CREATIVE LEADERSHIP IN FASHION BUSINESS TODAY
A case study on MUUSE

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Abstract

Purpose: From an anthropological angle, the purpose of this paper is to shed light into how young innovative fashion companies can exercise creative leadership and reflect the creativity of their external image in their internal environment, towards their path to prosperity and success.

Design/methodology/approach: The research analyses the case of MUUSE, a paradigmatic fashion company based in Copenhagen, Denmark in order to examine its creativity inside-out (external image and internal environment/operations). The entrepreneurs and employees were interviewed during two workdays, as well as observations were held over a period of eight months. For the analysis of the case and its operations, the 4P’s creativity framework (person, product, process and press/situation) was used.

Findings: The research shows that creative leadership in fashion business today can be linked with innovation, meaningfulness and transparency in all levels of infrastructure. Further it declares the significance of creative leadership traits, which can include: having a creative and purposeful vision, developing an effective global mindset, evolving a creative work environment and increasing intrinsic motivators.

Keywords: creative leadership, innovation, organizational creativity, fashion business, case study, 4P’s, entrepreneurship, meaningfulness
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1 Introduction

This chapter begins by detecting the basic indicators of how business is developing today and provides information around creativity and fashion, emanating from existing research and literature. Then it forms a problem, which discusses the issue of creativity as per the external image and internal environment/operations of fashion companies. A research question is consequently created in order to lead to the purpose of the study, which, based on the analysis of the case study of MUUSE, a young innovative fashion company, based in Copenhagen, Denmark, will further draw insights around creative leadership in fashion business today. The lens used for this research has humanistic angles and socio-cultural concerns.

1.1 Background

In our days, fashion business is enormously increasing, with many brands and new designers continually entering the retail market. There are numerous factors that entrepreneurs and managers need to consider so as to approach business in fashion on a successful level. Fashion companies aspire to be successful, yet the biggest challenge they face is that a mere product or service that meets certain needs is not sufficient: Success doesn’t necessarily come from what we do (or sell), but from how we do it and why. On a broader scale, research indicates that many business leaders, politicians and educators emphasize the vital importance of promoting creativity and innovation in order to stimulate a sustainable future (Robinson, 2011).

1.1.1 Humanistic approach as evolution in making business

It’s a fact that the world is radically moving towards new ideals; it is changing in a very rapid base and business is going through transmission: numbers-driven management began to fade towards creativity, innovation and meaningfulness. Strategic management is now creative art; it’s not about math and science anymore (Nussbaum, 2005; Deiser, 2011).

Lucy Marcus (2011), professor of Leadership and Governance at IE Business School, acknowledged that “it’s not just about immediate returns or even long-term returns in a monetary sense; manager directors also now have responsibility to larger communities, their entire eco-system, the stakeholders – it’s time to know better the people who work in the company and the sector around it; it’s not about hands-in rather it is about hands-on the company, it’s about getting a fingertip feel for the business and understanding what’s happening. We have the obligation to take a moment, to remind ourselves why we’re there and what our purpose is; we’re there for the business, for the future of the business, for the sake of the ecosystem of the business, all the stakeholders. It’s all about human dynamics.”

Recent developments in science (Goswami, 2008) indicate that there is an evolutionary movement of consciousness going on right now. “This evolutionary movement demands that our society as a whole must become more ethical, more inclined to put moral values at the center of societal activities. Money has no intrinsic
value. Businesses that make money speculating on money have no scope for fundamental creativity and because there is no intrinsic value involved, there is no creativity, even situational innovation” (Goswami, 2009:138).

1.1.2 The decline of hierarchy and rise of team work
“Creative competence calls for a new culture of leadership that shapes horizontal, non-hierarchical relationships without relying on formal power and control. It requires courageous leaders who can experiment with innovative business models, based on trust and engagement” (Deiser, 2011:18).

Provided that businesses now start to get driven by youthful employees, the decline of hierarchy is inevitable. Steven Pedigo, researcher for the Creative Class Group, which is a global think tank that advises companies on how to attract talent from the creative class states: “As the workforce gets younger, they are really interested in taking on projects that tap into the idea of entrepreneurism. The employers that have been really successful in fostering creativity are those that have created an environment that is entrepreneurial. They are really team-driven and not a top-down, but almost flat, infrastructure. One way that employers can open their company up to more creativity is by providing a work environment that is flexible and caters to the needs of employees. One example is being amenable to employees who want to work untraditional hours, or in a setting outside the office” (Inc.com, 2007).

1.1.3 The impact of technology
One dominant indicator of how business is developing today is the evolution of technology. The continuous introduction of new technologies has forced managers to reflect on how these can be adopted in order to develop and improve business logic; the blossom of Internet has set entirely new standards to the way business is considered now. Robinson (2011) has stated in his book that what is distinctive now is the rate and scale of change, and that the two great driving forces are technological innovation and population growth. These are transforming the nature of people’s life and work, politics and culture. The new technologies contradict the capacities required by the old labor-intensive industrial economies, demanding completely different abilities, based on high levels of specialist knowledge, and on creativity and innovation.

1.1.4 Creativity
Creativity is vital for organizations and considered as a “key success factor” in small and entrepreneurial firms (Fillis, 2000:132). Creativity is the ability to produce an idea that is in some way novel. Writers of creativity have added to its characteristics efficiency, effectiveness and high quality. (Amabile, 1998; Kauffman & Sternberg, 2007; Deiser, 2011) Robinson (2011) claims that creativity is sometimes associated with free expression, as being creative does usually involve playing with ideas and having fun, enjoyment and imagination.
According to Amabile (1998), the associations made between creativity and artistic originality often lead to confusion about the appropriate place of creativity in business organizations, yet it’s a fact that creativity can benefit every function of an organization. Deiser (2011) states that creative organizational design is the new strategic weapon.

1.1.5 Innovation

It is widely considered that innovation is vital for corporate survival and growth. Innovation can be defined as novel moderation or reformation; it denotes a change in a new, different and optimizing way than the usual or standard. Common types of innovation relate to new products, materials, new processes, new services, and new organizational forms (Ettlie & Reza, 1992, see Baregheh et al., 2009: 1234). Baregheh et al. (2009:1334), who have conducted an extensive research around the definition of innovation, suggest that innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organizations transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace. According to Baregheh et al. (2009:1234), in order to sustain their competitive position and to strengthen it, organizations and economies must innovate and promote innovation; innovation is a key policy and strategic issue.

In that way, it can be said that companies are considered innovative when they introduce to a market something (product, service, process) different than the mainstream. Innovation always denotes something new, so it cannot be accurately put in a strict frame. As an example, however, Ralph Lauren is considered to be innovative in a sense, due to the organization’s technological approach to luxury fashion: “The company’s commitment to e-commerce, mobile applications, original media content and interactive digital experiences has placed it at the forefront of the fashion world as it moves into the digital age.” (FastCompany.com, 2012)

1.1.6 Fashion business and innovation

Fashion, an entirely creative discipline, has always been linked to innovation. Fashion senses the changes taking place in the world and responds to them sensitively and immediately. It is exposed to influences coming from all fields of life: a) social and economic situation, b) protection of environment and health, c) political and legal environment, d) multicultural effects, e) arts and design, f) technological developments (e-textiles, new production procedures, etc.), f) sexuality (blurred border between male and female dressing, etc.) and g) the Internet (social media etc) (Kisfaludy, 2008: 59).

Recognizing as trends of our times a) the rise of the creative class and importance of creative talent in a knowledge economy, and b) the rise of creative competence as a critical success factors (Deiser, 2011), we see that a large number of innovative startup companies are making a strong appearance nowadays, and that many organizations are enhancing their innovation in order to develop a sustained
competitive advantage in their industry. Also, design is one of the major competitive differentiators. (Deiser, 2011: 18) Today, the main trends command creativity, meaningfulness, transparency, innovation and reinvention, and have a vital importance that impugns the society’s previously commercial-driven business standards.

However we see that creative industries have two dimensions; apart from the artistic side, business as linked to commerciality is the other side that forms the whole. The latter is what makes things obviously harder when trying to reach success and profitability, and is a factor that can decrease the level of creativity inside the company.

1.2 Problem Discussion
There is an unfortunate schism between the brand image of fashion companies and their work environment; more often than not, companies do not reflect their brand identity in their inner core. According to a survey commissioned by the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs in 2007, nearly 40 percent of employees say companies are not creative and that one in five U.S. workers also say they would take less money to work at a more creative company (Fairfax County EDA, 2007). Teresa Amabile, director of research at the Harvard Business School supports in her research (1998) that “creativity gets killed much more than it gets supported. Even though managers believe in the value of new and useful ideas, creativity is undermined unintentionally every day in work environments that were established – for entirely good reasons – to maximize business imperatives such as coordination, productivity, and control” (Amabile, 1998). At some point, it can be natural to stress on the aspect of profitability since it’s the fundamental factor that controls a company’s life.

High importance is given to attract customers with creative ways, however the fact of striving for the commercial aspects raises the risk of paying less attention to hold the creativity and euphoria of the employees as the years of a company’s existence proliferate. This is consequence of various yet similar reasons, which mainly revolve around the negative influence of economic pressure. Managers usually begin entrepreneurship with creative ideas, but unless the structure of the company is highly attentive, there is a strong possibility to forget the primordial enthusiasm and urge to build a strong and successful team, and start to have a less engaging attitude towards employees.

One factor that presently inflates this issue in a lot of European countries is the global economic crisis; due to the increase of unemployment many companies partially tend to stress on peoples’ need to work for survival, making creativity a prerogative of few. The young generation, which now faces this problem, has grown up having many ideals that are refuted along their way. In particular, when entering the business field, young people can be zealous to find meaningful jobs, however the problem that
occurs to a large extent is that very quickly they confront the rigorous side of business that may bate their creativity and infuse feelings of aversion regarding labor. Even though one can argue that this side is essential for hardening, the question of how creativity should be circulated in a company still remains crucial in order to have a healthy and progressive organization.

Creativity, in its core, is a result of human dynamics. Hence, it is important to observe it with an anthropological approach. The findings of a recent study suggest that people who produce creative work, usually have personal creative characteristics, and that their creative performance is enhanced in a creative work environment, which provides more intrinsic motivators, such as interesting work, equitable pay, independence, responsibility, and achievement. On the other side, the same research reveals that non-creative employees are driven by motivators such as comfortable working conditions, advancement, security, adequate earnings, respect and recognition (Gupta, 2009).

1.3 Research Question
How can a young innovative fashion company manage to reflect its creative external identity (creativity outside) in its internal environment/processes (creativity inside), towards its path to prosperity and success?

1.4 Purpose of the research
This case study is part of the research Entrepreneurship and Creativity: Case Studies in Design and Fashion Companies. Under the government's action plan for cultural and creative businesses VINNOVA, the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, financed and organized studies of small and medium-sized enterprises to analyse the conditions for business growth opportunities in this sector. The studies are carried out in 2011-2012. Entrepreneurship and Creativity: Case Studies in Design and Fashion Companies is one of five projects in this program.

The general purpose of the case studies in design and fashion companies is to describe and analyse how companies with design and fashion as a core of the business concept exercise leadership and are able to maintain a high creative level in its operations and development. Two main issues are the starting point; how are creative processes managed and organized and how is the creative result in the company commercialized? Based on these issues questions about the organization, marketing, brand building and licensing as well as the financial development are investigated. It is also intended to investigate how various difficulties, including financial ones in the early years, have been overcome. The case studies are selected to demonstrate

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different leadership and organization of design and fashion companies, how design interacts with other features in and around the company. The research of the cases ultimately intends to serve as insight provider for inspirational, informational and teaching purposes regarding the enterprise culture of fashion (University of Borås, 2012).

This specific thesis describes the fashion company MUUSE from a creativity perspective, with the purpose of gaining insights around creative leadership in fashion business. Compiled by young entrepreneurs, the company’s approach to business should nonetheless make a case study that teachers, students, policy-makers and entrepreneurs can reflect upon; looking at its stance on fashion, business atmosphere, style and ideals we will observe an exemplary at the fashion sector of the business revolution in the creative industries of the 21st century.

MUUSE has made its entrance in the fashion business arena in 2011. The specific case company has since created and developed an innovative business model with determined goals and visions. Based on supporting young extraordinary designers who come right out of fashion schools, the company emphasizes in reinventing the way fashion business is considered in our times. Moreover, it challenges the world’s fascination about clothes, turning our focus to the concept behind the garments and the designers’ vision, in an aesthetically meticulous way. The case makes evident that designers can be artists who communicate and express themselves through making clothes that react to mass-addressed functional clothing; the pieces designers make represent expressions of thematic ideas and feelings through arts and aesthetics.

2 Methodology

This chapter includes information and justification around the research strategy of the paper. It starts by describing the nature of the study approach and thereafter gives reasoning behind the choice of company. Then it offers information about the type and way of data collection. Finally, a delimitation part is included, as for the accuracy of the research.

2.1 Design of the study

In order to offer solid, reliable and substantial understanding, and help build knowledge on the creative leadership in business within the fashion industry of the 21st century, this research emphasizes on empirical data provided through thoroughly analyzing the case of an innovative fashion startup company. The analysis will emanate from findings concerning the company’s profile, operations and management and from focusing on how business is handled within the company, interpretation of its significance takes place in a social context. This case aims to act as a reference point, which will function as a focus for the founding of schools of thought.
Flyvbjerg (2006), who has thoroughly examined the role and structure of case studies, has reported that the choice of method should clearly depend on the problem under study and its circumstances. In this case, the approach to the relationship between theory and research is primarily inductive, where theory will emanate from the research, aiming to generate interesting and illuminating findings, through insightful empirical data, whose theoretical significance is not entirely clear (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

This research is studying a single case, recognizing the limitation of generalization that questions the accurate application of liable conclusions. However it is believed that the strategic choice of a case may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods (Flyvbjerg, 2006:229).

As mentioned by Flyvbjerg (2006:232) “no standard exists for the paradigmatic case because it sets the standard. Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus (1986) saw paradigmatic cases and case studies as central to human learning.” Flyvbjerg (2006:232), in his article quotes what Dreyfus shared with him in 1988 about what constitutes a paradigmatic case and how it can be identified: “Heidegger says, you recognize a paradigm case because it shines, but I’m afraid that is not much help. You just have to be intuitive. We all can tell what is a better or worse case—of a Cézanne painting, for instance. But I can’t think there could be any rules for deciding what makes Cézanne a paradigmatic modern painter... It is a big problem in a democratic society where people are supposed to justify what their intuitions are. In fact, nobody really can justify what their intuition is. So you have to make up reasons, but it won’t be the real reasons.” Flyvbjerg (2006), in accordance with Dreyfus, indicates that intuition is indeed central to identifying paradigmatic cases, however argues that one’s intuitions can be justifiable, by adding that “ethnomethodological studies of scientific practice demonstrate that all variety of such practice relies on taken-for-granted procedures that feel largely intuitive,” and that nevertheless, “those intuitive decisions are accountable, in the sense of being sensible to other practitioners or often explicable if not immediately sensible.” Flyvbjerg (2006:233) ends by stating that “researchers can use their experience and intuition to assess whether they believe a given case is interesting in a paradigmatic context and whether they can provide collectively acceptable reasons for the choice of case”.

Moreover, regarding the issue of validity, Flyvbjerg (2006:233) claims that, “Besides the strategic choice of case, the execution of the case study will certainly play a role, as will the reactions to the study by the research community, the group studied, and possibly, a broader public. The value of the case study will depend on the validity claims that researchers can place on their study and the status these claims obtain in dialogue with other validity claims in the discourse to which the study is a contribution”.
The thesis explores the use of descriptive, narrative analysis. Etherington points out that a narrative researcher begins from a ‘curious, not knowing’ position (Anderson & Gehart, 2007, see Etherington, 2011) and focuses on questions that help the storyteller address cultural context; their embodied engagement in the events, their senses, feelings; thoughts, attitudes and ideas; the significance of other people; the choices and actions of the teller: based on values, beliefs and aims; historical continuity; and metaphors, symbols, and creative, intuitive ways of knowing which create pictures that capture vivid representations of experiences (Etherington, 2011).

The method used for this research is constituted by three ways of data collection: observations, interviews and documentation. The analysis is based on a combination of these three sources of information in order to produce meaningful insight for the company’s profile and operations.

2.1.1 Choosing MUUSE
Since this study aims to be as contemporary as possible, the main reasons that drove to the selection of MUUSE were the company’s innovative approach to business and artistic disposition. Due to its particular designer-centric character, the way that the company approaches fashion, gives a meaningful touch to the study of the case. Finally, the aesthetical attraction that was provoked when observing as a visitor of the company’s website is yet another reason that qualifies MUUSE as a choice for analysis.

2.1.2 Connecting with MUUSE
When VOGUE Italy first published information about the new talented fashion designers contest with MUUSE on its website, the creative initiative instantly drew my attention and motivated me to observe the course of this new organization. Months later, after having decided to write my master thesis on creativity and take part in the project Case studies in fashion and design companies, I spent time trying to choose the case that would operate as paradigmatic in terms of creativity, innovation and artistic operations within fashion. Following a discussion with my supervisor about design companies that collect the work of various artists, I contemplated MUUSE.

MUUSE has since the beginning been perceived as innovative in my mind because of its unusual character that differs from the mainstream fashion business scene, as it actively promotes the work of young fashion designers that graduate right out of renowned fashion schools. I thought that, with the company’s consent, it would be an interesting opportunity to explore more about its creative operations through my research topic and investigate its potential successful leadership in fashion.

Soon after sending a corresponding email to the company expressing my thoughts and requesting interviews, I received a positive response that signaled the formation of this research.
2.2 Data collection

2.2.1. Observations
This research was approached with analytical, multidimensional observation and critical thinking. It has been conducted with humanistic sensors emanating from personal former work experience in the commercial cog of fashion business.

From the start of my communication with MUUSE, my thoughts and observations were partially kept in notes. Prior to the interviews, my observations, apart from my onsite experience as a visitor, were based on my essence and impression of the written communication with the company, i.e. the speed, the frequency, the formality, the language, the content and tone of their responding emails so as to figure out the company’s spirit when they interact with outsiders, such as fashion master students. The casual and positive response I received before my visit for the interviews encouraged a sincere and lighthearted cooperation with the individuals I was in contact.

During my visit to the company for the interviews, my observations were based on my essence and impression of a variation of things: their characters and personalities, their way of communicating, the atmosphere, the aesthetics of the environment and the surroundings, their tasks, routines and activities, saunter, sounds and music, and other operations such as their recruiting system. The observations serve in order to examine the ratio of freedom and stress, fun and productivity, business and creativity.

2.2.2. Interviews/ Conversations
When visiting the offices of MUUSE in April 2012, I was welcomed to stay and talk with all the employees of the company for two continuing workdays, as well as to participate in one of their team meetings. The principal interviews I conducted with the two founders of the company, as well as with two out of nine employees, were all audio-recorded. Supplementary conversations with the interviewees and the rest of the work force during lunch break and other operations were partly held in notes. The aim of the interviews was to collect data on the story around the general subjects of:

(i) Creativity Outside (external processes)
- PR and marketing operations
- Company History (mission and values)
- Company Present (where is the company now)
- Company Future (goals and aspirations)

(ii) Creativity Inside (internal processes)
- Operations and production
- Business and Management
- Designers as collaborators
- Team environment and activities
Finally, collecting (iii) ideas and perceptions on success and leadership from people at
the company were considered important and interesting to investigate.

The data from the interviews were fully transferred into transcript. Basic key
questions were organized beforehand, but were purposely not orderly followed to lay
importance to improvisation and the human factors of establishing a conversational
environment that would lead to information unaffected by predefined conclusions.
Further, more specific questions were defined prior to the second day of interviews,
adjusted on the outcome of the first day.

2.2.3. Documentation
Documents that have to do with the concept of the company, its profile, its
management and marketing directions, testimonials and press releases, figures and
confidential data were provided after my request in order to help me understand the
business model and develop a more clear image on their mission and vision, to
perceive their wider external image and define their gauge of creativity outside.
Furthermore, the documents included resumes of the founders that, along with the
interviews, ameliorated my search on their background qualities as leaders. Finally, I
have used my photographic camera in order to visualize the work environment and its
aesthetics.

2.3 Delimitations
Given the fact that the company is radically evolving and is in progress, the
information provided in the research is subject to the corresponding date of working
on each data.

3 Conceptual Framework
This section begins by emphasizing the vital importance of creativity inside a work
environment and the particular effect of creative leadership in organizations.
Subsequently, it analyzes the 4P’s creativity framework, which will be used in order
to examine creativity in the case company.

3.1 Creative Leadership

3.1.1 The importance of the creative work environment
There are many perspectives from which creativity can be observed. When talking
about business, and especially fashion business, there are two ways in which
creativity can be examined: outside and inside. Creativity outside is the gauge that
refers to how creatively the company communicates its external image to the broader
audience, e.g. customers’ experience. On the other hand, creativity inside is the
indicator of creativity in the internal environment of an organization, i.e. the
experience of the people who work inside the company, for example the employees,
managers, or collaborators.
Both perspectives are equally important in order to have a healthy, creative organization. Companies, through their products, environment and organization should be able to satisfy the needs and aesthetics of people, either the latter are, for instance, customers or employees; the feeling of willingness-to-come-back-again to the company should always be attained and applied in both cases. People spend a very big part of their lives at work. That being said, when business links with creativity, people can get more motivated and more efficient in their work. Studies have shown that people in positions that require conceptual and creative thinking don’t function better when offered money bonuses, but rather when taken the pressure out of it (Pink, 2010); it is true that the brain can create more freely when it is released from the stress of money.

Amabile (1998) states that in order to foster an innovative workplace, one needs to pay attention to employees’ expertise, creative thinking skills, and motivation. Of these three, she points out that employees’ motivation – specifically, their intrinsic motivation, or passion for a certain kind of challenge – is the most potent lever a manager can use to boost creativity and his company’s future success. Intrinsic motivation is a person’s abiding interest in certain activities or deep love of particular challenges. Employees are most creative when they are intrinsically motivated. On the contrary, extrinsic motivation, which comes from outside the individual – might be a bonus offer or the threat of firing – can’t prompt people to be passionate about their work; in fact, it can lead them to feel bribed or controlled.

In her recent article, Amabile (2012) claims that even incremental steps forward boost what is called “inner work life”: the constant flow of emotions, motivations, and perceptions that constitute a person’s reactions to the events of the work day. Beyond affecting the well-being of employees, inner work life affects the bottom line. People are more creative, productive, committed, and collegial in their jobs when they have positive inner work lives. But it’s not just any sort of progress in work that matters. The first, and fundamental, requirement is that the work be meaningful to the people doing it. And the truth is that not only must work be meaningful to people, but the organizations’ strategy must also be meaningful to create meaningful work. When individuals feel the cause is worthwhile, the natural inclinations to do good work and to feel challenged will result in enthusiastic efforts to achieve organizational goals. (Amabile, 2012)

Furthermore, the aesthetics of a workplace are duly important as they influence the inspiration and creativity. Hansen (2007) described that aesthetics refers to sensory knowledge and felt meaning of objects and experiences. Reason and logic has often been contrasted with emotion and feeling, but what they both have in common is that they are sources of knowledge and generate meanings we rely and act on. Aesthetics involves meanings we construct based on feelings about what we experience via our
senses, as opposed to the meanings we can deduce in the absence of experience, such as mathematics or other realist ways of knowing.

One great example of revolutionary creative entrepreneurship is Google. Google’s mission statement and corporate culture reflect a philosophy that you can “make money without doing evil” and is “built around the idea that work should be challenging, and the challenge should be fun.” In the company’s core values, it is further stated that, “we believe that great, creative things are more likely to happen with the right company culture. There is an emphasis on team achievements and pride in individual accomplishments that contribute to our overall success. We put great stock in our employees—energetic, passionate people from diverse backgrounds with creative approaches to work, play and life. Our atmosphere may be casual, but as new ideas emerge in a café line, at a team meeting or at the gym, they are traded, tested and put into practice with dizzying speed—and they may be the launch pad for a new project destined for worldwide use.” (Google, 2012) Among the top comments on the work environment of Google, it is interesting to quote Avinash Kaushik, the Analytics Evangelist for Google; in 2008 Kaushik described in his website working at Google as fun, surprising, insightful, inspiring and impactful. Kaushik further signified the brain expansion opportunities, and the energy, the vibe, and the passion of the work environment.

In order for creativity to prosper in a work environment, many aspects should be considered. An aesthetically intriguing and creative environment is not enough, if it is not compiled with creative leaders and creative followers, and the analogous creative work at hand. There are different departments, however, within organizations that may require different levels of creativity. For example, of its nature, accounting is not as creative work as fashion design, however that too can benefit from creative processes and a creative environment.

3.1.2 The importance of leadership
It has been accepted as a truism that good leadership is essential to business, to government and to countless groups and organizations that shape the way in which we live, work and play (Robbins, 1986). Bridle (2001) agrees with this idea and claims that successful business begins at the top and is driven by leadership. A leader gives direction and sets standards, creates inspired people whose enthusiasm for the business leads to an innovative approach to the business and also inspires employees with natural enthusiasm and flair when interacting with customers (Carstens & Barnes (2006).

What distinguishes a true leader is the vision of changing the world by contributing to the society in any certain way. The vision is the most important key in successful business and it should come from something a leader really loves and believes; even at times when there is limited financial background, since it’s in the leader’s acknowledged characteristics to be able to convince others and develop followers,
investors can then be persuaded as well, and eventually the profit will come when more people believe what he believes.

Hansen (2007) holds the view that leadership refers to phenomena considered magically creative, inspirational, and life-full. Like young artists who develop their pieces in order to make a statement or to express themselves, it’s exactly the same way that businesses should approach management nowadays, meaning that the purpose should not be the money itself. This is the reason why websites that aim to raise fund for creative ideas, like kickstarter and indiegogo, are popular: it’s almost ideal is to make profit out of contributing for a cause and making a change. “Creative leaders have a strong set of core values, which are nonnegotiable. They have a vision for their work or their organization that is premised upon a clear and consistent moral, social or ethical purpose (West-Burnham, 2008 see Harris, 2009).

Literature has defined already too many types of leaders and there are fairly too many descriptions out there of what a leader is; but again, the existence of a true leader comes by doing something one loves and believes and by intriguing people to believe in that. Being a leader in the 21st century is quite simple when generalized: all that is needed is an open mind, a passion for a cause and the ability to move people.

Briefly when it comes to global leadership, the development of a global mindset is critical to operating in a global environment and even in a domestic environment (Lovvorn, 2011). Having traveled to other countries, speaking more than one language fluently, having experienced an international assignment, or having studied abroad can nurture global thinking. When managers gain international experience, they broaden their perspectives and knowledge and can develop a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Cohen, 2010). Also, individuals that have lived and worked in another part of the world are likely to develop an understanding of the relationships among worldwide operations and capabilities (Black & Gregersen 1999, see Lovvorn, 2011). As it is proven through various research, living or studying abroad increases creativity. A recent research has shown that cultural experiences from living abroad have wide-reaching benefits on people’s creativity, including the facilitation of complex cognitive processes that promote creative thinking (Lee & Therriault, 2012).

In regards to operations, according to Schultz (2000), the role of an effective leader is to set direction, improve performance and produce results. Schultz (2000) emphasizes in psychological conditions such as the need of respect, harmony and cooperation in the organization, as these help leaders understand and optimize people’s abilities; in order to improve productivity, it’s essential to ensure: commitment by everyone, ownership of work, as well as information and feedback up, down, and across the organization’s infrastructures. As reported by Carstens and Barnes (2006), in order to achieve the higher levels of performance in a team, leaders must demonstrate their trust in others before requiring for trust from others.
The leader of a company, depending a lot on his own personality and way of managing business and people, has the power to influence, reveal, expand or diminish the potential of his employees. Creativity, even though it is considered vital and coveted, is difficult to be sustained within the organization, since sometimes people cannot realize that it is an ongoing process that should never cease to be encouraged. Leaders who do not champion the value of creativity, can be considered as non-creative leaders. Some qualities that indicate non-creative leaders are: being narrow-minded and not putting effort to learn from others, not willing to ask for help in areas they are not familiar with, not recognizing talents, not rewarding employees, not creating good communication paths, not showing respect by using inappropriate language, letting people work unhappily, not trusting their employees, not smiling or laughing often, and are being too money-oriented, too strict, autocratic, allowing no space for creativity.

Leaders lead. Everyone is learning so much so fast today that the leaders must never sit back and think they know enough. Leaders must learn at a faster pace than their employees and that is a challenge. You cannot lead what you do not understand and you cannot understand what you have not done (Schultz, 2000).

3.2 The 4P’s in creativity

Creativity has many aspects that rely on the perspective from which it’s being examined, and can be subjective, as it depends on the person who is observing/criticizing. One recognized way to look into creativity in business is examining the “4P’s creativity model”. Created in 1961 by Mel Rhodes, the model classifies the fundamental elements of creativity, which are: Person, Product, Process, and Press (environment) (Kauffman & Sternberg, 2007; Fox, 2012), and is going to be described below.
Organizational creativity is the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure, or process by individuals working together in a complex social system (Woodman et al. 1993). An understanding of organizational creativity will necessarily involve understanding (a) the creative process, (b) the creative product, (c) the creative person, (d) the creative situation, and (e) the way in which each of these components interacts with the others (Brown, 1989; Harrington, 1990; Woodman et al. 1993).

3.2.1 Person
Person refers to the characteristics and motivation of the creative individual. “The term person covers information about personality, intellect, temperament, physique, traits, habits, attitudes, self-concept, value systems, defense mechanisms, and behavior” (Rhodes 1961:307). There are four factors that have been established as instrumental for understanding the individuality of creativity, and these are: personality, intrinsic motivation, knowledge, and cognitive skills and abilities (Hansen et al. 2012).

Concerning personality, creative traits can include “high valuation of aesthetic qualities in experience, broad interests, attraction to complexity, high energy, independence of judgment, autonomy, intuition, self-confidence, ability to resolve antinomies or to accommodate apparently opposite or conflicting traits in one's self-
concept, and a firm sense of self as creative” (Barron & Harrington 1981:453, see Woodman et al. 1993:298).

In terms of cognitive skills, researchers have identified a number of cognitive abilities that relate to creativity. These can be: fluency (i.e. speech, expression), flexibility, originality, and learning and thinking skills (Woodman et al. 1993; Dimov, 2007).

Intrinsic motivation is a particularly crucial factor for creativity. As discussed earlier in the paper, intrinsic motivation relates to the passion for a certain kind of challenge. It can emanate from sources like vision; when setting up goals that are meaningful, leaders are intrinsically motivated and hence, more keen to creativity. Employees can be more creative when, for example, they are given the choice of how to perform a task. “Extrinsic motivations, such as monetary reward given for performance on a task for which the individual has no choice can enhance creativity, but when the individual is offered a reward for consenting to perform the task, creativity may actually be undermined.” (Woodman et al. 1993:300).

Finally, knowledge is identified as significant to creative performance, since it increases a person’s abilities to perform creative tasks. Knowledge is a key-element and is the foundation for innovation. More than that, knowledge that is not only on one’s area of expertise is considered as a great asset due to the fact that it widens perspectives and raises creativity. Moreover, it is a matter of high importance for leaders to be knowledgeable on aspects in all the functions of the organization, as it enhances their own productivity and effectiveness, and builds a stronger communication path with the employees.

3.2.2 Process
The process refers to the way in which creative ideas occur. “The term process applies to motivation, perception, learning, thinking, and communication” (Rhodes 1961:308). There are five elements that constitute the process: preparation, incubation, insight, evaluation and elaboration.

Preparation involves acquiring, as well as utilizing knowledge and skills. It can be learning how to write a business plan, or the general knowledge of different legal forms of businesses (Corbet 2005, see Hansen et al. 2012).

Incubation has to do with the passive disorientation from problem details or entrenched ideas that do not work and the use of signals from the environment (Ochse 1990; Olton 1979; Smith & Dodds 1999, see Hansen et al. 2012:30). During problem solving, it is sometimes needed to put the issue aside and get occupied with something else; ideas can then come on a separate moment, when one is doing something unrelated to the task, such as working out, relaxing or taking a shower.
Insight is a moment of realization in which a potential solution becomes clear or a new possibility is perceived; in other words it’s the moment of “eureka”. It can be one large insight or the gradual collection of many small insights. (Hansen et al. 2012:30)

Evaluation involves further exploring an idea to verify its viability and determine if it is worth pursuing or not. Finally, elaboration is the actualization of the most viable idea. This is the process that involves the most time and effort by an entrepreneur. (Hansen et al. 2012:30)

3.2.3 Press
Press comes from the Latin word pressus, meaning a box or a container to put things in; it refers to “the relationship between human beings and their environment” (Rhodes 1961:308). The term includes the pressures on the creative process. These pressures can be either creativity enhancing or constraining (Woodman et al., 1993). Amabile (1998) identified the following positive situational influences on creativity: freedom, autonomy, resources, encouragement, freedom from criticism and norms in which innovation is prized and failure not fatal. These situations are more prevalent within entrepreneurship because the entrepreneur typically directs him or herself and develops the environment they want in their business. Discouraging factors include red tape, time pressure, competition, lack of autonomy and resources. External pressure will not be as effective in producing creativity as internal motivation. External pressures may include resources, time pressure, social networks, costs, and the opinions of others.

3.2.4 Product
The product concerns the outcome of the creative processes (Runco, 2004, see Hansen et al. 2012). There are many forms of creative products; it can be about a new designer product, the launch of a new webpage, a business plan or a new idea. “The word idea refers to a thought which has been communicated to other people in the form of words, paint, clay, metal, stone, fabric, or other material. When an idea becomes embodied into tangible form it is called a product.” (Rhodes, 1961:308)

4 Case Study MUUSE
At first, this chapter explores the external image of the case company through a description of the website and what is communicated to its visitors, and also gives a brief description of competitors. By classifying the collected information under the 4P’s creativity model of Rhodes (1961), next starts the case analysis of MUUSE. Since the data are interrelated, each section will focus on one primary P factor, but there will be reference to others.

4.1 The external image of MUUSE
MUUSE is an online fashion company based in Copenhagen, Denmark that specializes in producing and selling in most of Europe, garments of emerging graduate fashion designers. The pieces are special, given that some of them cannot
typically be worn, a fact that however gives a stigma of a differentiated artistic character and approach to fashion business. The company does this in three ways at the moment: 1) through tailor-made orders that are sewn to fit the measurements of an individual, 2) through ready-to-wear pieces that are in stock for immediate shipping, and 3) with preorders that only get produced if a certain amount of people is interested.

MUUSE appears to be very creative when observed externally. First and foremost, this is due to its website’s aesthetically neat layout: artistic pictures of high quality and zooming abilities, black and white colors as a basis, simple sophisticated logo and fonts. The structure is clean-cut, making it easy to navigate throughout the website; the features are simple: Shop – Designers – Blog – About Us. The language used, a particular balance between formal and informal, indicating a diversified comfortable company code.

Barring the visual image, the second factor that meets creativity is the concept itself and the way it is publicly presented. The idea of promoting the talent of young designers is innovative on its own, yet it also requires creative thinking in order to be as flowingly described onsite: “A platform for connecting the best global independent fashion talent to people who love fashion, MUUSE produces pieces in limited editions, of uncompromising design, crafted by European tailors to the highest quality standards” (Muuse, 2012).

In the Designers section, MUUSE not only displays the artists in alphabetical order, the most popular or newest, but in two more ways: by categorizing them by school and by distinguishing the ones featured in Vogue. In that way, MUUSE makes it clear that the designers enrolled are not fortuitous; listed are renowned fashion schools: The Antwerp Fashion Academy, Central Saint Martins, Istituto Marangoni, Parsons, The
Royal College of Art and more. The designers – they are around eighty at the moment – are displayed all cohesively in black and white pictures, and right next to each one of them, in color, there is a representative picture of their collection.

What is particularly noticeable when clicking on a collection is the way the garments are presented; contrary to common multi-brand or multi-designer fashion e-shops, every designer has his space, somewhat of an online exhibition, which is differentiated and distinguished from the other collections through the images. When visiting the page, one can see each designer’s collection through individual artistic photos, rather than identical product pictures; however the latter are provided in addition, apparently to show the clear shape and fit of each garment. It is significant that the concept of each designer collection is being described next to the pictures, disposing the focus on the story behind the creation of the collection and garment. Finally the conceptual spirit of the website is enhanced by the featured information about the background of each designer.

Picture 2: The Designers page (Screenshot taken on May 20th, 2012)
MUUSE’s blog is about art-related topics, such as photography, music and events. Through the blog, named MUUSINGS, one can read that MUUSE has already been associated with VOGUE Italy. The collaboration with Vogue Italy happened in December 2011 and was about “MUUSE’s most promising designer by Vogue talents”, a contest after which 10 finalists were selected by the fashion editor of Vogue Italy to receive a production opportunity with MUUSE. The winner of the contest was featured in Vogue talents as well as designer of the month on the website of MUUSE during fashion week in February 2012.

In the About Us section there is a picture of the working team, also in black and white, with a few words on who-is-who when moving the cursor on each one, denoting transparency and team environment. Moreover, the expressions on the peoples’ faces seem natural, relaxed and unconstrained.

In terms of shopping experience, the price level is considerably high, yet the quality seems to be adequate of what MUUSE wants to stand for; even though the designers are unknown to the public due to the fact that they are recent graduates, there are very inspiring pieces that surely attract interest. It also seems that MUUSE pays attention to customer support, through helpful messages regarding sizes and measurements, garment care and general explanations.

The mission of MUUSE, as stated in the relevant section on their website, is “to bring the work of the most talented independent fashion designers to people who love design – without filtering by retailers or policing by trend forecasters. We show original pieces from the ateliers of designers profiled by the press, selected by tastemakers, and alumni from the top fashion design schools. We allow customers to influence design and to choose which pieces to have sewn, kick-starting production of their favorite pieces. MUUSE believes in slow fashion: made to-order, crafted in
small studios. To ensure the best quality, MUUSE works with top tailors to translate designer visions into lasting, quality garments. This means pieces are not only uncompromising in their design, but high quality and unique garments – truly sustainable style. Based in Copenhagen, MUUSE represents graduate designers internationally from the top fashion design schools. MUUSE ships to most of Europe. MUUSE works with tailors worldwide, matching the designs with the most expert sewing and fabric sources. In Copenhagen our in-house tailors sew the clothing in our studio in Copenhagen” (Muuse, 2012).

It is apparent that MUUSE is no ordinary online fashion retail shop. However, in terms of innovation, it’s not the only company that has challenged the idea of showcasing young independent designers; there are two online shops that have similar patents with MUUSE and are indicated as direct competitors so far, NOT JUST A LABEL and CARNET DE MONDE.

NOT JUST A LABEL is established and located in the UK, and promotes its company profile as ‘discovering and supporting pioneers in contemporary fashion’. In the About Us section it is noted: “Set up in 2008 to infuse new life into fashion, NJAL was quick to become an indispensable tool for the industry; helping designers gain exposure and finance their progression independently by providing an easily accessible retailing forum via its online shop. NJAL is a creative hub with a red carpet following setting trends and perpetuating innovation, an infinitely expanding destination devoted to facilitating growth in the fashion industry.”

French CARNET DE MODE claims to be “the Parisian temple of fashion on Internet which offers an international showcase of tomorrow's most talented designers. Established as a real worldwide talent hunter, Carnet de Mode's strongest will is to present limited edition of not only unique but also "avant-garde" collections. First international platform of crowdfunding in the Fashion industry, Carnet de Mode allows shoppers to invest and finance designers' collections from all around the world in return for exceptional and original pieces and an important return on investment. Carnet de Mode is also a permanent online store offering a highly specialized selection of ready-to-wear and accessories' items.”

It can be said that the styles of the sites are very different in terms of layout, and way of presenting the designers, i.e. there is a different aesthetical approach. However it is noted that the synthesis of colors and fonts, logo are similarly in black and white; possibly because the emphasis is given to the colors and patterns of the designers’ products. Both competitors of MUUSE have supporters from press and other organizations. Nevertheless, comparing the three in the social media arena, which is a strong indicator of popularity, the page of MUUSE has 16,809 Likes on Facebook, whereas CARNET DE MODE follows with 9,185 Likes and NOT JUST A LABEL is with 5,892 (May 21st, 2012).
4.2 Person

Person shall be described and examined separately in the below analysis, as regards to the leaders (founders) of the company. Further, the followers will also be analyzed in the same way, not individually, but as a group.

4.2.1 The leaders

Thirty-three year-old Danish David, and forty-five year-old American Gitte, joined their powers to create MUUSE in January 2011. They had met in 2007 while working together for two years at Red Associates consultancy agency in Denmark as project managers for specialist teams, with clients such as Samsung, Addidas and Lego. The basic idea of the purpose of their job was to find out how to develop a product that actually meets customers’ needs, and find out why do people want to buy a firm’s goods. It is interesting to note that back then, David and Gitte were working with anthropologists, ethnographers and sociologists that they would send them out in the field, going in people’s natural environments and making observations about what were actually their needs - e.g. sit down and play with kids for Lego, or sit and watch TV for Samsung - and basically try to understand people, and see why people do what they do.

“What I realized in these two years is that some of these things you can do online; if you have an online community, you can gain knowledge out of it”, said David. In 2009 the CEO and founder of MUUSE launched his own consultancy agency, based on his idea to see what happens if you want to do this project online, by developing the online project JOIN.DK, which basically invites people to share their inspiration (interview with David, 2012); JOIN.DK is a co-creation platform for lifestyle products where companies, designers and end users can work together in an online process to bring design products to market that better meet the customers’ needs (Join.dk, 2012).

David has graduated from the Copenhagen Business School with a M.Sc. degree in Business Administration in 2007. Before this, he had obtained a MA degree in Political Science at Columbia University, New York in 2005. His B.Sc. degree was in Business Administration and Philosophy, through which he attended an exchange program to National University of Singapore in the fall 2002. Since 2010, David is an external lecturer at the Copenhagen Business School teaching the master course "Managing Creative Processes" about entrepreneurship in the creative industries.

Gitte expressed that through her collaboration with David as management consultants, they shared a background of understanding how people do things and use materials, products and services in order to come up with better ideas; she is fond of looking at things, saying “can we do better”. According to Gitte, “that’s a basic approach to things. In my twenties I also tried to do a couple of businesses as a designer. As frustrated as I was after my failures, I went to work as a consultant to help other companies develop creative ideas; David and I met in that context. Working at this
consulting agency, we would study how people use products. Often the comments received about that type of envisionary researches is that they are not quantifiable; you can come up with very good ideas and emotional arguments of why something would succeed, but before a company invests, they really want to know what are the numbers behind it, how large is this market. And they wanted David to work on that side, so I was very happy to have that.”

Through her broad experience and education, Gitte has developed skills in bringing qualitative research and design thinking to business problems, translating insight to opportunity, and in leading diverse development teams in research, analysis, iterative prototyping and development. Gitte’s background includes a BFA degree in Painting and Film, received in Rhode Island School of Design, from which she graduated in 1989. In 2001 she obtained her MDes degree in Human-Centered Communication Design at the Institute of Design of the Illinois Institute of Technology.

As it’s possible to understand responsibilities in the company are clearly distinguished: David who has the analogous training, is in charge of the finance, production, and logistics side, whereas Gitte is mostly occupied with the customers and community side. Together they work on brand positioning, site design, collaboration with designers, marketing and PR. It should be further stated that, as it will later be justified through statements of the staff, both persons have built strong connections with people from the creative industries.

Through documentation, it is apparent that David and Gitte have done a thorough research on the business aspects of their venture. They have developed detailed analysis of the customer segmentation, in-depth market analysis, business plans, growth strategies, site traffic analytics and other modules.

High quality is a dominant trait of theirs, evidenced, among others, by the attention to craftsmanship and materials, to the choice of designers and general aesthetics.

Regarding their perspectives on success, David states: “That’s going to sound quite banal, but success for me is achieving goals, and goals that are meaningful.” Gitte reflects this idea by saying: “Success for me is doing something that makes a positive impact that is lasting; positive impact, simply put, is what makes people’s lives better, the designers’ lives in this case; you could argue that making people better clothing makes peoples’ lives better, but I’m not really concerned about that, I think there’s enough products out there and there’s enough clothing that people are going to find to make themselves look pretty. But it’s not that: for me, it’s about creating a path for the talents who come out of school to actually realize their ambition, because right now over 90% have no other path option.”

As for happiness David responds: “Yes, I’m happy! It can be very frustrating but it gives great satisfaction to actually do this, even though this might not succeed. We
might not be around in a year. Concerning success in life, he expresses: I have a successful life at the moment, in some parameters. Of course I work a lot, I don’t have a good work-life balance but it’s rare to have that if you’re in a startup. But I’m doing what I want to do; and it’s important to do something that makes sense to me. I would never be in a place where I wouldn’t be happy with what I do.”

When it comes to the founders’ opinions on leadership, Gitte states that “leadership is building and inspiring people to want to do things that benefit them but also benefit the firm; the ideal leader for me is a combination of a teacher, a support, and a guidance.” David explains that in order to qualify as a leader “you need to have a vision and set the example; and if you can’t get people to rally around it, then you’re more of a manager. You want to make sure that people prioritize things in the right way.”

The company is owned 35% by David, 35% by Gitte, and 30% is ownership of investors. Initially they participated in a startup initiative that is called ‘Connect Denmark’, a workshop over several months where people participate and pitch their business ideas and then there are investors connected to this initiative that are interested.

4.2.2 The designers
MUUSE gives high importance to the choice of designers represented on their website; the criteria involve designers that have 1) graduated from renowned fashion schools, and 2) are uniquely distinguished, i.e. won awards or were featured in fashion or trend information magazines (see as an example: Trendland, 2011). This is achieved through inside-collaborators at the fashion schools, and also VOGUE Italy.

People from MUUSE are the ones who chose designers for recruitment; they don’t work with applications. In compliance with David, they aimed to get the most prominent designers from the top fashion schools that have won prizes, for example from Saint Martins. Now they receive a lot of applications from designers, and the majority is very thrilled to be part of their project. It’s considered a sign of recognition that someone is featured at MUUSE, designers put it on their resumes. (see Appendix A. Designers Testimonials)

According to David, this recognition was built a) by being very selective about designers b) through partnership with Italian Vogue in recruiting designers and c) by establishing a level of trust with the designers (in terms of production, labeling, tailoring, quality). Since the beginning, very few designers have left MUUSE (around three), of which one was picked up by H&M. H&M organizes an annual contest with young designers of the world, the H&M Design Award, in which they choose five designers; out of these five, three of them were at MUUSE and the one that won, had to step from MUUSE. In accordance with David, H&M is sporadically calling MUUSE to get recommendations on young designers.
Regarding the collaboration with VOGUE for the designers’ competition, the purpose was to reveal talents that might have not been discovered yet. The selection was made by senior editor of Vogue Italy, and MUUSE recruited ten designers that she had selected, who are now featured on site.

MUUSE is working from a distance with the designers, as the most important to get from the designers is the vision. MUUSE represents the designers, so they need to communicate their vision as clear as possible. Conforming to David, the relationship between MUUSE and the designers is characterized as “open but structured”.

The designers are set to be paid by commission, of which the amount is a highly good value proposition for them. Compared with when a designer works by himself, there is less profit due to the costs of the whole procedure, while in this case the designers merely give the inspiration through a sketch and guidelines, and MUUSE is the one that manufactures and sells the garment. Indeed, for designers it seems a very good agreement, as their options coming out of schools can be rather limited. They commonly dream about starting their own brand, however, lacking the appropriate financial background and business logic (sales, production, marketing and management), the alternative most of them often have is years of unpaid internships with uncreative tasks.

People at MUUSE offer an agreement of non-exclusivity for the tailor-made garments as they support the young designers and because IP (intellectual property) is impossible to enforce; they want to give them the opportunity to decide freely to do what else they want, as the majority of them doesn’t have enough money to make a living out of it. For the ready-to-wear, things get more exclusive, as they are created so one can only get them at MUUSE; but then again, it’s the fashion industry we’re talking about, and they can’t be protected.

In terms of social media: “When we launched we thought that the designers would know who would love their work and we gave them access to our blog through networks tweets, facebook connections, so as to come back and contribute to the community as a whole, benefiting everyone. But it didn’t work out that well. As it turned out, a lot of designers are very non digital, they love textiles, sewing; just because you’re a great designer doesn’t mean that you’re sitting on twitter and facebook and interacting a lot; people have the idea that the new generation is social and online, it’s not true. There are lots of designers that have fifty facebook friends and post every six months. And even if they’re great designers, they don’t feel comfortable saying ‘I’m great’. Designers are mostly artists and that’s all they need to be within MUUSE.” - Gitte
4.2.3 The employees

There are several people working at the offices of MUUSE in Copenhagen. My main contact was with Alexandra who works in Marketing and PR, and Christina who functions in Operations. Alexandra is the person who handles the communication of the company with the bloggers, the social media and other external collaborators; she also attends fashion events and fairs such as Fashion Week. Christina, along with other specialists, is the mediator between the designers’ sketches, the tailors and the production. Besides them, the personnel consists of eight other people, in the departments of Marketing, Finance, Operations, Design, and Development. The company pays normal salaries and also hosts internships.

As for personalities, all the employees seem rather pleasant and gentile. They say good morning everyday and when they leave they say goodbye to everyone. They are skilled, as most of them hold masters degrees in their fields, they have relatively high level of English language speaking, and they are international, as they are all coming from different places of the planet, like Spain, Greece, Denmark, Germany and other: “We have a very international team- we have a good mix of people: someone who is very organized, someone who is very creative, someone who has good communication skills.” – Christina

Finally, they all seem creative; they have concerns around arts and aesthetics and, on a general level, they are happy with their lives. They are comfortable with stating their opinion and suggestions in the progress of the operations they are involved. “People are generally confident and say what they want to say.” - Alexandra

Regarding relationships in and out of work, it seems that it’s a team of people who try to have good contacts with one another. “People like each other, connect on a social level, they take responsibility of their area. And I’m proud of that. I’ve worked in places where people just lean back and try to hide.” - David. Alexandra states: “We sometimes put music, we have fun, we joke; we have of course phases when everyone is quite because they’re busy.” As explained by Alexandra and Christina, employees usually meet up on Fridays after work for some drinks and catching up, they have a dinner during fashion week, and a Christmas party. They are also talking about having an official private lunch party where they intend to invite the bloggers. “Yes, we do sometimes arrange gatherings. We should be better at doing it more; I know that people meet up after work as well. But we do it once a month. But we’re also really really busy. There’s room for people establishing personal relations. I wouldn’t want to work in an environment that I wouldn’t like the people and doing what I want to do.” - David

Regarding the employees’ perspectives on success and leadership, below are some of their statements:
“A leader should have the ability to be clear about where he or she wants to go, and communicate that in a way to everybody else that he’s working with in a motivating way and to be able to grasp the big picture and understand what’s necessary from everyone to reach that goal.” - Alexandra

“Among the qualities of a leader, first of all is the ability to communicate the vision and the goals to the employees very clearly; the strategy also and the way you can accomplish the goal. Many times people in leadership positions have goals but they fail to communicate that goal. To be able to distinguish the strengths of your employees and base your expectations on that and be realistic; be there all the time to answer questions, be available. Sometimes people are not accessible, be they should be able to listen and take feedback, not just have a very strong opinion.” - Christina

“Success is when you’re able to reach and exceed the goals that you set.” – Alexandra

4.3 Product

What the founders of the company observed together was the business opportunity behind a great gap: the waste of talent of promising young designers who, coming out of fashion schools cannot fulfill their dream due to lack of financial support or connections; MUUSE became the manager of these designers. MUUSE, from the word muse, denotes inspirational as a partner; in accordance with Gitte, when trying to find the right name, the founders mostly wanted to promote co-creation: a muse for an artist is someone who gives him ideas, who supports his business. If the artist doesn’t have a muse, he can’t be creative.

As described by David, the fundamental insight of the business side of the company is that, “if we change how things are made and/or developed, then we can start addressing niche markets. Looking over the last two-three hundred years, how things changed happened in the industrial revolution, which marked a major turning point in manufacturing. The big advantage of the industrial revolution was obviously the fall of the cost price, the whole supply chain went cheaper and the goods made became available to more people. What was also brought by the industrial revolution is that it’s harder to access the niche markets.”

David further explained his business thinking: “If we want to change the way things are made, for example if we want to make a dress for 50 people, then it’s going to be extremely expensive compared to a dress made in a factory for 50,000 people. Then the question that comes up is, what are the costs that accrue from doing fashion?” David had realized four kinds of expenses: a) to design and develop a product, b) to figure out the trends and set the pricing, c) to use marketing activities d) the risk of overproduction. David then saw that “if we make the costs smaller, then we can address a niche market and make 50 dresses and be profitable.”
Gitte describes the whole concept of this model as a support system for the designers: “Once you connect with people who share that enthusiasm, there’s no reason not to work with us, what we offer the designers is free; even though we’re not profitable yet and you can argue whether we’re successful or not, we have discovered a model that basically takes from designers things they have already done because design is simply a part of their education (prototypes, photos that they had to take anyway). Unless they invest money, attend fashion fairs etc. -which is a lot to jump into-, for designers that are following a more standard path, take internships and put their collections in the closet, we’re saying to them, that ‘this piece you don’t know what to do with, we’re going to showcase it and we’re going to invest in you by making it ready to produce’.”

MUUSE has experimented a lot of different features and approaches to the way the visionary design could become a product that could attract their defined target group in the best way, during the eight months I have been following MUUSE’s website. Until sometime around April, the pieces were only produced as made-to-wear, meaning that each garment would be produced only after an order had been done, on measurements already defined. Also, there was another feature that existed for a small period of time: Certain chosen designer sketches were provided in a separate section, asking people to show interest on them by a single click in order for these to become garments and get finally produced, if enough people would show interest in purchasing them. However, these concepts were replaced, by the three new features mentioned above.

Among the products, there can be found artistic garments that are not practically wearable. David responds that they had evaluated that some pieces should be there to work as inspiration, aimed to be given to ambassadors and also to create traffic in the site.

The founders of this company, with their values and beliefs, are trying to link the pure artistic side of the designers with the commercial side of business through creativity, innovation and meaningfulness. The company is functioning for almost a year and is not yet profitable; so far the sales are still low, therefore their newest strategy includes shifting to ready-to-wear. The ready-to-wear concept is new -it hadn’t yet been launched during the interviews-; it is still connected to the collections with small details, but aims to deliver more affordable products. Post communication with David through email, indicated a small increase in sales after this launch. I wonder if the values of the company might change:

-“We would never overproduce stuff because that’s not in our DNA.” - David

-“Ultimately, the company is going to be much more commercial than it is now, which is natural, because you need to make money at some point. But I think if this RTW project goes well, it’s going to expand, then hopefully the whole company is
going to expand; and there will be different profiles coming in. I think that for the brand it’s important that we retain this focus on art and craft and fashion not so much as a lifestyle but more as a platform. But I think we’re going to have much more sales people, optimization about how to sell online, and search engine optimization; things like that will become much more important and the whole operation will become much more professional, streamlined and corporate. On the tailor-made there is no compromising about the quality and the fabrics, but now we’re entering in this whole new project with the more affordable ready-to-wear and we have to think about choosing cotton over silk for a t-shirt for example. It’s a more commercial thinking that’s coming in.” – Alexandra

Further to the ready-to-wear launch the company is working on expanding its distribution channels, and is in touch with large partners in Europe, in order to collaborate for retail operations.

4.4 Process
The creative processes that take place in MUUSE are many and variant. The main procedure that connects to the final product, firstly involves communicating with the designers as for the sketches and visions. According to David, the material they get from the designers is mainly around the design, which is communicated visually, in pictures, sketches, notes, drawings and mood pictures, through Google docs and/or Dropbox.

After agreeing upon the materials and making certain prototypes, they then come back to the designers for evaluation. Depending on the type of clothing, i.e. tailor-made or ready-to-wear, thereafter starts the process of production.

This process appears to be the most crucial, as everything needs to be communicated in the right way in order to catch the designer’s original idea, the corresponding fabrics and measurements, and then bring it to production through communication with the relevant people. Part of this process also includes taking pictures in the photo studio, which is built in the house, in order to upload them online.

If the product is destined to become tailor-made, the garment will take shape indoors; if it’s intended for ready-to-wear, then communication with the outsource production is required. As regards to the ready-to-wear garments, David reported that they’ve reserved high-quality production in factories in Europe, and are about to launch their first collection in October 2012. He further noted that, when choosing what to produce as ready-to-wear, they then slightly change it in terms of fit and materials in order to make it wearable and more affordable, but they do not wish to interfere with the designer’s vision, as they want be loyal to it but at the same time help the designer sell to the market.
It seems that the two founders are very open in listening to new ideas about how they can optimize their products and the ways this can be processed, and make good use of their connections in the field of fashion and business. According to Christina, “The good thing is that David and Gitte are excellent in communicating; and that’s the thing that keeps people coming in the house, trusting us and actually be willing to give time and that’s the most important thing. Working here, you can see that people are interested to help without getting something in return – we have consultants and people coming in all the time to help as much as they can and they can really see the vision of what we want to do; and that’s the most important thing that keeps you trying.” – Christina

A process they work on as a team on a daily basis in order to communicate ideas, is their standard morning meetings. The second day of my visit, I was invited to participate in one, so as to observe their method and interaction: Everyday at 09:30 a.m., the whole company gathers for around fifteen minutes to discuss what each member of the team had done the day before and what he or she will be occupied with the current day. They stand around a board, which is divided by weeks; everyone can put down what needs to be done and note deadlines in post-its, so that they can be more aligned with what the other people are doing.

Regarding the briefing of the stakeholders, it appears as important for the company: “There have happened so many changes since January 2012; right now I’m working on an internal document that sums up what we want to stand for, once we do the shift to R-T-W because it’s important to be sure that everyone feels the same way about the company and that we’re all on the same track of where we want to go and what we are about.” – Alexandra
Pictures 5-8: Team work and daily meeting in front of the area of the board (Own photos)

Pictures 9-12: Process boards (Own photos)
Concerning marketing activities and processes, David reports: “The designers are very pleased. The customers... it’s much more difficult to persuade them that it’s all about cool, beautiful, high-quality stuff. It’s a strong brand building exercise! It takes a lot of time to do that.” The site traffic in December 2011 was 70,000 visitors and now it is around 25,000 visitors per month, because of no marketing efforts at the moment; their aspiration for December 2012 is 200,000 unique visitors. “We’re continuing a strong social media focus, because we have this so much interesting content coming in, we’re trying to bring in more bloggers and journalists because they actually want this content. They’re looking for interesting things and we are fond of it. But we’re actually hiring a PR agency to help us in more traditional ways to get out into media and journals because there’s still a lot of value in the traditional PR approach; to that point our best strategy still is PR and stories and letting things spread through Word of Mouth (WOM), and not so much paying PR and advertising marketing; we shouldn’t have to.” – Gitte

The company still struggles with the idea of finding the proper way to communicate its vision: “If you’re coming to MUUSE, we tell the story of promoting young designers and help them enter the market, which is really what’s driving us and it’s what’s easy to be retold, but it’s the people that can retell it; however when you’re a customer and want to make a purchase decision, what you really want to do is to buy a cloth that you think is beautiful; obviously it’s not about the functionality but it’s about putting your identity in a certain way, so that it has a lot to do with the story we tell; it’s not that we promote the young talents, it’s that it’s the best visionary design in the world. Right now we find difficult to decide which story we want to communicate to the world and we talk about both, but we’re testing it.” – David

Currently the company is also seeking for an ambassador to boost its brand image. Gitte states that it’s hard to define one: “We need someone who could be somewhat inspiring for people, who is an interesting creative personality, who believes in creativity and who doesn’t follow trends necessarily. It’s on our list. Famous enough, appropriate. We asked the designers who they want as ambassadors-it’s about what the designers think that’s cool.” – Gitte

Among the different creative processes, briefly some significant activities that are presently taking place in MUUSE, are the collaboration with VOGUE Italy, as for the start of their annual Vogue competition, the launch of a revised online look and feel of their website, and the development of an iPhone/android application, for which the team developed meetings for exchanging ideas and delivering tasks.

4.5 Press

4.5.1 Copenhagen
One important factor concerning creativity is the influence of the broader environment. MUUSE is located in the heart of Copenhagen, Denmark, which is a
cultural and very creative city that inspires innovation. As reported by a journalist for Spiegel: “The city with the "happiest people in the world" is also a magnet for innovative companies” (Spiegel online, 2007).

In Denmark creativity is very seriously taken under consideration. It’s significant to note the words of the Danish minister of culture, who says “art and culture have a special ability to foster new ideas and new hope in a time of crisis”, and this year has put into project the questions: “What can art, culture and the creative industries do right now? How can we make the most of the innovative power of art and culture to stimulate new ideas in terms of identity, community and economic growth?” In Denmark, it is believed that new ideas, new energy, and value creation can come out of artistic and creative thinking and that strengthening culture and the arts can offer new opportunities for development (Kum.dk, 2012). It is evident that valuable importance is given to culture and business, therefore the environment can be more fertile towards creativity and can have a positive impact to the way business is developed.

Fashion also seems to be given high importance in Copenhagen. The official website of Denmark has a special section about fashion, where it is written that “successful designers, international fashion fairs and two annual fashion weeks have rightfully put Copenhagen and Denmark on the fashion map of Europe. Some even speak of Copenhagen as the fifth European fashion enclave” (Denmark.dk, 2012).

Besides these matters, because Denmark is located in northern Europe, it is affected by a relatively dark, cold and windy Scandinavian weather. Late research from Harvard has shown that weather can play a significant role in people’s productivity. More particularly, bad weather conditions increase individual productivity and also influence positively one’s own cognition and focus (Lee et al. 2012). This is another factor that can have impact in people’s creativity.

4.5.2 Work environment and aesthetics

The work environment of MUUSE is simple but artistic; it is clean, with high-quality equipment and a photo studio in a separate space. The people are all in one room and sitting next to one another, but have enough space around them. The company is relatively small, so there is no need to consider about separate offices, departments and floors. Alexandra reports that, “people do put more emphasis in office design in Copenhagen than in other countries. I think our office is a little above average in terms of style.”

Describing the climate at work, Alexandra further states: “The environment is very open, family-like, we are a small team, we sit together, and everybody hears everything – very flat hierarchy; you can just go to everyone and tell you opinion and be honest about things. It’s important that we are all in the same room. Especially since it’s a startup company, it’s important to have all people on board; if we were all
in separate offices it would be much different. It needs team effort and in order to have a team effort, you need to feel like a team, and I don’t think that’s possible if everybody is by himself or herself. It’s also important to always be informed about what’s going on.”

Regarding flexibility in the work environment and schedule, the two managers appear to be comprehensive when some employees occasionally might have to come in late or early, as a corresponding incident at my second visit to the company confirmed this perception. On this matter, Alexandra stated: “Our schedule is nine-to-five, but it depends. Sometimes if needed, I might come earlier. But typically the latest someone has to be here is 09:30 am when we have our team meeting.”

As a form of team building, every day the whole team sits in the kitchen table to eat lunch all together and discuss; they have relatively long lunch break that lasts for about an hour and the expenses for the meal are covered by the company.

**5 Conclusions**

This section draws findings from the analysis of the case organized by the 4P’s in order to give insights about the creativity inside and outside of MUUSE, and thereafter gives answer to the research question by providing some prerequisites that
can help form a creative company. Finally, the study closes by giving suggestions for future research.

5.1 The 4P’s in MUUSE

The analysis shows that there is a correlation between the external and internal image of MUUSE concerning creativity. The founders have shaped an environment and structure that supports a creative atmosphere and the creativity of the employees. The basis for this conclusion is indicated below, by going through the 4P’s of creativity in MUUSE.

Person

The findings show that the personalities of the leaders declare traits, such as: assertiveness, interest in aesthetics and high quality, global thinking and broad interests. Also, it can be said that they are social, comprehensive, and good listeners; they care about respect and trust, they inspire engagement, they can smile and laugh often, and encourage others to be natural too. No specific findings were revealed concerning stressful factors that could influence their attitude towards the work environment and the stakeholders. Research showed that numbers drivers have not been let to overshadow creativity and meaningfulness. The various personalities of the employees include characteristics, such as: global mindset, interest in arts and communication, loyalty, sociability and diligence.
In relation to intrinsic motivation, it is shown that the vision is what motivates the two leaders and, consequently, the people around them; their passion to support the young designers and urge to make a change in the way that business in fashion is developed, can be characterized as powerful and positive. Bono & Ilies (2006) suggest that charismatic leaders are strong senders of emotion; all people send out messages through their energy and mind, yet the leader is considerably able to transfer it to his followers. In MUUSE, people seem to inherit this vision and express it in their effort at work, which enhances their creativity and productivity. Other intrinsic motivation factors like taking initiatives for creative tasks and freedom of being creative in their field of expertise can be noted as for the employees.

Knowledge characterizes the leaders, as well as the employees. Their education and background in various areas in the creative industries and the good combination of their skills indicates a good basis for effectiveness and productivity; they follow technology trends (new production methods, new textiles), marketing trends (WOM, ambassadors, social networks, blogs) and seek for new ideas in order to develop innovative business strategies (collaboration with Vogue, retail operations), they are aware of their market by keeping track of fashion trends (attend fashion fairs and shows), and arts trends (music, photography etc.) The findings suggest that the leaders need to constantly build knowledge on all aspects of the process of their products in order to have a better perception of what they are representing, and can have a more thorough understanding for all the procedures and people involved. As an example, they are not as knowledgeable in areas such as design and tailoring as in business and communication; however, the findings also show that the leaders are developing their broader knowledge throughout creative processes and, predominantly, they have powerful willingness.

In terms of cognitive skills, the leaders and their team appear to be very fluent in their speech and expressions, have good command of English language, are flexible and can easily focus on tasks. They have good analytical, observing and problem solving skills, and are able to produce novel ideas.

**Process**

In the various processes, preparation has been observed in several occasions; before meetings the team would prepare data about the development of their work. For one employee was to get updates as for the current trends in tops clothing in order to foster ideas about new products. As another example, David would collect information about crafts in order to help improve tailor-made garments.

Instances of incubation were noted during lunchtime, where the team was not concentrating on business matters, but on discussing various subjects that had to do with external issues. Findings suggest encouragement of more incubation moments, such as increase of team leisure activities or practice of noncommissioned work. As
recent research has shown, projects that are unrelated to normal work can increase individual creativity (Burkus & Oster, 2012).

No specific moments of insight were noted during my two days presence that would denote ‘eureka’, even though many new ideas are constantly developing in MUUSE, such as the application for iPhone/android, or the upcoming launch of the new layout of the website.

Evaluation and elaboration were observed in different instances; MUUSE seems to take careful steps as for its creative operations and proceeds accordingly. Also when the company sees that certain features are not adequate to remain online, they withdraw them and they start processing new ideas; for example, the option of designer sketches was a feature purely artistic, yet impractical and probably dysfunctional, as a single sketch, as detailed as it can be, it is subjective to a person’s imagination. As the leaders later evaluated, the material, the fit and the shape cannot be specifically presented, making it difficult to capture the satisfaction of the customer at the moment of production.

**Press**

It is evidenced in the research that the impact of press is significant to the way creativity is circulated in the company. The findings show that people’s creativity is enhanced in the artistic conditions of MUUSE, especially when they are inspired to feel natural in their work environment. MUUSE pays great attention to the aesthetics of the workplace. The city of Copenhagen, due to its creative approach has become a pole of attraction for international people that are willing to work together with the entrepreneurs in order to come up with creative results. Freedom, autonomy and teamwork productivity were further identified in the work environment of MUUSE.

**Product**

MUUSE is a defender of emerging fashion designers’ artistic visions and has developed a business model in order to promote their work. The products offered by MUUSE are unique, creative and meaningful; they are carefully selected and of high quality. It can be understood through the many different changes taking place since MUUSE’s first launch in 2011, that the company tries to find the golden mean between artistic design and commercial approach. The new operations (ready-to-wear, retail) will be crucial as for the future prosperity of the company and establishment of this new creative platform.

**5.2 Creative leadership in fashion business today**

Taking into consideration the findings of this case study and the literature review provided in this research, in regard to how a young innovative fashion company can manage to reflect its creative external identity (creativity outside) in its internal environment/processes (creativity inside) towards its path to prosperity and success, the following can be stated:
What is made clear through this study is that creativity is the vital key-success element for today’s organizations. Taking into account the crucial importance of the 4P’s of creativity model, the person who leads the company is the number one factor that can influence the way business is being handled by the people in the company. It is shown that if a leader cares for creativity, the whole organization can benefit from it. What is also shown is that the vision is a strong driver of a leader, and motivates the followers (employees, collaborators, investors) to follow and support. Apart from being passionate for a powerful, positive vision and communicating it to all stakeholders, important personality traits for entrepreneurs of fashion that bring off creativity can be: constantly evolving knowledge regarding all operations of the value chain, being able to listen and learn from all stakeholders, being able to produce and inspire novel ideas, not letting numbers drivers overshadow creativity and meaningfulness but rather enhancing playfulness, being open and developing an effective global mindset (traveling, reading etc.).

Characteristics of fashion innovative companies with a creative external image include a fusion of novel operations and processes that entail good knowledge of the market by keeping up with fashion trends, arts trends (music, photography, movies etc), marketing trends (WOM, ambassadors, social media) and always seeking for new ideas in order to develop innovative business strategies, paying attention to the timing and its variant implications (e.g. global crisis, state of competitors, pricing parameters), minding customer care and receiving feedback, giving importance to details, aesthetics and high quality, and keeping up with technology trends (e-commerce, new production methods, new textiles).

Important characteristics for young fashion innovative companies that want to reflect their outside creativity, inside their company can be to: encourage new ideas and creativity in all levels of infrastructure, give importance to the design and aesthetics of the workplace, increase intrinsic motivators for employees, build team trust and commitment, see creative operations as an ongoing process, develop creative organizational design, support human dynamics and individual growth, circulate adequate information across the organization, and have and share good communication and understanding.

Finally, it shall be noted that the boundaries between the artistic and commercial side of fashion business can be very fragile. It is a matter that should be very carefully dealt with in order to defend what a company stands for, and maintain creativity in all processes.

5.3 Suggestions for future research
A suggestion for future research on the subject of creative leadership in fashion business is to analyze case studies of young companies that struggle with innovation in different environments and countries with different mentalities as well as situational circumstances/implications, such as, for example, European countries that
face the severe aspects of the financial crisis. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of the research with cases in measurably less creative environments would be critical as for indications and interpretations around the anthropological creativity in fashion business and leadership today.

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Appendix

Designers testimonials

“It’s an opportunity to show my designs to a wider public and to have a **start point in my career**.” Ksenia Kisteneva

“It’s a perfect place for new designers of my generation to be **showcased to the world**.” Lyusine Oganesyan

“MUUSE is a really exciting concept, and there was no reason not to join. I have had many questions from people about buying items from my collection, but **I haven’t had time, money or the knowledge to start to produce** anything in a larger scale. That’s why MUUSE was ideal for me. This is a great opportunity and I really look forward to see the development in the future.” Sigrun Unnarsdottir

“People seem excited about the awesome blog and promotional posts you're putting up - wanted to say thank you for being so incredibly **supportive** and **encouraging** of me!” Abigail Stewart

“Being among amazing fellow young designers on MUUSE is very **energizing, motivating** and I believe this could just be the perfect beginning for something very big.” Tarang Bharti

“I like the thought of slow fashion and being able to provide something unique and special to the customer. Hopefully this will be more common in the future – having people buying less clothes, and invest in a piece that they really treasure and wear a lot – **instead of buying many cheap mass-produced** pieces they only wear once.” Beate Godager

“The first time I saw your website I was greatly **impressed** with the quality of the product, the **professional looking photos**, and the **entire platform** in general. I would definitely like to be a part of this collaboration!” Zaida Adriana Goveo Balmaseda

“I decided to be part of MUUSE because I admire this project: Finally someone who moves, really, for young designers! Northern Europe is becoming a **destination for cult designers**, and I always felt very close to these countries.” Caterina Montagni
Visiting adress: Bryggaregatan 17 • Postal adress: 501 90 Borås • Website: www.textilhogskolan.se