



## CREATIVITY IN FASHION

Pammi Sinha  
UMIST

### ABSTRACT

*Fashion consumption, ever contradictory in nature, requires product to achieve, among a variety of facets, both quality and value for money, individuality as well as brand identity. Hines (2002) draws attention to the relationship between manufacturers and retailers and, in particular, information sharing. With increasing complaints of new collections on the shopfloor being 'unimpressive' or 'unattractive', the issue of creativity as part of a strategic response by companies must be examined, in particular in the relationship between buying and designing new fashion items. This paper will examine the process of design as practiced by fashion designers and aims to offer insights and highlight issues that should be considered when examining how 'designerly thinking' might be incorporated at the strategic level of management.*

*Key words: creative thinking, fashion designer, strategic management.*

---

---

### Introduction

Creativity is a very emotive issue in fashion and fashion designers themselves cannot agree what it is, or, indeed, if there can be too much of it as a recent article voicing the opinion of two well-known designers demonstrated (Wood 2002). Inappropriate or dull designs were blamed as major causes of the troubles for Marks and Spencer and Laura Ashley and it is the same complaint for the lack of sales this season for William Baird Group's brands Windsmoor, Planet and Precis Petite, where lack of trend spotting was raised as an issue (Anderson, 2002).

Part of the problem is the role of the designer in many UK high street stores. Fashion designers are increasingly finding that their ability to spot trends and be

J  
T  
A  
T  
M

derivative of market leaders, rather than innovate has become a key part of their work (Carter 2002). At the same the lack of trend spotting does have its problems (as at William Baird, Anderson, 2002). It appears, therefore, that the problem is not that designers are trend spotting and adapting but that, as lead times decrease and the practice of changing product ranges every few weeks rather than every season is adopted by most levels of the fashion market in the UK, newness is no longer a competitive advantage in fashion retailing. Advantage is gained by understanding the increasingly fragmenting target markets, ensuring that the right amount of newness/adaptation is on the shopfloor so as not to scare or bore the customer (Butler, 2002). Information has become key, specially sharing it between manufacturers and retailers (Kilduff 2002, Hines, 2002, Birnbaum, 2002). Access to