We are all affected by fashion: as individuals when we use clothes and other products to create an identity and an image and as consumers participating in the wheel of consumption and economy. As researchers, we try to understand fashion and its actors and how research can contribute to a better society and prosperous industries. This issue of the Nordic Textile Journal presents both articles based on research conducted at the University of Borås and articles from other researchers who share our interest in sustainable fashion and the textile industry.

Once upon a time, Borås was well-known as a cluster for the Swedish textile industry. Although many textile and fashion businesses closed down as a result of the decline of the industry in the 1970’s, the Borås region still hosts many fashion and textile businesses and is the home of the only fashion incubator in Sweden (Modeinkubatorn). Together with the Swedish School of Textiles, the University of Borås and other educational organisations focusing on fashion and textiles this region has once again become a hub for a dynamic fashion and the textile sector. Thus, it is no coincidence that a research programme called Fashion Function Future (F:3) was initiated at the University of Borås in 2010.

Fashion Function Future (F:3) – is a programme for research and artistic development, addressing issues and topics ranging from artistic design to distribution logistics, as well as the marketing and management of fashion and textile companies, where sustainability is a shared concern. The programme is based on an interdisciplinary environment that supports the development and balancing of artistic expressions, design methodology, technology and management, all related to the field of fashion and textiles. Several departments at the University of Borås collaborate to achieve this interdisciplinary approach and contribute with the knowledge required to shape F:3.

Although we are based in Borås, where tradition associates fashion with clothing and textiles, we realise the term fashion is more complicated than that and that it needs to be further investigated for our readers to fully understand the intention behind our programme. Our research is Future oriented, but the in-between term Function also needs some explanation, which we will come back to below.

To explain why fashion is not only the study of dress and clothing, Kawamura (2005, p. 1) coined the term “Fashion-ology”, which she defines as “a sociological investigation of fashion, and it treats fashion as a system of institutions, that produces the concept as well as the phenomenon/practices of fashion”. Fashion is an immaterial concept and clothes are the materialized objects of this concept. In this sense, Kawamura refers to the actors who are part of a specific system that defines what is defined as fashion and what is not. For clothing to become fashion, it is not enough that a collection...
design and creativity. Therefore, at the different departments of the University of Borås, we stand to benefit from research from a broad perspective in the fields of management, leadership, marketing and technology and are also able to apply it to the fashion and textile sector. However, in order to understand how different management models are to be interpreted in connection with different products, it is necessary to recognize the fashion market as an aesthetic market and one which comes with certain particularities (Entwistle, 2009).

The importance of being part of a specific culture and of participating in specific events is not unique to the field of fashion. A number of companies, such as H&M and Zara conquered fashion markets globally. This happened in a typical fashion cycle: a few luxury companies, designers, media, PR-agents and consumers are also valid for other product categories that are part of what we described above and that we referred to, in a wider sense, as aesthetic cultures. The products in question are usually ones we do not consume solely for their functional value, but also for the value of a certain aesthetic, which in many cases is endorsed by a famous designer brand and legitimized by defined trends. Researchers need to have an understanding for the role of luxury branding as a whole. This role is performed by people who are part of it, while these companies also experience the same management-oriented system and what could be referred to, in a broader perspective in the fields of management, leadership, marketing and technology and are also able to apply it to the fashion and textile sector. However, in order to understand how different management models are to be interpreted in connection with different products, it is necessary to recognize the fashion market as an aesthetic market and one which comes with certain particularities (Entwistle, 2009).

References


