

Discovering a brand identity for Norwegian Fashion

The case of Norwegian Fashion Institute



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Executive Summary

This thesis seeks to explore the Norwegian Fashion industry and its lack of brand identity. Norwegian Fashion Institute (NMI – Norsk Mode Institutt) opened in February 2009 and has as one of their main goals to promote Norwegian Fashion in Norway and abroad. Norwegian Fashion is not as internationally known as our Scandinavian neighbours' fashion and thus NMI has an important job ahead of them. According to Per Aage Sivertsen, Head of Design for FIN Fashion, this is a perfect time to strengthen Norwegian Fashion as fashion is very much in focus in the Scandinavian countries and it is important to exploit that opportunity when it is present.

As NMI is still at the infant stage, there are some strategic actions I feel are important to take in the near future in order to fulfil their goals. The recommendations are based on findings from brand management theory, strategic management theory, fashion theory as well as findings from surveys conducted for this report.

Norwegian Fashion Institute should:

- Support and aid research on Norwegian fashion design as it provides a foundation for further evolvement of Norwegian fashion
- Map the Norwegian Fashion Field to identify all institutional actors
- Promote the building of a fashion cluster in Oslo, as tacit knowledge is key in creative industries
- Conduct an extensive industry research including SWOT analysis, Porters Five Forces, identifying the various actors, characteristics, similarities and differences between brands
- Aid Oslo Fashion Week in attracting international buyers to the fashion week
- Get more exposure about Norwegian Fashion in Norwegian fashion magazines



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Discovering a brand identity for Norwegian fashion

1. Introduction

"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening." - Coco Chanel

Fashion has been an important part of people's lives for a long time. This can be seen in the abundance of fashion magazines and fashion blogs, tv-series on fashion and fashion design, in general the immense size of the fashion industry and its power. Fashion has also become an important tool of communication, both for the brands and for oneself. What you wear exposes you to the world the way you want to be portrayed. Hence fashion is personal and very powerful. One can dress to fit into a group, dress to portray power or dress to show you do not care.

The Fashion industry has existed for hundreds of years and has grown into a billion dollar industry. There are four main fashion clusters in the world: Paris, London, New York and Milan (some may even include a fifth: Tokyo). These cities are some of the most important places in the fashion world, as they arrange a Fashion Week where the top designers of the world presents their newest lines. In recent years, other countries have seen the importance of having these fashion weeks as a way of exposing the country's designers, and Norway is no exception. 2004 was the birth of Oslo Fashion Week and it has grown to become an important platform for designers, buyers and other people with an interest in what is going on in the Norwegian Fashion Scene. However, Norwegian Fashion is relatively small internationally, and some key people in the industry propose it is due to the fact that there is no clear identity on Norwegian Fashion. Head of Design in FIN Fashion, Per Aage Sivertsen states that there is a strong need for Norwegian Fashion to identify who and what they are in order to become an international player in the Fashion World (Skjærvold, 2009).



1.2 Report background

Choosing a topic for a master thesis is not an easy matter. It should ideally be something of genuine interest and it should “fill a gap in research” – provide new information.

In 2008, Karun Nordgård, Karin Fensgård and Siv Marina Flø Karlsen were chosen to conduct a research on the Norwegian fashion field. They spent two year mapping the Norwegian market and interviewing various actors on their perceptions on the industry. They ended up with a conclusion with four distinct actions the government should take in order to help businesses in the Norwegian fashion industry. Firstly, the respondents stated that they needed financial support for marketing, export and production, and felt that the Government should take more action. One example of this was the government arranging various events in the Embassies around the world as they are a great platform for promotion. Secondly, the VAT, customs duties and other types of taxes are too high and need to be decreased. In addition to this, there was a suggestion of making it easier to produce ecological clothing by reducing the VAT. Thirdly, the respondents also felt there was a need for the Government to give financial support to the establishment of a coordinating organization for Norwegian Fashion. They felt the industry needed a more joint setting and a place where the entities could find possible collaborations. Lastly, there is a need to go away from the existing support arrangement, which treats design within the regional politics, and instead include it within trade politics.

This research was the first of its kind and it showed how important it is to increase the research on this field, as it has great economic potential. The research was the foundation for creating an organization working to join the Norwegian Fashion industry, and promote Norwegian fashion home and abroad. My initial thoughts upon reading this report was how this could be the first of its kind in the year 2009? Fashion is an important part of many people’s life and has turned into a billion dollar industry – why is Norway such a small actor in that industry?



Based on the recommendations from “Motepilot”, The Norwegian Fashion Institute officially opened in February 2009 and reading about the organization brought especially one question to mind: “What really is Norwegian Fashion?” I soon figured I had very little knowledge about the various aspects of the fashion industry in my own country and thus it became clear that this could be a suitable focus for the master thesis. Norwegian Fashion Institute (NMI – Norsk Mote Institutt) has an extensive job ahead of them, to achieve their goal of promoting Norwegian Fashion nationally and internationally. However, before they can start promoting, it is my firm belief that the first step NMI should take is finding an identity for Norwegian Fashion. Without having a clear identity, it is very hard to position and further market a brand. In fact, Michel Van Tongeren states, “displaying your true identity is your strength” (Tongeren, 2008).

The timing is also right for NMI and their work to promote Norwegian Fashion. Head of Design in FIN Fashion, Per Aage Sivertsen, feels that the Norwegian Fashion Industry should exploit the focus that is on the fashion industry in the Scandinavian countries. In an article in D2, a magazine under the Norwegian newspaper “Dagens Næringsliv”, Sivertsen states “there is a large interest for Scandinavian design these days. We have a strong music scene and good designers. The only thing mission now is for Norway to become a stronger contender in the fashion industry” (Skjærvold, 2009)

1.3 Research field and research question

The Cultural Industries may be a new term in Norway, but it has existed for a long time and has been an important part of many countries national economy. It provides an input to the industry diversity, creates jobs and can contribute greatly to the national economy. As mentioned above, the Cultural industry is still at the infant stage in Norway compared to other nations like UK, France and even a small and comparable country like Denmark. Norway does produce many cultural products, but whole term “cultural industry” has not yet gained a safe foothold in Norway. This is also true for the fashion industry. Fashion is still a very small and young business field in Norway and the promotion of Norwegian fashion, both nationally and internationally, has not been as good as in the neighbouring countries Denmark and Sweden. However, as mentioned before, in February 2009, Norwegian Fashion



Institute (NFI) opened and their goal is to make Norwegian fashion into a respected and desired brand.

NFI states that they have four main tasks that will help build and structure the fashion industry in Norway; (1) being the united organization for Norwegian fashion, (2) being a centre for competency, (3) making a joint move, and (4) organizing and disclosing efforts for development within trade (Norwegian Fashion Institute, 2009). The tasks NFI states as their main tasks are greatly important in the promotion of Norwegian fashion, but before doing all this, I propose that there is a need for NFI to gather valuable information in order to identify a clear-cut brand identity for Norwegian fashion. This will make it easier for the Norwegian actors involved to work together as there is a clear definition, it will also be easier for local and international customers to recognize and identify Norwegian fashion. On this note, I will present my research question:

How can Norwegian Fashion Institute (NFI) create a brand identity for Norwegian fashion and in turn form a strategy for promotion?

In order to answer this research question I have stated some sub-questions that I find relevant:

- What can be gained by a brand identity for Norwegian Fashion?
- Which strategies should NFI focus on in order to create an identity?
- Is it important to look back in history in order to move forward?
- Which characteristics in Norwegian fashion brands today can help create an identity?

1.4 Report Structure

Chapter 2 concerns the methodological choices made in order to find an answer to the research question. The chapter presents the research objective of the thesis, the relevant stakeholders, theoretical and empirical data chosen, research contributions and lastly delimitations. **Chapter 3** starts by defining the Cultural Industries in order to identify the appropriate characteristics and theories for the thesis. It ends with shedding some light on an area of the Cultural Industries that has been less explored than other parts of the



industry: the Fashion Industry. Furthermore, **Chapter 4** presents the Fashion Industry, a brief history and some of the important elements of the industry. **Chapter 5** narrows down the scope and presents the Norwegian Fashion industry with its history, milestones, tendencies and important institutions. **Chapter 6** explains the theory of branding, with a strong focus on brand identity. In the last part of the chapter the combination of national identity and fashion is described. In **Chapter 7** an analysis of the surveys conducted for this thesis is presented and discussed. **Chapter 8** summarizes some of the possible steps to take in order to make Norwegian Fashion into an accepted brand and **Chapter 9** presents the strategic recommendations for Norwegian Fashion Institute to achieve their goal of promoting Norwegian Fashion nationally and internationally. **Chapter 10** gives some concluding remarks on the thesis and **Chapter 11** concerns some perspectives that were not included in the thesis, but could be interesting to further research.



2.0 Methodology

This chapter concerns the methodological choices made, which makes up the research design. The research design has been chosen in order to understand the relationship between the research question, the research objective and the data.

2.1 Research Objectives

This thesis seeks to investigate the Norwegian Fashion Industry, as it is an industry that has not been researched sufficiently. Thus, the thesis takes an explorative approach. Norwegian Fashion Institute is the most recent actor in the young industry, and has been made responsible for stimulating and positioning Norwegian Fashion in Norway and abroad. But before taking on such an important task, it is my firm belief that Norwegian Fashion Institute needs to create an identity for Norwegian Fashion and this thesis aims to make a contribution to this creation as well as present some strategic recommendations on how Norwegian Fashion Institute can make a strategy plan for promoting Norwegian Fashion.

2.2 Stakeholders

A stakeholder can be referred to as the persons, groups or organizations that can effect or have a stake in the project. In this case the main stakeholders are Copenhagen Business School, Norwegian Fashion Institute, the actors in the Norwegian Fashion Industry and the writer. The various stakeholders may, and probably will, view the problem dealt with in the thesis differently as they have different backgrounds and interests.

2.3 Data

The process of collecting data has been long and vast. My initial knowledge about the fashion industry was above average as I had attended an elective in *“Fashion and Luxury Industries”* at CBS. There was an abundance of texts in our curriculum and thus I did not foresee any difficulties finding relevant information about the Norwegian Fashion industry. The truth turned out to be the opposite. There were practically no scientific articles on the



subject except for one report, consequently large parts of the thesis has been inspired from that report.

2.3.1 Theoretical approach

The thesis makes use of various theoretical contributions related to the Fashion industry, the cultural industries, branding, strategy and so on. Several academic articles, newspaper articles, books and reports make up the theoretical foundation of the thesis and strongly contribute to finding an answer to the research question.

One report in particular has proved to be of vital importance and was in fact where the inspiration for the thesis originated. “Motepilot” by Karun Nordgaard, Karin Fensgård and Siv Marina Flø, is a report exploring Norwegian fashion as an industry, providing valuable information of the fashion industry, which in turn can result in a better knowledge about Norwegian fashion’s future and growth.

To get an understanding of what Norwegian fashion is and has been, I felt it was imperative to research the history. However, this was also easier said than done. There is very little historical information, embarrassingly little in fact, about the history of Norwegian fashion. It came to show that most of the literature on Norwegian fashion available was studies on the “bunad” (the national dress) and native dresses, where the focus revolved around the clothes themselves and their shapes. Nevertheless, there was one leaflet that provided some historical aspects of fashion in Norway from 1790 until 1914: “Hvor kommer moten fra? – Fra ideologi til mote I perioden 1790 – 1914” by Birgitta Ramnefalk. This leaflet has been the main source of information on the historical aspect of Norwegian Fashion.

As the Fashion industry is a part of the Cultural industries, there is a need to apply some of the relevant theories hereunder. Here Lampel, Lant and Shamsie’s five polarities have been used. It is a theory based upon the five polar opposites that define the field of action organizations in Cultural industries take.



Branding makes up an important part of the thesis. Various theories were used to analyze the Norwegian Fashion industry in order to suggest the initial steps in finding an identity for Norwegian Fashion. This thesis has taken use of two theories in particular, David Aaker's *Brand Identity System* and Noel Kapferer's *Brand Identity Prism*. The reason for choosing these particular theories was their focus on identity.

In order to contribute to the formation of a strategy of promotion for Norwegian Fashion, various theories within the field of strategy and management were examined (i.e.: Porter's Five Forces). In the end, however, a SWOT analysis was chosen, as it is an excellent tool for a strategic planning process. Furthermore, in order to get the best results from the SWOT-analysis, a PESTLE-analysis should be carried out. This has not been done in this thesis as I feel it should be done by a person with more knowledge and understanding about the industry.

2.3.2. Empirical approach

In order to test my initial thoughts on Norwegian fashion and its exposure, both on a national and an international level, two short surveys were made; one for Norwegians and one for foreigners. The content of the surveys are mostly the same, except for one question in the Norwegian survey, where they are asked to identify Norwegian brands from a list of 10 brands with various nationalities. Even though the number of participants was relatively low, it proved the fact that Norwegian fashion is very little known. The surveys also had an important question about characteristics of the Norwegian fashion. This question was included in order to test whether or not the answers matched the findings from my research. The participants were given a list of 10 characteristics and were asked to choose the ones they felt represented Norwegian fashion.

Another research has also been conducted, where a number of Norwegian brands were studied. Their history, their design focus and their characteristics were identified in order to provide information for the search of an identity for Norwegian fashion. The brands studied were Moods of Norway, Arne & Carlos, FIN Fashion, Leila Hafzi and Fam Irvoll (see appendix



1). The reason for choosing these brands in particular is based on their success, potential and their background.

The reason for choosing a combination of both primary and secondary data is to collect a substantial amount of information about the research problem and in turn be able to answer the research question in a respectable manner. It is of vital importance to use existing relevant reports and studies in order to get familiar with the history and status quo of Norway. Another reason for choosing to conduct the two surveys was to make sure that the results I had found from my research could also be found by anyone else doing a similar research.

2.4 Contributions

This thesis may contribute in a number of ways to the various stakeholders mentioned earlier. To my knowledge, there is no similar report on the lack of an identity for Norwegian Fashion Institute. I believe that this problem is something that should be dealt with as soon as possible by NMI in order to maximize the potential that exists in Norwegian Fashion. Thus, the report can be a useful tool for NMI in their work on building and strengthening the Norwegian Fashion Institute.

Furthermore, as there is very little knowledge and information available about the Norwegian Fashion Industry, historically, economically and sociologically, this thesis may hopefully contribute to the interest of further researching the industry and in turn make us more educated on the subject.

2.5 Delimitations

I have chosen to narrow down the scope and limit myself to only one part of the cultural industry; the fashion industry. The reason for this is it is where my interest lies and it is one part of the cultural industry in Norway that is the least developed.



The fashion industry is a complex industry with many different segments, and this thesis has a focus on premium brand and prêt-à-porter. The reason for this focus is the fact that the garments in question had to have some sort of exclusivity to them, but still be attainable. If a focus had been on fast-fashion, it could be argued that it was not a cultural industry, as the focus lies mostly within economics. Moreover, if the focus had been on Haute Couture it may have been difficult to relate to the garments, as there is only a selected few that can afford and actually purchase garments from that segment. It can of course be argued that Haute Couture is the segment that clearly is a part of the cultural industry as the clothes are created in order to communicate and create meaning.

Branding is a wide-ranging subject and there are many theories to choose from. This thesis has taken use of two theories in particular, David Aaker's *Brand Identity System* and Noel Kapferer's *Brand Identity Prism*. The models were chosen because of their focus on identity, as this also was the focus of the thesis.

The reason for choosing to go as far back as 1790 in the presentation of the Norwegian fashion history, is that this was the end of the French Revolution and the start of the time when the middle class took over the economic and political leadership. This shift of power would entail many challenges for the next 150 years and this also has an effect on how people were dressed. The historical perspective ends in the 1950's and the reason for this is that this was the time when fashion in Norway started to be more up to date with the rest of the world. The communication got better, fashion magazines grew in importance and the fashion cycles became shorter. The most important happenings in contemporary fashion (from the 1950's and up until today) are presented as milestones.

Lastly, and most importantly, the thesis has had a focus around what NMI can do within the first couple of years, as this is a crucial phase. Thus, some the theories and strategies presented may seem simple, but they are concerned around gathering information and knowledge about the industry and this is of vital importance to the industry's future.



2.6 Source Critique

Despite the growing literature within the Cultural industries, there has been very little development on the research of the Fashion industry. Thus, the research area proved an interesting challenge, especially in relation to the Norwegian Fashion industry. Large parts of the information on the industry and its history are based on a handful of published materials. The report *“Motepilot”* has been a key source of information in terms of the industry and Ramnefalk’s *“Hvor kommer moten fra?”* in terms of historical literature. This can be somewhat critiqued, as it may not give a fair picture since it is only based on certain literature. However, as there is very limited literature to get a hold of, I chose to base my thesis on the literature I could find.

The surveys conducted in this thesis have too few respondents to present legitimate conclusions valid for Norwegian Fashion Institute. Nevertheless, the results does tell us that the respondents have very limited knowledge on Norwegian Fashion and that can be used to trigger NMI to discover whether this is true or not.



3.0 The Creative Industries or The Cultural Industries?

“The Creative industries” and “The Cultural industries” – are these terms referring to the same industry? There are many opinions around these terms and there are different definitions to the two. The Creative industry is described by Richard E. Caves (2002) to be industries *“in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative endeavour”* (p. vii). He includes book and magazine publishing, the visual arts (painting and sculpture), the performing arts (theatre, opera, concerts, dance), sound recordings, cinema and TV films, fashion and, lastly, toys and games in this industry. Some may argue that the term ‘Creative industry’ is inappropriate as one needs to be creative in all sorts of industries to plan, produce and/or service in order to sustain a competitive advantage. The Cultural industry, on the other hand, has a different definition. According to Hesmondhalgh (2007) it includes *“those institutions (mainly profit-making companies, but also state organizations and non-profit organizations) that are most directly involved in the production of social meaning. So, nearly all definitions of the Cultural industries would include television (cable and satellite too), radio, the cinema, newspaper, magazine and book publishing, the music recording and publishing industries, advertising and performing arts. These are all activities the primary aim of which is to communicate to an audience, to create texts”* (p.12). Hesmondhalgh proposes that all cultural artefacts are text, as they are open to interpretation. Many products may involve design and marketing inputs (such as a car), but their primary goal is not meaning. Thus, a text, he suggests, is *“a question of balance between its functional and communicative aspects”* (p.12). The author does not, however, include fashion as a part of the cultural industries. He calls it a ‘borderline case’ as it is a *“hybrid of a cultural industry and a consumer good”* (p.12). I would not refer to fashion as a borderline case, but as being a part of the cultural industries. It is a consumer good, as a person need clothing to keep warm, but the consumption of clothes goes so much further than that need. Consumers buy clothes in order to create an identity for themselves, and these clothes create a wordless means of communication to identify which social group one belongs. There is also a symbolic value of fashion and it is so high that it keeps people buying even when they do not have a need (Tran, 2008). The designer creates the garments for an audience in order to communicate, and it would be an insult to the designer to say that his/her design is not produced in order to create meaning. John Galliano’s creations, for



examples, are not created as a consumer good as it is in fact un-wearable. It is created as an artistic expression and a cultural artefact to society.



The thesis in hand refers to the industry in question as the Cultural industry, using Hesmondhalgh's definition, however, upgrading fashion from being a borderline case as to being a part of the industry.

The next sections will explore some interesting features about the Cultural industries and how it differentiates itself from other industries.

3.1 Five polarities

Cultural goods are experiential goods and the Cultural industry is highly unpredictable. Two filmmakers can make two separate movies using the same actors, the same equipment and even be based on the same theme, but which film is going to succeed is very unpredictable. In addition to this, whether or not a movie is of good quality is a highly personal opinion, while in other industries quality is based on specific product attributes. Lampel, Lant and Shamsie (2000) agree when they say; *"opinions about quality can diverge so strongly that producers find it hard to figure out why some products do well while others do not. This is not only the case before consumers make their purchase decisions, but also afterwards. Ultimately, understanding why products succeed or fail is forever in the realm of educated conjecture"* (p.264). Moreover, organizations can create some strategies in order to make an



attempt at controlling the success of the product, but there are several factors strategists need to take into considerations. After studying the cultural industries, Lampel, Lant and Shamsie found that there is five polar opposites that define the field of action organizations take.

3.1.1 Artistic Values versus Mass Entertainment

An artist may experience a great dilemma when creating. The artist has a strong need to stay true to the artistic value of the cultural product, but he/she must also consider the entertainment value, as it is through this entertainment value that cultural products are accepted and supported by the audience. This dilemma is a constant one in the cultural industries as the industry strives to remain loyal to the artistic values, but they need to deal with market economics in order to survive. Many artists feel they “sell out” if they solely focus on the value of mass entertainment. Thus, the question remains: which of these imperatives should drive decision-making? Should the art dominate the mass entertainment or should the focus be the other way around with profit as first priority? In the end, neither of the two can prevail without destroying the identity of the organization and thus, coexistence is the only answer (Lampel, Lant, & Shamsie, 2000). But how this is executed is still a challenge.

3.1.2 Product Differentiation versus Market Innovation

There is a constant search for novelty in the Cultural industries (Lampel et al., 2000). However, even though the consumers expect novelty in the purchased goods, they also expect this novelty to be somewhat familiar and accessible and this poses a challenge for the artists. Should they seek the novelty that differentiates products without making them fundamentally different from others in the same category, or the contrary: seek the kind of novelty that pursues innovation beyond existing limits? The last form of innovation is a large risk, but can at the same time break new grounds and may expand or fundamentally change the market (Lampel et al., 2000). This innovation could be in terms of new fabrics, technology, procedures and so on.



3.1.3 Demand Analysis versus Market Construction

Many industries base their decisions on carefully conducted market analysis before launching new products. However, in the cultural industries there is an ongoing debate concerning why the cultural products are created. On the one hand, there are those who strongly feel that what the consumers want is exclusively shaped by the imagination of the producers and on the other hand, there are those who only see cultural goods as an expression of consumers' needs and desires. Anand and Peterson (2000) found in their study of the recorded music industry that there may be large risks involved in making the assumption that a cultural product is no different than other good and that one should focus on demand analysis. They show how a change in the way that the industry collected and analyzed information on consumer purchasing patterns (using the Billboard Hot 100 chart) produced a dramatic shift in the interpretation of market structure. Something that was perceived as an objective picture of the market turned out to be an object of the methods the industry used to construct that picture in the first place. It is once again finding a balance that seems to be the key.

3.1.4 Vertical Integration versus Flexible Specialization

The age-old business question "to make or buy" also exists in the cultural industries. Organizations often look for profit by trying to have greater control over both the creation and the delivery of the product, and this has led to an integration of all aspects of the value chain under one single corporate umbrella (Lampel et al., 2000). This integration is not always the best solution, as it may inhibit the artist by reducing the creative freedom because integrated firms tend to push for greater coordination. Hence, there is a need for balance between integration and specialization. Specialization enables the firm to focus on the activities that are best suited their role in the creation and distribution of the product, and outsource the rest.



3.1.5 Individual Inspiration versus Creative Systems

What is the true source of creative value? Is it the individual or is it the system? If it is the individual who is the true source, organizations must use many resources in finding, developing and keeping these talents. If, however, it is the other way around, with the system as the true source, organizations must focus on developing structures, processes and cultures that produce successful cultural products (Lampel et al., 2000). Focusing on one can in some cases be very successful, but generally there is a need to combine both in order to succeed.

All these five polarities are important aspects of the cultural industry and great tools in the construction of a strategy.

3.2 Clusters

According to Michael Porter, the definition of a cluster is *“a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities”* and this definition has been widely used, as it points out two important features; the fact that the companies are a part of *a geographically proximate group*, and that they are *interconnected*” (Porter, 2000). In addition to this often-used definition, Porter has created a model that explains the different elements in a cluster. It is a model made as a tool for finding a nation’s competitive advantage, but it can also be a useful tool to understanding a cluster. (see figure 1.).



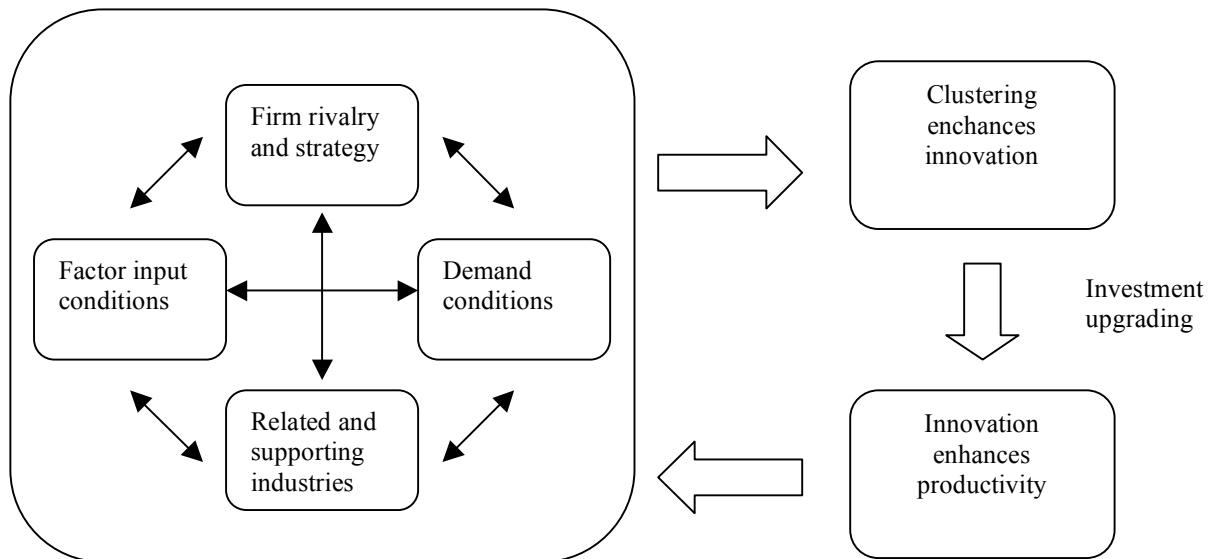
Figure 1.

Geographical clustering of related industries/firms

Intensifies interactions within the 'competitive diamond'

Competitive rivalry and

knowledge spillovers within
the cluster stimulate innovative
activity



High productivity raises competitive advantage of cluster, enables high wages and employment, which in turn attract skilled and educated labour

There are many important characteristics of a cluster, as it is a complex way of business. The first characteristic, close proximity, is the most fundamental part of cluster theory. Being located close to each other has many advantages such as closer relationships and communication to customers, suppliers as well as competitors, which in turn can lead to future joint ventures, lowered cost of transportation, a large concentration of future employers and employees, etc (Porter, 2000). This is also something to be found in the fashion industry, as there are five Fashion Capitals: Paris, New York, London, Milan and Rome. An advantage of being located in close proximity brings us to the second characteristic; having face-to-face contact. Face-to-face contact permits *"a debt and speed of feedback that is impossible in other forms of communication"* (Breschi & Malerba, 2005). Furthermore, face-to-face contact occurs on several levels at the same time, and this kind of



multidimensional communication can be considered as fundamental for the diffusion of tacit knowledge (Breschi & Malerba, 2005). This diffusion creates a '*knowledge spillover*' among the members, which most likely enables them to stand stronger than they would alone. The term '*knowledge spillover*' refers to the exchange of ideas among members of the cluster, and has been mentioned as one of the key reasons for innovative firms to cluster. But to be able to be a part of such cluster, trust is of vital importance (Breschi & Malerba, 2005). It is important as in tacit knowledge, there usually is a high degree of uncertainty. The uncertainty comes from the fact that there is a possibility that the partner involved may be a free-rider or wanting to manipulate the others involved. But, as there is a close proximity and a high degree of constant face-to-face contact in clusters, making a bad name for one self will most likely not be beneficial, as bad news tend to travel fast. The members are encouraged not to act in an opportunistic manner, as the relationships within clusters are based on mutual trust and respect and reflect long-term interest.

All these characteristics are important factors in a philosophy unique to the network industry called 'social solidarity', and it is only made possible because of the fact that the networks are underpinned by social and cultural links (Swann, Prevezer, & Stout, 1998). The member firms of the clusters achieve the same kind of economies of scale in unison, as the large international companies do, *"at the same time as business networks stimulate mutual learning and innovation co-operation, and make possible more flexible production"* (Isaksen, 2004).

Moreover, clusters consists of more than just characteristics and according to Porter, the list of other elements in a cluster is long. It consists of, beyond single firms, suppliers of specialized inputs, providers of specialized infrastructure, customers, companies in industries related by skills, technology or common inputs. Many clusters include governmental and other institutions – such as universities, standards-setting agencies, think tanks, vocational training providers, and trade associations – that provide specialized training, education, information, research, and technical support. Finally, foreign firms can be and are a part of clusters, but only if they make permanent investments in a significant local presence (Porter, 2000).



3.2.1 The Importance of Clusters in the Cultural Industries

Clusters have become an important part of the Cultural Industries. For example, in the fashion industry there are four main cities named the four Fashion Clusters of the world; Paris, London, New York and Milan. This is where the greater part of the major designers and fashion houses are situated and is a magnet for all actors within the industry (buyers, fashion journalists, gatekeepers and so on). There are of course clusters in other kinds of industries as well, but they seem to have become a vital part of the Cultural Industries for many reasons. One of the reasons is grouping together many different actors, with many different areas of expertise can make the process of creating a complex product easier, faster and cheaper.

Another important reason for clustering is the constant flow of ideas and inspiration one can achieve by being a part of the cluster. The members of the industry usually have specific qualities and knowledge which have been achieved by doing, not reading, and thus if one wants to learn or improve ones know-how, being a part of a cluster is vital. This brings us to an interesting element of the Cultural Industries - the use of interns.

3.3 Internships

There is an abundance of people who would do anything for the opportunity of having an internship in the Cultural Industries and this is probably because of the fact that much of the know-how in the industry can only be learned by doing and by finishing an internship, a person has shown what he or she can do, created an important network and is better equipped to handle the harsh reality of the Cultural Industries. Being an intern under a certain name, may in some industries secure you a job for the rest of your career, as that knowledge you learned from that internship is of such a high quality that you will be an asset to anyone.



3.4 An area overseen - Fashion

Even though there has been an increase in research within the Cultural industries in the recent years, one industry seems to have gone missing: the fashion industry. There is more to fashion than just fashion-shows and shopping, and there exists an economical potential for various stakeholders.

The fashion industry today is nothing like the old garment industry, and is today looked upon as a design industry with great potential on various levels. The industry has come a long way and has adapted itself towards globalization, focusing more on import/export. Nevertheless, there is also a potential for local designers to survive on a small, but loyal customer base, as individual creativity and personal style has increased in importance. For fashionistas and the opinion leaders, like bloggers etc, it is important not to be mainstream, but instead find exclusive and unique clothes to create that important personal style. The term fashionista refers to a person devoted to fashion clothing, particularly unique or high fashion. It is the consumers increased focus on individualistic fashion, as well as the recent way of looking at fashion as aesthetic design and not just garments, that creates the economical potential for the industry.

Before the economical potential can be realized, it is important to boost the research within this field, as it provides a more qualified view. Both Denmark and Sweden understands the potential in researching fashion design and have established two important institutions to increase the knowledge within fashion design as well as exploiting the potential. In Denmark an interdisciplinary platform for fashion research has been founded, called MOKO and their aim is to gather, generate and communicate knowledge within the field of fashion through research, conferences, media and web¹. In Sweden, there is a master degree programme in Aesthetical Disciplines with a specialization in fashion studies. These research institutions are important in order to identify and increase the cultural-, business- and sales potential that exists in fashion design. Norway lacks a similar institution.

¹ <http://www.dkds.dk/forskning/projekter/moko>



4.0 Fashion

This section presents fashion as an industry. It gives a historical aspect as well as discussing what fashion is and why people use fashion. It also explains the Fashion System, ways of segmenting fashion and some of the challenges in the industry.

4.1 History

Even though the theory and research of fashion is quite young, the industry is not. The start of fashion can actually be traced back to the Middle Ages, as it was the start of merchant capitalism and the rise of larger cities. And there is one city in particular that became, and still is, the capitol of fashion – Paris. It was Louis XIV and his finance minister Jean Baptiste Colbert who initiated the development of Paris as the capitol of fashion and luxury, as they created economic policies that encouraged commerce as well as the establishment of luxury boutiques in the city (Parmal, 2006). And it was in Paris the birth of *haute couture* took place and its father was Charles-Frederic Worth. He established the *Chambre syndicale de la haute couture parisienne* in 1868, making fashion an attractive commodity. Worth invented the top-down system where the prototypes of clothes were shown exclusively to rich clients, and famous French designers soon imitated this system and it was these couturiers that dictated fashion trends to the world, making it an elite-oriented system. Haute couture was reserved for the upper class, but as the lower classes also had a desire to be fashionable and belonging to the exclusive upper class, the clothes were imitated. Thorstein Veblen introduced a theory called ‘trickle down’ theory to explain this phenomenon.

In later years, fashion has also moved from a “Class fashion”, towards a “Consumer fashion”, or in other words; fashion has gone from being dictated by the industry, to becoming more consumer driven. This new trend erupted as a consequence of the post-war economic prosperity, where more classes of society experienced an increase in capital, creating new segments in fashion. This change created a demand for more mass-produced and ready-to-wear clothing, as well as introducing new rules and cycles in fashion. This became apparent as the youth subculture of the 1960’s challenged the power of couture, which in turn changed the industry. The youth fashion experienced a rapid increase in power, and as a



consequence of this the “old” trickle-down effect of fashion, had been replaced by styles bubbling up the fashion chain.

4.2 What is fashion?

Fashion as a concept may be new to many, therefore this section will start off with defining what fashion is and presenting the various dynamics related to the concept. Fashion has become an important tool of communication, open for interpretation for various people in various situations. One often dresses similar to a group one wishes to be a part of and this process can be deliberate as well as unintentional. Sproles agrees in his definition of fashion as: *“a way of behaviour that is temporarily adopted by a discernible proportion of members of a social group, because that chosen behavior is perceived to be socially appropriate for the time and situation”*. This definition is chosen for this thesis, as fashion is behavioural and group-oriented (Sproles, quoted in (McIntyre & Miller, 1992).

Before continuing explaining fashion it is important to distinguish the difference between the clothing industry and the fashion industry. In the clothing industry the end product is the actual garment. Conversely, in the fashion industry the actual garment is only one of many elements that will contribute to the value of the product for the end consumer. Fashion is thus more of a cultural product with a strong symbolic reference.

Fashion is also a collective understanding. For something to become fashion it has to be considered as fashion by several people (Kawamura, 2005). This is also one of the reasons as to why the fashion industry tends to cluster in one city – the proximity between the actors becomes smaller, which in turn makes it easier to agree on what the next big thing is. The fashion life cycle is quite short and tense, thus it needs efficiency.

Fashion means “change” (Tran, 2008) and the fashion life cycle is short. Trends can come and go – and then return again. As a matter of fact, the only constant in fashion is change and this is one of the reasons this industry is a hard one to survive in. There is a continuous search for ‘the next big thing’ and fashion companies must always be in vogue in order to be ‘fashionable’.



4.3 How do people use fashion?

“Fashion happens to be a relevant and powerful force in our life” (Agin, 1999). It is used in order to portray one's identity to the world, in order to belong to a certain group, in order to express meaning and make statements, and so on. Hence, fashion takes on many roles.

Herbert Blumer proposes that fashion is an important form of collective behaviour. He believes that fashion is expressive as people are looking for a novel experience, have a desire for distinction as well as an urge to conform (Blumer, 2003). Lastly, he suggests that *“fashion is important especially in providing a means for the expression of developing tastes and disposition; this feature establishes it as a form of expressive behaviour”* (p. 126). It is hard to disagree. Fashion is without a doubt expressive as the consumption of clothing in the world is far past the basic need of keeping warm. People buy clothes they find nice to look at and that portrays themselves the way they want to be portrayed. One can of course argue that there are people who only buy clothes in order to stay warm and do not care about how they look – but is that not also expressing your thoughts and identity?

4.4 The fashion system

There are many elements in understanding fashion and Roland Barthes understood that one has to map the elements in order to understand the whole. In 1967 Barthes published ‘The Fashion System’ where he presented his theory, with an emphasis on one important concept: system. There have been many other scholars who have presented different theories on the fashion system, but this one is chosen, as it is the original and the most suitable for this thesis. Nevertheless, according to Webster's dictionary, a system is a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole². A system usually consists of three common characteristics: structure, behaviour and interconnectivity – all equally important. The structure refers to the fixed rules in the system, while the behaviour refers to certain norms and behavioural patterns that are considered appropriate and lastly, interconnectivity refers to the relationship the various parts of the system have to

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/system>



each other. All in all, *“no single element in a network should be regarded as the cause of fashion; not the dress taste of individuals or groups; not the specific forms assumed by dress; not the claims made for a garment by its promoters. ‘System’, therefore, is a way of conceiving of human existence as something in which a structured collective being precedes, and provides the foundation for, individual being, and this has steadily become a central organizing principle of Western thought”* (Carter, 2003). This is also very relevant to the fashion industry, as it is the collective whole that makes it possible for a single actor to operate.

Returning to Barthes and the fashion system, he proposed three stages of which a garment journeys through in the fashion system. The first stage he calls ‘the real garment’ and this is the production stage. The second stage he calls ‘the represented garment’ which corresponds to the distribution and the last stage, the ‘used garment’ corresponds to the consumption. In other words, a beautiful dress is made by a famous fashion designer, presented in various fashion magazines as well as worn by specific people picked out to be trendsetters, then made available in certain stores for the public to buy. The dress is a part of a system of interrelated elements, which in turn forms a whole.

4.4.1 The media

The fashion system consists of many different elements, but one is very important. The media. The media has a range of important functions and here two will be highlighted; communicator and gatekeeper. The media’s role as communicator is communicating to the public what is fashionable, what next seasons big items will be, which celebrity is the most trendy, etc. This mass-communication to the public may turn us into a homogeneous mass, as we all follow the same trends. However, this is what fashion is – a collective process.

The media can also have an important role as a gatekeeper. Blumer (1939) stated that the reason why a whole industry can agree on what is fashionable is that a certain people involved have a unique knowledge of what the end-users want in addition to being a part of a specific milieu. Kawamura (2005) propose there are two types of gatekeepers. The first type consists of people who consider themselves as arbiters of good taste and these are the



fashion designers who take part in the seasonal fashion shows in the main fashion clusters around the world. The second type consists of fashion journalists, marketers, publicists, advertisers – the media. These gatekeepers are the ones that diffuse to the public what is in vogue. The phenomenon of gatekeepers is not only reserved for the fashion industry, in the Cultural industry in general there are a certain few who decides who or what will become successful (Caves, 2000).

4.5 Segmentation

There are various ways of segmenting fashion and in the following section two approaches developed by Jørgensen & Hansen (2005) will be presented. In the first segmentation there are four distinct categories;

Fashion brands

This category is where the most accessible fashion is, the high street. Here the garments are in the lowest price range and the stores are most often represented in many markets around the world. Mass-production is the hallmark. Examples of Fashion brands are H&M, Zara, Top Shop, etc.

Premium Fashion brands

The garments in this category are a bit more expensive than the previous. They are on the edge between mass and exclusivity, and they compete both with the categories below and above themselves. These brands are usually also spread around the world. Examples are; Levis, Diesel, Espirit, The Gap, etc.

Premium brands/High-End brands/Mass-Luxury brands

These brands are quite special as they try to adapt luxury to mass-market rules. They are also represented around the world, but are very selective when it comes to distribution. Examples: Armani, Hugo Boss, Polo Ralph Lauren, D&G, etc.

Luxury brands/Prestige brands



The garments are made by the finest materials and have the highest level of craftsmanship and thus are in the highest price range. They only have a few, exclusive stores around the world and they are characterized by extravagance. Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Cartier are examples of these.

The second way of segmenting fashion is based on the retail price of a dress and here there are five categories. The first is the lowest price range where the retail price of a dress would be under DKK 300. This category can be characterized as *budget*. A dress falls in the *mid-range* category if the dress costs between DKK 300 – 750. A *premium brand* dress has a price range of DKK 750 – 2500. The next two categories may be familiar names in fashion: *Prêt-à-Porter* and *Haute Couture*. *Prêt-à-Porter* is when a dress costs over DKK 2500, while the term *Haute Couture* can be used only by firms that meet certain well-defined standards and are a member of the exclusive *Chambre syndicale de la haute couture*.

4.6 The Industry Challenges

As like any other industry, there are some general challenges in the fashion industry and in this section some of these have been identified.

As the fashion industry is a part of the Cultural industries, they share some of the same problems. As mentioned, Lampel *et al* (2000) proposed a set of five polarities that organizations in this industry may come across. These polarities exemplify the ambiguity and dynamism in the industry and there are especially two that are relevant for the fashion industry. The first one is *artistic value versus mass-entertainment*. In terms of the fashion industry, these two polarities can be understood as fashion design (ex: Leila Hafsi, Arne & Carlos) versus mass production (Bik Bok, Lene V). When referring to fashion design as artistic value, it is not say that mass-production does not include creativity, but that it is not what is the focus of the business. As a matter of fact, one could say that the more an item is produced, the more it loses its artistic value. Exclusivity is key. Nevertheless, as an organisation needs to consider market economics as well as staying true to its artistic value, this is a continuing problem within the creative industries.



The second polarity is the problem of *new versus familiar*. In the creative industries especially there is a continuing need for something new, and the fashion industry is no exception. A designer must always present new ideas, reinvent one self and try to find the next it-item. However, a designer cannot change too much as the public may have certain expectations for the new clothes to resemble the old or at least have the qualities that designer is known for. Thus, designers can easily put themselves in an iron cage, which can be hard to escape from. The designer may want to break completely with the old style and go in a different direction, but the market has certain expectations and one should always consider the market. This is also one of the difficulties in the fashion industry; should one focus on demand analysis when designing or should one “construct” the market? Lampel *et al* (2000) said the following on this challenge: *“There is a longstanding dispute in the cultural industries between those who see cultural goods as an expression of consumers’ needs and desires, and those who argue that what consumers want is almost entirely shaped by the imagination and creativity of the producers. The debate corresponds to fundamentally different views of why some cultural goods become successful while others do not”* (p.266). One can easily see this in the fashion industry as in some cases the inspiration of the designers come from underground cultures who have created their own unique style, while other designers design completely from their own imagination.

Finding an investor is always hard as they usually have certain requirements that have to be fulfilled in order to be eligible for investment. The fashion industry is an industry in constant movement and it may be hard to predict success. A survey made on the Norwegian fashion industry discovered that 43% of the designers asked stated that they need help with financing the business, and it is mostly in production the help is needed (38%) (Nordgård, Fensgård, & Karlsen, February 2008).

Copyright is a well-known word within the creative industries, but it is hard to achieve a copyright in the fashion industry as fashion and market demands change so quickly. This is another reason why the designers need to be producing constantly, always creating new fashion.



Organizations in the fashion industry may experience strong pressures to conform to the procedures and standards set by the industry. This pressure to conform can be referred to as isomorphic pressure, entities becoming similar to each other. The concept of isomorphism was first described by Hawley (1968, p.334) and he proposed *“units subjected to the same environmental conditions, or to environmental conditions as mediated by a given unit, acquire a similar form of organization”*. Today, we can identify two types of isomorphism, competitive and institutional, however the focus will be on institutional isomorphism. There are three mechanisms triggering institutional isomorphic change: (1) coercive isomorphism; (2) mimetic isomorphism and (3) normative isomorphism (DiMaggio, P. and W. W. Powell, 1991). It is important to understand that the mechanisms can easily be integrated.

Coercive isomorphism stems from formal as well as informal pressures put forth by other organizations within the relevant industries, upon which the specific organization is dependent. It may also result from cultural expectations in the society within which the organizations operate. Such pressures may be felt as force, as persuasion, or as invitations to join in collusion (DiMaggio, P. and W. W. Powell, 1991)(p.67). Some organizational changes are a consequence of a governmental mandate. A good example of this is the school system. A country has certain state standards they have to follow in each subject and thus the schools mainstream pupils and hire the teachers that fit with and follow these standards.

Mimetic isomorphism, on the other hand, does not originate from coercive authority. In this view, it is argued that organization mimic each other as a result of uncertainty. The organization experiencing uncertainty can come from very different background and have very different reasons for uncertainty, such as *“when organizational technologies are poorly understood, when goals are ambiguous or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty”* (DiMaggio, P. and W. W. Powell, 1991)(p.69). Mimicry can also be diffused as a result of employee transfer or turnover, new innovations on the market, using the same consultancy firms or simply a lack of variation to choose from (DiMaggio, P. and W. W. Powell, 1991). When mimicking other organizations, it is the organizations that are perceived to be more legitimate and successful than the mimicking organization that works as a benchmark.



The last of the three mechanisms is normative isomorphism. It stems from professionalization and quoting from the works of DiMaggio & Powell (1991), professionalization in this context can be understood as “the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control *“the production of producers and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy”* (p.70). There are two aspects of professionalization that are important sources of isomorphism. The first is the formal education and the requirements following the education. The second concerns the expansion of professional networks as well as professional and trade associations, resulting in new models being diffused rapidly (DiMaggio, P. and W. W. Powell, 1991).

The isomorphic pressure brings us to the last challenge within the fashion industry: the quest for legitimacy. The world of fashion is large and it can be difficult to achieve status and respect from the market, as well as from the gatekeepers, the experts and the fellow designers. A fashion designer needs legitimacy for many reasons: to promote the brand, to communicate with the industry, to increase revenue, and so on. Even though there is a strong demand for continually reinventing oneself in the fashion industry, it also exist a strong pressure of incorporating some set standards and procedures within the industry. Meyer and Rowan (1991) states that *“organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized in society. Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures”* (p.41).

It can be difficult to deal with isomorphic pressures, as it may seem like a safe strategy conforming to the standards. However, in the fashion industry it is your distinctiveness that that makes you unique.



5.0 Norwegian Fashion

This section will present the history, the general tendencies and some of the institutions of the Norwegian Fashion Industry.

5.1 History

Many people have said it before, but it is still highly relevant: One must know the past to understand the future. Thus, in order to understand contemporary fashion, one must go back in time and see how it has evolved during the past centuries and see what effects fashion has had on society. Norway has not been a country well known for being a first mover when it comes to fashion. On the contrary, Norway is seen by some as being the least trendy country in Scandinavia, or at least the least developed country when it comes to fashion. It is therefore important to narrow down the scope and focus on the evolution of Norwegian fashion, in order to better equipped for the future. This section will explore the fashion in Norway from the late 1700 up to the 1950's. The section will be divided into three parts representing three different periods. **Period 1** will deal with fashion from the 1790 until mid 1800, a period where the end of the French Revolution had a great impact on many different levels of society. In **Period 2**, from the 1860's to early 1900's, there were many changes in fashion and some of these will be presented. The last section, **Period 3**, presents fashion from 1900 up until the 1950's. The reason for choosing to go as far back as 1790 is that this was the end of the French Revolution and the start of the time when the middle class took over the economic and political leadership. This shift of power would entail many challenges for the next 150 years and this also has an effect on how people were dressed and what the ideals were. The historical perspective ends in the 1950's and the reason for this is that this was the time when fashion in Norway started to be more up to date with the rest of the world. The communication got better, fashion magazines grew in importance and the fashion cycles became shorter. The major milestones after this time is mentioned in the section "The major milestones in Norwegian contemporary fashion".



5.1.1 Period 1, 1790 – 1860

In the last 18th century, the time of Enlightenment, reason and rationalism was strong. The middle class took the power from the nobility, and people rebelled against traditional authorities such as the church and state. The middle class swore to the motto “liberty, equality, brotherhood” and the ultimate citizen was an effective citizen. There were clear distinctions between a man and a woman, as the two were seen as polar opposites. The man represented reason, responsibility and firmness, in opposition to the woman who represented nature, freedom and warmth. This can be seen in the way they dressed, as the ideal expression for a woman was dresses with empire waist in light fabrics, representing nature and nudeness, and flat shoes, representing freedom (Ramnefalk, 2004).

The Romanticism replaced the Enlightenment, putting feelings, fantasy and culture in focus. The corset was re-introduced and the ideal dress had lacing all the way up to the armpits, a large underskirt and sleeves so tight it was impossible to lift the arms to the head. The women were actually more hindered by the way they dressed than they had been in many years (Ramnefalk, 2004).

5.1.2 Period 2, 1860 – 1900

The industrialization in Norway blossomed after 1860. This meant many new jobs as well as great possibilities for export and as a result of this, many men emigrated to other countries. This in turn resulted in a surplus of women, which may have been the reason of the creation of the first Women’s Rights association in 1884 and why the woman’s role in society was discussed. In the years 1868 – 1890 there was a great unrest in terms of the woman’s role, and this seemed to reflect in the fashion of the day as it was very unstable and had rapid changes (Ramnefalk, 2004).

5.1.3 Period 3, 1900 – 1950

It was after the turn of the century that the way women dressed really changed. Women’s role in society changed, making the woman more interesting and respected as well as being more aware of themselves and their opportunities (Ramnefalk, 2004). Many women wanted



to work outside the home to provide for themselves and this brought about a change in the way they dressed. They went from looking like an “S”, with the chest pushed forward and the back pushed backwards, to removing the corsets in 1910 and instead embracing the natural female body. As travelling abroad became easier, people brought back fashionable items such as turbans, kimonos and eastern European embroideries and introduced these in the Norwegian fashion.

It seems as though all these changes inspired women to make changes and be more free and an example of this is when women around 1910 started bicycling and in order to make this easier, wearing pants to many men and some women’s dismay. In the second part of the 1920’s fashion took a long step when women started wearing knee-length skirts and the ideal was young girls without curves. However, this was again replaced by the more curvaceous silhouettes of the 1940’s and 1950’s. During this time, the fashion cycles became shorter and improved communication made it easier to get inspiration from abroad.

The changes in fashion presented above, were generally a result of changes in society and thus fashion works as a mirror of society. Researching the way people dress can provide a unique knowledge on many levels.

5.2 The major milestones in Norwegian contemporary fashion

Norwegian fashion has grown rapidly the past half-decade and this section presents some of the major milestones.

1958 – William Jensen

William Jensen was the first registered Norwegian designer who started designing for specific clients.

1977 – Per Spook

One could state that much began when the greatest Norwegian designer in the years 1977-1995 had his own haute couture maison in Paris. He was one of a selected few who could



label their garments *haute couture*, as this term was reserved for members of the exclusive Chambre Syndicale de la Confection et de la Couture pour Dames et Fillettes.

1990 – Esmod opens in Oslo

It was the designer Nils-Christian Ihlen-Hansen who established the renowned school of fashion design in Oslo in 1990. This will enable prospective designers to learn more about the industry and the craft of fashion design.

2000 – Design Street

Design Street was launched as a meeting place for Norwegian fashion. Another reason for starting Design Street was to create a place where Norwegian fashion could be exposed and presented both locally and internationally.

2004 – Oslo Fashion Week

Pål Vassbotten, a former model, launches Oslo Fashion Week (OFW) to promote Norwegian fashion and integrate it on the international scene. Today, OFW is arranged twice a year, in February and August. During the fashion week, various prizes are handed out to people who have done an extraordinary job in contributing to the success of Norwegian designers.

2008 – Motepilot

The first study made on Norwegian fashion design is completed. It is called “Motepilot” and is a study of fashion as an industry, and since there has been no prior research in this field it is regarded as a pilot study and should preferably work as a basis for further research.

2009 – Norwegian Fashion Institute

With a desire to build up Norwegian fashion to a strong and competitive industry, the governmental body Innovation Norway founded Norwegian Fashion Institute (NFI). Their mission is to “stimulate and position Norwegian fashion design in Norway and abroad”³ and to be a meeting place for networking in the fashion industry.

³ www.norwegianfashioninstitute.no



5.3 Tendencies in Norwegian fashion today

An important part of researching fashion is to take a closer look at the connection between fashion and national identity. Danish design has connections to the bohemian look, while Swedish fashion is more oriented around graphics and bold patterns. But what characterizes Norwegian fashion? As of today, there is no real collective Norwegian fashion-identity. Nevertheless, there are some tendencies among the various designers, which can lead the direction to a joint identity, and these will be explored in the following section. The importance of the connection between fashion and identity will be elaborated on later in the thesis. The tendencies are based on a personal study of several Norwegian fashion brands, and are thus individual.

5.3.1 Traditions and history

Norway is an old country with an array of history and various traditions in numerous fields, and Norwegians are generally proud of their heritage. This can be seen in the popularity in the national dress, the *bunad*. The bunad is based on the old *folkedrakt* and was used in Norway up until the 1800's. This was a garment that was local and unique to a certain village, and was used both as everyday clothing as well as for more social gatherings. The bunad, as it is known today, got its form around 1900 and was based on models by Hulda Garborg and Klara Semb.



Source: www.norskflid.no



To many this garment may seem extremely old fashion and not very trendy, but Norwegians do not agree. As a matter of fact, the sale of bunad has increased during the past 20 years. A good example of how popular the bunad is can be found in the total sales of bunad in a year. In 1998 Norwegians purchased bunad for NOK 700 millions⁴.

Knitting has always been important in Norway, probably due to the cold weather and easy access to wool. One knitted garment that is very popular is the *Seterdalsgenser* or *Lusekofte*. This sweater/jacket can be traced back to the start of the 20th century and many view this as being the best garment to characterize Norwegians, and many Norwegians agree. The largest gossip magazine in Norway, *Se og Hør*, gives every international celebrity they interview a *Lusekofte* to give them an insight to the country and to promote Norway.



5.3.2 Innovation and Sustainability

Norway, as any other nation today, is concerned with sustainability and has even introduced it in the fashion industry. The Norwegian high-end brand FIN focuses on eco-luxury and was been quite successful. The Wall Street Journal wrote an article about NICE, the Nordic Initiative Clean & Ethical, calling them groundbreaking and predicts a bright future for Scandinavian sustainable design. FIN is a very innovative brand and has actually made a dress entirely out of milk proteins.

⁴ [www. http://www.norskflid.no](http://www.norskflid.no)



5.3.3 Weather / Climate

Norway is a country with many different kinds of weather, and we like to talk about it. There is an old Norwegian motto which is heavily used: “Det finnes ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlige klær” – which means that there is no such thing as poor weather, only poor clothing. Having such a range of weather creates a need for suitable clothing. One of the most well known brands in Norway, Helly Hansen, can be traced back to the end of the 19th century when Helly Juel Hansen and his wife made various clothing from coarse linen soaked in linseed oil. Today, Helly Hansen is a large provider of high quality, technical outerwear garments. It is a very popular brand that Moods of Norway have had a design collaboration with.

5.3.4 Place branding

Even though Norway is not known for being a “fashion nation” worldwide, many Norwegian designers choose to associate themselves with Norway in their brand name, i.e. Moods of Norway, Norwegian Twist, IIs of Norway, etc.). This is a good indication that the designers are proud of their heritage and want to show the world some of what Norway can offer. One of the best-known examples of this is Moods of Norway who concentrate all designs around Norwegian history and traditions.

Norway is known for its range of weather and thus the need for quality outerwear, and the Italian brand Napapiirji knew this well when they chose to put the Norwegian flag in their logo. Simon Anholt explains this: *“the associations of quality or appropriateness are powerful enough attributes to make it worthwhile for a manufacturer to claim a fictitious provenance if it appears to lend more credibility than their real provenance”* (Anholt, 1998)(p.369). He calls this a *cuckoo-brand* and they are surprisingly common and have been around for many years.

5.4 Organizational form

The Norwegian Fashion industry today is not optimal when it comes to organizational form. It is a sort of network organization, where the network does not function properly. However, Norwegian Fashion Institute was opened in hopes of becoming a gathering institution in the



Norwegian Fashion industry and hence facilitating networking. Another challenge is the geographical positioning of the actors in the industry. Innovation Norway (Innovasjon Norge) encourages designers, in form of financial support, to situate their business in the regions, to avoid centralization in the major cities. One of the main conclusions from the industry report 'Motepilot' was that this decentralization is quite unfortunate, as clustering can be an important tool in the Cultural Industries. Especially in Norway, as it is a small actor on the international arena it is even more important to be close to each other, both physically and mentally, and this is best achieved when the actors are situated within close proximity.

5.5 Important institutions supporting Norwegian Fashion

The following section will present some of the most important institutions supporting and working with Norwegian Fashion. The reason for highlighting the institutions is to draw attention to the fact that there are many different organizations that can work together to build Norwegian Fashion and push it to the next level. All the information about the various institutions is taken from their homepages and freely translated from Norwegian.

5.4.1 Norwegian Fashion Institute

Norwegian Fashion Institute (NFI) was officially opened when the Norwegian minister of Trade and Industry Sylvia Brustad cut the ribbon February 11th 2009. It was the government, under the management of the governmental body Innovation Norway, who have made NFI possible, as they will contribute with economical support for the first three years.

NFI sets out to "stimulate and position Norwegian fashion design in Norway and abroad"⁵ and the institute is based on a basic set of value: quality, renewal, co-operation and diversity. NFI has one more "cornerstone", which is to promote ethical fashion and business. Moreover, there are many people who will benefit from NFI's work as they wish to create co-operations between important educational institutions and organizations, brand-owners, producers and other relevant professional creative players. There are 69 members at the

⁵ www.norwegianfashioninstitute.no



moment (as of September 1st 2009), which is quite good as it has only been official for around 8 months.

The institute have created four main tasks that will help build and structure the fashion industry in Norway:

1. The unified organization for Norwegian fashion

- NFI hopes the institute will become a meeting place for networking, strategic debates and agreements on co-operations
- Relevant industry-information shall be made public
- The institute will work together with similar institutions in other countries, Norwegian Embassies, related businesses or industries, investors and financial institutions

2. A Centre for competency

- The institute will organize co-operations with relevant actors in the industry
- These co-operations will include various happenings from seminars to guidance in supervising and forecasting trends as well as knowledge improvement
- NFI will take initiative in FoU projects and PhD-positions
- NFI will be an instigator in promoting the history of fashion design as inspiration and a foundation for further development

3. Making a joint move

- The institution will act as an agent for Norwegian Fashion and organize promotion and other forms of marketing, i.e. by participating in foreign events
- Develop an internet portal for promoting Norwegian Fashion, fashion shows and events as well as co-operations with similar foreign organizations
- NFI will facilitate for working together to develop and revise an
- Announcement on the positioning and branding of Norwegian fashion



4. Organizing and disclosing efforts for development within trade

- The institute shall take care of, communicate and organize development initiatives within trade in collaboration with initiatives from the government

5.4.2 Norsk Form

Norsk Form was established by the ministry of Culture in 1992 and is an information and project institution for Norwegian design and architecture. Through exhibitions, publications, awards, competitions, press and much more, Norsk Form does an important job for promoting Norwegian design and architecture. Additionally, Norsk Form is the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' advisor and the administrative organization for the architectural and design fields.

According to Norsk Form's homepage, their mission is to:

1. Increase the understanding for architecture and design
2. Work towards quality and innovation in the development of our surroundings and products
3. Strengthen the professional cooperation across industry borders, convey knowledge and give advise to the public, industry-experts, the different industries, the government and educational institutions

One of the most important function is the distribution of travel and transport subsidies for professional Norwegian architects and designers who are set to attend, weather it is speaking or exhibiting their collection, important international arenas where they can represent and promote Norway. Another important activity internationally is providing advise for ministries, foreign posts and embassies when they wish to organize visits or profiling arrangements concerning Norway. Furthermore, Norsk Form also plays an important role in assisting the international press with information and photographs within the design and architectural fields. All these activities are a way of promoting Norway both as a quality design and architectural nation, but also as a tourist nation.



5.4.3 Innovation Norway

The governmental body Innovation Norway (Innovasjon Norge) *“promotes nationwide industrial development profitable to both the business economy and Norways national economy, and helps release the potential of different districts and regions by contributing towards innovation, internationalisation and promotion”*⁶. Innovation Norway has offices in all the counties in Norway as well as in 30 countries all around the world, and employs over 700 people.

The organization assists the Norwegian industry, but has particular focus on helping entrepreneurs and aiding small and medium-sized companies whom have ambitions and potential for growth. According to a report from Norway Exports (2008), Innovation Norway can offer (1) funding provided as loans, guarantees and equity capital programmes, (2) advisory and expertise development measures, (3) national and international network-building and technology transfer and (4) marketing of Norwegian industry and Norway as a tourist destination.

5.4.4 Tekstil Forum

Tekstil Forum is an industry publication about fashion, environment and wellbeing. They provide the industry with statistics and trends from around the world, fashion and beauty news and much more. They state they have an overview of the Norwegian market, the suppliers and the profitability in the industry, import and the sales progress.

As you can see, several institutions working with Norwegian Fashion have been identified and they can be important players in strengthening Norwegian Fashion nationally and internationally. There are however more players in the Norwegian Fashion Field and a mapping of these could be beneficial.

⁶ <http://www.innovasjon Norge.no/system/Global-toppmeny/English/>



6.0 What is a brand?

6.1 The evolution of branding

The word branding stems from its literal meaning ‘to brand’. It refers to the branding of animals, which at the outset was done to mark which animal belonged to which farmer. This marking turned out to become a mark of quality, as animals from particular farmers were better and thus became popular and more desirable than the lot. There has been a remarkable development of brands since that time, and four main stages can be found (Roper & Parker, 2006). In table 1 this evolution is presented, but only three of the four stages are included as the last stage (‘brand as asset’) is not necessarily a stage that would be recognizable external to individual companies.

Table 1: Stages in the Development of Brands and Branding

Time	Macro-Environmental Change	Purpose	Examples	Stage in development of branding
2000C	Use of tools, development of trade.	Identification of trade man with craft	Signs	Identification ↓
4768C-1492AD	Increasing mobilization of and legislation in population	Identification of ownership	Brand marks	
16C	Increasingly mobilization of population	Identification of product offering	Pub signs	
1760-1830	Industrialisation of production	Identification of manufacturer	Names	
1830-1970	Mass-production and development of distribution infrastructure and mass communication	Differentiation of product (quality and functionality)	Brand advertising	Differentiation ↓
1970-1990	Development of the service sector	Communicating added value (intangible differentiation)	Brand narratives	
1990's	Globalisation and post-modernism	"Emotionalise", build relationships	Micro marketing	Personalization ↓

(S. Roper & C. Parker, 2006)



Branding as Identification

Originally, branding was a tool used to link a product or service to its owner, in order to ensure that consumers would recognize the product.

Branding as Differentiation

The start of mass-production, distribution and communication prolonged the need for identification in the new unexplored marketplaces. In addition to this, there became a strong need for differentiation as there were many actors in these new markets trying to succeed. The communication of differentiation was usually functional or rational (size, packaging, quality, etc). Nevertheless, *“these factors were not economically rational and those charged with forecasting or understanding demand for these products could no longer rely on economic theory to explain the behaviour of costumers and predict the behaviour of brands”* (Roper & Parker, 2006)(p.57). Consequently, the theory of marketing developed further and from the 1950’s the study of branding began.

Branding as Personification

As time goes by and researchers begin to study brands, their importance are widely recognized and they are no longer ‘just a symbol’ – they have now been ascribed a personality. This makes it easier for people to relate to the brands and to make (hopefully) long-lasting relationships.

Brand as Asset

Branding has its roots in economic theory and what lies at the core is what the brand is worth. Companies can now report their brands on balance sheets and this has increased the desire for measurement. Today one can actually find an annual table listing over the world’s most valuable brands. Aaker explains the value of brands as ‘brand equity’ and it comprised of brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations.

6.2 Branding today

There are many definitions on what a brand is in present day branding theory, but there are two scholars who have published the two of the most significant and widely used



definitions; David Aaker and Noel Kapferer. Aaker, together with a fellow scholar Biel, propose *"a brand is basically a name that refers to product of a particular manufacturer in a particular product category. A brand includes tangible or intrinsic qualities, such as appearance, performance data, package and the guarantees or warranties that are attached to it. Perhaps more importantly, a brand involves aspects that the consumer attributes to it, beyond its tangible features. These attributes may include attitudes towards the company that produces the product or towards the brand itself, beliefs about the brand in relationship to self and others, and so on"*. Kapferer's definition of a brand goes a little bit further when he claims, *"a brand is not a product. It is a product's essence, its meaning and its direction, and it defines its identity in time and space"*. Both scholars agree on the importance of having a clear-cut brand identity, and the next section will explain this further.

6.3 Brand identity

Having a clear defined brand identity is vital for companies in order to attract costumers. The costumers use the brand identity and compare it to their own personality in order to find a connection to the brand and establish a relationship. But as there is a massive and chaotic world of brands out there, it is imperative to have a unique and distinct identity and to be able to turn the consumers' interest and fascination with the brand into loyalty and make them lovers and ambassadors of the brand. When consumers turn into ambassadors of the brand, they tell their friends and acquaintances about it and this functions as a legitimating process as the brand has by now been approved.

There are many different theories and models in the theory of brand identity. Aaker and Kapferer are have produced several theoretical insights and models to the theory, though from different perspectives. Aaker created the *"Brand Identity System"* where he looks upon brand identity as a unique set of brand associations, which represents what the brand stands for. The structure of a brand's identity, according to Aaker, consists of a core identity and an extended identity. The core identity should remain constant over time, even though the brand travels to new markets, whilst the extended brand identity completes the picture and adds important details to the core by describing and demonstrating in a more explicit way what the brand stands for. After having identified the core of the brand, Aaker further



explains brand identity as consisting of twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives (the twelve dimension will be presented in the analysis):

- (1) The brand as a product: product related associations will always make up an important part of a brand's identity and are directly linked to brand choice decisions
- (2) The brand as organization: an organization's attributes can contribute positively to the sent out value proposition, may provide credibility to the customer and are more enduring and more persistent to competitive forces than product attributes, thus it is even harder for competitors to duplicate them
- (3) The brand as a person: brand personality can help to create an enduring and self-expressive benefit that can be used by the customer to express his or her personality. It may form the basis for a long lasting relationship between the customer and the brand
- (4) The brand as symbol: strong symbols can be key ingredients and cornerstones of brand development by making it much easier for the consumer to gain brand recognition and recall

After having defined a brand's identity from the above mentioned perspectives, it generates a value proposition to the customer, *"a statement of functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand, which should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive purchase decisions"* (Aaker, 1996)(p.95).

Furthermore, Kapferer regards brand identity as a necessary and contemporary concept and agrees with Aaker's thought of a brand having a "centre", however from a different view. Kapferer made a model, *"The Brand Identity Prism"*, that set out to define a brand's essence. The hexagonal model is divided into six different facets, which define a brand's identity as well as its boundaries within it is free to change and develop. The prism shows that these six facets are interrelated between each other and should form altogether a well-structured entity.

- (1) Physique: It refers to the physical qualities of the brand, representing the brand's backbone and its tangible added value



- (2) Personality: The way in which a brand speaks of its products/services shows which kind of person it would be if it were human. Especially in marketing communications, personality has always been an important issue, e.g. when using celebrity endorsers or a spokesperson to represent a brand
- (3) Culture: A brand's culture is shared by every product of the portfolio and links the brand to the firm. Major brands are driven by their culture and in turn also convey this culture to the outside world. In addition, countries of origin may serve as a cultural basis for brands as well, leaving it open to either emphasize their origin or to deny it
- (4) Relationship: Particularly in the service sector, brands are often at the hearts of exchange relationships between people and therefore help to establish a mode of conduct that most identifies the brand (e.g. Nike – “just do it”, Canon – “Yes you can”)
- (5) Reflection: Brands frequently build up a reflection of the potential buyer or user group (e.g. “a brand for teenagers”, “a brand for sportsmen”, etc.)
- (6) Self-image: Customers develop a type of inner relationship with themselves through their attitudes towards certain brands

Later in the paper, the two models will be used to analyse Norwegian fashion and its identity in terms of brand image.

6.4 Fashion and national identity

Many have specific characteristics in mind when asked about a nation's fashion identity, i.e.: sporty American, chic French, bohemian Danish, etc. This may to some seem very narrow and not representative of the array of brands and styles represented in a country, but it can serve as a very useful tool in marketing both a country's fashion scene in addition to the country itself. Palmer (2004) agrees in her book on Canadian fashion when she states: *“On one hand, fashion is becoming more multinational, in terms of both design and manufacture, making trade and international borders increasingly irrelevant. On the other hand, the role of design in fashion shows, marketing and the resulting press coverage is still very much linked to national identities. Concomitantly, national design identity has become an increasing*



important marketing tool in creating a unique fashion product, particularly when there is little distinction between designs.”

Furthermore, having a national fashion identity is an excellent way of exposing a country's fashion in the competitive, global fashion economy and showing its unique selling propositions. According to Marie Riegels Melchior and her research within the fashion industry, the connection between fashion and national identity is very complex and seems to exist in three forms: (1) the national identity of the brand is created through addressing a specific national market, (2) the connection is created as a means for fashion brands to indicate a difference with their design expression in a growing global competition, (3) national states cooperate look to the fashion industry and their design in their redefinition of the national identity in order to promote the country's economic development (Melchior, 2008). An example of a country where national identity has played an important role in fashion is Japan. Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto were two very renowned designers in Japan, but on an international level they were unknown. However, this all changed in the start of the 1980's. This was a time when the fashion capital, Paris, experienced a crisis both in terms of image and economy due to a decrease in clientele. The crisis, and the fact that Japanese popular culture was of high interest in the West at the time, made room for new entrees. The Japanese designers started receiving very positive media attention and this was in fact a win-win situation. The designers were exposed to the market and sold many clothes and Paris got a renewed reputation of being the centre innovative fashion design and creativity. The media presented the designers as promoters of Japanese culture through their design, and fashion journalists made Japanese fashion design exotic. This has in turn presented some problems for later Japanese designers as they felt it as a requirement as well as a dilemma that they had to express their national identity in their design if they wanted to succeed (Skov, 2003). This example put a stronger focus on the connection between fashion and national identity and seems to be a strong strategy in contemporary fashion design.

This exotic authenticity of a fashion garment has grown remarkably during the last 30 years. In fact, José Teunissen and Jan Brand propose that *‘the exotic authenticity of a product is so important in fashion at the moment that it is turning the whole fashion hierarchy upside*



down' (Teunissen & Brand, 2006). They also state that this proves that *'one's own heritage and culture have become an important stepping-off point in the design process'* and thus merging fashion and national identity could prove to be an excellent strategy for Norwegian Fashion.



7.0 Analysis

At the starting process of this thesis, my perception about Norwegian Fashion and all it entails (events, actors, organizations) was that it is hardly known on an international level and, even worse, very little known in Norway as well. Why is that? Is the marketing strategy for the different brands too weak? Should the Government promote Norwegian fashion more? Or is it simply that the Norwegian Fashion industry is still at the infant stage and lacks knowledge and experience? These are all questions in which it is important to find the answer to in order to improve the attractiveness of Norwegian Fashion. However, before doing so, I felt it was imperative to test my hypothesis about Norwegian Fashion being very little known on both a national and international level. Two surveys were conducted, one for international respondents and one for Norwegian respondents. The respondents were asked questions concerning Norwegian brands, actors within Norwegian Fashion and which characteristics they felt were best suited to Norwegian Fashion. The next section will present the survey and its answers individually.

7.1 International Survey

As mentioned earlier, this survey is a small one, as it was only a tool in confirming my hypothesis on the assumption that Norwegian Fashion is hardly known abroad. The survey was sent out to 22 respondents of various nationalities, but only 8 completed the survey.

7.1.1 Norwegian Brands

Question 1: “Do you know any Norwegian Fashion brands?”

This question was an open one and the respondents could mention as many brands as they knew. However, only three respondents could mention three Norwegian brands in total. The brands mentioned were Bik Bok (1), Helly Hansen (2) and Moods of Norway (2).



7.1.2 Actors in Norwegian Fashion

Question 2: “Do you know anything about the Norwegian Fashion industry? Events, organizations, etc? If you do, which?”

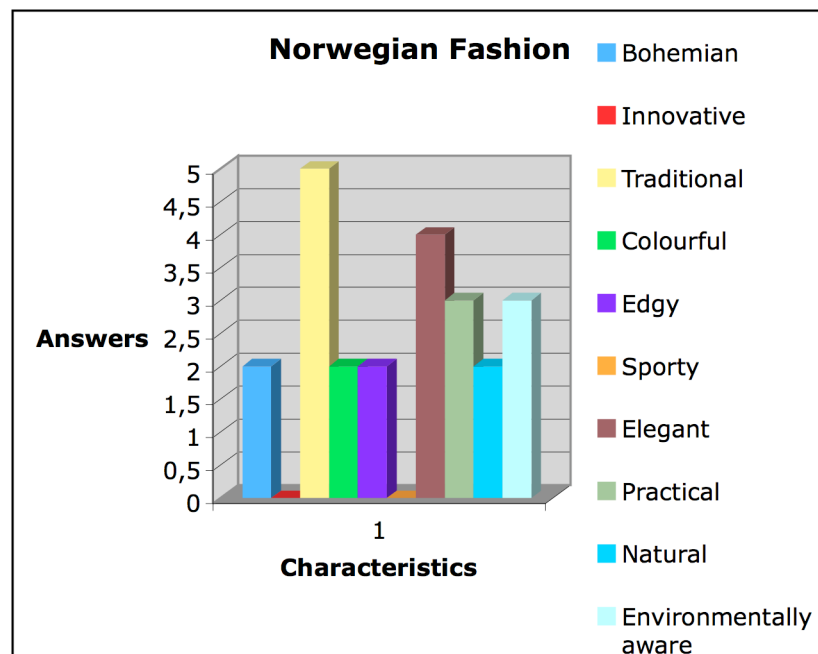
This question could have many different answers, as there are many actors within the Norwegian Fashion industry. Nevertheless, only one person had a specific answer, and the answer was Oslo Fashion Week. All the respondents in this survey live in Copenhagen and thus the distance to Norway is not far and the likelihood of them having knowledge about Norway is large. One person even answered; “Nothing, not trying to answer the survey quickly, I just don't know anything”. This is interesting.

7.1.3 Characteristics

Question 3: “Which characteristics do you think best describes Norwegian fashion?”

This question was of course somewhat spread, but some characteristics seemed to be more suitable than others (see table 2)

Table 2





As you can see from the table, most people thought traditional and elegant best characterized Norwegian Fashion, closely followed by practical and environmentally aware. There is of course little difference between the characteristics due to the low number of respondents, but it can still give an indication as to what foreigners associate with Norwegian Fashion.

7.2 Norwegian Survey

The Norwegian survey was sent out to 30 respondents, resulting in 11 answers. The reason for choosing to conduct a survey for Norwegians as well was of course to test my hypothesis, but also to compare the answers to the international survey to see if it matched.

7.2.1 Norwegian Brands

Question 1: "Do you know any Norwegian Fashion brands?"

All the respondents could mention at least one Norwegian Fashion brand, but only one was mentioned several times: Moods of Norway. Other brands mentioned were TSH, Leila Hafzi, Kristian Aadnevik, Johnny Love and more. It must be mentioned, however, that the four brands mentioned above were all mentioned by the same person. When doing a simple search on www.google.com Moods of Norway has 735 000 results and when comparing this to Leila Hafzi's (one of the more known Norwegian abroad) result of 17 800, it is clear that PR is important in order to achieve success.

7.2.2 Actors in Norwegian Fashion

Question 2: "Do you know anything about the Norwegian Fashion industry? Events, organizations, etc? If you do, which?"



There were only two people who did not know anything about the Norwegian Fashion Industry. Most of the respondents (8 out of 11) knew of Oslo Fashion Week. One had heard of Norsk Design Råd, but was uncertain of whether or not it only concerned industrial and furniture design. One respondent could also mention NICE, Nordic Initiative for Clean and Ethical fashion. This is a Nordic cooperation, but still somewhat Norwegian.

7.2.3 Recognizing Norwegian Brands

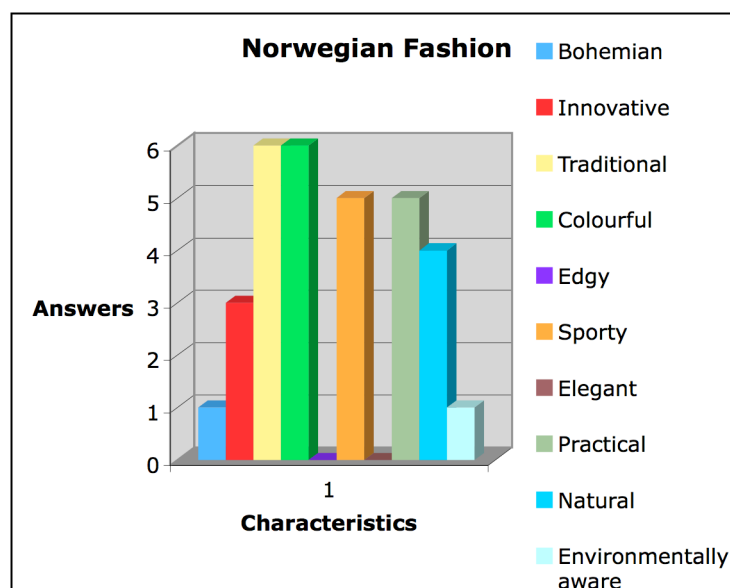
Question 3: “Which of the following brands are Norwegian?”

This was a question unique to the Norwegian survey, as I felt Norwegians were (or at least should be) more qualified to answer. All the brands were chosen at least once, even though they were not in fact Norwegian. Napapijri, Malene Birger, Ivan Grundal and B-young were the brands that the respondents thought were Norwegian, but were not. The reason for why the respondents thought that the brand Napapijri was Norwegian may be because of the fact that they use the Norwegian flag in their logo (as mentioned in 6.3.4 Place Branding).

7.2.4 Characteristics

Question 4: “Which characteristics do you think best describes Norwegian fashion?”

Table 3





As with the international survey, the answers were quite spread. 6 out of 11 respondents feel thought that Norwegian Fashion in traditional and colourful, while 5 out of 11 thought that it was sporty and practical.

7.3 Comparing the studies

When comparing the studies there are many similarities, as well as some interesting differences. There was no surprise that the Norwegians could mention more brands than the foreigners. But there was one brand that clearly was the most well known brand – Moods of Norway. As mentioned before, Moods of Norway have done a great job both on their own marketing stunts, but also in attracting the media and this seems to pay off, as most of the respondents knew of the brand.

There were 9 of the Norwegian respondents who knew of Oslo Fashion Week (OFW), but only one international. Looking at this, OFW should focus more on promoting themselves abroad in order to attract potential buyers, important gatekeepers and so on. In August 2008 OFW had 24 designers showing their collections, while in August 2009 the number had dropped to 19. In an article from Dagsavisen designer Tina Haagenzen can understand why some designers choose to focus on international Fashion Weeks such as in Paris or Copenhagen, as this is where the potential international buyers are. OFW should take this into consideration and try to attract some more international buyers (Hoffengh, 2009).

When comparing the characteristics from the two surveys, there are some clear differences. Both the international and Norwegian respondents agree that Norwegian fashion is traditional (international 62%, Norwegian 54%). But the international survey also feel it is elegant (50%), but in the Norwegian study no one thought Norwegian Fashion was elegant. However, the Norwegians felt the Norwegian Fashion was sporty (45%), but none of the international respondents agreed. 33% of the international and 45% of the Norwegian respondents agreed that *practical* was a suitable characteristic. All in all, the respondents from both surveys could agree upon Norwegian Fashion as being traditional and practical,



but it is interesting that there is such a difference as to which characteristics the Norwegian respondents chose compared to the international respondents. As this survey had such a small number of respondents, it is not a qualified tool in finding which characteristics are best suitable for Norwegian Fashion, however, it does give an indication as to what people seem to associate with Norway.



8.0 How to make Norwegian fashion an accepted brand

The following section will set out to make a suggestion as to how Norwegian Fashion Institute can go about making Norwegian Fashion legitimate in an international setting. It is based on various academic articles, relevant business strategies and the survey conducted for this thesis.

8.1 Constructing an identity I - Finding the relevant DNA particles

Earlier in the thesis, two models by Noel Kapferer and David Aaker was presented. This section will use these models in order to take the initial step in finding an identity for Norwegian Fashion. The information used in the analysis stems from the survey conducted, research of Norwegian brands' homepages, as well secondary data, such as "Motepilot" and other fashion related articles.

BRAND IDENTITY SYSTEM

Core identity: Presenting tradition and history

Extended identity:

The brand as a product

Product scope: Fashionable garments in high quality fabrics

Quality / value: High quality clothing

Technology: Norway can be regarded as a pioneer in eco-fashion. An example of this is the brand FIN Fashion who has made a dress out of milk proteins. Innovation is important in Norwegian fashion.



Slogan: N/A

The brand as organization

Organization: Norwegian Fashion Institute will be Norwegian Fashion's face to the world. As we are dealing with an industry and not a firm, the uniqueness will be in the cooperation and the willingness to help each other.

Environment: There seems to be a high level of interest in ecology and sustainability within Norwegian Fashion. Brands like Leila Hafzi and FIN Fashion both focus on ecology and see sustainable fashion as the future.

The brand as a person

Personality: Traditional and practical

User profile: As fashion attracts all sorts of people and they all have different views on what fashion is, there may be difficult to identify a certain user profile. However, the Royal family, especially Mette-Marit and Märtha Louise, Norwegian actors, TV-show hosts and many more have been seen wearing Norwegian design.

Reliability: Norwegian fashion should be looked upon as reliable. The reason for this is the focus on history and traditions as well as ecology.

The brand as symbol

Visual imagery: Traditional patterns, knitting, Norwegian Nature

Value proposition

Functional benefits: High quality garments



Emotional benefits: Buying something from an exotic (or local) culture should make the consumer feel proud

Self-expressive: Expressing Norwegian ancestry and a high degree of fashion knowledge

Credibility:

As Norwegian Fashion is very little known internationally, gaining credibility is an important challenge. However, there has been written an article on FIN Fashion in the Wall Street Journal, proposing Norway (and the whole of Scandinavia) to be “Style’s Sustainable Frontier”.

Brand-customer relationship:

Norwegians should feel proud to wear Norwegian design and others should feel intrigued and interested in wearing something as exclusive as Norwegian design.

BRAND IDENTITY PRISM

Physique: High-quality fabrics, fashionable, but still long-lasting

Personality: Various Norwegian celebrities as well as the royal family, especially Mette-Marit and Märtha Louise, are great ambassadors for Norwegian fashion as they wear Norwegian brands on various events nationally and internationally.



<u>Culture:</u>	It is important to emphasize the country of origin and many brands do so already. Using something unique to Norway, such as the scenery for example, can portray an image of exclusivity and exoticism.
<u>Relationship:</u>	One should feel fashionable
<u>Reflection:</u>	Norwegian fashion is for everyone.
<u>Self-image:</u>	Customers should feel fashionable and exclusive when wearing Norwegian fashion. They should feel fashionable as Norwegian fashion aims to be up-to-date as well as creating new fashion, and they should feel exclusive because Norway is a small and unique country.

8.1.2 Constructing an identity II - Background for identity

In the fashion industry today, a brand needs something unique to distinguish themselves from the others. Background, history and narratives have become a very important tool in the quest for distinctiveness.

When it comes to history and traditions, Norway has a great deal to offer and it is important in the creation of an identity for Norwegian Fashion not to neglect this. It can tell the receiver something about who we were and how we got to where we are today. Looking deeper into the history of fashion in Norway is imperative if Norwegian Fashion is to make a name for themselves on an international level in the fashion industry, as Norway's history and tradition seems to be an important part of the country's uniqueness. A good example of this is Moods of Norway and their focus on the Norwegian heritage. They have in fact such a high level of success that there has been written a Harvard Business Case on their unconventional management and marketing strategies. They have chosen to focus on all that is unique about Norway and design by their motto "Norway meets the World". An



example of this is a quote by Simen Staalnacke, one of the originators: *"We wanted to tell Norwegian stories through the medium of clothing"* (Austin, O'Donnel, & Krogh, 2010).

8.1.3 The Importance of having an identity

Having a national fashion identity can be a great step on the way in exploiting the potential in the Norwegian Fashion industry. It will (hopefully) make Norwegian fashion more recognizable on an international arena as well as marking a difference to the abundance of similar actors in the industry. Additionally, it will make it easier to market Norwegian Fashion and thus make it more visual in the growing competitive world of the fashion industry. Becoming more visual and interesting to the world, may in turn lead to an increase in the tourism in Norway – strengthening the economic development in the country in a time of economic uncertainty.

It can of course be argued that it may be difficult to create an identity to a whole industry, as there are many different actors with a range of opinions on how an identity should look like. Nonetheless, many other countries have benefited from having a fashion identity; hence there is no reason why Norway should not succeed. Many may also argue that having an identity will limit creativity and freedom as many may feel a pressure to conform to the identity. However, having a fashion identity does not mean that the designer's identity must match the national identity; it is only a picture of some general tendencies in Norwegian Fashion and a tool in more successfully promoting Norwegian Fashion and turning into a more professional industry.

8.1.4 Clusters

As mentioned earlier, clusters can be a great tool within the fashion industry, as it brings the actors together, making it easier to cooperate and challenge each other which can in turn make Norwegian Fashion more interesting to the public. Being located in close proximity also makes it easier to agree on important matters that concern the whole industry, as they have the possibility of talking face-to-face, which strengthens their relationship. This feeling of togetherness can in turn help strengthen the identity as it becomes easier for the actors



to work together towards a collective goal of getting Norwegian Fashion “out there”, as it is in everyone’s best interest. Clustering peripheral industries also strengthens the position of Norwegian Fashion, as the relationship between the designer and manufacturer has potential to be very strong. Meetings can be arranged on short notice, communication can flow better, there are no misunderstandings language-wise, and so on.

8.1.5 Positioning

Newly started businesses often create a good strategy plan early in the process. In order to create a good strategy plan it is vital to research the industry to best understand the industry and hopefully gain a competitive advantage. There are several ways of analyzing the market, but this thesis proposes the SWOT model as a tool for positioning Norwegian Fashion.

SWOT is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that an organization, a project or anything alike may have. During the course of writing the thesis I have made many observations about the Norwegian Fashion Industry and these have been used in a SWOT-analysis on the industry. The analysis has lasted throughout the thesis-period in order to include the most suitable strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. However, the analysis is only a preliminary analysis, as a complete analysis should be done by a person with inside knowledge and understanding of the industry.



<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long history • Rich country • Exotic to many • Respected country • NMI • Technology and innovation • EsMod & Oslo Kunsthøgskole • Good designers • Oslo Fashion Week 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too little marketing • Communication • Expensive to produce • Not good enough to take care of own designers • Little knowledge about the industry • Too little academic research • Organization, and ability to act as a unified organization
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion • Promotion Norwegian Fashion AND Norway • Making Norway trendy at a time when fashion is interested in exotic countries and cultures • Technology and innovation • Increase knowledge through research 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweden, Denmark, Finland → all within close proximity and have strong positions within design • EU – expensive to export and import • Rules and regulation, taxes • Too little governmental financing • Norwegians not knowing anything about Norwegian design or which brands that are Norwegian

Looking at the result from the SWOT-analysis, Norwegian Fashion industry seems to have great potential and an optimistic future. The strengths and opportunities outweigh the weaknesses and threats and many of the weaknesses in the industry can be easily solved. One main weakness as I see it, and this has become very clear during the process of writing the thesis, is the lack of academic research within the field of fashion in Norway. In the fields



of history, economy and sociology, there is a large gap in research and this needs to be filled in order to maximize the potential Norwegian Fashion has. Knowledge is the key to success.

8.1.5 Building attractiveness

There are many ways of building attractiveness and many variations of attractiveness. Reputations, recognition and renown are central elements when dealing with attractiveness. Reputation refers to *“a consensus building process among relevant insiders on the worth and artistic merits of a member of the art world”* (Becker, 1984). Recognition, on the other hand, *“is the esteem, in which peers and other art world insiders hold an artist”* (Svejenova, Mazza, & Planellas, 2007). And lastly, *“renown is a more cosmopolitan form of recognition that transcends the artist’s art world and shows in the interest of the general press in the artist’s work and persona”* (Svejenova et al., 2007). In the world of Cultural Industries, these elements are very important, as it can be the key to success. In an article on Ferran Adrià, a Spanish celebrity chef, Svejenova, Mazza and Planellas illustrate the importance of having a good reputation and being recognized by peers. *“In their quest for authenticity, artists combine identity expression with image manufacturing, the latter realized through self-presentations of the artist with relevant audiences or through presentations by an intermediary, who is either chosen by the artist or self-appointed”* (Svejenova et al., 2007). They explain the success of the chef to be *“his ability to get attention by and approval of legitimating gatekeepers and high-status players in the field”* (p.28). The chef himself agrees: *“You know that in life you are what others say you are”*.

Building the attractiveness of Norwegian Fashion should be continuous and executed on many levels. It is imperative to strengthen Norwegian Fashion and making it attractive in order for the industry to function successfully in Norway, as there is instability in the economy due to the financial crisis that boomed in 2009. William Øberg, owner of the fashion label C.Øberg, proposes that the reason for the many economic failures in the Norwegian Fashion industry is due to the fact that the interest for Norwegian Fashion is not adequate (Skjennald, 2009). One of the reasons to this lack of interest, he proposes, is the Norwegian fashion magazine’s shortage of mentioning Norwegian brands.



Building attractiveness is concerned with getting in contact with the right gatekeepers and turning them into ambassadors of Norwegian Fashion by convincing them of the attractiveness. When consumers turn into ambassadors of the brand, they tell their friends and acquaintances about it and this functions as a legitimating process as the brand has by now been approved.



9.0 Strategic Recommendations

The overall scope of the thesis was to identify some strategic actions that could help Norwegian Fashion Institute start their work on strengthening the Norwegian Fashion nationally and internationally. As the Norwegian Fashion industry is still a young industry, compared to Sweden and Denmark, and because Norwegian Fashion Institute is still at the infant stage, the strategic actions identified were meant to be important actions to make within the first years, in order to get a better understanding of the industry and be better equipped to make strategic decisions in the future. It became clear that a two-fold focus would be the best way to start: finding (1) a clear-cut brand identity and (2) possible elements of a strategy plan. Based on the research findings of this thesis, some strategic recommendations were identified and will be presented in this section.

In order for NMI to succeed in promoting Norwegian Fashion, there was a need to find a brand identity for Norwegian Fashion. The reason being that having a clear-cut brand identity will make Norwegian Fashion more recognizable and memorable, easier to market and position and in general, easier to strengthen. To find this identity NMI should conduct a larger industry research on Norwegian Fashion, its history, characteristics, similarities and differences between brands – everything that can increase the knowledge on the industry. In addition to this, NMI should map the Norwegian Fashion Field in order to identify all the institutional actors. In addition to understanding the industry, it is important for NMI to build a good relationship to the actors in the industry, and this will, hopefully, in turn make NMI the congregating organ in the Norwegian Fashion industry.

As Norwegian Fashion is a research field that has been very little studied, there is a strong need for a better understanding of many different components of the industry and thus, research on Norwegian Fashion should be strongly encouraged.

Clustering can be an important tool in the Cultural industries. The clusters can facilitate the growth of tacit knowledge in the industry, make it easier for the actors in the industry to learn from each other, build stronger relationships, which in turn can lead to co-operations. Oslo is a natural place for building a fashion cluster in Norway, as it is where most of the



actors are situated including designers, Esmod School of Fashion Design, investors, Cultural institutions and so on. Norwegian Fashion Institute should support the strengthening of Oslo as a fashion cluster.

One of the main goals for Norwegian Fashion Institute is to promote Norwegian Fashion in Norway and abroad. There are many ways of doing this, but there is especially one focus I feel is the most important in the long run: attracting international buyers to Oslo Fashion Week. If the number of international buyers on OFW would increase, it would in turn lead to a greater export of Norwegian Fashion and it would be spread all around the world. Increasing the availability of the design is of course important, as this will make the potential buyers aware of its existence.

Another way of boosting Norwegian Fashion would be to increase the level of exposure in magazines. There are a large variety of fashion magazines in Norway and more exposure of Norwegian Fashion could enlarge the attractiveness of buying Norwegian design.

In order for Norwegian Fashion institute to best be able to promote Norwegian fashion nationally and internationally, they should:

- Find a proper brand identity for Norwegian Fashion
- Support and aid research on Norwegian fashion design as it provides a foundation for further evolvement of Norwegian fashion
- Map the Norwegian Fashion Field to identify all institutional actors
- Promote the building of a fashion cluster in Oslo, as tacit knowledge is key in creative industries
- Conduct an extensive industry research including SWOT analysis, Porters Five Forces, identifying the various actors, characteristics, similarities and differences between brands
- Aid Oslo Fashion Week in attracting international buyers to the fashion week
- Get more exposure about Norwegian Fashion in Norwegian fashion magazines



10.0 Conclusion

This thesis has proved to be a challenging process. The lack of literature available on Norwegian Fashion has led to a focus on both branding and fashion, in order to achieve some valid results. Nevertheless, the combination of branding theory, strategic management theory and fashion theory has proved important in order to achieve success.

There may be many reasons as to why there is very little literature on various parts of Norwegian Fashion. It may be that fashion is a term without a clear definition and can therefore seem somewhat intangible. It may also be that people have some kind of prejudice towards the fashion field and what it has to offer. I feel that we need to reconsider our classical ideas about fashion. It is an industry with great economical and cultural potential and it undoubtedly needs to be further researched in order to make the most of the potential there is.

This thesis has explored the Norwegian Fashion industry, its history, some of the important actors and some tendencies today. It was imperative to research Norwegian Fashion on different levels in order to get a broad picture of what kind of industry it is. It was important to look into the history in order to know where the roots are and it was equally important to identify what was going on in Norwegian Fashion today. The results found in this thesis are somewhat limited. An extensive field study would be more favourable in researching a whole industry as the industry is complex and all entities are interconnected. As the surveys conducted for this thesis had such a small number of respondents, they are not a qualified tool in finding which characteristics are best suitable for Norwegian Fashion, however, it does give an indication as to what people seem to associate with Norway.

Applying theories from the Cultural industries proved helpful. How to respond to isomorphic pressures and how to gain legitimacy are important aspects of the Cultural industry as well as the Fashion Industry. Lampel, Lant and Shamsie's five polarities have also been useful as the theory concerns the polarities that define the field of action organizations in Cultural industries take. In addition to this, theories from branding and strategic management have



also played an important role in analysing how NMI can create a suitable strategy for promoting Norwegian Fashion. David Aaker's and Noel Kapferer's models on brand identity served as a good tool for identifying some relevant elements of the Norwegian Fashion's identity. However, the models lack certain information, and that information can best be obtained by a deeper study of the industry. The same goes for the SWOT analysis.

The thesis has had a focus on which initial steps NMI should take in the next year in order to strengthen Norwegian Fashion, thus the analytical and strategic methods used in the thesis are all focused around the most important preliminary steps for NMI to take: to gather valuable information and statistics on the Norwegian Fashion industry. This knowledge will be of vital importance in strategy planning, promotion and in attracting international buyers, investors and other gatekeepers. Based on the data in the thesis, the following strategic recommendations were made.

Norwegian Fashion Institute should:

- Find a proper brand identity for Norwegian Fashion
- Support and aid research on Norwegian fashion design as it provides a foundation for further evolvement of Norwegian fashion
- Map the Norwegian Fashion Field to identify all institutional actors
- Gather statistical information on the industry, especially economical
- Promote the building of a fashion cluster in Oslo, as tacit knowledge is key in creative industries
- Conduct an extensive industry research including SWOT analysis, Porters Five Forces, identifying the various actors, characteristics, similarities and differences between brands
- Aid Oslo Fashion Week in attracting international buyers to the fashion week
- Get more exposure about Norwegian Fashion in Norwegian fashion magazines

The strategic recommendations above are only some of the actions Norwegian Fashion Institute should take in order to strengthen Norwegian Fashion. However, I strongly believe they are actions important to take in the near future. And the time is now. As Per Aage Sivertsen, Head of Design for FIN Fashion, said: fashion is very much in focus in the



Scandinavian countries and it is important to exploit that opportunity when it is present. By combining historical traditions, contemporary tendencies and innovation with the proper strategies from branding, strategic management and the Cultural Industries, Norwegian Fashion will most likely be better equipped in the competitive world of fashion.



11.0 Perspectives

As there is such a lack of literature on Norwegian Fashion, this thesis could have taken a variety of other approaches. It could, for example, have been interesting to explore more of the economic side of the Norwegian Fashion Industry. Identifying potential through economical reports could be very beneficial as many stakeholders are interested in numbers and figures in order to make decisions. In addition to this, it could be interesting to investigate the possibilities of reducing VAT, customs duty and other forms of taxes, as this is one of the conclusions Nordgård *et al.* (2008) identified in the report 'Motepilot'. The respondents in that survey felt this would enable and facilitate more export of Norwegian Fashion. Export is especially important to Norway as it is a small country and it can have great economic impact. An example is the Danish Fashion industry sold for DKK 21,5 billion in 2006 and 88% of that number was in exports⁷.

As the thesis turned out to be somewhat of a case study, it could have been interesting to write the thesis together with NMI in order to narrow down the scope to fit their needs. This could have brought the thesis to the next level, as it would have been customized to a client. However, I wanted to look at NMI with a critical eye and not feel I had a conflict of interest with the stakeholders.

Lastly, it could be exciting to interview a number of designers and see how they felt about the creation of an identity and what they would have liked to see in a strategy plan, as they are important actors in the industry.

⁷ <http://www.investindk.com/visNyhed.asp?artikelID=17934>



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List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Researching Norwegian Fashion Brands

Appendix 2: Study

Appendix 1

Reseraching Norwegian Fashion Brands

Case 1

Name:	Fam Irvoll
Homepage:	http://www.famirvoll.com/
History:	Graduated from Esmod International in 2005 and later from Central St Martins in London in 2008
Design focus:	Designs womens clothing
Characteristics:	A signature style of bright colours, 3D and cartoon elements

Case 2:

Name:	Moods of Norway
Homepage:	http://www.moodsofnorway.com/
History:	After studying abroad, the initiators of the brand found they missed Norway and understood what a great country it was after all and started designing clothes with elements of the Norwegian cultural heritage.
Design focus:	Women, Men, Shoes, Accessories
Characteristics:	Strong and bold colours, using Norwegian elements (ex: tractor, moose)

Case 3:

Name:	Laila Hafzi
Homepage:	http://www.leila-hafzi.com/
History:	Presented her first collection in 1997 and introduced the idea of organic- and ethical trade to the high-end fashion industry.

Design focus: Sustainable, high-quality fashion for women

Characteristics: Has become known for beautiful evening gowns embracing femininity, elegance, colours

Case 4:

Name: Arne & Carlos

Homepage: <http://www.arne-carlos.com/>

History: Norwegian and Swedish duo situated in Valdres, Norway. They

Design focus: They draw on their Scandinavian influences and their natural environment. Men, Women

Characteristics: Original and striking knitwear, drawing on Scandinavian traditions

Case 5:

Name: FIN Fashion

Homepage: <http://finoslo.com/en/>

History: Oslo based

Design focus: "Design and awareness are combined into fashion", Women clothing

Characteristics: Innovative fabric → dress made out of milk proteins

Appendix 2

International Survey

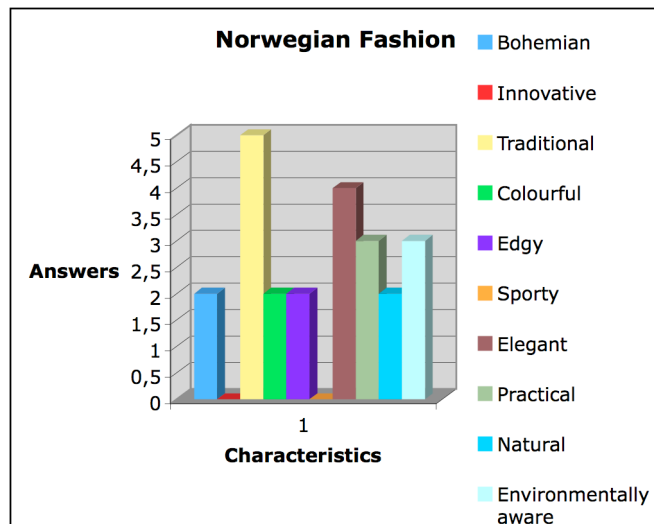
Question 1: "Do you know any Norwegian Fashion brands?"

"Do you know any Norwegian Fashion brands?"
No
No
NO
Err... Sorry, nope
No, unfortunately not
Helly Hansen is Norwegian I think?
Moods of Norway.
Bik Bok Moods of Norway Helly Hansen

Question 2: "Do you know anything about the Norwegian Fashion industry? Events, organizations, etc? If you do, which?"

"Do you know anything about the Norwegian Fashion industry? Events, organizations, etc? If you do, which?"
No
no
NO
Nothin, not trying to answer the survey quickly, I just don't know anything
No
No idea...
I have only heard about the event. Fashion Week that is organized in Oslo.
No, not really

Question 3: "Which characteristics do you think best describes Norwegian fashion?"



Norwegian Study:

Question 1: “Do you know any Norwegian Fashion brands?”

Label 10
Moods of Norway
Björg Jewelry Moods of Norway TSH Leila Hafzi Johnny Love Kristian Aadnevik
Moods of Norway,
moods of norway napariji
Moods of Norway, Chill Norway
Iselin Engan Moods of Norway
Moods of Norway, Oleana (strikkejakker)
moods of norway fam
moods of norway
M of N
Moods of Norway

Question 2: “Do you know anything about the Norwegian Fashion industry? Events, organizations, etc? If you do, which?”

Label 13
Oslo Fashion Week
Star PR NICE Norge OFW
Kjenner ikke til noe spesielt
Kathrine Sørland Oslo fashion week
nei

Oslo Fashion Week
Oslo Fashion Week
oslo fashion week
oslo fashion week
Oslo FW,
Norsk Design Råd, men vet ikke om det er mote eller design generelt. Oslo fashion week

Question 3: "Which of the following brands are Norwegian?"

FIN Fashion	Napapijri	By Malene Birger	Leila Hafzi	Ivan Grundahl	Fam Irvoll	Bik Bok	TSH	b-young	VIC
0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0

Question 4: "Which characteristics do you think best describes Norwegian fashion?"

