed of high-value knowledge-based industries where design and
branding are keys to competitive success in a mature, competitive and globalised marketplace. Secondly, a system of creative industries that are tightly integrated with urban renewal where the production/consumption of art and culture are linked to broader policy concerns such as creative regeneration and social inclusion. Thirdly, an economic system where the creative industries act as agents in the commodification of culture for a mass audience, where creativity is ‘organised around, and for, the market’ (Townley & Beech, 2010a, p. 6). It’s easy to see fashion enterprises in the first and third model of these consumption-based classifications when one pictures designer/couture at the top end of the market and then high street chains and value retailers at the other end of the market spectrum. Critically, Townley and Beech have successfully expanded the definitions provided by the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2001) and Caves (2000) with their narrow focus on designer and couture fashion. The mass market is now part of the creative economy.

SECTION SUMMARY

The creative industries literature has helped to situate fashion as part of the broader creative economy. However, each creative domain has quite distinct processes and patterns of economic activity, and fashion is not well represented in the studies and theories of the literature cited here. The broadening of the economic theory by Townley and Beech above (2010a), has embraced the creativity inherent in mass market and mid market fashion. Dixon’s (2010) demarcation of creative work is particularly relevant to the global fashion industry because for so many businesses, creative processes and much creative labour has drifted offshore to low cost manufacturing countries. It provides clues about the value or creative work in businesses and by extension, the value of creativity itself. The literature has also highlighted that in the UK at least, socio-cultural status or class mattered in accessing creative work (Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; McLeod, et al., 2009). Which begs the question for Australian fashion enterprises: who is afforded creative work and what should your background be to secure it? All of these studies are from UK researchers and rarely look at the micro detail of artistic or creative production in a creative enterprise, which provides a space for an investigation into the management of creative work at an operational, practical level.

2.2 Defining Creativity

Mark Runco, one of the leading figures in creativity research, co-authored a correction in the Creativity Research Journal to provide a ‘standard definition’ for creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). They returned to the work of psychologist Maurice Stein for one of the most explicit and resonant definitions:
The creative work is a novel work that is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying by a group in some point in time…By “novel” I mean that the creative product did not exist previously in precisely the same form. It arises from a *reintegration* of already existing materials or knowledge, but when it is completed it contains elements that are new (Stein, 1953, pp. 311–312).

This 60-year-old definition is still relevant today because it incorporates so many different aspects of creativity. To undertake the process the creator requires a body of knowledge or existing material, and the product requires an audience to assess it. Novelty suggests originality but the product need not be entirely original. The temporal nature of creativity is also hinted at here with the possibility of creative recognition coming after the work is produced. This is illustrated by the case of painter Vincent van Gogh, who was not recognised for his contribution to painting until after his death. Creativity is a process and a product, and there are tangible and intangible elements.

Stein’s definition presaged the very broad systems view of creativity proposed by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (2001). Csikszentmihalyi described three actors in the production of creativity: the domain, the field and the individual producer. The domain is the symbolic or cultural aspect of creativity. Bourdieu (1984) would have defined it as the prevailing ‘taste’. The field is the society in which the creativity will be judged. This connects with the Caves’ (2000) ‘gatekeepers’ and Bourdieu’s (1984) ‘cultural intermediaries’. Csikszentmihalyi’s creative process is summarised in the following quote:

> For creativity to occur, a set of rules and practices must be transmitted from the domain to the individual. The individual must then produce a novel variation in the content of the domain. The variation then must be selected by the field for inclusion in the domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 2001, p. 12).

Thus creativity occurs at the intersection of the three actors described above, when an individual makes a change in the domain that is absorbed or accepted by the field.

In the fashion industry, the domain is a shifting scene. The emergence of ‘fast fashion’ in recent years, built on a business model where products have increasingly shorter life cycles, has only intensified the domain. Magazines, buyers, stylists, the film and television industry and the music industry are all players in the fashion field. The emergence of fashion bloggers and designer brands streaming fashion collections live on the internet have changed the nature of the field, making the forces that shape taste increasingly complex. There is little empirical evidence yet in the literature of how these more recent changes in the production of fashion
have shaped the industry, and even less about how all of the forces in the field of fashion affect product design and development at an operational level.

Hennessey and Amabile (2010) endorsed the systems view of creativity in a recent review of the creativity literature over the past ten years. They believed that creativity arose from interrelated forces operating at multiple levels that required inter-disciplinary investigations. Their conceptualisation is illustrated in Figure 1. Their review also noted an explosion of subtopics, perspectives, and methodologies related to creativity that occurred in the 1990s that did not seem aware of the developments across them. Leading theorists have consistently suggested that interdisciplinary approaches were the best way of delivering a science of creativity (Gardner, 1988; Mumford, et al., 2002; Runco, 2004).

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1*
*Hennessy and Amabile’s Levels of Creativity Schema.*


The creativity literature also revealed theoretical discussions about the equity of creativity. Mumford was critical of creativity research that focused on creative people doing creative work because it seemed to perpetuate a ‘platonic, class-stereotypic view of the creative act’ (Mumford, 2011, p. 110). This echoed the class distinctions in the creative industries literature between routine and creative labour (Dixon, 2010; Warhurst, 2010). Runco (2014) perceived of a dichotomy in creativity research which was popularly coined ‘big C Creativity’ and ‘little c
creativity’, referring to high-level recognised creative achievement and mundane, low-level personal creativity, respectively. It appears that all creativity is not equal which is certainly the case in the fashion industry. Roles and tasks involved in the creative process can vary from the routine and the technical, through to sophisticated product design for markets such as couture and high-tech sportswear.

INDIVIDUAL CREATIVITY

This section of the literature review ends with a list of the creative behaviours of individuals. It is not the intention of this study to explore individual creative behaviours because the focus is more on the management of creativity. Nevertheless, it is important to sketch the contemporary understanding of personal creative behaviours in order to situate those behaviours in an organisation. The following core set of behaviours, traits and characteristics are typical of creative persons: aesthetic sensitivity, broad interests, attraction to complexity, high energy, independence of judgement, autonomy, intuition, self-confidence, toleration of ambiguity, firm belief in the ‘self’ as creative (Barron & Harrington, 1981), persistence, curiosity, intellectual honesty (Amabile, 1988), and having an internal locus of control (Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990).

SECTION SUMMARY

In this section, creativity is conceptualised as a systemic phenomena. There are personal behaviours; processes and products within organisations; and a field of arbiters and tastemakers in the domain of endeavour. Creativity simply cannot be viewed from a single perspective only, because as the literature reviews cited here suggest (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Mumford, 2011; Runco, 2004), it requires a multi-level, interdisciplinary approach. Creativity in fashion is not easily isolated as a phenomenon for study, nor managed within the confines of a fashion enterprise because it is linked to the broader industry, and even further, to socio-cultural norms and tastes. The difficulties and tensions of the creative process within an enterprise and the extent to which socio-cultural factors influence that process are important areas of investigation in this study and will be explored further.

2.3 Creativity in Organisations

In 1965, Larry Cummings published his seminal work ‘Organisational Climates for Creativity’ expressly to answer the “significant administrative question of the optimum utilization of …creative talent” (Cummings, 1965, p. 220). His list of characteristics for the creative organisation envisioned flat structures, informal relationships, personal autonomy, free-flowing
information, and broad spans of measurement all under a managerial climate where everyone is creative in pursuit of an organisational goal (Cummings, 1965).

Since then, a number of approaches have emerged to address the many aspects of Cummings’ ideal organisation and accommodate the multi-disciplinary perspectives and constructions of creativity that have been discussed in the previous section. The best known approaches to organisational creativity are the component view (Amabile, 1983; Amabile, et al., 1996); the interactionist view (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Woodman, et al., 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990); creativity as process (Basadur & Basadur, 2011; Basadur, Gelade, & Basadur, 2014; Caniëls, De Stobbeleir, & De Clippeleer, 2014); and the competencies view (Epstein, Kaminaka, Phan, & Uda, 2013). Less widely discussed are studies concerning intangible dimensions such as aesthetic knowledge (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; Zuo, 1998), culture and climate (Ismail, 2005; Pitta, Wood, & Franzak, 2008; Tesluk, Farr, & Klein, 1997) and affect (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005).

Amabile’s (1983) early componential framework for individual creativity was a tripartite model where creative production occurred at the intersection of three components: [1] a person’s domain expertise (knowledge of the field of endeavour); [2] their creative skills (such as divergent and analogous thinking); and [3] the task motivation (the intrinsic interest in the task at hand). Thirty years later, this framework still underpins contemporary understanding of individual creativity in the workplace.

At the organisational level, again three main components were observed: [1] organisational motivation to innovate, [2] resources and [3] management practice (Amabile, et al., 1996). To quote this work:

[1] Organisational motivation to innovate is a basic orientation of the organisation toward innovation, as well as supports for creativity and innovation throughout the organisation. [2] Resources refers to everything that the organisation has available to aid work in a domain targeted for innovation (e.g. sufficient time for producing novel work in the domain, and the availability of training). [3] Management practices refers to allowance of freedom or autonomy in the conduct of work, provision of challenging, interesting work, specification of clear overall strategic goals, and formation of work teams by drawing together individuals with diverse skills and perspectives (Amabile, et al., 1996, p. 1156).

The interactionist model proposed by Woodman and his associates (Woodman, et al., 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990) looked at the interaction between creative people, creative
processes, creative products and the organisational context. The model organised these interactions into three levels, incorporating intra-individual, intra-organisational and external factors. They are: [1] individual creativity, [2] creativity in groups and [3] creativity in organisations. Individual creativity takes into account antecedent conditions, personality and cognitive factors, intrinsic motivation and domain knowledge. Creativity in groups considers the conditions of the group (size, leadership, cohesiveness, longevity, composition and structure), group processes (such as problem solving), and social information (norms and shared knowledge). Creativity in organisations considers the orientation of the organisation to creativity and creativity development, including external inputs.

Gilson’s (2015) review of the literature about creativity in teams uncovered a multitude of characteristics that impacted team member engagement in creative processes, the development of creative outcomes and the implementation of creative ideas (innovation). A key conclusion from this study was the need for a fuller understanding about the difference between creativity and innovation because the drivers for both were different at the team level. For example, the composition of teams suited for ideation and creative tasks is not necessarily good for teams tasked with development or implementation (Gilson, 2015). When conceptualising creativity as a process, success factors varied greatly at each creative stage. A common theme was the ability of team members to communicate, share information, handle conflict and work collectively in order to drive the creative process (Gilson, 2015).

Cohen and Levinthal’s (1990) ‘Absorptive Capacity’ theory was concerned with the interaction between outside stimuli, the individual and the organisation to identify and exploit new information for the purposes of innovation. The theory stressed the importance of balancing organisational commonality with diversity; the free-flow of information in, across and through an organisation; and the critical role for those at the organisational interfaces: external to internal and between subunits in the organisation. Organisations needed expertise or domain knowledge in order to identify the usefulness of external (and internal) stimuli and the extent to which an organisation was able to manage (or exploit) new and existing information determined the ability of the firm to innovate (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Twenty five years later Cattani, Ferriani and Colucci (2015) prescribe almost identical conditions to maximise creativity in social networks within and across organisations, with particular implications for managers. Creative organisations need a core of creative members with links to peripheral structures that validate and legitimise creative output. Like the Absorptive Capacity theory (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), managers play a key role in identifying and endorsing innovative ideas internally, as well as making connections to the periphery where divergent ideas thrive (Cattani, et al., 2015).
Studies and theories have emerged in recent years that focused on the creative process to explain creative performance in organisations (Basadur & Basadur, 2011; Basadur, et al., 2014; Caniëls, et al., 2014). Caniëls et al (2014) framed their study around three creative stages because they believed that each stage would be associated with different success factors. The stages were: [1] idea generation, including problem recognition and the ‘ripening’ of creative ideas; [2] idea promotion, meaning the gathering of support and resources for the new idea; and [3] idea implementation within the organisation. The results from their five propositions (linked to creative antecedents) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Roles and Stages for Creative Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFINED PROPOSITION</th>
<th>IDEA GENERATION</th>
<th>IDEA PROMOTION</th>
<th>IDEA IMPLEMENTATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Perseverance, have a communicative personality</td>
<td>Flexible, task-oriented and result-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Rewards</td>
<td>No role or demotivating role for extrinsic rewards</td>
<td>Extrinsic rewards motivate creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Group/team composition</td>
<td>Complementarity of networks</td>
<td>Complementarity in team roles, include experts, build competent team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Close contacts with influential people, established reputation, high credibility</td>
<td>Hierarchical leader needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Organizational resources</td>
<td>Stimulate interpersonal contacts, provide access to information</td>
<td>Transparent organizational structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Basadur model (2011), illustrated in Figure 2, is a practical blueprint for organisations to consistently and repeatedly solve problems incorporating both creative and analytical processes. They propose that individuals have preferences for different stages of the process and that one’s role in an organisation will correlate with the stage or step involved (Basadur, et al., 2014). The model, the survey instrument and the consultancy services that accompany the model, construct an organisational creativity that is democratic and commodified: it includes everyone. It presumes the role of an organisation is to solve customer problems and that creativity in organisations integrates with cyclical quality improvement models.

Tesluk, Farr and Klein (1997) reviewed the literature on creativity in organisations and developed a different framework that focused on culture and climate. These intangible influences on organisational creativity are linked but discreet. Culture has a number of dimensions but at the deepest level “culture contains the basic beliefs and values that represent the things that are taken for granted as individuals conduct their business in the
organization and define what types of behaviours are considered appropriate” (Tesluk, et al., 1997, p. 28). Culture is modelled by leaders and embodied in the policies, procedures, practices and artefacts in the organisation. Climate refers to the perceptions held by the members of the organisation about the embodied aspects of the prevailing culture. Both climate and culture are learned as a new staff member is socialised by the organisation. The framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image)

Figure 3
*A Model of the Influences of Organizational Culture and Climate on Individual Creativity.*

The aesthetic dimension of creativity is rarely discussed in the organisational literature. Aesthetic knowledge, in a study by Ewenstein and Whyte (2007), is knowledge that is “…embodied. It comes from practitioners understanding the look, feel, smell, taste and sound of things in organizational life” (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007, p. 689). There are two dimensions
to aesthetic knowledge: “The first is symbolic, consisting of knowledge in the form of signs and symbols. The second is experiential, consisting of feelings and embodied experiences that emerge through knowledge use” (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007, p. 689). In practice, the first dimension refers to a particular style, while the second dimension refers to the application of that style through iterative design. Thus, organisations can possess an identifiable style that manifests in their practice. In their study of a UK architectural firm (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007), aesthetic knowledge revolved around the founder of the firm. The knowledge manifested in buildings designed and built by the firm because they had a distinct look or spatial arrangement that was readily identifiable by other practitioners. This style (the first dimension of aesthetic knowledge) was deployed by other practitioners in the firm in the design of buildings, reflected upon and adjusted to suit the new context and incorporate aspects of their own aesthetic knowledge in an iterative and dynamic fashion (the second dimension of aesthetic knowledge). The development and increasing competence of this aesthetic knowledge was not strictly coded and was highly subjective with practitioners speaking of feelings and sensory perceptions when developing designs.

Zuo’s theoretical paper about aesthetic sense (1998) links to the aesthetic knowledge described by Ewenstein and Whyte above. Aesthetic sense is shaped by different practice domains but underlying them all is insightful perception, sound judgement, subtle discrimination and intelligent evaluation (Zuo, 1998). Zuo demonstrated the role of aesthetic sense in creative problem solving (problem finding, problem solving and verification), then argued for the development of aesthetic sense through practice, guidance and learning.

SECTION SUMMARY

In summary, the four main approaches in the literature to conceptualising creativity: componential, interactionist, process and competencies, reflect to a greater and lesser extent, management’s concern with the optimisation of creativity to meet organisational goals. Amabile’s (1983) early componential view at both a personal and organisational level and Generativity Theory (creative competencies, see Epstein, et al., 2013) elegantly explain organisational creativity in a way that can be assayed, developed and measured. Woodman and Schoenfeldt’s (1990) and Cohen and Levinthal’s (1990) more interactionist approaches are more dynamic and complex for researchers to investigate but come closer to understanding how creativity might be managed in an organisation from a social perspective. The process views of Basadur and Basadur (2011) and Caniëls et al (2014) are accessible but they do presume that everyone in an organisation is involved in creative product development and this is not necessarily the case for all organisations. The studies from Zuo (1998), Ewenstein and
Whyte (2007) and Tesluk et al (1997) round out the dominant approaches and provide a perspective of the affective and intangible dimensions of creativity in organisations. These studies reflect the creative concerns of fashion enterprises such as style and aesthetic sensibility at both a personal and organisational level.

2.4 Leading and Managing Creativity

For the purposes of this study, the leadership of creative efforts pertains to organisation wide aspects such as strategy, culture, climate and outputs at the organisational level, while the management of creative efforts is concerned with individuals, teams, tasks, resources, processes and outputs at an operational level. Although this study is chiefly concerned with the management of creativity, leadership influences are also discussed in this section, and indeed, are unavoidable. The literature slips easily from management to leadership, depending on the focus of the study and the conceptualisation of creativity. Key studies that have shaped this section are Ravasi and Stigliani’s (2012) review, focussing on the management of product design; and Rickards and Moger’s (2006) review, assaying ten years of writing in Creativity and Innovation Management with a focus on leadership processes. Most of the influential empirical studies into the leadership or management of creative efforts focus on scientific and technological organisations and originate in the US. Rickards and Moger (2006) have observed that leadership research had become increasingly interpretive following post-modern approaches while the management literature remained true to a modernist paradigm. As a result, the management literature failed to address the ambiguities surrounding creativity, leaving it to the ‘fuzzy-front end’ of innovation (Rickards & Moger, 2006, p. 14).

Scott and Bruce’s seminal study (1994) of American engineers, scientists and technicians in an industry research and development unit provided great insight into the determinants of innovative behaviour. Climate was one of four ‘components’ for creative/innovative behaviour and included aspects such as:

- rewards and recognition for creative/innovative excellence;
- organisational willingness to experiment with innovative ideas;
- the orientation of the organisation toward creativity and innovative change;
- support for autonomy and independent pursuits; tolerance for diversity; and
- adequate supply of resources including equipment, facilities and time (Scott & Bruce, 1994).
Some of these aspects fall into the control of the manager of creative processes such as resourcing, autonomy and reward, while other climatic considerations are more the domain of the leader such as organisational willingness to experiment and the general orientation of the organisation to creativity and innovation. Another component tested in the study was the role of leadership in innovative behaviour. ‘Leadership’ in this study essentially referred to the quality of interactions between supervisor and subordinates and the expectations of the leader for the subordinate’s innovative output, which for this study, is categorised as the domain of management. This pivotal study set the tone for much of the investigation into the management and leadership of creative/innovative efforts that was to follow. Key results confirmed that leadership (i.e., quality interactions with management) and support for innovation positively impacted individual innovative behaviour. Subordinates with supportive managers who trusted them with autonomy and independence felt that the organisation as a whole was supportive of innovation. Technical staff who experienced management expectations for innovative activity, resulted in increased innovative behaviour, but this did not apply to the more creative engineers. Interestingly, climate perceptions more broadly, did not correlate to innovative behaviour (Scott & Bruce, 1994).

Oldham and Cummings (1996), when considering the contextual factors for creativity in a US study on technical component manufacturing, found evidence of enhanced creative outputs as a result of the interaction between high personal creativity, challenging jobs and a supportive, non-controlling supervisory style. ‘Supportive’ in this study meant supervisors: demonstrated concern for employee needs; encouraged employees to raise questions and concerns; provided positive feedback; and facilitated skill development. This approach was intended to encourage employee self-determination and initiative. The opposite was ‘controlling’ where supervisors provided controlling feedback and pressured employees to behave and act in certain ways, thereby undermining intrinsic motivation in the work, and reducing creative output (Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Amabile et al’s (2004) study of leader behaviours and work environments confirmed that work environments have a significant impact on individual and team creativity. Part of that environment is ‘local leader’ support, with particular behaviours having positive and negative effects (Amabile, et al., 2004). The study focused on the subordinates’ perception of leader support for creative projects encompassing both instrumental and socio-emotional support linking back to the organisational ‘climate’ referred to by Tesluk, Farr and Klein (1997) earlier. Shalley and Gilson (2004) outlined the social and contextual role that leaders play in fostering creativity in organisations, as follows:
In order for creativity to occur, leadership needs to play an active role in fostering, encouraging, and supporting creativity. Hence, the role of leaders is to ensure that the structure of the work environment, the climate and culture, and the human resource practices (e.g., rewards, resources, goals, and expected evaluations) are such that creative outcomes can and do occur (Shalley & Gilson, 2004, p. 35).

Mumford et al. (2002) drew a number of conclusions about the leaders and managers of creative efforts. Firstly, they cannot fully rely on pre-defined organisational structures because of the ill-defined nature of creative work. Instead, they must be able to induce structure and provide direction where there is often no inherent direction (Mumford, et al., 2002). Another key difference in leading creative teams is the need for effective influencing behaviours. Due to the autonomous, professionally oriented and self-motivated nature of creative workers, leaders and managers cannot rely on positional power and conformity pressures. These are often counter-productive to creative output. A different influencing strategy is required that relies on social intelligence as well as cognitive skills (Mumford, et al., 2002). Feedback for creative efforts represents a critical process in development and in order to evaluate ideas and provide effective feedback, expertise in creative problem solving is required (Mumford, et al., 2002). The risky nature of innovative work is also at odds with the role of leaders who are responsible for tangible output. Mumford et al. (2002) described this as the tension between innovation and organisation, where managers and leaders sit on the boundary between the two.

Mumford et al. (2002) proposed an integrative tri-partite model for the role of creative leadership, summarised as follows:

1. Idea generation – providing the stimulation, support, climate, structure, composition and conditions of creative workers and creative teams;
2. Idea structuring – providing the evaluation/feedback for ideas, guiding development, integrating projects and setting expectations;
3. Idea promotion – gathering support from the broader organisation and project implementation.

More recently, Byrne et al (2009) outlined a three-step innovation process where the leader’s actions were sketched alongside:

1. Defining problems – environmental scanning, team leadership, strategy formation and mission definition;
2. Structuring creative problem solving – idea generation and evaluation, climate definition and team construction; and
3. Managing idea development – planning, process management and providing support and resources.

There is a subtle change in the role of leadership between the earlier tri-partite model (Mumford, et al., 2002) and the more recent innovation process by Byrne et al. (2009). Participation in the idea processes of the first model has been refocused towards the management of the innovation process in the second model. That is, from a more open, facilitative notion of leadership towards something that is more defined, active in a problem solving process, shaping and directing creative work. Later, in a work co-authored by Mumford, the role of the leader is characterised as the integrator of creativity into practical innovations (Mumford, Connelly, & Gaddis, 2003). The inference in this shift is that leaders are responsible for the delivery of viable innovations from creative inputs and outputs.

Reiter-Palmon and Illies (2004) theorized in a similar vein but specifically drew on existing studies to propose that leaders should take an active role in creative problem solving. They followed the well-established model of problem identification and construction, identification of relevant information, generation of new ideas, and the evaluation of the ideas generated (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Basadur (2004) was also very explicit about leader actions when deploying a structured problem solving model. Leaders were urged to go beyond modelling, leading and organising for collective creativity and become process leaders in a continuous improvement cycle. The conceptual paper also argued individuals were better suited to different stages of the creative problem solving process, and leaders needed to actively manage their role. The two studies further promote the role of the leader as an active player in the creative process with a particular emphasis on problem solving.

There has been some investigation into the most appropriate leadership style for innovative or creative efforts. Oke, Munshi and Walumbwa (2009) theorized on the transactional/transformational dichotomy. They argued that transformational leaders were better suited to creative innovation processes, while transactional leaders were better suited to innovation activities that exploited creative outputs. Gumusluoglu and Ilsev (2007) provide evidence of a positive relationship between transformational leadership and individual level creativity as well as organisational level creativity. An interesting departure from previous studies was the discovery that psychological empowerment was a stronger mediator for creativity than intrinsic motivation. Of particular relevance to fashion enterprises, that are not typically radical innovators, was the positive influence of transformational leadership on
incremental innovations that are more developmental than wholly original creative work. Černe, Jaklič and Škerlavaj (2013) found that an authentic leadership style positively affected creativity and team innovation but it was the employees’ perception of leader authenticity that was the key driver because self-ascribed leader authenticity was not a significant factor. A further determinant was the perception of support for innovation in the organisation. The ‘leaders’, as they were described in this study, were in team leader positions and this study correlates to the work of Amabile et al (2004) and their investigations into the perceptual and affective aspects of leadership in organisations.

Miller and Moultrie (2013) developed a framework for design management roles in fashion retailers from a recent study of a number of large UK fashion retailers. The framework is illustrated in Figure 4. Their findings clarify some of the fuzziness that exists in the management literature between the leadership and the management of creative efforts and the recent discourse surrounding design management. Their study showed that managers of design fulfilled ‘vital non-design support functions managing people and processes...’ (Miller & Moultrie, 2013, p. 173). True leaders of design ‘relentlessly focus on fashion and product and operate as a profoundly design-centric function...in most instances this involves a ““hands-on” approach’ (Miller & Moultrie, 2013, p. 173). The retail organisations that participated in the study required leaders of design to have formal design qualifications and extensive experience. The study also revealed that the two roles are very co-dependent and that design leaders oscillate between the two (Miller & Moultrie, 2013).
Figure 4
A Framework of Design Management Roles in the UK Fashion Retail Industry.

SECTION SUMMARY

In summary, the literature portrays the leaders of creative efforts as involved actors in the creative process, integrating creative outputs with organisational innovations that align with the mission and vision of the enterprise. Managers of creative efforts are characterised as local leaders, who attend to the daily needs of creative workers providing support, resources and expert feedback along the way. Managers monitor and adjust the local creative climate surrounding a team of workers while leaders enact the broader culture of creativity and innovation. The two identities can exist at different levels in the organisation but they can also exist within the same individual. If we accept that expertise and knowledge of a particular domain is necessary for creativity, and that each domain enacts creativity in a different way, then it must follow that the leadership and management of creative efforts are context specific. With the notable exception of Miller and Moultrie (2013), the literature has an overwhelming focus on the fields of science, engineering and technology.
2.5 Innovation, Design and New Product Development

This section explores the creativity literature as it pertains to innovation, design and new product development (NPD). The primary interest here is the actual product development process: how people in enterprises create, develop and implement new products to be traded in an economic system. The section is loosely organised into levels: the intra-organisational level; the organisational level; the inter-organisational level; and at the systems level, to reflect the multi-level conceptualisation of creativity. Mostly, the empirical studies and theories that follow are directly related to creative domains. The section begins with an explanation of the distinctions between design, innovation and NPD in order to orient the reader to the literature that follows.

Von Stamm (2008) defined ‘design’ as “…the conscious decision-making process by which information (an idea) is transformed into an outcome, be it tangible (product) or intangible (service)” (p. 17). Acklin (2013) framed design as the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. The OECD (2005) defined ‘innovation’ as: “…the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations” (p. 46). The term or acronym ‘NPD’ is frequently used in the innovation and supply chain management literature and refers to a process that results in new products or experiences being launched to the market (Perks, et al., 2005). Design is a subset of NPD, as is seen in the five phases of NPD: [1] identification of need; [2] concept generation; [3] design and development; [4] production; and [5] launch (Perks, et al., 2005). For the purposes of this study, innovation (made possible through design) is the result of NPD processes.

At the intra-organisational level, Tran (2010) explored the manner in which fashion enterprises generate stylistic innovations. Stylistic innovation refers to: “…changes in the aesthetic design and/or symbolic value of products” (Tran, 2010, p. 131). Colour, pattern, material, shape, detailing and construction are all elements that make up the aesthetic design of a fashion product. How society attributes meaning to a product or experience informs its symbolic value (Tran, 2010). The flow and form of stylistic innovation is thus sensitive to the economic and social positions of those who buy it and the settings in which the fashion is displayed (Caves, 2000). The two aspects of aesthetic (or stylistic) and symbolic innovation are intertwined in the fashion industry (Tran, 2010).

Tran’s study is significant in the management/innovation literature, as few have detailed what designers actually do in fashion enterprises in the design process. She defined three overarching practice constructs associated with stylistic innovation: creative sensing (inspiration-
Based); stylistic orchestrating (coherence-focused); and agile synchronisation (timing-driven), (Tran, 2010). The constructs are not mutually exclusive in an enterprise, or limited to a single point in time. Depending on the market or the stage of the design process, enterprises may combine two or three practices in sequence or parallel.

At the organisational level, Perks, Cooper and Jones (2005) developed a taxonomy for design roles based on a study of product development practices in a variety of creative industries including fashion/accessory manufacturers. They identified three main roles: design as functional specialism; design as part of a multifunctional team; and design as new product development process leader. The study went further to detail the specific actions and skills for each of the role types as they progressed through the five phases of NPD. A key recommendation from the study was that management needed to consider a more variable role for design in NPD. If the enterprise required radical product differentiation through creativity, the design role needs to be more central in the development process and the traditional skill base of the designer needs to expand to incorporate management-oriented skills such as project management and motivation (Perks, et al., 2005).

Poolton and Ismail’s (2000) conceptual paper outlined a number of characteristics for successful innovation at an organisational level, based on a number of their own studies and others. In essence, they proposed that successful innovation occurs in enterprises that have formal and structured design processes triggered by authentic market intelligence. The process needed to be agile and collaborative within the context of a well-managed work environment that harnessed the full potential of workers (Poolton & Ismail, 2000).

In a study of Italian furniture design firms (which are characterised as having longer development times and product life cycles than fashion), Dell’Era and Verganti (2007) observed that fashionable products were the result of incremental innovations. These innovations drew on the established design ‘language’ of a firm, which in turn connected with socio-cultural product meanings that characterised the firm such as status, prestige, quality and fashionability. They argued that radical changes in the product language of a firm had corresponding adjustments in the socio-cultural meaning of the brand (Dell’Era & Verganti, 2007).

Dell’Era and Verganti’s (2007) study had a number of implications for innovation practices at the organisational level. Radical new design languages had a negative impact on brand identity thus leading firms were very careful about the development of product languages before introducing them to the market. Leading firms did not generate multiple design languages, which contrasted with imitator firms who produced multiple design languages and then allowed the marketplace to decide the best subset. Leading firms had more purposeful and
planned product strategies that were harmonious with their brand identity and were more capable of influencing the market. Innovative firms with established research and experimentation processes were better able to respond to market changes and simultaneously filter market ‘noise’. Finally, leading innovative firms redefined the aesthetic parameters of the industry by creating a recognisable design language. By contrast, imitator firms copy accepted design languages for a lagging market (Dell’Era & Verganti, 2007).

Dell’Era and Verganti’s findings are presented extensively here because they resonate for NPD practices in Australian firms. Brand identity and having a carefully managed design language are similar constructs for Australian fashion enterprises with many brands portraying a distinctive aesthetic. However, few have the ability to redefine aesthetic parameters globally, as is the case for some brands in the Italian fine furniture industry. Australian fashion enterprises are a long way both temporally and geographically from the cultural and economic systems that nurture and support the international designer brands, which may explain why so many Australian firms have taken an imitative approach to their NPD processes.

The themes of brand identity versus market noise were explored by Cillo and Verona (2008) in their study of Italian fine fashion enterprises. They proposed roughly two stylistic innovation strategies: designer driven (or identity driven) and market driven, which they believed corresponded to the resource-based and structural view of competitive strategy literature, respectively. The design process for designer driven firms is triggered by the senior designer, creative director, or the eponymous designer of a brand and is usually internally focused. In more market-driven firms, the design process is triggered by external factors such as sales, market intelligence and competition. The fashion firm then leverages its responsiveness to these factors to guide the design process (Cillo & Verona, 2008). Verganti’s theoretical analysis of the socio-cultural meaning of products further promotes brand identity above traditional market pull as the key driver for product innovation (Verganti, 2008).

At the inter-organisational level, the literature is dominated by supply chain studies (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Birtwistle, et al., 2004; Bruce & Daly, 2006, 2011; Bruce, Daly, & Towers, 2004; Bruce & Moger, 1999; Cao, Zhang, To, & Ng, 2008; Chen, Murray, & Jones, 2007; Christopher, et al., 2004; Christopher, Peck, & Towill, 2006; Dari & Paché, 2013; Goworek, 2010; Jacobs, 2006; Lin, Piercy, & Campbell, 2012; Randall, Gibson, Defee, & Williams, 2011; Tyler, Heeley, & Bhamra, 2006; Wigley & Provelengiou, 2011). Typically, empirical papers are broad, inter-organisational studies from the UK, Europe and more recently, Asia. Supply chains are frequently modelled as ‘push’ or ‘pull’ systems, where NPD is being driven upstream (the push model), or downstream by the consumer (the pull model).
The literature from the supply chain field concentrates on how supply configuration affects the innovative capabilities of the focal firm. Consequently, there is little attention to the design process at the operational level of the firm. Nevertheless, two examples are cited here because they exemplify approaches from the 1990s to today.

Bruce and Moger (1999), in an exploratory study of the innovativeness of large-scale UK retailers, identified three main types of supply relationships: [1] co-partnerships, [2] ad-hoc relationships and [3] networks. Co-partnerships were prevalent between larger manufacturers and large retailers and were characterised as having very close, strategic and long-term relationships between partners where information was freely shared and acted upon. The benefits of this type of relationship were a ‘seamless’ and lean supply of products. The main disadvantage was that co-partnerships could only generate a limited amount of incremental innovation due to the lack of exposure to more diverse stimuli (Bruce & Moger, 1999). Ad-hoc relationships were characterised as being more adversarial with price being the key criteria for choosing suppliers. There was less trust between the actors and manufacturers were reluctant to share ideas, which allowed the manufacturers to supply other retailers. New developments were the responsibility of the manufacturers who were expected to lead retailers in trend developments. As a result, products were less innovative (Bruce & Moger, 1999). Network relationships were more common with small and medium sized enterprises. They were characterised as being vibrant risk-taskers with a stronger emphasis on design and creativity. They were capable of responding quickly to trend shifts, which was a competitive advantage over the large-scale enterprises, but there was a trade-off between production efficiency and responsiveness. Larger retailers were less willing to involve themselves with the smaller-scaled networked suppliers for reasons related to trust and risk and it was asserted that the more mainstream retailers had “no room for unconventional design input” (Bruce & Moger, 1999, p. 124).

Goworek (2010) described a more integrated NPD process that spanned suppliers and retailers in the supply of house-label fashion ranges for large retail fashion chains on the UK high street. According to this study, textile designers, knitwear designers, clothing designers and buyers worked collaboratively to source, design and develop fashion ranges in sometimes overlapping processes. With the use of visual and verbal communication heavily dependent on technology, fashion enterprises achieved international inter-firm product development processes for a competitive market (Goworek, 2010). This study is important because it provided evidence of the integration between the creative and technical aspects of product development with the mercantile function of buyer. Missing from the research was an understanding about the dynamics of the relationship between the buyer, the designer and the
supplier/manufacturer. For example, there was no discussion about influence, power and control between the actors in the supply chain over product development processes. Of note, is that the study concerned house-label (or housebrand) product, which frequently has less brand identity or a distinct design language than branded product.

De Toni and Nassimbeni’s (2003) study of NPD in the Italian eyewear industry categorised three distinct product development phases: [1] a creative phase; [2] a design (or technical) phase; and [3] a manufacturing phase. The study revealed a number of problems such as poor formalisation of the NPD process; overlaps and/or weak connections between the phases; limited monitoring of milestones leading to delays; and problems integrating external inputs (De Toni & Nassimbeni, 2003). Their study included suggestions for improvements and at the heart of these are a reappraisal of a number of limiting assumptions, which are tabled in Figure 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Related to</th>
<th>CURRENT ASSUMPTIONS</th>
<th>NEW ASSUMPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRODUCT VALUE</td>
<td>Material, bound to its functional use</td>
<td>In great part immaterial, bound to its capacity to recall new ‘scenarios’ for use and to identify a style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIGNERS’ TASK</td>
<td>To solve the technical problems and detect efficient solutions for manufacturing</td>
<td>To capture explicit and implicit market requirements, to represent a vision, to impose a style, to identify and integrate potential sources for innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>A sequence of mostly technical activities, a chain of distinct responsibilities</td>
<td>A process connecting distributed knowledge, a shared responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>Mainly explicit, articulated in specialist domains, owned by distinct professional categories</td>
<td>Also tacit, spread in pluralistic domains, considered as a collective patrimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN</td>
<td>Rigid work distribution (knowledge fragmentation)</td>
<td>Hierarchical level reduction, inter-functional teams with extended tasks, management by process and projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL SYSTEM</td>
<td>A source of efficiency and flexibility</td>
<td>The locus of contextual and tacit knowledge, a source of distinctive capabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5
‘Current’ and ‘New’ Assumptions for New Product Development Activities
De Toni and Nassimbeni’s proposals for process improvements (and the research that underpins them), are unique in their conceptualisation of NPD as knowledge-based organisational interactions within a highly collaborative supply network.

Abecassis-Moedas and Mahmoud-Jouini (2008) investigated the absorptive capacity of a number of French clothing and construction enterprises in relation to the assimilation of external design inputs in their NPD activities (such as freelancers, specialist designers, third party suppliers and interns). They discovered that the ability of a firm to assimilate and transform external knowledge into new products was improved by a dyadic two-way flow between external services and internal corporate knowledge and that the complementarity of the two enhanced the development of new products along with organisational willingness (Abecassis-Moedas & Mahmoud-Jouini, 2008). To explain this in practice, products were more successful in terms of production efficiency and fitness of purpose when two separate entities with different capabilities (like design and manufacturing) worked closely together and shared their distinct expertise. A typical example in the fashion industry is the use of third party suppliers for specific product types that are not part of the normal expertise within a firm. Similar knowledge flows were observed in Acklin’s study (2013) of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and their use of external design consultants. Acklin proposed that enterprise owners could develop the capabilities of the Design Manager (if they did not have them in house), in order to improve their competitiveness through differentiated products or experiences (Acklin, 2013).

At a systems level, the value of innovations is dependent upon the social context in which they are experienced (Caves, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). In other words, judgement is required to assess products as desirable, good, bad or successful, let alone new. Caves (2000) believed that establishing the rank of a product innovation (stylistic, incremental or radical) is dependent on the exchange between all the actors in the chain of fashion creation and consumption: designers, buyers (‘gatekeepers’), early adopters (‘certifiers’) and consumers. He also proposed that the market uses a paradigm to ‘sort’ innovations (and they vary with the type of enterprise) but it is essential for there to be a common understanding of what constitutes success. Caves described a spectrum of this common understanding where at one end there are tightly briefed standards of performance and product type and at the other end expectations are loosely defined or articulated. At the control end of the spectrum, novelty is not readily accepted as a valid or desirable innovation. At the other end, novelty is welcomed but it becomes difficult for the system to rank because there is little consensus on the commerciality of the product (Caves, 2000).
The fashion industry works across the spectrum of social acceptance of innovative products and in some enterprises the spectrum is represented within a single brand. For example, a retailer can sell housebrand product that is relatively controlled and well within expectation boundaries, as well as branded product lines that are perceived as risky, where market acceptance is not assured. At designer showings of new ranges, products can be offered but not put into production because the market may be unsure of their commercial viability. Thus, fashion enterprises must balance the tension between innovations that won’t challenge or overrun a system, and innovations that will leave the system with no way of discerning that which is of value (Caves, 2000).

Townley and Beech (2010a) theorised that creative workers set out to revise the aesthetics of the domain (such as fashion), and this represents a challenge to management that is often uneasy with change to the status quo. Creativity interferes with the control tendencies of management. This is summarised in the following quote:

> In all these areas there is an inherent tension between the freedom to be creative and keeping this creativity within manageable and productive bounds; the necessity of creating a ‘creative space’ for ‘creative labour’ to experiment, and maintaining the tension and balance between creativity and cost, autonomy and management control (Townley & Beech, 2010a, p. 7).

Caves (2000) also described a tension in the creative process, where the creator constantly defines and redefines a problem, then solves it aesthetically. He linked creativity to the larger enterprise concern of innovation by saying that innovation was “…the visible tip of the iceberg of everyday creativity – those creative efforts that strike the market as unusually distinctive, satisfying, and/or productive in opening new ground” (Caves, 2000, p. 202). Fashion, by his definition, was automatically innovative simply because it did not replicate exactly what existed before.

**SECTION SUMMARY**

To summarise, this section has explored the literature about the design process at a number of levels. From the intra-organisational level, explaining what designers and design teams actually do (Tran, 2010), right out to a systems level where innovation practices need to consider judgement and perception in order for new products to achieve acceptance or commercial success (Caves, 2000; Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). At the organisation level, the role of design (as a function) has been demonstrated to be responsive to the context, varying from a discreet compartmentalised activity to being a pivotal NPD process leader (Perks, et al.,
The design process has been shown to be structured and formal before 2000 but there has been a shift to more flexible agile practices in response to volatile environments (Poolton & Ismail, 2000). Strategically, the literature has explained innovation approaches such as being designer driven or market driven (Cillo & Verona, 2008); and the competitive advantage of a design language that is carefully managed (Dell’Era & Verganti, 2007). Moving further outward again, inter-organisational design processes have been explored in the supply chain literature with recent studies about integrated process (Goworek, 2010) and the capacity of organisations to learn and absorb design capabilities (Abecassis-Moedas & Mahmoud-Jouini, 2008; Acklin, 2013).

2.6 Critical Synthesis and Conclusions

Despite the wide-ranging literature cited in this review, a number of areas are worthy of further investigation. Firstly, links between operational processes and the broader aesthetic knowledge that is an essential part of the fashion economy; secondly, the role of creativity in product development and the support and resources available for creative work; and thirdly, the nature of the interactions among the actors in the product development process.

Developing fashion products involves choices, judgements and decisions that draw from aesthetic and commercial knowledge. For the actors involved in the process, that knowledge has been acquired over years and is constantly being refined and recalibrated in light of a shifting fashion scene and changeable business environments. Once the products hit the market, they have cultural, symbolic and economic value (Caves, 2000) that cannot be fully known in advance because they are socially and culturally assigned. Australian enterprises, that are temporally and geographically distant from the fashion centres of the northern hemisphere (Weller, 2007), have additional knowledge to integrate, which differentiates the Australian product development process from those discussed in the literature emanating from Europe, the UK and America. None of the literature cited in the preceding review has empirically examined the nature of the interactions between the actors in product development as they create, propose, refine and commercialise fashion products. None investigated the subtle, hidden factors that influence the exchange of commercial and aesthetic knowledge, as the actors of the creative process work towards a final range.

Creativity is regularly discussed in the literature in the areas of management/leadership and organisational studies. By contrast, when reviewing the innovation field, creativity is scarcely mentioned. Even in the creative industries field, there are surprisingly few empirical studies that examined how creativity was managed and organised at work (Warhurst, 2010). There is
a tendency to embed creativity (implicitly) in design, NPD, product development and innovation processes. Thus creativity is conceptualised as a process, which means it can be managed, structured, given deadlines and made more efficient. This is problematic because it fails to address three key assumptions. Firstly, it presumes creative processes are orderly and dismisses the potential for disruption or disagreement, which arguably, is an essential and unpredictable part of the creative process. Secondly, it glosses over intangible factors such as the climate and the orientation of the organisation for creative efforts and how this informs more tangible aspects such as providing resource and time for creative endeavours. Thirdly, it fails to recognise the multi-level conceptualisation of creativity where the factors at play in the process range from the deeply personal intra-individual aspects such as aesthetic sensitivity, to broad socio-cultural constructs such as ‘fashion’ and taste.

In the following chapter the methodology is explained in detail, encompassing research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethics.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter begins with the key considerations for developing the methodology, followed by the design itself, encompassing sampling, data analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a brief statement about the evolving nature of the methodology in response to various obstacles and knowledge acquired in the field.

The chief influences in the research design were the writings of Neumann (2006) and Yin (2009). Interviewing techniques were inspired by the work of Rubin and Rubin (2005). Data analysis followed guidelines and methods by Flick (2009), Saldaña (2013), Bazeley and Jackson (2013), and Strauss (1991).

3.1 Methodological Considerations

From conversations with industry insiders and my own industry experience, it was evident that the interaction between design, merchandise/sales and management throughout the product development process varied dramatically from enterprise to enterprise. For manufacturers and wholesalers, sales staff were the enterprise drivers and integral to product development, with little input from senior management. Some of these enterprises had even outsourced the design function completely, keeping the influence of designers in operations at arms-length. In other enterprise types, where design was a valuable and integrated function in the business, designers were at the centre of decision-making, from initial brand concepts to retail fit-outs, in-store visual merchandising and marketing. In some enterprises, management maintained distance from the design process, providing feedback at limited points in the development process. In others, management had frequent and direct input into design and were the most influential actor in the creative process. There were also known enterprises where one person performed all three of the generic functions (design, merchandising/sales and management), so the dynamics under investigation were personal, fully integrated and largely unconscious. This wide variation in product development activities inspired a methodological design that investigated multiple contexts in an attempt to capture a number of different practice settings.
3.2 Methodological Design

The research questions seek understanding about contemporary product development processes that are complex and highly context dependent. The questions were designed to reveal values, attitudes and perceptions about creativity: a phenomenon that is interpreted in multiple ways in the literature and in the fashion industry. Product development and creativity are integrated into the everyday business processes of fashion enterprises making them difficult phenomena to access in any depth in order to uncover perceptions and assumptions. It is because of these factors that a case based methodology was chosen. A large proportion of the empirical UK/European studies used case-based methodologies to gather data, and for management, it is considered a powerful tool for the development of new theory (Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002). The case method is well suited to asking questions of ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ in a natural setting with all complexities in play. It is useful for investigating contemporary phenomena in settings where the researcher has little control over the phenomena under investigation (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) also advocates the case-based approach when the phenomenon under investigation has an historical dimension. As outlined in the literature review, creativity is influenced by antecedent factors such as background, experience and domain knowledge acquired over time (Woodman, et al., 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990), which further supports the case-based approach deployed for this study.

Typical of case study approaches, there is intrinsic data that is context specific, instrumental data that serves to illustrate an issue and collective data that will contribute to theory building (Cresswell, 1997; Stake, 2000). Because of the variety of enterprise types in the fashion industry, a multiple case methodology was chosen so that the management of creativity could be investigated in different contexts with the possibility of identifying patterns and themes across them (Flick, 2009). The advantage of multiple case-based methodologies is the increased robustness of findings because multiple cases can improve external validity and limit observer biases (Miles & Huberman, 2002).

In a generic sense, there were three functional groups participating in product development: design, merchandising/sales and management. The design function is typically performed by fashion designers, textile designers or graphic designers and supported by garment technicians. They are responsible for the design and development of garments for selection, production and eventual sale to a consumer. The merchandise/sales function collaborates with design (to varying degrees) in the development of product ranges and normally determine quantities, range balance and distribution or sales of product. The management function is typically performed by business unit managers, merchandise managers and design directors. They
commission and oversee the creative process and have final sign-off on product ranges. The merchandise and management functions, in large part, carry the financial responsibility for a business unit. Figure 6 illustrates their interactions around the product development process.

![Diagram of organisational functions involved in product development]

**Figure 6**
*Generic schema for organisational functions involved in product development*

### 3.3 Sampling

The population for the study was the Australian fashion industry. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) categorises industries according to the 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZIC). ANZIC identifies three main types of fashion enterprises: manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. In reality, there is considerable overlap between the classifications – most notably between manufacturers and wholesalers, so for the purposes of this study, the broad classifications have been reduced to just two: retail operations and manufacturing operations. This is because the ABS defines wholesale operations as those (business) units that mainly purchase and on-sell goods without significant transformation (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). This implies that design input is minimal or non-existent in this division and thus would not be relevant to the study. Table 2 provides information on the population for the study.
Table 2
Counts of Fashion Enterprises in Australia with Employees in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Subdivision</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Small 1–19</th>
<th>Medium 20–199</th>
<th>Large 200+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>134 Knitted product manufacturing</td>
<td>1340</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>135 Clothing manufacturing</td>
<td>1351</td>
<td>2057</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL MANUFACTURING:</td>
<td>2432</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>425 Clothing, footwear and personal accessory retailing</td>
<td>4251</td>
<td>6321</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>7017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>426 Department stores</td>
<td>4260</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL RETAIL:</td>
<td>7137</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The source data for the population table forced some assumptions for the purposes of this study. The manufacturing information for Group 134 (knitted product manufacturing) is very broad and includes textile manufacturers as well as garment manufactures. Therefore of the 117 enterprises tabled, only a fraction would be manufacturing garments. Department store retailing (class 4260) counts business units that retail a number of different product types which do not necessarily include clothing. However they have been tabled because major department store retailers such as Myer, Target and Kmart have large floor areas devoted to clothing. Despite the operational size of these major retailers, only a proportion of the 120 business units tabled above would have fashion clothing departments. Finally, not all of the population would have design functions and therefore would not be suitable for this study. The sampling frame was derived from the population with the assistance of key informants in the fashion industry, personal contacts, trade publications such as Ragtrader and AT&F Index (which contain supplier directories that provide more relevant information than sources such as The Yellow Pages), and trade show websites. 39 enterprises based in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney comprised the sampling frame. Perth was chosen because of close proximity to the enterprises. Melbourne and Sydney were chosen because initial investigations indicated that the majority of Australian fashion enterprises are based in these two cities. The preferred method of contact was by telephone with a targeted email follow up to the appropriate addressee. Some businesses only accepted email enquiries and some diverted queries to a PR firm. Gatekeepers were very protective of their business and it was extremely difficult to gain access to a staff member who was in a position to accept the invitation to participate in the study.
As the number of suitable and willing participants in the sample frame dwindled, a more purposive approach was taken to establish a core group of diverse cases for investigation. The first level of purposive sampling was to ensure there were participants in both divisions as defined by ANZIC: retailers and manufacturers. The second consideration was for both branded and unbranded enterprises because it was believed that the centrality of design and creativity was higher in branded product than in unbranded product. The third level of purposive sampling was to research different product categories such as menswear, womenswear, childrenswear and sportswear. Not only did this provide diversity of context, but it also provided another layer of protection for the intellectual property of the participant enterprises, should they have any concerns about confidentiality. The final sampling consideration was the location of the enterprise.

Despite persistent attempts to include local businesses in Perth Western Australia, none wished to participate. Sydney-based businesses (where there is a high concentration of fashion enterprises) were also contacted repeatedly but none were able to participate during the data collection period. Due to opportunities made available and resource constraints, all the participants had design operations based in Melbourne Victoria. Table 3 maps the core sample group derived from the purposive sampling criteria outlined above.

As part of the recruitment process, gatekeepers or key informants at each enterprise were sent a synopsis of the study, which briefly explained its aim and methodology. When they agreed to participate, a more detailed information sheet was sent which explained processes, risks and assurances for confidentiality. At the time of entry for conducting interviews or observations, this information sheet was presented in hard copy and a consent form was provided and signed by the interview participants. The generic form of these participant documents are attached in Appendices A, B and C.
Table 3
Sampling Map: Participant Enterprises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RETAILER (VERTICAL OPERATION)</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER/IMPORTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BRANDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beta Homme (Victoria)</td>
<td>• Epsilon Knitwear Importers (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the Alpha Group</td>
<td>Men’s and women’s knitwear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Delta Gentleman (Victoria)</td>
<td>• Zeta Woman (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the Alpha Group</td>
<td>Independent womenswear with pop-up retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sigma Luxe (Victoria)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upmarket Designer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNBRANDED</strong></td>
<td>• Theta Kids (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not represented</td>
<td>Childrenswear manufacturer based in Nantong China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Enterprise names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

3.4 Data Collection

In the fashion industry, product development is a protected process that is part of the inner workings of the enterprise. Not only was access to the unit of analysis challenging, the timing of access at a convenient time for all proved difficult because each enterprise had different development timelines. The original intent was to collect data at critical product development points but most of the participant enterprises were unwilling to cooperate with this request and only allowed access after the busiest development times. My own work commitments meant that I had to take personal leave to collect data, which necessitated access to multiple cases in a condensed timeframe. Further complicating the problem were the movable travel plans common to many fashion enterprises for overseas sourcing, production and retail research and development. My role as a researcher was fully disclosed to all sampled enterprises and participants.

A rare opportunity to enter the field as a participant and observer at Beta Homme precipitated the first of two data collection phases. In May 2013, I worked on-site at Beta Homme as a design assistant for two weeks. The timing of access was mutually convenient to both the gatekeeper (the Design Manager) and myself as researcher. Knowledge gained in this first phase of data collection precipitated an adjustment to the original research question because it highlighted an incorrect assumption about the roles and relationships involved in the product development process. For example, large retail enterprises relied heavily on the work of the merchandise planner in the product development process to quantify and financially model the performance of product ranges. This information expanded the original investigation of the creativity/management dichotomy to include situations where product development was
a more complex practice involving a design team, a merchandise planner and management at both a middle and senior level.

The second phase of data collection with the remainder of the five cases took place in July 2013. Access to these sites was by mutual agreement that was convenient to both the gatekeepers and my own work commitments. The two phases involved different data collection types because it was not possible to access and observe product development processes in the second phase.

The choice of data collection types varied across the cases. The Beta Homme case allowed the deployment of a number of types because it was the only case that allowed participation in, and observation of, the product development process. For the other five cases, interviews were the key source of data along with limited access to documents and product. Data collection types and time of entry for observations and field interviews are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4
Data Collection Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION TYPES</th>
<th>TIME OF ENTRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta Homme</td>
<td>• Participant as observer&lt;br&gt;• Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Documents&lt;br&gt;• Store visits (artefacts)</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Gentleman</td>
<td>• Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Documents&lt;br&gt;• Store visits (artefacts)</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon Knitwear Importers</td>
<td>• Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Observation&lt;br&gt;• Documents</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Luxe</td>
<td>• Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Observation&lt;br&gt;• Documents&lt;br&gt;• Store visits (artefacts)</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta Kids</td>
<td>• Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Documents</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta Woman</td>
<td>• Interviews&lt;br&gt;• Documents&lt;br&gt;• Store visits (artefacts)</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The field interview was the critical data source across the six cases and the process for selecting participants varied. After a couple of days working at Beta Homme, I decided to
interview five of the six staff in the unit because they appeared to have direct involvement in the product development process. For the other cases, the gatekeeper provided information about suitable interview participants after it was requested that key actors in the product development process be available for interview. By having two (and up to five) viewpoints in five of the six cases, it was possible to achieve a satisfactory level of construct validity (Yin, 2009). Table 5 lists interview participants for each case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beta Homme</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business (Unit) Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Gentleman</td>
<td>Design Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandise Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Luxe</td>
<td>Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon Knitwear Importers</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta Kids</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta Woman</td>
<td>Designer/Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All interviews were conducted in the field, at or near the place of work. The original intent was for individual interviews in private however two of the six cases participated in combined interviews with design staff and management staff in the same appointment. The reasons for and limitations of this are discussed in Chapter Four. Despite the deviation from the preferred methodology, there were still insights to be gained by interviewing participants in pairs, with the most obvious being the way they interacted with each other. Interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to explain responses to a set of questions and expand on their own experiences and perspectives about creativity and management. The instrument was developed from the research questions, which were in turn informed by the literature review. All participants were asked about their personal background and work history; their current role in the business; the design process; creativity and taste; performance factors and any additional stories or experiences that served to illustrate how the business viewed, valued or managed creativity. Management participants were asked extra questions about corporate data such as turnover, organisational structure, ownership, governance and staffing. For details about the survey instrument, please refer to Appendix D.
The survey instrument was designed and administered so that rapport was established early through simple questions about personal data, which led into an extended explanation of participants’ backgrounds and personal histories. The interview then moved into the core content about creativity and then ended with more open-ended questions about creativity in the organisation, dialogue about the survey instrument and the opportunity for participants to ask questions of the researcher. The interviews took anywhere between 45 and 90 minutes with most taking 90 minutes to complete.

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by external service providers. I checked and edited the transcripts against the recordings before sending them back to the interviewees for verification and approval via an agreed data exchange protocol. Some data required clarification and elaboration and this was achieved by email.

A field journal was kept during both phases of the data collection period. At Beta Homme, I recorded observations as a participant in the field. There was limited opportunity to write extensively in real time because of the demanding nature of the work, so most of the entries in the field journal were made or elaborated out of work hours. I observed supplier meetings, fittings, business unit meetings and a wide range of interactions both within the business unit and across the enterprise. There were no areas that were deemed out of bounds. The field journal was also used in phase two data collection at the remaining five cases. Immediately after each field interview notes were made about site information, observations and impressions about non-verbal communication, thoughts and reflections.

At Beta Homme, in addition to the field journal, a personal journal was kept to record reflections, personal emotional states and ideas for investigation, in the manner of ethnographic/participant methodologies (Goodall, 2000).

In all cases, it was possible to sight artefacts such as range books, technical packs, storyboards, sample garments and fabrics. Indeed at Beta Homme, I was an active producer of these artefacts. It was not possible to document these artefacts formally during the data collection period in order to protect the intellectual property for the participant enterprises, however impressions and observations were recorded in the field journal. Other publicly available documents such as newspaper articles, trade journal articles, industry reports, annual reports and corporate websites have been accessed as evidence for cases where they were available. For example, corporate websites displayed range development outputs a few months after the data collection period, triangulating evidence acquired in the field. Retail store visits provided similar evidence to corporate websites. In four of the six cases it was possible to see the outputs of their product development processes through viewing product in stores. While
both these sources are not evidence of the actual product development process, they provided valuable information about the presentation of a brand and confirmed or challenged perceptions of innovation and creativity made apparent through interviews and observations.

Within the Beta Homme case a considerable degree of construct validity has been assured through the use of a variety of data collection types and by seeking multiple perspectives from several interview participants. With the remaining five cases, this degree of robustness was not always possible to the same extent and this will be discussed in Chapter Six.

3.5 Data Analysis

Yin (2009) recommends the use of an analytical strategy before commencing data analysis in case studies. In this study, three of Yin’s strategies guided the analysis: [1] the theoretical propositions implied in the research questions; [2] the desire to provide rich descriptions for contextualised product development processes; and [3] the need to examine rival explanations in order to limit researcher bias (Yin, 2009). In practice, the strategies overlapped, were iterative and involved a mutual interdependence between the data and ideas (Neuman, 2006). That is, the empirical evidence informed concept development and this, in turn, influenced the interpretation of the data. There were essentially three phases to the data analysis:

• Phase 1: within case coding of field data;
• Phase 2: triangulation of field data with documents and artefacts; and
• Phase 3: cross case analysis to explore patterns and to confirm, augment or rival theoretical propositions from the literature.

The first phase of analysis used NVivo software to code interview transcripts and the field journals. Two coding methods were deployed simultaneously: structural and open. Structural coding (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998; MacQueen, K.M., & Guest, G. 2008, cited in Saldaña, 2013) created codes that directly related to the interview questions. In this way, one could easily see all responses from all cases that relate to a common question. Open coding (Strauss, 1991), created codes for responses and thoughts contained within the text that appeared either relevant to the research questions or worthy of further investigation. Open codes emerged more frequently from responses to open-ended questions or where interview participants were asked to expand on their answers. These codes were intuitively applied and as such, were quite personalised to the researcher. This is both the strength and vulnerability of qualitative research because of the difficulty in maintaining reliability in data analysis. As with structural coding, NVivo facilitated easy viewing of all responses in relation to
these new open codes instantly. Ideally, these two coding techniques should have been executed separately but the data was already very familiar to me as a result of detailed verification of the transcripts prior to coding. The Beta Homme case was the first case coded this way and the coding structure that emerged provided a framework for each subsequent case, with new codes added as required. This phase of analysis organised the data into the six distinct in-case responses to the research question, which are explored in Chapter Four. Table 6 lists the initial codes applied.

Table 6
*NVivo Codes Applied to Texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL CODES</th>
<th>OPEN CODES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on interview questions</td>
<td>From texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business information</td>
<td>Business strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Structure</td>
<td>Impact of strategy on product development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Aesthetic discord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/creative background</td>
<td>Unclear role definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Rise of the Merchandise Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value add</td>
<td>Business expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Creativity</td>
<td>Barriers to creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of creativity</td>
<td>Creative development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative control</td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taste or Style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second phase drew data from documents and artefacts such as annual reports, corporate websites, newspaper articles, industry reports and publications. I also conducted store visits to visualise branding and design intentions described in interviews at the time products were arriving in store. The purpose of this analysis was to triangulate the coded data from interviews and journals and to enrich within-case reporting and analysis.

The third analytical phase followed Yin’s technique of ‘pattern matching’ (Yin, 2009), which essentially sought explanations and patterns for product development processes and creativity across all six cases. There were three main steps in this phase. The first step analysed product development process data in detail across the cases to determine any similarities or contrasts.
in practice. This analysis highlighted distinct patterns between business types such as retailers and manufacturer/wholesalers. The second step was to align theory with the data to confirm, augment or explore alternative explanations. For example, Cillo and Verona’s (2008) design led approach to innovation was evident, but to very different extents across the cases. The alternative explanation provided by Weller (2007) of Australia’s product development led approach (copying and adapting) was more prevalent and this study concludes that a hybrid approach of the two is more typical of the participant cases. The third step was to explore new insights and concepts that emerged in the first phase of open coding across all six cases. Insights such as the centrality of the merchandise planner and concepts such as aesthetic leadership were analysed in the different cases to determine if they had similar or contrasting incidences. Analysis revealed that large retailers heavily relied on merchandise planners in the product development process and that all cases had difficulties with aesthetic leadership from time to time. The third analytical phase attempted to find generalisable theory that would apply across the cases but the context for each case was too diverse to permit a satisfactory universal explanation for all phenomena. Instead, this phase of analysis revealed dimensions and patterns, which were used to develop a series of matrices to illustrate contrasts, variations and similarities between the cases.

Analysis was guided by the research questions, the field data and the literature, but my background as a designer has also influenced the process and therefore, the resulting findings. To balance this and protect against bias, a reflexive approach was adopted where personal experiences and assumptions were continually checked against all of the data. The process involved reading for bias, reflecting, adjusting the analytical perspective and then re-examining the data to ensure findings were rigorous and not overly personalised to the researcher. This approach has impacted the findings attenuating the original intent of the research questions. As a result, some of the critical questions around taste and creative control were not fully realised in the study.

3.6 Ethics

This study was granted ethics approval by the ECU Human Research Ethics Committee, well in advance of data collection (ethics reference number: 8496). The study posed a negligible risk level to participants (as per ECU protocol) and was carried out in accordance with principles and policies outlined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2009). Participation was entirely voluntary and all participants were offered information outlining the background, aims,
processes, benefits and risks associated with the research. Participant documentation is attached in Appendices A, B and C. Integrated with the consent form was a checklist (made explicit at the time of interview) that summarised the participant information documentation to ensure that all participants provided their consent with full knowledge of the project. Participants were advised that they could pull out of the project at any time and that their contributions would be removed from the gathered data and destroyed. They were also advised in interview that they were not obliged to answer all questions and could skip elaborating on answers when probed.

All data collected is individually identifiable but for data storage purposes the identifiers have been removed and the data recoded. If required, it is possible to re-identify individuals and entities. Digital audio files will be destroyed upon completion of the project but text-based data will be kept for five years after the project is completed and may be used in unspecified future research with the consent of the chief investigator (myself). After that period it will be destroyed as per ECU record keeping policies and protocols. This information was explained in participant information documents provided at the time of interviews.

Upon completion of the project, participants were promised a summary of the findings and advised that the published thesis would be available to the public via the ECU Research Online website (accessed at http://ro.ecu.edu.au/). The participants were also advised that if the data were used for any publication purposes such as journal articles, conference papers and oral presentations, the participants would not be identifiable.

Despite all of these protocols, confidentiality and anonymity were not entirely possible with this study. Some participants at three of the six cases knew each other very well and were aware of each other’s involvement with the project, therefore they are identifiable to at least those participants. Two of the cases could easily be identified to fashion industry insiders from the case descriptions provided in the following chapters and from there, participants could be identified if they had connections with the enterprises. The consequences of being identified from the study were discussed with some of the participants when it was perceived that they had divulged confidential information about themselves, their colleagues or their enterprise. There were two main concerns: [1] the public access to the study findings and [2] whether or not the information divulged was in fact confidential. When this occurred in interviews, participants were reminded of the opportunity to edit the transcript of the interview and remove the data in question.

There were ethical concerns in some cases with data collection procedures and the relationships between participants – the researcher included. At Epsilon Knitwear, the
Designer was summoned to the Managing Director’s office to participate in a joint interview. The Designer did not appear perturbed by the request and indicated that she was happy to answer questions but it would have been preferable to ask her in private. At Beta Homme, my friendship with the Design Manager, which had afforded the access to the business unit, required further assurances about the confidentiality of responses from the other participants in the business unit. The confidentiality of their responses was reiterated by reminding them that I would not discuss their interviews with the Design Manager and that they could simply skip questions if they preferred. Cross-participant confidentiality was also a consideration for the Designer of Theta Kids as she was a close collaborator and friend of the Sales Manager. The Designer had expressed ethical concerns (and displayed them in considering her responses to questions), when discussing her interactions with the Sales Manager. This caution and care were also observed in the Sales Manager when discussing the Designer. Rather than seeing these as limitations of the methodology, they are also indicators of the nature of the relationships between participants. Care has been taken in the subsequent analysis and reporting of each case to preserve existing relationships, both personal and in a business context.

3.7 Chapter Conclusions

The original methodology proposed for this study was ambitious and demanding on both the researcher and the researched. As the period of candidature progressed and the availability of suitable participants diminished, it became imperative to adapt the original design in order to complete the project in the standard timeframe for the course. The opportunity to collect data in the field as a participant-observer presented a challenge in terms of becoming familiar with the literature that surrounded this method, acquiring field skills in time and making arrangements and preparations to enter the field at a mutually convenient time for both the researcher and the participants. Despite the difficulties, the experience proved critical as the knowledge gained in the field in this first phase of data collection precipitated an adjustment to the original research question because it highlighted an incorrect assumption about the roles and relationships involved in the product development process.

Increasing awareness of the political-ideological nature of research resulting from a greater exposure to critical theory (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Dixon, 2010; Entwistle, 2006; Magala, 2006; McLeod, et al., 2009; Prichard, 2002; Strauss, 1991; Warhurst, 2010) throughout the period of candidature has informed observations of practices and assumptions in the field and influenced the analysis of the data collected there.
In summary, the methodology has developed and adapted to changes in the project plan, to discoveries in the field and to the development of the researcher's perspective. Rather than the entire research being a sequence of discreet steps (for example, literature review, followed by methodological design, data collection, analysis and reporting), the methodology was integrated into the research project with iterative revisions and adjustments.
Chapter 4: Within-Case Analysis, Findings and Discussion

In this chapter high-level findings for each of the six cases are presented, derived from the in-case data analysis of interview transcripts, field journals, artefacts, trade and industry journals, documents and corporate websites. The findings are presented case by case because they align with the first two phases of data analysis and they present the context specific nature of the creative process under investigation. The Beta Homme case, where I spent two weeks in the field, is the most extensive of the six.

Each case begins with a snapshot of the enterprise, outlining the main business activity, size, structure, turnover, governance, location and relationships (if any) to other cases in the study. The snapshot was generally drawn from direct questions to the Business Manager and follow-up research online. Following the snapshot is a summary of the key findings for each case that relate to the research questions. They are presented this way in order to keep the thesis concise and to allow readers to explore findings in a user-friendly fashion. The summaries attempt to explain the following topics consistently across the cases:

- How the enterprise manages the product development process;
- How creativity is facilitated;
- The nature of the relationship between the actors of the product development process;
- The role of taste and style; and
- Antecedent factors that impact product development.

At the end of the chapter is a discussion section that highlights consistent in-case findings and makes connections to the extant literature.

4.1 High Street Retailer: Beta Homme

4.1.1 Case Snapshot

Beta is one of four brands in the Alpha Group. The Alpha Group is a highly successful iconic fashion group incorporated in Australia in the 1970s. At the time of data collection, Alpha was a publicly listed company with a controlling interest by one shareholder owning over 80% of
the shares\(^1\). According to the Annual Report (2013), the Alpha Group generated annual sales of over $700 million in over 500 retail stores in Australia, South Africa and New Zealand as well as online. There was a board of directors accountable to shareholders and responsible for the overall strategy of the group (Governance, 2014), while brand strategy and day to day operations are the responsibility of the Executive Management Committee chaired by the group Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The committee comprised the CEO, the Managing Directors (MDs) of the four brands, group MDs from shared functions, the group Chief Financial Officer and the group Chief Operations Officer. The Alpha Group acquired Beta in 2012 from a private equity group (Waters, 2012), and began change management processes to harmonise a range of functions and processes. At the time of data collection in 2013, change management had not yet affected creative processes.

Beta is the young, fashion-forward brand of the Alpha Group that retails womenswear, menswear and childrenswear. According to the corporate website, the Beta brand first started trading in womenswear in 1972, launching Beta Homme in 2009. The brand employed around 80 staff at head office in inner urban Melbourne, leading and managing operations in a retail network of nearly 200 stores across Australia and New Zealand. Total employee numbers are approximately 2000. Beta was organised on a matrix structure, so the menswear division operated at the intersection of two reporting lines and across four different departmental functions (see Figure 7 for a visual representation). Interviews and informal conversations with management staff in the menswear division revealed that Beta Homme was a very small part of the Beta business with a turnover in the 2011/12 financial year of $12 million. They were struggling to build a profile and improve sales figures in the face of ambitious growth targets set by senior management.

\(^1\) In 2014 the Alpha Group delisted from the Australian Stock Exchange (Australian Stock Exchange, 2014).
Beta Homme employed six staff at head office at the time of data collection. From observation, five of the six staff had direct involvement in the design and development of clothing and accessory ranges. The division was headed up by the Business Manager and creative work was carried out by the Design Manager supported by the Design Assistant. The Quality Assurance Technician (QAT) was involved in range development with regard to technical work and the division occasionally used the services of freelance designers for print development and ad hoc presentation work. The Planner, assisted by the Purchasing Officer, worked closely with the Business Manager to structure, plan, quantify, purchase and manage the merchandise for the business division. Figure 8 provides a schematic representation of the various actors and functions involved in the product development process. For each main selling season (Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer), roughly 200 apparel styles and 60 accessory styles were produced by the menswear division.

Data collection took place over a two-week period in May in 2013, as a participant observer, at head office operations in Melbourne, Victoria.
4.1.2 Key Findings at Beta Homme

It was clear from observation and participation in the field that Beta Homme was very focused on product development. The process was accordingly ordered, systematic, iterative and tightly controlled within the business unit. The Design Manager was the main process driver but market and sales data ameliorated her influence, reflecting a fine balance between being designer driven and market driven (Cillo & Verona, 2008). The Design Manager however questioned her centrality in the product development process:

I don’t think it’s right in an organisation like ours. I think there should be more collaboration. We’re not a designer led label. At the end of the day we’re a mass-market brand, and I think to put one person on a pedestal and think that they can just design that range with a hundred percent autonomy, I don’t believe it’s quite the right structure (Design Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 13, 2013).

From interviews it was revealed that the focus and control of product development and brand presentation dissipated beyond the menswear unit. Other departments controlled the
merchandise planning, retail operations, online store, online presence, visual merchandising, branding and communications. This meant that the relatively small menswear unit (with less than ten percent of total Beta sales) had to rely on organisational networks and personal influence to maintain any sense of control over the product and how it was distributed and presented to the market. From the Business manager:

It goes from being quite tightly controlled within our little office if you like, with a lot of interaction and going backwards and forwards with discussion and needing to understand where people’s minds are and where they’re going and clarifying, to suddenly it’s out there in the greater world and we’ve had very limited control over that (Business Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 10, 2013).

Interviews with the Business Manager revealed a history of strategic missteps and unclear brand direction for menswear that made the product development process problematic for existing and predecessor teams. It was evident from data analysis that the repositioning of the brand after the Alpha takeover was hasty, not implemented smoothly nor fully embraced or understood across the business. This was despite considerable work by the business division to articulate the new vision for Beta Homme. From the Business Manager:

…there wasn’t that kind of time for “Look guys before we get to a buy [meeting], before we get there, let’s all sit down together and talk about what this means.”

…and fundamentally it comes down to us delivering a brief, but having managers that are still mentally working their way through where they want to be and where we need to be…(Business Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 10, 2013).

‘Buy meetings’ (where final decisions about product were made with senior management) highlighted the lack of alignment or clarity between middle and senior management about the new vision and revealed the inevitable lag for the new direction to translate into product. Interviews with the two managers suggested that senior management (not interviewed), did not appear to fully appreciate the difference between the two major product development approaches: design led and product development led. As a consequence, the implications of each approach with respect to resourcing and processes were not well understood. Field experience suggests the business unit adopted a predominantly product development led approach in the face of time constraints, a lack of human resources, and the organisational mindset. When the highly experienced Design Manager was asked if there were enough resources and support for creative work, she was unequivocal in her response:
No. Being blunt, no. It’s just the workload. But that’s me just saying that because we’ve just worked nearly a twelve-hour day and there’ll be four more of those to come for me before the weekend again. And there’s something wrong there. There is. It’s not just the way I work, is it? Because as I say I’m really second guessing the way I work now, because I’ve never worked like this before (Design Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 13, 2013).

The lack of resource for creative work impacted the capacity of the division to generate the kind of creative and differentiated product they wished to, with the level of quality and detailing deemed necessary to be competitive in the market. Analysis suggests that creative capacity was compromised by two factors. Firstly there was no one in the role of production manager to deal with queries from manufacturers, most of which fell onto the Design Manager and the Design Assistant to answer; and secondly there were a number of additional demands on the design team to prepare visuals and garments for internal processes, board meetings and marketing purposes. Both of these demands took them away from their core activity of designing ranges.

From observation and participation in the field, it was clear that taste and style fundamentally guided the design process. Taste and style prescribed aesthetic standards from initial inspiration to final garment and even the way illustrations were drawn for presentations. It was frequently referred to, but seldom made explicit. Instead, taste and style were tacit phenomena that quietly and consistently influenced the creative process internally, shaped management’s perception and orientation to product proposals, and impacted the divisions’ attitude to third party suppliers. Stylish and tasteful product was considered very important for the business unit but analysis of the data reveals that it was neither consistent nor made explicit across the entire business.

Relationships and interactions between staff were observed as respectful and generally courteous with a degree of responsibility or role overlap that at times caused tension. From interviews it was apparent that the members of the business unit had rich backgrounds and considerable experience to draw from to develop and refine fashion products. As a result, they were largely confident of their abilities in this area, in the face of an ambitious growth target, an unclear future, and unstable senior leadership as a result of staff turnover.
4.2 Discount Manufacturer: Theta Kids

4.2.1 Case Snapshot

Theta Kids (Theta) is a family-owned manufacturer of casual clothing for children with head office and factory operations based in Nantong China, approximately 130 kilometres northwest of Shanghai. At the time of interviews, Theta employed 300 factory staff and was actively managed by the business owners. In April 2012, the Managing Director in Nantong appointed a full-time Sales Manager and a part-time Designer in Melbourne to design and sell infant wear and children’s wear to a New Zealand (NZ) department store chain to which they supplied garments. Interviews with the Melbourne-based staff revealed that their appointments were to fill the gap created by the failure of the Melbourne-based company that worked between Theta and the NZ retailer. The Sales Manager and Designer were employees of the failed company when it defaulted on payments for orders to the NZ retailer. After discussions between the Managing Director of Theta, the Sales Manager and Designer in Australia and a key Buyer from the NZ department store, it was decided to start the Australian operations of Theta to continue supplying the NZ retailer. As far as the interview participants were aware, this was Theta’s first successful attempt to bypass intermediary firms to supply garments directly to the retailer.

The Australian arm of Theta comprised the two employees (described above), who considered themselves equivalent level employees. They both reported to the Managing Director of Theta China and were paid a salary. The Designer had not met the Managing Director in China and all dialogue between the Melbourne employees and China head office went through the Sales Manager. The study gathered only rudimentary data about the governance or organisational structure of Theta’s operations in China, because product development mostly took place in Australia and New Zealand, and the full details of the head office operations were not fully known to the Australian employees.

During interviews it was revealed that there were up to three accounts at any one time with the NZ retailer, reflecting different buyerships, but the bulk of the business was with the infant wear Buyer. For the 2012–13 financial year (their first full year of operation), the Australian arm of Theta had fallen short of achieving its forecast sales target of NZ$1.2 million. There were production problems outside of the control of the Australian arm that resulted in the cancellation of a number of orders, which contributed to this shortfall. For the 2012 winter season they developed and sold over 80 styles.
Staff of the Australian arm were interviewed only – the Sales Manager and the Designer – in their respective homes, which was where they worked.

4.2.2 Key Findings at Theta Kids

Based on the analysis of the interview data, the product development process was essentially a three-way exchange between the Buyer, the Sales Manager and the Designer. The process was almost purely product development led because the factory in China required actual samples to expedite manufacturing once the Buyer had purchased a style (Figure 9 provides a schematic illustration of the unit of analysis).

![Schema of Key Actors Involved in Product Development at Theta Kids](image)

Product development work centred on print and graphic design as well as the creation of a cohesive ‘story’, where each garment had an aesthetic and functional relationship with the other garments in order to enhance multiple sales at both wholesale and retail. The Designer developed the ‘storyboard’ of illustrated garments from one or two styles that were known to be of interest to the Buyer, along with other styles that coordinate. From observation in the field, up to ten styles comprised a storyboard and the Sales Manager estimated that roughly 80% were selected by the Buyer to proceed to sales and production.
A significant finding of the Theta case, which differentiates it from the others in this study, is the complete removal of the Sales Manager and Designer from further product development and manufacturing after an order was placed. The retailer placed the order directly with the factory and subsequent product development and approvals passed directly between Theta China and the NZ retailer without further input from the Australian office. The interview participants described very rare occasions when they saw the product as it would appear in store. The Designer felt distant from the success or failure of the product whereas the Sales Manager described a strong sense of responsibility and would endeavour to involve herself further than the role required. From the perspective of the interview participants, poorly conceived design development resulted in ‘old-fashioned’ looking product that negatively impacted sales performance.

The creative process was the core process for Theta’s Australian operations, but not for the head office or manufacturing operations in Nantong. It is self-evident from the data that the business model and context were not conducive for highly original product. The following quote from the Designer illustrates this neatly and distinguishes her view of creativity from the Sales Manager and the Buyer.

“I don’t see it as a creative job at all. I think everyone else I work with would see it is a creative job, and when I can pull something together and make it look nice, they’re all satisfied with that. I’m not satisfied because I would like to take it a bit further. I don’t think it would have to be much further, but it can’t really be done in this environment (Designer, Theta Kids, interview, July 8, 2013).

Accordingly, resources and support for creative work in Theta were deemed sufficient for the product they designed for the New Zealand Buyer, who made fairly conservative choices to suit a value-conscious customer. The other constraint on the creative capacity of the Theta case was the low innovative capacity of the factory in China. Product designs had to take account of and work within limited manufacturing capabilities.

There were no rewards or feedback from the organisation for creative efforts.

Taste or style provided a competitive edge for Theta’s design offerings, though it was described more as a ‘look’ or ‘handwriting’. From the Sales Manager:

“We’re in a very unique situation because the buyers love M’s [Designer] artwork.
When we pull it together as stories, they love it (Sales Manager, Theta Kids, interview, July 8, 2013).
From the data, taste had a personal dimension for each of the interviewees with the Buyer acting as arbiter. The fourth dimension for taste was the perceived taste of the customer, which was never made particularly explicit to Theta or consistently applied. The Designer inferred the customer taste by looking at the NZ retailer's online product offering, making the assumption that the product actually sold well. ‘Cute’ was a term frequently applied in this case but the actual meaning was nuanced and therefore open to interpretation.

Theta’s entire operations were aligned to the Buyer’s timeline, price points, margin requirements and taste. The Buyer was described as a time-poor but active player in the creative process with multiple exchanges, amendments and refinements leading towards an eventual purchase or rejection, as would sometimes be the case. It was self-evident that the NZ Buyer was the single biggest influence in the creative process but the chief driver was the Sales Manager. At the heart of the Australian enterprise, the Sales Manager and the Designer were close friends and allies in a focused but arms-length relationship with the Buyer. Analysis of the interview data would suggest they prioritised their relationship over allegiance to Theta’s head office. They had worked closely together for many years in different enterprises and had extensive shared experience in mass-market childrenswear. They believed their experience was a key factor in their ability to perform in their roles as well as their ability to quickly compile a range of commercially viable and appealing product that suited the Buyer’s taste.

4.3 Designer Retail: Sigma Luxe

4.3.1 Case Snapshot

Sigma Luxe is a designer womenswear brand in the Australian and New Zealand market. At the time of interview there were six stores across three states and a handful of wholesale accounts in Australia and New Zealand. The Designer began operations with a wholesale business model in 2002 and changed to a wholesale/retail model in 2004 by opening her first store in Melbourne. The husband of the Designer joined the business in a full time capacity as Managing Director in 2005. In 2008, they decided to pursue a pure retail model so they actively divested themselves of nearly all their wholesale accounts. At the time of interview, the business employed 23 people with five in head office operations and the balance in stores. Contract staff were employed in product development functions on an ad hoc basis. External consultants advised on various areas such as real estate leases, accounting services and business structure to ensure they did not ‘make any wrong choices’ (Managing Director, Sigma
Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013). The annual turnover in 2013 was approximately A$4.5 million and there were plans to expand the retail network and move into new product categories in the near future. The pair own the company outright.

The brand delivers to store approximately 120 styles in each of the autumn/winter and spring/summer ranges, with colourways driving up the option numbers to about 160. The Designer believed the brand covered a very broad range of product to cater for the lifestyles of her customers. They generally develop about 10% more styles than they settle on for production.

The Designer and the Managing Director (the Directors) were interviewed at their company-owned head office in inner urban Melbourne.

4.3.2 Key Findings at Sigma Luxe

Analysis of the data clearly shows that Sigma Luxe was the archetypal design led, (Cillo & Verona, 2008) fashion brand. The Designer was central to the product development process, designing garments with a unique identity, integrated with her own, in an almost completely autonomous manner. The process was described as orderly, sequential, largely informal, highly efficient and adequately resourced for the current operation at the time of data collection. The role of management was to facilitate the creative development of product, while the control over the process resided with the Designer. From the Designer:

But in a way, to me it always happens instinctively anyway. Like… when I start a range, I start with colours, colour palette, story, colour stories and then I go from there, and somehow, you know, x amount of styles end up in that group and the next and, you know, it somehow works out pretty much close to the mark (Designer, Sigma Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013).

Feedback from management, including senior retail managers, was incorporated into the process at specific points. Figure 10 provides a schematic illustration of the actors involved in the process.
From analysis, creativity was a core value that underpinned decision-making in business functions well beyond product design, and manifested in both products and processes. Creativity and innovation were unofficial parts of the recruitment strategy: they tried to employ sales staff who showed creative flair or originality in interviews because they believed they would perform better. From the Managing Director:

There’s creativity in every aspect though. It’s not purely the product ...It’s about everything that we do. You know, our attitude to our customers, our customer service policies. I think that’s partly what makes it as successful is that we really consider that (Managing Director, Sigma Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013).

When probed about the pervasiveness and centrality of creativity for everyone in the organisation, the Managing Director replied as follows, reiterating the link between creativity and brand values:

They do but I’m not sure they all get it [creativity] to the same ... at the same level, so I just want to clarify that. But they all are equally understanding and appreciative and passionate towards the brand (Managing Director, Sigma Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013).
The directors believed that creative choices (or decision making in creative contexts) were innate and highly personal. It could not be taught but it could be nurtured. Creativity for the Designer was something that required development, maturity and time to become commercial: a thing of value, but this was not the same for all businesses who operated in different markets with different creative demands.

According to the Designer, creativity was adequately resourced and intrinsically rewarded. There were no extrinsic rewards for creative work as part of any performance management process. Expansion plans were mentioned in interviews and this was deemed possible because the current creative output was scalable, however the capacity to expand product categories is questionable.

Taste (and for the Designer it meant good taste), was linked to the taste of her customers and tacitly informed her design process. From the Designer:

> I think a lot of our customers are very taste-oriented people as well, like, they like good food, they like going out, they just have a nice quality lifestyle, so they appreciate the taste. So that is enormous, of enormous value when you're designing that your customer appreciates taste, has good taste. I couldn't design for a market that didn't, I don't think

(Designer, Sigma Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013).

The Managing Director's taste level was considered an important advantage for the business because he was able to steer the brand's strategy with full cognisance of its value. This was described as a rare quality in senior managers and leaders.

Observation of the two directors and analysis of the interview data revealed a business structure and operations that aligned with their personal qualities and skillsets. They worked independently in clearly defined roles with areas of responsibility that were interdependent. From the Managing Director:

> So my title is the Managing Director but essentially I'm just a facilitator. Really, at the end of the day, it's about just making it happen and enabling things to happen…To make 'this' [points to a rack of garments] simple

(Managing Director, Sigma Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013)

Both directors had family backgrounds that featured artists, photographers, small business owners and entrepreneurs. The directors had extensive and intensive experiences in their respective areas of expertise. They were cognisant that these experiences had contributed to
their success, making them more confident in taking risks and making plans for future expansion.

### 4.4 High Street Retailer: Delta Gentleman

#### 4.4.1 Case Snapshot

Delta, incorporated in 2009, was the youngest business unit in the Alpha Group. Delta was a speciality womenswear and menswear fashion brand which catered for the oldest demographic in the Alpha Group. According to the Group Annual Report (2013), there were 40 Delta stores across Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the latter having the lion’s share of stores. Delta also retailed online, shipping to Europe, the UK, North America and East Asia. Annual turnover was A$60 million across the menswear and womenswear divisions. At head office, the Delta unit employed 20 staff in merchandise and design functions with the other functions performed by shared services in the Alpha Group parent. External consultants provided specialist services such as PR and expert marketing analysis with most core functions conducted in-house. Merchandise and design teams worked in partnership for range development but reported separately to more senior managers, then to the Delta Managing Director who headed up the brand in the Alpha Group executive.

Approximately 200 styles were developed each season, which included clothing, shoes, and accessories. The Design Manager liked to have contingency options at the ready, so there were product ideas that were developed beyond the 200 styles. The design team consisted of the Design Manager and a Design Assistant, with access to technical support staff.

Only the menswear division of Delta took part in the study (Delta Gentleman). The Design Manager menswear and the Merchandise Planner menswear (clothing) were interviewed at Alpha Group’s head office in inner urban Melbourne, Victoria.

#### 4.4.2 Key Findings at Delta Gentleman

Based on analysis of the data, there were essentially two functions involved in product development at Delta Gentleman: design and merchandise planning. They worked fairly autonomously with input from senior management at critical points in the development timeline, which was strictly adhered to (see Figure 11 for a schematic illustration of the functions involved). Design and merchandise planning worked in parallel fashion, as well as interactively, in frequent formal and informal exchanges. Observation and analysis suggests
Delta Gentleman adopted a hybrid of the product development led (Payne, 2011; Weller, 2007) and design led (Cillo & Verona, 2008) approaches.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 11**
*Schema of Key Functions Involved in Product Development at Delta Gentleman*

The product development process was structured, iterative, and collaborative at Delta Gentleman, in overlapping cycles for each delivery period. From the Merchandise Planner, an elegant summary:

…the process is cyclical, so it’s not a linear process that’s A to Z. It’s A, B, C, D, A, B, C, D. So for example, we’re starting a season now and the design team will do a design brief, which is essentially a creative brief, highlighting the key trends for the season. So that’s how it will start, but then simultaneously to that we will be doing the numbers behind the scenes… (Merchandise Planner, Delta Gentleman, interview, July 9, 2013).

When you say product cycle there’ll be a full product cycle for the January range and then for the February range and then for the March range, and we have a whole production timetable that the whole business needs to stick to in order to achieve the critical dates to get that range in on time. So that production starts about six months prior for each range and what we will do is we’ll give direction to design and say, “Right, we need ten styles of that, we need three career...
options and we need seven casual options. Of career we need one suit and two shirts at the following prices so that's going to be 399 [dollars] and that's going to be 99 [dollars]…” We put out an option plan, and this is not just a thumb suck, it’s based on numbers, so as I said, we’ve got to build it up from the bottom (Merchandise Planner, Delta Gentleman, interview, July 9, 2013).

Both interviewees described a healthy and robust relationship where feedback was freely sought. The Merchandise Planner believed in constructive feedback because she was cognisant of the emotional investment for the design team when developing product. Also, without constructive feedback, there was no direction for the design team to adjust their work. She had witnessed situations where negative feedback was delivered without consideration of the design team. Likewise, the Design Manager described an early range presentation meeting with senior management:

…there have been times when the first range, the first three months here for Delta, the CEO had an absolute mind spin. He said, “This is not what I fucking wanted!” and he walked out halfway through, and we had to do it all over again. He felt that what we did was not going to answer the financial need that he had identified for the brand. Ironically we’ve flipped right back to that whole sartorial thing that we both referred to, and which is how we started the brand, and thank goodness it’s found a niche (Design Manager, Delta Gentleman, interview, July 9, 2013)

Analysis of interview data suggests the product range regularly drifted from the original commercial intent of the season and that this was a normal part of the creative process. At these times, the Design Manager and the Merchandise Planner had to discuss and debate range proposals in order to reach a compromise position. Historic and current retail sales performance data played a major role in product development activities, from the development of the first version of the option plan to the final structure of the range. This data, together with identified opportunities, personal observations and preferences about what was deemed ‘commercial’ or saleable to the Delta customer, helped the business unit reach consensus about range development. Both participants were keenly aware that product ranges needed to satisfy two dimensions: innovation and commercial viability.

Senior management set financial targets each season but the official aesthetic of the brand was loosely articulated. To balance this, the Design Manager, who identified strongly with the target demographic for the Delta brand, embodied the brand aesthetic. The Design Manager liked affirmation and feedback to ensure he was on target to meet range expectations, and this
inclusion of various stakeholders in the process helped to familiarise them with the new product and ensured a degree of support in advance of formal executive meetings when the range was approved for purchase.

Creativity, taste and style were intermingled concepts at Delta Gentleman. Interviews revealed that creativity was framed as an important and highly personalised aspect of product development, while taste and style were more aligned to the commercialisation of creative outputs. All three were deemed critical for product differentiation and brand identity. From the Merchandise Planner, in response to a question about taste and style in the design process:

I think it’s all what it’s about, absolutely, a hundred percent. I mean, I’m thinking menswear specifically, but our womenswear designs are the same, and the Alpha designers are the same, it’s all about the eye. It’s all about having…an eye for trends and for style, and understanding what the brand is about, and marrying trends to the brand in essence. I think beyond that it’s also an eye for detail…

(Merchandise Planner, Delta Gentleman, interview, July 9, 2013).

Based on product and data analysis, the focus on taste, style and creativity resulted in the development of differentiated and yet saleable garments that were aligned to the commercial imperatives of the business unit. Creativity and taste were of strategic importance for the brand (and explicitly acknowledged) because they traded in highly competitive markets in Australia and internationally.

In terms of resources and support for creative efforts, the Design Manager believed they were compromised but fortunate in the Australian fashion industry:

We don’t have enough time to be creative, but…compared to any other fashion company in Australia, we have a team of people who are there in theory to resource fabric for us. I choose to do a lot of it myself because that’s how I work. We have a team of people to work with us on knitwear, so they brief the factories, they’re experts…so when it comes to that level of support, I don’t know another business in Australia that’s got that. We are really lucky, but we’re still running all the time

(Design Manager, Delta Gentleman, interview, July 9, 2013).

Performance measures for the Design Manager made reference to creativity or creative solutions but the metric focused on gross profit margin. By comparison, the Merchandise Planner was incentivised to achieve a gross profit target and there were no references or indicators about creativity for her.
Antecedent factors that contributed to the creativity of the business unit were quite complex and different for the Design Manager and the Merchandise Planner at Delta Gentleman. Obvious talent aside, family backgrounds in design and retail (respectively), tertiary qualifications, experience and personal networks had influenced their ability to access and perform confidently in their roles at one of Australia’s largest and most iconic fashion companies.

4.5 Manufacturer/Importer: Epsilon Knitwear

4.5.1 Case Snapshot

Epsilon Knitwear was a specialty manufacturer/importer established in 1952 that supplied the Australian and New Zealand retail market with both branded and unbranded product. Based on interview data, the enterprise employed thirteen on-going staff for most of the year but in peak shipment periods it employed a further eight to ten casual staff in warehousing and distribution roles. Annual turnover in 2013 was approximately $A7 million, with the winter season generating the lion’s share because of low demand for knitwear in the summer months.

It was revealed by the General Manager that Epsilon had only ever manufactured knitwear and was still manufacturing locally up until 2008. Knitwear was traditionally a specialised field because there were high capital investment costs and considerable expertise required to be competitive in the industry. At the height of local production, they employed 160 staff. Increasing pressure from core customers to reduce price points, typically large department store retailers, meant they could no longer afford to manufacture locally. The company began sourcing garments from China in the 1990s and eventually opened a Beijing office with a joint venture partner in 2000. At the time of data collection, the Beijing office employed twelve staff who managed production with factories in north China.

Epsilon Knitwear was a privately owned family business with a very small shareholding by the General Manager. The Managing Director was a member of the majority owning family who worked part time with responsibilities for finance, buying and selling. Below the Managing Director, the General Manager assumed most of the day to day running of the business. Based on the data, the company structure was very flat as all of the account managers, designers and warehouse staff reported directly to the General Manager. Account managers and designers were organised around brands or ranges. There were three sub-brands under the Epsilon name for both men and women: [1] a corporate range for men and women; [2] a fashion range for men and women; and [3] a women’s classic range. In addition, there were various retail and
wholesale accounts for whom Epsilon Knitwear supplied housebrand knitwear. The two designers developed most of Epsilon Knitwear’s product under the watch of a merchandiser. The merchandiser liaised with a team of sales agents and managed a large department store account.

For the Winter 2014 season, approximately 210 styles were sold under Epsilon brands. It was uncertain how many styles were developed for housebrand accounts.

The General Manager and one of the designers were interviewed at the business head office in inner urban Melbourne. They were not interviewed separately, which unfortunately, could have adversely affected the study.

4.5.2 Key Findings at Epsilon Knitwear

The development of product ranges (both branded and unbranded) was a core activity for the business, and management had high expectations for branded ranges to generate revenue for the company. Analysis of the data suggested that the product development process was a hybrid of design led and product development led approaches and this varied according to the brand or account.

The product development cycle began with market data analysis in order to develop a design brief for the design team. From the General Manager:

So we analyse what happened and what worked. What yarns did work, what yarns didn’t work. Analyse what colours worked, what colours didn’t work. We also get feedback…we have agents…so we have an agent in every State. Obviously we’ve got an agent in Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, Queensland, and New Zealand’s a very important part of our business. So all our agents…give us feedback and reports on what worked and what didn’t work. So we analyse all that and then give the girls a rough guide for Winter ’14. What we would like: how many styles, how many crew necks, how many V-necks. What we would like.

(General Manager, Epsilon Knitwear, interview, July 10, 2013).

From the information gathered for the range review meeting described above, the resulting brief provided a rough structure for the new season’s range. Surprisingly, no target price points were discussed at this stage because the Beijing office provided them all. The office advised the designers at the Melbourne office if proposed designs were not workable for the Australian market based on their understanding of the business. There was no evidence of
discussions about the quantities or depth of buying but there was discussion about minimum dye quantities, which suggested that there was some concern for meeting minimum production quantities. There was no mention of the brief reflecting any stretch forecasts or strategic targets but it was flexible enough to include whatever the Designer felt was right for the season, wishlists from agents (which were usually repeat styles), and additional samples purchased by the General Manager on overseas trips. Because of the high cost of salesman samples (three times the cost of production), and a recent failed attempt to expand a product range to include cut and sew jersey pieces, there was a renewed focus on concise and targeted ranges.

After briefing, the process was linear, open, relatively informal and yet closely monitored by management, as evidenced by frequent meetings along the development timeline. Timing and planning was strict to fit in with factory deadlines in China. From the General Manager:

> Ninety percent of Mondays we’ll sit down and just go through every label and what everybody’s doing. So everybody is aware of what everybody is doing. There’s no secrets (sic), everybody knows. So if somebody is away somebody can always step in and do their job for them

(General Manager, Epsilon Knitwear, interview, July 10, 2013).

Analysis of interview data suggested a high degree of collaboration between management and the design team throughout the process, interspersed with independent robust exchange about product. For the Designer, maintaining cohesion and design integrity when supplying a very diverse group of retailers through a dispersed sales network was a difficult task. Management deliberately limited the inputs from the various stakeholders to critical points so that range development could take place without excessive interference. Figure 12 is a schematic illustration of the actors involved in the product development process.
Creativity was highly valued and deemed extremely important to the firm. There was general agreement that it was adequately resourced by fashion forecast intelligence services and overseas sourcing trips, however further analysis suggests time was an issue when new business opportunities arose that required designers to set aside their core ranges and work on tenders and pitches for new business. Also, they had reduced the design headcount from three to two and simply redistributed the work. There were no performance rewards for creativity and recognition for work was largely intrinsic or related to sales performance. For the Managing Director, there was evidence of some tension between the desire to grant autonomy and creative freedom to the designers in range development, and the commercial responsibility for ranges to generate sufficient revenues at wholesale. As a result, he monitored the process closely, partly in reaction to recent range design missteps, and partly to ensure the designers were developing product that aligned with commercial expectations.

Taste and style certainly influenced product development and there was evidence of quite distinct styles or tastes at play in product ranges. When asked about competing tastes, the Designer's response was:

…there’ll be things in there that I like, so I believe in them, but there’s things that obviously I hate, but it’s other people’s taste…There’s a few things here and there that will be what other people have told you. And there’ll be things that are my taste that I’ll put in. So you’re trying to do that whole “standing in their shoes”, what they would want (Designer, Epsilon Knitwear, interview, July 10, 2013).
Elsewhere in the data, the ‘European’ tastes of a highly experienced and respected freelance designer were spectacularly unsuccessful for the business while the more youthful perspective of the relatively inexperienced Designer performed considerably better.

The Managing Director had rich and extensive experience in knitwear manufacturing acquired with one of the oldest and best known manufacturing brands in Australia. He was an important source of knowledge for the Designer in the technical aspects of knitwear manufacturing and provided credibility and experience when supplying knitwear to other retailers. The Designer was relatively new to the industry but completed two tertiary qualifications before accepting an administrative position in the business with a view to accessing a design role. They appeared to possess complementary attributes and described a collaborative and productive working relationship.

4.6 Independent Designer: Zeta Woman

4.6.1 Case snapshot

Zeta Woman was a micro-business with only one ongoing employee, the Designer/Director, who designed and manufactured womenswear, lingerie and accessories in Australia. She started the business as a partnership with one other in 2006 and moved to a corporate structure in 2008. Her start-up partner was no longer involved in the business on a day-to-day basis but she sought his advice on occasions. Initially, Zeta Woman was wholesale only but there had been several pop-up retail shops over the history of the brand as various opportunities presented themselves. From the corporate website, Zeta Woman distributed product ranges through 17 independent retailers in Australia, two international retailers (Singapore and Japan), and three Australian online stores in 2013. Zeta Woman retailed their entire product offering through its own online store and, from time to time, sold accessories at weekend designer markets. The Designer/Director preferred not to disclose the annual turnover for the business and at the time of interview, she still worked part time for an accessories company nearby. In 2014, Zeta Woman opened its first flagship store in Melbourne.

The Designer/Director revealed in interview that the business took on a full time intern for a period of several months at a time, who was usually an international student looking to get work experience as part of their studies in Australia. There were additional interns who worked a day or two a week while studying. Interns were involved in all aspects of the business including creative, technical and manufacturing work. In recent years she had acquired
the services of a business strategist on a consultancy basis to help her plan the brand’s growth. She had other business mentors she consulted from time to time.

Zeta Woman was an atypical case for the purposes of this study because the enterprise did not ‘employ’ staff and the research questions that focused on interpersonal exchanges between management and creative workers were largely redundant. However, the business is included because it embodied the attributes of a contemporary independent fashion label in the early stages of its life cycle. A desktop survey of independent fashion labels (undertaken as part of the purposive sampling strategy), revealed that they are characterised as being entrepreneurial with a unique brand identity; they pursue a multi-channel distribution strategy; and they have an active online presence through their own websites as well as through multiple social media channels. From the Designer/Director:

I’m always thinking what the customer does want and trying to communicate that with the way we approach our social media or interaction with our customers (Designer/Director, Zeta Woman, interview, July 11, 2013).

The Designer/Director had both creative and management roles and the case study provides insight into how she moved between the two roles and if they can be integrated successfully. She was interviewed in her studio space in inner urban Melbourne.

4.6.2 Key findings at Zeta Woman

Based on analysis of the data, the product development process is linear, informal, loosely structured and naturally, centred on the Designer/Director as the only ongoing employee of the enterprise. The process is designer driven and design led with the additional input of interns and contract staff as early creative concepts crystallise and subsequent development phase begins. There is limited input from external stakeholders such as sales agents and public relations consultants, though there was evidence of collaborations on specific projects with other designers, filmmakers and artists. The key functions and actors involved in the process are illustrated in Figure 13.
When asked about the importance of creativity to the business, the Designer/Director was unequivocal:

I think creativity is really central. That’s why I’m here, that’s why I do all the hard work, because creativity is the fun part and I want to incorporate that into every part (Designer/Director, Zeta Woman, interview, July 11, 2013).

Accordingly, the Designer/Director had created an archetypal studio working space that allowed for full creative expression. Related to this, was her rather unique perspective on the creativity of her products:

So I guess in terms of pattern making, or like the actual garments, they’re not crazy or wild or innovative a lot of the time. It’s more about the print on them. And maybe it’s what we’re not saying. That is what makes them special (Designer/Director, Zeta Woman, interview, July 11, 2013).

To explain this quote, the clothing ranges were comprised of simple shapes and silhouettes where creativity was more apparent in aspects such as print design and colour. The quote
revealed a very important point about creativity for Zeta Woman: creative effort was not always obvious. Minimalist garments may appear less innovative than heavily detailed and embellished garments, but it doesn’t necessarily mean they’re not creative.

Taste and style were framed as quite distinct concepts at Zeta Woman. From the Designer/Director:

Style I always think of as being quite classic and taste as, I guess, trends or what the mood is. So I think both of those things are really important to delivering the things that people want

(Designer/Director, Zeta Woman, interview, July 11, 2013).

The Designer/Director drew on her own taste and style when making creative decisions but incorporated what she believed was her customer’s taste and style. Looking at people on the street; using social media interactively; talking to friends and peers, as well customers in her pop-up stores all provided insight into the customer’s perspective.

Despite the centrality of creativity, management of all the other aspects of the enterprise fell completely on the shoulders of the Designer/Director. In interview, she revealed that she had to delegate creative and technical work to the various contractors and unpaid interns because of the enormous workload. The Designer/Director was in the process of reviewing her business strategy to drive a more sustainable future and to this end, had developed an innovative model for selling-in ranges to her wholesale accounts. This involved taking orders for the following season, while selling in-season items that were available as stock.

The Designer/Director’s current operations reflected her background and experiences. Her tertiary education was mixed, starting in business and transferring to fashion during her degree. This was followed by employment with an artisanal fashion firm in Brisbane renowned for its distinctive print, colour sense and use of handwork in its product ranges. Her Melbourne experience was very localised to the inner urban fashion district, which is where she chose to set up her operations.

4.7 Chapter Discussion

The involvement of various actors in the product development process suggests that creativity in these cases is a distributed phenomenon. At the heart of this suggestion is the assumption that feedback, direct input and decision-making from actors other than a designer, equate to participation in the product development process, and therefore are creative acts. This
contrasts with a number of theorists who have framed a more oppositional or concentrated view of the creative process. For example, Townley and Beech (2010a) spoke of a creative and managerial tension, while Warhurst (2010) observed that truly creative work was the domain of an elite few. From my analysis, the cases presented in this study align to this oppositional/concentrated view to some extent but is not as overt or demarcated as in the UK context. In all cases the imperatives of senior management were willingly accepted even if there were misgivings on behalf of a few. All cases had articulated Warhurst’s (2010) consumption model of creative industries, demonstrating a healthy regard for viable creative outputs and focusing squarely on sales. Finally, all cases welcomed interactivity and feedback during the development phase of the creative process.

There was sufficient evidence to support the proposition that creativity was an important and valuable aspect of each enterprise, and that the producers of creative work (design teams) cared about their outputs (Caves, 2000). Interestingly, it was not only those employed in creative functions that felt this way, with business managers, merchandisers and sales staff also sharing in the sentiment, but not to the same extent as those responsible for designing product. Analysis of the data revealed that what constituted ‘creativity’ was not universally understood. Definitions from Stein (1953), Csikszentmihalyi (2001) and Runco and Jaeger (2012) leave considerable room for interpretation and variation and these will be explored later in Chapter Five.

The literature review in Chapter Two presented a number of frameworks and models for organisational creativity. To recap, the four main approaches discussed were the: [1] componential; [2] interactionist; [3] creativity as process; and [4] creativity competencies. At the individual level, the findings were consistent with Amabile’s (1983) early work on personal creativity. In each case, staff involved in the design of products provided evidence of domain knowledge, creative skill and motivation. Amabile’s later work on creativity (Amabile, et al., 1996), together with Woodman and associates’ work on interactionist views of creativity, underpinned much of the interview questions about organisational level creativity. Perceptions of organisational level creativity were largely positive in five of the six cases, but Scott and Bruce’s study (1994) had already reported that a perception of a creative climate did not correlate to innovative behaviour. In the Beta Homme case dissent was found in this regard and the perceptions of the Design Manager were backed by analysis and experience in the field – organisational support and recognition for creative endeavours from senior management was not evident. In the larger cases (Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman), there was considerable evidence that effective leader behaviours for creative or innovative outputs as described by various studies (Amabile, et al., 2004; Byrne, et al., 2009; Černe, et al., 2013; Gumusluoglu &
Ilsev, 2007; Mumford, et al., 2002; Oke, et al., 2009; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004; Shalley & Gilson, 2004) were at best inconsistent. In all cases orderly creative processes were adopted with patterns that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Tesluk, Farr & Klein’s (1997) model specifically addressed the organisational culture, practices and climate required for individual creativity to occur. Creativity was embedded in the culture of all six cases and as such, there were tacit but varied assumptions about what it meant. From analysis, it was apparent that for most cases the embodiment of this culture into organisational structures and processes did not fully translate and there was significant evidence of product development practices that were inconsistent with the creative rhetoric espoused in interviews. Few participants were able to pinpoint specific examples of reward, support or explicit emphasis on creative outputs other than achieving sales targets, being provided with stable employment, forecast services or granted overseas trips for research and development. Arguably, the last two listed here are the ‘tools of the trade’ for a designer’s job.

In each of the cases, making collaborative decisions about product and trying to predict demand, required an organisation level aesthetic sense, taste or style. Zuo (1998) and Ewenstein & Whyte (2007) described similar processes but findings from this study have added other taste dimensions to include the personal and the perceived taste of the end consumer. Consideration for the perceived taste of the end consumer may seem obvious for a successful business but this study shows that it was not central when developing product. The organisational or brand aesthetic was rarely articulated in this study and with a variety of tastes at play in the product development process there was ample evidence of inconsistency about what was deemed ‘good’ creative product. Taste is further explored in Chapter Five.

The findings were fairly consistent with the main innovation approaches that pertain to creative industries but with some adaptation. Poolton and Ismail’s (2000) market triggers for product development processes were evident at nearly all of the market-oriented firms but especially those with access to real-time sales data such as Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman. Incremental innovation practices as outlined by Dell’Era and Verganti (2007) were evident in all cases but particularly the designer or identity driven firms such as Zeta Woman and Sigma Luxe. Tran’s (2010) practice constructs were apparent in most of the product development practices in the six cases, with the exception of testing products before full supply. None of the cases in this study were of sufficient size or dealing in such risky product to warrant this kind of practice. The designer driven versus market driven approach to product innovation (Cillo & Verona, 2008) will be discussed in Chapter Five because the findings suggest a hybrid approach was taken by large retail enterprises in Australia.
4.8 Chapter Conclusion

The cases presented in this chapter have illustrated product development practices in enterprises ranging from large-scale international operations to micro-businesses supplying a handful of accounts. The enterprises represented include wholesaler/manufacturers of general and specialty apparel; branded retailers; producers of up-market and value-market apparel across menswear, womenswear and childrenswear. In the main, findings are context specific and limited at times by the methodology, access to the phenomena or unit of analysis and by incidents in the field that precluded more in-depth investigation.

The discussion section has highlighted aspects common to all or most of the cases and linked these back to the literature. The main findings presented in this section are that:

- creativity was a valued construct although it meant slightly different things within cases;
- the creative process was distributed beyond the design staff and as such, was a shared process;
- in all cases a consumption-based view of creativity was embraced (Warhurst, 2010);
- four of the six cases had down-played the tension between creativity and management (Townley & Beech, 2010a); and
- in the main, participants perceived of adequate organisational support for creativity.

Cross-case findings encompassing patterns and variations are presented in Chapter Five.
Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Cross-case findings from the third analytical phase of the methodology are presented in this chapter, which reveals a number of patterns and themes. Data was analysed across the six cases in three ways: firstly, identifying patterns using Yin’s (2009) technique of ‘pattern matching’; secondly, linking these patterns to the literature to confirm or augment explanations; and thirdly, to explore new concepts and ideas that emerged in the first two phases of data analysis, derived from structural and open coding.

The findings have been grouped into four main topics:

1. Approaches to creativity and innovation;
2. Managing creativity at the organisational level;
3. Managing the product development process; and
4. Team dynamics in the product development process.

The topics draw from the multi-level view of creativity as outlined by Hennessey and Amabile (2010), thus findings are presented from the macro level (for example, patterns in strategy and approach) and move deeper to the micro level (such as patterns in personal qualities and taste). The first topic, revealed the most significant patterns because an enterprise’s overarching approach to innovation or creativity had the most profound impact on product development activities. The second topic demonstrated the manifestation of the macro level approach. Analysis resulted in two significant themes that pertain to performance management and the growing importance of the merchandise role in product development processes. The third topic identified patterns in the data around day-to-day product development activities. Finally, the fourth topic presents themes relating to product development processes in teams, including the influence of personal taste and brand aesthetic.

5.1 Approaches to Creativity and Innovation

5.1.1 Design Led Versus Product Development Led

Innovation literature concerning European and UK creative industries frequently referred to a design led approach to product innovation (Cillo & Verona, 2008; Dell'Era & Verganti, 2007, 2009; Perks, et al., 2005; Ward, et al., 2009). Sigma Luxe and Zeta Woman exemplify the
design led approach, where a designer (or team of designers), designs product essentially from scratch. They typically develop a concept, create colour palettes, choose fabrics, design garments and develop patterns with the input of technical and creative experts to produce original garments. If they have a textile focus, they may also develop textile designs to create original fabrics for their garments. Depending on the complexity of the brand’s aesthetic it can require considerable creative labour to produce clothing ranges using this approach.

The product development led approach contrasts sharply with the design led approach. Weller (2007) and Payne (2011) described product development processes that revolved around copying concepts and garments that already exist in the marketplace, particularly in the northern hemisphere. The copying can vary from being an exact replica of a garment to being an adaptation of a concept or look for a different context. Naturally, the amount of creative labour can be lessened by this approach but there is still a degree of creative and technical labour to produce clothing this way. Theta Kids typified the product development led approach to creativity, closely copying sample garments because they were already to the buyer’s taste and it facilitated speedy manufacturing.

Cases evidenced a range of approaches that fell along a continuum, bound at one end by a design led approach and at the other by a product development led approach. Cases were rarely purely design led or purely product development led and frequently deployed a mix of both approaches in a hybrid process. This quote from the design assistant at Beta Homme, eloquently summarises a hybrid approach to creativity:

> For a corporate company like [Beta Homme] or [Alpha Group], I don’t believe creativity means creating something from scratch. You always have a reference, you always have a sample to refer to and creativity in a corporate environment is how to manipulate existing standard [sic] and how to interpret it into our way, reworded using Beta words. Recreate sentence [sic] using Beta words, if that makes sense (Design Assistant, Beta Homme, interview, May 13, 2013).

To paraphrase, the hybrid approach to creativity uses samples but liberally adapts them to the new context. The large retailers Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman, deployed a hybrid approach largely to align with their internal creative processes where there were not adequate resources to develop garments from scratch. Figure 14 maps the variation in approach to creativity against, market and operational type.

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2 The original quote has been edited to protect the identities of the participating enterprises.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Market level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Design Led</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Product Development Led</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Luxe</td>
<td>Retailer</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Designer womenswear</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta Homme</td>
<td>Retailer</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Fashion menswear</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Gentleman</td>
<td>Retailer</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Classic menswear</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta Woman</td>
<td>Manufacturer¹ + Retailer</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Independent womenswear</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epsilon Knitwear</td>
<td>Manufacturer¹</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Classic knitwear men + women</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta Kids</td>
<td>Manufacturer¹</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Contemporary childrenswear</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14

Product Innovation Approaches

¹ ‘Manufacturer’ used as per Australian Bureau of Statistics business classification.

It was clear from observation, analysis and experience in the field that having a sample garment greatly facilitated the development process for technical staff, manufacturers and garment suppliers. Furthermore, it quickly cut through internal approval processes because it was much easier to explain a proposed range to senior management when there were sample garments to look at. In Australia, due to the southern hemisphere’s seasonal lag, businesses can easily purchase a sample garment in a northern hemisphere market in time to begin development work for clothing ranges destined for the Australian market. In some cases, samples purchased from leading international brands carried more cachet than an original idea created internally.

By contrast, design led development meant trusting the creative skills of the designer or the design team. New products needed to be explained by drawings, images, prototypes and fabric swatches for a management team that needed to be comfortable making decisions under a veil of uncertainty.

Designers perceived the product development led approach as the lesser of the two approaches in terms of creativity, and yet two of the cases revealed that management and/or merchandise teams saw no difference. At Beta Homme (and even more in the womenswear business unit), the organisational acceptance of a product development led approach manifested in the use of third party suppliers for specialist product types such as denim and tailoring. In doing this, they had pushed their creative efforts into the supply chain. Bruce and Moger (1999, p. 122) have described this practice as ‘co-partnering’.
As discussed in Chapter Four, nearly all the interviewees believed that creativity was very important for their respective businesses. However, it was clear from the variation in approaches presented in this chapter, that the meaning and centrality of creativity was different for each of the cases. For example, ‘creative’ product could be purchased and copied from an existing market or fully developed from an original concept. Three designers out of seven noted that not every market needed original and/or creative product, thereby questioning the centrality of creativity in a brand’s value proposition. Some markets were happy to simply follow trends (either slavishly or by adaptation), and for one designer it was questionable if the end consumer even appreciated original product. If a brand did not require original product, then a product development led approach would align best with their creative processes, with a greater focus on the interpretation and adaptation of existing trends and ideas for their own context.

5.1.2 Designer Driven Versus Market Driven Innovation Strategy

The work of Cillo and Verona (2008) in the Italian fine fashion industry classified innovation strategies that were designer driven and market driven. To recap from Chapter Two, designer driven firms have internally driven creative processes that are triggered by a senior designer or creative director. Market driven firms have externally driven creative processes that are triggered by sales figures, market intelligence and competition. Success is dependent upon how a firm leverages these approaches when responding to the market.

Sigma Luxe and Zeta Woman exemplified the designer driven innovation strategy where a designer’s aesthetic vision was central and a source of competitive advantage. This advantage (if it was ever articulated as a strategy) evolved organically from their practice. For example, at Sigma Luxe, it was not deemed possible to have anyone else design a range. If they were to expand into other product categories (for example, accessories), it would only be considered if the Designer had the capacity to do the work.

The high street retailers Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman had highly experienced and respected design managers who worked in market driven enterprises. Their creative processes were similar to the designer driven cases but they worked parallel to merchandisers and business managers, and under the supervision of senior management who were largely market driven. These firms typified a hybrid approach, where design managers were able to incorporate their own aesthetic vision in a large retail context with strong market drivers, and persuade others to subscribe to it.
Theta Kids typified the market driven strategy. Many of their creative processes were driven by the market, anecdotal sell-through data and the input of the Buyer. The Designer then used this data to create product. The various approaches to innovation after Cillo and Verona (2008), including the ‘hybrid’ classification, are tabled in Figure 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Operation type</th>
<th>Market level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Designer Driven</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Market Driven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sigma Luxe</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Designer womenswear</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta Homme</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Fashion menswear</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Gentleman</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Middle</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeta Woman</td>
<td>Manufacturer¹ + retail</td>
<td>Middle</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Epsilon Knitwear</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Contemporary childrenswear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15
Innovation Strategies after Cillo and Verona (2008)

¹ ‘Manufacturer’ used as per Australian Bureau of Statistics business classification.

It is self-evident that innovation strategies aligned with product development approaches, when comparing Figure 14 with Figure 15. From analysis, when misalignment occurred, business performance suffered. The following quotes illustrate the issues and consequences. The first quote from Epsilon Knitwear is about the shift towards a more designer driven innovation strategy. The second quote from Sigma Luxe illustrates the reverse move towards market driven innovation and the consequence of losing ‘soul’ or brand essence.

We brought a third-party designer in last year. It was a disaster. Cost us about half a million dollars. Our fault, at the end of the day. We saw what she was doing. She was very strong in her beliefs [that] what she was doing was correct. She’d seen these trends in Europe and what she believed was going to work. We went with it and sales dived (General Manager, Epsilon Knitwear, interview, July 2015).

…I think going back, we probably tried to make it too much on that trend, and we didn’t satisfy enough of that ‘soul’. …we just didn’t have the balance right of what the soul was and what the new stuff was meant to be, and then the
customer thinking, “Hang on, I'm really confused.” Best thing is, we made that mistake and it was probably the best learning experience. And it was an expensive mistake but glad we had it then and not now (Managing Director, Sigma Luxe, interview, July 9, 2013).

5.1.3 Retailer and Manufacturer Patterns

The retailers and manufacturers of the study were fundamentally different types of business. Manufacturers (as classified by the ABS), were essentially wholesalers who had outsourced manufacturing functions. As a consequence of this difference, aspects of product development varied in areas such as data use, product development cycles, range structure and core function. These are summarised in Figure 16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANUFACTURER</th>
<th>MANUFACTURER + RETAILER</th>
<th>RETAILER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THETA KIDS</td>
<td>EPSILON KNITWEAR</td>
<td>ZETA WOMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGMA LUXE</td>
<td>BETA HOMME</td>
<td>DELTA GENTLEMAN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Retail data use in PD**
  - Low: Continuous: Ad-hoc, Seasonal: Bi-annual & Ad-hoc
  - Moderate: Seasonal: Bi-annual & Ad-hoc, Seasonal: Quarterly
  - High: Seasonal: Monthly

- **PD cycles**
  - Continuous: Ad-hoc, Seasonal: Bi-annual & Ad-hoc
  - Seasonal: Bi-annual & Ad-hoc, Seasonal: Quarterly
  - Seasonal: Monthly

- **Range structure**
  - Story groups, Ranges, yarn types & items
  - Collections, sub-ranges & complementary story groups
  - Collections & complementary story groups
  - Collections, categories & complementary story groups

- **Enterprise focus**
  - Sales+PD, PD+Sales
  - PD, Retail
  - Retail+PD

**Figure 16**

*Product Development (PD) Variations*

**THE INFLUENCE OF DATA**

Data was an important tool in the creative process to provide structure and foundation for product development decisions. There was evidence of data being used to interrogate rather than inform creative proposals adding little constructive value. Untested colours and product types were treated with scepticism and required considerable explanation and persuasion on the part of designers to gain acceptance. In the large retail businesses (Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman) there was constant access to real-time sales data. Managers and merchandisers spoke frequently of the value of data analysis to review and predict purchasing patterns but it was difficult to see validity in applying the data to a new season’s range, particularly when there was a new strategy in place targeting a different customer. It is important to note that no
matter how recent the data was gathered, it was immediately historical and of finite value when making forward plans with new product. Businesses without access to retail figures received anecdotal and sometimes patchy information about product performance at retail. Epsilon Knitwear had only past wholesale figures to base future range development upon, with little knowledge of retail sell-through other than anecdotes from sales agents. For Theta Kids, sales data provided tactical information about what product not to propose to the Buyer, for fear of rejection if presented with similar product concepts. The designer driven firms Sigma Luxe and Zeta Woman kept data at a distance so as not to interfere with more intuitive approaches to range development.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT CYCLES

Product development cycles for retailers were strictly calibrated to monthly or quarterly delivery periods, whereas manufacturers worked towards wholesale selling periods that were more seasonal and suited retail buyers' purchase planning. The manufacturers also had ad hoc opportunities presented from time to time that required new product development outside of their normal business.

RANGE STRUCTURE

Range structures were different between retailers and manufacturers, with the retailers of the study developing full collections comprising multiple complementary concept groups. In addition, they were acutely aware of the inter-complementarity of product groups over time. By contrast, manufacturers worked in smaller concept groups without having to consider the relationship of their products to others at retail at any given time.

ENTERPRISE FOCUS

The last area for comment in this section is the enterprise focus: the core function of the business. For example, if the purpose was to retail product, then it followed that product development would be subordinated to the primary focus of retailing. The findings presented here are inferential but connect to notions about the role of an organisation’s climate to foster innovation and creativity (Tesluk, et al., 1997). The large retail cases, Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman, were complex operations with multiple functions, where product development was but one of many functions to consider. As such, they are broadly classified as having a core function of ‘retail’. This contrasts sharply with Sigma Luxe, which was organised around the function of product development (or design). Their retail operations are a result of their product focus, not incidental to it. They expected everyone in the enterprise to value creativity and beautiful product.
Again, by inference, both Theta Kids and Epsilon Knitwear had partnered sales with product development as core functions. Epsilon Knitwear firmly believed their sales were dependent upon innovative product.

...showing a company like [MP], I've got to show them different ideas. There a hundred companies out there doing what I do. I have to be smarter and better than them... (General Manager, Epsilon Knitwear, interview, July 10, 2015).

There were clear distinctions between retailers and manufacturers in terms of product development activities. Essentially, both groups were engaged in very similar practices but the influences and foci of the process varied largely as a result of the scale and type of operations. The large-scale retailers needed merchandise planners to manage stock, which added a complexity to product development not experienced by the manufacturers. In addition, they needed to consider the dimension of time to deliver complementary product in complete concept groups at regular intervals. For product development in the manufacturing cases, the sales role replaced the merchandising role in terms of influence and control, and they relied on wholesale sales data to structure their ranges.

5.1.4 Strategic Issues

STRATEGIC MISALIGNMENT

Both high street retailers (Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman) reported problems aligning their product ranges to the brand’s strategic direction. Senior management were ultimately responsible for brand strategy and participants from both cases recounted times when the direction was ill conceived, poorly communicated, or not clearly understood by everyone. Quantitative strategic direction was definitive and clearly understood at all levels because it was easy to communicate a forecast budget, a target margin, a demographic, and a distribution channel but the same could not be said for the aesthetic dimension of a brand’s strategy. Evocative concepts such as the ‘the lone wolf’ or ‘sartorialism’ were used to describe the aesthetic strategies or directions for these brands but they were highly subjective, nuanced and open to interpretation by a design team. As a result, there were aesthetic ‘discords’ from time to time during periods of strategic change. These were exacerbated by a delay in product changes due to the long lead times for fabric and product development, causing anxiety for

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3 The original quote has been edited to protect the identity of the participating enterprise.
designers and senior management. Both cases looked forward to a more efficient design future as a result of clarifying the brand strategy with their respective senior managers.

PROBLEMS WITH EXECUTION

In four of the six cases, where a brand’s performance failed to meet business expectations, design was believed to be the main problem. The other aspects of the brand’s strategy (such as distribution, merchandising, retailing and marketing) were seldom revised. To illustrate, at Epsilon Knitwear, despite closely monitored product development, a contract designer was not re-employed for another season when a range did not meet sales expectations. The brand was repositioned and yet little work had been done in communicating with key accounts and sales agents about the intended positioning. Nor was there an investment in marketing to boost sales at retail.

If it is accepted that strategy is the domain of leaders, then the study has highlighted a number of instances of poor leadership in relation to brand strategy. There were issues with defining and structuring creative ‘problems’ such as brand repositioning, changing demographics, or developing a competitive strategy from an aesthetic perspective. Leading the implementation and providing guidance for creative work was patchy across the six cases, but especially for larger organisations. Byrne, Mumford, Barrett and Vessey (2009) proposed strategy formation and mission definition for effective leader roles. Mumford (2002) outlined leader processes for idea structuring: providing feedback, guiding development and setting expectations. In this study, leaders in four of the six cases failed to consistently define their creative challenges to design teams explicitly and connect meaningfully with the product development process so that the output was aligned and met performance expectations. A possible cause for this is the absence of senior design leadership in the Australian industry context, particularly in large enterprises when design is not a central function. Senior management capabilities are more likely to focus on commercial skills and expertise. This differs from the findings of Miller and Moultrie (2013) in the UK, where design leaders were represented at senior management levels because of their skills in visioning, structuring and implementing innovative product.

5.2 Managing Creativity at the organisational level

Two major patterns emerged in relation to organisational level factors in the management of creative efforts. Firstly, the influence of the organisational structure on creative efforts; and secondly, the role of management to promote, foster and reward creative efforts. The influence of structure was quite apparent in larger enterprises that were more layered with
more complex reporting arrangements, when compared to the smaller enterprises that were flatter with simpler organisational designs. The way functions like design, merchandising, sales and management were structured in the business unit had considerable impact on the creative process. The rise of the planner in the large retail organisation was a notable feature of the study.

5.2.1 Organisational Structure

In the Alpha Group (of which Beta and Delta were brands), design was just one of many functions in the business. Design and merchandise planning were siloed within brands to keep brand identity separate, whereas divisions such as finance, quality, IT and human resources were centralised services that were shared across the Group. The most critical function working with the design function in the product development process was that of merchandising (job titles included: planner, merchandise planner and merchandiser). At Delta Gentleman, the merchandise function was contained within the business unit whereas at Beta Homme, the function reported externally to a centralised merchandise director. This was an important distinction that impacted decisions about creative (and untested) product in two ways. Firstly, the more democratic nature of product development meant that decision making stayed within the business unit if merchandising was integrated with design. If merchandising reported externally, the product development process had to accommodate another influence as product decisions are approved higher up in the process. Secondly, merchandise planners had the power and responsibility to mark down or move stock when trade was poor, which would impact the business performance of the unit. From the Business Manager at Beta Homme:

…the planners, they’re the ones who mark the stock down at the end of the season, so in a way I see it as linked. If you’re there at the end of the season marking down a thousand units of something, that’s going to make you think: “okay, I won’t do that again.” So that then influences your next round of decisions… (Business Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 10, 2013).

At Beta Homme, the external reporting line for the planner meant the members of the unit needed to persuade senior management about product decisions on two fronts at the next management level: with the general manager of merchandise planning and the general manager of design. It was apparent in interview and in observation that the planner was caught in a difficult psychosocial space, having close working relationships within, and loyalty to, the business unit but having to report elsewhere for his performance. The planner sat with the other members of the menswear business unit and thus was quite separate from his functional
manager. Over time, it was revealed that he felt unsupported by the centralised merchandise manager and eventually left his position. For Delta Gentleman, having the Merchandise Planner within the business division meant that much of the creative/commercial conflict typical of range development was managed and resolved internally before going for range approval at the senior management level.

The small to medium sized operations (Sigma Luxe and Epsilon Knitwear) had very flat structures with owner/directors at one level and everyone else in one or two layers below that. In the case of Sigma Luxe, one of the owner/directors was the designer who was central to the creative process with full creative control. In the case of Epsilon, the owner/directors were not designers but the flat structure and small size of the business allowed for close scrutiny of the creative process and direct control of the final range.

Theta Kids’ Australian operation was entirely responsive to the New Zealand Buyer. Whilst they could control their own inputs into the design development process, they had no control over anything else. Final product decisions, size specifications, merchandising decisions and quality were completely the domain of the retailer. The Designer and Sales Manager seldom saw prototypes, production samples or actual production garments because these went between the factory and the retailer directly, bypassing the Australian operation. There was partial control of the creative process, but only in sample purchases and documentation. The Designer had no direct contact with her employer in the China office as all communication was via the Sales Manager. The China office did not intervene in the creative process at all.

Organisational structure defined the proximity and integration of varying functions in the creative process. The arrangement and reporting relationships of senior managers, business managers, designers, merchandisers and sales managers impacted product development as a result of the oversight or access to the creative process that each were afforded.

5.2.2 Merchandising in Large-Scale Retailing

A key theme for the large-scale retailers was the influence and power of the merchandisers and planners in product development. Strictly speaking, they were responsible for buying, quantifying, distributing and managing stock and providing the commercial structure for range development. Astute merchandise planners played a critical role in mitigating enterprise risk when dealing with the large volumes of stock required for an extensive retail network. Merchandise planners were the chief interpreters and communicators in head office operations of key retail data such as stock on order, stock in hand and product sell-through. As such, they provided valuable data for decision-making at senior management level and their analysis of
previous seasons’ sales formed the basis for range plans in the following season. They determined distribution patterns and quantities for the retail network and could dramatically influence a brand’s retail presence, particularly at low performing stores and clearance outlets where the range on show could be compromised and patchy. From the data, it was evident that planners perceived of their role as sense-checkers or gatekeepers for range proposals put forward by design managers. They were not averse to challenging proposals using sales data or alternatively, endorsing proposals with personal opinions. For the large retailers, merchandise planning was a core competence and its influence had extended into product development. At times, this brought them into contest with design managers who were attempting to innovate their product ranges using qualitative trend data, intuition and creative vision.

Interviews revealed that the planning role had increased in scope and value in the last decade. Prior to this, buyers were the power players of the retail sector making quite singular product decisions with the assistance of merchandise planners or quantifiers who would advise quantities and distribution patterns. In recent years, the lack of local talent with the specialised analytical skillset of the planner pushed large retailers to seek recruits from mature retail markets abroad. Anecdotally, from the interview data, roughly 80% of the planners at a major Australian womenswear retailer were from the UK and the role was considered an ideal stepping-stone for middle and senior management roles. The following comment from the Beta Homme Business Manager provides insight into the rise of the merchandiser/planner in large-scale retail.

They [large retailers] were looking for people from South Africa, the UK, the US. Planning was a bit more of a developed function in the UK. There would be merchandisers working in UK firms alongside buyers and it was seen as very much an equal role. In actual fact, when I was at [larger firm]4, the CEO had worked her way up from merchandiser level/planner level, so it was seen as very much an equal footing. And one thing that I learned in the UK, was you needed to have as much knowledge about product and interest in it to be a valuable merchandiser. And equally, to be a really good buyer, you had to have all the product knowledge but also have a head for the figures. So what I found interesting when I moved over here is they looked at the planners as kind of second, lower tier, particularly at Myer. It felt very old school, it felt to me like I’d gone back to a phase twenty

4 Store name removed for anonymity.
years ago, where there was a bit of a tiered structure
(Business Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 10, 2013).

Elsewhere, he described the value-add of the planner/merchandiser to large-scale retailers in Australia.

…but they’ve all realised [the retailers]: you know what? It’s no good having somebody who could just buy loads of stuff. We need somebody who can control that and manage that and give that a structure as well
(Business Manager, Beta Homme, interview, May 10, 2013).

5.2.3 Performance Management, Rewards and Value

ABSENCE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FOR CREATIVITY

Smith (2005) suggested it was difficult to account for creative achievement when creative processes have ideational as well as evaluative stages that ‘critically censor’ the outputs. In an early study of technology firms (Oldham & Cummings, 1996), one of the criteria for creative performance was the number of patent applications, despite the fact that patents don’t necessarily equate to successful implementation of an idea. Montag, Maerts and Baer (2012) and Mumford (2011) have been critical of traditional measures for creativity and have suggested criterion based metrics instead. From this study, it was evident that none of the participants could point to any specific performance management metrics that measured their creative efforts. The design managers from large-scale retailers recalled wording in performance indicators that might have referred to ‘creative’ or ‘innovative’ ranges, but these did not surface in the study and when probed, the metrics related back to profit against forecast sales or some other sales-based indicator. As far as could be determined in the study, all design participants were fundamentally intrinsically motivated to perform in the creative domain in their jobs and enjoyed the creative aspects of their job and the outputs from them. These findings were not surprising given that so much of the literature on the management of creative efforts frequently describe the high levels of intrinsic motivation for creative workers (Amabile, 1993; Amabile, et al., 1996; Mumford, 2000; Mumford, et al., 2002; Woodman, et al., 1993). However, this study has outlined a more distributed notion of creativity in the product development process (with the involvement of managers, merchandisers and technical staff), which follows on from a shift in the creativity literature to embrace innovation approaches and a focus on the implementation and commercialisation of creative efforts (see Byrne, et al., 2009). The distribution of creativity apparent in this study suggests that managers should not rely on the intrinsic motivation of all workers.
THE VALUE OF CREATIVITY: PERCEPTION AND REALITY

Although there was no extrinsic reward or performance management around creativity, there was nonetheless value ascribed to creativity in most of the cases in the study. As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, all the interviewees believed creativity was important for their business but how this translated into tangible value was not readily apparent. ‘Value’ in this study means how a business explained or demonstrated the worth of creativity.

The large-scale retailers and Theta Kids believed in the strategic value of creativity to differentiate their products in a crowded and competitive market. Management and merchandise participants believed that their respective businesses needed to leverage their creative members further and become more design led than they had been to date. This was in order to maintain competitiveness in the face of global brands opening stores in Australia and the rise of international online shopping. In nearly all of the cases and according to most participants, there was a perception that the organisational climate as explored in the literature (Ahmed, 1998; Cummings, 1965; Ismail, 2005; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tesluk, et al., 1997), was positive and supportive of creative efforts.

However, analysis of the data and experience in the field suggests otherwise. The senior management of the two large retailers did not value creativity in the same way as merchandisers and middle management. Evidence includes the aforementioned lack of any performance measures for creativity; the absence of any explicit strategic or operational goals for creativity; the lack of positive feedback from senior management; and various anecdotes about the poor treatment of design teams and their outputs. An explanation that was proffered was that senior managers don’t come from design backgrounds so they don’t really appreciate that aspect of the business. They have more analytical and commercial skills that come from merchandising and management experience.

LACK OF CREATIVE RITUALS AND REWARDS

There were no specific celebrations or cultural activities described or experienced that centred on creativity. Rewards for creativity were more intrinsic and essentially about the successful realisation or implementation of creative efforts. Design participants talked about the satisfaction of seeing a completed mock-up store, seeing their garments on people in the street, achieving sales, and anecdotes from respected sources.
5.3 Managing the Product Development Process

The process perspective of creativity has been explored in Chapter Two through the writings of Basadur and associates (Basadur & Basadur, 2011; Basadur, et al., 2014), and Caniëls, De Stobbeleir, and De Clippeleer (2014). These were largely innovation theories, which actually moved beyond the scope of this study into areas such as organisational change, idea implementation and production. This section is more specifically about the operational aspects of managing new product development (NPD) and the patterns that emerged across the six cases as a result of data analysis.

The start of the creative process was largely split along role lines with different approaches to the NPD cycle for creative and commercial team members. The development phase of product ranges was a collaborative process between team members, beyond the creative sphere, in a highly interactive manner. Final decision making about product ranges varied considerably across the six cases but there were similarities between the large scale retailers. This is because for retailers Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman with characteristically high stock levels, decisions about products had enormous implications on cash flow and presented considerable risk for management.

5.3.1 Beginnings

IDEATION ACTIVITIES

The commencement of the creative process varied with the functional perspective of the interview participants and the creative approach of the business. People in creative roles spoke more about aesthetic activities like developing colour palettes, gathering fabrics and images, looking at international collections and sensing the fashion zeitgeist. They followed the practice constructs explained by Tran’s (2010) study of innovation processes in the fashion industry in the UK and Europe. People in management, merchandising and technical roles spoke mostly about the market (what is currently in store), reviewing sales data from the previous season, inputs from sales staff, budget forecasts and option plans. If an operation was more design led, aesthetic activities preceded hard data activities. If an operation was more product development led, the order of activities was reversed. Whichever way the business was oriented, it was evident in the data that there were two beginnings to a creative cycle: one that was aesthetically driven with a contemporary/future orientation and one that was commercially driven with a historical, market orientation.
For businesses that could afford it, an overseas research and development trip kick-started the creative process. By visiting international fashion centres in the northern hemisphere, people could gather valuable data about trends in fabrics, garments and retailing. Those adopting a product development approach to creativity would also source sample garments for development, as explained by Weller (2007) and Payne (2011). If fabric was purchased from specialist mills at international trade fairs, the trip helped maintain supplier relationships. Once back in Australia, I observed that the overseas trip (and the sample purchases made) provided greater certainty for creative work and conferred authority and credibility upon the traveller. Well-resourced firms had access to forecasting services that required an annual subscription. Naturally, all firms used the Internet to research concepts, trends, international fashion brands and influential retailers with an online presence.

Beta Homme, Delta Gentleman, Sigma Luxe and Zeta Woman all developed a version of a creative brief. Formats for the brief varied (as did the exact purpose of the brief), but from observation in the field and analysis of the interview data, they were commonly an assemblage of images, colour swatches, patterns, fabrics and garments that gave a sense of what the product offering for a season would look like, and where there were opportunities for growth based on trend research. This information was largely visual, at times ambiguous with little numeric basis, and essentially an aesthetic overview for a season.

The communication of the creative brief ranged from barely articulated musings at Zeta Woman, a micro business of one staff member, to more formal presentation meetings at Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman. As enterprises increased in size, the formality and documentation of the communications increased, which aligns with the findings of De Toni and Nassimbeni’s (2003) study of manufacturers, where creative briefs were not prepared at all. The creative process began with sales data, feedback from sales teams or buyers, what was currently in store and what was deemed a commercial opportunity in the marketplace at a given time.

OPTION PLANNING

For large retailers like Delta Gentleman and Beta Homme, garment ranges were captured in an option plan, one of the most critical documents for a business unit, which itemised every style and colourway in a delivery period. Based on analysis and observation, the large retailers placed great emphasis on structuring a product range, which required collaboration between designers and merchandisers and to a lesser extent senior management. A balanced range structure ensured that garment types, styles, price points, quantities, colourways and delivery months would support business forecasts and agreed margins. A well-considered range
structure provided a degree of stability by ensuring adequate stock coverage with minimal markdowns in the volatile retail fashion environment. Garment data was broadly blocked into the option plan in quarters or months in the early planning stages for a season, becoming more detailed and granular to monthly or fortnightly deliveries as the time for purchasing (or commencing production) approached. The large retailers developed products to match an option plan almost exactly, hence multiple revisions to the plan as the design process unfolded.

For Sigma Luxe, the option plan was a more evolutionary document that shadowed creative processes rather than dictated it. Quantities and numbers of styles were mapped but not slavishly followed. At Zeta, similar creative sensing and structuring processes took place in the early stages of the creative process before past sales data came into consideration and best-selling styles were incorporated into the mix.

The wholesalers designed to more flexible end points. Epsilon Knitwear provided option plans for their designers with garment requirements and repeat styles listed. Range sizes were to some degree elastic, depending on opportunities identified by sales staff, and there was some freedom for the designers to develop additional styles. Theta Kids’ design ‘brief’ (if it could be termed that), was completely unstructured and bound only by the capacity of the Designer to produce the artwork. These practices reflect the wholesale/manufacturing business model, which is different to the retail model where product flow, available floor space, stock turnover and month-by-month sales forecasts are critical considerations.

5.3.2 Range Development

ITERATIVE APPROACHES

As the creative process unfolded and designers moved from broad concepts to more detailed range development, almost all participants described collaborative activities between designer(s), merchandiser(s) and management. For Beta Homme and Delta Menswear, participants described (and the researcher observed) multiple formal meetings and informal exchanges where concepts, design ideas and samples were discussed and opinions sought as they moved towards formal deadlines for finalised ranges. The option plan was a very ‘live’ document that was revised and recalibrated myriad times to ensure that a product range met all the financial requirements and growth targets of the business, mitigated risk, and stayed true to the aesthetic vision of the brand. Development followed program lines such as shirting ranges, merino wool knitwear and tailored suitings to fit in with factory deadlines. Some development work and design decisions were made prior to final buy meetings particularly in the development of yarn-dyed fabrics that had longer lead times. Analysis of the data suggests
that the development process was iterative for these large-scale retailers, which fostered greater collaboration and integration between functions and allowed for greater management scrutiny.

LINEAR APPROACHES

Design led firms like Sigma Luxe and Zeta developed their ranges more intuitively. Zeta deployed a more additive approach, creating intuitively at first and then incorporating best sellers from previous seasons, whereas Sigma Luxe was more deductive in their development process, reducing and refining their ranges towards the end of the process. Sigma Luxe reduced feedback from staff outside the design function to just three meetings in the design development process. Based on analysis of the interview data, the process for design led firms was more linear reflecting the centrality of creativity, trust in the designer’s vision and the scale and complexity of operations.

For Theta Kids, working directly with a Buyer, the development process was sure-footed with limited scope for creative divergence. The Buyer knew what she wanted and the Australian operations were responsive to her requirements. As a result of this focus, the development process was efficient and more linear than iterative. Goworek’s (2010) study of product development practices for a housebrand label in the UK indicated greater creative collaboration than Theta Kids but with a similar sense of efficiency. At Epsilon Knitwear, range development was also largely linear and characterised by a high degree of management scrutiny. This could be attributed in part to a recent and unsuccessful brand re-positioning conducted by a consultant designer but beyond this, the General Manager felt ultimately responsible for the commerciality of ranges, hence his close oversight of the development process.

5.3.3 Decision Making and Buying

FORMALITY AND STRUCTURE FOR LARGE RETAILERS

For Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman, product decisions were mostly made at middle level management and below with periodic and final review by senior management. Final senior level review meetings were formal events and the last opportunity for senior management to provide their input into product ranges. The meetings required complete data on garment costs, projected margins, quantities and distribution patterns in anticipation of purchase orders and the full production phase that followed. At Beta, the information was presented on spreadsheets with a garment illustration to accompany each style. Sample garments were
brought into the meetings to support the data on the spreadsheets and provide an impression of what the range would look like. The Delta Design Manager brought a mood board to the meeting with fabric swatches, colours and images to help persuade senior management about the overall direction for the range. Senior management scrutiny varied with the trust and faith they had in the business division. The chief basis for this confidence was the experience and competence of the managers of the business unit. Both Beta and Delta described these meetings as watershed moments for the attitude and level of control the business had towards the creative and business performance of the unit. Business units prepared and even practised for these meetings so that they presented a united and professional front. They were termination points in the creative process but in some cases, where fabric had already been booked, the approval being sought was in part redundant.

SEMI-FORMAL AND MINIMALIST FOR MEDIUM RETAILER

This practice contrasted with Sigma Luxe, a designer driven and design led enterprise. Final range decisions were made in conjunction with senior retail managers in a single meeting after the sampling process. There was no mention of formality or official ‘sign-off’ but, like the retailers, it presaged the raising and signing of purchase orders by the Managing Director. At Sigma Luxe, as the range moved towards the final approval meeting with other members of the organisation, the scrutiny shifted to the merchandising function, not the creative function, because each item had already passed aesthetic approval by the Designer. At the meeting, the business concerned itself with the balance of the range. Examples cited included too many items in a certain category (for example, trousers or dresses) and to what depth and distribution pattern the range was to be purchased. Analysis of the interview data suggests the process around final decision making for Sigma Luxe was about merchandise refinement not creative review.

STAGED PRACTICE FOR MANUFACTURER/WHOLESALERS

Manufacturers with wholesale distribution such as Epsilon Knitwear and Zeta Woman had staged decision points. Product ranges were finalised internally before selling to retailers. If a style did not sell at wholesale (and bulk production had not been booked earlier), the style did not go into production. On occasions, styles or colourways were added during the selling season. When the wholesale period was over, product quantities were tallied and the business placed production orders. Despite the lower stakes for Epsilon Knitwear as a wholesaler, it appeared to have the most product review meetings leading up to a range release date. This is in addition to an already constrained design brief, a flat management structure and the involvement of a merchandiser to unofficially supervise the design team.
The shift from product development to purchase (or production) was a critical point in the timeline for all of the cases due to factory production schedules and the strict delivery dates typical of the retail sector. No one spoke of lean or agile supply chain practices or the ability to mass customise or creatively refine products once they were purchased, as was frequently discussed in the supply chain literature (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2006; Bruce, et al., 2004; Christopher, et al., 2004; Pan & Holland, 2006) for the fast fashion European retailers. The reasons for this are not clear. Possibilities may be the lack of buying power in Australia due to the relatively small size of the market; the lack of resource to re-work products once production had commenced; or short term range planning in the Australian industry context.

5.4 Team Dynamics in the Creative Process

As explained in the previous section (5.3.2), the development of ranges was for many an interactive and collaborative process, and all of the cases had developed a workable relationship between management, merchandise and design teams to facilitate the process. The findings align with the interactionist view of creativity as explained by Woodman and associates (Woodman, et al., 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990) and to a lesser extent, the work of Cohen and Levinthal (1990) and others in the concept of absorptive capacity (Abecassis-Moedas & Mahmoud-Jouini, 2008; Acklin, 2013; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Scott-Kemmis, Jones, Arnold, Chitravas, & Sardana, 2007; Zahra & George, 2002). Scrutiny of the research data revealed situations where role definition for design, merchandise and management staff had a liquid quality where overlap and distinction ebbed and flowed organically. By contrast, in other situations roles and responsibilities were rigorously prescriptive. The variations were attributable to personal qualities and contextual factors that enabled some individuals to influence creative processes beyond what was required of the role.

This section also addresses how personal taste and the corporate or brand aesthetic overlap in the product development process.

5.4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Based on analysis and observation in the field, it was evident that the design managers in the large retailers (Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman) had expanded their influence beyond their role as a result of their menswear expertise, industry experience and the high esteem to which they were held in the organisation. In some ways, they operated in a design vacuum because there was very little menswear-specific knowledge at senior levels to counter their own voices in their respective businesses. Both had a high degree of autonomy in creative briefs and
during the development phase. At Beta, the Design Manager influenced visual merchandising, the online store, marketing, merchandising and quality. At Delta, the Design Manager regularly adjusted the option plan in order to fulfil his creative ambitions for the product range.

Elsewhere, the business managers and merchandise planners of the large retailers used their positions to influence creative decisions when they believed it would improve sales and profit performance. Analysis of the data suggests that this influence was at times exerted at quite a granular level with limited knowledge of the market and with much less experience than the design team. Readers must note that none of these incursions (by all parties) appeared malicious in intent. There was a palpable desire for the success of the business in both cases, and they had normalised crossing role boundaries believing it to be an appropriate way to operate. For Delta Gentleman it was part of the cut and thrust of product development, the ‘constructive bickering’ as the Merchandise Planner described it. For Beta Homme it was mostly the result of staff attrition that was never backfilled.

Business managers and merchandisers at Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman believed their role was central to business operations because they coordinated with other functions such as finance, production, marketing and retail operations. They constantly monitored sales data looking for opportunities to optimise the business and updated monthly forecasts for senior management. Merchandise planners quantify and decide on distribution patterns for product ranges thereby wielding considerable influence in how the brand was perceived at retail. Middle managers, normally responsible for the financial performance of a unit and the implementation of strategy were actively shaping brand strategy, thereby encroaching upon the role of senior management. The Beta Homme Business Manager identified a need to ‘manage up’ performance data and strategy due in part to a lack of understanding at senior levels about the menswear market as well as to a leadership void as a result of staff turnover.

Technical staff and design assistants at Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman were aligned to creative teams and were responsible for subtle or minor creative elements that were quite important for menswear product. Design assistants put together technical packs that contained detailed design information and quality staff stepped in to finesse garments with respect to construction and size specifications for sampling. Roles were clearly demarcated and respected in these domains and their power to influence the creative process was very limited in scope.

Roles and responsibilities were broadly defined at Sigma Luxe. Overall, the two directors covered all aspects of the business with complementary roles. This was possible (and necessary) because they owned the business outright, the size of operations was still manageable and they had a trusting, consultative business relationship that was an extension of
their personal relationship. The Designer’s responsibilities revolved around the presentation of the brand, which encompassed product design, production, marketing, visual merchandising and branding. The Managing Director was responsible for the overall business strategy and retail operations that included finance, purchasing, merchandising, staffing and anything pertaining to the store experience. In essence, the Designer produced the tangible outputs of the brand and the Managing Director took them to the market. In interview they frequently spoke of their similar taste level that enabled them to do this seamlessly. Range design revolved around the Designer so as such, she was the chief influence in the creative process. This typifies the design led nature of the designer enterprise.

For the manufacturers such as Theta Kids and Epsilon Knitwear, there appeared little overlap or conflict over roles and responsibilities. However, unlike the designer driven cases, management, merchandisers, sales teams and buyers exerted considerable influence over the creative process in three ways: [1] by initiating a product for development; [2] by closely monitoring the development phase; and [3] by editing design outputs. For Theta Kids and Epsilon Knitwear both the Sales Manager and the Managing Director (respectively) felt enormous responsibility for the product ranges on offer hence their close scrutiny of all product development. Analysis of the interview data and observation in the field indicated that designers were the engines of the creative process in the manufacturing cases, despite others heavily mediating their influence and control.

5.4.2 Taste

Taste was difficult to experience in itself, but it was discernible in a firm’s output. Product ranges had an aesthetic or look about them that was reflective of a taste level in the organisation. Unfortunately, the survey questions did not help distinguish ‘taste’ from ‘aesthetic’ or ‘style’ so at times the concepts blurred. Despite this, it was very clear from the data and experiences and observation in the field that taste was an important part of the creative process for all participants. Taste was of primary value in the designer driven enterprises, whereas in the market driven enterprises the value was more understated. It was still deemed vital because it provided coherence and informed product development choice. Fundamentally, taste was the lens through which all six cases designed, developed and ordered product, with multiple tastes at play in the process. There was the taste of the designer, their assistant and the technical staff (if involved); the merchandiser or planner; the business manager or sales manager; the senior manager or buyer; and finally the taste of the customer. Broadly speaking, there were three main tastes to consider: the personal, the corporate and the consumer’s taste.
All design-based participants had a highly personalised view of taste that was seldom defined but consistently driving their creative practice. To illustrate from the study:

If I don’t like it, I won’t put it in the range. So there’ll come a time when my personal taste won’t be right and then that’ll be when I move on to do something else. But generally, if I don’t like it, I won’t put it in. I’m not one of those designers that can… (Design Manager, Delta Gentleman, interview, July 9, 2013).

By contrast, the merchandise planners and the Business Manager in the large retailers believed their taste was aligned to the brand or the customer’s taste. Based on evidence and observation, they struggled to keep their own taste out of product decisions, trying instead to use historical data to predict customer taste. Senior management and buyers were not interviewed but there was evidence from the data that while anchored to the brand’s taste (which was not necessarily explicit or universally understood), taste was still highly personal and hypersensitive to weak business performance.

Those assisting or on the perimeter of the creative process frequently referred to the corporate or brand taste. Participants defined the brand’s taste as having an essence, handwriting or signature that was identifiable or unique in the market: as if one should be able to recognise a brand simply by looking at an outfit. The larger and more layered the enterprise, the more difficult it was to align everyone to a particular taste or aesthetic as part of the strategic intent of the brand. Evidence from the large retailers Beta Homme and Delta Gentleman indicated that taste played a critical role in the presentation of the brand both internally and to their consumers online and in store. Yet the alignment of that taste with operations such as product development, marketing and communications was inconsistent, leading to brand confusion and inefficiencies in the creative process. Products were developed initially with the Design Managers’ personal taste, which was quickly mediated by the corporate taste. Because of the management layers, taste was negotiated at each level of the approval process. Analysis and observation revealed a greater concern for personal and corporate tastes than that of the consumer in the large retailers.

The manufacturers such as Epsilon Knitwear and Theta Kids considered the taste of the end consumer more than the other cases, and for Theta, they had to appeal to the Buyer’s taste as well.

The designer driven firms, exemplified by Sigma Luxe and Zeta, relied on their own personal taste the most. Designers felt their taste reflected that of their customer, which was deemed a critical success factor for their businesses. For these firms, the taste of the designer, the brand
and the consumer had merged and they tried to incorporate this taste into all brand experiences.

Taste is a socio-cultural construct (Bourdieu, 1984), hence the simple questions about background and experience in the survey instrument. In the study, designers with strong creative or aesthetic backgrounds were confident of their taste level. This taste had been cultivated from a young age and enhanced in businesses that nurtured their creative development or at least exposed them to a taste level that they might not have otherwise experienced. Participants spoke of European, English, American, South African, Chinese, Australian and New Zealand taste, suggesting a geo-political dimension to taste. At Beta, most of the decision-makers for product were from the UK with strong English identities. When the Managing Director sought to emulate the more ‘ethnic’ tastes of a market competitor, Milan was added to the itinerary for the bi-annual international sourcing trip in order to capture a continental aesthetic. It appeared that taste could be purchased.

In 2003, the Scottish Managing Director of the Alpha Group insisted that an Australian should be appointed to the role of Design Director of the Alpha brand, as part of a repositioning strategy after years of declining revenues. He believed only an Australian could understand the legacy of the brand and would be better able to translate that to a modern Australian lifestyle (2010b). Taste, with its social, cultural and historical foundations, was therefore an important quality for a Design Director at the Alpha Group, of which Beta and Delta were stablemate brands.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented cross-case analysis and findings from the third analytical phase of the methodology. It has revealed the implications and nuances for a number of different aspects of the creative process, which sometimes formed patterns across the six cases.

At a strategic level, Australian fashion enterprises can embrace either design led or product development led approaches to innovation, as well as a hybrid approach deploying both. Similarly (but still distinctly), enterprises can embrace designer driven or market driven innovation strategies, as well as a hybrid approach deploying both. Where divergence and misalignment occurred between product development strategy and overall strategy, there were negative consequences for the business.
For larger enterprises, with integrated merchandising and sales functions that were active in the product development process, there was a functional split in the initial ideation stages. Creative staff generally followed Tran’s practice constructs (Tran, 2010) while merchandise, sales and business managers followed more data driven processes. After the ideation stage, design development and decision making stages were more interactive and collaborative. Roles and responsibilities had perceptual distortions and were not necessarily explicit or crisply defined. One of the most significant findings in this study was the growing importance of the merchandising function for larger retailers in purchasing, distributing and managing stock. This lone responsibility afforded them great influence in the creative process.

At an organisational level, there was a distinction in the way products were developed between retail enterprises and manufacturer/wholesale enterprises that did not distribute through their own retail outlets. Retail enterprises had to factor in the passage of time, considering drops and product coordination over a season, while manufacturer/wholesalers did not have this uppermost in range development. Universally, none of the cases explicitly rewarded or managed creative performance, though all perceived that it was a valuable behaviour or practice.

At the team level, the cross case analysis revealed that taste played a vital role in product development. There were however three different tastes at play: the personal, the corporate/brand aesthetic, and the perceived taste of the consumer. The alignment of all three was problematic at times for nearly all of the participants.

The cross case analysis has contributed further detail to the literature on creativity and innovation in product development practices. It has showcased the implications of strategic level approaches to product development across a range of six diverse contexts and shown that there are hybrid approaches at play. These hybrid approaches are largely a result of distance, both temporal and geographic, from the cultural fashion centres of the northern hemisphere, as explained by Weller (2007); and the more distributed nature of creativity revealed in the cases. Perhaps the most striking omission for management practice was the lack of any performance criteria or metrics for creative work in the sampled cases. How do creative workers sustain or improve performance, when there are forces in the process that foster safe, less challenging product options?
Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

In this concluding chapter the findings are briefly summarised in two subsections that correspond to the original research questions. Following this, the implications for industry; the contribution the study makes to the literature; the limitations of the study; and possible avenues for further research are addressed in turn.

6.1 Research Question One

How do fashion enterprises manage product development and facilitate creativity within the process?

CREATIVE APPROACH

The management of product development varied from enterprise to enterprise, largely contingent upon the flexible construction of creativity that was evident across the cases. Weller (2007) and Payne (2011) had detailed a product development led approach where enterprises copied or adapted garments purchased elsewhere as the main driver for stylistic innovation. At the other end of this spectrum was the design led approach, where design teams developed products without a sample garment from original concepts. The study provided evidence of both approaches as well as a third hybrid approach. The position of the enterprise on this spectrum had implications for management practice in terms of strategy, organisational structure, resourcing and fostering creativity. Although all cases valued creativity and perceived that there were adequate resources to support creativity, there was insufficient evidence to fully support this perception. Figure 14 illustrates the variation in approach across the six cases.
### Case Operation Market level Description Design Led Hybrid Product Development Led

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Market level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Design Led</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Product Development Led</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Designer womenswear</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fashion menswear</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Classic menswear</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Manufacturer¹ + Retailer</td>
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<td>Independent womenswear</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Classic knitwear men + women</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Contemporary childrenswear</td>
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</tbody>
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Figure 14
*Product Innovation Approaches*

¹ ‘Manufacturer’ used as per Australian Bureau of Statistics business classification.

## INNOVATION STRATEGIES

Cillo and Verona (2008) had outlined two distinct strategies to product development in the Italian fine fashion industry: a *designer driven* approach and a *market driven* approach. The designer driven approach had the designer or team of designers providing the impetus for stylistic innovation whereas the market driven approach had market intelligence, competitor outputs and sales data as the impetus for stylistic innovation. This study provides evidence of both approaches as well as a third hybrid approach. The hybrid approach was largely a result of more collaborative creative processes that were evident (to varying degrees) in nearly all of the cases in the study, but especially in the retailer cases because they had access to real time sales data. The designer driven approach meant that the designer’s vision was the key innovation driver with less influence from sales and merchandising staff when designing and developing product. Figure 15 illustrates the variation in approach across the six cases.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<th>Hybrid</th>
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<td>Zeta Woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epsilon Knitwear</td>
<td>Manufacturer+ retail</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Classic knitwear men + women</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theta Kids</td>
<td>Manufacturer+</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Contemporary childrenswear</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15

Innovation Strategies after Cillo and Verona (2008)

1 'Manufacturer' used as per Australian Bureau of Statistics business classification.

RETAILERS AND MANUFACTURER/WHOLESALE PATTERNS

Retail operations developed product differently to manufacturer/wholesalers. Retailers had to consider the flow of products over time, with particular attention to complementary products delivered in monthly (and fortnightly) conceptual groups. By contrast, manufacturer/wholesalers developed products for biannual or triannual range releases and in an ad hoc manner as required by their wholesale accounts. Data reliability and use were also key variances along this dimension because of access to sales data. Figure 16 illustrates the variations across business types.
As part of the management of creativity, the study inquired after rewards, processes and metrics for creative work to explore if there were motivations, protocols and even cultural expectations for creative performance. Universally, there were none that were explicitly about creativity, with only two large cases describing performance indicators that related to the commercial success of products, creative or otherwise.

6.2 Research Question Two

What is the nature of the relationships between the various actors in the product development process?

INTERACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In this study, there was a fundamental acceptance of the consumption-based view of creativity as proposed by Warhurst (2010). In practice, this meant that all enterprises had an underlying market orientation and perceived of creativity as a necessary part of good commerce. The opposition described at the beginning of this chapter between creativity and management was not evident in this study in the same way. A more accurate framing was a tension between ‘partners’: senior management and design; and commerce and creativity. This tension existed because of the distributed or shared nature of creativity in the product development process.
that is part of the acceptance of the consumption based view. All enterprises adopted interactive and collaborative product development processes, particularly in the development and decision making stages, involving more than just the creative members of the business unit.

TASTE

Personal taste played a significant role in the creative process, as it was the 'lens' through which products were conceived, designed, developed and finally decided upon. Many struggled with discerning the multiple tastes at play: the personal, the corporate, and the consumer. Designers who were confident of their taste melded all three and this was deemed a key success factor. Merchandise planners and business managers attempted to pull back their own taste to discern that of the consumer, relying on data and anecdote to achieve this. With the collaborative nature of the product development process apparent in the study, a degree of taste alignment is a factor for successful creative practice.

6.3 Practice Implications

ALIGNING STRATEGY WITH PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

In light of this study, the primary implication for enterprises is the need for greater alignment of corporate strategy, innovation approach and product development practice. By this, it means a fuller understanding of the various ways in which organisations can develop new products and the implications of this approach on operational functions and the staff involved. Creativity, as part of this clarification, needs to be universally understood in an enterprise so that those participating in the product development process are aware of the expectations for their role in the process, as well as for the outputs of that process. In this study, readers have been exposed to the workings of Sigma Luxe a design led, designer driven enterprise where a single designer creates original product with a distinct identity for a discerning customer who values high quality garments. If an enterprise was design led but wanted market driven products, they might consider having multiple designers developing more varied, pluralistic products that were responsive to the market. If this same enterprise was a retail enterprise, the design team would work closely with the merchandise team so that products were market competitive, in tune with trends, aligned to the brand aesthetic, distributed intelligently to stores, in realistic quantities to achieve required business performance.

It is of questionable value if an enterprise strategized to create original products and struggled to cope with the unknown nature of forecasting sales for untested product. Or if a market driven strategy does not have access to reliable and valid market intelligence and data. Aligning
strategic intent with innovation strategy and then product development approach, helps clarify for all parties, what the expectations, requirements and possible outcomes might be.

Four of the six cases described periods when the brand aesthetic did not align with product as a result of a new brand launch or a brand repositioning. These divergences were a result of not fully realising the aesthetic impact on the product of a brand shift, or, not fully considering the impact of a brand shift on strategy or the current business model. Enterprises should carefully consider that a strategic or brand shift requires a rethink of product development practice.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Senior managers in larger organisations should consider that partnering merchandise or sales functions with the design function within a business unit impacts collaboration in product development. Where it is desirable to do so, such as in the case of a retail organisation with a strong market focus, this helps to ensure that product ranges will meet retail requirements. If highly creative original products are required, it is desirable to have a safe, experimental space for full creative expression. Embedding sales or merchandising functions within the business unit may negatively impact the product development outcome. This aligns with the creative process as outlined by Basadur and Basadur (2011), where it is important for ideation stages to be completed before evaluation stages commence.

RESOURCING CREATIVITY

Design led approaches require different resources to product development led approaches. Managers need to consider that original product requires more time and creative labour to develop than product that is copied from an existing source. Development timeframes are longer and good garment technical skills are required either in house or at the point of manufacture.

MANAGING DISTRIBUTED PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The study has demonstrated that the product development process in the participant cases was shared amongst a number of actors with different roles, responsibilities and skill sets. This has implications for a number of management concerns. Firstly, performance management and metrics specifically about creative behaviours and outputs were noticeably absent in the study. Management should carefully consider the role of performance management in improving creativity, should it be desired, and align motivations with organisational goals. Amabile (1985) suggests that creative workers are more intrinsically motivated than non-creative workers,
thus management may need a variety of metrics to improve individual performance due to the distributed nature of the product development process. Secondly, managers may need to consider role definition in highly interactive settings. The findings revealed situations where there was a degree of ambiguity about inputs and responsibilities in the product development process. Thus roles may need recalibrating: either to sharpen definition or alternatively, to blur boundaries so that even further crossover can take place. Depending on organisational goals, one approach may prove more suitable than the other. For example if greater collaboration is required, managers may need to recruit for broader skills and experiences so that individuals can perform across functional lines, instead of having deep, but narrow expertise. Thirdly, the development of staff in both creative and commercial domains may improve the collaboration between team members, in that staff would have a better understanding of the perspectives of different functions involved in the process.

6.4 Contribution to the Literature

DETAILED CREATIVE PRACTICE

Primarily, this study builds upon the work of Tran (2010) by detailing creative practices in a variety of contexts: from a micro enterprise with limited wholesale and retail distribution through to a large-scale retailer with a layered organisational structure and multiple divisions. In doing so, the findings revealed a more nuanced, varied approach to product development, providing richer detail about practices at and across the boundaries of current classifications. For example, the classifications outlined by Cillo and Verona (2008) with design driven and market driven innovation strategies have been augmented to include a hybrid approach where both strategies were deployed by three of the six cases (Beta Homme, Delta Gentleman and Epsilon Knitwear). In a similar way, the findings have shown a continuum of product development approaches with design led at one end (Cillo & Verona, 2008; Dell’Era & Verganti, 2007; Perks, et al., 2005; Ward, et al., 2009), and product development led (Payne, 2011; Weller, 2007) at the other. The findings have illustrated the practical implications of each approach and confirmed the use of both for three of the six cases (Beta Homme, Delta Gentleman and Epsilon Knitwear). The findings revealed patterns in product development activities across all cases in stages such as the commencement of the creative process, range development and decision making when finalising or choosing product ranges. The patterns were closely aligned to the different business types involved in the study: manufacturers and retailers, and this study has contributed to a better understanding of those differences in relation to creativity and product development.
COLLABORATIVE CREATIVE PRACTICE

Many theorists from Adorno (1997) to Caves (2000) have written about a creative/non-creative dichotomy with myriad implications for the management of design-based industries, such as balancing creative freedom against management control. All of the cases in this study had to varying extents ‘partnered’ these apparent opposites and downplayed the tension that was foreshadowed by the literature review. Participants were clearly in the business of producing functional fashion commodities, as few held artistic or creative pretensions about their outputs. All six cases had commercial orientations to product development and had embraced a consumption-based view of creativity (Dixon, 2010; Warhurst, 2010). NPD was not the sole concern of a creative elite, as multiple inputs into the creative process were accepted and indeed encouraged. This was clearly illustrated in the Delta Gentleman case where the Merchandiser and Design Manager were literally ‘partnered’ in a business unit to develop product collaboratively. The contribution of the study does not negate the writings of scholars such as Adorno and Caves, but suggests instead that the relationships between the creative and non-creative aspects of product development are more partnered than oppositional.

The study contributes to the interactionist view of creativity (Woodman, et al., 1993; Woodman & Schoenfeldt, 1990) by documenting collaborative product development practices across enterprise functions (horizontally) and across management hierarchies (vertically). The study has also documented the complexity of group level creativity in organisations and augmented the creative/non-creative dichotomy described above to include a three-way dynamic between design, management and merchandising. Though not comprehensive, the study has contributed to the more integrated theories of innovation and creativity (Bissola & Imperatori, 2011; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007), through field research of the granular exchanges between actors in micro-level processes within a business unit. The findings have provided empirical evidence of some of the subtle, personal forces at play in the product development process, in particular the different tactics that each uses to influence the final product, such as data, expertise and personal qualities.

THE MANAGER – WORKER INTERFACE

The work of Mumford (Byrne, et al., 2009; Mumford, 2000, 2011; Mumford, et al., 2003; Mumford, Hunter, Eubanks, Bedell, & Murphy, 2007; Mumford & Licuanan, 2004; Mumford, et al., 2002). Amabile (Amabile, et al., 2004) and others in the leadership space (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Carmeli, Gelbard, & Gefen, 2010; Černe, et al., 2013; Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2007; Oke, et al., 2009; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004; Rickards & Moger, 2006; Shalley & Gilson,
2004; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008) provided compelling arguments for leader and manager practices, behaviours and qualities at the level of senior and middle management in organisations. The findings in this study have provided detail of practices, behaviours and experiences at the middle and lower levels of organisations. The study balances the literature to a small extent by focusing on the lived experiences of workers involved in product development, seldom discussed in the fashion industry. The study has also served to provide evidence of the impact of the discharge of leader and manager responsibilities such as strategy development and execution, organisational structure and design, and performance management at an operational and personal level. An important addition to the literature is evidence of the failure of leaders and managers to fully realise the implications of different creative approaches and brand development on product development practice. Dixon (2010) noted that the literature had till then been silent about management practices and this study has gone some way to giving voice to ‘the missing middle’ (identified in the title of his book chapter).

6.5 Limitations of the Study

SCOPE AND INCOMPLETE CONCEPTUALISATION

The scope for this exploratory-descriptive study was too broad for the timeframe, the resources available and in some aspects, beyond the experience of the researcher. An example of this overreach was the ambition to understand the nature of the interactions between the actors in the product development process. This was not fully realised in the study because there was limited access to the unit of analysis in all but one case and it was not possible to repeat the extended field experience for all cases. The hoped-for opportunity to attend product meetings in the field did not eventuate for the other five cases. In those cases, the results were mainly perceptions about the interactions, not observations of the interactions themselves.

At the outset of the research project, the existence of a link was anticipated between creative antecedents (Woodman and Schoenfeldt, 1990) and taste (Bourdieu, 1984). Unfortunately, the conceptualisation of taste was vague and the questions in the survey instrument were correspondingly fuzzy. However, interview experiences in the field revealed the high premium on (good) taste in the creative process, with interesting questions for future research arising about the link between taste and the brand aesthetic. Improved conceptualisation about taste in the creative process may yield more insightful results.
VARIATION IN DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The variation of data collection techniques across the six cases has compromised the cross-case analysis to some extent. The unusual opportunity for full participation in the Beta Homme case was not replicated for the remaining five cases. The ability to view the artefacts of the creative process was also inconsistent across all cases. In some cases, it was possible to view artefacts in the field during data collection, or later at retail outlets online and in store. This inconsistency compromised the triangulation of field data in order to check against perceptions of innovation and creativity made through interviews.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Personal, political and ideological development throughout the period of candidature has had implications for the research. Critical readings had influenced observations in the field and data analysis, which had adjusted the original focus of the study. While this reflexivity is an inevitable and desirable part of qualitative research, it is difficult to maintain reliability when reading data for meaning and making connections to the literature. Connected to this was a personal perspective as a former designer and in the case of Beta Homme, a participant in creative work.

CASE ISSUES

In this study, the six cases were selected purposively so that they represented different enterprises types in the fashion industry. While it was possible to draw some cross-case conclusions about product development (the lack of performance management, for example, and some NPD patterns), the aim of investigating a broad cross-section of enterprises was perhaps too disparate to be meaningful. Some interview questions were not applicable to the micro businesses, which were fundamentally different operations. It might have proved more effective to select a less diverse sample group so that only those of sufficient size to have organisational layers were included.

6.6 Further Research

MEASURING CREATIVITY

The one universal finding from this study was the lack (and by inference, the difficulty) of measuring creative performance. Further research could explore the application of new theories to the fashion industry, such as the work of Montag, Maertz and Baer (2012). They outlined a framework for the measurement of creativity around the concepts of creative
performance behaviours and creative outcome effectiveness. This would augment the current preference for sales performance as the only metric for creativity. This is particularly important for the Australian context where product development processes were found to be collaborative in development and decision-making, involving designers, merchandisers, sales staff and managers. If creative workers are typically intrinsically motivated, what would drive the performance of the other actors in the creative process? Other frameworks to consider for measuring creative performance would be Kaplan and Norton’s (2006) Balanced Scorecard, or Hadida’s (2015) inter-connected framework comprising artistic merit, commercial performance, societal impact and managerial performance. The last criterion of managerial performance is particularly resonant in light of the findings from this study. An exploratory, action research project for small to medium businesses would be of great benefit to the industry, as these enterprises (such as Sigma Luxe and Epsilon Knitwear) are not adequately resourced to develop their own metrics and systems.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Further research into the management of creative efforts in fashion should adopt a multi-disciplinary approach. The wide-ranging literature review that underpinned this study highlighted multiple conceptualisations of creativity: sociological, cultural industries, creativity, innovation, management and leadership. For example, to more thoroughly investigate the role of taste in product development, and creativity in fashion more broadly, management and creativity academics should incorporate the sociological aspects of the phenomenon. From where and how is taste acquired and developed, and how can it be directed at making better product decisions?

CRITICAL APPROACHES

Critical theory from the UK provided fascinating perspectives on creativity and creative industries (Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Oakley, 2004; Thompson, et al., 2007; Townley & Beech, 2010a; Warhurst, 2010). This study revealed tacit assumptions about the nature of creativity with all cases in full acceptance of the commercial drivers for creative endeavour. In the field, it was observed that there was little regard for intellectual property concerns in product development led practices (copying or ‘knocking off’ styles). Field experience also highlighted an excessive workload and inadequate time allocation for product development work, despite many participants believing they were adequately resourced. A critical study of the Australian fashion context would provide insight and fresh perspectives on contemporary practice, so that managers were more cognisant of the impact of their product development approach on their staff.
EXPLANATORY RESEARCH TO TEST THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS

Further explanatory research could provide more conclusive evidence that confirms or augments the frameworks and theories explored in this study. Instead of a broad range of contexts (as attempted here), a number of similar enterprise types and classifications could be researched at greater depth, incorporating quantitative methodologies, so that the findings were more tailored to the relevant industry segment. By focusing on a specific aspect of creativity or product development, further research would be of more immediate value to managers in the Australian context.
References


Hello and thanks for taking the time to consider this project: 
Creativity, Design & Management in the Australian Fashion Industry

I am a research student at Edith Cowan University and I’m investigating how people in fashion businesses work together to design and develop product. Of particular interest is how a business organises itself to be creative, and how a person’s job, background, skills and experience influence the creative process. It’s hoped that by participating in this research and working together, we will provide a better understanding of what creativity means and how it is cultivated in the Australian fashion industry.

This research project is part of my requirement to complete a Masters of Management by Research in the Faculty of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University. The University primarily funds the project with funds from the Federal Government and I will absorb any additional costs as the project unfolds.

If XXXXXXX chooses to get involved in the project, we’ll start as close as possible to the beginning of a product development cycle. At a mutually convenient time, I will come to your workplace to document your product development process and conduct interviews with the people directly involved in range development (and are available). At a later time, I need to sit in on a product meeting where I can listen and observe how everyone interacts when making decisions about product.

In addition, I require staff central to the design process to compile key range documents and record their personal reflections about the creative process. This evidence will be analysed along with all the other information gathered to create a rich and detailed picture of the product development process in your business.

Thanks again for taking the time to consider this project. I hope you will agree to be involved after reading the information provided. If you have any further questions, please don’t hesitate to call me on 0403 462 221, (08)6304 5612, or email me at b.santarelli@ecu.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,
Bruno Santarelli
Candidate, Masters of Management by Research
Edith Cowan University | Faculty of Business & Law
  e: b.santarelli@ecu.edu.au
  m: 0403 462 221
  t: 08 6304 5612
Appendix B: Information for Participants

Research Project
Creativity, Design & Management in Australian Fashion Businesses

An information sheet for participants

1. Background
A core activity for a fashion business is the design and development of product ranges. Despite the size and the economic importance of the textile and clothing industry in Australia, how businesses develop product is rarely a focus for study in the management literature. With increasing competition from online retailers and international superbrands opening stores in Australia, it feels timely to investigate product development processes in fashion businesses.

This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for a Masters degree for Bruno Santarelli (the Chief Investigator) under the supervision of Dr Janice Redmond and Dr Beth Walker. Dr Walker leads the Small and Medium Enterprise Research Centre (SMERC) with Dr Redmond’s involvement. SMERC is part of the Faculty of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University (ECU).

The study is funded primarily by the Faculty of Business and Law at ECU with funds from the Federal Government, as per all research degrees in Australian Universities. The Chief Investigator will absorb additional costs and is conducting the research in his own time, outside of his employment at ECU.

2. What is the purpose of this study?
The aim of the project is to improve our understanding of how management and design work together to create fashion products. Not only is this a study of creativity as a business function, it is intended that the human dimension of creativity be investigated. In particular, how your background, your position in the firm and your personal ideas about creativity influence the product development process. It is hoped that this study will provide some insight into the key factors that enhance or hinder creativity at both a personal and organisational level.

3. Why have you been invited to participate?
You have been invited because your business designs fashion product; is of sufficient size; is working in either manufacturing or retailing; is based in Australia; and produces for the Australian market. You have been identified from a variety of sources including Ragtrader, Australian Fashion Review, the Council of Textile & Footwear Industries of Australia, key industry contacts and industry knowledge gathered by the Chief Investigator from previous experience.

Please remember that your involvement is entirely voluntary and there are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

4. What will I be asked to do, specifically?
The ‘gatekeeper’ of your business (which may be you) will be asked to complete a paper-based survey to determine company demographics such as number of employees, governance, organisational structure, company history, operations, turnover etc. Both the ‘gatekeeper’ and the Chief Investigator will then compile a process map to visualise the design process. This map will be used to establish timelines, key actors and critical input and output points in order to plan for data collection. You may be asked for your input into this to ensure that it is correct.
After this, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview to gather information about you, your role and the product development process. This will include a wide variety of questions ranging from your educational background to your thoughts and opinions about creativity. It is expected that this will take up to 90 minutes. This interview will be recorded and a transcript will be made. The transcript will be sent back to you for verification and corrections, if required. For this project, the investigators would like to be able to use your quotes anonymously.

At an agreed time, the Chief Investigator would like to observe you and the other members of your development team in a product meeting so that he can listen to and observe how you interact with each other. This will not be recorded but notes will be taken.

For one product development cycle (such as a seasonal range, or preparations for a meeting with a buyer), you are asked to create a portfolio of documents and images that you use throughout the creative process. This might include items such as a range brief, a mood board, illustrations, fabric swatches, option plans and key communications you make or receive within your organisation in the process. In addition to this, you are asked to jot down your thoughts or reflections about the creative process on a weekly basis in a journal. These are onerous tasks, but they are the real artefacts of the creative process and as such, are highly valuable to a researcher. It is expected that the journal will take 5-10 minutes per week and that collecting documents may take a similar amount.

Participating in a research project is time consuming and this project is especially so. We apologise for this and take this opportunity to thank you in advance for volunteering your time and energy.

5. Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?
Potentially, we hope that you gain greater awareness of your role in the creative process and better insight into the many influences that shape product development. At a broader level, when the results are published, it may contribute to understanding about the management of creative processes in the Australian fashion industry. At present, this is not well documented.

6. Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?
Negligible, this research is considered very low risk.

7. What will happen to the information when this study is over?
All the information and data that you provide will be deidentified, given a code number that is unique to you and then stored in a locked file. The document that links your identity with your allocated code will be kept in a separate lockable file.

Upon completion of the project, hardcopies and artefacts will be photographed or scanned and then destroyed. ECU then securely stores all of the information electronically for 5 years from the publication date of the thesis, which is scheduled for early 2014. After the five-year period it will be securely destroyed.

Only ECU and the investigators listed on page 3 will have access to the data. It is possible that the data may be used for a future research project if within a five-year time frame. If there are partner institutions involved with this project, they will also have access to the data but only through ECU.

Rest assured, that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. It is possible that transcripts will be produced by an external service. All efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality if this occurs.
8. What if I change my mind during or after the study?
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and you do not have to provide an explanation if you
don’t want to. Any data collected that is attributable to you alone will be destroyed. If you have input in a
shared document, that data will be retained but will not identifiable to you.

9. How will the results of the study be published?
In the first instance, the findings from this study will form part of a thesis that will be published by ECU. It will
be accessible to the public at the ECU Research Online website: http://ro.ecu.edu.au/. A summary of the
findings will also be sent to you directly.
The findings could also form the basis of a journal article, a conference paper or an oral presentation. With
all publications and presentations, you will not be identifiable.

10. What if I have questions about this study?
We welcome your questions! Below are our contact details. Please direct queries in the first instance through
the Chief Investigator, Bruno Santarelli.

Bruno Santarelli
Chief Investigator
Candidate: Masters of Management by Research
Edith Cowan University
270 Joondalup Drive
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Dr Beth Walker
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E: elizabeth.walker@ecu.edu.au

Please note this study has been approved by the ECU Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any
concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Research Ethics Officer on (08)
6304 2940 or email research.ethics@ecu.edu.au. Please quote ethics reference number 8496.

Please retain this sheet for your personal reference.

We sincerely thank you for your involvement in this project.
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Creativity, Design & Management in Australian Fashion Businesses
Participant Consent Form

Please print your name, sign and date this form and return to Bruno Santarelli, either electronically, by standard mail or personally:

Bruno Santarelli
Building 18, Room 209b
Edith Cowan University
270 Joondalup Drive
Joondalup WA 6027
T: 08 9304 5612 | M: 0403462221
e: b.santarelli@ecu.edu.au

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for Participants for this study.
3. I understand that the study involves recorded interviews, observation, the creation of a portfolio and journal entries.
4. I understand that participation involves negligible risk.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on ECU premises for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed.
6. I understand that the researcher will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply will be used only for the purposes of the research.
7. I understand that the results of the study will be published and that I cannot be identified as a participant.
8. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect. I understand I can only withdraw my individual data and that any co-created data will remain and be deidentified.
9. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
10. I agree that the researchers may contact me using the details and methods below.

______________________________
Name:

______________________________
Signature:

______________________________
Date:

______________________________
Preferred mailing address:

______________________________
Preferred email:

______________________________
Preferred telephone:

Thank you for your participation!
Appendix D: Survey Instrument

Creativity, Design & Management in Australian Fashion Businesses

For gatekeepers: paper-based survey, face-to-face, onsite.

1. How many employees work for this organisation (full time, part time and contractors)?
2. If you use freelancers/contractors, what function do they perform?
3. What is the annual turnover for this company (or business unit)?
4. When was the business incorporated (when did you start operations)?
5. What is the main business of this enterprise? (retail, wholesale, manufacture, design)
6. Is this a privately owned business or are there shareholders?
7. What is the governance structure of this business?
8. How is the company organised? How many business units are there and what do they all do?

Semi-structured interviews with management and design staff, face-to-face, onsite.

Antecedent factors

1. In what year were you born?
2. Where were you born?
3. Do you identify with any particular ethnicity?
4. Where did you spend your school years?
5. What was your post secondary education? Was that your highest qualification?
6. In what discipline was your post-secondary education/development?
7. What experience have you had in the fashion industry? In which markets? What roles? How long in each?
8. What do/did your parents/guardians do as an occupation?

Current position and role perceptions

1. What is your position in this company?
2. What are you responsible for, specifically? Any other responsibilities?
3. How long have you been with this company and in what role?
4. Who do you report to?
5. Who reports to you or are you part of a team? Liaison/collaboration in the team.
6. What’s the basis of your technical knowledge/skill about the business you’re in?
7. What’s your greatest value-add for this business? Do you think the business agrees with this view?
8. What five words would people in this organisation use to describe you in this organisation?
The design process and creativity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Design staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you brief the design team at the start of a product development cycle?</td>
<td>How much influence do you have into developing a brief (or choosing product) for a product development cycle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From what information sources is the brief prepared? Is it aligned to any corporate strategy?</td>
<td>What data/information do you use, if at all, if you provide input into a range brief or in product selection?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many styles are you developing in a year? How many make it through to the final range?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What oversight do you have over the design process with regard to decision-making, if at all?</td>
<td>How much autonomy do you have in the design process with regard to decision-making, if at all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much involvement or management do you exercise in the design process, if at all? How is that feedback received?</td>
<td>How often do you receive feedback during the design process and from whom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much influence do you have in setting deadlines and timeframes in the design process, if at all? How does that influence the creative process?</td>
<td>How much influence do you have in setting deadlines and timeframes in the design process, if at all? How does that influence the creative process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does taste/style play a role in the design process? What is this taste? Is taste linked to intuition? What is the basis for your intuition/taste/style?</td>
<td>To what extent does taste/style play a role in the design process? What is this taste?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think creativity means in your organisation?</td>
<td>What do you think creativity means in your organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important do you think creative product is for your business?</td>
<td>How important do you think creative product is for your business?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you resource/support creativity in your business? Trips, HR, subscriptions, time etc.</td>
<td>Is creativity resourced/supported in your business?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think this business views creativity?</td>
<td>How do you think this business views creativity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your creative input valued? How so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance factors

1. How accountable are you with regard to the final product range?
2. Is creativity a factor or indicator in your performance management? How?
3. What are the key performance indicators for you in your position?
4. Does this business reward or recognise creativity in any other way?

Culture of creativity

If there is a culture of creativity in this organisation, how do you see/feel/hear it? Any Stories, myths, recognition, reputation?