Responsiveness and Collaboration in the Fashion Supply Chain

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of MPhil in Responsiveness and Collaboration in the Fashion Supply Chain, to the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to a) compare the design process models of various High Street fashion retailers, b) analyse the roles and relationships of team members within the fashion supply chain and c) highlight strategies that would facilitate responsiveness and collaboration within this chain, in conjunction with ongoing seasonal changes. In order to undertake this research, a number of key areas were explored in the literature review to gather further information, in particular the fashion design process and the supply chain. The design process analyses key issues and trends within the industry, thereby having an influence on design management and process models for the future. The design process also reviews the significance of the product lifecycle whilst identifying diverse Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) software that is currently used by various organisations in the apparel sector. In addition, the main issues concerning fashion supply chains shall be discussed in detail. This research will elaborate upon the collaborative relationships within a supply chain, and put forward strategies to help improve them.

The research approach for this study comprised of both a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative approach was used to gather preliminary data, which was focused towards consumers, in the form of questionnaires. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, was used through various means of semi-structured interviews focused towards fashion retailers and a High Street supplier to gain a further understanding of the activities carried out in their respective business models. The research findings indicate the main phases within the business processes of a High Street retailer, and the supplier is mentioned in Chapter 5 with reference to the literature review. Conclusions were reached with the aid of both the literature review and the results from this research. The final recommendations with reference to the SAP model, illustrated towards the end of this research, were based on an analysis of all the work undertaken.
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1. Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Research background and problem
Fashion retailing has been volatile since 1998, across the world, especially in the Far East, where Hong Kong was affected badly, The Economist (2001, 2003), and more recently the UK and USA, who are about to face their second recession over the past 3 years (Inman, 2011; Spragg 2012). This has led to the fashion consumer being more price conscious than ever before. Therefore the unpredictability of the current market place has given birth to fast fashion in process, where consumers are willing to make purchases through the season, but want variety and would like to buy items at low prices (Siegal, 2010). As an average UK consumer has become richer and older, they prefer to spend money on a variety of services, ranging from private education for their children to holidays abroad to various other leisure based activities (The Economist 2001; Mintel, 2011).

In addition, one of the major fluctuations that retailers and consumers have come across over the past decade has been drastic changes in the weather sector, due to which fashion retailers have faced many up turns and down turns. The problem of matching weather to products is largely a concern of high street where consumers buy for immediate use, at regular intervals throughout the season and low prices, which has resulted in a growing trend of retailers seeking manufacturers not just in the Far East but towards the region of Eastern Europe and Africa, where they can have shorter lead times for their regular fast fashion range to meet consumer demand.

The fashion retail industry is progressively becoming more turbulent and volatile, exhibiting characteristics such as low predictability and high impulse purchasing as a result of many variables mainly related to shorter product lifecycles and the responsiveness of today’s consumer (Christopher et al. 2004). These ongoing changes in
the market place have made many High Street retailers resort towards a collaborative supply chain in order to be more responsive, M&S, New Look, H&M are some examples of fast fashion retailers that have adopted or are moving towards an integrated supply chain to be successful in this volatile market place Khan (2008, 2011) but can it be as integrated as Zara who are capable of manufacturing from concept to delivery to stores within two weeks? As the fashion supply chain has become a global phenomenon, fashion retailers no longer simply sell fashion products; but are also involved to some degree in a relationship with the manufacturer/supplier. Fashion retailers believe in managing relationships now more than they did before. In the UK, the lead-time from design to delivery of the range can vary from a calendar year to three weeks, dependent on which model of fashion retailing is adopted. In the UK, the models typically followed are that of Marks and Spencer (M&S) or Zara.

The Marks and Spencer model - is inclined towards having large suppliers working at long distances. They have high growth margins exploiting low labour in Zone 3 (Asian manufacturers), where the shipping would take in the region of 5-6 weeks. Therefore responsiveness time (from order to be placed, manufactured and then delivered to the shops) typically is between 12-15 weeks.

Prior academic research with reference to M&S has indicated where these decisions are normally made in the fashion design process; see following, Fig 1.3, Sinha (2001, 2002). Even though this design process is dated and M&S have moved towards dealing with more suppliers, this design process is to provide an over view of where do they normally make decisions and how do their team members collaborate.
The M&S design process had been structured to enable the maintenance of long term relationships with their core suppliers, especially with regards to Coats Viyella (CV),
which was the key to their business success (Sinha, 2001). The timescale for this process was about 12 months, from concept to manufacture and delivery and 18 months from initial stage to retail.

Sinha (2001) had examined the partnering approach between the contract clothing division of Coats Viyella and Marks and Spencer PLC, including analysing and describing the design process for team T54 (for casual shirts) within the clothing division, highlighting areas of interaction with M&S.

M&S has always had a wide range of clothing, catering for a wide range of ages. M&S shoppers were also classed as “functionalist”, driven by needs for fit, comfort, durability and appropriateness rather than the desire to reflect any prevailing fashion trends, (EMAP, 1997). The aim of M&S according to a designer of T54 team of Coats Viyella, was to have a versatile collection that would suit as many people as possible. Thus, advantages of having close relationships within the two organisations enabled Coats Viyella to gain a better understanding of M&S consumers.

However, it was soon realised that M&S had to redefine their strategy due to increasing competition in the market place by value retailers such as New Look, Bay Trading and Hennes and Mauritz (H&M) who were more focused towards fashion conscious consumers, rather than consumers focused on buying into a lifestyle. Another disadvantage for M&S has been their hierarchical structure, which filters the information down slowly across the structure, Champion and Carr (2000) as cited by Sinha (2001) but recently, it appears that M&S is set out to revamp their whole supply chain, i.e. they have hired a new team to manage their supply chain in order to make it more responsive to meet consumer demand and which will involve the team members to be more collaborative. Thus adopting this approach, M&S aim to increase revenue by £11.5bn and £12.5bn by 2015, according to their Chief Executive Marc Bolland (Logistics manager, 2010).
The Zara model - on the other hand, a Spanish based retailer has a network of small suppliers at a regional distance (zone 1 or 1a, i.e. Europe or Morocco), where the production output takes 2-3 weeks and the shipment time would be between 2-3 days, which results in overall response time to be in the region of 2-3 weeks. Zara exploits proximity to market by using small suppliers in the nearby regions, but sacrifices on high margins, as the labour rates as expected are higher than Asia.

These are the two renowned fashion supply chain models that majority of fashion retailers follow, many retailers tend to mix and match their supply chain models by using the M&S model for their basic clothing range in order to maximise on its economies of scale and use the Zara model for their fast fashion range in order to stay competitive and be able to meet consumer demand, which will be further discussed in the literature review.

This research seeks to understand how fashion retailers collaborate in their supply chain and design process in order to be more responsive, which would be carried out through conducting various case studies and through literature review. Based on the research conducted, further recommendations would be made to the industry in order to remain competitive in the field to meet unpredictable demand (trends, seasonal conditions)

1.2. Research synopsis
The author carried out this research with reference to identifying gaps in the fashion market with reference to goods being delivered at the right time, at the right place with the right range according to the weather. It was noticed by the researcher that the key to being a successful fashion retailer, is that the company has to be highly responsive especially with regards to the current ongoing changes economically and environmentally. Therefore, this research was proposed.
1.3. **Chosen area of study and market**

From the concerns raised by the author, it was realised that the supply chain and design process of various high street fashion retailers should be investigated in detail to establish how collaborative they are to be responsive and in the process suggest better ways to manage the supply chain effectively. Based on the two renowned models as stated above, a third model may be formed to possibly allow design of the products to be responsive and maintain high margins. This model could allow the range to be sourced from zone 3 areas at high gross margins but should be brought to zone 1 areas where all the range can be put together as the demand arises and also tie it up with perhaps a software that allows the retailers to be responsive according to the weather which is an issue that has been faced by many UK retailers for the past few years. This would allow more flexibility for the High Street fashion retailers, to be able to respond as quickly as possible and perhaps would be useful for companies that work on longer lead times and want to be able to respond to consumer demand.

Today the key to responsiveness for many fashion retailers would be to have the ability to leave the design decisions as late as possible in the supply chain. Thus, based on previous findings (Sinha, 2001), this research should identify how late these decisions can be made in order to meet continually changing trends, be it due to weather or some item that a celebrity has worn or a designer has released on its catwalk.

This research is aimed towards the mass market of women who want to make regular purchases through the season at affordable prices and are more style conscious. The high end retailers are removed from this research as their target market are consumers who are more keen to purchase their range at the beginning of each season or across (Flotibell, 2002) regardless of changing trends or price.
1.4. Research aims and objectives
In terms of understanding how fashion retailers respond to changes and to maintain an effective supply chain, this research will examine current processes that various fashion retailers on high street and manufacturer that caters for high street under take in order to meet constantly changing demands and the measures they take in order to stay ahead of their competition, if any. This research will also examine opportunities to develop some strategies or a model to utilize their resources within their supply chain with the aim to stay responsive to market trends.

The main aim of this research is to understand how key members of high street retailers collaborate in their design process to stay responsive and accordingly propose a collaborative and a responsive design and manufacturing process to make the fashion supply chain more effective for UK high street retailers.

The research objectives are to:

1. Conduct a literature review to understand general trends in the UK fashion industry, the supply chain and design process and to identify issues that retailers face in responding to consumer demand and strategies that they currently take to overcome these issues.;

2. Conduct primary research with consumers across different retail areas of Manchester to establish whether there is a need for a responsive design process.;

3. Conduct case studies with High Street fashion retailers and manufacturers to:
   - Determine design process model for each company.;
   - Understand level of collaboration in each organisation.;
   - Identify issues relevant to each sector;
   - Understand how they respond to market and seasonal changes.
4. Compare and contrast the primary research with the literature review conducted to put forward recommendation for further research and for the UK High Street fashion retailers for women.

1.5. **Research methodology**
The research methodology will adopt a mixture of primary and secondary data. Primary data, firstly through questionnaires, which would be aimed at the consumers around various commercial areas of Manchester to gain a better understanding of consumer habits and secondly through interviews with different key members of high street fashion retailers or manufacturer to gain a better understanding about the company and its strategies. On the other hand, secondary research will be used to form the literature review (Chapter 2 and 3), obtained via internet, journal articles, databases and books relating to current fashion trends, design processes of various companies and fashion supply chain.

1.6. **Summary**
This chapter has provided a general overview of current market trends and its impact on fashion retail sector and various opportunities that lie within making the fashion design process extremely efficient. The research problem was identified and the aims and objectives were listed, in addition to the methodology that would be used in this study. In this research, the thesis outline will comprise of the following chapters.

**Chapter Two** discusses the fashion design process, overseeing key issues and trends in fashion, analysing the design process by analysing role of design and significance of design management the textile and fashion organisations. It further analyses different types of design process linking them to 3 main examples from practice i.e. Zara, M&S and New Look. In addition it explains Product life cycle management (PLM) and its
relevance to design process, along with PLM software’s that are currently available and being used by various fashion companies.

This chapter also presents over view of supply chain management and its key issues located in the literature and demonstrate various management disciplines within its field. This Chapter reviews work of various authors such as Slack (2001); Harland (1997) and Lamming (1996) and many more. The chapter examines the evolution of supply chain management along side the economics of supply chain management, further examining Cox’s work on collaboration and discussion on its relationships. Furthermore it asses various strategies that have been adopted to improve the supply chain and the overall design process, in this it oversees strategies such as JIT (Just in Time), TQM (Total quality management), Quick Response (QR) and a few others.

In addition it identifies and examines various software and strategies that are currently available to help textile and fashion based firms in making their supply chain more responsive along with other software’s that are available to make supply chain process more smooth for other type of industries. This chapter establishes the need for software that incorporates seasonal information for fashion companies, in order to meet consumer demand efficiently.

**Chapter Three** presents the research methodology where various approaches to research strategy in terms of qualitative and quantitative methods are examined and identified, highlighting the most appropriate methods for this research by analysing advantages and disadvantages with further emphasizing on chosen methods for preliminary and empirical findings in conjunction with the aims and objectives of the research.

**Chapter Four** explains the preliminary research that took place through quantitative research. It discusses findings from the research which was conducted through using questionnaires that were given to consumers who were approached in six different
commercial locations of Manchester (explained in detail in the chapter). There were various questions based on consumers themselves and their shopping habits which enabled to identify need for responsive designs. This chapter further explains our main method of research that was used and the companies that were researched. It outlines the five qualitative interviews conducted in depth to justify the hypotheses of this thesis. The information obtained from the case studies is summarized into a flow chart where necessary and other relevant information was placed in an IDEF0 (Integration Definition) chart, which will be used to depict the processes and all the activities carried through the companies.

**Chapter Five** discusses the findings from the primary data collected and links it to the literature review, along side conduct a meta-analysis across the case studies in order to meet research aim and objectives. Thus it summarises the findings of the study, drawing conclusions in conjunction with the aims and objectives of this research, identifying limitation in this research and providing recommendations for further research overseeing collaborative and responsive fashion supply chain.
2. Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1. Introduction
The principal aim of this thesis is to investigate the strategies undertaken by fashion retailers to achieve responsiveness and collaboration in the fashion supply chain, this chapter will discuss the key characteristics and elements about the fashion industry that may have an impact on the fashion design process and supply chain. Section 2.2 will discuss the key trends that lie within the fashion industry. Section 2.3 will explain and present various design process models and highlight their significance to the fashion sector. Section 2.5 defines supply chain management (SCM) in detail and explores key issues pertaining to the fashion supply chain. It reviews some of the key literature on SCM by various academics that may broaden our understanding of this. In addition, section 2.7 identifies various strategies that are adopted by fashion retailers to respond to UK’s volatile market, in essence making the supply chain more effective. It oversees area of Fast Fashion and the Quick response strategies that various firms use according to their target market.

Finally conclusions are drawn from the literature review in section 2.8 about key trends in the fashion sector, the design process, supply chain and various strategies adopted by fashion retailers to make the design process and supply chain more responsive. Based on conclusions from Literature review, facilitated the researcher to formulate research questions for the primary data.

2.2. Key issues and trends within the fashion industry
The clothing industry is one of the most mobile industries in the world Martin (2007) as cited by MacCarthy and Jayarathne (2009). The UK textile and clothing industry makes a substantial contribution to the UK’s economy. In 2007, the UK market that accounts for clothing and footwear was measured to be worth approximately £48.55bn (Clothing and
Footwear Industry Market Review, Keynote, 2008). It accounts for about 6% of total consumer spending, the lowest proportion in recent history.

“Powerful trends can emerge quickly and require the mass market fashion follower to adopt a particular product (e.g. poncho in 2004)”, (Jackson and Shaw, 2009). In fast fashion businesses such as Zara, H&M and Topshop, sudden fads (i.e., short term trends) emerge, which can come and go within 2-4 weeks.

Similarly, if a specific trend emerges lasting a number of seasons, this can suddenly become unfashionable in a segment. The sudden emergence of fads and medium trends is also something that a fashion brand has to respond to. However, to predict the customers' reaction to new trends in advance is hard to predict. In predicting such responses, classic market research normally is not useful; however there are some continuous market research software programmes that allow monitoring attitudes and trend shifts which guide them in being responsive to emerging trends.

There is an established series of events which include trade fairs and fashion weeks, such as the London fashion week/weekend, Premiere Vision (Paris), Home Tex et cetera, which contribute to an evolving theme and “look” of a fashion season. The speed and power of these trends varies significantly and depends upon the target audience and consumer groups involved. These trade shows and exhibitions guide the retailers in the right direction for the up and coming trends on colour, fabric, styles and finishing’s, which eventually make their way to the mass market.

2.2.1 Fashion Consumer
In the UK, female consumers spend more money on clothing than men (Jackson and Shaw, 2009). When it comes to fashion, fundamentally, the young generation are higher spenders in comparison to mature people.
Furthermore, as the world is becoming increasingly globalised, consumers are able to share global knowledge and information through the latest technological discoveries, such as television and the Internet, together with newspapers and magazines, which conveys information with speed across geographical and culture borders and brings customers closer together (Jackson and Shaw, 2001). Today the new global consumers purchase and shop online through websites from various locations. However, web based shopping experience cannot as yet truly replicate real-life shopping (e.g., no ability to touch and try garments before they buy). Hence, in order to encourage sales on the internet, many online retailers such as ASOS for example do free returns and many high street retailers who sell online, for example like Next, Zara or River Island, also allow free returns through post or in store. In addition it has been realised that over the past few years consumers have become more trend-aware and at least one in three consumers know what they want and where they will be able to find it in stock (Jackson and Shaw, 2009).

2.2.2 Complexity and Speed
The fashion industry is extremely competitive and complex, closely allied with a wide variety of functions and industries, such as raw fibre suppliers, yarn manufactures, textile manufactures, design and research teams, garment manufactures, agents, wholesalers, distributors and retailers. According to Singleton (1997) as cited by Khan (2006), it has become more difficult to sustain competitive advantage in an environment that is changing rapidly. But through information technology, the fashion industry strives to remain competitive through continuous innovation, creativity, quality and design (Stengg, 2001), which has not only reduced time to market for garment manufacturers but has also reduced production costs (Brun et al. 2008). However, to stay constantly competitive organisations must ensure smooth running of the design process from designers through to distributors.
2.2.3 Globalisation

The fashion and textile sector is a global industry, with constant trade flows across the world. “Globalisation”, a business phenomenon which has evolved substantially over the past decade, is best supported by an evolved system of specialisation and international business trade between nations (Porter, 1990). Therefore, a global strategy must take organisations, markets and operations into account together, viewing them from an integrated framework angle which progressively includes cooperation with other firms (Harland et al. 2003).

The UK fashion sector has always responded to changes in order to stay competitive, thus globalisation exposes the industry to more competition from low labour cost countries (especially from Asia) (Euratex, 2001). Over recent years, global supply networks have emerged to supply clothing to world markets. The nature of these global networks poses significant challenges for quick and accurate response in the clothing sector, such as ensuring the right product volume and mix is delivered to retail stores on time. Therefore, a globally dispersed supply network requires innovative operational strategies and practices (MacCarthy and Jayarathne, 2009).

According to Stengg (2001), the fashion industry is a very diverse and heterogeneous industry. Its activities range from the production of raw materials to the manufacture of a wide variety of semi-finished and finished products. Moreover, processes such as merchandising, sourcing and distribution have become a global subject matter, (Jackson and Shaw, 2009). It is widely recognised that across the UK more than 90% of apparel lines are imported, mainly from South East Asia, with leading exporters being mainly from China and Hong Kong. Therefore, inevitably the UK manufacturing base has shrunk dramatically, with exports of luxury and designer products sustaining the industry (Clothing & Footwear Industry Market Review - Keynote, 2008).

All of these phenomena are important in understanding current and emerging supply chain structures in the clothing sector that are based on global supply but often
supplemented by local supply where desirable. Marks and Spencer (M&S), the major UK retailer with a retailing presence in a number of other countries, sourced substantially from a core UK supply base up until the late 1990s but today it utilises a global sourcing strategy fully (Tokatli et al. 2008).

### 2.2.4 Seasonal impact

According to Roslow, Li and Nicholls (2000), “seasonal change is a fact of life for most human beings”. Hence, seasonal change has an impact on consumers socially, in terms of what clothes people wear, what sports they can play; even religious events are dependent upon seasons. It even has an impact on their travelling, where and when they socialise, and many more.

Weather has become widely recognised as a dynamic factor that has a major impact upon the fashion sector, and this has implications on supply chain management to enable efficient and responsive collaborative design and production (Ferla, 2006). Therefore, the supply chain of fashion and textiles sector needs to be responsive towards ongoing fluctuations in the market.

Related to pre-season weather forecasts, Fisher and Raman (1996) illustrated that the errors in forecasting were in the region of 50 percent; whereas forecasts based on observing showed that about 20 percent of actual sales had forecast error, which highlights the need of precise forecasting in order to meet consumer demand and maximise profits. Longer lead time will result in a huge impact on uncertainty and will not be able to comply with consumer requirements through an efficient supply chain (Mattila, King and Ojala, 2002). Therefore, making accurate season forecasts is essential.

### 2.3. The Design Process

The value of design to business has been acknowledged worldwide (Hollins 1991; Kotler 1973; Lu and Wood 2006) and therefore managing design effectively has become
paramount. This section examines the key features of design activities and their management. It also explores product life cycle management strategies that incorporate an element of forecasting.

2.3.1. Definition of the term ‘design’
The term “design” is widely, yet ambiguously, used throughout literature. Design has been acknowledged as a strategic tool in competitive industries (Kotler 1973; Walsh et al. 1992; McGoldrick 2002). Design is identified as an activity that involves a wide spectrum of professions in which products, services, graphics, interiors and architecture take part, and where notions of creativity, consistency, industrial quality and shape are emphasised (Mozota, 2003). Making accurate decisions about design and being quick in responding to consumer demand is essential especially in fast moving and impulsive markets such as fashion and apparel. Design can be seen as a key decision making tool and a source of sustaining competitive activity, to optimise consumer satisfaction and organisation profitability through creative use of major design elements that includes performance, durability, appearance and cost, Kotler and Rath (1990) as cited by Bruce and Bessant (2002); Studd (2003); Mozota (2003).

According to Ford (1903) design decisions are ten times more effective than production planning decisions and one hundred times more effective than production changes in reducing costs and improving quality (Roy and Potter, 1990). Therefore “investment in design improves financial performance, retains and regains market share, enhances exports and affects the competitiveness of British Industry” (Potter et al, 1991) and facilitates penetration of new markets or increase of present market share (Walsh, 1995).

Design is a process that lies at the very heart of innovation and thus at the heart of the company itself (Hollins, 1991). Design is a vital process of the supply chain and the design of the product does not only have a huge impact on market success but also on sourcing of components, production, distribution and even visual merchandising of the
products in store, (Khan and Christopher, 2008). Therefore, the way design process is managed and organised can have an impact on time to market, replenishment lead times and cost, (Dutta, 2005).

2.3.2. Design management
The concept of design management, generated in Great Britain during the 1960s, originates from the Taylor model of management (Towill, 2010), emerging from a hierarchical model to a flat and flexible organisational model, which encourages individual initiative, independence and risk taking (Mozota, 2003). Design management involves the application of a wide range of professional skills to co-ordinate and optimise the design process. It has been defined as harnessing of design expertise to reinforce strategic objectives of the organisation (Cooper and Press, 1995). Design Management affects the design process, designers and other members of the design process. Above all, design management has a major impact on the overall performance of an organisation.

The role of design management is to identify and communicate the ways in which design can contribute to a company’s strategic value. There appears to be two main approaches: reactive (managerial) and proactive (strategic) (Borja de Mozota, 1992).

The managerial approach enhances design by reacting to and accommodating administrative and management concepts, by analysing design and organisational performance, alongside design brand, identity and strategy.

The strategic approach, according to Hart et al. (1989) proactively examines design as a new paradigm in order to coordinate ideas and methods that can be used to facilitate the efficiency of management. This approach requires an understanding of the ways in which design perceives authenticity and an examination of its methods, such as shape, colour, aesthetics and sociology of objects in order to develop management concepts.
2.3.3. Design process models
From the literature review conducted to date, design is a crucial process that impacts total supply chain. “The design process takes full account of the requirements of the total supply chain to ensure maximum flexibility and responsiveness to customer demands at a minimum total cost to the business” Mughal and Osborne (1995) as cited by Khan and Christopher (2008). Therefore, design needs to be managed through a process that integrates market research, branding, marketing strategy, engineering, scheduling, new product development, production planning, distribution and corporate communication policy, thus the design process has a multidisciplinary character which must allow responsiveness and collaboration to take place effectively in order to meet consumer requirements.

Various design process models have emerged from the literature reviewed. Twiss (1987) believes that decisions can be made more effectively and efficiently with an understanding of the processes at work and within a “conceptual framework”. This conceptual framework is recognized as the design model. A design model also shows the general direction of the design process. The majority of design process models show similar core stages in the similar sequence as reflected from Cooper’s (1983) model illustrated below in Fig 2.3.3;

![Fig 2.3.3: Core Stages within design process (Cooper, 1983)](image)

When considering the supply chain, account needs to be taken of the manufacturer as well as retailer. Gaskill (1992), described how retail product development splits its activities into three parallel areas, such as fabric selection, palette selection and fabric
design after trend analysis and concept development, which is then followed by silhouette and style direction on one hand and prototype construction and analysis on another before emerging into the final phase of line presentation. Other authors allude to a supply chain, Carr and Pomeroy (1992) described the complete fashion design process as “a process that begins with identifying a need for style or a garment and ends only when the company has manufactured and sold the last garment”.

Mazota (2003) outlined a five stage generic design process across all industry sectors, which are even applicable to the fashion sector, illustrating that each stage had differing objectives. The stages are described briefly as:

**Preliminary Phase 1: Investigation**
An opportunity or a potential need is identified and ideas are generated to analyse if that need can be turned into a design concept.

**Phase 2: Research**
This stage is understood as product design for process execution, (Lu and Wood, 2006), where in a design brief identifies the problems and the objectives for the project, the positioning of the product or graphics in its competitive market and the technical and functional parameters of the project. This analysis often leads to complementary studies and documentation on the “environment”, or context, of the project. There are two main phases at this stage, one to form diagnosis of the project and secondly to define a visual concept (or to create a script or verbal and textual definition of the project).

**Phase 3: Exploration**
Various creative directions are presented to the client in “rough” or drawings of proposed perspectives along with various solutions. During this stage, the committee i.e. clients select one or two creative direction. This selection is facilitated by a diagnosis of the various solutions in relation to the hierarchy of desired functions defined in the design
brief. Solutions are then examined according to analysis of the aesthetic, functional and technical constraints and are developed further in phase 4.

**Phase 4: Development**
This is the product design for process design stage, which addresses the concerns about how a new product design or a product change may impact on process design or modification. Three dimensional solutions are presented to enable judgements to be made on quality. A life size prototype is made to analyse the aesthetics and technical constraints in assembling the fashion item. The prototype model can also be used to perform marketing tests. Towards the end, after various tests, the final garment is adopted and the creative phase of the process ends.

**Phase 6: Realisation**
The prototype of fashion item is developed into a final product along with documentation of execution and a plan that defines the materials used, surface treatment, and colour for the different elements of the product or range. This is a time consuming phase because it requires collaboration of different departments – the manufacturer and external suppliers.

**Phase 5: Evaluation**
Evaluation tests are carried out through a number of ways, which are listed as follows:

- Technical control: which are the tests of conformity to norms of use, safety and durability;
- Marketing evaluation: is the appropriateness of the design solution i.e. the fashion item to brand values, target market and market share objectives (although this market evaluation can be conducted earlier, consumer preferences and behaviour can be assessed during prototype testing).
All the stages in this generic design process highlighted by Mazota (2003) do comprise of brainstorming, trend analysis and research methods similar to a typical fashion design process (Studd, 2003). Design is not an isolated activity; it is a more complex process with several key phases involved. In the generic design process as highlighted by Mazota (2003), design participates in the innovation and transfer of new technologies, as well as in the revitalisation of a region (Guimaraes, 1996).

On the other hand, Total design “integrates market research, marketing strategy, engineering product design, production planning, distribution and environmental monitoring within one cyclical model”, (Cooper and Press, 1995). The Total Design Activity Model (figure 2.2.4 (i) ) proposed by Pugh (1986) is a multi-disciplinary process that examines the issues that take place in the business environment, such as interactions between phases, teamwork and reasoning behind design decisions. The model has been designed in such a way that there is constant evaluation of decisions at each stage which encourage the members of the design team to constantly focus and question their main aim in order to achieve the end result in an efficient manner.

Even though the model illustrated below by Pugh (1986) is engineering-based, it is widely adapted by fashion sector as they follow similar processes and strategy for their range. For example, the core activities of this model are exactly the same as the M&S design process model illustrated in section 1.3, along with other fashion companies who also follow similar stages in their design process and will be explored later in Chapter four.
The design process has been described as a strategic planning of products and in competitive industries it has been acknowledged as a strategic tool, Kotler (1973); Walsh et al. (1992) as cited by Studd et al. (2003). However, Fairhead explained it further as a process that collects information on markets, technological innovation and competitor activity that develops strategic planning on new Product development and specifies product performance characteristics, product image, production processes and allied activities. Cooper and Press (1995) illustrated this concept as figure 2.3.3 (ii) and reinforced the understanding that design process is fundamental to enabling information collection, exchange and used effectively to design products and this is especially important in fast moving sectors such as high street fashion industry.
2.3.4. Fashion design process models
All design processes reflect individual firms and their requirements and various integration strategies. Sequential activities within the fashion supply chain have been explored; Forza and Vinelli (2000) indicate design and production’s substantial dependence on accurate forecasting with regards to trends and season, which also integrates information about customers and their requirements.

In relation to these sequential activities, amongst many other academics who have investigated and analysed variations of design process, Wickett et al. (1999) outlined seven phases as guide for product development within the fashion sector which were identified as trend analysis, concept evolution, palette selection, fabric selection, fabric design, silhouette and style/line directions with an additional category listing influential, internal and external intervening factors, that include lengthy processes carried out by producers, prior to launch of products in the market place, which involves a series of screening and selection of design options and combinations of ideas and trends to palette, fabrication along with final mix of merchandise, as cited in (Pan and Holland, 2006), to accumulate through a range of decisions typically before the deadline of the next stage.
There are three key players who are a significant part of the fashion design process, that comprise of designers / brand houses, fabric suppliers and garment manufacturers and as mentioned earlier, there is a lengthy screening and selection process in order to put a range together for each season, be it 2-4 seasons a year or 20, they all follow a similar procedure. For some designers/ brand houses, this procedure normally begins during late September and February at the textiles and forecasting trade show known as Premier Vision at Paris, which caters to provide general market trends to the buyer from different companies as well as take orders from potential buyers (Pan and Holland, 2006). And for some it could be a matter of attending various fashion shows along with a combination of attending fabric exhibitions, doing competitive shopping, searching the internet or simply hiring trend forecast agencies (Jackson and Shaw, 2009). Therefore it is vital to keep up with the trends and have continuous feedback which aids towards gaining knowledge about customer requirements and preferences.

According to Pan and Holland (2006), design development is a crucial phase between conceptual design and production in the supply chain. The three key players converge at this stage, although, judgments are primarily based according to evaluation of trend forecasting, observations of ongoing market trends, assessment of past sales and availability of resources which all in some format accumulate towards acknowledgement of consumer requirements alongside forming trends to give consumer an insight to trends to allow satisfaction together with consumer wants, therefore, ultimately exercises the supply push approach.

Figure 2.3.4 illustrates the “Amalgamated Map” by Pan and Holland (2006) that displays the activities in the fashion design process and how they are synchronised from start to finish in terms of the starting point from garment design through to production of garment.
Fig 2.3.4: The amalgamated process map - integrated decision points (Pan and Holland, 2006)

Firstly Fig 2.3.4 demonstrates interface of communication and the way communication is streamlined by eliminating duplicate processes and setting collective specifications and
approval standards between designers and suppliers, and between designers and manufacturers, in order to reduce design development time. Secondly, at the “integrated decision points” (IDP in the map), customer’s choice can be strategically incorporated into the series of screening and selection process.

According to Pan and Holland (2006), the amalgamated map emphasizes that although product life cycle is in effect getting shorter, it appears that product design and development takes the longest time in the actual process - up to 26 weeks from start (beginning of research and conceptual design) to finish and it still remains the longest part of the design process for many retailers whether it means it would take days or months.

There is considerable amount of pressure on suppliers and manufacturers to reduce time to market. Most textiles/apparel suppliers and high street retailers have to work under extreme pressure to produce and deliver within the time span of four to five weeks from order sign-offs due to fast paced industry, this typically involves weaving, dyeing / printing and finishing, assuming that suppliers have gone through a pre-selection process in order to stock up or reserve the” right” type of yarns required, in this process fashion designers actually are rarely involved in actual fashion design or selection process. Garment manufacturers continually take measures to compress and control time factor by moving the design development services down the supply chain, by allowing more in house design on their own premises, developing products according to order specifications and production.

The following section explores the fashion product life-cycle in detail and identifies various product life-cycle management (PLM) software’s that are currently available in the market and being used by various fashion retailers.
2.3.5. Business process modelling

Business process modelling is used to gain knowledge about the business processes, make decisions on the process or used to develop business process software (Aguliar-Saven, 2003). It aids to represent the structure, activities and the inter-dependencies of a firm in a systematic and defined way (Busby and Williams, 1993). It has been argued that “when it comes to business modelling, a picture may be worth far more than a thousand words” (Gill, 1999) thereby a diagram can explain more things and visually make things clearer for the reader, giving a better overview of total business process and in theory save money and time (Giaglis 2001; Damij 2007). In addition, process modelling is a requirement in ISO 9000 international standard for quality management and assurance (Damij, 2007).

Business process modelling techniques can be either diagrammatic or tabular (Damij, 2007). Tabular techniques use activity tables where as diagrammatic techniques use flowcharts, data flow diagrams, integrated definition of function modelling (IDEF), Petri nets, role activity diagramming, knowledge based techniques and etc (Giaglis 2001; Damij 2007). Thus a lot of this research has been based on explaining its business process modelling through diagrammatic techniques and the two widely used business processes modelling techniques in this research are described in sections below.

2.3.5.1. Flow charts

Flow charts are based upon a set of activities for a process from start to finish presented graphically and in a logical sequence. There are different symbols, connected by lines, slowing the path of a series of activities or steps. The concept of flow charts was developed in the 1960’s, flow charts are recognized as one of the first graphical modelling techniques, that illustrates the flow and information of activities whilst high lighting the key processes and decision points (Giaglis, 2001). The main advantage of using flow charts for business process modelling is the ease of understanding of the main business activities and its sequential flow but it only provides basic facilities. However,
flow charts can be difficult to evaluate when they are big, as there is no breakdown of main and sub-activities which is presented in the diagram, (Aguliar-Saven 2003; Damij 2007).

2.3.5.2. IDEF (Integration Definition) modelling
IDEF is a family of modelling methods that offers a diagrammatic way to represent the operations in an organisation. Primarily, IDEF was developed in the United States from Structured Analysis and Design Technique (SADT) at the American Air Force to identify the required information for process modelling (Damij, 2007). Firms use IDEF modelling to express their current understanding of the business and to re-structure the operations as they would like to envisage in the future (Busby and Williams, 1993).

There are sixteen methods of IDEF that represent different types of modelling; IDEF0 and IDEF3 are the two commonly used methods in business process modelling. IDEF0 represents the activities, decisions and actions of an organisation and models the decisions, activities and operations in a manufacturing organisation in a graphical form (Kim and Jang 2002; Bin Akasah and Amirudin 2006).

Fig 2.3.5.2: Activity box for the IDEF process modelling technique (Bin Akasah and Amirudin, 2006)
IDEF analyses a function performed, what is required for that performance, alongside the development potentials. As illustrated in figure 2.3.5.2 a function in an IDEF0 chart is expressed by a box and arrows are used to represent the interface to or from those functions. IDEF0 technique is easy to analyse and improves the process by using this method. In addition, more controls can be defined to the process by working backward from output to the input along the chain according to Aguljar-Saven (2003).

Another element of the IDEF0 technique is that each activity can be expanded into more detailed levels of analysis as illustrated in the case studies for Zara, Asda George and River Island. Its capability to cope with complexity and hierarchical levels is considered to be the main selling point of the model (Busby and Williams, 1993).

On the other hand, the IDEF0 model does lack in the quantitative part which incorporates attributes such as lead time costs and scrap rates; thus it is difficult to make development merely by just analyzing the model. The model is not publically testable and therefore subjective. Regardless of those drawbacks, IDEF has become the widely used process modelling technique in most businesses due to diversified applications.

2.4. The Fashion Product Life-cycle
All types of product follow the Product Life-Cycle (PLC), with no product selling forever (Jackson and Shaw, 2009). The concept of PLC was introduced by, Dean (1950), and it has been greatly studied and discussed by various academics ever since (Gardner 1987; Rink and Swan 1979; Tibben-Lembke 2002; Jackson and Shaw 2009). Generally the sales of any product will follow a well known product life cycle curve. From initial concept till the end it passes through several distinct phases. Typically the life cycle is divided into five phases, which is significant in corresponding to distinct problems and opportunities, (Jackson and Shaw 2009; Goworek 2007; Kotler 1985):
Product development;
Introduction;
Growth;
Maturity;
Decline.

After the product is introduced, sales begin to grow slowly, until a critical mass of consumer awareness is reached, and sales grow rapidly. Eventually the swift growth starts to show and the product enters a constant phase of slow growth i.e., sales start to level off. Eventually sales will decrease, at first slowly and then rapidly. Once the sales fall below some threshold level (which normally varies according to company), the product will gradually terminate and sales will drop to zero, (Tibben-Lembke, 2002)

Fig 2.4: The Product Life-cycle (PLC) – (Goworek, 2001, 2007, Ryan, 2007)

According to Jin (2004), fashion products have a more limited life cycle, than any other products and their demand is difficult to predict, and there is a high level of impulse purchase that is involved. The buyer needs to anticipate the expected life cycle of a fashion product in terms of number of phases or seasons for which it is offered to customers. The product life cycle can be applied to a generic product type, or to a specific style stocked by the retailer. It could be that the products life cycle for a particular style is extended from one season to the next possibly through different colours, or small style details or it could be that a particular style only lasts one season (Goworek, 2001). Jeans are a prime example of a classic item that has survived over the several decades, having
been first introduced in the 19th century, with a growth stage in the 1950’s, they are currently positioned at the maturity phase (Goworek, 2007) and according to the ongoing current trends, it will continue to be at that stage for several more years. Even within such a classic product area there are fads, which evidently have a shorter product life cycle than classic styles and the buyer needs to predict the length of this time span precisely in order to assist range planning (Ryan, 2007). The product life cycle usually lasts from four weeks up to several decades but for most women’s fashion styles, it is likely to last from six months to a year, Goworek (2001, 2007). Fashion sector has the maximum variety of PLC’s; a typical lifecycle for each fashion item varies between 2 – 4 weeks, if not less. Prime example of this type of cycle would be found at retailers like Zara, Topshop, who replenish stock with new items every 2-3 weeks. Those managing the products must determine the point of optimum sales, profitability and point of decline when mark downs and stock clearance would be necessary.

2.4.1 Controlling the life cycle: IT in the design development process for fashion products
Since the 1950s, leading retailers such as the Arcadia group have been using information technology to monitor sales and coordinate distribution to their outlets, so as to match supply to the shifting patterns of demand. Therefore, it is crucial that the designer constantly considers what the market requires, along with analysing and developing consumer lifestyles. Life cycles in fashion driven areas are very short and with current market trends there is a need for constantly fresh ideas, (Studd, 2003). Although many fashion retailers are focused towards having in-house designers, but it has been gathered that freelance designers are increasingly playing an important role in the companies.

The 1980s saw a boom in information technology, which enhanced awareness about the nature of changing markets, and in response act accordingly and flexibly in response. The rise of information technology created a massive market for design, with 86% of UK retailers investing in design, (Walsh et al. 1992). It was this strategy that transformed the manufacturing industry through computer-based innovations. Design was not only
essential to the processes of consumption but also in exploiting the flexible manufacturing potential that the new production systems offered by increasing the choice to consumer, allowing one production line to produce a number of different modes and variants geared to different niche markets hence the factory was automatically geared to respond to changing consumer demand as quickly as possible. Therefore, it appears that information system enables effective coordination covering all aspects of production.

Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) software allows companies to manage the entire lifecycle of a product efficiently and cost-effectively, from conception, design and manufacture, through service and disposal. Computer-Aided Design (CAD), Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM), Computer-Aided Engineering (CAE), Product Data Management (PDM) and Manufacturing Process Management (MPM) converge through PLM. PLM is unique from other software solutions because it drives top-line revenue from repeatable processes. By providing the application depth and breadth, validate and manage the detailed product and process data, PLM supports continuous innovation.

Over the past 3 years there has been a growing interest in the possible benefits of enhancing in house systems with a dedicated fashion PLM platform from suppliers such as Lawson, Lectra, Gerber, Setlog, Trade Stone and Dassault systems (Clements 2010; PTC 2010).

PLM software redefines business; it empowers businesses to formulate unified, information-driven decisions at every stage in the product life-cycle. PLM solutions establish a cohesive platform to:

- Optimize relationships along the lifecycle and across organisations;
- Maximize the lifetime value of business’ product portfolio;
- Set up a single system of record to support diverse data needs.
In order to succeed in this intensive competitive market, retailer and brands need to be experts at delivering products in the shortest possible time frame at the right price. This involves coordinating a complex apparel product development process across a global supply chain, (Drapers, 2010). This thereby puts huge pressure on their PLM – which is the lifecycle of a product or a range from inception to the finished article. This means that retailers should do all they can to ensure fashion product life cycle runs smoothly.

2.4.2 A comparison of various PLM Software’s
There are several specialized PLM packages that comprises of various modules including line planning, story boarding, colour management, computer aided design (CAD), management of fabrics and trims, management of product data, cost estimation, sourcing and supplier management (Drapers 2010; PTC 2010). Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) Software redefines business; it empowers a business to make unified, information-driven decisions at every stage in the product lifecycle.

PLM software facilitates in meeting deadlines by all parties in the life cycle and aid in making decisions and act upon them quickly. Listed below are a few, widely recognized PLM software’s that are predominantly used by many fashion organisations.

(i) Lawson
Lawson is a fashion software solution for apparel, footwear, home textiles and accessory companies. Lawson for Fashion enables companies with complex, global supply chains, to synchronize supply and demand in real time. Lawson provides Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions for companies that source; distribute; retail or manufacture apparel, footwear, home textiles, general textiles and fashion accessories and over 4,500 customers use their software throughout the world. This software also compliments human capital management, customer relationship management, business intelligence and corporate social responsibility, (www.apparelsearch.com, 2010), therefore, Robert McKee – Lawson software director, states that retailers cannot take the risk of ignoring the benefits of PLM, (Clements, 2010).
(ii) **Lectra**

Lectra is a world leader in design, manufacturing and distribution of software and hardware dedicated towards the major business users of textiles, leather and other soft materials, supplying a comprehensive range of associated services for the development of complete solutions, from product design to manufacture to retailing. Lectra Fashion PLM, is specifically designed for fashion companies, it integrates process optimization with lifecycle management of collections and includes modules for line planning, creative collection development, product data management, product engineering, and workflow management. Lectra Kaledo Collection shares a common database platform within PLM, and encourages artistic creativity alongside structuring of collection creation process and facilitation of information exchange internally and externally within the design environment. Lectra is software that comprises of all textiles designing processes i.e. printing, knitting and weaving and allows more designs to be created with the same resources. Lectra serves more over 20,000 customers in more than a 100 countries, (www.apparelsearch.com, 2010).

(iii) **Gerber**

Gerber technology recently announced that it is marketing a new PLM solution that is designed to meet the specific needs of the apparel sector. Fashion Lifecycle Management (FLM) will combine Gerber's Web product development management (PDM) software with an apparel PLM workflow solution. However, there are already a few fashion companies that have been using the Gerber system, in particular New Look, who are one of the foremost Fast Fashion retailers on High Street. They invested in the Gerber system for pattern cutting a few years ago (Khan, 2008). This newly developed CAD system enables designers and product developers to map out garment pattern pieces and minimise fabric waste. They link this technology with their suppliers in order to share the data and compress time from design to manufacture. According to Yvonne Heinen-Foudeh, the European marketing director for Gerber technology states that designers also
have access to a “digital library” of previous style ideas and garment templates, which facilitates the speed of the process, i.e. chasing samples and supplier feedback is made easier, and in essence lead times are reduced, (Clements, 2010)

(iv) Dassault
Since its creation in 1981, Dassault Systems has aided its industrial customers to maximize product design and development. Initially it used to design complex shapes, 3D and now it makes it possible to design and manufacture products creating digital mock-ups. Today, Dassault Systems anticipates the industrial processes of tomorrow, with solutions that provide a 3D view of a product's lifecycle, from creation to maintenance, including manufacturing and recycling.

2.4.3 Summary of PLM
All the PLM software’s mentioned above cater primarily for the apparel sector and many companies have it already incorporated into their design process. All four PLM software share a common ground of being able to deliver an effective solution to its client with regards to product development and manufacturing, alongside offering various other services. They all share some similarities and are unique in one way or another. For instance, Lawson, is the most widely used software by many retailers as it provides complete solution to companies from sourcing through to distribution. It specialises in ERP planning and offers various other services (see 2.4.2 (i). Whereas, Lectra is more design focused, even though it provides solution from sourcing through to manufacturing but it offers a wide variety of textiles design processes such as printing, knitting and weaving, which Lawson doesn’t offer or the other two software and it is not as widely recognised as Lawson. On the other hand, Gerber has been recently adopted by New Look over the past few years as mentioned earlier and it is mainly used for pattern cutting; it is used to compress time to manufacture. It is the newest form of CAD available, mainly used by designers and product developers to cut while eliminating waste. Similar to Lawson, Dassault has aided customers from design to product
development but offers a 3D view of a product’s life cycle. It operates more towards an industrial process of tomorrow.

The four PLM software’s discussed in this chapter have some similarities yet are exclusive in many ways, which results in a higher demand for them by the retailers as they target different needs. Some retailers may just use one type of PLM software or some may combine it with others, depending on their requirement. However, Lawson does appear to be the one stop all software for majority of the retailers.

Thus with reference to this research, it raises the question as to what type of PLM software do the companies investigated (if any) use to stay competitive?

2.5. The Fashion Supply Chain

2.5.1. Background of Supply Chain Management (SCM)
Supply chain management (SCM) is a recently developed phenomenon, which has made a significant appearance in management literature since the 1980’s, (Oliver and Weber 1982; Houliam 1985; Stevens 1989) and since then it has been popular with various authors as an independent field of study, (Zokaei and Hines 2007; Cooper and Ellram 1993; Cooper et al. 1997; Christopher 2005; Skjoett-Larsen 1999; Mentzer et al. 2001; Gibson et al. 2005). In fact, roots of SCM can be traced to back to studies of Forrester (1958, 1961), looking into system dynamics and analysis in response to changes in demand and supply chain situations, cited in (Sahay, Cavale and Mohan, 2003), alongside integrated logistics management, (Chopra and Meindl, 2010). Derived from the fifties would be the prime example of Toyota Production System (TPS) 50’s who emphasized upon mass production to minimize unit production cost and has resulted in a one of the most successful manufacturer over the years.
2.5.2. Interest in supply chain management (SCM)

SCM is the integration of key business processes from suppliers through to end users, and comprises of products, services and information that add value for customers and other stakeholders (Lambert, 2006). According to Kannan et al. (2004), effective SCM is seen as the driver for reductions in lead times and material costs, parallel with improvements in product quality and responsiveness, this proves to be beneficial for all the firms.

According to various authors, such as, Godsell and Harrison (2002); Christopher (2005); Womack and Jones (2005) as cited by Zokaei and Hines (2007), supply chain management is emerging into consumer driven value chain management, which recognizes the importance of the consumer and attempts to capture the subtlety of consumer value as a source of differentiation and supply chain competitiveness, along with the idea of forming cooperative relationships with suppliers (Farmer and Macmillan, 1976).

2.5.3. Definitions of supply chain management (SCM)

There is a lack of agreement on a universal definition for the term SCM and the term can be used ambiguously to convey a variety of different meanings (Bechtel and Jayarem, 1997, Otto & Katzab, 1999, Tan, 2001; New, 1997) from internal supply chains through to external dyadic chains and network structures (Harland, 1996). Moreover, Lumus and Vukurka (1999) were a few of many people to oversee and discuss the early work of supply chain management as well as analyzing and interpreting relevant definitions.

According to Tan (2000), SCM is about the coordination of activities and there are four basic activities that are included in the supply chain; planning, sourcing, making and delivering, (Lumus and Vokurka, 1999). The supply chain is described as a dynamic, interconnected supply network, (Bodes, Mall and Redner, 2004; Harland, 1996).

SCM is the preferred name for the actual name “integrated logistics”, (Muller 1990; Jackson and Shaw 2001) and has been defined as “management of materials and
information both in and between facilities, such as vendors, manufacturing and assembly plants and distribution centres” (Thomas and Griffin, 1996), which according to Sayre (1996) starts from a consumer, and ends with the consumer.

Similarly Harland (1996) explains that SCM is a process that manages a set of business activities and relationships within an organisation and externally through different types of suppliers and consumers. Therefore from a broader context SCM is an integrated philosophy that allows management and coordination of upstream and downstream relationships with suppliers and customers to deliver superior customer value at lower cost to the supply chain as a whole, which encompasses different organizations, (Ellram and Cooper 1993; Christopher 1998; Heikkila 2002; Scott and Westbrookm1991; New and Payne 1995; Tan 2000). Hence, the essence of supply chain management is as a strategic weapon to develop a sustainable competitive advantage by reducing investment, without sacrificing customer satisfaction (Lee and Bellington, 1992).

2.5.4. The Textile Supply Chain
The current interface of textile and apparel supply chain is moving towards a global approach, as mentioned in Chapter one and two. This is an occurrence with many organisations that are taking a step towards sourcing goods from overseas such as the Far East, South East Asia, or even shifting manufacturing to nearby countries with low labour costs not for all the goods, which may have an adverse impact resulting in longer lead times. These delays may affect an organisation’s responsiveness capability and due to lack of collaboration between suppliers and buyers, may result in further dispute. Therefore, it is important for supply chain to be managed effectively in order to maintain the responsiveness and collaboration amongst different parties.

Fig 2.5.4 illustrates the conventional supply chain process within the textile and fashion sector and demonstrates the cycle of the supply chain as an end to end process, from raw materials through to the buyer. The textile supply chain itself may vary considerably to the one displayed in diagram below, which displays a linear approach; however in reality
it acts more as a network of processes as shown and elaborated upon further in this chapter.

Fig 2.5.4: The traditional/ textile apparel supply chain model, adapted from (Adewole, 2005; Forza and Vinelli, 1997)

Mason-Jones and Towill (1997) describe the flow of materials and information through the supply chain as a “pipeline”. On the other hand, Hines (2001) suggests that the modern supply chain concept begins and ends with a customer, which perhaps is more relevant to the fashion industry, rather than the conventional supply chain which starts from a supplier of raw material. In the fashion supply chain, according to Hines (2001), it is the consumers who dictate the fashion, alongside textile trends that are influenced by various economic and environmental factors such as music, culture, media, or the weather as highlighted briefly in Chapter 1. It is therefore crucial for designers to forecast and recognize these influences to interpret them into new designs for the upcoming seasons (Towill, 1996). Consequently it seems that Hines (2001) agrees with Towill’s view point that the supply chain begins and ends with the consumer.
2.5.5. Significance of supply chain management to fashion industry
The fashion industry has for a long time attracted attention of researchers in the area of operations and Supply Chain Management (SCM) (Lawson et al. 1999; Christopher et al. 2004; Bruce et al. 2004), mainly because it is becoming increasingly complex, dynamic, and extremely competitive, (Newman and Cullen 2002; Jackson and Shaw 2009).

Central to all definitions is customer satisfaction, a shared objective of the whole supply chain (Zokaei and Hines, 2007). However the literature review reflects upon the existence of supply chain management within the fashion sector, which largely remains focused on improvements in efficiency in relation to responsiveness and collaboration as their main aim (Stalk and Hout 1990; Womack and Jones 1996; La Londe and Masters 1994; Christopher 2005). This area as evident has been widely discussed across the literature but very few academics have researched in depth with reference to prime examples i.e. Sinha (2001) has discussed M&S, Khan (2008) had focused her study on New Look but with reference to risk management, and few academics have studied Zara. Whereas this research will analyse a few retailers and focus more towards analysing how key members collaborate at different stages across its supply chain to be responsive. Various strategies that have been used or are being used by different retailers will be discussed, along with future recommendations will be given based on current findings.

2.5.6. Evolution of SCM in relation to the fashion sector
As the fashion sector is prone to changes due to the global market, similarly “The evolution of supply chain management is a theory driven by rapid changes in global business practice”, indicated by Hartland et al. (1999) as cited by Baites, Maw and Rodner (2004) alongside. Tan (2000) attempts to describe SCM clearly in terms of its evolution with two perspectives with prime focus on visibility, cycle time reduction and streamlined channels which are as follows:

- Purchasing and supply;
- Transportation and logistics.
2.5.6.1. Purchasing and supply perspective of the industrial buyer
This perspective of SCM evolves from conventional purchasing and SCM functions that mainly focuses on the manufacturing side of supply chain than the wholesaling or retailing side (Farmer 1997; Morgan and Monczka 1996; Lamming and Hampson 1996; Kraljic; 1983). According to Reck et al. (1992), this perspective represents a basic strategic business process. The short term objective of this perspective is to increase productivity and reduce inventory and cycle time, while the long term objective is to increase customer satisfaction, market share and profits for all the members of any given organisation.

In order to achieve these objectives, it is important for all strategic partners to realise the importance of purchasing functions which act as major links between the sources of supply chain and the organisation itself, with support coming from overlapping activities to enhance manufacturability for both the consumer and supplier.

Therefore, according to Tan (2000) the importance of supplier involvement has been taken into account since the early nineties, where suppliers participate at the earliest stage of product development during the product design stage where they could render cost effective design choices, leading to innovation in process and material technology to compete globally (Monczka et al. 1994). Thus competition does not only exist between organisations with regards to their range but also between their actual supply chains, (Anderson and Katz 1998; Birou et al. 1998; Lummus et al. 1998; Morgan and Monczka 1996; Christopher 1996) as cited by Tan (2000).

2.5.6.2. Transportation and logistics perspective of the merchants
This perspective is analysed from the wholesaling and retailing point of view which focuses on a different aspect of SCM (Christopher et al. 1998; Christopher 1992, 1996; Fisher 1997; Lamb 1995; Turner 1993; Bowersox et al. 1992; MacDonald 1991). It oversees the aspect of location and logistics issues more often than transformation.
According to Hale and Houlihan (1998), the transportation perspective is where logistics are normally incorporated into the strategic decision process of SCM. It is more focused towards inbound logistics than outbound.

On the other hand, Handfield (1994) states that it is a strategy used to make activities more efficient through quick replenishment of merchandise and delivered when required in small batches, therefore it is essential organisational performance to effectively coordinate logistical activity through information technology Lewis and Talalayvesky, (1997) as cited by Tan (2000).

Evolution of SCM continued through to 1990’s, as organisations felt there was a need to identify their business environment from a supply chain perspective and further extend best practice to build effective supply chain that includes strategic suppliers and logistics function along with the value chain (Houlihan 1987; Straus, 1989; Davis 1993; Tan et al. 1999; Tan 2000). It has also been noticed that this new phenomena of supply chain has been embraced by many manufacturers and retailers in order to improve efficiency across value chain (Tan, 2001) and enhance responsiveness in the fashion sector.

Thereby according to Mentzer et al. (2001), functions of logistics management have evolved more over the past decade, which now has branched out into a broader philosophy known as SCM, as cited in (Kempainen and Vepsalainen, 2003).

2.5.7. Economics of supply chain management
Initial development of SCM derived from the literature of physical distribution and transportation as mentioned earlier. SCM was declared to be “the most practically and intellectually significant theme within current managerial and economic research” (New, 1997), while it was referred as “the new management science of the millennium” by Lancioni, (2000)
Across the literature it has been acknowledged by various academics that SCM should be taken as the prime unit of competitive analysis, Macbeth and Fergusson (1994); Cox (1997) as cited by Croom et al. (2000), where competition should not only be carried out with a single company but must engage all channels of supply chain, (Christopher 1992; Lambert et al. 1998; Gong 2006).

Croom (2000) analyses the overview of SCM through various authors perspective. It appears that most supply chain definitions seem to have one thing in common; they focus on the “external environment of an organisation, with the boundaries of the latter defined conventionally in terms of an entity identified legally as a company or some other form of business unit”. However, Harland (1996) argues that SCM focuses on internal supply chains through to external dyadic chain and network structures, notably the business reengineering (Lee and Dale, 1998) and in operations management literature, (Slack et al. 1998). Therefore, it is important to realise that the terminology of SCM is not only associated with activities related to logistics and planning and control of materials and information that flows internally within an organisation, but also externally between organisations, (Croom et al. 2000).

Conventionally, SCM was used mainly by the manufacturing industry to improve responsiveness and flexibility (Gunasekaran, 2004), but today it is also recognised as an important strategic tool for organisation’s efficiency to gain competitive advantage through maintenance of relationships, (Cox 1997; Handfield and Nichols 1999), between manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, transporters and consumers.

In addition, Hong and Jeong (2006) summarised existing literature to define SCM as “a set of manufacturers, logistics and customers for improving the long term performance of the individual companies and the supply chain as a whole”, which is what many fashion retailers have adopted, for example, Zara, Primark, New Look, or aiming towards revamping their supply chain would be retailers like M&S and many other retailers.
Cox (1999) summarised the nature of SCM as “a way of thinking that is devoted in discovering tools and techniques provided for increased operational effectiveness and efficiency” in the supply chain. In addition, Cox argues that SCM practice is a representation of what has been done by Toyota to minimise their waste production. This approach taken by Toyota for external resources management is commonly accepted as the term ‘lean approach.

2.5.8. “Leanness” and Agility – Definition

This section focuses on making comparisons between lean manufacturing approach on eliminating waste, and on agile or flexible manufacturing systems, Christopher and Towill (2001) as cited by Mistry (2005). Lean concepts emphasize upon manufacturing efficiency and cost savings, whereas agility focuses towards flexibility and quick response known as critical dimensions of manufacturing systems, where service and customer value enhancements are prime requirements for obtaining and retaining market share.

Lean methodology is supported by reduction of set up times to allow economic production of small quantities, achieving cost reduction, flexibility, and aiming for external responsiveness by responding to customer requirements. However, even though lean supply chain is able to provide higher profits & internal manufacturing efficiency, it lacks in external responsiveness to meet consumer demand.

On the contrary, rapid replenishment requires agile suppliers, organisational agility, and a demand driven supply chain (Lawson et al, 1999) and it appears that postponement fulfilment enables the adoption of lean production principles up to the point supported by agile capabilities beyond that point, (Harrison et al. 1999).

Agility should not be confused with “leanness”. “Lean is about doing more with less” which is often used in relation with lean manufacturing, Womack et al. (1990) as cited by
Christopher and Towill (2000) to imply a “zero inventory”, known as the just in time approach. In practice a more relevant philosophy would be minimum reasonable inventory, (Grundwald and Fortuin, 1992). On the other hand, “Agility, is a business wide capability that embraces organisational structures, information systems, logistics processes and in particular mindsets. Agile supply chains are meant to be market sensitive and hence quick. A key characteristic of an agile organization is flexibility”, (Christopher and Towill, 2000).

To work effectively, lean production requires a highly coordinated value chain, close coordination between suppliers and consumers, rapid flows of products, information and Just in Time (JIT) deliveries, (Booth, 1996; Bruce et al., 2004). A key principle of JIT feature is reducing inventories to the bare minimum, through finding waste and inefficiencies throughout the production process.

Both agility and leanness demands high levels of product quality, alongside they also require minimum lead times defined as the time taken from a consumer raising a request for a product until it is delivered. Total lead-time has to be minimised to enable agility, as demand is highly volatile, thus difficult to forecast. If end-to-end lead-time is long then it will not be able to respond quickly enough to exploit market place demands. Thus effective cycle time reduction always leads to significant bottom line improvements in manufacturing costs and productivity (Towill, 1996).
Fig 2.5.8: Elements of an agile supply chain (Hoek, 2000)

Fig 2.5.8 illustrates the four different elements that contribute towards the agile supply chain, whilst leanness may be an element of agility in certain circumstances, by itself it will not enable the organization to meet the precise needs of the customer more rapidly. According to Webster’s Dictionary, lean is described as “containing little fat” whereas agile is defined as “nimble”.

2.5.8.1. Lean and agile – application to the fashion sector
Fashion markets are volatile and difficult to predict, thus the need for a process that is receptive to changes, (Christopher et al. 2004). A distinct feature of agile companies is their use of flexible arrangements with a wide supply base, (Nagel and Dove, 1991); therefore companies like Zara and Benetton have succeeded in achieving high levels of consumer response by working closely with specialist yet small manufacturers. Main strategy behind both these fashion retailers was the adoption of carrying out all the activities such as dyeing, cutting, labelling and packaging, in house, which enabled them to be flexible and respond to consumer demand accordingly.
Marks & Spencer (M&S) had initially adopted the lean approach; nevertheless it did not generate success. M&S has always been known for its perfection in delivering value to consumers along with quality, it surely developed close and collaborative relationships with its suppliers, turning into long-term relationships, i.e. with Coats Viyella but did not make any profit as it did not adopt the just in time (JIT) system. It can be argued that building relationships for a longer period of time is beneficial to the organization, however, according to current market changes, consumers want to see variety of products and in store within weeks. Therefore M&S were forced to adopt the agile approach, building relationships with more suppliers in UK and surrounding areas as well as the Far East rather than just one supplier and concentrate on producing a wider variety of products for its consumers. According to supply chain review (2006), “M&S had claimed in 2003 to be improving its margins as a result of supply chain initiatives. From sourcing 97% of its goods in the UK in 1967, M&S has moved to buying more than 90% of clothing from overseas today”.

On the other hand, Primark, a renowned British value fashion retailer has taken UK fashion market by storm over the past few years, through management of supply chain that is simple and less complicated. According to Gordon Colborn, chairman of judges “This is a £2bn supply chain which is run by eight people with incredibly short lead time….. What a great achievement for a company operating in such a highly demanding market” (Tesseras and Parsons, 2010). Primark supply chain model is based on rapidly changing clothing lines at extremely low prices, which is achieved through a combination of a responsive and agile supply chain. It is based on the concept of quick inventory turnover i.e. if there is an item today, it has to be bought today because it may not be available tomorrow (Supply chain standard, 2010). Primark has delivered excellence to the fashion sector through strong relationships with core logistics providers, and has resulted in success. Primark is purely based on fast fashion, where as an organization like M&S still believes in providing quality to its consumers, which is where they differentiate. Extremely short lead times are a necessity for Primark but not for M&S.
Even though, M&S believed in its core relationships with its suppliers, but was not able to achieve what Primark has, instead had to seek alternative suppliers closer to the UK region.

According to Kathuria (2011), Primark is based on two organizational capabilities – ability to sense new trends in fashion and the ability to respond quickly through mass production in a number of sizes and colours. Thus Primark’s growth has increased by 40% in volume over the past three years and was awarded as the overall winner of the European Supply Chain Excellence Awards 2010.

After analyzing impact of Lean on M&S, it is clear that lean strategies only are more suitable in automotive industries, where it originated from and may be applied to highly customized products within the fashion sector but should not be aimed at a mass market i.e. high street retailers.

2.5.8.2. Late Customization in the fashion supply chain
In order to respond to market effectively, objective of this activity is to compress specific part lead times to the minimum. This process is the key technique in achieving flexibility of supply itself. The aim of this strategy is to allow majority of the stock with variety to be standardised at the early stages of the design process and allow mass customisation towards the end of the lead-time according to requirements. This will allow manufacturing according to consumer demand avoiding investment in large strategic stocks, (Mughal and Osborne, 1995).

Benetton as mentioned in 2.4.8.1 was one of the most agile company across the fashion sector and was the first fashion apparel manufacturer, who was able to make changes to its range during a fashion season to satisfy consumer needs, especially in terms of colours for its range, which resulted to be fashionable for the season. Benetton achieved this by integration of functions such as logistics, operations management, purchasing and a few others. The distribution channel that was appointed by Benetton was governed by a strict,
franchise like service and financial package. Part of the package comprised of point of sale information systems, which is connected directly to Benetton’s own systems in order to allow stock to be replenished as soon as possible.

Benetton moved dyeing to a much later stage in the operations process, rather than weaving fabric in pre-dyed wool, majority of the garments were kept undyed to dye the colours according to consumer demand and market trends as and when they arise during the season. In addition, flexibility was used to respond to the demand for different garment styles also (Jarillo and Stevenson, 1991; Christopher, 1992).

The strategy adopted by Benetton was known as postponement, where the final customisation or assembly does not take place till the end where product is given to the consumer (Christopher and Towill, 2000). It is based around delaying activities in the supply chain until final orders are received based on consumer demand, and it is based on performing with a focus on customization along with cost efficiency (Hoek, 2000). Benetton was one of the first apparel retailers that was capable of responding to flexibility, however, now similar strategies are adopted by many fashion retailers, for some of their range in order to respond quickly. Prime example would be Zara who commit to approximately 60% of their range that is un-dyed and make decisions near to the time to respond to market trends. Primark is also another example who adopt postponement, for some of their range but unlike Zara who source their range Europe, Primark sources majority of its range dyed or un-dyed from the Far East, that is why it is able to cater to a mass market, (Kathuria 2010; Harvard Business Review 2005), and others.

In addition, due to the volatile nature of the market, companies are increasingly seeking for local and cheaper manufacturers who are able to respond to consumer demand quickly and who can manufacture a new design that the company requires or an existing
design with high demand that needs to be repeated, (Mughal and Osborne, 1995). Visage Ltd, a prime example of UK supplier to high street is explored in detail in Chapter 4.

2.6. **Collaboration of relationships within fashion supply chain**

The following section examines collaboration of relationships within the fashion supply chain, it explores relationship between team members within an organisation, and it highlights the importance of relationships between manufacturer to retailer and the buyer.

Across the literature of supply chain, many academics have explored the area of collaborative relationships in conjunction with partnerships and describe it as a favourable situation that may prove to be extremely beneficial to some companies and parties involved within the supply chain, (Vohra 2010; Khan et al 2008; Wong 1999; Dossenbach 1999; Bowen 2000; Harland 1996; Lamming 1996; Bidault and Cummings 1994; Valasmakis and Groves 1996).

SCM enables integration between buyers and suppliers, which seeks improved performance through elimination of waste, along with better use of internal and external supplier capabilities, (Chen and Paulraj 2004a; Morgan and Monczka 1996; Tan, 2001), with technologies to create a seamlessly coordinated supply chain. In addition it has become increasingly important for organisation to involve consumers and suppliers in their decision making process. Successful involvements have major benefits, according to Corbett et al. (1999), such as, increased market share, inventory reductions, improved delivery service, improved quality and shorter lead times.

The trigger that forced firms to re-examine at strategic level was the worldwide recession that took place during the 1980’s and early 1990’s. It can be argued that the circumstances during the mid 80s brought about a new open outlook towards collaboration than vertical integration (Porter 1987; Thackaray 1986) and more importantly to develop understanding of how a business manages these relationships their

According to Handfield and Nichols (1999) without a foundation of effective organisational relationships, any effort to manage the flow of information or materials across the supply chain is likely to be unsuccessful. Therefore, various benefits of collaborative relationships within supply chain were realised by firms and many of them no longer compete only in isolation of their suppliers, but also with other entities of SCM. For that reason, collaboration is an important part of supply chain, failing to do so may result in distortion of information along the whole supply chain, known as the bullwhip effect, which can lead to surplus of inventories, cost inefficiencies, slow response, and thereby low profits, (Lee et al, 1997).

In line with this view, Cox et al (1995), over looks at SCM as a set of functions that are within and outside of an organisation that enables the value chain to make products and provide services to the customer at the right time and at the right place. Cox (1997, 1999) explains the current principal of SCM is a “way of thinking that is devoted to discovering tools and techniques that provide for increased operational effectiveness and efficiency throughout the delivery channels that must be created internally and externally to support and supply existing corporate product and service offerings to customers”.

However, as reviewed from the literature, automotive industry has been the main type of industry to give importance to the relationships between manufacturers and suppliers of the design process which has demonstrated benefits of co-design in the NPD process performance measured in terms of lead time, cost and quality of the process, (Clark 1989; Midler 1993; Zirpoli and Caputo 2002) as cited by Moedas (2006).
2.6.1. Types of collaborative relationships

According to Lappide (2002), there are three major types of collaborative relationships that are depicted in the diagram and explained below:

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**Manufacturer/supplier collaboration**

It was stated by Lappide (1999), that close collaboration within supply chain partners would add value to the network combined activities. Also supplier to manufacturer collaboration will add benefits to key activities such as NPD, order fulfilment and capacity planning by coordinating various activities, which are the theories adopted by various organisations.

**Manufacturer/customer collaboration**

The collaborative opportunities between manufacturers and customers (such as wholesaler – distributors and retailers) centre on demand planning and inventory replenishment.” The focus is on jointly developing an understanding of demand at
the point of consumption, followed by creation of a mutually agreed replenishment plan”. This approach is used in order to ensure that consumer requirements are met efficiently.

To collaborate on successful demand planning, business partners need to allocate and amend each other’s demand plans and forecast electronically. It is vital for each partner in the supply chain to understand and electronically share its promotional plans. Once demand plans and forecasts are in place, replenishment plans are designed accordingly to assume adequate product availability, which would be jointly developed.

- **Collaboration with third party and fourth party logistics providers**
  This type of collaboration takes place between companies and third party logistics activities, and will prove to be beneficial for the transportation services. Here collaboration will improve equipment utilisation by enabling the consolidation of inbound, inter-facility and outbound shipment among business partners, which can be accomplished electronically through sharing of information of shipment schedules and transportation resources along with inventory replenishment plan. In addition, packaging may be another potential area of logistics collaboration, Sahay (1999)

However, further to various types of relationships that exist within the supply chain, not all organisations will seek to create cooperative relationships with all their suppliers or customers (Ford, 1980). Such relationships may only be formed if there will be significant benefits gained such as reduction in costs to increase overall revenue price. But it is also arguable that not all relationships can be analyzed instantly and that each relationship between an organisation, supplier and customers’ are different (Ford et al (1998). Thus relationships between the links of supply chain can be described in terms of the flows between the operation involved (Slack et al. 2010).
2.6.2. Significance of supplier involvement
Increasingly suppliers are becoming more involved at an earlier stage of the design process, (Burt & Soukup, 1985; O’Neal 1993; Sleigh 1993; Liker et al., 1996a; Ragatz et al. 1997). According to Twigg (1998) this upstream participation in the product development process has led to changes in the management of the buyer to supplier relationship, with a tendency towards partnership form. Lamming (1993) views this development as delegating greater design responsibility on the supplier side, as operating uncertainties are resolved through joint discussions, shared discussion of information, and long term cost knowledge, (Twigg, 1998). Therefore, competition is not only between organisations but theirs supply chains also to be successful Christopher (1992), as cited in (Christopher and Towill, 2001), and ultimately the success or failure of supply chain is determined upon the end consumer in the market place.

2.6.3. Vertical integration
Further to the relationship between clothing manufacturers and retailers within the design process, Richardson (1996) has highlighted “that in fashion, competition has shifted to the arena of timing and know where vertically integrated firms gained the lead” and alongside there are integrated firms that have linked to quick response to retailing having superior capabilities. Therefore, full vertical integration includes design, retail and manufacturing, as Richardson (1996) explains and concludes, “By linking design and production closely to retailing through integration, fashion apparel makers are better able to manage flexible production to meet demand volatility”.

Thus vertically integrated firms like Zara for instance, maintain excellent collaborative relationships within their supply chain and are more than capable of meeting consumer requirements along with market trends in a matter of days rather than weeks.

2.6.4. Information sharing
Different companies try to re-engineer existing processes to improve efficiency at each stage of the supply chain, predominantly through shared information, to ensure supply meets demand to avoid unnecessary surplus of stock (Lee et al. 2000). Therefore, it is
important to coordinate all layers of supply chain to meet common goals such as maximizing profitability with effectiveness and responsiveness.

Shared information may include consumer needs, consumer demands, product related data, costs related data; process related data, as well as performance metrics. Sharing information does not mean that all people involved at each stage have access to all information. Each tier may have a proper information access from other party in order to plan effectively.

Therefore, information sharing in SCM must be a two way process in order to be efficient at different stages. Forward flow of information has always been considered important resulting in quick response (QR) and efficient customer responsiveness (ECR) by fulfilling demand in a better way along with reducing the lead time. This combination of forward and backward information sharing will provide companies with better results and will enable them to react to market trends accordingly alongside, better manage their supply chain.

2.6.4.1. Obstacles in information sharing
Ideally information needs to flow throughout the supply chain, but some obstacles may occur as mentioned below (Chopra and Meindl, 2004):

(i) Lack of information sharing
Unwillingness of information sharing can cause lack of information flow in supply chain, which would cause loss of transparency and visibility of information across the supply chain.

(ii) Ordering focused forecasting
Traditionally forecasting was done based on orders from retailers. But these orders do not indicate real customer demand and variation in customer demand may increase during backward ordering. Each layer considers these orders as a base of their own demand
forecast and pass the same to its supplier downward. In case of any unsystematic changes in demand, the retailer is may interpret it wrong which could cause increase or decrease of buffers in whole supply chain, which elevates bullwhip effect.

2.6.4.2. The Bullwhip effect
The Bullwhip effect is the phenomenon where demand variability increases in supply chain as you move away from retailer to manufacturer. Lee, Padmanabhan and Whang (2004) had defined the bullwhip effect as “the amplification of demand variability from a downstream site to an upstream site.” It is observed that the order pattern in upstream direction is highly variable than downstream. This amplification in order variation may cause irrational decision making (Lee et al. 1997), which can cause a dramatic effect on firms resulting in excessive inventory, poor product forecasts, insufficient or excessive capacities, poor customer service due to unavailable products or long backlogs, uncertain production planning and high cost correction like high shipments (Lee et al. 1997). Therefore, it is important to forecast and share information precisely to avoid bullwhip effect which means that team members inevitably have to collaborate effectively to avoid uncertainties.

2.6.5. Role of coordination in SC
Extensive coordination with suppliers has been reported as a competitive advantage in developing successful new products by synergistically co-designing new products, (Twigg 1998; Diez 2000; Ragatz et al. 2002). It was discarded by Ragatz et al. (2002), that supplier integration allows reduction in material costs and quality, development time and cost and production cost while improving functionality, features and technology of the product. Also to add Twigg (1998), as cited in Lau and Yam (2005), emphasizes that suppliers of critical modules should be integrated in the early development process, thus, supporting my theory of weather responsive designs where designs could be incorporated in to the process according to weather from an earlier stage.

Research on SCM has increasingly paid attention to the role of coordination as a means to integrate value added process across different sectors, Simatupang et al, (2004).
Coordination is a central lever of supply chain management, according to Ballou et al, (2000) and Cooper et al, (1997). On the other hand, Lee (2000) proposes supply chain coordination as a vehicle to redesign decision rights, work flow and resources between chain members to leverage better performance such as higher profit margins, improved customer service performance and faster response time.

According to Simatupang et al. (2004), tight coordination is essential to improve the difficulty of accomplishing the creative design process in time in order to suit customer preference, for example, the Spanish apparel manufacturer and retailer, Zara, competes on the basis of its speed of responding to rapidly changing tastes of young urban customers (Walker et al, 2000). The reason behind Zara’s success is the ability to have compressed lead times and due to tight coordination with retailers, textile suppliers, local sewing assemblers and distribution centres working collaboratively allows product development to be as fast as possible from sketch to stores within two weeks, (Simatupang et al. 2004).

Fig 2.6.5 illustrates coordination of the creative design process (Simatupang et al. 2004), which demonstrates operations that take place within the process and how information travels across the key people in order be responsive.
Fig 2.6.5: The coordination structure for the creative design process, Simatupang et al. (2004)

2.7. Strategies used in fashion Supply Chain

This section examines various theories that have emerged in supply chain in response to competitor activity. It explores the concept of fast fashion and signifies rise of Quick response in relation to the concept along with emphasis on importance of lead times. It identifies various strategies and technologies that enable Quick Response (QR), such as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), Computer aided design (CAD), Computer aided Manufacturing (CAM) and Postponement.

Over the years numerous approaches have emerged in the manufacturing industry in terms of new paradigms, initiatives and practices, to enhance operations performance, in response to competitive activity resulting in improved product quality, increased
responsiveness and shorter lead times at low cost. Therefore, three management theories that have received attention in particular are Just in Time (JIT), Total Quantity Management (TQM), and Supply chain management (SCM) mentioned earlier in this chapter, Kannan and Tan (2004), which represent alternative approaches in improving effectiveness and efficiency of operational functions in a given organisation (Kanan and Tan, 2004).

Fig 2.7: Strategies (Kanan and Tan, 2004)

(i) **Just in Time (JIT)**

JIT is a concept that encompasses almost all management activities related to manufacturing and focuses on all aspects of manufacturing products with a minimum of waste (Vollman et al. 1997).

According to McIlhattan’s (1987) Just In Time was defined as the constant and harsh pursuit of the elimination of waste, which can be defined as anything that does not add value to a product – for example, inspection, queue time and stock. Consequently the focus of JIT was based on improvements in the efficiency of processes in the manufacturing cycle, such as implementation of demand-pull production.
Principally JIT production systems have proven to be popular, due to outstanding results achieved by the Japanese industry (Peterson, 2002), which attempts to reduce costs and improve flow of work by scheduling materials to arrive “just in time” at a place in order to be used (Schermernhorn, 1996).

(ii) Total Quality Management (TQM)
TQM is a management system for a customer focused organisation that implements a corporate wide culture to involve all employees to continually improve all aspects of the organisation and allow data driven decision-making process. TQM uses strategy, data and effective communication to integrate the quality principles into the key stages of product development, culture and activities of the organisation, (Kanan and Tan, 2001).

Thus the three strategies JIT, TQM and SCM are strongly interlinked with the fashion design process externally through SCM and internally through JIT and TQM management system. The key members of design process i.e. merchandisers ensure effectiveness of supply chain by making sure that the right product is scheduled to be at the right time, ensure smooth running of the range from sourcing of the product till it is delivered in store. On the other hand, buyers may use the JIT approach towards sourcing and manufacturing the range, in terms of reacting late as possible in design process to eliminate surplus of stock and simply respond to consumer demand, an approach that is adopted by Zara. In addition, TQM approach can be used by designer to integrate the quality principles into key stages of product development while improving corporate wide culture in any given organisation. Thereby, the three strategies are interlinked at a strategic level unambiguously yet effectively into operations strategy with potential to add value and to be in a better position to respond to this volatile market.

2.7.1. Fast Fashion

The UK apparel industry has become increasingly competitive, Kilduff (2005) as cited by Bruce and Daly (2006). Over the years, the Fast Fashion process has been explored
widely by various academics, and it is a terminology that has been linked with the theory of SCM.

Fast Fashion is a business strategy that defines “cutting-edge fashion at affordable prices”, (Caro, 2008) and it is increasingly becoming popular in Europe because it offers the consumers the opportunity to buy high fashion clothes very cheaply. Fast Fashion is build on the operations strategy of Quick Response which is similar to the Just in Time (JIT) approach that was used widely in the auto industry, (Hammond and Kelly, 1990) as cited in Caro (2008) and agility (Barnes and Greenwood, 2006). Fast Fashion is usually strongly influenced by, or in some cases replications of, a catwalk or celebrity style (The Economist, 2005). Retailers who follow this strategy seem to refresh their stock constantly, which results in reduced markdowns, where as, if stock is refreshed each season, the previous season’s stock would usually have to be discounted (Anson, 2002). Retailers also benefit from reduced inventory costs and fewer markdowns of overproduced items (Richardson, 1996).

According to the current retail scenario, Fast Fashion is the key strategy for many high street fashion retailers, such as Zara, H&M, Mango, Topshop, Primark, New Look, etc (Reda 2005; Saini and Ryle 2005; D’Andrea and Arnold 2002), especially Zara who can operate on a lead time of 15 days or less. When Zara had entered the UK, it began competing directly with Topshop, who have now decreased their lead-times from approximately nine weeks to six. Other retailers like H&M and Mango have now reduced their minimum lead times down to approximately three weeks (White 2004; Carruthers 2003; Lareaudie 2004). The ranges are constantly being refreshed with fashion led styles that attract media attention and entice their young female customers into their stores, (Barnes and Greenwood, 2006).

However, in the 21st century, cost has remained an important factor to UK retailers and consumers, but it was realised by retailers like Zara and H&M, that consumers are driven
by constantly change fashion trends at competitive prices, thus meeting consumer
demand along with price has became more vital to high street fashion retailers.
According to a Mintel report (2011), “women of today are revising their wardrobes more
often, than in previous years, even within a single season”, which reflects on a statement
made by Christopher et al. (2004), that retailers need to “deliver newness and “refresh”
products Fig 2.7.1 adapted from Bruce and Daly (2006), illustrates three simple factors
that encourage fast fashion in the current retail environment

Fig 2.7.1: Elements of Fast Fashion (Bruce and Daly, 2006)

Collaboration and responsiveness is the key to Fast Fashion especially with regards to
sourcing and buying decisions, where turnaround is achieved through sourcing new
suppliers with different products, and maintaining strong relationships with existing
suppliers, who understand the need for change and are able to cater for it, (Bruce and
Daly, 2006).

Therefore, the competitive retail environment has given birth to “Fast Fashion”, where
the design process has compressed design times, enhanced multiple refreshes, coupled
with quick response from the supply base, at a low cost (Tokatli 2007; Ferdows et al. 2004), where retailers are working constantly on a short lead time. Lead-time means the time taken from the point when the order is placed, until delivery to retail distribution centre or store. This comprises of the whole production process and the transport time, (Jackson and Shaw, 2009). Fast fashion satisfies women’s desire to change clothing quickly and often at a low budget. It encourages shoppers to buy large quantities of clothes which may be disposed of frequently without wearing them more than once or out of fashion.

2.7.1.1. Fast Fashion at Value Retailers
The driver for success of value retailers was the downward pressure on price that took place during the 1990s within the UK fashion retail market. A few examples of value retailers would be Matalan, Primark, New Look, including the grocery retailers such as George Asda, Tescos, Sainsburys, who emerged as strong contenders in the fashion market and to sustain a competitive advantage. Over the years “value clothing has become a lot more accessible and more importantly acceptable, especially with the growth of Primark and the supermarkets,” comments Katrin Magnussen, senior retail analyst at Mintel (2008).

However, not all fashion retailers are based on Fast Fashion and majority of clothing currently being sold across the fashion sector is not Fast Fashion. Retailers such as Gap, is one of America’s most successful retailer despite an average lead-time of between three and nine months Larenaudie (2004) as cited by Hayes and Jones (2006). Next is also not defined as Fast Fashion retailer; however it has the highest turnover within the UK clothing market (Mintel, 2008).

Thus, Fast Fashion remains a strategy that is only adopted by a few high street and value retailers because they have specific process in place to cater for that target market, and this is where the interest of my project lies within, in terms of exploring strategies that
high street and value retailers use to respond to consumer demand and analyse how their
design process operates and above all how do they respond to fast fashion, if they do.

2.7.2. Quick Response (QR) - Background
QR was coined as an umbrella term for the strategies used to achieve Fast Fashion.
Various academics (Bertolini et al. 2004; Fiorito et al. 1998, 1995; Giunipero et al. 2000;
and Sohal 2000, 2001; Sohal et al. 1998) in the apparel industry have researched into the
implementation of quick response (QR) strategy. It has been defined a mode of operation
in which a manufacturing or service industry strives to provide products or services to its
customers in the precise quantities, varieties and within the time frame that those
customers require it within (McMichael et al. 2000a; Lawson et al. 1999; and Kincade
1995)

The study of QR was initiated by Kurt Salmon Associates (KSA) in the US apparel
industry in 1986 (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006) and has spread widely in apparel
sector since 1990 (Al-Zubaidi and Tyler, 2004). QR methods were developed in the USA
between suppliers and fashion retailers to compete with offshore manufacturers
(Birtwistle et al. 2003a, b) notably, from the Far East and other international areas
(Fernie, 1998). However, according to Christopher et al. (2004), evolution of SCM and
agile supply chain has given birth to QR,

Therefore, QR is a type of Automatic Replenishment (AR) strategy, suited particularly to
the apparel sector and in response to fast fashion trends arising.

2.7.2.1. QR - Significance to Fast fashion
QR is a strategy used to respond quickly to market changes and cut ordering lead times.
QR is especially significant for fashion product supply chains with high demand volatility
and short-life products (Choi, 2006). Quick Response (QR) has been a dominant theme in
the clothing sector for almost two decades (Hunter 1990; Cooper et al. 1997; Al-Zubaidi and Tyler 2004; Holweg 2005; Birtwistle et al. 2006). However, speed of communication is not the only thing that is important element in QR but also building relationships between supplier and buyers as mentioned in section 2.6 and will be explored in detail in Chapter four and five with regards to companies researched.

To facilitate quick response, retailers and suppliers are required to share information about sales data based on stock keeping units (SKU) in detail such as style, size, colour as well as providing specifications about order schedules and deliveries. However, suppliers agree to keep this information confidential (Fiorito et al. 1995).

Therefore to maintain relationships Suppliers develop partnerships with the members across the supply chain and are able to participate through collaboration, planning, forecasting and replenishment (CPFR), through which retailers will benefit from having lower stock holdings and fewer stock outs (Christopher, 2003).

Other systems that are linked, accomplish QR through the development of advanced information technology (Jackson and Shaw, 2001) are through postponement strategy, (CAD) computer aided design as well as (CAM) Computer Aided Manufacturing, (Birtwistle, Fiorito, Moore, 2006).

2.7.2.2. Postponement
Theory of postponement is not a new notion; it dates back to the 1960’s (Bucklin, 1965). However, recently there has been a wide interest in this concept (Margretta 1998; Feitzinger and Lee 1997) due to sudden turbulence in the market, enabling technologies and deregulation.

Postponement is based on designing products, components or modules on a common platform, where the final customisation or assembly does not take place till the end point
of when the products will be given to the consumer (Christopher and Towill, 2000). This strategic model is based around delaying activities in the supply chain until consumer orders are received, rather than manufacturing products in anticipation of future consumer demand, hence it is based on performing with a focus on customization along with cost efficiency (Hoek, 2000).

Bowersox and Morehouse (1995) predicted that the next decade was going to see a rise in usage of postponement and according to various reports it has been realised that due to consumer demand and volatile markets, postponement has been forced in organisations as their supply chain strategy, (Lee and Tang 1998; Pugh and Cooper 1998; Van Hock et al. 1998) and prime examples from the apparel sector who have used this strategy and as mentioned in section 2.5.8.2 would be United Colours of Benetton and more recently Zara and Primark. Hence, ability to customise products nearby as and when necessary will provide higher variety with low production cost, enabling strategies of “mass customisation”, (Christopher and Towill, 2000).

2.7.2.3. Computer Aided Design (CAD) & Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM)
“CAD is an indispensable time serving tool”, (Lawson et al. 1999; Gray 1998; Hunter 1990; Hunter et al. 2002; Aberthany et al. 1999), as cited by Hayes and Jones (2006), that allows flexibility where retailers are able to contact their suppliers at any time with any changes in regards to design or style, (Adewole, 2005). It is a design tool, used in creating garments, it minimises time to market of new products through its ability to accept design changes during product development process (Wainwright, 1995).

CAD has various applications, some of which allow a stylist to create design directly on screen in order to store, retrieve and modify images, patterns, colours, fabrics and shapes accordingly, not only from current collections but also allows the designer to make modifications to previous collections which are repeated based on best sellers. CAD enables buyers and designers to draw new designs and make appropriate alterations,
which are then, send to suppliers via the internet. Manufacturers are able to directly link CAD with CAM processes, to allow reduction in time to finalize garments, (Aster, 1991) through flexibility and in line with latest trends, (Moedas, 2006). According to Creamer, Primrose and Leonard (1984), CAD is known as the core of the design support system due to interaction with all design tools and techniques.

On the other hand, CAM is known to be the manufacturing tool that controls automated process such as cutting, (Gray, 1998). It was reported by EMAP (1998-1999) that through these technologies, clothing design and manufacture has been made more efficient by enabling manufacturing processes and decisions to be speeded up. In addition, CAD and CAM systems ensure pattern layouts are optimized fully, Hunter (1990), Deny and Sohal (2000) as cited by Birtwistle (2003). Therefore, design contributes to the competitiveness of enterprise by reducing manufacturing costs, improving quality and enhancing company image along with financial performance that raises market share and increases exports.

2.7.2.4. Speed to Market
Quick response within the supply chain enables speed to market of products by moving them through the production and delivery cycle from raw materials to the consumer, (Chandra and Kumar, 2000, 2001). Also it has been noted that excessive use of QR stimulates apparel firms to accelerate the speed, in essence enabling copy of designs and merchandising through the main catwalks, rather than encouraging individual creation of fashion (Corstgens and Corstgens, 1995).

2.8. Conclusion
This chapter provides an overview of the key trends that lie within the fashion sector and the impact it had on organisational decisions. It also illustrates and explains various design processes and role of design management in section 2.3 and its key issues. It also identifies significance of design within the fashion supply chain. It explains PLM in detail and highlights various PLM software’s that companies use to compete
competently. In addition, various aspects of fashion supply chain are explained in detail in section 2.5 and various strategies have been explored with the aim of improving responsiveness and collaboration within the supply chain.

Thereby, a number of questions were raised from this literature review to highlight the interest with respect to my research question.

Are consumers more fashion conscious and price sensitive? Is there any other retailer been as successful as Zara’s in terms of their supply chain model? What PLM software’s are used by the companies investigated for this research? Is there a need to design a weather responsive design process for fashion retailers? To respond effectively, where do key members collaborate in the design process of the chosen companies? How late can the decisions be made in the design process and can this method be applied to all the retailers? What suitable strategies can be formed to make the design process more collaborative and responsive for the high street fashion retailers, operating on a mass market?
3. Chapter Three– Methodology

3.1. Introduction
This chapter discusses various research approaches and the appropriate methods of data collection best suited to this research. In addition, benefits, purposes and problems are examined in detail along with a final justification for the choice of research methods. An appropriate research design is discussed in detail with reference to research aims and objectives, and the most appropriate form of investigation for this research is explained in light of relevant literature in the subsequent sections.

3.2. Research Methods
Research methods are a crucial part of the Social Sciences (May, 1997, 2011). Research methods can be defined as a particular procedure or a set of procedure of a human activity based on intellectual application in the investigation of matter (Creswell, 2003). Research itself is pragmatic, and involves studying the world outside ourselves. It adopts various systematic and explicit methods that are fundamentally endeavoured by the public, where there are possibilities to repeat investigations and check on their precision (Thomas, 2004). Even though different fields have their preferred research styles, they share common understandings in relation to their various research methods. According to Gill and Johnson (1997), the research process is not recognised as an apparent sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a cluttered interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, where deduction and induction occurs simultaneously. There are many categories of research methods, but in terms of data collection, there are two categories of methods, primary and secondary (Saunders et al. 1997).

3.2.1. Primary and Secondary Research
Primary data is collected by the researcher and is unique to the research and it is not accessible till is published (Myers et al. 2002). Data collection for primary research
comprises of conducting surveys; direct observation; focus group; interviews and questionnaires. However, issues that remain with primary data are, time and expenditure involved in designing the collection instrument, selecting samples, collecting and analysing data.

Alongside, limitations of the primary data (Yin 1994; Saunders et al. 1997) remain, the uniqueness factor that may inhibit ability to compare it to other populations (Denscombe, 1998), researcher error and bias which may limit confidence in the results, and finally, the question of whether the method chosen is the most suitable for meeting the research aims and objective (Yin, 1994).

Secondary research is data that has already been collected by other resources (Hakim, 1982). Secondary data forms a crucial part of conducting research. It comprises of electronic journals, newspapers, company reports and documents. Main benefits of secondary data are that it can be used as a source from which the researcher can begin to answer research questions (Saunders et al. 1997). Secondary data aids primary data, in terms of forming surveys, interviews and making choices, such as choosing appropriate companies to contact or forming relevant questions. Secondary data is inclusive of both raw data and published summaries and includes both quantitative and qualitative data that can be used in both descriptive and explanatory research (Robson, 1993).

Literature review is classed as secondary research method which analyses the data from an original source, by collecting internal and external data. Internal data is found within the organisation, made, examples include memos, reports, invoices, company reports or confidential documents. Alternatively, external data is obtained from outside sources, which include published documents, periodicals, newspapers, library books, electronic periodicals, news articles and literature which form a part of secondary data (Churchill, 1995).
However, limitations remain that previously collected data may not match with the actual study area of the researcher and the data is likely to be less current than any primary research conducted. In addition, combination of data sets may be costly, unsuitable or have less accessibility (Saunders et al. 1997; Hakim 1982). Thereby, primary and secondary data work collectively.

3.3. Research Methodologies
Silverman (1993) describes methodology as a general approach towards studying a research topic, which establishes upon how one would go about studying a certain phenomenon. Silverman also explained that there are two main approaches known as qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative data focuses on statistical and numerical form of measurement, which is normally presented in the format of graphs and tables, whereas qualitative research is more focused on interpretation of words or images.

3.3.1. Qualitative versus Quantitative Research

Research designs are often equated with qualitative and quantitative research methods (William, 2002). According to various academics, the key difference between the two types of research methodologies is that quantitative data consists of numbers and qualitative consists of words Miles and Huberman (1984b), Yin (1989, 1988) as cited by Thietart et al. (2001).

With emphasis on interpretative approaches, qualitative research takes a phenomenological outlook, whereas quantitative research has a positivist approach where data is measured numerically. According to Hussy (1997), qualitative research has been described as an “array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decide, translate and come to terms with the meaning of more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. One of the notable strengths of qualitative research is that it acutely involves experienced operations of subjects along with collection and analysis of information, turning it into useful and creative research results (Hague and Jackson,
1996). The following table 3.3.1 displays common assumptions of quantitative and qualitative paradigms based on the methodological approach (Creswell, Gould and Papadopoulos, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deductive process</td>
<td>Inductive process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>Mutual simultaneous shaping of factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static design</td>
<td>Emerging Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisations leading to prediction,</td>
<td>Patterns, theories developed for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explanation, and understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate and reliable through validity and</td>
<td>Accurate and reliable through verification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliability</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3.1: Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigm (Creswell, 1994)

The difference between the two main methods are that quantitative research is readily available to emphasise on measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables (Gould and Papadopoulos, 2003), whereas qualitative method focuses on processes and meanings as illustrated above, Lewis et al. (1995) as cited by Walle (1997).

3.4. Quantitative Method

Quantitative method is a formal, objective and systematic process where numerical data is utilised to obtain information about the world (Cormack, 1991). According to Miles and Hubberman (1994), “there is no such thing as qualitative data, everything is 1 or 0”. Quantitative research deal with measurable data, that can be displayed in forms of tables and graphs, in essence it can be used to make comparisons between products, services, overall performance, consumer response and many more.
Quantitative research is concerned with studying questions derived from theory and being able to estimate the size of a phenomenon of interest. This type of research method can be utilised through questionnaires and formalised surveying, which normally involves using a large number of people or large numbers of data in order to make valid conclusions (Creswell, 1994; Mertens, 1998).

The concept of quantitative research was developed from the natural sciences, which is objective in nature and concentrates on measuring natural phenomena (Straub, Gefen and Boudreau 2004; Collis and Hussey 2003). It is an iterative process whereby evidence is evaluated, theories and hypotheses are refined and technical advances are made.

Quantitative methods incorporate the statistical element of social surveys and experiments, which rely on quantitative measurement and analysis of numerical data that is frequently viewed and evaluated against the strengths and weaknesses of statistical research methods and analysis (Vaus 2001; Thomas 2004; Straub et al. 2004). Thus, it includes methods such as face-to-face, telephone, postal and online data collection, (Stubbs 2006; Marsh 1982).

3.4.1. Advantage and Disadvantages of Quantitative Methodology

In relation to the quantitative paradigm, there are various advantages and disadvantages that have been addressed by various researchers as illustrated in table 3.4.1, (on the following page).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative methods produce quantifiable, reliable data that are usually generalised to some larger population.</td>
<td>The greater disadvantage of quantitative research is that issues are only measured if they are known prior to beginning the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative measures are often appropriate for conducting needs assessments or for evaluations in comparing outcomes with baseline data.</td>
<td>Questions designed must be direct and easily quantified, and the size of the sample must be quite large (i.e. 200), as the advance formulation of specific hypotheses are required in quantitative research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It states the research problem in a very specific and set format (Frankfort-Nachmias &amp; Nachmias, 1992)</td>
<td>Researchers’ bias and their personal views tend to affect the data analysis (e.g., selective recording of information).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is clear and precise in specifying both independent and dependent variables</td>
<td>Research often fails to take account of unique characteristics of individual samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following firmly the original set of research goals, arriving at more objective conclusions, testing hypothesis, determining the issues of causality.</td>
<td>It de-contextualises human behaviour in a way that removes the event from its real world setting and ignores impact of variables that have not been included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These methods achieve high levels of reliability of gathered data due to controlled observations, mass surveys, laboratory experiments or other forms of research manipulations (Balsley, 1970).</td>
<td>It fails to provide the researcher with information on the context of the situation where the studied phenomenon occurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminating or minimising subjectivity of judgment (Kealey &amp; Protheroe, 1996).</td>
<td>Inability to control the environment where the respondents provide the answers to the questions in the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing longitudinal measures of subsequent research subject performance.</td>
<td>Outcomes limited to those outlined in the original research proposal due to closed type structured format/questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4.1: Advantages and disadvantages of quantitative methodology

84
3.4.2. Quantitative data collection techniques

3.4.2.1. Surveys
Surveys or questionnaires enable researchers to question individuals directly. It is a tool used to collect primary data that adapts well to quantitative research, it allows the researcher to work with large samples and establish statistical relationships to facilitate numerical comparisons (Theitart et al. 2001).

A survey can be used to gather information on a wide variety of topics and usually entails a careful random selection of samples that enables researchers to generalise results to wider populations with a high degree of confidence (Gill and Johnson, 1997). Government and commercial surveys are frequently designed with the former objective in mind, whereas management researchers are more concerned with the latter (Thomas, 2004).

Sample surveys are a common form of survey, which uses a subset of the population in order to gain information as the basis for estimating population values or parameters (Thomas, 2004). Collection of data by survey involves three crucial steps: initial crafting of the survey and choosing scales, pre-tests to check the validity and reliability of the survey and then actually administering the final version Albrek and Settle (1989); Fink and Kosecoff (1998); Rossi et al. (1985); Schuman (1996) as cited by Theitart et al. (2001).

3.4.2.2. Questionnaires
Questionnaires are associated with both positivistic and phenomenological methodologies. A questionnaire is a list of carefully structured questions. According to Collis and Hussey (2003), the aim is to find out what a selected group of participants do, think or feel.
Under a positivistic paradigm, questionnaires can be used for large social surveys. Each question can be coded at the design stage and completed questionnaires can be computer processed for ease of analysis. A positivistic approach suggests that closed questions should be used, whereas a phenomenological approach suggests open-ended questions should be used (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Question testing should be prolonged until a question format has been constructed which conveys the intended meaning to the participants. There are limits as to how far this process can be taken, but question testing is one process that is always highly recommended. Other factors that may be influential when constructing a questionnaire are stated by Thomas (2004) below:

- Research relevance - making sure that questions asked are actually relevant to the research objectives instead of overloading respondents with unnecessary questions;
- Respondent ability - making sure that the respondent’s chosen will have the ability to answer questions appropriately;
- Respondent willingness - ensuring that respondents are willing to participate and have the capability of providing the researcher with sufficient results.

3.4.2.3. Interview Schedules
The design of an interview schedule needs as much attention and raises just as many issues as of the self-completed questionnaire. However, additional considerations may be applied by an interviewer (Labov, 1973).
(i) Structured Schedules
This type of schedule is used whilst conducting a survey; which will ask all respondents the same set of questions to avoid biased answers. Ideally, same set and same order of questions should be asked along with the same interviewer, whose behaviour should be consistent with all the interviewees. The design of questions can be structured to have the same meaning for all respondents. The aim of this type of schedule is to standardise the interviewers’ behaviour to avoid misinterpretations in respondent’s answers, (Thomas, 2004). Therefore, a structured schedule should include questions that are formatted and delivered word-for-word by the interviewer. It should include standard phrases that the interviewer must use to guide the respondent, such as “Can you please explain your reasons?” and “in what way?” along side a set of instructions, which must be inline with question sequencing and recording of answers.

(ii) Semi-Structured Schedules
In this type of schedule, interviewer’s use questions that are perhaps worded differently according to respondents even if they have the same meaning for all respondents. The presentation of order of questions should be dependent upon specific context of each interviewer and respondent interaction. Therefore, semi-structured schedule consists of a range of topics and sub topics through which the information is organised accordingly. In addition, it is interviewer’s decision to introduce topics during the interview itself and how to word specific questions according to the respondent (Thomas, 2004).

3.5. Qualitative Method
Qualitative research is more subjective in nature (Vaus 2001; Thomas 2004) and includes examination, analysis and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships, including classifying the types of phenomena and entities which do not involve mathematical models (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. According to Neil (2004), this
research includes analysing data in the form of words (e.g., from interviews) and pictures (e.g., video, objects (e.g., an artefact)). Qualitative data sources include observation and participant observation (fieldwork), interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, as well as a researcher’s impressions and reactions (Stubbs, 2003). Prime examples of qualitative methods are action research, case study research and ethnography.

“Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right, it cross cuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters” (Agar, 1991). Hence, it is a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

The aim of qualitative analysis is to provide a complete and detailed description of research and should take place during earlier phases of research projects. The design of qualitative research emerges as the study unfolds, with the researcher acting as the data-gathering instrument. Data, as mentioned above, is gathered from words, pictures or objects. Qualitative data is more 'rich', time consuming, and has the least ability to generalise. However, researchers do become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.

Generally, qualitative research is likely to take place in a normal setting (Denzin 1971; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Marshall and Rossman 1989). This type of study is based on everyday activities, which is recognised as "defined, enacted, smoothed, and made problematic by individuals going about their normal routines" (Maanen, 1983). Qualitative research is concerned with emergent themes and ideographic descriptions and less driven by specific hypotheses and categorical frameworks (Cassell and Symon, 1994).

Unlike quantitative research, there is no set framework for how qualitative research should be conducted; rather each type of qualitative research is guided by particular philosophical stances that are taken into account by the research into each phenomenon.
3.5.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

Table 3.5.1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research (Creswell 1998; Cassell and Symon 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It has the capability to interact with the research areas in its own language and on its own terms (Kirk &amp; Miller, 1986).</td>
<td>Data collection and analysis may be laboured intensive and time-consuming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has the descriptive capability based on unstructured data and primary data.</td>
<td>It can move away from the original objectives of the research, in reaction to the changing nature of the context (Cassell and Symon, 1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research can obtain a more realistic feel of the world that cannot be experienced through numerical data and statistical analysis.</td>
<td>Different conclusions may be reached based on the personal perspective of the researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has flexibility in data collection, subsequent analysis, and interpretation of collected information.</td>
<td>Inability to investigate causality between different research phenomena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides a holistic view of the phenomena under investigation, (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Patton, 1980).</td>
<td>Obscurity in explaining the difference in the quality and quantity of information obtained from different participants and arriving at different, non-consistent conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The data tends to be rich, detailed and leaves the participants' perspectives intact.</td>
<td>May require a high level of experience from the researcher to obtain the targeted information from the respondent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacks consistency and reliability as researchers may employ different penetrating techniques and respondents may focus on certain stories and ignore others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.2. Data Collection Techniques

There are three main types of data collection techniques that are used towards collecting evidence for the social sciences; observation, interview and use of documents and records (Yin 2007; Creswell 1998; Stake 1995; Robson 1993; Yin 1994), which have the ability to surprise researchers by the sheer volume of data and the detailed level of analysis that
results even when research is confined to a small number of subjects. These methods are often combined; for example, observation with interviewing or interviewing supported by documents and visuals. But with reference to using records, the investigator must be careful in evaluating the accuracy of data before using it, even if the records are quantitative, as there may be a chance that they are not accurate. Some examples of data collecting methods are explained in further detail below in Table 3.5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Complete participant researcher conceals role.</td>
<td>Researcher has firsthand experience with informant.</td>
<td>Researcher may be seen as an intruder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observer as participant - role of researcher is known.</td>
<td>Researcher can record information as it occurs.</td>
<td>“Private” information may be observed that researcher can’t report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete observer - Researcher observes without participating.</td>
<td>Unusual aspects can be noticed during observation.</td>
<td>Researcher may not have good attending and observation skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for informants to discuss.</td>
<td>Certain information may present special problems in gaining rapport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Face-to-face, one-on-one, in-person interview. Can also be a group interview</td>
<td>Useful when informants can’t be directly observed.</td>
<td>Provides “indirect” information filtered through the views of interviewees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Informants can provide historical information and documentation.</td>
<td>Provides information in a designed “place,” rather than a natural field setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows researcher control over the line of questioning.</td>
<td>Researcher’s presence may bias responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>Public documents such as minutes of a meeting or newspapers. Private documents such as a journal, diary or letter.</td>
<td>Enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of informants. Can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher - an unobtrusive source of information. Represents data that is thoughtful, which informants have given focus to compile. As written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing.</td>
<td>May be protected information unavailable for public or private access. Requires the researcher to search out the information required, which can be time-consuming. Requires transcribing or optical scanning for computer entry. Materials may be incomplete. The document may not be authentic or accurate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5.2: Qualitative Research Methods (Creswell, 1994)

Analysis begins when the data is first collected and has been used to guide decisions related to further data collection. According to Myres et al. (2002), in communicating or generating the data, the researcher must make the process of the study accessible and write descriptively so tacit knowledge may best be communicated through the use of rich, thick descriptions. There are three data collecting techniques which are explained in detail below;

3.5.2.1. Interviews
“Interviewing is a technique aimed at collecting, for later analysis, discursive data that reflects the conscious or unconscious mindset of individual interviewees” (Theitart et al. 2001). Interviews are generally used for a wide variety of purposes and may take many forms (Thomas, 2004). Interviews are related to both positivistic and phenomenological methodologies.
Interviews are one of the most essential sources of case study information, and can come in several forms; whether open-ended, focused or structured,:  

- In an **open-ended** interview, key respondents are asked to comment on certain events – for which they may propose solutions or provide insight. They may also corroborate evidence obtained from other sources. The researcher must avoid becoming dependent on a single informant, and seek the same data from other sources to verify its authenticity (Tellis, 1997);  
- A **focused** interview is used in situations where the respondent is interviewed for a short period of time, usually answering set questions. This technique is often used to confirm data collected from another source;  
- A **structured** interview is similar to a survey, and is used to gather data in cases such as neighbourhood studies. The questions are detailed and developed in advance, much as they are in a survey.  

Interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives (Silverman, 1997). Interview formats vary extensively according to the nature of the research, ranging from highly structured, standardised, quantitatively-orientated survey interviews to semi-formal or informal conversational interviews used in ethnographic research, which is structured to an extent apart from the fact that it is not formal (Silverman 1997; Collis and Hussey 2003).  

There are many ways of collecting data through interviews, where selected participants are asked a set of questions, which are mostly open-ended to find out what they think or feel (Collis and Hussey, 2003), which allows participants to forget the defence mechanisms they generally use to cover up their behaviour or their thoughts from the external world. Thus, it may help them to overcome their reluctance to discuss certain subject areas that they may not otherwise talk about (Theitart et al. 2001).
3.5.2.1.1. Structured Interviewing

In structured interviewing, the interviewer will ask respondents the same set of pre-established questions with a limited set of response categories. Usually, variations in responses are not allowed apart from when using open-ended questions (which are infrequent). To follow the questions in a standardised and straightforward manner, the interviewer controls the pace of the interview by treating the questionnaire as if it is a theatrical script (Denzin and Lincoln, 2001). Thus all respondents participating have to answer the same set of questions and in the same order as one another. It has to be pursued by an interviewer who can treat each interview/interviewee in a consistent manner. After carefully analysing the method, there seems to be lack of flexibility in carrying out interviews in a structured manner.

However, interviews make it easier for researchers to compare answers through different methods, such as face-to-face, voice-to-voice or screen-to-screen; conducted either with individuals or groups of individuals (Collis and Hussey, 2003). These types of interviews are associated with survey research, which is likely to be included in the structured interview category, (Denzin and Lincoln, 2001).

In most of the structured interview, not every interviewer behaves in the same manner. However, they always leave a little room for the interviewer to improvise or exercise independent judgment. But regardless, in any structured interview situation - not every contingency can be anticipated, Bradburn (1983); Frey (1989) as cited by Denzin and Lincoln (2001).

3.5.2.1.2. Unstructured Interview and Semi-Structured Interview

Conventionally, a distinction is drawn between two types of interview: unstructured and semi-structured. In an unstructured interview, the interviewer defines a general subject area or theme without intervening to direct a subject’s remarks (Thietart et al. 2001). This has the capability of providing a greater breadth of data than the other types, considering
it is of a qualitative nature (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The interviewer can limit interventions to those that facilitate the discussion, express understanding and provide reminders based on elements already expressed by the subject or go more deeply into discursive elements already expressed (Thietart et al. 2001).

Whereas, in semi-structured interviews, also known as “focused” interviews (Merton et al, 1990), the researcher applies similar principles. But a structured guide that allows the researcher to raise a series of subject areas that are defined in advance and this guide is completed during the course of the interview, with the aid of other questions (Theitart et al. 2001). The researcher has more flexibility in carrying out unstructured interviews than structured interviews (Theitart et al. 2001), where they are able to ask or avoid certain questions by analysing situations.

An interview never follows a set pattern; any situation can occur during the course of it. One of the main disadvantages of interviews are that the researcher becomes fully adsorbed in taking notes, which risks in not paying attention to take full advantage of opportunities that emerge in the dynamics of the interview. Due to this reason, it has strongly been recommended to use a Dictaphone during interviews, even if it will make the interviewee more uncommunicative or vigilant in his/her answers, but it will allow the interviewer to be fully attentive and energetic during the course of the interview (Theitart et al. 2001; Denzin and Lincoln 2003). In addition, an added advantage with taped data is that it will be more comprehensive and more reliable. It will also allow further analyses to be carried out at a later date. Therefore, being flexible is a key factor to attain reliable data.

3.5.2.1.3. Interview skills and recording

It was gathered by Miles and Huberman (1994) that all the interviews conducted, need to be processed precisely, transcribed, edited and typed up, whilst any interview that is tape recorded needs to be transcribed and corrected. Even though it’s a long and tenuous
process, it needs to be written up in order to validate the data. Thus as explained further by Miles and Huberman (1994) qualitative data are about actions rather than behaviour which comprises of intentions and meanings and in theory leads to consequence. Certain actions are straight forward to analyse and other are impression management i.e. how they want other people to perceive them, (Denscombe, 1998). Thereby, the researcher needs to be aware of rising levels of complexity involved with qualitative interviews. It was highlighted by Yin (1994) that certain types of skills are required in order to conduct interviews, which are as follows:

- Be a good listener;
- Be able to ask appropriate questions and interpret them;
- Need to be unbiased of preconceived notions;
- Have a good grasp of issues being questioned.

It is not advisable to rely on memory when conducting interviews as they can always be mistaken. Thereby, traditional approach of tape recorders (Saunders et al, 1997) or Dictaphones should be used while conducting interviews, which will allow the researcher to correspond with the interviewee effectively and will allow the researcher to analyse data precisely at a later date. Advantage and disadvantages of using a tape recorder/Dictaphone is listed in the table below. However, it was highlighted by Yin (1994) that tape recorder/Dictaphone should not be used when:

- Interviewee is not comfortable with the device being used;
- There is no plan to transcribe the data;
- The device causes distraction during the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Advantages</strong></th>
<th><strong>Disadvantages</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows interviewer to concentrate on questioning and listening</td>
<td>Have an impact on the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows interview questions to be accurately recorded for use in later interviews where appropriate</td>
<td>May inhibit some interviewee responses and reduce reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can re listen to the interview</td>
<td>Possibility of technical problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbiased and accurate record provided</td>
<td>Disruption when changing tapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct quotes can be used</td>
<td>Time consuming to transcribe data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent records for others to use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5.2.1.3.: The advantages and disadvantages of recording the interview (Saunders et al. 1997)

### 3.5.2.1.4. Documents

Use of documents and records were considered appropriate as they are sources of multiple data required for “triangulating” with the data collected (Yin, 2009). Thus the data received through documents will facilitate appropriate logical conclusions.
3.5.3. Qualitative Research Approaches
Some of the main research methods that will be discussed below in table 3.5.3 are action research, case study research, ethnography and grounded theory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>Attempts to shed light on a phenomenon by studying a single case example of the phenomena in-depth. The case can be an individual person, an event, a group or an institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded theory</td>
<td>Strategic approach to data collection and data analysis. Theory is developed inductively from a mass of data acquired by a participant-observer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>Describes the structures of experience as they present themselves to someone's consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>It originates from anthropology and focuses on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of socio-cultural phenomena. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5.3: Qualitative research approaches (Gay, 1996) as cited by Neil (2006).

3.5.3.1. Case study research
Yin (1994) defined case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, to retain a holistic and meaningful characteristic, (Hartley, 1994). Case study methodology not only allows researchers to include single
but multiple case studies (Yin, 2009), which lets the researcher identify and study patterns of commonality amongst various cases and theory to avoid generalisations Esenhardt (1989) as cited by Chetty (1996). Therefore, the case study method allows the researcher to study a topic as a dynamic process, rather than something static and enables to study the decision-making process.

3.5.4. Chosen research method
Thus, after careful consideration the researcher decided that qualitative interviews are the most suitable approach to this research, as it provides rich and meaningful data and highlights the details of social science processes in their context (Hartley, 1994). It will aid the researcher in investigating and understanding responsiveness and collaboration within fashion supply chain. This option was selected as the interviewing process helps support the underlying principles of case studies by gaining an insight into how a particular procedure works while preserving its natural settings. Use of a qualitative interview will demonstrate a successful practical application of theory and consequently strengthens the point of this thesis and begins to understand its activity within different circumstances (Saunders et al. 1997). However, this research will not only comprise of qualitative approach but coupled with quantitative research for preliminary research to analyse the consumer perspective with regards to UK high street shopping.

3.5.4.1. Criteria for interpreting the findings
Yin (1994) mentions construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability as the four standards commonly applied to evaluate case studies. Thus, it appears that construct validity is especially problematic in case study research. It has been a source of criticism because of potential investigator subjectivity. Internal validity is a concern only in causal (explanatory) cases. This is usually a problem of "inferences" in case studies, and can be dealt with using pattern matching. On the other hand, external validity deals with knowing whether the results can be generalized beyond the immediate case. Some of the criticism against case studies in this area relates to single-case studies, but that
criticism is directed at the statistical and not the analytical generalization, which is the foundation of case studies. Thereby, reliability is achieved in many ways in a case study and one of the most significant methods is the development of the case study protocol (Soy and Susan, 1997). Another important process after conclusions are drawn is to verify them. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) “The meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, and their “conformability”- that is their validity.”

3.5.4.2. Research questions
Research questions analyse the conceptual framework of the situation and provide a snapshot of the organizational setting. This research attempts to answer questions in terms of who, what, where, when, how, why and how much. It defines issues and thus has an in built methodology based on various questions. Generally a case is descriptive in nature and the case study is used to answer the how and why questions. There by my research question is based on analyzing;

How collaborative are key members of high street retailers in order to be responsive to consumer demand and stay competitive?

3.5.4.3. Propositions & relationships
A proposition in research drives the study in search of variables and the relationship amongst the variables, but some exploratory studies may not have a proposition to start with. However, in such situations the research questions themselves are the source of the direction. A proposition is thus a sentence in which a subject is acknowledged or denied and unlike the research question, it provides direction for the research.

This study has used a combination of face to face and on-line interviews with observational study carried out in a store, a seminar that was attended. Flow charts and
IDEF (Integration Definition for Function Modelling) diagrams have been constructed to display design process activities clearly where possible and flow charts, which indicate a brief overview of the step by step design role stages within the design process.

3.5.4.4. Research Design
Research design is simply the framework or plan for study that is used as a guide in collecting and analysing data (Churchill, 1995). According to Yin (2009), it is the logic that links the data to be collected and conclusions to be drawn towards the initial question of the study. Effective research design is the specific procedure for collecting and analysing the data necessary to help identify or reflect the problems (Tull and Hawkins, 1993).

The main purpose of a research design is to avoid situations where the evidence does not relate to the initial research question. Therefore, it ends up dealing with focused logical issues rather than illogical and irrelevant matters. An appropriate research design must be drawn before commencing any research in order to avoid an unbiased outcome.

3.6. Research aims and objectives
The purpose of this research is to critically evaluate level of collaboration and responsiveness that takes place across fashion retailers in the UK, and further expand on the literature that exists through chosen case studies for this research. In addition, investigate potential strategies and processes that can be used by fashion retailers to enable further responsiveness.

Thus, the main aim of this research is to understand how key members of high street retailers collaborate in their design process to remain responsive and accordingly propose a collaborative and a responsive design and manufacturing process to make the fashion supply chain more effective for UK High Street fashion retailers.
The research objectives are to:

- Conduct a literature review to understand the general trends in the UK fashion industry, the supply chain and design process;

- Conduct primary research with consumers across different commercial areas of Manchester to establish a need for a responsive design process;

- Conduct case studies with high street fashion retailers and manufacturers to compare and contrast the primary research with the literature review conducted to put forward recommendations for further research.

Based on the objectives, this research requires depth and richness of data with attention to detail. Thus, this research will focus predominantly on qualitative methodology mainly due to constraints of time, available budget and access to the firms for this study. However, for preliminary research aimed towards the consumers, quantitative approaches will be adopted, to quantify their requirements more easily.

For preliminary research, structured questionnaires were chosen as part of quantitative methodology to enable precise answers that can be measured easily and analysed. For qualitative research, multiple case study methodology was adopted, where semi-structured interview approach was used to allow the interviewee to explain and discuss questions asked in detail. Five companies were targeted to achieve desirable answers. The interviews were conducted with merchandisers, buyers, print designers and store managers of the different cases chosen. Only one set of interview schedule was formed to target all types of members of the design process and companies, in order to explain the findings easily. Moreover, from the case studies conducted, various business processes were described by interviewees and have been illustrated using IDEF0 technique (as explained
3.7. Conclusions
This chapter introduces the two types of data primary and secondary, as well as both epistemological approaches: the positivist (quantitative) and interpretive (qualitative) approach, the two type of approaches oversee different types of methodologies and perceive the world differently. Both advantages and disadvantages were considered for both types of data. Aims and objectives of the research were highlighted in relation to the methodology chosen. Due to time constraints, budget and access available to the relevant companies, quantitative approach was used to conduct preliminary analysis and qualitative approach to conduct research with companies was selected. Different types of interviews were identified and the in–depth, semi-structured interview method was chosen based on the literature review conducted. A method to analyse the data was also outlined.
4. Chapter Four – Results and Analysis

4.1. Introduction
The purpose of the study was to describe and analyze the design process of various High Street related fashion companies and propose a protocol that is able to produce responsive and collaborative designs alongside propose possible strategies to improve the supply chain process, which various fast fashion companies may consider in order to enhance accuracy of forecasting, thereby a more responsive process.

However, in order to justify the need for responsive and collaborative designs/design process, quantitative and qualitative research was carried out. Quantitative research comprising of questionnaires that were handed out to about 150 customers in different locations of Manchester as mentioned in Chapter three. Results from the survey made it apparent that there is a need for responsive designs. Further to evaluate and analyse results from preliminary results, qualitative research was carried out, which comprised of conducting qualitative interviews with five different companies to analyse their current design process and how they operate across the supply chain and whether they are able to meet consumer demand according to unpredictable market trends.

4.2. Preliminary Research

4.2.1. Location of Research
This quantitative research was conducted in six different shopping areas of Manchester, to determine the type of consumers that would appreciate responsive designs and to explain in detail as to what type of shops may be situated and the type of consumers that may be expected to shop in the following areas;

- **King Street** – is a street within Manchester city centre, where there are predominantly designer shops including Vivien Westwood, Armani, Diesel, Whistles, Flannels at one end and on the other side there is more of High Street
designer brands with premier brands such as PINK, Ted Baker, Jaeger, All Saints, Hugo Boss, The White Company and many more. The people who tend to shop on this street are consumers with higher disposable incomes and celebrities who endorse for this want quality and service. Not all consumers who shop on this street may be highly fashion conscious but are expected to be in line with current trends, and they may not be affected by seasonal changes,;

- **Deansgate** – is a street which links to King Street and Market Street, it is mainly popular for its restaurants and bars. The main feature of the street is that it has a big House of Fraser, a multiple store retailer that offers many brands under one roof. There are also a few other boutique type retailers which are based in an arcade off Deansgate,;

- **The Triangle** – is a small shopping mall that caters for more upper end customers with slightly unusual tastes. The brands based in the Triangle are not highly commercialised, but there is a variety and in order and are specialised in certain brands and products. It has retailers such as Bravissimo, East, Jigsaw, Henri Lloyd, Joy, Addidas, Storm and many others. It does not cater for mainstream fast fashion consumers,;

- **Arndale/ Market Street** – is a shopping centre, similar to Trafford Centre but based at the heart of the city centre, which comprises of all major high street retail stores, such as Next, River Island, Topshop, Oasis etc. Arndale offers a variety to all types of people, where mainly consumers appear to be with average disposable income and are more in line with fast fashion. Biggest advantage that Arndale has that it is interlinked with Market Street that offers a variety of stores, including a huge Primark and Debenhams, which attracts a lot of customers from all backgrounds. Arndale is also interlinked with Selfridges and Marks and Spencer, along with Harvey Nichols which is five minutes away. Therefore, it
predominantly caters for Fast Fashion markets and consumers that tend to be more inclined towards fashion in line with the weather.;

- **Affleck’s Palace** – is a renowned shopping arcade, based in the northern quarter of Manchester city centre, it is a place that carries alternative, vintage clothing along with independent stockists spread across the three floors. It is possible to find all sorts of quirky things, it predominantly attracts youngsters up to the age of 25, and some consumers who are curious about the place or would like to get something unusual to wear, and they offer all sorts of variety of items at reasonable prices.;

- **Trafford Centre** – is an out of town indoor shopping centre, based about 20 minutes drive/bus ride away from the heart of the city centre, it offers over 280 shops under one roof in addition to many restaurants and entertainment area. It has a huge variety of retailers from high end to low end aiming at a mass market. Trafford centre offers free car parking, and it is based on a motorway route due to which all types of people are attracted to the centre and it is also opened till 10 pm everyday apart from weekends. Therefore, many people especially with families tend to come to Trafford centre a lot as it does not only offers shopping but entertainment as well and consumers can shop during any weather comfortably especially during winters.

4.2.2. **Questionnaire Format**
Below is the questionnaire format that was used to conduct the quantitative research, which as mentioned earlier were conducted in 6 different shopping areas, thus the questions were a mixture of open and closed questions, more closed, in order to quantify accordingly.

- Age - 0-18  18-30  30-40  40-50  50-60  60+
- Sex - Male  Female
- Household Income - >20K  20-30K  30K+
- Profession?
- Principal Earner?  Yes  No
- Postcode?
- How do you like to buy fashion?
  At a particular period of the season  Anytime through the season
- When do you buy in the fashion season?
  Start of a season  Middle of the season  End of the season
- How frequently do you shop for clothes
  Daily  Weekly  Monthly
- Average monthly expenditure on clothing
- Three most frequently visited stores
- Top three features you look in a store
- Are you loyal to?
  Brand  Shop  Brand and shop  No loyalty
- If the garment you wish to buy is not available
  Go elsewhere  Wait till it comes  Alternatives  Order it
  Don’t buy it  Internet shopping
- Do you return on separate occasion?
  Yes  No
- How many repeat trips?
- Would you order it?
  Yes  No
- Would you buy the same type of item?
  Yes  No
• Would you buy?
  Same type of item / different shop    Same item/ same shop/ different location

• Does this effect additional purchases you wish to make on that day?
  Yes    No

• Do you buy another item of clothing instead?
  Yes    No

• Does it matter to you if the style of the garment doesn’t tally with the weather outside?
  Yes    No

• Do you separate your wardrobe into summer or winter?
  Yes    No
• Do you mix and match summer/winter items?
  Yes    No

• What range of colours do you most often wear in cold weather?

• At range of colours do you most often wear in hot weather?

• What types of fabrics would you definitely not wear in cold weather?

• What types of fabrics would you definitely not wear in hot weather?

• What fashion items do you tend to buy in cold weather?

• What fashion items do you tend to buy in hot weather?

• What would attract you most to a fashion store in cold weather?

• What would attract you most to a fashion store in hot weather?

• Do you like to customize your fashion purchases?
  Yes    No

• If you do customize, how do you?

• Would a garment designed to be customizable be more attractive than one that wasn’t?
4.2.3. Discussion of Preliminary Results

The sample chosen for quantitative research consisted of people between the ages of 18 and 50. Consumers between the age group of 30-40 were found in all the shopping areas apart from Affleck’s Palace, as it is aimed more towards youngsters under thirty than adults, however a couple of consumers did come across between the ages of 50-60 who like to be different. According to this research, mainstream market would range from 18-30 years old and mainly females across all shopping areas of Manchester, along side the 30-60 year olds. More 60+ consumers were noticed shopping in the Arndale as mentioned before it does offer a variety of shops under one roof and is also based in the city centre. Consumers on King Street were predominantly with high disposable income.

From the research conducted, It appears that the consumers mainly came from a house hold income of 30K plus. Only a minority of consumers surveyed around Affleck’s Palace had a disposable income of 20K or under.

Manchester being a multicultural university city, has over 40,000 students each year across three different universities, hence, when the questionnaires were given out, it appeared that majority of the consumers were students, alongside a lot of young professionals, who were not the principal earners, however were clearly more inclined towards fashion. It could be that the principal earners are parents, partners, etc.

Consumers that were questioned had come from different areas of Manchester and surrounding areas such as Yorkshire, Leeds, and Liverpool and all over UK. Trafford and Arndale saw more of a variety of people in terms of where they came from. Afflecks palace had more visitors from locals than people from else where.

From the results it seems that majority of the consumers like to shop at anytime across the season; however there were a few across all the six locations who like to shop during a particular period of the season. Furthermore, it was realised that most consumers tend to
shop towards the middle of the season across the locations, however, more were found to shop at the beginning of the season on Deansgate, alongside other locations. On King Street it seems that no one hardly shops towards the end of the season, as there is more designer wear available, it appears that the consumers are more inclined with fashion and a high status, therefore they want to be in line with fashion, where as there are consumers that still buy towards the end of the season in the other locations especially, in areas such as Arndale, Trafford Centre, and Deansgate.

Apart from the Trafford Centre, it appears to be that most of the consumers in all the locations tend to shop monthly, whereas at Trafford Centre the frequency of shoppers seem to be daily or weekly, that could be primarily due to it being an indoor shopping mall with free parking. However, across Arndale, Trafford, and Deansgate, there were some daily buyers too.

Mostly consumers tend to spend less than 100 pounds on clothing especially in the location of Arndale, Trafford, Deansgate and Afflecks Palace where as, consumers on King Street and Triangle generally spends more than 100 pounds or more. Consumers at Afflecks palace will only spend a maximum of 20 pounds. Style, price, range, environment, quality, variety and many more features appear to be amongst some of the top features that consumers look for when they are in a retail store. Moreover, some consumers remain loyal to some stores, but majority of the consumers are not inclined towards a particular brand or shop.

Across all the six locations it was gathered that consumers go elsewhere for a garment that they would like to purchase but was not available, however, there are a few consumers who would order it. Even on Deansgate, none of the consumers who took part in this research were the type to order goods in, mainly relating to the waiting factor. Consumers tend to be impatient and usually would like to buy the item immediately, unless it was an exclusive item and hard to find. Therefore it is important to have enough
stock especially for popular items to cater for the demand. A few consumers may wait for the item to come in, especially in areas such as King Street, Trafford Centre, Arndale and Afflecks palace and some may even order it or go elsewhere and very few may just shop through the internet. But mostly all the consumers surveyed stated that they may return on a separate occasion for the item and to make further purchases.

Consumers researched were willing to make up to 2 trips if the item was not available, but very less people may make 3 to 4 trips, however, only a few consumers on King Street and Trafford centre, were willing to make repeat trips up to four times, this could be due to the exclusivity of the product, or in Trafford Centre, due to the free parking and being based indoors, thus were not hesitant to make multiple trips. Consumers surveyed did state that if an item would not be available, they would probably buy a similar type of item, but at a different retail outlet, or same item, same shop, different location, however, a lot of consumers who shop at Arndale, said they would probably get the same type of item at a different shop more than consumers at different location. Also it appears that when a certain item is not available than people do buy other items, more in the Arndale and Trafford centre, due to the variety of shops available.

Majority of the consumers questioned from all different locations, agreed upon the fact that style of garment does have to tally with the weather, furthermore, some of the consumers even separate their wardrobe, but mostly consumers prefer mix and match items

Based on the weather consumers tend to wear different types of colours and it appears to be that, mostly darker colours are worn during winter season along with some bright colours but a few people tend to wear light colours, whereas, during the summer/autumn period, mostly light colours are worn, alongside bright colours which are mixed and matched with some dark tones.
The type of fabrics that consumers would not wear in Winters would be fabrics such as, Linen, Cotton, Nylon, any see through fabrics, silk and many more, some even mentioned wool due to its texture, on the hand however, the type of fabrics that would definitely not be worn during summer/ autumn period would predominantly be fabrics like wool, pvc, leather, nylon, silk, lycra, velvets, suede and any other type of heavy fabrics.

According to the results, it seems that during winters, consumers tend to mostly buy jumpers and coats as presumed along side, waterproof clothing, accessories such as scarves, gloves, tights, other type of thermals jackstay and many more, therefore, if it is cold outside be it summer/ autumn season, consumers would be attracted towards buying winter type clothing. Similarly, if people had to purchase items during a hot period, they would tend to buy more t-shirts, vest tops, bikinis, linen trouser, skirts, sandals, cropped pants, jeans and many others including cosmetics and perfumes to compliment the weather as illustrated in the appendix.

General features that attract consumers to the store in cold weather include, shelter, café, music, sales, price, colours, environment, music, sizing, brand names and many others amongst which heating, display and the actual range in the store seems the most prominent feature in attracting consumers.

On the other hand, during the summer/ autumn period, some of the most common features that attract consumers to the store include music, sales, sizing, colours, environment, brand names, lighting, variety and many others out of which price, style, range, display are most noticeable features.

Finally from the research carried out it became apparent that majority of the consumers do like to customize their designs, however, it seems that consumers at Trafford, Arndale and Afflecks Palace are not inclined towards customizing their items. This could be due to consumers being more concerned with buying fast fashion items, that they can wear
and dispose it after a few wears. Where as, consumers on King Street, Triangle and Deansgate like to different and prefer customisation in order to portray an individual look. Customization generally tends to cost money, usually low to average income consumers may not be able to afford it, however, some innovative consumers tend to customize clothing items as they would like by themselves by various simple ways, such as add sequences, broaches, buttons, etc.

One of the most popular ways of customization is alteration of trousers i.e. length wise or adding pockets, alongside by adding belts, jewels, pockets, altering other fitting and dimensions, rip clothing, add beads, add buttons, tailored suits and shirts etc, however, according to the consumers at Trafford and Arndale, it seems that most of them prefer non customizable designs – they prefer to pick an item and wear it.

Thus from the results it seems that consumers especially females, between the age of 18-30, are the main stream buyers and prefer fast fashion and shop at high street retail stores, where they would like to see new trends, new designs, reasonable prices, and the range that is readily available according to the weather, which is the biggest feature to consider to attract consumers to a retail store. The designs have to tally with the weather, they are not so fussed about it being customized according to them but like to be in line with fashion, in terms of what is out on catwalk, yet related to the weather which is most important. As discussed in Chapter 2, some retailers like Zara appear do cater accordingly for its consumers, their range may not be influenced by the weather but it certainly offers the up to date range every 2-3 weeks, which is more than any other retailer offers. Thereby, mostly all the High Street retailers should follow a similar strategy to stay competitive and increase overall turnover.
4.3. **Empirical Findings**

This section presents the various qualitative interviews that were conducted. There were five qualitative interviews conducted, out of which one of the interviews included gaining majority of the answers and information by spending a week at the premises of the retail store, one of them was a face to face in depth qualitative interview. One of them was a group interview attended, and two were online interview due to lack of time by the interviewee. All five qualitative interviews were conducted at different times due to availability of people and the companies chosen were a mixture of high street retailers, value retailer and a manufacturer for high street fashion. They are explained in detail further in this chapter along with the interviewee’s experiences and views on their respective companies and their processes. The companies investigated were:

- Qualitative Interview I: Zara;
- Qualitative Interview II: George Asda;
- Qualitative Interview III: River Island;
- Qualitative Interview IV: Bonmarché;
- Qualitative Interview V: Visage Ltd.
4.4. Qualitative Interview I: Zara

4.4.1. Background

This was a face to face interview conducted with Zara’s store manager Leanne Copeland at Exchange Square Manchester alongside 1 week was spent by myself in the store as a fellow colleague to gain an in depth understanding about how Zara’s store operate in order to be responsive. This took place around mid-February 2011 for 1 week. This observational study and qualitative interview was mainly focused on womenswear.

4.4.2. Company details

Company name: Zara

Zara Head Office: La Coruna, Spain

Location of research – Zara – Exchange Square – Manchester

Level of Market: ready to wear/ fast fashion: Women, men and childrenswear

Zara, one of the biggest clothing chain with its origins in Spain, it is also the world’s current fastest-growing high street retailer. At the heart of the company's success, is its vertically-integrated business model that spans design, just-in-time production, marketing and sales, giving it more flexibility than its rivals to respond to changeable fashion trends, (Gallaugher 2008; MacCarthy and Jayarathne 2009). Unlike other international clothing chains, Zara keeps major share of its production in house, rather than relying on a network of slow-moving and disparate suppliers. Zara is capable of making a new line from start to finish in three weeks, against an industry average of nine months. Zara rapidly designs, manufactures and distributes in small batches, which ensures flexibility in its supply chain and allows the company to meet unpredictable demand. This is done
by being vertically integrated and having surplus capacity which is the recipe for their success.


In comparison to its competitors, Zara is undergoing an extremely fast global expansion, opening a store a day and entering new markets across the world. Zara had already opened in 68 countries so far in comparison to H&M who are only spread only across 28 countries. From figures, it appears to be that the chain’s profitability level is amongst the highest in its industry, (Sull and Turconi, 2008)

According to the fashion director at LVMH – world leader in luxury goods with over 60 prestigious brands, calls Zara “the most innovating and devastating retailer in the world” (CNN, 2008). Zara concentrates on producing more fashionable items with a slightly higher pricing strategy, normally only replenishing its stock twice a week. Zara’s nearest competitor, H&M, tends to have new stock coming in every day but as 70% of their range is basic and only 30% is fashionable; they are actually replenishing fewer fashion items than Zara. Lead times differ too: most retailers need an average of about six months to design a new collection and then another three to manufacture, (Sullivan, 2005). Zara’s lead time is between 2-5 weeks depending on the range and consumer demand, H&M’s is between 2 weeks to 5 months from creation to delivery. That is mainly due to 60% of H&M’s product being sourced from Asia, (Caro, 2008).

4.4.3. Development at Zara
Traditionally design and development is followed after fabric procurement, but in order to keep up with short lead times, Zara designs according to the fabrics and trims, which eradicates the long process of fabric formation (Anderson and Lovejoy, 2007). Therefore,
due to its vertically integrated structure, Zara has the capability to respond to any mid-season fashion shifts. In addition, it has the advantage of having its own in house production which allows them to make 40% of its own fabric and purchase most of its dye from its own subsidiary and according to Anderson and Lovejoy (2007), for Zara “dyeing and fit are critical processes within the supply chain”. Zara remains a large investor in a dyeing and finishing plant allowing them to oversee the dyeing process. About half of the fabric arrives un-dyed so it has the ability to respond.

“After cutting and dyeing, many items are stitched together through a network of local cooperatives that have worked with Inditex so long they don’t even operate with written contracts. The firm does leverage contract manufacturers (mostly in Turkey and Asia) to produce staple items with longer shelf lives, such as t-shirts and jeans, but this volume accounts for only about 1/8th of dollar volume”, (Tokatli, 2007 as cited in Gallaugher, 2008)

As soon as approvals are received from the team regarding the designs, instructions are issued to cut the appropriate fabric. Majority of cutting is done in Zara’s own high tech automated cutting facilities (Anderson and Lovejoy, 2007). The cut pieces are distributed for assembly to a network of small workshops mostly in Galicia and in northern Portugal where 350 workshops employ about 11,000 grey economy workers, (Dutta, 2005). None of these workshops are owned by Zara. The workshops are provided with a set of easy instructions to follow, which enable them to quickly sew up the pieces and provide a constant stream to Zara’s garment finishing and packing facilities. Thus what normally takes months, only takes days for Zara to achieve.

### 4.4.4. Distribution at Zara

Zara is renowned for its distribution system and its whole integration of supply chain, not only in Europe but all over the world. It is twelve times faster than Gap, offering roughly ten times more unique products, (Helft, 2002). Nearly 60% of Zara’s merchandise is produced in house, whereas H&M does not own any factories. H&M has 900 suppliers
and has production houses next to its main suppliers, (Caro, 2008), but it does not follow own its production house.

Zara has access to various inventory optimization models, which facilitates by providing information of verifying amounts of items, sizes that should be delivered to the essential stores. This is carried out through shipments twice-a-week, ensuring stores are stocked up with the required collection, (Gentry 2007; The Economist 2011). Usually trucks are used to distribute products where it can be reached overnight, while chartered flights serve destinations further away. Hence, using short lead times results in being successful but doesn’t necessarily mean that the costs are low.

4.4.5. Zara Stores
According to Anderson and Lovejoy (2007), Zara’s retail stores are the “ear and eyes of the company”. Instead of only relying on electronic data (through PDA’s), Zara collaborates with the store managers to gain a better understanding of their consumers and on going trends. Based on store managers reviews best sellers are replenished quickly and slow sellers are pulled out or marked down at a later date.

Limited stock at Zara encourages the customer to visit the store approximately 17 times a year, in comparison to only 3 visits at rival firms, (Kumar and Linguri, 2006). These visits are made by consumers without any advertising, as Zara does not invest in traditional advertising. The firm’s founder has referred to advertising as a “pointless distraction”, (Gallaugher, 2008), as Zara is located carefully in prime locations for clear visibility. This constant refinement of operations throughout the firm’s value chain has helped reverse a prior trend of costs rising faster than sales, (Rohwedder and Johnson, 2008).
4.4.6. Store Structure

Based on this research and 1 week spent at Zara at Exchange Square Manchester, according to the store manager Leanne Copeland, there are over 70 people working at the Exchange Square Manchester store, out of which 35 of them work for ladies wear, which is a huge section and spread on ground and basement floor. However, everyday only 25-30 staff work, which according to Leanne is not enough for the shop that size but they have to manage it as Zara would not let them employ more staff. She also explained the hierarchy of team members and the structure of the store, which is illustrated in Fig 4.4.6. She also pointed that majority of the stores operate in a similar manner, only the number of employees may differ according to the type of store.
Fig 4.4.6: Store Structure Zara
4.4.7. Main Competitors of Zara

Even though Zara’s supply chain may be extremely difficult to copy, rivals, such as H&M have already increased the frequency of new items coming in stores. Other retailers like New Look (Khan, 2008), Forever 21 and Uniqlo are following getting in new looks within six weeks. Renner, a Brazilian fast fashion rival, appears to introduce new collections in small amounts every two months, and Benetton, a firm which had previously closed down 90% of its US stores, now appears to replenish once a week, (Dutta, 2005). European retailers, such as H&M have the advantage of offering lines by star designers such as Stella McCartney and Karl Lagerfield, along with collaborations with celebrities like Madonna and Kylie Minougue, etc.

Zara’s plus points lies with its design staff who are mostly young and hungry types, fresh from design schools that a constant drive to achieve the best designs. Therefore, competitors are trying their level best to be in the same league as Zara, if not in terms of their range than in line with their supply chain.

4.4.8. Company Environment

Zara is a multi-cultural organisation. Work environment at Zara is extremely collaborative from head office to stores. Their employees at the stores come across as enthusiastic, friendly and extremely motivated and are of mixed nationalities. They are young and energetic. The work environment at the store is highly integrated and reflects high level of team work. From the work experience conducted, the staff appeared to be friendly, helpful and interested in how Zara works. It is due to their interactive company environment that it has many staff that had been working at Zara or the Inditex group for many years.
4.4.9. The Interviewee’s Background

Name: Leanne Copeland

Position: Store Manager – Exchange Square Manchester – The Shambles

Age: 27

Education: School leaver

Work experience:
Leanne was a school leaver when she joined Inditex and ever since the age of 17 years old has worked for them and than for the past seven years has worked for.

Location of Interview
The interview took place at the Manchester Exchange Square store, at Leanne Copeland’s office.

4.4.10. Main analyses

Sourcing
To ensure quick turn around, Zara outsources majority of its range from countries close to their head office in Spain i.e. from Eastern Europe or North Africa, as they mainly operate on fast fashion. However, the rest of the range is sourced from the Far East or Asia. According to Leanne, Zara maintains strong relationships with all their contractors and suppliers; they view them as part of their organisation.

Collaboration
From the Head quarters in Spain to stores, Zara operates in an extremely collaborative manner, not only this has been addressed by a lot of academics (Gallaugher 2008;
Anderson and Lovejoy 2007; Dutta 2005) but it was evident by spending a week at their flagship store in Manchester. They tend to have a system in place and all team members follow it. The store boosts team work at all times from deliveries to sales, all members came across as being extremely motivated and helpful and extremely knowledgeable about all the range and how the whole store and company operates. The in-store merchandisers are on top of their replenishment constantly and the visual merchandisers are there to ensure that the shop is looking presentable along with the displays to keep the consumer interested. Leanne Copeland explained in detail about how she constantly collaborates with all her managers and team members to and from all the departments, along with being frequently in touch with the head office to update them about consumer trends and requirements, best sellers and worst sellers. In order to be extremely collaborative through the store and making sure every staff member is proactively performing their duties, every team member is provided with a walk and talky to coordinate with each other when selling or regarding stock or price enquiries, to be able to deliver the consumer that excellent service along with their range.

**Design and design process**

In order to meet consumer demand, design decisions at Zara are delayed for as long as possible. On average, Zara commits to 50-60% of production before the season begins, in comparison to other apparel retailers who commit to 80-90% (Anderson and Lovejoy, 2007).

“Garment styling at Zara, actually starts with an email or phone from the stores” (Leanne Copeland, 17.02.2011).

Thus, from the beginning Zara is responding to an actual need rather than forecasting a demand that is unknown. Based on store demands, Zara’s commercial managers and designers sit down and conceptualise various garment looks, fabric that may be used, and decide upon the actual cost of the product and the selling price.
All the data about consumer desires go directly to “The Cube” in La Coruna, where the design collection is developed by creative teams rather than just a few designers. Team comprises of designers, sourcing specialists and product development personnel (Anderson and Lovejoy, 2007). Approximately 300 designers are employed to produce 30,000 fresh items a year against the usual of 2,000-4,000 items produced by retailers such as H&M and Gap, (Pfeifer, 2007; and The Economist, 2011). The designer than sketches the garment out along with details of specifications and prepares the technical brief. As fabrics and trims are already available at Zara’s warehouse, sampling is done swiftly and approvals are done simultaneously; and therefore, joint decisions are made quickly.

Table 4.5.10 on the following page explains the step by step design process of Zara, from research and analysis to how it is sold at the retail store. It illustrates the key information required to key members who may be involved and the end result. Typically the design process ends at distribution to retail outlets, however, after the 1 week spent at Zara, it was gathered that their process in reality starts from the retail store and ends at the retail store – i.e. the consumer. Thereby there was a need to add the retail store function to this design process where all the important decisions are being made in collaboration with Zara’s head office.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research and Analyses</strong></td>
<td>Obtain figures about its best sellers / current trends from store managers through email or phone and market specialists. (do not forecast, just rely on information)</td>
<td>Store managers, Market specialists, Buyers, Designers, Merchandisers</td>
<td>Commercial managers and designers simplify hits and produce a library of designs while collaborating with store managers and market specialists to know their view about style, colour, and fabric.</td>
<td>Obtaining figures, Precise information, Time to react</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They Scan fashion shows to know what is new.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis</strong></td>
<td>Designer sketches garment out, details the specifications and prepares technical brief</td>
<td>Designer, Sample team, Buyers, Merchandisers, Pattern cutters, Machinist, Assemblers, Store managers, Manufacturers</td>
<td>Sampling takes little time, Approvals are quick, buyers, designers and merchandiser Pattern cutters, machinist, assemblers are instructed to follow procedures.</td>
<td>Limited samples to choose from, Quick decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fabrics and trims are readily available in Zara’s ware house.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Finalize samples</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>Finalize decisions for the new batch (quantities/colours/sizes)</td>
<td>Decisions lead time (i.e., short)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Designers</td>
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<td>Sourcing decisions</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Quality control team</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sample room team</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Sourcing of materials (depending on where it is made and comes from - Spain 50%/ Asia 34%/ Rest of the world 14%)</td>
<td>Merchandisers</td>
<td>Pattern cutters, machinist, assemblers are instructed to follow instructions to make garments in a flow.</td>
<td>Instructions given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suppliers or in house Production team (Pattern cutters Machinist Assemblers)</td>
<td>Garments are manufactured as and when required.</td>
<td>Location of manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Production team (Pattern cutters Machinist Assemblers)</td>
<td>Goes through manufacturing garments wherever it needs to be done</td>
<td>Collaboration of team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warehouse operators</td>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Collaborative decisions are made between about the quantities to be delivered to each store.</td>
<td>Merchandisers</td>
<td>Distributed through rail, road, air or sea.</td>
<td>Allocating decisions on transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form of distribution is</td>
<td>Store managers</td>
<td>Two shipments a week with replenished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warehouse operators</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
decided by the merchandisers and distribution centres, dependent upon distance and demand.

and new items. This is the standard for every store.

POS at the store – Head Office gets feedback from store managers through PDA’s and the process starts again.

| In-store operations | Information from Head office (merchandisers) about the range that they should be delivered. | Merchandisers Distribution staff
| | Communication with warehouse operators and distribution staff about the delivery | Store managers Team leaders
| | Display in store according to the story/ season. | In store merchandisers
| | | In store visual merchandisers
| | | Sales staff and cashiers
| | | Designers
| | | Designers
| | | Deliveries are brought in twice a week at the early hours of the morning 5am/6am.
| | | All staff including store managers sort the deliveries out
| | | Visual merchandisers dress the mannequins and window displays with new range
| | | Visually displayed
| | | From boxes of deliveries to shop floor
| | | Make sure main delivery out by 10 am

Time to deliver
and constantly replenish items across the day

Store manager analyses sales figures daily and collaborate accordingly with head office.

Feedback to head office

| Table 4.4.10: Design process at Zara |
Fig 4.4.10: IDEF0 chart for design process at Zara
Responsiveness
According to Leanne and a few academics (Anderson and Lovejoy, 2008, Tokatli, 2007, and Dutta, 2005) Zara hires young fresh designers and trains them to make quick decisions. Thereby at Zara, decision making is encouraged and bad decisions are not strictly punished. However, to ensure responsiveness, designers have to limit their number of reviews and changes of samples and make decision about the final product or range.

From the beginning Zara has invested in their information technology (IT). Their in-house IT system is simple but effective and is used at the head office through to the shop floors. According to Leanne “they are very approachable and answers are obtained quickly” and with regards to the staff on shop floor, in order to be responsive every member is given a walk and talky device to communicate with each other across the shop to stock rooms, just in case no items are available on shop floor staff on the shop floor use internal stock checking system on till and communicate via walk and talkie device, which every team member has on them. Even vendors and suppliers have reported back that the people at Zara are accessible.

Seasonal impact
Zara has the capability to produce seasonal clothing collections. The company is known for its stylish designs, many resembling those of the big-name Italian fashion houses, sold at moderate prices. “Getting locally targeted designs quickly onto store shelves is where Zara really excels”, (Gallaugher, 2008). The average time for Zara to create a range from concept to idea to appearance in store is 15 days (Dutta, 2005) in comparison to its rivals who are only able to deliver the new range once or twice a season. But if there was a sudden demand for a product which was selling more than the other, Zara would be able to get a new version to stores within 10days (Tagliabue, 2003). If Jennifer Lopez appears in a ravishing new item, Zara can get a version of it into its stores in a matter of weeks, not months. According to Surowicki (2000) at Zara, most of the products you see in stores didn't exist three weeks earlier, not even as sketches.
Possible changes to the company

During the 1 week spent there, I gathered that there are a lot of employees that work at the Zara Flagship store in Manchester, but Leanne Copeland highlighted how they are short staffed, at the store all the time. Even if they need staff, Zara would not allow them to have anymore, which Leanne Copeland stated should be one of the changes to be brought about. Thus, even though they have a high turn around, it seems that they do not invest in having enough staff especially in store. They do evidently spend a lot on freight due to the fast turn around, and perhaps save money on other things such as hiring enough employees, which could be one of their strategies and is questionable.

Summary

After 1 week spent at Zara’s flagship store at Exchange Square Manchester, it was evident that Zara operates on a highly collaborative and a fast paced system not only across the head office but also through the stores.

Interview by Leanne Copeland and constant information provided by other employees and managers were extremely useful and all of my questions and concerns were answered successfully. Leanne explained in detail of how the store operates along with the hierarchy of members across the store. The senior managers highlighted in detail about the range of clothing that they have, how their price points work and who are they targeted at, for example in terms of womanswear, there are three sectors, Zara Basic, Zara Woman and Trf (Trafaluc) - more casual line offered by Zara at lower price points. All the team members for womanswear section are shuffled across the department to gain a better understanding of the brand and the customer. The employees are also rotated across in doing deliveries at the early hours of the morning to putting the range out on the shop floor and stock room to get a better idea about of the products that are arriving. The employees at Zara are allowed to give their view point to the managers about the range and consumer trends, as it is their interaction that Zara’s creative team interprets.
Thus secret behind Zara’s success are its team members. Being collaborative is their key to responsiveness and thereby their success. It carries a worldwide consumer base and is able to cater for them exclusively and culturally by meeting their demands.
4.5. Qualitative Interview II – Asda George

4.5.1. Background

This was a face to face interview which was carried out with Mohan Sundram on the 10th of December 2009.

4.5.2. Company Details

Company name: Asda George

(Asda Head Office) - Asda House, Southbank, Great Wilson St, Leeds, LS11 5A

(George Head Office) - Hunter Boulevard, Magna Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire, LE17 4XN

Level of Market: ready to wear: Men, Women and kids / value retailer

Asda is Britain's most popular low cost supermarket chain, (Fashionunited, 2004). Asda is the UK arm of Wal-Mart, the world's biggest retailer, (Hall, 2007). It was in 2004 that Asda's target was to overtake M&S as Britain’s largest clothing retailer and according to recent figures it has achieved that position. It was 2004 from where Asda was reaching its targets with M&S in terms of its market share where Asda had raised sharply to 8.9 % just a fraction less than M&S’s 9.1 %, (Fashionunited, 2004).

It was in 2005 that Asda geared up for a major expansion of its clothing sector alongside other non-food outlets in order to bridge the gap with its arch rival Tesco to compete in its overall retail sales in the UK, (Fashionunited, 2005). The expansion included opening of George stand alone stores adding to the 4 stores that had opened in 2004, along with opening of Asda Living stores where there plan was to add clothing in a few key sores in the northern region. However, the past few years has seen immense expansion in various
sectors of Asda accompanied with new store openings which results in constantly improved technology to ensure efficiency in terms of getting the right product at the right time to the right store.

In 2007 George Clothing held a major campaign by Asda to boost the struggling British clothing industry, by stocking an entire range of clothing made exclusively in the UK, (Fashionunited, 2007). Moreover, the products were to be labelled with a Union Jack symbol displayed prominently to emphasize on the origin of the product. In addition, they wanted to set up a Dragon's Den style open access system, where UK clothing manufacturers could present their latest ideas and designs to a panel of ASDA buyers.

According to one of the Asda Buying Manager, "Our fast fashion ranges are inspired by the latest catwalk trends which means we need to turn our designs into production as quickly as possible", therefore, "It obviously makes sense for us to use local manufacturers here in the UK whenever we can, rather than shipping in products from the other side of the world." Even though in that year fashion houses such as Burberry transferred its production from Wales to overseas with the loss of 300 jobs, but Asda were keen on having in house production, “We want to do all that we can to encourage new designers and new manufacturers to come forward. If you've got new designs and new styles or new garments, we want to hear from you”, (Fashionunited, 2007). This approach of Asda was very encouraging for the British clothing industry and for new upcoming designers.

However, from the recent interview results from Mohan Sundram taken place on the 10th of December 2009, it seems that Asda did not adopt the in house production approach in UK and like many other high street/ value retailers were forced to source majority of its products from the Far East countries and Eastern Europe region.

Asda George did initially set out to challenge other value fashion retailers with its strategy, even though British designers and manufacturers are talented, cost is the main issue and thus manufacturers were moved from the UK to other parts of the world.
However, according to Mohan it was gathered that they still follow the strategy of in house designing which is carried out at their head office by various talented designers for different ranges. Other British retailers that pursued in house designing strategy is New Look, River Island and a few others including Bonmarche. It seems to be a growing trend for fashion retailers to now have design teams in house.

4.5.3. Company Structure George

Fig 4.5.3: Company Structure - George
4.5.4. Main competitors for Asda

- J.Sainsbury plc
- Tesco Plc
- Wm Morrison Supermarkets Plc

Source: (http://www.hoovers.com, 18.02.2012)

4.5.5. Main competitors for George clothing

- Marks and Spencer
- Primark
- Tesco clothing

Source: (http://www.hoovers.com, 18.02.2012)

George is a global brand with ranges sold in seven different countries, in over 3000 stores including stores in the UK, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Japan and the US, (http://www.asda.jobs/). The brand name George was named after the fashion entrepreneur George Davies in 1990. It is a brand of apparel for men, women and children (including school uniforms). George has extended its brand to house wares, jewellery, and more. Most of the factories for George are based in Bangladesh and China where the majority of its products are sourced from, Source: (http://www.hoovers.com)
4.5.6. Company environment

Asda is a one team of over 170,000 that includes people working across the business from head office to shop floors and fundamental to this is the way they operate, (http://www.asda.jobs/why-join/culture.html)

As an organization Asda has the drive, commitment and ‘can do’ attitude which refers to great ideas that can be put into action quickly. They believe in questioning themselves and asking how they can do things instead of looking for reasons not to do them, “this, in a nutshell is the way we work”, (www.asda.co.uk)

Their company environment is built on building relationships with others from supplier through to customer including their colleagues. They believe in greeting one another if they find anyone within 10 feet vicinity just with a simple “hello”, which according to Asda takes a second but it creates the friendly atmosphere with warmth and respect, (http://www.asda.jobs/why-join/culture.html)

4.5.7. The Interviewee’s Background
Name: Mohan Sundram

Position: Buyers Administrators Assistant for ladies wear and kidswear

Age: 26

Education:

- Master of Arts in Fashion Business from Nottingham Trent University, England

- Bachelor of Science in Fashion and Apparel Design from Bangalore University, India
Work experience:
Mohan Sundram had previously worked in Dubai for three years as a designer for a company called First Choice, in their product development and design department, which is a traditional Arabic costume making company. Then he came to Nottingham to do his Masters and during the time at Nottingham Mohan worked at Hobbs for three months in their design team, and then at Asda George for six months as a buying administrator’s assistant in their buying team of Ladies wear. With Mohan’s range of work experiences and his short time at Asda, Mohan was not able to provide information in a lot of detail however, managed to answer 90% of the questions asked to the extent of knowledge he had.

4.5.8. Location of Interview
This face to face interview with Mohan Sundaram took place on 10th December, 2009, in a cafe at Nottingham University, as it was a public place and it was more comfortable for Mohan to talk about company information in detail with no restrictions. The interview took place just after lunch time to avoid the rush hour and to communicate clearly. The interview lasted about an hour and a half and resulted to be very informative.

4.5.9. Main analyses
The interview questions were split in various categories just to make it easier to analyze and also to give some direction to the interviewee as to what the questions are like in each section. The interview lasted just over an hour and was very informative.

General
According to Mohan the main vision of the company is:

“To be Britain’s best retailer in terms of value and volume by 2012”
However Mohan explained that recently Asda has already achieved that target, as it was even published by the BBC and Drapers, but regardless they are set out to do even better by 2012.

“…They have already achieved their market share recently to their certain level, they have overcome Marks and Spencer, still there are certain levels to achieve, the target is by 2012 now” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.09)

Mohan was hired as a buyer’s administrator assistant for the dresses range for ladies wear and kidswear and the lead times they normally worked on was 8 weeks, especially in regards to fast fashion, which is the main concept at George according to Mohan.

**Sourcing**

Asda George operates mainly from Turkey with regards to its Fast Fashion range and the rest of the range is sourced from the South East Asia region, majority being from China and Bangladesh the rest of the countries include India, Pakistan, Mauritius and Egypt. They have factories allocated in China and in Bangladesh.

Mohan explains the whole Fast Fashion lead time process in detail. He emphasizes on how the process of selection and ordering of the product is done from start to finish in one week. It is the manufacturing process that takes up to 8 weeks from production to delivery into stores. All the items are delivered by road from Turkey.

Below table 4.5.9 explains various activities of the fast fashion process that take place at George. It provides information that is needed on each day of the process along with the people involved in that part of the process with emphasis on outcomes of the activities as well as the possible issues that could arise. Table 4.5.10 is followed by IDEF0 4.5.10 diagram to put into perspective all the measures that need to be taken in order to run through the Fast Fashion process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Preps</td>
<td>Discussion about what range is missing</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>Emails to Manufacturer about possibility of having meetings and ordering the range</td>
<td>The need for getting it ready and into stores as soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1 – Sunday</td>
<td>Leave for Turkey</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>In Turkey</td>
<td>To check the range and make final decisions by Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandisers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2 - Monday</td>
<td>Meeting with suppliers</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>Buyers would choose from manufacturers collection and range</td>
<td>Final decisions due to pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandisers</td>
<td>Than sit and have brainstorm meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suppliers</td>
<td>Reach final decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3 - Tuesday</td>
<td>Meeting with other fabric suppliers in Turkey</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>Samples are chosen, put together to decide upon final ranges</td>
<td>Ensure sample goes with everything under the range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandisers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suppliers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4 - Wednesday</td>
<td>Look into redesigning any styles or see samples</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>New designs come in or the suppliers would be required to have a</td>
<td>If delays with samples, it may cause problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandisers/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>garment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5 - Thursday</td>
<td>Call up for fabric test reports and lab reports</td>
<td>Buyers Merchandisers suppliers Lab staff</td>
<td>Make decisions on fabrics based on lap reports</td>
<td>If fabric tests come negative regarding certain fabrics, it can delay the process of fast fashion ordering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6 - Friday</td>
<td>Place Orders (decide on the final range and quantities)</td>
<td>Buyers Merchandisers Suppliers</td>
<td>Buyers fly back to UK and place the orders for manufacturing</td>
<td>To ensure that the products are delivered on time to be on shop floor within 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5.10: Preparation for IDEF0 chart for Fast fashion process at Asda George
The need for getting it ready and into stores asap

Emails to Manufacturers about having meetings and ordering

To check the range and make final decisions by Friday

In Turkey

Final decisions due to pressure

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

Buyers choose from manufacturers collection / make final decisions

New designs required or prototypes

Fabric tests negative = delays in ordering

Make decisions on fabrics based on lab reports

Delivery of products on time = 8 weeks

Fig 4.5.10: IDEF0 chart for Fast fashion process at Asda George
Collaboration

With reference to the process of fast fashion at George, it seems that key people who must collaborate to start with are the finance manager and the merchandiser along with the supplier, in order to know the budget and to be able to acknowledge the demand and quantify products accordingly and also establish whether the suppliers can meet the demand in time. The role of a buyer is still in line with the merchandiser; however the designer comes into the picture at a later stage of the process as seen from the process detailed in figure 4.5.10. Furthermore; monitoring the critical path is the key to meet tight deadlines through help from various software’s, in particular Edi Track which is mentioned in detail further in the analyses.

According to Mohan it seems that the buyer is not in much contact with the designer, which appears to be peculiar but perhaps it is the way George operates. Mohan meant it more in the context of long term commitment.

The collaboration strategies that Asda George applies to its organization is predominantly supply chain strategy, a strategy they use to categories their suppliers such as partner strategy, strategic supplier, key supplier and many more. Asda operates with more than 224 suppliers, from which 100 of them account for 91% of the main supplying, hence long term relationships are maintained with the 100 suppliers across the globe who actually deliver at the right time, at the right place on time.

“Mohan - So they have an excellent strategy and it has been divided as partner strategy and strategic supplier, key supplier, approved supplier, file supplier and exit supplier, there is one 2, 3, 4, 5,6 strategies”

In terms of partnership strategy there is GATT which is in Turkey, which is a supplier that Asda George deals with and maintains very good long term relationships with them.

Author - What is GATT?
Mohan - GATT is a company in Turkey

Mohan - I am not exactly sure, but it’s known for George Asda at Turkey” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

However in order to build long term relationships with suppliers it is not that easy according to Mohan.

“Mohan -...to achieve they have again a criteria to get into that partnership. They have to come across different exit/ trial/ than trial range than approve range than key suppliers than strategic supplier and then only become partnership suppliers”

Mohan - So they have to go through different criteria to become a long term supplier

Hebe - Oh ok” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

**Design and Design process**

Generally in Fast Fashion all buyers, merchandisers, designers and even garment technologists are involved, but not necessarily for the basic range. On the contrary George does have its own design department in house based in the Midlands for its non fast fashion range. The non-Fast Fashion range’s lead time normally varies from 6-8 months according to Mohan.

Even though all the key people, such as the buyers, designers and merchandisers are constantly working together on the fast fashion range. It seems that the buying team for the basic range is not as much involved, perhaps in a lesser context which Mohan was trying to explain as quoted below.

“Author - So you were not involved much with the designers but your role?”
Mohan - the buying role is not much involved with designing.

Mohan - In terms of not much involved with, we are not involved with the fast fashion part of it but yes we have our own design department” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

At Asda George, according to Mohan it seems that mainly the buyers, merchandisers, garment technologist and fabric manager are involved in working on a range together. Overall a group of 10 people are usually involved. The fabric manager’s role is more inclined towards checking which fabric would be relevant in different styles and to ensure that the fabric required for the items are available in the market, to further assess the quality of it. Also if any new fabric comes in the market, the fabric managers would get a sample and make the buyers and the design teams aware of it to decide upon future styles.

According to Mohan, Asda makes the majority of its buying decisions based on price. Being a value retailer, it would base its decision on price more than trends but more than these factors it tries to address customer requirements.

“Mohan - yes price comes first and then the trend but I would rank trend as the 3rd or 4th because what they normally do is look into the range which is missing in the department on the floor they don’t want to miss any of their customers / they don’t want to lose any of their customers so that’s what they try to focus on

Author - so yes price and trends but they try to focus on consumer needs at the same time” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

In order to meet consumer demand and to fill in any gap in the range, Asda George tends to send their buyer administrators and junior buyers to go out and explore various high street shops which are their possible competitors and analyze what they have and what’s missing from their range. According to Mohan, they do not only analyze activity at shops
but also do a competitive report through analyzing various websites of retail stores, as the online retail system is getting more and more popular these days.

“Mohan - They go to other shops they look into price ran, how much they are selling and what are the ranges that they have. Based on that they have analysed and they say that this is what we need to do next.

Mohan - Getting into the websites, getting into the stores, taking some snaps, unknowingly than take it to fit room and take they take the garment” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009).

Generally it is known that all the High Street stores and other fashion stores do their own market research through attending various exhibitions and fashion shows to keep up to date with the current trends. But according to Mohan, Asda George did not only go to shows and exhibitions but also organized one in house exhibition every six months to encourage team integration along with making other departments aware of each other’s range. At George Asda, they do not only let the buyers go to shows and exhibitions but the fabric manager also attends shows such as Premier Vision to meet various suppliers and to analyze various fabrics. Asda George has a different type of department known as the Supply based management department, where the team in that department go to exhibitions, meet suppliers and suggest to buyers accordingly, which in my opinion is less time consuming for the buyer as they can concentrate on relevant suppliers rather than chasing after various different ones which may not suitable range related to the buyer’s requirements.

“Mohan - Buyers also do visit some exhibitions to meet suppliers and catch up suppliers and to have a quick look.

Mohan - The upper hand goes to supplier chain management there is a different department called supply based management. Department... they used to go to the
exhibitions and they look into suppliers and they suggest to the buyers to place order with those specific suppliers

Author - So they go to the exhibitions and they decide and than suggest to buyers.

Mohan - Yes supply chain management.

Author - So you have a separate supply chain management team?

Mohan – Yes” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

Responsiveness

To facilitate interaction with the suppliers, George at Asda uses three different software’s known as Edi track, Humming Bird and Compass:

- Edi track is used to share information with different suppliers and to monitor the product process;

- Humming bird is used to analyze the weekly reports, sales reports, daily department sales which is mainly used by the merchandisers;

- Compass on the other hand is internal order management software used by George head office only.

“Mohan - So these software packages are also shared with the suppliers to know what are the production dates, delivery dates, status of products and has been entered in suppliers computer and can also be seen by the buyer at the head office…..right

Author - Oh ok” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)
Therefore, there are three forms of interaction that takes place amongst these three soft wares, for example one software is just used for the staff at George, one software is for usage between buyers and suppliers and one is predominantly for merchandisers.

According to Mohan, buyers have more of an upper hand in collaborating effectively with the suppliers as they are the ones who will be part of negotiating and having a final say in the buy. Whereas, merchandiser’s role at George is more towards, analysing the sales figures and advising the buyers on the quantities of various ranges, according to the market trends.

“Mohan - This is how George works actually.

Mohan - So they work mostly buyers to suppliers and they do conference calls. Sitting in the office doing conference calls.” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

Hence there are two different types of interaction that George at Asda faces, one type of interaction is where a few key people are involved to make joint decisions and the other type is when there is person to person interaction. According to Mohan, both type of interaction takes place at Asda George. However, as a company George believes in building long term relationships with its suppliers rather than relying on short term relationships.

Mohan even gives example of a high end store such as Burberry who used to have 200 suppliers 30 years back but now in order to avoid confusion with orders and maintain relationships with suppliers they only deal with 10 suppliers. Although Burberry does not work on a similar principal as Asda George, the strategy it adopts in terms of dealing with suppliers is similar to many other high street stores, however on a smaller scale due to the nature of retail.
Although some of the questions asked in this interview are very interlinked and somewhat may have a same or almost similar answer but those questions do actually assure the quality of answers.

In order to meet consumer requirements effectively and quickly, Asda George tends to use the strategy of where they can speculate the demand as early as possible. They want to know when there is a range missing as soon as possible and usually it’s the merchandiser’s duty to do that at Asda George and in order to keep up with their orders they have direct links with their supplier. They do not believe having agents being involved in the middle.

According to Mohan, initially George was not very responsive to fashion trends, however over the span of time that is changing. In order to meet consumer demand they are being more and more responsive in terms of price, quality and even trends, plus with added competition they have no choice but to be extremely responsive in my view. They already have a back up strategy for the fast fashion range, however they need to try and implement or work on a strategy for the basic range where they can be as responsive too.

In terms of logistics they normally have all products supplied through road from places like Turkey. However for the delivery coming from South East Asia and Far East, it comes via ship. All the products normally come to the distribution centre (DC) for George, which is based in New Castle and then distributed to different stores according to the quantities that are decided by the merchandisers. All the details are generally conveyed from the merchandiser to the DC, through software’s being used as mentioned earlier.
Seasonal Impact
According to Mohan it seems that various seasons do have an impact on George’s sales figures and they do try and consider the climate by saying “keeping the climate in mind” however they do not seem to incorporate the weather factor into their ranges and sales which therefore has an impact on their overall sale figures and according to Mohan, who has worked there emphasizes on how they should integrate weather in to their design process in order to have higher profits and to meet consumer requirements.

Possible changes to the company
The structure of George has changed immensely over the years and the key person behind this change has been Fiona Lambert who is the brand director of Asda George. She reformed the whole layout of the firm and created more specialised roles within the organization to target specific areas of the supply chain and cater for the constantly rising demand.

“Mohan - Well but yes in general in terms of George Asda it has changed when I hear that George Asda had a very different head office, which is adjacent to the current head office where most of the colleagues, from Asda, Asda living were also involved in the clothing. Than Fiona Lambert, who is the brand director now was appointed and changed the entire structure and she made specific and certain departments got certain specialists for clothing for example and now George has very specific people particularly for that department, so even the design structure has also been changed. I can say yes it has changed but I cannot give you in terms of what reason it has changed”.

Based on Mohan’s experience with George Asda, there were various areas that he feels George can improve upon in order to make the design process more effective from the manufacturers through to the customer. Mohan suggests that how the manufacturers need to have a more hands on in terms of understanding consumer needs of its retailer rather than just dealing directly with the retailer and send the products across. They need to be
more involved on the other side of the business. They should also be very flexible to be able to meet unpredictable demand.

“Mohan - ….manufacturers need to be very proactive in this approach... they must understand from their retailers customers ...Which is very important” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)

Mohan’s suggestions are more in favour of how George and its manufacturers should try and adopt the postponement strategy in order to meet unpredictable demand, be it in terms of styles of colours or a new production line. Alongside Mohan feels that retailers (head office) must always look into the supplier’s way of trading and operating. Even though Asda is already taking measures in analyzing its suppliers and ensuring that they trade ethically, but Mohan still feels it’s one of the main factors that will improve the supply chain even more and many other companies should follow similar strategies as they lack in this area.

According to Mohan, there is always room for improvement in supply chain; however it seems that George Asda is constantly looking into strategies to improve its responsiveness and to reduce lead time as much as possible especially with regards to fast fashion as mentioned earlier.

“Mohan - And they are trying very innovative waysm very quick supply chain strategies, quick response where they can cut... for example in fast fashion so what has been reduced, they have reduced the product development time, they have reduced fabric test times, i.e. the samples. They used to do like 4-5 samples now they have cut it down to one sample. So in fast fashion just one sample is enough and they will approve it.

Author - So they are cutting down time a lot. That’s great.

Mohan - And that’s it” (Mohan Sundram, 10.12.2009)
From the interview, it is clear that Asda George is trying to be responsive in many aspects, however not to the full extent. Its lead time is still 8 weeks for the Fast Fashion range and 6-8 months for the basic range, which in comparison to other retailers such as Primark, New Look, River Island and other high street fashion stores is relatively long. Also with reference to the conversation, it seems George Asda is not extremely collaborative especially between its main functions of the company such as the buying, merchandising and design departments. It should be interlinked at all times regardless of what range. Perhaps Asda George should follow the collaborative strategies that it uses for its fast fashion range towards its basic range also, which may result in a successful process over all.
4.6. Qualitative Interview III - River Island

4.6.1. Background
This was a AHRC seminar workshop which was attended on 6th September 2007, and was conducted by the womenswear Fashion Buying Director of River Island, called Farida Kaikobad, who emphasized upon the three main functions of River Island being Design, Buying and Merchandising and explains in detail how they are interlinked to the process of design management of River Island.

4.6.2. Company Details

Company name: River Island

Address: Hanger Lane, Westgate, London, W5 1DR

Level of Market
River Island is high in fashion at reasonable prices, from ages 16 – 40 predominantly for women and men.

River Island Clothing Co., Ltd is a London based company that operates in apparel retail stores in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Europe, the Middle East as well as the Far East, (Business week, 2010). Chelsea Girl was founded in 1948 and the company was formerly known as Chelsea Girl, Ltd. and in 1988 it changed its name to River Island Clothing Co., Ltd. The company offers apparel, jewellery, and accessories for men and women. Its products include tops, knitwear, dresses, jeans, trousers, jump suits, leggings, shorts, skirts, jackets, coats, handbags, footwear, hoodies, shirts, suits, leathers, maternity, gifts and lingerie. The majority of River Island clothing and accessories are designed in the UK with its very own design team available in house. It sells its products
through retail stores and through the internet. Alongside, River Island also designs, produces custom apparel, and franchises its store (Business week, 2010).

River Island is recognized as one of the UK’s most exciting and evolving brands on the high street. It is a youth orientated firm that operates more than 250 stores in the UK and has a growing international presence through its franchise operation. With over 50 years of fashion retail experience they are one of the Britain’s largest and most successful privately owned companies.

4.6.3. Main Competitors
There are three main competitors of River Island, as listed below, (www.hoovers.com)

- Arcadia Group;
- New Look;
- Next Plc.

Source: (http://www.hoovers.com, 18.02.2012)

4.6.4. Company environment
River Island’s company environment is culturally rich. It provides a challenging career, experience and exposure to its staff to become the best in business. River Island’s working environment is very interactive; i.e. is open plan which facilitates communication amongst all team members. No one has an office and everyone from every department is based on one floor. All of the meetings that take place at River Island are informal and inclusive because they believe that from those meetings the young team members will get to learn a lot.

“Hearing the senior people bantering and arguing in you know a positive way about the qualities of the product... all three functions are always present at key meetings... all have a voice and all learn to have a respectful ear to each other’s disciplines” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).
They do not believe in sending their staff for training on formalized courses. They believe that the individual learns through the conventional way of teaching. Instead of learning through lots of theory they believe the junior team members would pick up through being in a working environment where they get taught every step of the way by their seniors.

“It’s this coaching mentality at River Island that we believe is another success... it’s almost an apprenticeship, a good old fashion apprenticeship method of teaching” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Farida Kaikobad, as a prime example, has “built her way up” in River Island from a clerk to a director not through degree but through her experience and she believes that a lot of people who have worked for River Island and had no higher education are working on a higher level than fresh graduates. They follow this principle not just for hiring people for their stores but also for their head office.

The key to their success is their stores (as will be discovered in detail from the interview). Their store management teams are extremely customer focused, commercially minded and carry strong people management skills along with a strong affinity with River Island brand. Employees at River Island, within the buying, merchandising and design department, operate in a very responsive manner at the forefront of current buying and design trend influence.

At River Island they are trained in a way where they always listen and question.

“We have trained ourselves to always assume we are wrong…… Come up with this fantastic range…got all the excitement… and its all there... we always ask our selves... what if. What if they don’t like it... what if we are wrong...? and that measure is considered from the beginning.” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).
The questioning allows self-assessment of the situation in store constantly. It encourages to analyze whether it is necessary to have 100,000 of one product for one store for one season or can it be done with less and if it can be than instead of going and allocating a 100,000 of a certain range and getting it all wrong in the stores it is better to keep it at a lower number and getting the orders right. This will permit the three key members to play around with more options in the range and give customer a choice of a few styles rather than one. Hence the reason for constant self-questioning in required at River Island as fashion is volatile.

“So we always apply ourselves to what if scenario and we always say as much as we could be right... we could be wrong…. Because that is the climate that is out there... as I say we are mostly right... we give ourselves... an allowance of what we call mark down... “(Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Working at River Island means is all about passion. Any individual who joins River Island must be passionate and enthusiastic about the brand and be willing to learn and communicate ideas across the team. Everyone who joins River Island is encouraged to think as if River Island is your own shop, which Farida believes helps the individual to take decisions based on something they own and are a part off, hence the ability to make good decisions regarding the product range – what is to be sold and what is not to be sold.

“Run your department as you are running your own shop, don’t make decisions that you would not make if it was not your own business” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

4.6.5. The Interviewee’s Background

Name: Farida Kaikobad

Position: Fashion and Buying Director


**Age:** Early forties

**Education Qualification:** School Leaver

Farida joined River Island in 1982 as a Buyers Clerk and has been with the business for 25 years gaining a prominent position at River Island as a womenswear fashion and buying Director since 1994. Farida’s role intervenes between the functions of design development, buying and merchandising, heading a team of buyers, merchandisers and designers. The family run business thrives on a “hands on” approach and Farida has held positions in all functions across all levels during her 25 years with the Business.

“..I... had the experience in working in all the tiers, in all the levels, in all the functions and a retail buying head office. So I am fortunate enough to have a wealth of experience in all aspects of Buying/ Merchandising and indeed Design” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Furthermore, according to Farida, being a female added to her advantage in being competent for the top level job that she has. She believes it is the combination of creativity and business that has enabled the success of River Island along with the cooperation of their young team that are able to multi task under pressure every day which is vital.

4.6.6. **Location of Interview**

This was an AHRC workshop attended on 6th September 2007, at the University of Westminster, between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m which was based on Balancing Creativity and Risk: decision making and negotiation. The seminar was recorded and transcribed as seen in the Appendix 3 (ii).
Farida spoke about how the three main departments of River Island operate and collaborate. Farida explained its basic design process with an example of a jean to some extent. She also answered any questions that were asked, which helped in building a clearer picture of design process of River Island. The seminar lasted approximately an hour and was extremely informative.

### 4.6.7. Main Analyses

#### General

Farida’s main aim was to define the different functions at River Island that basically enable the process from the manufacturing of the products through to the stores and she explained how they work together in the three disciplines which are as mentioned before buying, merchandising and design.

“So we have three disciplines in the buying office that have to come together. They have to come to collaborate to deliver the product...” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Design is the first discipline amongst the three functions, than buying, where it is the buyer’s responsibility to source and procure the product that is chosen, i.e. buy the product. Whilst on the other hand, the merchandising role is about quantifying the buy while minimizing any risk involved.

Therefore it is important to maximise profit as a merchandiser along with minimizing risk. It is all about how many are they going to buy as they have over 200 stores, and if they have to buy say a black dress, how do they want to sell this item from January to March which is 8-10weeks which refers to how they would like to buy the item.
.. When we look at that garment through experience we are able to talk about how many we think we can sell a week in our 200 stores. If it is a fantastic seller we might say every store is going to sell 5 of those every week. We have got 200 stores so we going to realize the sale of £1000 a week on that style. If we are buying for 8 weeks, that’s 8,000, we need a bit of stock turn, to give us a bit of buns at the end, so lets buy 10,000. So it is the merchandisers job to look at the product that buyer has and to quantify the buy” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007)

**Collaboration**  

At River Island, it seems that amongst the three main functions, the buyer’s role is always in the middle of the designer and merchandiser’s role side by side.

“So all the time we are discussing this tight row, between all three of them and it is the buyer who is normally in the middle of the design over here and merchandising over here…” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007)

Thereby it is the collaboration between buying and design along with planning ahead of the range which adds to the success of River Island. It is in fact crucial for all three i.e. buyer, designer and merchandiser to be involved at every meeting regarding the current range and the future in order to ensure the right product comes through at the right time and to ensure no problems arise due to communication.

“…Where are we... (pause) September and we are actually talking about next Spring / Summer, May to July that’s very much in our mind. We are beginning to formulate how summers going to look and we also talking about what’s sold this week, so it is done through a series of very pedantic meetings. So although we are a creative fashion retailer, to actually run the business, because actually that’s really what we really are a business, have to be a fashion business but we are a business first, the bottom line is hard cash. We have to be very pedantic about the meeting cycle that we have. So yes all the time the three of them at River Island
are always coming together for their weekly meetings to discuss their future range but also their current trading and at River Island is always the three of them. The design room is not somewhere down the end of the corridor with the radio on sketching away in a bubble, the designers are based in their room and the buyers and merchandisers are based in their own panel fix but every single discussion on every single product is between the three of them. So we would not make a big decision on the black trouser update without the designer being present and her voice would be just as valid as the merchandiser’s voice” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007)

Farida Kaikobad emphasized how the buyer normally is the neutral person who is there to acknowledge both sides and make the final decision. With regards to River Island, Farida Kaikobad in her role as Womenswear Fashion Buying Director makes the final decision on every product.

Further into the discussion in response to a question Farida explained about how Quality Controller and garment technologist work in line with the designers to ensure prototypes of garments are running smoothly and to ensure activities are taking place according to the critical path. However, unlike the designers, buyers and merchandisers who sit at every meeting together, the quality controller and garment technologist do not.

“We might get them in every so often if the merchandiser is saying that oh that waist band looks very tricky, because it has got 2 buckles on it and when you are in a hurry in the morning how could you do buckles up and the designer is saying no, its actually not 2 buckles, you just have to press under one buckle so and then there is some argy bargee going up and then they will say do you know what, lets get the technologist up. Hope that they might have some input, so you know. Randomly they will come up so to have some input but on the actual product development. They are not involved in the key meetings. They are busy checking something... somewhere else... laughs“(Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007)
The key is the collaboration between the three departments buying, merchandising and design as mentioned before, which is the key to River Island’s success. The aim is to make profits along with satisfying the consumer and with their creative range they are able to accomplish that. There are always conflicts of opinion between the team members but that allows them to reach to a fantastic decision.

“Your product is not successful in commerce if you do not please your customer that is the bottom line, your product can be not a success. On the upside.. when the collaboration comes together... and the creativity... and the commerce comes together beautifully, than obviously the customer is thrilled and satisfied, the buying teams and head office are thrilled they see the sales coming through and satisfied and our bosses are thrilled and surprised because they see the profit coming through.. You know there really is a thrill and a monetary gain that happens to come from this collaboration” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007.
Fig 4.6.7 (i): Flow chart of how key members operate in River Island (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.07)

Fig 4.6.7 explains how the key members operate within the River Island design process according to Farida Kaikobad and how the three main functions of River Island operate when working on a range.
Design

Design is very important for River Island, as explained by Farida. It is the design function’s responsibility to instigate new product ideas which River Island. Along with updating existing designs that may be carried forward to the next season for example like black trousers, black t-shirts, which means a bit of nuisance for the design team according to Farida Kaikobad, as they are not fresh new items, they are repetitive but need to be altered slightly (perhaps a button detail or finishing or a hem detail) every time repeated to meet consumer demand yet offer them variety. At this point merchandisers work closely with the design team in order to advise them better about the best sellers and worst sellers to facilitate their design direction according to consumer demand and current trends.

Farida emphasizes more on design and its and importance by using various examples from various industries and mentions how they full fill their brief by making regular store visits every single week and if they do not have time in the week they would make a point to go in on weekends to understand consumer needs and wants better. Even though it is a long and strenuous procedure to visit stores every week but River Island buyers and designers constantly perform this activity to keep on top of consumer requirements. Usually it is the buyer’s job to be continuously in touch with their store managers who are very passionate about the brand to get updates on what’s selling and where along with customer reaction and expectation along with regular store visits to check the fit of the product range and analyze how the products are visually displayed.

“….you look to see that your key product, the ones you know take the most amount of money are in the right places, are in the visual places so the customers can see them, you try on all your own jeans, and you make sure that they fit nicely. Sometimes we send a team down and obviously we are all different shapes and sizes, so we say ok... jeans team... go to Harrow now... Harrow is about 15 minutes from our head office so off they trot the size 8, the size six, the 10, the girl who is tall the girl who is short and they try all their jeans on…"
And then they come back and they go... oh do you know what?? do you know why our jeans are not selling? It doesn’t fit any one, Its like oh great thanks just spent 8-9 months putting it together with the QC, we have just bought 50,000 of it and you are telling me now after its gone into the shop? …” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

However they would not talk to customers in relation to future designs as the trends keep on changing.

“We couldn’t possibly know what could be coming... I mean we are in business and we don’t always know what’s coming, so if we asked the public what is coming. It would almost be too random” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Further on during the talk, Farida emphasizes upon importance of design to fashion and how design can attract consumers to buy. Fashion is not a necessity it is an indulgence through which consumers are attracted to buy.

“Its not a necessity on the whole its an indulgence, what makes us indulged is consuming... we are normally seduced by something in a garment… that is eye-catching... show stopping.. a must have… a thrill…. What gives it those qualities…….? Exceptional design” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Hence unique and innovative designs are the key to River Island’s success over the past years and are constantly winning awards and this is not just because of its company name but due to its staff, team that designs where there is a mixture of raw talent to senior designs

“So design at River Island is on a pedestal... we understand its power... if used intelligently... it’s a winning formula from a decent enough vase, our business has grown by 500% in an 8 yr period and our profit is the highest on UK high street, we won the industry award last year, for retailer of 2007 and if you ask anyone why. The answer would be the designs” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).
The main advantage that River Island has in comparison to other high street brands is the fact that it is a family run business, which means that it has the authority to set its own prices which allows them to set prices according to their target market.

Therefore consistency in design is crucial according to Farida Kaikobad. It is the investment in innovation of product that will allow marking up the prices accordingly and encourage consumer spending, and in order to achieve this, constant collaboration is required amongst the three functions, buying merchandise and design which have to be constant.

**Responsiveness**

At River Island they do not look at past sales as much as they used to however, on certain items such as black trousers or black t-shirts where analyses are very straight forward they do tend to over look at the past sales from the last season as they are the products that always end up being the best seller for them each season and it brings them that little bit extra to generate profit, which they obviously need. Each season on their basic collection such as black trousers and t-shirts they would amend it slightly according to the current trend and order the range.

“There is no point making it very high waisted, there is no point putting it into the most luxurious fabric in the world, we know what that trouser range has got to deliver and so oh gosh... we sold a 100,000 black work trousers last year, do we want to sell them again….. Yeh … We are not going to throw that money away... we need that… “(Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

As the fashion is constantly changing and consumer are more aware, it is important to keep up with the current ongoing trends whether that means Victoria Beckham wearing yellow in winter or Madonna wearing pink. The main aim at River Island is to deliver
“WHAT is NEW” in the market, which is the key to them being successful as an organization and in order to accomplish that they have to go through a series of meetings.

“…our process has its theories of very pedantic steps that brings together all of the three functions in a lifecycle of a product and it is this very organized and pedantic system that is the saviour of River Island because without the pedanticness in a very creative atmosphere we can all go off in all sorts of direction” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

**Design Process**

Farida explains the process in detail further by taking an example of a jean.

**Product – Jean**

Key members involved - (3 designers, 1 buyer, 2 assistant buyers, 1 merchandiser, 1 assistant merchandiser, a business controller and a trading manager)

**1st detail meeting**

(Brain storm for 8-10 months ahead)

- Hang some original samples in a room (from all over the world/ influences/ current best sellers/ pictures, etc).

- Discussion – in a creative way in the creative design room with merchandiser/ buyer and designer (important for all three to be there).

- Each person is given the responsibility to analyze from an angle to ensure that the final 20 styles included their various contenders.

- Write out a brief form the first detail meeting
“We talk about the number of jeans we might want in the range, which happens to be about 20 and we talk about each of the character of each of those 20 jeans, we just give some target words like very 70s skinny, love lurex denim in one box, next box might be easy boot leg, must be a good price….next box might say boyfriend jean like Madonna in picture. Very slouchy…next jean might say skinny drain pipe jean like Kate Moss... erm look at black wet look denim, so we write ourselves a brief that day.” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Than the buyer and designer go off on their travels around the world for 2 months (sample range with their factories and their suppliers)

**First review meeting** – (after they are back) that meeting is with Farida Kaikobad

“We put up what they have got back... we look at our brief and I will say ok... than gang... Show me what you have got so far on a well priced nice fitting jean... and they will say we sampled it in turkey in this new fabric which is very well priced and it doesn’t stretch very much and it Is very easy to make and it is a very economical design... its great… We sampled it in Hong Kong in this new fabric... that our Gordon suppliers found it in the high street... its been developed by banana republic and they have developed a million meters’ of it… and they have got the price down to 1 us dollar / meter and Gordon showed it 2 us.. Its like good (with excitement)….It all sounds brilliant...” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Farida’s responsibility towards the buyers and the designers is to guide them in the right direction. Discuss with the team which products have to be finalized according to River Island and put forward for development.

Development process – 2 months later the buyers go to their suppliers and have a series of meetings alongside work with merchandiser in order to quantify what is the best jean.
Ranking of styles (discussion) – there is an open discussion between the merchandiser and the buyer. The buyer ranks various styles by making predictions on which jean will sell 7,000 a week and make the most amount of money in a 6 month period, or which one would be there because it is different. Or which jeans should be there because the competitor has it.

“…luckily we are a very successful business... and we can allow ourselves a few indulgences as gold jeans in Oxford Street to make us look as cool as everyone else but we buy them in a very measured way” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007)

2nd Review meeting – 8 Months after they start – They are at the point to buy those goods.

At this point all the team members are involved from the buyers, designers, merchandisers to quality controllers and garment technologist to ensure that the product is forming up as expected. Along with constantly checking whether the product is being bought from the right place, form the right country at the right price and it is being negotiated well and be delivered in line with the critical path which is crucial.

Alongside it is important to keep a constant check of a few things as Farida mentions

“…they are looking at what are they currently selling today and wondering oh god do I have that back in? oh god... would that keep selling… oh god I haven’t got that in my line up and its are selling 7000 a week this week .. shall I keep it going/ shouldn’t I?

So it is this word I use tight rope... which came to me last night and it is a perennial tight rope... shall we... shant we.. shall we shouldn’t we” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).
It is this constant questioning of River Island team members to themselves that makes them so unique and responsive as a company and it is the constant assessment of a situation that they endure which helps them in producing continuously fresh designs.

**Final meeting** – all the key members are normally present and usually are accountable on giving feedback from their angle and Farida herself makes the final decision based on everyone’s reviews based on her experience and gut feeling as she explains. For instance

“The merchandisers would vote from the angle of current best sellers, assuming that very little was going to change in a 6 – 8 month period, the design team would be spilling over with new samples ignoring huge cash sales for the ego of retailing yet another one of their designs. The buyer would be this nice measured combination of both of those schools and I would sit and listen and chair and make the final decisions based on experience... luckily 25 yrs experience within the same brand... I should by now have a pretty good idea of what the customers want. gut feel… a lot of it is about gut feeling and intuition, and an ability to forecast the future mood which we have to have... so we are never always right but…using this cocktail of talent... we are mostly right” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

According to Farida Kaikobad River Island holds around a 1000 items in a 6-8 week period, and she emphasizes on the fact that every single item is discussed in detail, which is why River Island is successful and ensures high profit margin on majority of its products. However this does mean that there is enormous pressure on the very young team but it is the collaboration of the threesome that delivers the success of River Island.

“Thereir quality of collaboration... that is critical to the successor, failure to their departments” (Farida Kaikobad, 6.09.2007).

Below table 4.6.7 illustrates list of activities that was explained by Farida in the interview as analysed above about the design process of a Jean. It is a universal procedure that is
normally applied by the team members to other product ranges as well. It could be applied to say t-shirts, to skirt to jumpers and many more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Information</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First detail meeting</strong></td>
<td>All team members involved</td>
<td>3 designers 1 buyer 2 assistant buyers 1 merchandiser 1 assistant merchandiser 1 business controller 1 trading manager</td>
<td>Brain storm  Hang samples from all over the world  Discussion</td>
<td>Too many ideas?  May be all team members would not agree on different ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Only the key members involved</td>
<td>Designers Buyers Merchandisers Suppliers</td>
<td>20 styles given to each member to finalise  Write brief from the meeting  Buyer/ designer go off to travel for two months (meet suppliers and visit factories)  Obtain samples</td>
<td>Problems with suppliers  Cannot obtain samples on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First review meeting</strong></td>
<td>Buyers, designers/ and merchandisers have a Discussion With Farida Kaikobad</td>
<td>Farida guides them (discussion about what styles should be put forward in which fabric and colour)  Development process starts</td>
<td>May be the team members disagree with Fairda's views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development process</strong></td>
<td>Buyers Suppliers</td>
<td>Buyers go after two months to suppliers and have meetings and work on the merchandiser to quantify the</td>
<td>Ensuring the right styles are ordered and the right</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Merchandisers</th>
<th>Buy (styles and numbers) along with analysing competitor activity</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Competitors may have got better buys</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Second review meeting</strong></td>
<td>8 months after the initial start date of the first detail meeting</td>
<td>Buyers</td>
<td>Buy the goods</td>
<td>Ensuring all the team is collaborating well</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Designers</td>
<td>Collaboration of team members to ensure smoothness in the manufacturing of the product</td>
<td>Competitors are not moving ahead too much</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Merchandisers</td>
<td>As well as constantly checking what is selling and what is new (Analyse competitor activity)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Garment technologist</td>
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<td>Quality controller</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Final meeting</strong></td>
<td>Feed back to Farida Kaikobad</td>
<td>Farida Kaikobad</td>
<td>Discussion on styles and numbers</td>
<td>Disagreement between team members and on the final decision</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Buyers</td>
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<td>Merchandisers</td>
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Table 4.6.7: River Island Jeans Design Process
Fig 4.6.7 (ii): IDEF0 - Summarizes the activities that take place in a design process for a River island Jeans range
Furthermore, with reference to the table 4.6.7 and fig 4.6.7, it was gathered that River Island only has about three to four main stages in the process known as the first detail meeting, the 2nd detail meeting, the final detail meeting and the rest of the activities are conducted with regards to sampling of product to buyers and designers travelling and making joint decisions are surrounded around these key meetings over a 8-10 month period with constant collaboration amongst all the key team members which is indeed the key to River Islands success. Thereby, it was very useful to find out a detailed step by step process from Farida which indicated upon how collaborated and responsive they are which is later discussed in the chapter five.
4.7. Qualitative Interview IV - Bonmarché

4.7.1. Background
This was an online interview with Attia Bashir. A questionnaire was sent via email that had a similar layout of the questions that were used for face to face interviews; the questions asked were similar in order to make comparisons. Online interview was relatively straightforward and precise than the face to face interview hence the information obtained is relevant but not excessive.

4.7.2. Company details

Company name: Bonmarché

Address: Jubilee Way, Grange Moor, Wakefield, WF4 4SJ

Level of Market: Value retailer at affordable prices for women over 45 years of age in a wide range of sizes (12-24).

Bonmarché is the UK's largest value retailer. It caters for women with plus sizes. Their range includes casual and formal separates, outerwear, swimwear, lingerie nightwear and accessories, all are designed according to a mature lady in mind, (www.bonmarche.com).

Bonmarché had over 380 stores across UK with a growing high street presence. Bonmarché was founded in 1982 but in 2002 The Peacock Group had bought them out and more recently since January 2012 Bonmarché and Peacocks, both have gone under administration, not fully but partially, Bonmarché has had to closed down its 160 stores, alongside, 1400 jobs were lost, (Neate, Guardian 2012), but there has been a growing
interest in the business from potential acquirers due to its high street positioning. (sky, 2012)

The Peacock group did strive to offer outstanding value, well presented stores and excellent customer service and since that time Bonmarché did show momentous growth. In addition, in 2007, they launched a collection designed in collaboration with David Emanuel, the designer famous for designing Lady Diana Spencer’s wedding dress in 1981. This collection has a slightly higher price point than the main range at Bonmarché but still represents good value for money.

4.7.3. Main Competitors
The three main competitors of Bonmarché are:

- French Connection Group, PLC
- Hennes and Mauritz
- Marks and Spencer

Source: (www.hoovers.com, 18.02.2012)

4.7.4. Company environment
It did employ over 4,000 employees across head offices and warehouse distribution centre based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, however more recently due to Bonmarché going under administration there has been a loss of 14,000 positions. According to Attia they also work in an open plan type office.

4.7.5. The Interviewee’s Background

Name: Attia Bashir
Position: Print Designer

Age: 28

Education:
UMIST - BSc (Hons) Textile Design and Design Management with Industrial Experience

Work experience:
Coming from a strong design and academic back ground, Attia Bashir started her career as a CAD designer at Redcats, which is a mail order company. At Redcats she was working for the childrenswear and womenswear department. After two years of working at Redcats Attia switched her job to her current position as a print designer for ladies wear at Bonmarché which has a strong high street presence in UK, and was a totally different type of company in comparison to Redcats. At the moment Attia is in charge of dresses, skirts and knitwear.

4.7.6. Main Analyses

Sourcing
According to Attia, Bonmarché work on a less than 6 weeks lead time, which is astonishing as even though it is a high street retailer, it does not operate as any other high street fashion retailers such as Top Shop, River Island, Oasis and many others in terms of offering very fashionable clothes as it does not aim towards that target market. As discussed later in this section Bonmarché tends to work a season behind in comparison to other fashionable high street stores. That is why considering the range is not fast fashion; it is surprising to know that it operates on a short lead time especially when the majority of the products are sourced from Far East.
Collaboration

In order to make their decisions about the range they mainly interact with the client, but to make joint decisions within the team usually about 10 people are involved similar to some of the other organizations and normally they base their decisions around trends, styles and colours, not price as they already have established suppliers based in the Far East who supply them at valuable prices.

Unlike the fast fashion market, Bonmarché tends to attend exhibitions and fashion shows once in three months to keep up with the trends, but as mentioned before they are not as trend focused hence they do not need to go to fashion shows and exhibitions as often. They base their collaboration strategies on long term relationships with their suppliers in order to obtain economies of scale. They connect with only a few suppliers and believe in building long term relationships, by personally interacting with them which helps when selecting the range, as price does not become an issue as they know they will get the products manufactured at a low price due to regular sales and volume of products.

Design

In terms of design, similar to many high street retailers also follows the in house design strategy i.e. they employ their own in house designers. According to Attia, it seems that the design department at Bonmarché is constantly collaborating with the buyers, even for comparative shopping trips.

“The design department researches trends including generating trend stories and creating colour palettes. Working with the buyers, we carry out research such as shopping trips to have a look at which trends the high streets are embracing. We then design garments to fit into trend stories also keeping in mind which styles we are currently selling well as a company. The styles we design fit into each trend story which has been generated”, (Attia Bashir, February 2010)

Further to the company structure, Attia mainly explained the process for the buying department but she did not explain about how other departments work and are inter
linked. However, below is a brief structure as to how the buying department process works according to Attia.

**Fig 4.7.6: Design process – Buying department, Attia Bashir, February 2010**

Bonmarché design process follows a similar format to other high street retailers. As Attia explains, it appears that the three departments design, buying and merchandising are fully interlinked at all times.

According to Attia, design department are responsible for trend and market research where as the buying and merchandising departments are more concerned with compiling product ranges, forecast sales and determine budgets.

Attia as a print designer is responsible for creating the prints, embroideries and other surface embellishments. The role involves working mainly with main stream designers of Bonmarché who work with the buyers to develop new ideas, styles and prints for the upcoming range.

Once the designs are developed by the designers, it is than budgeted by the merchandisers and buyers at the beginning of the season, after which the orders are placed with the suppliers in the Far East, where they are sourced from.

In order to ensure the process is being followed on time, critical path is followed to the closest extent.

“We work closely with suppliers to ensure lab dips, strike offs and samples are requested as early as possible to avoid hindering lead times”
Design process of Bonmarché has changed immensely over the past few years according to Attia, they used to work on very long lead times and there was less collaboration amongst team members. However, today as mentioned earlier Bon Marche has its own design process like many other big high street retailers such as New Look, Zara, etc, which means that they rely less on the suppliers, and has proven to be less time consuming for them and resulted in more efficiency in the designs being produced.

“This is because buyers do not have to go back and forth to suppliers for design reworks and amendments”, (Attia Bashir, February 2010).

Along side Attia explains that the advantage of having an in house design team would eventually result in a new collection by Bon Marche. In the near future, Bonmarche aims to not only develop their own signature and hand writing for their products but also a coherent range within the stores.

**Responsiveness**

In terms of responsiveness, Bonmarché works on a basic principal of speculating demand early for its range, but generally speaking it is not a company that is very responsive to fashion trends as it is not a fast fashion retailer even though it operates on a fairly small lead time, it does not respond to immediate market and fashion trends. This is because it aims at a mature age range, along with women who are plus sizes who are not usually concerned with the current trends but something that would fit well and look good.

“This is because our customer does not follow trends as strictly. She, our customer needs to see a trend and believe in it before she commits” (Attia Bashir, February 2010)

Currently Bonmarché does not have a strategy for meeting unpredictable demand but according to Attia if they had to aim at a slightly younger market, than they would consider being more responsive to fashion trends closer to the season and work on cutting
down their lead times. However, Attia feels very strongly that Bonmarché should have a strategy in place to follow the unpredictable demand if necessary rather than not have one at all with current volatile situation.

**Seasonal Impact**

According to Attia, weather does have an impact on their business.

> “As a business we are greatly affected by the weather. We find that during rain and snow our sales drop. Our customer is reluctant to shop and go out doors during winter seasons”  
> (Attia Bashir, February, 2010)

However, knowing that the sales are affected by the weather, Bonmarché does not follow any strategy to prevent loss of sales because of various weather conditions. Attia strongly feels that it is important for fashion retailers to respond to weather conditions as it would eliminate poor sales and they should do it by preparing financial forecasts, which should possibly help them cater for consumers according to the weather or put on great offers when the weather is poor to may be enhance customer’s visit to the stores.

**Possible changes to the company**

According to Attia, there seems to be not many new developments that Bonmarché is taking on board at this moment in time in order to improve their system further, however may be they will at a later date.
4.8. Qualitative Interview V – Visage Ltd

4.8.1. Background
This was an online interview with Sarah Austin. A questionnaire was sent via email that had a similar layout of the questions that were used for face to face interviews; the questions asked were similar in order to make comparisons. Online interview was straightforward and precise than the face to face interview hence the information obtained is relevant but not excessive.

4.8.2. Company details

Company name: Visage

Address: Visage Ltd, Visage House, Shaftesbury Avenue, South Shields, NE34 9PH, England

Level of Market
Visage is a leading supplier of men’s, women’s, children’s wear and accessories to the retail and wholesale clothing market

Visage is a manufacturer/supplier who cater to UK high street retail stores. It is a family run business that was established in 1981 and has ever since made its place in the market, it has created its reputation for quality, innovation and competitiveness in the UK and European retail clothing market, http://www.visage-group.com. Visage provides fashion companies with various services from design to manufacturing and distribution. Quality of its products is exceptional at great prices accompanied by the best customer service. At Visage every item in the range is thoughtfully designed by its team for each season,
alongside they are capable for branded any item according to the clients requirements or they deliver under one of visage’s brand names.

Visage specialises in jersey, knitwear and coats with its main function being merchandising and design. Visage has an in depth knowledge of the apparel sector which has been built on strong foundations over the past 25 yrs ensures Visage as a company can be trusted and through close collaboration with its core departments, they are able to deliver on time with help of its experienced management team and committed staff.

**Main Vision**

To supply the high street with quality, fashionable and commercial clothing

**4.8.3. Company environment**

Visage employs approximately 400 staff worldwide, from experienced designers to talented graduates, customer service staff through to highly experienced manufacturing and quality assurance experts, the Visage team are all equally committed to excellence and offer a premium service to each and every client.

In terms of its company environment, Visage operates similarly to some high street head offices, such as Zara, Primark, and New Look. It operates on an open plan environment which is spread over two levels. Only some meeting rooms and show rooms are separately allocated with a door. All the buyers for each department (jersey/ knitwear/ woven and jackets) are headed by a family member, i.e. each area was under them. Open plan system across the company was specially designed to encourage collaboration amongst team members. To ensure smooth running of the business and its employed, constant checks were in place. Strict internet and email policy followed as well.

Over the past 18 months, Visage has introduced new lines, comprising of fashion ranges and accessories. “The company has been growing to a point they are literally bursting at
the seams and have subsequently moved into new premises”, (http://www.visage-group.com/news.html).

4.8.4. The Interviewee’s Background
Name: Sarah Austin

Position: Senior Merchandiser

Age: 33

Education Qualification: School Leaver

Work Experience:
Sarah was working for Mothercare as a Trainee Merchandiser, before she joined Visage as a Senior Merchandiser and prior to that Sarah had worked at Winners clothing, a Canadian chain of departments stores, (which closed in UK a few years back) as an Assistant Merchandiser.

Having the experience from working at two very diverse organizations and being in charge of different range, Sarah took a step forward again to a different type of fashion organization, a manufacturer that delivers to high street women’s wear fashion companies but deals from a manufacturing perspective. Sarah has been working at Visage for about 3 years and at present Sarah is in charge of dealing with Tops and Knitwear range.

4.8.5. Main Analyses

Sourcing
According to Sarah, they manufacture, design and deliver its range to all the main high street shops for women. Their main buyers are all the main high street shops such as
Topshop, Dorothy Perkins, Next, etc and they tend to work on a lead time varying between 14-16 weeks, which in comparison to some of the fast fashion retailers is long. However, even though they do produce fashionable range for high street retailers but do not deliver for fast fashion range as majority of the products sourced are from the Far East and Asia.

**Collaboration**
With reference to collaborating, and making decisions about the range, Visage team to collaborate constantly with all the members in the supply chain, from designers, merchandisers, suppliers along with the retailers (buyers of the range). Usually the actual Visage team in house comprises of less four members, plus as mentioned before the company layout is open planned, which facilitates better communication amongst all the members.

Visages range is mainly based around current trends and pricing in terms of sourcing, thus the reason for its success as a manufacturer being based in UK. In order keep up with the trends the team members i.e. designers and merchandisers tend to visit exhibitions once a month. Due to the fact that Visage mainly sources from the Far East, they are likely to focus on building long term relationships with its suppliers to have the advantage of economies of scale. They believe in having a person to person interaction with its suppliers (where some key team members are involved) and have a small selection of suppliers that they comfortably deal with.

**Design and design process**
Similar to high street retailers, Visage’s strength lies in its design team. All the designs are mainly designed in house by its own team. This approach of designing in house makes it easier for the high street retailer buyers to arrange a meeting with the designers and merchandisers at Visage select the designs and order. Instead of high street buyers having to travel abroad and go through a selection process for a few months, Visage
simply makes things easier especially with the range it delivers. The designs selected by buyers can be even altered according to their requirement.

“We research the trends and then build our own range to sell to the retailer who in turn may amend the style of buy as is”, (Sarah Austin, November 2009).

Further to the company structure, Sarah mainly emphasized on how a group of designers are always working together on researching new trends and developing designs. They are the key to Visage’s success as it is the design that generates profits for Visage.

“We have a group of designers for Jersey, woven, dresses, jackets etc, which work on the trends and put their own ranges together” (Sarah Austin, 2009).

With reference to the company structure and how the responsibilities are carried out by individuals within the company it could be arguable that it follows more of a sequential process than an interlinking process, i.e. as Sarah has mentioned below:

“Designers – They build the range
Sales – Sell to the High Street
Merchandisers – Place the order and deliver to customer” (Sarah Austin, November 2009)

Perhaps it is interlinked amongst the team members while they are working on a range together where the designers may need to check for best or worst sellers with the merchandisers or simply to make joint decisions about colours and particular styles.

Visage works according to its client during the ordering process. As it is its client’s decision to make about the quantities required, than accordingly once the price and delivery dates are confirmed, merchandisers at Visage place the orders. To ensure that all the work and procedures are being carried out on time to meet deadlines, critical path is
normally followed. It is crucial for Visage to make sure that the range is being delivered to its clients at the right time and in right quantities.

“We use a critical path with all the critical dates we have to approve everything by to get the delivery on time”. (Sarah Austin, November 2009).

Visage has been operating since 1981, thus it is inevitable that over the past decade Visage must have changed its design process in more than one way in order to keep up with high street fashion retailers. With reference to Visage, Sarah mentions how it is interesting that the retail buyers are interested in taking more of the designers view into perspective regarding the range rather than relying on just their own opinions or market based information.

“I am not sure about it changing however I have found that the retailers are now taking more guidance for the designs/trends from our designers whereas years ago the retailer would be telling us what they wanted to see” (Sarah Austin, November, 2009)

Therefore, due to the fast changing fashion environment and consumer demands, high street retailers are choosing companies like Visage where they can visit some where local and choose certain designs, amend them if needed and place orders according to their range.

**Responsiveness**

In terms of responsiveness, Visage tends to keep up with the current trends through attending shows and catwalks frequently in order to respond quickly, as their main clientele includes high street fashion retailers, who have fashion savvy customers waiting to buy the range.

“We research the catwalks and trends to see what will be the next big session to determine what will be a big seller” (Sarah Austin, November 2009)
Usually the research for new trends is carried through Catwalks, internet, magazines and possible shopping trips to various stores. Visage even has the capability to meet unpredictable demand if need be. They have collaborative relationships with the factories in Turkey where they can bring in the range for its retailers within a few weeks.

“Quick turnaround from Turkey within 8 weeks” (Sarah Austin, November, 2009)

In order to ensure that the products are being delivered to its clients at the right time, Visage has strong collaborative relationships with this shipping company who manage all their deliveries for them.

“We have our own shipping department to tell us the vessel details/ Air freights so we can ensure it is shipped from source in plenty of time” (Sarah Austin, November 2009).

Thus, they are one of the main key players in manufacturing and delivering to high street retailers in the UK. They are linked to a good shipping system, thus when it comes to receiving shipments from the Far East, they are able to provide the right product at the right time.

Every retailer uses various software for stock control, it is apparent that Visage also uses them, and recently they have invested in new lines and thereby more products but it was unfortunate that Sarah did not explain about any software’s that Visage uses perhaps due to company policy.

Seasonal Impact
Sarah strongly feels that weather has an impact on fashion. According to her it has a strong impact on their department.
“If it is cold in summer no one buys vests and if its warm in winter no one buys knitwear” (Sara Austin, November, 2009)

However, knowing that the weather does have an impact on fashion, Visage does not currently take any measures to ensure that the range is being designed and produced according to the weather. Sarah actually believes that you cannot predict the weather and thereby predict fashion according to the weather. Considering Visage works with many high street retailers in UK, it is surprising that they have not come across such issues from its clients, who may be concerned with producing the range according to seasonal changes.

**Possible Changes to the Company**

In terms of possible changes that could be made to the design process. Sarah feels that the retailers i.e. client of Visage should not change their minds so much about the type of range they want in their stores, and should act quickly upon “booking key lines”. (Sarah Austin, November 2009). And according to Sarah at this moment in time there are no current improvements taking place or being considered.
4.9. **Summary**

To summarise, the following were observed from the results above;

All the qualitative interviews conducted were informative to an extent, out of which Zara resulted in being most informative and productive to this research due to the fact one week was spent at their store along with the input of information from many members. Where as other retailers studied only relied on information obtained from one member of each company.

Due to the nature of current fashion market, all the five firms apart from Bonmarché are responsive or are aiming to be. Zara however, is inevitably a prime example of being highly collaborative and responsive retailer. River Island aims to follow in similar footsteps, where as George – Asda only operates on fast fashion for a part of their range, but according to Mohan, they are adopting a more collaborative approach especially while using their software as well as with team members. They have a fast fashion process that is in place where items are ordered within a week and manufactured within 8 weeks, but in comparison to other retailers such as Zara, Primark and etc, it still operates on a longer lead time.

The seminar given by Farida Kaikobad was extremely informative, however due to the nature of the seminar, and many people being there provided limitations in asking many questions. However, through out the seminar Farida Kaikobad emphasized strongly upon River Island’s collaborative approach towards responsiveness, where their three main functions of buying, design and merchandising interact constantly to respond and stay competitive from start to finish of the design process.

In addition to be customer focused and provide the best quality, they ensure that their product fits properly across different sizes by sending their staff from head office to their stores every week to try various products, while analysing general trends.
Members at Bonmarché and Visage had to be investigated through online interview schedule and some questions were answered through correspondence of emails, as they were unable to make time to meet in person. Due to which a lot of the answers provided do not have an in-depth approach that the rest of the companies studied did.

Nevertheless, It was very beneficial to gain an understanding of how a supplier like Visage operate in terms of producing designs for its clients to its distribution to different places and as mentioned by Sarah Austin and their website, the key is their strong affiliations with the shipping firm. Sarah could not provide my research with the actual design process of the company but it appears that the whole company being a close knit firm is extremely collaborative and responsive from its designers through to their clients i.e. retailers they supply to, and the reason behind it being responsive even though not all of their range is based on fast fashion are their in-house design team, alongside its close relationships with its suppliers and strong distribution network, which has been built over a long period of time.

For Bonmarché, Attia Bashir did attempt to reply to the majority of the questions asked, however, could not explain the design process for the whole company in detail, but she did provide a brief overview of a process for the buying department which according to Attia follows the same principal for the merchandising department. If it was a face to face interview, the design process could have been explained better.

Bonmarché was chosen to be apart of this research, not because it is a fast fashion retailer but it is a high street retailer and it gave a better understanding about how a retailer may operate when it is not primarily responsive towards current fashion trends and seasonal trends. It was also gathered from this research that Bonmarché uses a collaborative approach but does not respond to the current seasonal trends as they target at a plus size market, who do not like to be inline with the current trends, therefore as a retailer they do
not need to be responsive. However, they have their own in-house design team similar to the rest of the companies investigated in this research.

Thus, all the design processes of high street retailers studied in this research were very customer focused. Zara, as evident is the key retailer that incorporates consumer requirements from the beginning of its design process until the delivery of products resulting in the most successful retailer across the world. Other retailers mentioned in this research are moving towards the same direction but have not fully overcome the barriers of supply chain especially with regards to in-house production. Zara succeeds because it sources and manufactures majority of its products from Spain or countries near to its head office, where as other retailers tend to mainly source from the Far East and in process are not capable of responding to consumer demand quickly.
5. Chapter Five – Discussion of results

5.1. Introduction
This chapter will summarise the findings from primary research conducted and discuss them within the context of the literature review and research aims and objectives. The comparison of qualitative interviews and the IDEF0 chats will be used to discuss the attributes of each process. This discussion will conclude by identifying the limitations on this study, further recommendation for research and for the high street fashion retailers for women.

The main aim of this research is to understand level of collaboration amongst team members of high street retailers in their design process to be responsive towards current fashion trends.

The research objectives were to;

1. Conduct a literature review to understand the general trends in the UK fashion industry, the supply chain and design process. Underline issues that retailers face responding to consumer demand and strategies that they currently take to overcome these issues;

2. Conduct Primary research with consumers across different commercial areas of Manchester to establish a need for a responsive design process;

3. Conduct qualitative interviews with high street fashion retailers and supplier to:
   - Determine design process model for each company;
   - Understand level of collaboration in each organisation;
   - Identify issues relevant to each sector;
   - Understand how they respond to market and seasonal changes.
4. Compare and contrast the primary research with the literature review conducted to put forward recommendation for further research and for the UK high street fashion retailers for women.

5.2. **Objective 1**  
Conduct a literature review to understand the general trends in the UK fashion industry, the supply chain and design process. Underline issues that retailers face in responding to consumer demand and strategies that they currently take to overcome these issues.

5.3. **Objective 2**  
Conduct Primary research with consumers.  
Preliminary research was conducted with consumers in various locations of Manchester, which aided in providing an overview of the market trends, consumer shopping habits and the need for responsive designs and software.

5.4. **Objective 3**  
Conduct qualitative interviews with high street fashion retailers and suppliers.  
Alongside the preliminary research, five qualitative interviews were conducted with four UK high street retailers and a supplier for high street retailer in the UK. Each company was slightly different in the way it operated. The five companies chosen for research were:

- Zara – Fast Fashion retailer;
- George at Asda – Value retailer on the outskirts;
- River Island – High street retailer;
- Bonmarché – Value retailer for plus sizes on High Street;
- Visage Ltd – high street womanswear supplier.
The five qualitative interviews facilitated to understand and evaluate the company and its design process. Moreover, it helped in identifying collaboration amongst its employees and departments, along with further comparisons. The most appropriate method of analysing the data was considered to be the IDEF0 modelling. However, as all of the interviews conducted were not face to face, it made it difficult to construct an IDEF0 model for all five companies with limited information. Only three IDEF0 models were formed, for Zara, George at Asda and River Island, due to their nature of interview.

5.4.1. Objective 3 (a) Design process models

Form the qualitative interviews conducted, IDEFO charts (Chapter 4) have been developed in order to outline main design activities that take place within a firm, however, IDEFO chart was formed for only three retailers, Zara, George at Asda and River Island, because they were more in-depth interviews i.e. more information was obtained than Visage or Bonmarche who were interviewed through online questionnaires and through some emails. However, from all the companies researched, it was gathered that they all operate on a generic model. But the activities carried out, and how they respond to market trends within those core process differ immensely. Generic model as reviewed from the literature and results comprises of five main stages;

![Diagram: Generic business process for companies researched](image)

Fig 5.4.1: Generic business process for companies researched
5.4.2. Objective 3 (b,c,d) Level of collaboration within retailers, issues and response to market

Based on interviews and IDEFO charts, level of collaboration was analysed amongst key members within the companies that were researched.

As mentioned in section 1.1, there are two possible design process models that fashion companies typically follow, an M&S or a Zara model, within which the team members collaborate very differently at each stage as explained in section 2.3.3 in Chapter 2 in detail and analysed further from the chosen companies in Chapter 4. It was gathered from the qualitative interview which was conducted with Zara, that the designers and store managers are constantly collaborating from research and analyses stage through to store operations. In addition, it was gathered that not only Zara involve designers from the beginning stage of their process in order to be highly collaborative but also the rest of the four companies interviewed. Thereby, it is evident that retailers and suppliers are moving towards the collaborative approach to respond to consumer demand, however are not as vertically integrated as Zara is.

Zara inevitably leaves their decisions about their range quite late, especially for their basic range, following theory of postponement; however, other companies researched do not follow this strategy and still work on longer lead times and their shortest lead time for their fast fashion range still remains between 6-8 weeks in comparison to Zara who work on 2 weeks or less. However, Zara’s manufacturing process is questionable. It would be useful to find out how long does their actual manufacturing process takes from the sourcing of raw materials to making decisions about suitability of fabric for the chosen style and range. It would be useful know how they get to the distribution stage and what issues they face during the process and does it actually take Zara 2 weeks from sourcing of raw materials to distribution of final product, or is that 2 weeks lead time from available fabric on site (in Spain) to production and distribution?.

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5.5. Objective 4

Compare and contrast the primary research with the literature review conducted to put forward recommendation for further research and for the UK High Street fashion retailers for women.

5.5.1. Recommendations for further research

From the research conducted, it would be useful to know precisely the type of PLM software’s that are used by each retailer and issues they face in developing relationships with their suppliers and perhaps the type of collaboration techniques they use, if any. Based on this information, various strategies and tools can be devised.

Further research could be extended to investigate only fast fashion retailers such as Zara, H&M, Forever 21, Primark, and New Look, with more in-depth face to face interviews and time spent at their stores (similar to the qualitative research conducted at Zara) or at their head offices if possible, to gain a better understanding of their detailed process and how each part of the process works, in order to make substantial comparisons and recommendations.

Also instead of choosing a few fast fashion retailers to base the research upon, only perhaps two companies should be chosen for future research to keep the research focused and conduct significant analyses. Combination of retailers that could be chosen for further research can be M&S and Zara, or Primark and Zara, or Forever 21 and Zara (two fast fashion retailers that have a growing international presence), etc. In addition for future research more than one person should be interviewed from one organisation, and from different departments, which will not only provide the researcher with substantial information but allow sufficient comparisons from various perspectives.
Perhaps to improve the research and its findings in the future, a fast fashion process should be illustrated by the interviewee for each company if possible and analysed in detail rather than just a model that is based on answers from the interviewees. Also interview relevant staff who over see the manufacturing process as well as fast fashion process and execute in detail how manufacturing and production process works together for each retailer chosen. This would aid the research in the following ways:

- Analyse the design process of each retailer chosen in greater detail;

- Make relative comparisons between manufacturing process as well as production process of each retailer;

- It will also allow generalisations to be made amongst all the models and highlight differences more clearly.

In addition, a day to day design process should be investigated for the companies chosen, similar to the one that Mohan Sundram provided for George Asda’s fast fashion process, which would allow further comparisons to be made with reference to timeline of the design process and how each company operates.

Also this research could be investigated at an international level, i.e. Two companies can be chosen as suggested earlier in this section and their UK design process can be compared to perhaps a Middle Eastern one, where unpredictable weather is not an issue or to an Australian design process where the weather operates in an opposite manner. It would be interesting to know how a retailer like Zara and others who have strong presence in these regions operate, as most of their range would be summer based for the Middle Eastern market or winter based for the Australian market during UK/ Europe’s summer and vice versa.
Questions that may arise from this research could be;

Do the retailers keep their stock consistent with the Europe’s range or do they have separate design teams for these regions? Do they design differently for the Middle Eastern market? Do they use any of their winter stock designed for Australia for the UK market during their unpredictable summer/autumn season? What kind of lead times do they operate on for these markets? If it is Zara that is being investigated, it will be useful to find out that are they able to maintain same time-to-market for these regions as they do for UK/Europe or is the replenishment and newness in stores less frequent? And if they are frequent like UK/Europe than what form of logistics/freight forwarding systems do they have in place?

5.5.2. Recommendation for the UK high street fashion retailers

After carefully analyzing the literature review and based on research findings, it was gathered that there is a need for weather responsive design process, however, not for fashion retailers that are highly collaborative as Zara. Retailers like Zara to be precise are not affected by the weather as they are extremely quick to respond to ongoing changes and consumer demand. It was even highlighted in Zara’s qualitative interview by Leanne Copeland (store manager) that they do not respond according to the weather as they are highly responsive generally.

Therefore, weather responsive software/strategy would be useful for Fast Fashion retailers that do not have an in-house production system like Zara does, and their minimum time-to-market is 6-8 weeks or more. In addition, it would also be useful for fashion retailers that out-source majority of their products from Asia or Far East region. Weather responsive software/strategy will allow them to make design and colour decisions quite late in the process. This will allow retailers to display the range according to the weather especially during Spring to Autumn period where the weather changes from being extremely cold and wet one week to a heat wave the following week. It will
also allow the retailers to make decisions about colour ways near the time for certain range, whether it is a colour in demand that needs repeating or a new colour that has been worn by a celebrity and is the newest colour on the market.

Thus after analysing the type of software that is being used by various fashion companies and the types of software that are available, the researcher has chosen to propose a weather responsive model for fashion retailers using SAP (System Application and Products) software.

SAP is the world's leading provider of business software. SAP's software helps many companies run their business, improve customer relationships, enhance partner collaboration and create efficiencies across their business operations. Over 95,000 customers, run SAP: including over 3,400 retailers, in more than 120 countries.

Hence due to the general success of the software being used by various companies across the globe, the model for a responsive and collaborative process incorporating the weather was proposed through IS Retail solution within SAP.

SAP for Retail solutions are particularly designed to cater for fashion retailers, to aid them in gaining a better understanding of shopper needs, manage the merchandise life cycle, optimise supply chain operations and manage the buying experience to inspire shopper loyalty, (www.sap.com).

The SAP for Retail solution portfolio addresses these needs by enabling companies to create a business process platform that serves as a foundation for establishing and implementing cohesive strategies across your retail chain. This approach in essence allows you to gain an insight into shopper’s behaviour, uses it to define the companies merchandise strategy and further more optimises supply chain strategies. This allows the organisation to evolve towards an integrated, responsive and agile business, enabling
quick adaption to varying fashion trends and meet competitive demand. Below the diagram explains SAP as a business process platform:

Fig 5.5.2 (i): SAP Business Process Platform

Thereby with an integrated software solution, a fashion retailer can gain accurate understanding of consumer demand and will allow achieving the control you need in order to drive effective operation strategies.

Once the firm has identified the merchandise it wants to create, SAP for Retail helps you manage the style development process. Concepts and plans can be shared both through external and internal forms. As new products are launched, all departments are integrated within the strategy to ensure the items arrive at the right store, at the right time. Moreover, with better collaboration tools, strategies can be devised and executed more quickly. These tools also ensure consistency in auditing and approval process to keep all the plans within budget across the organisation, (www.sap.com).
Fig 5.5.2 (ii): Proposed design process SAP model (SAP IS Retail)
To create this model SAP IS Retail was used which oversees area of supply chain management (SCM) and which incorporates features and functions to support collaborative supply chain planning processes, including strategic, tactical, and operational planning as well as service parts planning.

With SAP SCM, a full range of planning activities can be optimised, including:

(i) **Demand planning and forecasting** – Forecast and plan anticipated demand for products or product characteristics. Use state-of-the-art forecasting algorithms for product life-cycle planning and trade promotion planning;

(ii) **Safety stock planning** – Assign optimal safety stock and target stock levels in all inventories in the supply network. Meet desired customer service levels while maintaining a minimum amount of safety stock;

(iii) **Supply network planning** – Integrate purchasing, manufacturing, distribution, and transportation plans into an overall supply picture – that can simulate and implement comprehensive tactical planning and sourcing decisions based on a single, globally consistent model. This can involve heuristics and capacity planning, optimization, and multilevel supply and demand matching;

(iv) **Distribution planning** – Determines the best short-term strategy to allocate available supply to meet demand and to replenish stocking locations. To achieve this, planners can determine which demands can be fulfilled by existing supply elements;

(v) **Supply network collaboration** – Work with partners across the supply network. Using collaboration features that improve visibility into supply and demand, where company and partners can reduce inventory buffers, increase the velocity of raw materials and finished goods through the pipeline, improve customer service, and increase revenues.
More specific to this research and with regards to the design process model proposed; demand planning and forecasting function is used within supply chain management area within IS Retail, where all the variables are addressed according to the demand.

With reference to the proposed model, there is a section where the weather information can be obtained and fed into the system and it is illustrated across at the top of the design process. The data gathered with about the changes in season would not be SAP related and would be obtained from external sources such as the met office, or other weather forecasting agencies. The information gathered would act as an interface to enter SAP system, which is recognised as Multi linear regression (i.e. variables that are weather based or environmental, or based on pricing as well as historical data), and aids to forecast in different ways based on different variables.

5.5.3. Key Planning Benefits of SAP Supply Chain Management

SAP SCM enables to:

- Increase demand accuracy and order fulfilment satisfaction levels;
- Reduce inventory levels and increased inventory turns across the network;
- Increase profitability and productivity;
- Integrate sales and operations planning process

However within SAP SCM the model proposed will focus around the demand planning and forecasting area, which is part of the planning and collaboration part of SAP SCM, as it is a forecasting tool that we would like to propose in order to enable weather responsive designs.

Perhaps if this model was to be followed using SAP implementation, many popular high street retailers of UK such as Topshop, River Island, New Look and more could be responsive and collaborative in their design process. However, SAP IS Retail Solution is an expensive set up in comparison to other software that is available in the market, but
the industry specific processes that SAP offers, especially for retail, would not be offered by any other business application vendors. These business processes for retail provided by SAP are based on global industry best practices and methodologies, which are currently being used by most of the multi-nationals. For the high street fashion retailers moving towards globalization, SAP IS Retail can prove to be an investment they should make to improve ROI, extensive business analysis (for business projection and planning), cost benefit and consistency in their business processes. (www.sap.com)

5.6. Limitations of the study

There were various limitations that became apparent during this research. Initially, a lot of difficulty was encountered in establishing links with fast fashion / high volume retailers. A lot of the members contacted never replied, which made it difficult to have a good selection of companies for this research.

Moreover, when some companies agreed in aiding this research, it was gathered that key members that were interviewed had issues with time, i.e. merchandiser for Visage Ltd, who could not make time for a face to face interview, print designer from Bonmarche, also faced similar issues. Farida Kaikobad was at a seminar so not all questions with reference to my research were answered. Buying assistant at George Asda was very helpful and informative during his interview however, could not provide with a total insight to their design process due to his lack of time at George, and he did provide me with suitable contacts from George Asda, but due to no time by the key members I did not receive any call. Only sufficient and in depth data was gained from Zara, as 1 week was spent at their store to analyse their collaborative design process – along with valid information obtained from various key members. However, because this research was only conducted in-store and not at the head office, it provided limitations to this study as not all the design process stages could be examined in detail, therefore as gathered from
section 4.4, majority of the processes of Zara have been explained with reference to the literature review, as not all the processes could be explained by the staff at a Zara store.

Furthermore, due to various company policies, not all members investigated were comfortable in disclosing the type of PLM that their company uses, which would have been useful to know for this research and provide best practice solutions based on their requirements. Hence only a generic model was formed to meet universal needs of all the organisations studied in this research and others.

5.7. Reliability

The interviews were reliable to an extent due to the nature of qualitative interviews and the fact that not enough time was spend at the work places or with the interviewees apart from Zara. Analyses of companies, with reference to the aims and objectives were difficult to evaluate. However, with regards to the face to face interview with Mohan Sundaram, it was ensured that the interview occurred in a public place where the interviewee could feel comfortable with discussing information and issues about the company. Hence after a few emails back and forth, it was decided to take the interview at Nottingham University café campus just after lunch time, which benefited both my findings and aided Mohan in talking in a comfortable environment.

Similarly with reference to the seminar held with Farida Kaikobad, it was clear that she was comfortable with the people and surroundings at this seminar which took place at University of Westminster and since she was familiar with a lot of people on site she could discuss and explain the three main functions of River Island and its issues in detail. The time chosen for her talk was in the morning slot, hence she was fresh and energetic and took her time in explaining things in detail to an extent that she could. However being in an open environment amongst many other people the researcher felt that Farida was restricted at the information she could share, as there were members from other companies present too, it is even clear from her conversation in the last 15 minutes ( as
seen in the transcripts in Appendix 3 – ii) when she was explaining River Islands Jeans design process in detail. This reflected upon her apprehensiveness in sharing information.

If this research was to be extended further, the researcher would try and arrange for a face to face interview with Farida Kaikobad in order to obtain detailed information about the company, or as 1 week was spent at Zara store, similar strategy could be adapted coupled with sometime spent at their head office to analyse their design process in depth. This strategy will allow in depth understanding of how key members collaborate within their supply chain with further emphasis on PLM software that they use alongside in their design process.

Moreover, conducting research at the Zara store was very valuable and reliable in terms of all the staff, who were extremely helpful in providing information on how they operate along with a couple of documents to show how they replenish in store. However, this research could be even more reliable if some time was spent at their head office or an in depth interview was conducted with one of their key members from their head office.

5.8. **Internal and External Validity**

The validity of case studies conducted were ensured by various measures, which included using a Dictaphone for face to face interview which was conducted with Mohan Sundaram from George Asda. A DVD was recorded from the talk that Farida Kaikobad gave on the three important functions of River Island and both the interview and the seminar recorded were transcribed which is included in the Appendices section and can be found in Appendix 3. A letter was written by Leanne Copeland to validate that I had spent a week at the premises of Zara. For the other two case studies, Visage Ltd and Bonmarche, emails were generated back and forth along with work email addresses were used to assure the team members were a part of the organisation and the interviewees were recommended by people who worked at these organisations. In addition, all the
flow charts, IDEFO diagrams, and other flow diagrams that were created for different case studies were validated by the interviewees themselves, some were explained and illustrated by the interviewee themselves and some were created from the information provided by the interviewee.

Furthermore for the companies that were researched in the literature review were validated through a number of journal articles, newspaper articles, internet and thesis which are all referenced in detail, hence all the data gathered was validated to the optimum level to ensure accuracy of information.

5.9. Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the research findings and placed them in the context of the literature reviewed. It highlights the constraints that the high street fashion retail market faces in the UK. It oversees the significance of responsiveness and collaboration in the fashion and textiles industry. To reach concrete conclusions, a range of business models were formed from different companies that were discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and the way each company attempts to collaborate was highlighted. Furthermore, collaboration and responsiveness amongst the five qualitative interviews were analysed in detail in Chapter 4 and various models were addressed and discussed by the interviewees which were explored in detail. Based on research conducted, limitations were addressed in terms of time and accessibility to premises and accordingly recommendations were addressed and proposed for the UK high street fashion sector.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Preliminary results
House hold income

No. of People

>20K
20-30K
30+K

Shopping Areas

King St
Triangle
Deansgate
Trafford
Arndale
Afflecks Palace
How do you like to buy fashion?

How do you like to buy fashion?

- At a particular period of the season
- Any time through the season

Shopping Areas: King St, Triangle, Deansgate, Trafford, Arndale, Afflecks Palace

No. of People

- King St
- Triangle
- Deansgate
- Trafford
- Arndale
- Afflecks Palace
When do you buy in the fashion season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopping Areas</th>
<th>Start of a season</th>
<th>Middle of the season</th>
<th>End of the season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King St</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deansgate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafford</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arndale</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afflecks Palace</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Average monthly expenditure on clothing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopping Area</th>
<th>100-200</th>
<th>200-300</th>
<th>300-400</th>
<th>500-1000</th>
<th>1000-2000</th>
<th>2000-3000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deansgate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trafford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arndale</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afflecks Palace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- 100-200
- 200-300
- 300-400
- 500-1000
- 1000-2000
- 2000-3000
Top 3 features you look in a store?

- **Afflecks Palace**
  - Style
  - Price
  - Range
  - Environment
  - Location
  - Variety
  - Store Layout
  - Quality
  - Customer Service
  - high fashion
  - value for money
  - up to date
  - tidiness
  - size ranges
  - staff
  - presentability
  - colour
  - design
  - display
  - reputation
  - organisation
  - brands
  - value for money
  - uniqueness
  - space
  - no music
  - Trend/ Merchandise
  - lighting

- **Arndale**

- **Shopping Areas Trafford**

- **Deansgate**

- **Triangle**

- **King St**
Are you loyal to?

No. of People

Are you loyal to? (brand, shop, brand and shop, no loyalty)

Shopping Areas

No. of People

0 5 10 15 20 25

King St  Triangle  Deansgate  Trafford  Arndale  Altecks Palace

Legend:
- blue: brand
- yellow: shop
- light blue: brand and shop
- dark purple: no loyalty
Alternatives if garment not available

- Internet shopping
- Don't buy it
- Order it
- Alternatives
- Wait till it comes
- Go else where

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopping Areas</th>
<th>No. of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King St</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deansgate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafford</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arndale</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afflecks Palace</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you return on separate occasion?
Would you buy the same type of item?

Options:
- Yes
- No

No of People

King St
Triangle
Deansgate
Trafford
Arndale
Afflecks Palace
Would you buy?

- Same item/ different shop
- Same item. Same shop, different location
Does it affect additional purchases on that day?

- Afflecks Palace
- Arndale
- Trafford Shopping Areas
- Deansgate
- Triangle
- King St

No. of People

No
Yes
Do you buy another item of clothing instead?

- Yes
- No
Does it matter whether a style of garment matches with the weather?

No. of People

Responses

yes

no

King St
Triangle
Deansgate
Trafford
Arndale
Afflecks Palace

254
Do you separate your wardrobe into summer and winter?

- **Afflecks Palace**: No
- **Arndale**: No
- **Shopping Areas Trafford**: No
- **Deansgate**: No
- **Triangle**: No
- **King St**: No
Do you mix and match your summer and winter items?

No. of People

King St | Triangle | Deansgate | Trafford | Arndale | Afflecks Palace

Shopping Areas

- Yes
- No
What range of colours do you wear in cold weather?

- Afflecks Palace
- Arndale
- Shopping Areas Trafford
- Deansgate
- Triangle
- King St

Colors:
- dark
- light
- bright
- navy
- black
- grey
- brown
- khaki
- denim
- burgundy/purples
- nudes
- beige
- pink
- red
- green
- white
- blues
What colours do you mostly wear in hot weather?

- grey
- khaki
- yellow
- pink
- brown
- orange
- light blue
- green
- cream
- black
- red
- dark blue
- beige
- white
- light
- bright
What types of fabrics would you definitely not wear in cold weather?

No. of People

Shopping Areas

King St  Triangle  Deansgate  Trafford  Arndale  Afflecks Palace

- suede
- lace
- polyester
- lycra
- chiffon
- leather
- pvc
- silk
- nylon
- see through materials
- cotton
- linen
- wool
- wool
What types of fabrics would you definitely not wear in hot weather?

- Thermal shirts
- Wool
- PVC
- Leather
- Nylon
- Silk
- Denim
- Heavy fabrics
- Linen
- Spandex
- Polyester
- Lycra
- Twede
- Corduroy
- Suede
- Velvets
What fashion items do you tend to buy in cold weather?

- thermals
- socks
- shirts
- hats
- gloves
- accessories
- jeans
- knitwear
- trousers
- cardigans
- jackets
- long sleeve tops
- jeans tops
- bags
- shoes
- boots
- tights
- waterproof
- scarves
- coats
- suits
- jumpers
- trousers
- knitwear
- jackets
- long sleeve tops
- jeans tops
- bags
- shoes
- boots
- tights
- waterproof
- scarves
- coats
- suits
- jumpers
What fashion items do you buy in hot weather?

- **Afflecks Palace**
  - t-shirts
  - jeans
  - linen
  - vests
  - skirts
  - linen trousers
  - cropped pants
  - sandals
  - trousers
  - bags

- **Arndale**
  - t-shirts
  - jeans
  - linen
  - vests
  - skirts
  - linen trousers
  - cropped pants
  - sandals
  - trousers
  - bags

- **Shopping Areas Trafford**
  - t-shirts
  - jeans
  - linen
  - vests
  - skirts
  - linen trousers
  - cropped pants
  - sandals
  - trousers
  - bags

- **Deansgate**
  - t-shirts
  - jeans
  - linen
  - vests
  - skirts
  - linen trousers
  - cropped pants
  - sandals
  - trousers
  - bags

- **Triangle**
  - t-shirts
  - jeans
  - linen
  - vests
  - skirts
  - linen trousers
  - cropped pants
  - sandals
  - trousers
  - bags

- **King St**
  - t-shirts
  - jeans
  - linen
  - vests
  - skirts
  - linen trousers
  - cropped pants
  - sandals
  - trousers
  - bags
What would attract you to a fashion store in cold weather?

- Café
- Shelter
- Music
- Sales
- Price
- Sizing
- Colours
- Environment
- Layout
- Music
- Display
- Under 1 roof shopping centres
- Heating
- Window display
- Range
- Style
- Experience
- Quality
- Variety
- Light

- No. of People
What would attract you to a fashion store in hot weather?

- café
- shelter
- music
- sales
- price
- sizing
- colours
- environment
- layout
- music
- display
- brand names
- under 1 roof shopping centres
- heating
- window display
- range
- style
- experience
- quality
- variety
- light
- variety
- spacious
- customer service
- music
- uniqueness
- experience
- prices
- sizing
- environment
- layout
- displays
Do you like to customise your fashion purchases?

No of People

Shopping Areas

King St  |  Triangle  |  Deansgate  |  Trafford  |  Arndale  |  Afflecks Palace

Yes

No
If you do customise, how do you do it?

- Afflecks Palace
- Arndale
- Shopping Areas Trafford
- Deansgate
- Triangle
- King St

No of People

- 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

- depends
- alter trousers
- belts/ jewellery
- rip clothing, add beads
- tailored suits and shirts
- cutting t shirts
- alter fitting / dimensions
- no colour clashes
- have pockets on my shirt
Would a customisable design be more attractive to you than non customisable designs?
Appendix 2 - Interviews Transcripts

(i) Face to Face Interview – Asda George

BUYERS ADMINISTRATOR – MOHAN SUNDRAM

DECEMBER 2009

Author - Hi you ok there?

Mohan – Yes I am good thanks.

Author - What company do you work for?

Mohan - I work for George at Asda.

Author - So what do you say is the main vision of your company?

Mohan - The main vision of George is to be Britain’s best retailer in terms of value and volume by 2012.

Author - Oh so that’s their vision.

Mohan - Yes that’s their target.

Mohan - But recently they have achieved it I think in BBC news and Drapers, they have already achieved their market share recently to their certain level, they have over come Marks and Spencer, still there are certain levels to achieve, the target is by 2012 now.

Author - So what range were you in charge of developing in the womenswear department.

Author - What range would you say?

Mohan- I was at Dresses and kids wear.

Mohan - So mainly dresses for kids wear and womanswear.

Author - In terms of sourcing and supplying, would like to ask you what type of lead times were you working on with your team members from the start of the design to samples to finish what lead time would you say?

In terms of
Less than 2 weeks
Less than 6 weeks or
8 weeks

Mohan - Specifically if we want to talk about fast fashion I would say its just 8 weeks.

Mohan - The main concept of Fast Fashion at George is that they don’t develop their fabric garments at their design studio which is at George.

Mohan - The buyer on Sunday night flies to Turkey.

Author - Every week?

Mohan - Not exactly every week.

Mohan - If you want to place an order for a certain range which is missing at the moment at the George Asda stores.

Mohan - When they decide to fly to Turkey, they put an email that to Turkey manufacturers that they are coming so keep ready with your samples, Sunday night they take the flight Monday morning they have the meeting with the suppliers. Their suppliers bring their own collections and these buyers would select samples from the manufacturer’s collection and the range and they would sit ad have a brainstorm meeting and they would select their own range and they also make sure that the fabrics are available for do those garments right particularly the Creech fabrics and they would have stock in their store room based on that they make sure that the fabric is available for these garments they make for at least 1000/2000 orders.

Mohan - The other day on Tuesday they meet other fabric suppliers and accessory suppliers and they have a meeting again.

Author - in Turkey again?

Mohan – Yes and they sit together and they decide everything that the sample goes with everything.

Mohan - On Wednesday they just look into redesigning if there are any changes or they want to see a sample, just one sample.

Mohan - And next day they call up for fabric test reports/ lab reports the next day as in Thursday and on Friday they place the order.

Author - And on Friday night the buyer flies back?

Mohan - Yes
Mohan - Just one week the process is, basically the one week is the first part, selection part and than it takes 8 weeks. Product arrives at George Asda store. All these garments are being dispatched by truck. They truck it and they send it and which reaches around the George.

Author - So all comes through from Turkey by truck? This is in terms of fast fashion? so in 8 weeks the product is in the store?

Mohan - In the store ok.

Author - and is there a central distribution centre?

Mohan - yes there is.

Author - and where is that based?

Mohan - Asda and Walmart group they have one full Rdc

Author - As you answered my next question that’s where does your company source majority of your products from?

Author - So you would say it’s Turkey?

Mohan – No, I specifically told you that Turkey is used for Fast Fashion

Mohan - If you want me to give you very specific detail about where do they source and how much do they source.

Mohan - That would be interesting I believe

Author - Yes of course.

Mohan - Isn’t it?

Mohan - The first comes is the China from the Far East origin.

Author - So the main products are sourced from the Far East?

Mohan - Yes Far East, which means 34% comes from China, 17% from Bangladesh, 17% from Turkey and 6% from India.

Author - I am surprised that India is low actually.
Mohan - 4% from Egypt, 4% from Pakistan, 3% from Mauritius, 3% from Vietnam, And 3% from Italy, and 8% from Others.

Author - So in terms of collaboration which members of the organizations did you mainly interact with when you were working?

Mohan - Is this in terms of distribution? Or?

Author - No you know when you were making your decisions like for examples you have bought you know you have said ok to. Would you be working with the merchandisers, would you be working with the designers, you within your team?

Mohan - You see this is how it works like the merchandising works like a he merchandiser has a certain budget. The finance department have a certain budget and they tell the merchandising department that this is what the budget is all about and merchandiser will also have an eye on what has been selling and what has not been selling and they also know how much is required for next season based on the numbers.

Author - So would you say that you were interacting with the merchandisers as well?

Mohan - Being a buyer, key person that one would interact with would be the merchandiser and than we also make sure that suppliers have the a say, so the second people that we interact with are suppliers.

Author - So you were not involved much with the designers in your role?

Mohan - the buying role is not much involved with designing, in terms of not much involved with, we are not working on the fast fashion part of it, but yes we have our own design department.

Author – And is that based at the Magna park branch?

Mohan – yes.

Author - So they design in house?

Mohan - Yes, they do.

Author - So apart from Fast Fashion, rest of the range is designed in house?

Mohan – Yes.

Author - And how many of you would be working on a range together? so you said you were working as a buying administrator assistant, so how many were you in a team?
Mohan - You mean buyers only?

Author - Well buying and merchandising what would you say roughly?

Author - Or the entire the work structure how does it work?

Mohan – It is just one full table where buyers/ merchandisers/ garment technologists all sit together.

Mohan - In a one team so if we are working on one range.. a buyer is involved.. a merchandiser is involved, a garment technologist is involved in that, a fabric manager is involved in that.

Author - So how many of people are there all together would you say 5/6 people or?

Mohan – Yes, or up to ten.

Author - So there is a fabric manager as well as you mentioned, to decide upon fabrics and that’s it?

Mohan – yes and to check if the fabric required is available in the market.

Author - oh ok so to assess the fabric availability in the market and the quality?

Mohan - and if any new fabric comes in the market they always know and give call to the design team and the buyers team that new fabric has come up and is doing well and should do well, they suggest to the team actually.

Author – Alright, that’s great.

Mohan - So what would you say you and your team base buying decisions on, would you say it is trends?

Author - It could be a few things from the options or more if you can think of others.

Mohan - Well it is actually a very tricky question.

Author - Obviously because you have got the basics and you have got the fast fashion as well

Mohan – Yes.
Author - Mainly what would you say overall George Asda itself would base its decisions on?

Mohan - In terms of price they would want to go with best price. Yes price comes first and than the trend but I would rank trend as the 3rd or 4th because what they normally do is look into the range which is missing in the department on the floor they don’t want to miss any of their customers / they don’t want to loose any of their customers so that’s what they try to focus on. But they try to focus on consumer needs at the same time.

Author - So how do they? How would they spot if you know that there is a range missing or for the consumer, is it just that you have buyers working on it?

Author - Do they? Or does the store inform you.

Mohan - The buyers do competitive shop, where they go to other shops they look into price range, see how much they are selling and what are the ranges that they have. Based on that they have analyses and they say this is what we need to do next.

Author - Oh ok, so they actually just basically see what is there and what is missing from there so buyers do them.

Mohan - And that was also one of my jobs actually and yes it was very good, interesting. Getting into the websites, getting into the stores, taking some snaps, unknowingly.

Mohan - They take it to fit room and take they take the garment.

Author - Oh yes that’s what I was thinking; we used to do that for some of our projects. Oh of course that’s one of the biggest ways these days. How often do you or your team attend the exhibitions and fashion shows to keep up with the trends would you say, do they attend?

Mohan - They do fashion shows.

Author - Oh of course.

Mohan - When I was there I was got the responsibility to select few garments because I was a placement student. I was also got the responsibility to interact with different departments. Find models and get their sizes.

Author - So what did you do than after that, so you got the models and a few people.

Mohan - All the models were from work.
Mohan - They wanted to prove that they are real persons behind the product. On the ramp models that were there were all the staff members and there are kid models as well, staffs kids.

Author - So they used to have it how often?

Mohan - I don’t know how often do they do that but they do it at least once in 6 months I believe. I am not too sure

Author - I mean do the buyers them selves go out to the exhibitions and….

Mohan - Yes they do that, buyers do and fabric managers do as well.

Author - Like to the Premier Vision and all?

Mohan – Yes, buyers also do visit some exhibitions to meet suppliers and catch up suppliers and to have a quick look. The upper hand goes to supplier chain management there is a different department called supply based management…. Department. they used to go to the exhibitions and they look into suppliers and they suggest to the buyers to place order with those specific suppliers.

Author - So they go to the exhibitions and they decide they suggest to buyers.

Mohan - Yes supply chain management.

Author - So you have a separate supply chain management team?

Mohan – Yes.

Author - So did you go to any fashion shows apart from organizing any?

Mohan - No I didn’t.

Author - What sort of collaboration strategies would you say your company uses, like in terms like of how information is exchanged? Like you said somebody goes to Turkey and obviously they have been, they have a lot of information exchanged in between so obviously because of being in turkey. They are getting the information from their supply base team. so would you say or which one would you select or have they got long term suppliers or do they?

Mohan – Yes, they have supply chain strategy I would say that
Author - And do they just take any suppliers or they actually for example, if I have been dealing with you as supplier from last yr.. would I stick to you as long as I am catering for your needs? Does George tend to stick to their suppliers?

Mohan – Yeah, they do, they have so many suppliers like more than 224 suppliers, in that 100 suppliers account for the 91% of the buying of the products. So they have an excellent strategy and it has been divided as partner strategy and strategic supplier, key supplier, approved supplier, file supplier and exit supplier, there is one 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 … yeh 6 strategy.

Mohan - In terms of partnership strategy there is GATT which is in Turkey, is a supplier they have very good relationships, long term relationships, so that’s their supply chain strategy actually, so technically you would say from that selection building long term relationships are the key. If you want me to explain more on that I can give you a very good explanation.

Author – Yes of course. Go ahead.

Mohan - Something like they have a strategy that GATT, they have a long term relationship, they want to build long term partnership. They want to build to build long terms partnership..

Author - What is GATT?

Mohan – GATT is a company in Turkey, I am not exactly sure but its known for George Asda at Turkey. Their intention is to build long term supply chain

Author - To get long-term suppliers?

Mohan - But its not that easy to achieve they have again a criteria to get into that partnership, they have to come across different exit/ trial/ than trial range than approve range than key suppliers than strategic supplier and than only become a partnership suppliers

Mohan - So they have to go through different criteria’s to become a long term supplier. They have a very well organized culture.. its already a Walmart group and the Walmart group has the number 2 position. They have strategies and they follow those strategies.

Author - That’s great, so what form of interaction does your company has with its suppliers.

Mohan - They have software’s, they have 3 different software’s, one is Edi track, Electronic Data interchange.
Author - So through that they keep in touch with the suppliers.

Mohan – Yeah, so these software’s are also shared with the suppliers to know what are the production dates, delivery dates, status of products and has been entered in suppliers computer and can also be seen by the buyer at the head office…..right

Author - So would you say its more person to person interaction which means a few key people are involved in it or would you say is like an internet interactions to make a joint decision because a few teams are into it, involved in it aren’t they?

Author – I mean, of course people are involved in that too but it could be like for example that a buying department itself is involved with the supplier as well as the merchandising. It could be that or it could be just I suppose people are involved in it as well but in theory, buyers are directly involved with the supplier?

Mohan - Buyers are yes and merchandisers are at some point but not all.

Author - Not all? But buyers are mostly as you are saying

Mohan - Merchandisers don’t have to look into the store, what is selling and what is not selling and they advise the buyers to how much to buy and what is the quantity and what range to buy and their job stops their and the further interaction in terms of negotiating prices.. Everything is done by a buyer.

Author - Yes that’s fine.. it is just that certain companies operate differently, like I used to work for a home textiles company, there used to be mostly merchandisers being involved with the suppliers, where as buyers would just select the range and give it to us.. and we would do a joint decision together so again.

Mohan - There is a big difference between Next, if you look in Next.

Author - Yes its completely different, that’s what we are trying to address the different types of link different companies have.

Mohan - This is how George works actually, so they work mostly buyers to suppliers and they do conference calls sitting in the office doing conference calls. They have in fact a little system that they can monitor what is the status of the garment. They have again software called Humming Bird.

Mohan - They have different software, three different software, one which I said before was Edi Track, than Humming Bird one, than its Compass. Role of Compass is to be used internally for George order management system; it is an internal software that is being used only in the head office. Whereas Edi Track is to share information with different suppliers and know and monitor the product process and the Humming Bird is to analyse
the weekly reports, which is mainly done with merchandisers, weekly reports sales reports, daily department sales, 3 different reports.

Author - So you got one buyer to supplier than you got one mainly merchandisers and you got one mainly for internal.

Mohan – Yes, so what would be the answer that you would suggest me, with that I would probably think

Author - Probably interact to make joint decisions?

Mohan - I would say a few key people are.

Author - Or the person to person interaction, I guess as well it could be both can’t it, but mainly that one.

Mohan – That’s the 1st one actually, person to person interaction in that.

Author - Yes I suppose if you are trying to.

Mohan – That would be the right proper answer I would say.

Author - What sort of relationships do you maintain with your suppliers?

Mohan - It is again I would say a long term supplier relationship

Author - yeah technically, I think that’s what a lot of companies are doing still.. yet have a few of them around.

Mohan – I had an interview at Burberry in central London, it was again a placement, I was with sourcing department.

Mohan - And she started explaining me everything, it was for an interview purpose and I thought she will be asking me questions from my side she will be asking me something like what would be so and so and why do you want to do this.. she straight away got to the point and got into job description which specifically says about how many suppliers we do have and what suppliers we wanted to be in future, she said, 30 yrs before we had 200 suppliers, and so confused and it was very difficult to process and so much of expenses was on that, now we only have 10 suppliers and we work only with 10 suppliers, we are very clear in what we are doing and you are clear with your goals, what you want and how you want, that was a quote from the sourcing manager from Burberry.

Author – oh alright, that shows a lot of people are adopting that approach.
Mohan – They are.

Author - In terms of design, so as you said George design’s most of the items in house than.

Mohan – yes.

Author - But fast fashion is in turkey? So they don’t design for Fast Fashion in house at all?

Mohan - Yes because there is no time, they have to get everything done and delivered to meet consumer demand.

Author - So when you get the sourcing of the design done, how does the process work, like fast fashion I know you have explained to me but the normal process for in house design, how does it work with your company?

Mohan - I am afraid, I have no clue about that.

Author – Okay so would you know how long their lead time is? would you have a clue like for the normal range that you did.

Mohan - It takes 6-8 months.

Author - So if it is not Fast Fashion, than it takes 6-8 months time?

Mohan – Yes.

Author - So can you explain the company structure?

Mohan - Actually yeh it is pretty much like its Anthony Thompson who is the executive managing director, than the structure goes to Andy Mores who is the Supply Chain Director, which is than. Again goes to, Director for Finance than again the Brand Director who is Fiona Lambert. Than under supply chain director the merchandiser comes and the buying director also comes in.

Author - So you mind if I have a look (Structure he had displayed)

Mohan - I will give you very clear one.

Mohan - This is how it is very quickly top management, very top management.

Author - So the buying one comes where would you say?
Mohan - The buyer comes adjacent to the Retail and Operations Director, Brand director, than Finance Director.

Mohan - So they have again under these, there are the top management directors,, than again they would start children managers structure, children managers for buying, for merchandising, for global markets, ISD for technology. So after the general managers, they are all the top directors.

Author - And is that for each sector you mean.

Mohan – Yes.

Author - Each like kidswear, womanswear or like its for all the departments, and now again buying is again categorized as senior buyer, than comes buyer, assistant buyer and than comes assistant buyer administration in some departments you can also see junior buyers.

Mohan - So junior and than assistant.. so basically it follows a structure of anything.

Author - That’s fine.

Author - So how would you say your design process like would run from start to finish, if you have a range, you would design, I know like you get. Someone who would design, someone who would buy, someone would sell, so how does it work? I know you were saying to me before about the fast fashion part which is all in turkey, but on a general basis how would you explain that, from buyers to designers to merchandisers, which one comes in at which time?

Mohan - I don’t know actually. I was a bit surprised because I need some more help to approach the design department because I was completely focused on buying department.

Author - That’s fine, don’t worry about it.

Mohan - So I have no clue about how does the design department works follows the structure and how do they work

Mohan - I have no idea, but I have a general idea, I don’t know how in George it works properly.

Author - Its ok.

Mohan – Do you know how does the design department work?
Author – Every department is different isn’t it, so that’s what I am trying to find out how each department is working.

Mohan - You must be having an idea, right as you are doing your research on design, so what it could be? So what do you think? What could be between design departments? What’s your perspective?

Author - Based on Asda George at what stage of the process would you place orders would you say and the quantities, I mean how they are decided who decides them, does Asda decide them or its based on the clients.

Mohan - Of course its George is the decider a long with coordination of the merchandiser and with how much is the budget available from the finance department based in that the decision is being taken.

Author - Including finance department?

Author - How do you make sure everything is being done on time, in a short period of time to ensure deadlines are met?

Mohan - What’s the key? Critical path is the key and monitoring the critical path successfully implementing critical path.

Author - Can you emphasize on that?

Mohan - The technology to monitor that is the Edi track management system is absolutely fantastic. They have very good investment in technology.

Author - That’s great, how you feel the process of design has changed?

Mohan – I can explain in general in terms of George Asda, yes it has changed, when I hear that George Asda had a very different head office, which is adjacent to the current head office, where most of the colleagues, from Asda, Asda living, they were also involved in the clothing. Than Fiona Lambert, who is the Brand Director now was appointed and changed the entire structure and she made specific and certain departments got certain specialists for clothing for examples and now George has very specific people particularly for that department so even the design structure has also been changed. I can say yes it has changed has but I cannot give you in terms of what reason it has changed.

Author - That’s fine, in terms of responsiveness, how does your department predict demand for a product range, say it is the dresses. How would they predict. I mean if it is not there, you could just tell me how they do it?
Mohan - See its all based on merchandiser, the merchandiser is the key person who gives the alarm that this is missing here or it is yet to build up, to give a specific answer amongst all these. Is there anything you can see, come other people have just said that they have gathered through catwalks and trends.

Author - You can see and decide through (from multiple choices of answers).

Mohan - It is speculate demand early. They want to make it as early as possible. They want to know what is missing as soon as possible and the second option goes to Marks and Spencer, I am just talking in general out of the box now actually using the postponement strategy to make the demand more predictable, like Marks and Spencer are very good at this. Like keeping a third person, agents at the manufacturing area so at the last minute they see the demand is, they see the stocks to hold down the damn? To hold it at their office on the supplier side, if they want it they will ship it or they will say no. That is the benefit of being third party, Middle man i.e. agent.

Mohan – Agent, so M and S keep agents. George again I would say have direct link with George and the supplier and there is no middle man.

Mohan - There is no middle man yes, so its buyer to supplier relationship and that’s it.

Author - Do you feel your firm as in George is responsive to trends than?

Mohan - Technically I would say No but they are working on it, because things have been changing.

Author - They have been changing obviously.

Mohan - They have been changing. Yes and now they are very focused but not only with the price factor but quality too. They are responsive to fashion trends.

Author - How responsive were tools and techniques? you mentioned Edi, for example they are using fast fashion strategy to react to customers in very short time with the help of software’s for example if there was an unpredictable demand, all of a sudden, do they have a back up plan? Obviously you said the fast fashion strategy so I will say yes to that as you said.

Author - So how would George decide upon to ensure the right product has been delivered at the right time, so what means of logistics does George use? I know you mentioned truck, but do they always use truck?

Mohan - Well if it is Turkey than yes, it’s a truck.

Author - But otherwise?
Mohan - But otherwise it would of course be shipped, if it is coming from China, Bangladesh, Pakistan or Vietnam, it should be shipped. And again on strategies like they have distribution centre and all products are being distributed straight away from to the distribution centre to the stores right and trucks are being delivered for four different for Northern England, Southern England, western, distributes through courier from the dc. A few departments’ big companies have different dc’s for different products in main England, in New castle and as I said before products are being distributed right from the dc through to the stores that’s again a very good strategy.

Author - So from dc to else where.

Mohan – Yes saves time, so much time.

Author - And the merchandisers decide where it is going, how much is going?

Mohan - Yes how much has to spend all that details would be given to the dc department.

Author - So the merchandisers would have direct links with the dc.

Mohan - Yes exactly.

Author - That’s fine, you have obviously mentioned about the software that they do use to respond.

Mohan – Yes.

Author – There is Edi, than humming bird and compass?

Mohan – Yes.

Author - In terms of seasonal impact, do you feel the weather has an impact on fashion?

Mohan – Yes.

Author - And how does it have an impact on your department?

Mohan - If I say yes, do you want me to explain it? (laughs) I cannot.

Author - Well if you can? (laughs)

Mohan - I haven’t got that experience to explain that effectively.
Author – ok, I mean from your experience you have had at George, do you think does it affect your sales figures or have you realized that?

Mohan – Yes that is a very big affect in terms of sales, weekly sales analyses that would affect even their stocks. Availability/ too much of stocks held back, yes I would say its very strongly recommended that it has a very strong impact.

Author – so there is an impact?

Mohan - Yes of course.

Author - Does George respond according to the weather at all? do you know or do they incorporate that at all? For example if they know its going to be rainy all next week or next few days, do you feel that they incorporate weather at all?

Mohan - I don’t know because you can ask this question directly to a merchandiser who can give you a very good answer because if she predicts like you can ask a question like. Do you look into the forecasts for the merchandiser? Are you interested in looking at the forecast and if she says yes than how far do you predict it? Is it 2 weeks time or 1 week time?

Author - Yes obviously you can’t predict that.

Mohan - Based on that do we always have a thing called keeping the climate in mind. Do you have a lot the styles, garment styles/ colours? You can may be make questions like this.

Author - So I mean right now you would say they don’t? Do you feel that they don’t or would they?

Mohan - Personally I would say they should consider it but I cannot say I don’t know whether they consider it or not, it will b better to ask the merchandiser.

Author - So you do feel it is important to incorporate?

Mohan – Yes.

Author - And if yes than, what do you feel are the benefits?

Mohan - Benefits of course there should be an increase in sales turnover, that’s actually more customer focused, more customer driven approach.

Author - Yes
Mohan - More being like part of meeting their needs really.

Author - So being part of your company and your team as whatever your role was that you played, are there any suggestions that you would like to make to the way they operate within the process between the whole retailer to consumer?

Mohan - In general?

Author - Just generally yes, what do you think?

Mohan - You want me to give you a lecture on this?

Author - Not something like masses but something what you think?

Mohan - You haven’t specified that is that from retailer or manufacturer through the customer process or from manufacturer through to the customer?

Author – That is what I meant to say, between the retailers through to customer? From like manufacturers through to retailer head office (buyers/ merchandisers)?

Mohan - Yes

Mohan - Very generically I would say that manufacturers need to be very proactive in this approach, they must understand from their retailer’s customers, which is very important.

Mohan - And they must also understand the strategies of what the retailers are taking to cater the best product and satisfy the demand to the consumer, right? So they make different strategies. Like at one certain time. Retailer places orders like 10,000, 15,000 of quantities with different colours but sometimes sudden change it may change like they may place like 500 quantities, with very different styles, so it makes it difficult for manufacturers to set up production batches and again to source fabrics, to source accessories, there is a very tough becomes challenging and challenging for the manufactures and the pressure is always on the manufacturers than the retailers, so there must be a very proactive approach, they should have their own design department available in their head offices. Manufacturers should work directly to regulate consumer demand and of course there would be something else that cost was a factor, quality was a factor and than again flexibility was a factor at several points of time. But these factors were in the previous decades and now what would it be in the future that is what my investigation is going to be in my PhD or that its very clear now that manufacturers have to be proactive and need to understand what the retailers are looking for and the demand and must incorporate according to that and at the same time retailers must look into suppliers, ethical conditions because retailers (head office) always put pressure onto
manufacturers, so they need to see and have people doing over time and they don’t even pay them much so that are the conditions.

Mohan - In particular with George, they are doing really good, what they do is actually they provide development programs with the suppliers. They go to suppliers factories. They have spoken to the labourers in their factories and they know their needs and they know they have their needs, have kids in their houses, they have established a small school.

Author - Oh so they are providing for the labourers as well. That’s called ethical trading?

Mohan – Yes, they have development programs for the workers. So this is how they are working it. I think many companies are lacking in this and this how George do. Even Primark lack in this as you must have heard.

Author - Yes I have heard. Do you think as a company they are looking into improving, i.e. making any further improvements to system to be more responsive to fashion? Any ideas to how they are trying to improve?

Mohan - Improve?

Author - Improve like the whole system to be more responsive basically.

Mohan - I cannot because I am so confused at this point of time. I will say that there is always a massive room to change for supply chain. So basically they are trying and that’s it.

Mohan - And they are trying in very innovative ways, very quick supply chain strategies, quick response, where they can cut for example in fast fashion so what has been reduced they have reduced the product development time. They have reduced fabric test times i.e. the samples.

Author - So they have reduced?

Mohan - They used to do like 4-5 samples now they have cut it down to one sample, so in Fast Fashion just one sample is enough and they will approve it.
(ii) Seminar - River Island

AHRC WORK SHOP – WITH WOMENSWEAR FASHION AND BUYING DIRECTOR – FARIDA KAIKOBAD

6th SEPTEMBER 2007

LORRAINE Now we are ready for the next presentation

LORRAINE I would like to introduce you to Farida who is the fashion and womenswear buying director for River Island.

LORRAINE Over to you

FARIDA Thank you

FARIDA Good morning

FARIDA As Loraine said, my name is Farida Kakebat, I am the fashion and buying director for river island ladies wear, I have been with the business 25 yrs and have grown up if you like through the business.

FARIDA I started as a clerk and sticking labels and filing things and have had the experience in working in all the tiers, in all the levels in all the functions and a retail buying head office.

FARIDA So I am fortunate enough to have a wealth of experience in all aspects of buying/merchandising and indeed design and also being a Gemini

Laughs

FARIDA And Being a female has stood me in good step for the top job that I have now because it is only the combination of creativity and business that really drives the success of our business and it is the ability of the very young team that we have to multi task under extreme pressure every day, that also delivers success.

FARIDA So today I am going to touch up on how creativity and innovation add value to businesses.

FARIDA And If I may, I thought I would talk through the different functions that we have at River Island to get the product into the stores and how we work.
together in the three disciplines that we have which are buying, merchandising and design.

FARIDA I am going to try and speak in non industrial speak and non fashion speak as much as I can, but if any step of the way I a talking about something that I find it very natural and you are not understanding what I am saying so please at that point to clarify what you need clarified or to ask a question I think it will kind of flow a bit better if we are tackling it as we go rather than perhaps saving it all at the end. so please feel free

So we have three disciplines in the buying office that have to come together. They have to come to collaborate to deliver the product, as I said buying is the first discipline and really that is the responsibility of sourcing and procuring the product that we have chosen so the buyer is responsible for buying the product. The merchandising role is about quantifying the buy. How many are we going to buy. we have got 200 stores. we want to sell this product. This black dress…we want to sell this black dress from January to March. That gives us 8-10 weeks. how many do we need to buy. When we look at that garment through experience we are able to talk about how many we think we can sell a week in our 200 stores. if it is a fantastic seller we might say every store is going to sell 5 of those every week. we have got 200 stores so we going to realize the sale of £1000 a week on that style. if we are buying for 8 weeks. That’s 8,000, we need a bit of stock turn, give us a bit of bunz at the end. so lets buy 10,000. So it is the merchandisers job to look at the product that buyer has and to quantify the buy… while also minimizing any risk involved, and I will come on to that in detail. so we are potentialising profit as a merchandiser but we are minimizing risk.

Design ……all important on design at river island, it is the designs function’s responsibility to instigate new product ideas and they have to. and they are lucky enough at river island to have a very free range each season to instigate new product design, they also have the job of updating anything that we all consider would sell from one season to the other but it needs a bit of a refreshing touch, so as you are all aware that the high street always sells black trousers, the high street always sells black t shirts but what makes the river island black trouser the one that people are going to pop their cash for…so its those little nuances that the design team would have the responsibility for doing. they tend to groan when they get that little task when we say we need an update on the best selling trouser, there always a bit of a groan but the merchandiser has to point out to the designer that this is the number one garment on the department .. and its taken. I don’t know 300k this week and without it we would not have the
luxury of the turnover to allow the designer to indulge in their top store
wimbs which actually never fell but look wind ups..

Laughs

So all the time we are discussing this tight row, between all three of them
and it is the buyer who is normally in the middle of the design over here
and merchandising over here. That its the diplomat, like the Switzerland in
the middle listening with ear to both sides. And its really that discipline
that than roles upon to the managerial level that is the success we believe
at river island of that real true collaboration of buying and design,

MS X Just going to ask you a question

You used … very graphically described the opposite ends of the scale in
terms of the design..

How does it work in the middle.. is the buyer creating brief for the
designer? Or is that more of a (sirens in the back ground – can’t hear what
is said clearly)

FARIDA No I am going to touch up on that… I am going to touch up on the
process..

FARIDA But all the time we are working in the long term and we are briefing
ourselves.. so we are now in .. Where are we.. September.. and we are
actually talking about next spring / summer .. may to July.. that’s very
much in our mind. We are beginning to formulate how summers going to
look.. and we also talking about what’s sold this week.. so its done
through a series of very pedantic meetings.. so although we are a creative
fashion retailer.. to actually run the business.. Because actually that’s
really what we really are a business.. have to be a fashion business but we
are a business first.. The bottom line is hard cash.. we have to be very
pedantic about the meeting cycle that we have.. so yes all the time.. the
three of them at river island. Are always coming together for their weekly
meetings to discuss their future range but also their current trading.. and at
river island is always the three of them.. the design room is not somewhere
down the end of the corridor with the radio on sketching away in a
bubble.. the designers are based in their room and the buyers and
merchandisers are based in their own panel fix but every single discussion
on every single product is between the three of them.. so we would not
make a big decision on the black trouser update without the designer being
present and her voice would be just as valid as the merchandisers voice..
and yeh.. Than the debate would start and the wrangling.. Normally the
neutral person is the buyer and the buyer manager.. there are there to listen to the both sides and to make the final decision.. and ultimately I make the final decision on every single product in river island.. so it is a process and I am going to come to the process.

MS Y you might be going to cover in your process now. but in those three roles you have not mentioned technology or quality, does it fit into the role..

FARIDA yes of course

Today actually I haven’t and also obviously there are the retail side of things.. so I have am just.. I have focused it on the three very immediate functions that develop the product.. hmmm

I have talked about the visual of the garment. I suppose.. but yes of course every step of the way the design team would be working with the technology and the QC team to make sure the prototypes of the garments are running smoothly and everything is going along the life cycles development on time.. so yeh every step of the way.. the design team would collaborate with technologist… but the technologist would not be privi (privileged) on the whole to these team meetings’ we might get them in every so often if the merchandiser is saying that oh that waste band looks really tricky.. Because it has got 2 buckles on it and when you are in a hurry in the morning how could you do buckles up.. and the designer is saying no no.. its actually not 2 buckles.. You just have to press under one buckles so and than there is some argy bargy going up.. and than they will say do u know what. lets get the technologist up .. Hope that they might have some input… so you know.. Randomly they will come up so to have some input but on the actual product development.. They are not involved.. in the key meetings.. they are busy checking something.. some where else.:)

So…

Buying, merchandising and design.. in the opinion of our company and in my personal opinion.. its the collaboration of all three of them that really is the key to success.. as I said the bottom line is ..that we are a business so the only thing that matters as brutal as it sounds is profit.. Because all these three people who that are working in this team..may have come into the fashion industry for whatever their personal reasons there were.. but when they do enter into the world of business …and this is what they have to accept.. the only driving factor is profit.. Which is all a bit glum when you speak to creative types.. but that’s the bottom line.. we not in the art
world... we are not creating prototype garments to aah and ooh over and admire.. We are creating stuff to sell.. and we are not in charity.. we r not clothing the world with very well priced clothing...(unfortunately, sorry we r not )... we are selling stuff so we can make huge profits.... and all three of these disciplines. Have to accept that fact to work well.. When they don't that's when the wrangling.. and u know there is always wrangling and we love wrangling at River Island because after all that wrangling we get not what we think it is a compromise but we get a fantastic decision.. so they will always be wrangling and they will always be leenix ? The design team will still be telling me that I duno.. Metallic foil silver dresses that are maxi length are going to be it.. they might be this thin all the way down, but everyone is going to wear them and the merchandiser will be really gloomy and not want to buy any at all.. and will be a waste of time looking at one .. see there will always be that wrangling but we at river island, as young people come into our business we tell them to love that wrangling.. to expect it.. to not fear it.. to enjoy it.. and to as we say .. we have a very genuine team ethos at river island... Which is working as a team.. not reaching a compromise.. Reaching fantastic decisions.. and when I say that to people who interview sometimes.. they kind of look at me very skeptically.. and goo.. oh no.. its al that kind of ..what it called now.. I have forgotten my term now committee buying.. oh my friend works at river island and she said all oh u know.. . its all like that everyone has a bit of an input.. I was like yes.. have you not ever heard of team work... because in the old days in fashion buying.. There were a lot of individuals who were very responsible for their departments and they were what we sued to call them lady buyers, and they were very sole players, over the last two decades in a lot of business that has been eradicated.. for a much more team spirit and u know personally at river island I think in all the success we think its the right way to go.. that you always are open minded and listen to all three sides of how to get this garment right.. and you make a joint decision.. so whether I was just thinking.. Whether it be car design or whether it be furniture design or crockery design..if you are involved in commerce.. the foremost goal is to appeal to your customer,

FARIDA Your product is not successful in commerce if you do not please your customer, that is the bottom line, your product can be not a success, on the upside.. when the collaboration comes together.. and the creativity.. and the commerce comes together beautifully, than obviously the customer is thrilled and satisfied, the buying teams and head office are thrilled they see the sales coming through and satisfied and our bosses are thrilled and surprised because they see the profit coming through.. you know there really is. There really is a thrill and a monetary gain that’s happens to come form this collaboration.
I was trying to think of commercial examples of great design and business collaboration and I thought of the smart car, I thought that was a fabulous, personally, I think that’s a fabulous collaboration of new design and whoever financed it and you know runs the whole thing, what a fantastic thing, they saw something, it was user friendly.. it has got a niche, it is a great price, it looks good, it looks different but actually…..

It fulfills its brief, it does what you think its suppose to do when you look at it, so that’s great for me innovative design with commerce, I was straight to think of a poor one, I thought of the electric card as in clear one, but another one I thought of was some of you might know.. it’s only a little one.. I bought one of those Philip star lemon squeezers,

Laughs (public)

I duno if many of you have heard of them…

Public voices – yehhh..

But very seductive, they look very good they are on a tripod of three steel legs, and on top of it.. Is a kind of a shape you are suppose to out the lemon, cut it in half and squeeze it.. but when you do the lemon juice goes every where, and it doesn’t ever run down .. well looks like It will go as its is shaped to go into a ditch, but it doesn’t so I would say, even though Philip has the bonus of being a fantastic brand and means you will buy it and I have still got it. It’s on the window cill looking very nice, But the Woolworths lemon squeezer in the drawer is the one we really use, so I would say in a way that’s a little example of design, where the form is better than the function. So that’s what we can’t deliver at River Island.

MISS T  Do you have a group of customers that you can do market survey with?

FARIDA  Yes yes we do

But more than that i would say.. we do have a group of customers that we do research with, but what we… even better than that we are in the stores every week, all members of our team have to visit a river island every single week and if they cannot do it in the week they have to do it on the weekend.

We cannot fulfill our brief for our business if we do not know what our customers are looking for and what they want. And it is such a quick win ..it is a bit of a pain in the ass when you kinda say to the team .. c’mmon we
got to get down to the stores.. oh .. but I am really busy .. I am filing this and I am doing this… but you might be doing all of that but if you do not keep in touch with their customers, you can do as much as you want of that but whatever you are doing its probably to no end.. just get out there.. get out there…

MISS XY So what are they looking at..are they looking at?

They are looking . emmm.. they are looking.. say I was the denim buyer.. or say I was the denim designer, you would look to see what your products look like on shop floor, you would look to see…whether if you were really honest.. the day that you told us the head office, we needed to have a fabulous high waisted, 1970’s nurex stitch jean .. that we were gona boule everyone over with.. the that thing in your head had arrived in … I dunno.. South end store, or Harrow, or Croydon,. Or anywhere like that, anywhere normal could be like to appeal to normal people..the masses, that your high waisted jean did pull of what you thought it was going to pull off as a designer, and you look to see that your key product, the ones you know take the most amount of money,, are in the right places, are in the visual places so the customers can see them, you try on all your own jeans, and you make sure that they fit nicely.. some times we send a team down and obviously we are all different shapes and sizes, so we say ok.. jeans team.. go to Hrow now.. harrow is about .. 15 minutes from our head office. so off they trot the size 8, the size six..the 10.. the girl who is tall the girl who is short.. and they try all their jeans on….

And than they come back and they go.. oh do. u know what..?? do you know why our jeans are not selling.... It doesn’t fit any one.... Its like oh great thanks just spent 8-9 months putting it together with the QC, we have just bought 50,0000 of it.. and you are telling me now after its gone into the shop?

We were wondering why it is not selling.. coz it looks quite nice..

and oh.. the cloth is very elasticated and the waist of all have stretched and it looks awful on everyone..

now that happens once in a blue moon really…because hopefully along with the techs and the qc’s and all the people who are putting the product together that happens very rarely..

but it is.. u know.. we are very busy.. we have our heads down a lot .. Sometimes w e don’t have our heads up..and you know keep in touch with
our customers and trying our stuff in the shop to know why is it selling well or why is it not selling well.

MS H  So you speak to the customers?

FARIDA  we speak to customers.. we speak to our manageresses.. who are lovely. they are all very straight forward, they will tell you straight away exactly what they think.. they are so in touch with their customers that if you walk in.. and say you know that cream jacket..oh i tell u what happened there .. I went to put it on ..the lining is too tight..

You know they know everything.. they are so passionate.. at river island and in retail. That when goods come in.. they tend to try everything on .. and obviously they are drawn as customers to things..that come into our stores.. and so they all say to me.. .. that omg.. Everyone has spend their staff discount on that dress. and you know.. soo al you got to do is be in the store for 10 minutes and you got on well served information..

MR Y  (Public).. do you..?

FARIDA  So we keep in touch with our customers with research groups.. Sometimes.. sorry.(to the person who was trying to speak) .

The things we want to know going ahead. may be for things that are to come.. but mostly we are in the stores.. Every single week

MS XY I listened to the example You used the example of the dress something like that… if it was a … would you try it on others?

FARIDA  Yeh yeh yeh

MR Y  Do you include the fashion trends as well from the customers or just what they are thinking?

FARIDA  Oh no the fashion trend as well ….   

MR Y  Oh as well

FARIDA  Yeh yeh yeh ..

MRY  So you talk to the customers?

FARIDA  Yeh yeh yeh

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FARIDA: I remember .. cant remember when .. a long time ago we wanted to introduce ¾ sleeves..

MR X: so its more about testing the concept than asking people what they think

FARIDA: Yes .. we couldn’t possibly know what could be coming.. I mean we are in business and we do not always know what’s coming … so if we asked the public what is coming. It would almost be too random

FARIDA: The funny thing now is.. these days.. you know I was thinking about this as I was writing up my notes last night... I remember about 20 yrs ago…, when there were only monthly magazines that were fashion magazines …and they were quite scary they weren’t very approachable for most house wives or students.. you know it was vogue and harpers. and you know.. Whatever those magazines were .. there weren’t that many …they were very user friendly and immediate.. they were quite scary tones up on the shelf and now a days af course.. there is a whole glut..too much in our opinion.. of very weekly/ immediate magazines that gives you fashion trends so in a way the customer.. an average day public is quite a calli customer now … obviously very celebrity led in our end of the market…you know that’s been a big change.. so they tend to get their trend ideas.. Probably through Mtv.. programs’.. you know music programs. .. films.. I cons.. young icons.. so that in a way that’s where they tap in now.. but we wouldn’t from a cold start ask a group of people what they thought about the 60’s trend that is coming through.. once we got prototypes ready.. and they had something to look at ..then they can start o comment.. they can say like.. oh yeh I like that dress because it’s a line.. and the fit …you know I don’t have to worry about anything underneath it.. so they can give you quite intelligent.. non fashiony comments.. that influences you in a very good way.. so they might give us that kind of feed back..

FARIDA: Ok I’ll continue.. if I may.. god this may go on for hours..

FARIDA: Oh right… where am i.. so back to fashion

FARIDA: So we say at river island that. With out the right proportions of all three of those functions, we cannot a create a successful range.. and if I may. I thought I would talk thought the process of product development at river Island and illustrate to you this tight run of creativity and risk that we work with every single day..
So how does creativity and innovation add value to a fashion business..

Or in simplistic

Terms why bother with design in clothing..

Well in our opinion.. Without unique design or design with a twist.. There is no USP.. in fashion retail we often have to remind our selves of our market division.. fashion …

We are not in clothing.. we are not some sort of clothing service.. we are in fashion. so we are the conveyors of all things tempting…..when it comes to clothing….

Its not a necessity .. on the whole its an indulgence.. what makes us indulged is consuming.. we are normally seduced by something in a garment… that is eye-catching.. show stopping.. a must have… a thrill…..

What gives it those qualities..

Exceptional design

At river island our moto is the right price for the right garment.. this immediately elevates us out of the mediocrity.. of the clothing base level on the high street.. if we did not cover creativity and innovation we would not have a relevant niche to trade from…luckily.. or by innate good business sense we have carved out a niche for river island as a boutique of the high street…boutique meaning.. an Alladins cave of individual designs for the masses.. and at river island we really pride our selves on dressing the nation .. we are not London centric.. we never even used to have a nice London shop until about 4 yrs ago.. we used to love the fact that in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, where girls enjoyed getting dressed up .. that we had amazing shops.. London is a bit .. u know  a bit peculiar.. Sometimes. doesn’t like to enjoy fashion..likes to intectualise it and talk about it.. but we just like enjoying fashion.. and we like seeing girls that look good in our clothes and feel good.. and all our clothing and fashion is all about feel good..

So design at river island is on a pedestal.. we understand its power.. if used intelligently.. it’s a winning formula.. from a decent enough vase,, our business has grown by 500% in an 8 yr period and our profit prefer is the highest on UK high street.. we won the industry award last year, for retailer of 2007 and if you ask anyone why. the answer would be the designs
We actively recruit and mentor design graduates. We are fortunate enough to be able to combine the raw talent of newly graduated designers with the commercial know how of more senior team members.

This brave and bold approach feels entirely comfortable in a business that intrinsically understands design. We are fortunate enough to have an owner, manager, led team which is small and tuned in with no unnecessary layers of control. The company is private and the spirit is family run. Although last year our turnover exceeded 800 million.

Quite a feat, but the secret is simply unique designs come on their own value and own price.

With the advent of supermarkets and value players, this is even more critical to deliver but if you stand for something you can command your own price. A bit like Waitrose, or John Lewis or Aldi or Bosh.

The consumer is much more au fait in all aspects of design now. There is not such a misteeq in interiors or home or garden design or fashion design. Obviously again with that cluttered TV programs everyone knows that you are supposed to have laminate floors with brown leather sofa and minimal lights. Everyone wants to be stylish and everyone can be stylish.

Sometimes when I go to my local B and Q for a light bulb, I found myself wearing towards the lighting section and nearly looking at the lights in their. You know the bathroom. The taps. Design. There is a lovely level of design. For the consumer. Emm at alarming prices.

Everyone expects a decent level of style or design... so unless there is added value... there is no where to go... as the giants of the high street are able to deliver pretty decent stuff at alarming prices.

Therefore the conclusion must be that an investment in product innovation is the only way out on a market based on price and repeated delivery of consistent product... of consistent quality levels. Consistent design. Enables you to present yourself as a true brand and reap through the awards of brand loyalty.

The process to achieve this is riddled with dilemmas and it is the constant collaboration of the three functions, buying, merchandise and design that enable us to consistently achieve our end goal. The tight run is never ending.
What has sold before sometimes never sells again….. analyses of past trends.. used to be a very big thing in our business.. I think it still is actually.. luckily its not so much at river island.. we call is analyses.. analyses…because no matter what has happens din 2006.. the consumer is so future thinking at the moment.. and is ever hungry for new.. that sometimes very little of that analyses would lead to correct future decisions..

At river island.. anyone who works at river island.. they have a combination of that left brain.. right brain.. they really do have to have it.. if they come in and they haven’t got that.. Within the first 6 months .. they normally resign and go to some where that’s very left brain.. or somewhere where there is very right brain.. they think we are all completely mad.. and we are.. actually and we enjoy it.

So emm.. we can analyze and we do it very swiftly.. because we are very capable and there will be some product types that don’t change that much.. you know a range of black trousers for work… there is no point making it very skinny. There is no point making it very high wasted.. there is no point putting it into the most luxurious fabric in the world..We know what that trouser range has got to deliver… it has got to deliver stylish, well priced.. well.. … good quality work trousers for young girls.. and so we can look at that set of analyses, and so oh gosh.. we sold a 100,000 black work trousers last yr.. do we want to sell them again..

Yeh

We are not going to throw that money away.. we need that…

So that sort of analyses we can do it very swiftly.. Sometimes we would do it on the flight back here. And its great .. it gets you in the right answer .. we don’t have meetings meetings meetings.. and look at all those computer reports..

The bottom line is we sold a 100,000, do we want them again..

Yes…

Design team does some updates

Groan

But never mind we get there
Than the most important question we ask at river island.. is .

Whats new?

That has become a very key question.. from management down ..what’s new.. ?

We sell fashion to young girls.. they go in our shop every Saturday.. what’s new… ?

If there is northing new.. they will quick scan around and than go some where else..

So what’s more important than retrospective analyses is what’s new..

We are in the market of seducing people. So what’s new?

And if Madonna or kylie.. happen to wear pink or yellow.. on a Saturday than we come in sometimes.. If we were talking about pink and yellow.. and think do you know what it looked quite good didn’t it.. and you know actually didn’t you say you fancied pink.. some one.. and we will have al sorts of discussion. So influence can come from any where and we will discuss it .. but we wont (own grandalise it) ?? it is a very swift but considered conversation

Our process although we are a creative company and there is this left brain.. Right brain thing.. our process it has its theories of very pedantic steps that brings together. All of the three functions in a lifecycle of a product and it is this very organized and pedantic system that is the savior of river island because without the pedanticness in a very creative atmosphere we can all go off in all sorts of direction.

So over the past..

Actually is tom here from Oasis yet

No

Good.. coz I might be telling him all our trade secrets

(Laughs)
We have a series of very pedantic meetings that we chair, my chair.. and we call them… just so that you know.. if we are starting.. lets say we are creating a new jean, the first meeting we ever talk about that jean is called the 1st detail meeting and we would brain storm. For the period that we are talking about which would normally be 8-10 months in advance what we want the jeans range to look like .. and we would hang up in a room like this on some racking.. some original samples that we have brought through as an influence from all over the world.. so current best sellers.. some pictures of Kate Moss stepping out in this new skinny flare and anything else hat we thought was material to discuss for the new jeans range for 8-10 months ahead

We discuss it in this very creative way.. in this very creative design room with the merchandiser ,the buyer and the designer.. now the merchandiser would even come down stairs to that meeting.. it’s a creative brain storm.. but unless they are in it from the beginning.. and unless they are hearing what’s been said.. they are not going to be in tune.. so it is very important whether the meeting Is a numbers meeting upstairs with the MD .. the designers would be there.. Because we cant educate our designers properly in business if they are not privy to all the steps.. and conversely the merchandiser how is probably groaning at this point.. in the room discussing jeans for 8 months ahead.. very important that they we are all together at all the times.

So we have this first detail meeting and than we write our selves out a brief .. we talk about the number of jeans we might want in the range.. which happens to be about 20  and we talk about each of the character.. of each of those 20 jeans.. we just give some target words like very 70’s skinny, love lurex denim in one box.. next box might be easy boot leg.. must be a good price.. next box might say boyfriend jean like Madonna in picture. Very slouchy…next jean might say skinny drain pipe jean like kate moss .. erm look at black wet look denim, so we write our selves a brief that day..

And than the buyer and designer go off on their travels around the world.. and they start to sample. The range with their factories and with their suppliers

Don’t write too many detail notes.. other wise I will get in trouble.. laughs..

Everyone will know how we do..
And than in 2 months time they come back.. and we have a meeting called the first review.. and that meeting is with me.. and it is just a process.. it a progressing .. so we sit down. We put up what they have got back.. we look at our brief and I will say ok.. than gang.. Show me what you have got so far on a well priced nice fitting jean.. and they will say we sampled it in turkey ion this new fabric which is very well priced and it doesn’t stretch very much and it Is very easy to make and it is a very economical design .. its great

We sampled it in Hong Kong in this new fabric.. that our Gordon suppliers found it in the high street .. its been developed by banana republic and they have developed a million meters’ of it… and they have got the price down to 1 us dollar / meter and Gordon showed it 2 us..

Its like good (with excitement)

It all sounds brilliant..

River island can go on the back of that development and than I tick off and discuss with them…ones to carry on working on .. or ones that are awful and ill… just lets just put full stop on it.. otherwise sometimes we drive our selves mad trying to just get something right but we will know I our hearts that its never going to be right.. so I try to guide them.. 2 months later. Than they go off again and they do a series of supplier meetings.. they start to work with their merchandiser to start to quantify what the best jean might be and we rank every product types so if you are the skirt buyer or the jeans buyer you would be expected to know what your number one money taker was that you are proposing to business and we call that ranking our styles

So they would start to rank their jeans by which one is going to sell 7,000 a week and take most amount of money over a 6 month period.. or which one is just going to be there cause we quite like it.. but actually it wont sell very well. Or Topshop is doing gold jeans.. so we better do gold jeans.. we out something but we don’t really expect to sell them.

So at least we have an open conversation about why we are doing something.. Which is fine.. and you know luckily we are a very successful business.. and we can allow ourselves a few indulgences as gold jeans in oxford street to make us look as cool as everyone else but we buy them in a very measured way
Erm and than.. about that point where we are having the 2nd review… which Is about 8 months after we started.. we are starting to buy those goods

And the buyer and the merchandiser and the designer and the qc’s and the techs are really getting involved to make sure that product looks great.. We are buying it from the right place from the right country at the right price, we are negotiating well on our buy, and we are buying it to our critical path to get it in on time for when we need it.. all of this is coming into play as well as doing that they are looking at what are they currently selling today and wondering oh god do I have that back in ? oh god.. would that keep selling> oh god I haven’t got that in my line up and its are selling 7000 a week this week .. shall I keep it going/ shant i?

So it is this word I use tight rope.. which came to me last night and it is a perennial tight rope.. shall we .. shant we.. shall we shant we…

Pause

At the final meeting where we buy.. in fact at all the meetings.. there would be about 10 people involved.. so if we are looking a the jeans range. There would be 3 designers, 1 buyer, 2 assistant buyers, 1 merchandiser, 1 assistant merchandiser, a business controller and a trading manager, and each person would have an angle to ensure that the final 20 styles included their various contenders, the merchandisers would vote from the angle of current best sellers, assuming that very little was going to change in a 6 – 8 month period, the design team would be spilling over with new samples ignoring huge cash sales for the ego of retailing yet another one of their designs..

The buyer would be this nice measured combination of both of those schools and I would sit and listen and chair.. and make the final decisions based on experience.. luckily 25 yrs experience within the same brand.. i should by now have a pretty good idea of what the customers want. gut feel… a lot of it is about gut feeling and intuition, and an ability to forecast the future mood which we have to have.. soo we are never always right but.. using this cocktail of talent.. we are mostly right

FARIDA Today. Yesterday actually I had a meeting on jeans for next summer.. and the focus is on what’s new.. and this has become a key question as I said earlier.. it looks to the future.. its a critical, a massive difference of approach to companies that trade all safely and less bravely.. Because they
either are too scared to embrace design or frankly do not understand its value...so they are forever asking what has already been sold... and why don’t we just carry on selling it.. as they seem to like it.. so lets not strike out.. lets just carry on selling what we are selling.. their key question would be what has sold... this si retrospective thinking not .. future thinking so already the product cannot command premium.. if it is something that the public has already seen and they are gona and the company is going to buy it again and out it out in the market place again.. it cannot have a premium price

All our meetings are informal and inclusive. Our working environment is open plan. No one has an office.. we are all just are on the same floor..

And its this coaching mentality at river island that we believe is another success.. its almost an apprenticeship.. a good old fashion apprenticeship method of teaching rather than going on too many formalized courses for the junior teams to learn a lot of theory ..and than they have to come back and put it into practice.

You know We take on just as many people from our stores.. who have no higher education but have worked in abyss than many of the graduates.. so we do really pride our selves in that apprenticeship. and coaching method of teaching these young people

That’s why our meetings are always very open.. Because in those meetings. young people would learn an awful a lot.. Hearing the small senior people bantering and arguing in you know a positive way about the qualities of the product.. all three functions are always present at key meetings.. al have a voice and all learn to have a respectful ear to each others disciplines. We always listen and question and at River Island we have trained ourselves to always assume we are wrong... we always having… Come up with this fantastic range. got all the excitement.. and its all there.. we always ask our selves.. what if. What if they don’t like it.. what if we are wrong.. ? and that measure is considered from the beginning .. just as we are about to place.. Because instead of placing a 100,000 for certain jean.. we know to get into our stores.. we can actually place about 15,000 and have quite a good presence of that jean. We do not need to place all the sales that we might get through the season.. we can have a much more softly softly approach ...and at the time we have opened to that jean.. we could also trial …two other alternative jeans in that fabric and see how the customer like those against the one that we have chosen. So we always apply our selves to the what if scenario and we always say as much as we could be right.. we could be wrong.... Because
that is the climate that is our there.. as I say we are mostly right.. we give our selves ..emmm an allowance of what we call mark down ..

so we always say to everyone who joins our business.. you have to think of this as your own shop.. if you pout your house up for mortgage and you opened a shop in your home town, think of your own high street.. I .live in weighbridge.. in surrey so I think aawwh thee is that nice little space there. I could open my shop there.. but every Saturday obviously.. I’d have to have the right things in that shop.. because ig I didn’t I wouldn’t sell anything.. I wouldn’t be able to pay for the shop or the girl I have asked to run the shop.. so we say to everyone who joins our business .. who are in their early 20’s … this is your shop.. this is your range.. its your jeans range.. its your jeans shop.. what decisions would you make if you were borrowing your money against your house and buying these jeans .. I am sure you would.. awwh goo just buy a 100,000 .. put one order down.. its much easier than writing 6 orders.. or ..

I really fancy that gold jean.. ohh I duno why. I just fancy it.. that’s not good enough.. you cant just fancy it.. you have to have a business argument.. for why you think that gold jeans is going to sell.. I mean you can say.. 2 yrs ago.. that metallic jeans were brilliant.. and girls love a bit of sparkle. you know it appeals to our core customer.. say anything you wanna say.. that is good in business. But it cant just be. .. ohh I duno I just fancy it..

So we always.. Once we have done all the positive work and we have got our selves up there and the products are great .. we do take a moment.. to have the what if scenario and we do say to al our team members.. run your department.. as you are running your own shop… don’t make decisions that you would not make if it was not your own business.

Ehh yeh.. I will tell you about the mark down

We are allowed…..emmm an allowance. A little budget to spend on….

Prices down in the sale. so the gods that are poor.. can sell at better prices..

So in very simple terms.. if the jeans range took a 100,000 pounds.. we allow our selves.. a 15% mark down, which would be 15,000, as a budget… as a buffer to spend on taking the jeans that are 29.99 to 14.99 and getting rid of the poor sellers.. so every season we are allowed this allowance of up to 15 % and mostly every yr.. we spent about 8-10 %..
over the last.. I duno... every season.. 4-5 years... we run a very tight..
and that's another success at river island..

We get very excited about products.. but we have very intelligent
conversations about ... you know potentialising but also managing the
risk...

So we train our selves to consider.. that we may not be right.. in our final
conclusions and develop strategies to minimize risk and trade more
carefully

River island holds around a 1000 different styles in every 6-8 period and
we literally discuss every single one in the detail. that I told you prior to
purchasing..

So there is enormous pressure.. on the very young team.. the handling
department are taking anything from 100,000 pounds to 3 million pounds
per week. and its their full responsibility as that three some who deliver
the success and its their collaboration.. Their quality of collaboration.. that
is critical to the successor failure to their departments.

(Laughs).

I think I have touched up on most of the things today..

(Music playing)

(Laughs)

Right.. thank you to Farida
(iii) Online Interview – Visage

November 2009

Please kindly just high light your choices with bold where needed and write where required and after filling it in if you can please email it back to hebaa@hotmail.com, or hebahmad@gmail.com

Personal Back ground

Name: Sarah Austin

Age: 33

Company: Visage Ltd

Current Position: Senior Merchandiser

Qualification and Name of Institute:

Where else have you worked previously and at what position?

Mothercare as a Trainee Merchandiser and worked at Winners clothing (which closed in UK a few years back as an Assistant Merchandiser

Contact details:

Tel - 0044 161 786 2265
Blackberry - 07814 552 712
Fax - 0044 161 789 5415
E-Mail - Sarah.Austin@visage-group.com

Company background

What is the main vision of your company?

TO SUPPLY THE HIGH STREET WITH QUALITY, FASHIONABLE AND COMMERCIAL CLOTHING

http://www.visage-group.com/jobs.html
What range are you in charge of developing in the women’s department?

- Dresses
- Tops
- Skirts
- Jeans
- Accessories
- Shoes
- Knitwear

**Sourcing and supplying**

What type of retailers do you supply to?

**ALL HIGH STREET**

Who are your main buyers (i.e. which retailers)?

**Everyone on the high street**

What is the lead-time that you and your team members are required to work on from start to finish of the product range?

- Less than 2 weeks
- Less than 6 weeks
- Less than 8 weeks
- **Less than 16 weeks**
- More than 16 weeks

Where do your company source majority of the products?
Some suppliers are regional and mostly are non regional

We source 50% from UK and 50% else where (i.e, could be Far East or Eastern Europe)

Mostly from UK and less from else where

Mostly sourced from the Far East / Asia

Mostly sourced from near by non UK based suppliers (i.e, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Turkey)

Collaboration

Which members of the organization do you interact with in order to make your decisions? (Tick however many)

- Designers
- Merchandisers
- Suppliers
- Client
- Retailers (outlet)

How many of you in a team work on a range together?

- Less than 2
- Less than 5
- Less than 10
- Less than 15
- Less than 20
- Less than 25
More than 25

What do you base your buying decisions on?

- **Trends**
- **Price – sourcing / suppliers**
- Collaboration between departments
- Styles
- Colours
- Others – for example?

How often do you tend to attend exhibitions and fashion shows to keep up with the trends?

- Once every 2 weeks
- **Once a month**
- Once in 2 months
- Once in 3 months
- Once in 6 months
- Once a year

What sort of collaboration strategies does your company use?

- Up to date tools and software to make collaboration for all teams within the organisation and suppliers easier
- Standardizing information that is exchanged
Building long-term relationships with its suppliers to get economies of scale

What form of interaction does your company have with its suppliers?

- Person to person interaction
  (A few key people are involved from the teams)
- Interaction to make joint decisions
  (Few teams are involved)
- Business to business interaction
  (Major departments are involved)

What sort of relationship do you maintain with your suppliers?

- Long term with a few suppliers
- Short term with many different suppliers

Design

Do you design majority of your items in house i.e. in UK?

Yes

No

If yes, than how does the process work? From retailers to your company to consumers

WE RESEARCH THE TRENDS AND THEN BUILD OUR OWN RANGE TO SELL TO THE RETAILER WHO IN TURN MAY AMEND THE STYLE OR BUY AS IS

If no, than do you outsource designing to different parts of the world? And if so please elaborate.
**Design process**

Can you explain me the structure of your company roughly?

WE HAVE A GROUP OF DESIGNERS FOR JERSEY, WOVENS, DRESSES, JACKETS ETC WHICH WORK ON THE TRENDS AND PUT THEIR OWN RANGES TOGETHER.

Can you run me through your design process quickly from start to finish when developing a product range, which team member is responsible for which section?

- **DESIGNERS** – THEY BUILD THE RANGE
- **SALES** – SELL TO THE HIGH STREET
- **MERCHANDISERS** – PLACE THE ORDERS AND DELIVERY TO CUSTOMER.

At what stage of the process do you place orders? And how are the quantities decided?

- **RETAILER DECIDE THE QTY**
- **WE PLACE ORDERS ONCE PRICE AND DELIVERY DATE CONFIRMED**

How do you make sure everything is being done in a short period of time, to ensure deadlines are met? What is the key?

- **WE USE A CRITICAL PATH WITH ALL THE CRITICAL DATES WE HAVE TO APPROVE EVERYTHING BY TO GET THE DELIVERY ON TIME.**

How do you feel the process of design has changed within companies over the last few years? (i.e., the various retailers you have dealt with, has their process of design changed over the years?)

- **I AM NOT SURE ABOUT IT ChangING HOWEVER I HAVE FOUND THAT THE RETAILERS ARE NOW TAKING MORE GUIDANCE FOR THE DESIGNS/TRENDS FROM OUR DESIGNERS WHERE AS YEARS AGO THE RETAILER WOULD BE TELLING US WHAT THEY WANTED TO SEE.**
Responsiveness

How does your department predict demand for a product range?

WE RESEARCH THE CATWALKS AND TRENDS TO SEE WHAT WILL BE BIG NEXT SESSION TO DETERMINE WHAT WILL BE A BIG SELLER

- Speculate the demand early
- Using postponement strategy to make the demand more predictable
- Postpone some products whilst speculate most items
- Speculate some items whilst postpone majority of the products

Do you feel your firm is responsive to fashion trends?

- Yes
- No

If yes – how is it responsive, what tools or techniques are used to overcome responsiveness

IT IS ALL IN THE RESEARCH, INTERNET. MAGAZINES THE CATWALKS

If no – than do you feel there is a need for your company to be responsive? And how do you think they should compile with it?

Does your company have a strategy for unpredictable demand?

Yes
No

If yes than how does it come over it?
QUICK TURNAROUND FROM TURKEY WITHIN 8WEEKS

If no, than is it relevant to your department, do you feel there should be measures just in case?

How do you ensure the right product is being delivered in the right time? What means of logistics does your company use?

   WE HAVE OUR OWN SHIPPING DEPARTMENT TO TELL US THE VESSEL DETAILS/AIRFREIGHTS SO WE CAN ENSURE IT IS SHIPPED FROM SOURCE IN PLENTY OF TIME.

Do you use any specific software’s to ensure responsiveness?

   ➢ Yes
   ➢ No

Which software’s does your company currently uses to respond to consumer demand?

Seasonal impact

Do you feel weather has an impact on fashion?

   ➢ Yes
   ➢ No

If yes – how does it have an impact on your department?

IF ITS COLD IN SUMMER NO ONE BUYS VESTS AND IF ITS WARM IN WINTER NO ONE BUYS KNITWEAR

Does your company respond according to the weather at all?
➢ Yes

➢ No

If yes – elaborate on how does it respond according to the weather? Are there any tools or organizations used to obtain correct statistics and forecast accordingly?

Do you feel it is important for fashion retailers to respond to weather

➢ Yes

➢ No YOU CANNOT PREDICT THE WEATHER

If yes – than why? What do you feel are the benefits?

**Possible changes to the company**

Being part of your company and being part of their team, as a merchandiser/ buyer/ designer are there any suggestions that you would like to make to the way they operate within the whole process as an intermediary between retailers through to the consumer?

RETAILERS SHOULD NOT CHANGE THEIR MINDS SO MUCH AND SHOULD BE QUICKER BOOKING KEY LINES

As a company are they looking to make any further improvements to their system, in order to be more responsive to the fashion market?

NOT THAT I KNOW OF
(iv) **Online Interview - Bonmarche**

Febuary 2010

Please kindly just high light your choices with bold where needed and write where required and after filling it in if you can please email it back to hebaa@hotmail.com, or hebahmad@gmail.com

**Personal Back ground**

Name: Attia Bashir

Age: 28

Company: Bonmarche

Current Position: Print Designer

Qualification and Name of Institute: UMIST
BSC (Hons) Textile Design and Design Management With Industrial Experience

Where else have you worked previously and at what position?
Redcats UK (mail order) as a CAD Designer for childrenswear and womenswear

Contact Details: mobile –Mobile - 07894011662
E-Mail - Attia.Bashir@bonmarche.co.uk

**Company background**

What is the main vision of your company as a retailer?

Bonmarche is UK’s largest value retailer selling affordable quality womenswear in a wide range of sizes (12-24) to women over 45 years.

[www.bonmarche.co.uk](http://www.bonmarche.co.uk)

What range are you in charge of developing in the women’s department?

- **Dresses**
- **Skirts**
- Jeans
- Accessories
- Shoes
- Knitwear
- Childrenswear

**Sourcing**

What is the lead-time that you and your team members are required to work on from start to finish of the product range?

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- Less than 6 weeks
- Less than 8 weeks
- Less than 16 weeks
- More than 16 weeks

Where do your company source majority of the products?

- Some suppliers are regional and mostly are non regional
- We source 50% from UK and 50% else where (i.e, could be Far East or Eastern Europe)
- Mostly from UK and less from else where
- Mostly sourced from the Far East Asia
- Mostly sourced from near by non UK based suppliers (i.e, North Africa, Eastern Europe, Turkey)

**Collaboration**
Which members of the organization do you interact with in order to make your decisions? (Tick however many)

- Designers
- Merchandisers
- Suppliers
- Client
- Retailers (outlet)

How many of you in a team work on a range together?

- Less than 2
- Less than 5
- Less than 10
- Less than 15
- Less than 20
- Less than 25
- More than 25

What do you base your buying decisions on?

- Trends
- Price – sourcing / suppliers
- Collaboration between departments
- Styles
- Colours
- Others – for example?
How often do you tend to attend exhibitions and fashion shows to keep up with the trends?

- Once every 2 weeks
- Once a month
- Once in 2 months
- Once in 3 months
- Once in 6 months
- Once a year

What sort of collaboration strategies does your company use?

- Up to date tools and software to make collaboration for all teams within the organisation and suppliers easier
- Standardizing information that is exchanged
- Building long-term relationships with its suppliers to get economies of scale

What form of interaction does your company have with its suppliers?

- Person to person interaction
  (A few key people are involved from the teams)

- Interaction to make joint decisions
  (Few teams are involved)

- Business to business interaction
  (Major departments are involved)

What sort of relationship do you maintain with your suppliers?

- Long term with a few suppliers
Short term with many different suppliers

Design

Do you design majority of your items in house i.e. in UK?

Yes

No

If yes, than how does the process work? From your company to retailers to consumers

The design department researches trends including generating trend stories and creating colour palettes. Working with the buyers, we carry out research such as shopping trips to have a look at which trends the high street are embracing. We then design garments to fit into trend stories also keeping in mind which styles we are currently selling well as a company. The styles we design fit into each trend story which has been generated.

If no, than do you outsource designing to different parts of the world? And if so please elaborate.

Design process

Can you explain me the structure of your company roughly? For example, directors to buyers/ merchandisers/ than junior buyers and all?

For the buying department the structure is as follows:

Director- buying director, buying controller, senior buyer, assistant buyer, buyers assistant

Can you run me through your design process quickly from start to finish when developing a product range, which team member is responsible for which section?

The design department are responsible for trend and market research. The buying and merchandising departments compile product ranges, forecast sales and determine budgets.
Working with the Buyers, Designers generate new style, prints and ideas for new ranges. We have a small team of designers here at Bonmarche. I am responsible for creating the prints, embroideries and any kind of surface embellishment.

The styles which are designed are budgeted and the make up sourced from factories.

At what stage of the process do you place orders? And how are the quantities decided? The buyers and merchandisers decide budgets and this is usually done at the beginning of the season.

How do you make sure everything is being done in a short period of time to ensure deadlines are met? What is the key?

The critical path is followed as close as possible. We work closely with suppliers to ensure lab dips, strike offs and samples are requested as early as possible to avoid hindering lead times.

How do you feel the process of design has changed within your company over the last few years?

We now have an in house design team which means we rely less on suppliers. We aim to develop our own signature and handwriting for our products and to develop a coherent range within our stores.

Designing in house is proving that designs are generated much faster. This is because buyers do not have to go back and forth to suppliers for design reworks and amendments.

**Responsiveness**

How does your department predict demand for a product range?

- *Speculate the demand early*
Using postponement strategy to make the demand more predictable

Postpone some products whilst speculate most items

Speculate some items whilst postpone majority of the products

Do you feel your firm is responsive to fashion trends?

➢ Yes
➢ No

If yes – how is it responsive, what tools or techniques are used to overcome responsiveness?

If no – than do you feel there is a need for your company to be responsive? And how do you think they should comply with it?

We are not a fast fashion retailer. Bonmarche is almost a season behind shops such as Topshop. This is because our customer does not follow trends as strictly. She, our customer needs to see a trend and believe in it before she commits.

To attract a slightly younger customer, we could be more responsive by following trends closer to the season and cutting down lead times.

Does your company have a strategy for unpredictable demand?

Yes
➢ No

If yes than how does it come over it?

If no, than is it relevant to your department, do you feel there should be measures just in case?

I think it is relevant for the company as a whole to create a strategy to overcome this.

Do you use any specific software’s to ensure responsiveness?
Yes

No

If yes, than which software’s does your company currently uses to respond to consumer demand?

Seasonal impact

Do you feel weather has an impact on fashion?

Yes

No

If yes – how does it have an impact on your department?

As a business we are greatly affected by the weather. We find that during rain and snow our sales drop. Our customer is reluctant to shop and go out doors during winter seasons.

Does your company respond according to the weather at all?

Yes

No

If yes – elaborate on how does it respond according to the weather? Are there any tools or organizations used to obtain correct statistics and forecast accordingly?

Do you feel it is important for fashion retailers to respond to weather?

Yes

No
If yes – than why? What do you feel are the benefits?

Responding to weather eliminates poor sales. Financial forecasts can be prepared

If no, than please elaborate on reasons?

**Possible changes to the company**

Being part of your company and being part of their team, are there any suggestions that you would like to make to the way they operate within the whole process from manufacturers through to the consumer?

As a company are they looking to make any further improvements to their system, in order to be more responsive to the fashion market?

Not aware at the moment.
(v) Zara – Letter to validate that I spent a week at their store in Manchester.

ZARA

INFORMATION FOR HR DEPARTMENT

WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENT’S DETAILS:
NAME: Hegz Attmann
SURNAME: Attmann
SCHOOL: University of Manchester

PLACEMENT DETAILS:
STORE NAME: 
STORE CODE: 
STUDENT’S LINE MANAGER: 
DATES OF PLACEMENT: from 14/05/11 to 18/05/11
STUDENT’S DUTIES DURING PLACEMENT (tick as appropriate):

☐ Customer Service
☐ Replenishment
☐ Merchandising
☐ Fitting Rooms
☐ Stockroom
☐ Deliveries
☐ Woman
☐ Basic
☐ Trafaluc
☐ Accessories
☐ Shoes
☐ Other (specify)

COMMENTS
Hegz has worked really hard and she has fitted in with the team. She has been a really strong team player. She has been a social sports and has been involved in all.

STUDENT AND THE STUDENT’S LINE MANAGER MUST COMPLETE THIS FORM AT THE END OF THE PLACEMENT.

[Signature] 3863