



Fashion industry professionals' viewpoints on creative traits and, strategies for creativity development[☆]



Elena Karpova^{*}, Sara Marcketti, Caitlyn Kamm

Department of Apparel, Events, and Hospitality Management, 31 MacKay Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1121, USA

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ABSTRACT

Through in-depth interviews, the study explored fashion industry professionals' viewpoints, on creativity, focusing on traits of creative people and how creativity can be developed. Four creative, traits were identified, including different thought processes, determination, having an open mind, and, risk taking. About one-third of participants believed that creativity is innate, and therefore, some, people were born creative whereas others were not. Another third of participants maintained that, everyone has some creative potential that can be further developed. The remaining fashion, professionals distinguished artistic creativity from creative problem solving. Suggested strategies for, creativity enhancement and development included (1) practicing creative thinking strategies, (2), formal training, (3) diverse experiences and exposure to the world; and (4) creating a safe, yet, challenging environment.

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1. Introduction

Creativity has been studied from the diverse perspectives of business, cognitive science, philosophy, psychology, and art, among others (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Creativity's multi-dimensional nature, which encompasses individual traits and behaviors as well as the interaction between creative individuals, their ideas, and society, makes it difficult to define and capture the phenomenon (Runco, 2004). According to creativity experts, human creative potential is a virtually limitless resource that defies racial, social, economic, and gender categorization ("Engineering Research. . .", 2006; Florida, 2002). Creativity can be cultivated, developed, and practiced (Michalko, 2006). The suggested ways in which to increase creativity vary, however. Popular press titles include strategies such as journaling, daily artistic and reflective activities, games, and heeding intuitive beliefs and feelings (Maisel, 2000; Makridakis, 2013; Van Oeck, 1992).

In the global and highly competitive fashion industry creativity is very important. According to Jennings (2011), "creativity is the backbone of fashion design" (p. 13). Other researchers argue that regardless of the primary job focus, from creative design to sales to museum work, creativity, and especially creative problem solving, is essential in the fashion business (Karpova, Marcketti, & Barker, 2011). Despite its importance, there have been a limited number of studies on creativity within the fashion field. Danielson (1986) surveyed fifty-five contemporary fashion illustrators to provide insight into their creative processes to enrich classroom teaching on the subject. Eckert and Demaid (2001) analyzed the ways in which the design process was influenced by differing business models of knitwear companies. The researchers examined the ways in which students and professionals used sources for inspiration for knitwear design. A qualitative investigation that focused on

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^{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 515 294 9266.

E-mail addresses: karpova@iastate.edu (E. Karpova), sbb@iastate.edu (S. Marcketti), kammcait@gmail.com (C. Kamm).

British fashion designers advocated for research on innovation in the creative industries (Malem, 2008). At the 2008 Apparel Executive Forum keynote presentation, Patty Devlin of Play, a consulting company, urged designers to “seek a diversity of inspiration” by incorporating different perspectives in the workplace, becoming comfortable with ambiguity, and promoting risk-taking or “passion in action:” key aspects identified in the literature for enhancing creativity (Speer, 2008).

Professionals in creative industries observe, practice, exchange, adapt, and cultivate creative strategies as part of their daily routines. Documenting, interpreting, and understanding their experiences, views, and insights regarding creativity will help advance our knowledge about this complex and important phenomenon. This study explored fashion industry professionals' viewpoints on traits of creative people and how creativity can be developed. Educators can utilize the information presented in the study to better understand the creativity phenomenon as experienced by industry insiders and use the strategies mentioned to enhance their students' creativity. In the same vein, industry practitioners can use the research findings to cultivate their own creativity as well as that of their employees.

1.1. Traits of creative people

The research on the relationship between personality and creativity is well established and has grown in popularity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Feist, 1998; Furnham & Bachtiar, 2008; Selby, Shaw, & Houtz, 2005). Many personal characteristics have been associated with creativity (Selby et al., 2005). One of the pioneering studies analyzed United States' Air Force captains, and determined that certain characteristics were correlated with creativity including a preference for complexity, independent judgment in a group situation, dominance, and impulsiveness (Barron, 1955).

Building on Barron (1955), MacKinnon (1962) assessed the relationship between creativity and personality in well known, highly creative architects. He supported Barron's findings by noting a strong correlation between creativity and preference for complexity. Other important characteristics identified included motivation to achieve, flexibility in thought, self-acceptance, and self-confidence. Due to the intense and somewhat arduous nature of creativity, creative individuals must be passionate (Renzulli, Koehler, & Fogarty, 2006; Selby et al., 2005). This passion provides the much needed discipline, motivation, and focused energy needed in creativity (Amabile, 1989; Renzulli et al., 2006). Numerous other studies reported various traits associated with creativity. These included divergent thinking, openness, and preference for challenge (Amabile, 1989; Furnham & Bachtiar, 2008).

Researchers have argued that creativity requires steps beyond cognition. Sternberg (1985, 2006) concluded that creative thinking was comprised of three skills: (a) seeing problems outside of conventional boundaries, (b) differentiating between ideas worth pursuing and those that were not, and (c) marketing one's ideas to others. Lubart and Sternberg (1997) established a correlation between taking risks and being creative. However, they suggested this correlation was present only in specific domains. For example, the correlation between taking risks and levels of creativity was significant among artists, but not fiction writers. Despite many efforts devoted to determining which traits can serve as predictors of creativity, there has been little agreement on creative personal characteristics.

1.2. Developing creativity

Since the 1990s, there has been increased interest in creativity training (Mumford, 2003). Various strategies for creativity development have been proposed and tested (Bull, Montgomery, & Baloche, 1995; Selby et al., 2005; Sternberg, 2006). Torrance (1987), in a two-part study, evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies: (1) Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem Solving program which included brainstorming and productive thinking, divergent thinking strategies, questioning assumptions, and creative problem solving techniques; (2) interdisciplinary approaches; (3) use of packaged materials (e.g., those by Purdue Creativity Program); (4) use of media and reading to practice skills; (5) emphasis on practice through artistic endeavors; (6) favorable learning environment; and (7) external motivation (e.g., rewards). Part one of his study analyzed 143 studies of creativity training courses used with children from kindergarten through grade 12. The most effective strategies included the Osborn-Parnes program and interdisciplinary approaches. The least effective strategy was an attempt to create an ideal learning environment. Part two of the study analyzed a total of 242 studies: 166 at the elementary and secondary levels and 76 at the college/adult level. When applying divergent thinking to real life scenarios, such as developing and evaluating new products, the college/adult level students had a much higher success rate than grade school students. Torrance (1987) concluded that training and practice in real-life problem solving improved creativity.

More recently, Bull et al. (1995) explored formal creativity training from an educational perspective. After reviewing 67 creativity course syllabi, the authors surveyed 103 creativity instructors and asked them to identify the importance of course criteria. The instructors responded that general theories and models were of very little importance; rather, they emphasized using humor, imagination, analogy/metaphor, and increasing student understanding of creativity. One of the highest ranked criteria was having a safe environment where students felt secure and free to explore their creativity. Other highly ranked criteria included eliminating creativity blocks and creating a climate that fostered creativity.

Scott, Leritz, and Mumford (2004) outlined six methods for developing creativity: (1) changing or improving the environment; (2) motivating through incentives; (3) building expertise; (4) enhancing career development experiences; (5) facilitating group work and interaction; and (6) training and education, which was the most favored. The most successful training programs focused the development of training content on the core practices of opportunity recognition, idea generation, and idea evaluation (Scott et al., 2004).

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