The Ability Of Innovation Management To Map Out The Complex Environment

Introduction

We are living in an age of uncertainty. The reason for that is the fast pace of change in all technological, social, economic, and political aspects of society. Globalization and digitalization are changing the forms of communication and distribution of information. The world is enriched with increasingly complicated structures, enriched with many elements, variables, events, and systems one cannot predict and numerous failing systems. A typical pattern of how organizations behave under changing environments is holding on to their competence and instincts that prevailed at certain times. However, in the age of climate emergency, practicing existing management models and the lack of innovation has irreversible and detrimental effects on the planet.

Society has always had a complex and emotional relationship with fashion as a commodity. Hence, there is a cognitive dissonance when people buy clothes because we consume more than we can wear, to the point where clothes have become a disposable good. The fashion industry is in a state of high nervousness and uncertainty. There are many issues regarding the fashion industry- from the race, gender, and class inequalities in the sector, to the decolonization of the fashion curriculum and climate change. In the communication of issues surrounding climate change and sustainability, the fashion industry has been taking the wrong approaches. It sets up more barriers than it needs in order to enter a conversation about sustainability and climate emergency. One characteristic is that industry professionals and climate change representatives often argue about the semantics and terminologies of sustainable fashion. Arguably, the time for talks, conferences, and discussions have passed Current fashion communication contributes to rising uncertainty. Issues surrounding fashion and sustainability are often very polarised and simplified. There is a need to look at fashion in a more holistic way, where issues are not black and white and are approached with more nuance. It is deficient in discussing to maintain or stop fashion week, due to the unrelenting schedule for designers to produce. The same applies to arguing over polyester versus cotton, or fast fashion versus luxury. It is time to critically evaluate these issues and be comfortable with operating in areas of ambiguity. The fact is, however, that there is too much clothing and not enough fashion, which indicates the need for longevity and future-oriented design — too much clothing, not enough culture, and lastly too much clothing and not enough innovation.

This essay investigates the ability of innovation management to map out the complex environment organizations find themselves in. As a result, the area of concern this essay addresses is how organizations and agencies within the fashion industry can effectively navigate unknown environments. Additionally, it will investigate how to cope with the rising danger of climate emergency and illustrate how styling contributes to deterritorialize these structures. Through providing an academic background in media and communications and professional experience in styling, design, and consulting, the following research applies the strategic and creative aspects of innovation. The essay aims to highlight how changing consumer- attitudes can be achieved through the adaption of these methods. Not to mention, the goal is to provide insight into how a changing mindset within organizations is essential to

tackle uncertain environments, arising through climate emergencies. This practical approach, however, is not to answer the right questions, but to raise awareness of which question to answer above all. It is time for the fashion industry to recognize that the world is in a state of emergency and realize how businesses should be agents of modern change.

Literature Review

2.1. Concepts of uncertainty, risk, and failure

Approaching the analysis of discourses surrounding uncertainty opens up an infinite amount of questions that unfold more discourses about organizational, environmental, scientific, strategic, and contextual uncertainties to name a few. The book ‘Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory’ by Bruno Latour (2007) introduces the first developments of the Actor-Network-Theory that aims to make sense of complex systems and explore the sources of uncertainty, that construct the social. The main concern of the ANT then is to investigate how things, people, and ideas become connected, assembled, and build relationships in larger units. (Latour, 2007). He explains, how the relationship between the actor-network, implies that the observer, object, or individual, as the ‘actor’ may also operate as a whole network. Latour, therefore, identifies five controversies and uncertainties that the social realm consists of which are the nature of groups, actions, objects, facts, and, finally, the studies within the social sciences. He questions conceptions of a stable and certain world and investigates the relations between these controversies, rather than solving them. The goal, therefore, does not aim to bring stability to society but embraces the approach to float and be guided by uncertainty to grasp the society that is ever-changing and ever-growing.

Generally speaking, uncertainty deals with the known unknown. Donald Rumsfeld shaped the classification, as cited from Nowotny (2005, p.63): ‘There are known knowns, the things we know. There are known unknowns, things we know we don’t know. There is also that third category of unknown unknowns, the things we don’t know we don’t know. And you can only know more about those things by imagining what they might be. Unknown unknowns can be characterized as unidentified risks. The known unknowns framework can also serve as a powerful tool for research or design thinking methods. The framework strengthens our understanding of inquiry and knowledge and raises the question if we are conscious of what we are not exploring, how we might prepare for the surprises ahead? ‘To surface the unknown unknowns, you need to explore a problem with an open mind’ (Justo, 2019) Answering those questions will surface different forms of knowledge and lack of knowledge which can enlarge the area of inquiry.

‘The cunning of uncertainty by Nowotny (2015) emphasizes that uncertainty changes social structures and as a result leads to a pluralization and individualization of society. Shifting structures of society due to globalization and big data, therefore change the way people communicate, behavioral patterns, and sets of values in ways one cannot predict. Nowotny describes uncertainty as uninsurable because it depends on the exercise of human judgment in the making of decisions. In a risk situation, however, one can calculate the likelihood of each possible outcome. Furthermore, Smith and Fischbacher (2009) provide insightful research on the stability and instability of systems. Their research illustrates the changing nature of risk and risk management emphasizing the power of media in amplifying risk potential. It then goes on to analyze the relationship between resilience, risk, and uncertainty. Resilience is a concept that

demonstrates a strong relationship with the notion of stability. Necessary actions of managing risk and resilience are to understand the circumstances to intervene and manage systems. Holling and Gunderson (2002, p.27) state, that resilience expresses the level of the system's ability to deal with uncertainty around the issues of persistence, adaptiveness, variability, and unpredictability. These attributes are at the heart of understanding and designing for sustainability.

Many authors have driven the further development of the connection between uncertainty, innovation, and leadership (Latour 2007; Schwartz 1996; Hodgson and White 2001).

Hodgson and White (2001) state that there is a higher call for leadership regarding the more uncertainty surrounding a decision. Their research illustrates how the common conception of uncertainty in leadership roles is perceived as a sign of failure. Their research takes into consideration that a substantial part of innovative leadership and success involves embracing ambiguity. As a result, Hodgson and White provide pragmatic and practical insights on how companies and individuals can enquire the skills and capacities to cope with uncertainty in the face of ambiguity. Chia and Holt (2009) strongly contested the ideas of conventional strategy-making as a deliberate, rational, planned, and goal-directed activity.

Consequently, successful outcomes are attributed to the systematic carrying out of a pre-thought program of actions. Failure is attributed to a lack of proper planning. They argue that the main weakness with this theory is that 'that the more directly and deliberately a specific strategic goal is single-mindedly sought the more likely it is that such calculated actions eventually work to undermine and erode their initial successes, often with devastating consequences' (Chia and Holt 2009, p.6). Chia and Holt (2009), therefore investigate in what ways organizational accomplishments can result from actions without the pre-authored design and show how collective success is achieved with the absence of a deliberate, planned strategy.

2.2. Theoretical sources of fashion, organizational design, and future research

Numerous studies investigate fashion's global impact on the environment. The majority of studies conclude that: 'The global fashion industry is extremely energy-consuming, polluting and wasteful. Despite some modest progress, fashion has not yet taken its environmental responsibilities seriously enough' (Amed et al, 2019, p.16). McKinsey & Company has been at the forefront of conducting several studies to assess insights on its Global Fashion Index, forecasts, and market strategies. The uncertainty stems from many macroeconomic challenges like declining global-economy growth.

Recent events like the Australian bushfires provide insights into the adverse ways fashion companies take action towards the climate crisis. Alongside many other companies, global luxury corporation Balenciaga's response was the launch of a new fundraising collection (see image 1: Balenciaga Koala