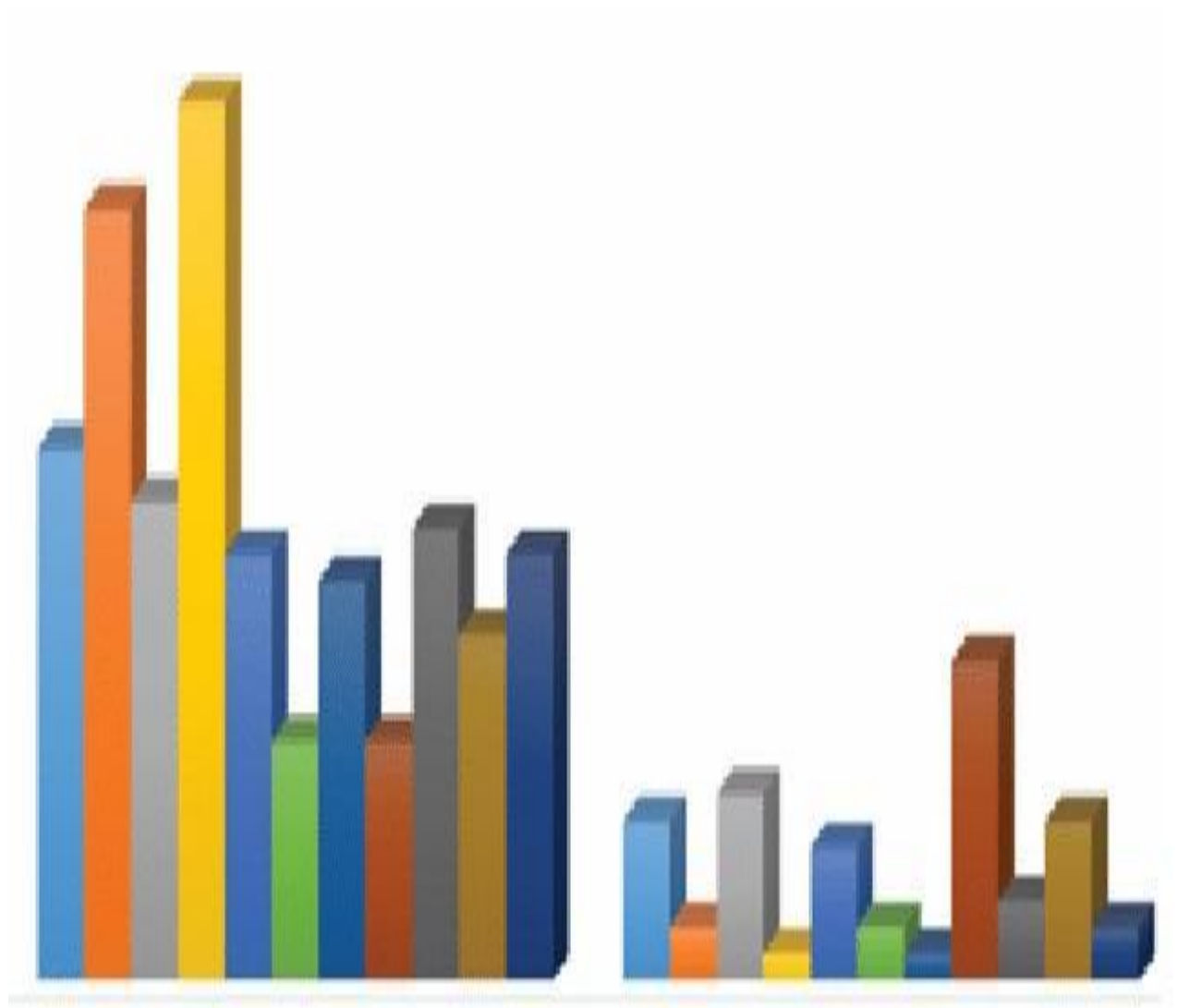


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Research Article

Qualitative Study of Leadership Influence on Technological Creativity in Fashion Firms

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ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of advanced technologies has transformed the global fashion industry, requiring firms to enhance their capacity for technological creativity to remain competitive. This study examines the influence of leadership on technological creativity within fashion firms using a qualitative research approach based on secondary data. Drawing on Transformational Leadership Theory, the Componential Theory of Creativity, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the study analyses how leadership styles shape innovation outcomes. The findings reveal that transformational and participative leadership significantly foster technological creativity by promoting intrinsic motivation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a supportive organisational culture. In contrast, transactional and authoritarian leadership styles tend to constrain creative expression and technological experimentation. The study further identifies key mediating factors, including organisational culture, digital transformation, and employee empowerment, which collectively enhance innovation capabilities. The research contributes to the existing literature by contextualising leadership and creativity within the fashion industry and offers practical insights for managers seeking to integrate technology with creative processes. The findings underscore the importance of adaptive and visionary leadership in navigating the complexities of digital transformation and sustaining competitive advantage.

Keywords: transformational leadership, technological creativity, fashion industry, innovation, organisational culture, digital transformation, employee empowerment

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1. Introduction

The global fashion industry has entered a transformative era characterised by rapid technological advancements, digitalisation, and increasing demand for sustainability. Innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing, virtual prototyping, blockchain-enabled supply chains, and data-driven design processes are reshaping traditional fashion systems (McKinsey & Company, 2023). These technologies are not only altering production and distribution mechanisms but are also redefining creativity itself. In this context, technological creativity, the capacity to generate, adopt, and implement novel technological ideas, has become a central pillar for competitiveness in fashion firms.

Historically, the fashion industry has been perceived as a creative domain driven primarily by artistic vision and craftsmanship. However, the integration of technology has blurred the boundaries between art and science, requiring firms to balance aesthetic creativity with technological innovation (Bain & Company, 2022). For instance, digital design tools enable designers to experiment with new forms and materials, while AI algorithms assist in trend forecasting and consumer behaviour analysis. This convergence of creativity and technology has made leadership a critical factor in guiding organisational transformation.

Leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping how organisations respond to technological change. Leaders influence

strategic direction, allocate resources, and establish the organisational culture necessary for innovation (Northouse, 2022). In the context of fashion firms, leadership must go beyond traditional management practices and embrace a vision that integrates creativity with technological advancement. This requires fostering an environment where employees are encouraged to experiment, take risks, and collaborate across disciplines.

The concept of technological creativity is closely linked to organisational innovation. According to Amabile and Pratt (2016), creativity involves the generation of novel and useful ideas, while innovation refers to the successful implementation of those ideas. Leadership is a key determinant in both processes, as it influences employee motivation, organisational climate, and the availability of resources. Transformational leaders, for example, inspire employees to think beyond conventional boundaries, thereby enhancing creative output (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Conversely, rigid and hierarchical leadership structures may inhibit creativity by discouraging experimentation and risk-taking.

In recent years, the importance of leadership in fostering technological creativity has gained increasing attention in academic and industry research. Studies have shown that organisations with supportive leadership are more likely to adopt innovative technologies and achieve superior performance outcomes (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). In the fashion industry, this is particularly relevant due to the fast-paced nature of trends and the need for continuous innovation. Firms that fail to adapt to technological changes risk losing

their competitive edge in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Another critical aspect of technological creativity is the role of organisational culture. Leadership shapes culture by establishing norms, values, and practices that influence employee behaviour. An innovation-oriented culture encourages openness to new ideas, collaboration, and tolerance for failure, factors that are essential for creativity (Schein, 2017). In fashion firms, where creativity is a core competency, such a culture is vital for sustaining innovation.

Despite the growing recognition of these dynamics, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the intersection of leadership, technological creativity, and the fashion industry. Much of the existing research has focused on high-tech sectors such as information technology and manufacturing, leaving creative industries relatively underexplored (Bain & Company, 2022). This gap is particularly important given the unique characteristics of fashion firms, which combine artistic creativity with commercial and technological considerations.

Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on sustainability has added another layer of complexity to technological creativity. Fashion firms are under pressure to adopt eco-friendly technologies, such as sustainable materials and circular production systems. Leadership plays a crucial role in driving these initiatives by aligning organisational goals with environmental and social responsibilities (McKinsey & Company, 2023). This highlights the need for

leaders who are not only innovative but also socially and environmentally conscious.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to explore the influence of leadership on technological creativity in fashion firms. By adopting a qualitative approach based on secondary data, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different leadership styles and practices impact innovation outcomes. The study also examines the mediating roles of organisational culture, digital transformation, and employee empowerment.

Research Objectives

- To examine the role of leadership in fostering technological creativity in fashion firms.
- To identify leadership styles that enhance or hinder innovation.
- To analyse the mediating factors influencing leadership and creativity.
- To provide practical recommendations for industry practitioners.

2. Literature Review

Leadership has been widely studied across various disciplines, including management, psychology, and sociology. It is generally defined as the process of influencing individuals or groups to achieve organisational goals (Northouse, 2022). Leadership involves not only directing and coordinating activities but also inspiring and motivating employees to perform at their best.

Different leadership theories have emerged over time, reflecting evolving organisational needs. Early theories focused on traits and behaviours, while contemporary approaches emphasise relational and transformational aspects of leadership. Among these, transformational leadership has gained significant attention due to its strong association with innovation and creativity (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leaders are characterised by their ability to articulate a compelling vision, provide intellectual stimulation, and offer individualised support to employees. These leaders encourage followers to challenge assumptions, explore new ideas, and take risks, behaviours that are essential for technological creativity (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on structured tasks, rewards, and performance monitoring, which may limit creative exploration.

Servant leadership is another relevant approach, emphasising the well-being and development of employees. By prioritising employee needs, servant leaders create a supportive environment that fosters creativity and innovation (Greenleaf, 1977). Similarly, participative leadership involves employees in decision-making processes, enhancing collaboration and idea generation.

2.1 Technological Creativity

Technological creativity refers to the ability to generate and implement innovative ideas involving technology (Amabile, 1996). It combines creative thinking with technical expertise, enabling organisations to develop

new products, processes, and business models.

Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity identifies three key elements: domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic motivation. Leadership influences all three components by shaping the work environment and providing resources and support (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

In the fashion industry, technological creativity manifests in various forms, including:

- Digital fashion design and prototyping
- Smart textiles and wearable technology
- Sustainable production methods
- Data-driven trend forecasting

These innovations require collaboration between designers, engineers, and data scientists, highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary leadership.

2.2 Leadership and Creativity

The relationship between leadership and creativity has been extensively studied. Leaders influence creativity by shaping organisational climate, providing resources, and motivating employees (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

Transformational leadership has been consistently linked to higher levels of creativity. This is because transformational leaders foster intrinsic motivation, encourage experimentation, and support risk-taking (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Empirical studies have demonstrated that employees

working under transformational leaders exhibit greater creative performance and innovation outcomes.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory also provides insights into leadership and creativity. High-quality relationships between leaders and employees enhance trust and communication, facilitating the exchange of ideas (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This is particularly important in creative industries where collaboration is essential.

However, not all leadership styles are conducive to creativity. Authoritarian leadership, characterised by strict control and limited autonomy, can suppress creative thinking. Similarly, excessive reliance on performance metrics may discourage experimentation.

2.3 Organisational Culture and Innovation

Organisational culture plays a crucial role in fostering creativity and innovation. Culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape employee behaviour (Schein, 2017). Leaders are instrumental in creating and maintaining organisational culture.

An innovation-oriented culture is characterised by:

- Openness to new ideas
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Tolerance for failure
- Continuous learning

Such a culture encourages employees to explore new possibilities and take risks,

which are essential for technological creativity.

In fashion firms, culture is particularly important due to the need for constant innovation. Leaders must create an environment where creativity is valued and supported.

2.4 Technological Innovation in Fashion Firms

The fashion industry has traditionally been slow to adopt technology compared to other sectors. However, recent years have seen a significant shift towards digitalisation and innovation (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

Key technological trends in fashion include:

- AI-driven design and forecasting
- Virtual and augmented reality applications
- Blockchain for supply chain transparency
- Sustainable materials and circular production

These technologies have transformed how fashion firms operate, from design to distribution. Leadership plays a critical role in driving these changes by setting strategic priorities and investing in innovation.

2.5 Digital Transformation and Leadership

Digital transformation refers to the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of an organisation (Teece, 2018). It requires a shift in organisational mindset and culture, as well as the development of new capabilities.

Leaders play a crucial role in digital transformation by:

- Defining a clear vision
- Allocating resources
- Building digital capabilities
- Managing change

In fashion firms, digital transformation enables greater efficiency, creativity, and customer engagement.

2.6 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on leadership and creativity, there is limited focus on their intersection within the fashion industry. Existing studies often overlook the unique challenges and opportunities associated with technological creativity in this sector.

This study addresses this gap by providing a qualitative analysis of leadership influence on technological creativity in fashion firms.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework that combines Transformational Leadership Theory, the Componential Theory of Creativity, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory to explain how leadership influences technological creativity in fashion firms. These theories collectively provide a multi-dimensional understanding of leadership behaviour, individual creativity processes, and organisational adaptability.

3.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership theory, developed by Burns (1978) and further refined by Bass and Riggio (2006),

emphasises the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and innovation. Transformational leaders are characterised by four key dimensions: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

Intellectual stimulation is particularly relevant to technological creativity, as it encourages employees to challenge conventional thinking and explore innovative solutions. In the context of fashion firms, where creativity is essential, leaders who promote intellectual curiosity can significantly enhance technological innovation. For example, leaders who encourage designers to experiment with digital tools or sustainable materials create opportunities for novel product development.

Empirical studies have shown that transformational leadership positively influences creativity by fostering intrinsic motivation and a supportive work environment (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). This is consistent with Amabile and Pratt's (2016) assertion that leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the psychological conditions necessary for creativity.

3.2 Componential Theory of Creativity

The Componential Theory of Creativity, proposed by Amabile (1996), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that influence creative performance. According to this theory, creativity is determined by the interaction of three components:

- **Domain-relevant skills** – knowledge and expertise in a specific field
- **Creativity-relevant processes** – cognitive styles and problem-solving abilities
- **Intrinsic motivation** – the internal drive to engage in creative activities

Leadership influences all three components. For instance, leaders can enhance domain-relevant skills by providing training and access to technological resources. They can also foster creativity-relevant processes by encouraging experimentation and critical thinking. Most importantly, leaders can influence intrinsic motivation by creating a work environment that values autonomy, recognition, and meaningful work (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

In fashion firms, technological creativity requires a combination of artistic skills and technical knowledge. Leaders who support interdisciplinary collaboration between designers, engineers, and data scientists can enhance all three components of creativity.

3.3 Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic capabilities theory, developed by Teece (2018), focuses on an organisation's ability to adapt to changing environments by integrating, building, and reconfiguring internal and external competencies. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of technological innovation, where rapid changes require continuous adaptation.

Leadership plays a critical role in developing dynamic capabilities by:

- Sensing opportunities and threats

- Seizing opportunities through strategic decision-making
- Transforming organisational resources to maintain competitiveness

In the fashion industry, dynamic capabilities enable firms to respond to technological trends such as digitalisation and sustainability. Leaders who can effectively manage these capabilities are better positioned to foster technological creativity.

3.4 Integration of Theories

The integration of these three theories provides a holistic framework for understanding the relationship between leadership and technological creativity.

- **Transformational leadership** explains how leaders influence employee behaviour and motivation.
- **Componential theory** explains how creativity is generated at the individual level.
- **Dynamic capabilities theory** explains how organisations adapt and innovate at the macro level.

Together, these theories suggest that leadership influences technological creativity through both individual and organisational mechanisms.

3.5 Conceptual Model

Based on the theoretical framework, the study proposes the following conceptual model:

Leadership Style → Organisational Culture → Employee Motivation →

Technological Creativity → Innovation Outcomes

Organisational culture and employee motivation act as mediating variables, while technological creativity serves as the key outcome influenced by leadership.

3.6 Propositions

The study develops the following propositions:

- **P1:** Transformational leadership positively influences technological creativity.
- **P2:** Organisational culture mediates the relationship between leadership and creativity.
- **P3:** Employee intrinsic motivation enhances technological creativity.
- **P4:** Dynamic capabilities strengthen the impact of leadership on innovation outcomes.

These propositions guide the qualitative analysis conducted in this study.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data to explore the influence of leadership on technological creativity in fashion firms. Qualitative research is appropriate for examining complex social phenomena and gaining in-depth insights into relationships that cannot be easily quantified (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A qualitative approach allows the researcher to analyse diverse sources of information, including academic literature, industry reports, and case studies. This is particularly

useful in the context of fashion firms, where innovation processes are often context-specific and influenced by multiple factors.

4.1 Research Approach

The study follows an interpretivist research paradigm, which emphasises understanding the subjective meanings and experiences associated with leadership and creativity. This approach is suitable for exploring how leadership practices influence technological creativity in different organisational contexts.

An inductive approach is employed to identify patterns and themes from the data. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses, the study seeks to generate insights based on the analysis of secondary data.

4.2 Data Sources

Secondary data were collected from a variety of credible sources, including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Academic books
- Industry reports (e.g., McKinsey & Company, Bain & Company)
- Case studies of fashion firms
- Conference papers and white papers

These sources provide a comprehensive view of leadership practices and technological innovation in the fashion industry. The use of multiple data sources enhances the robustness of the study by enabling data triangulation, which improves the validity of findings (Yin, 2018).

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved:

- **Literature Search:** Relevant studies were identified using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science.
- **Selection Criteria:** Sources were selected based on relevance, credibility, and recency.
- **Data Extraction:** Key information related to leadership, creativity, and technological innovation was extracted.

This systematic approach ensures that the data used in the study are reliable and relevant.

4.4 Data Analysis Method

The study employs thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying and analysing patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis was conducted in the following steps:

- **Familiarisation:** Reviewing and understanding the data
- **Coding:** Identifying relevant concepts and assigning codes
- **Theme Development:** Grouping codes into themes
- **Interpretation:** Analysing themes in relation to the research objectives

Thematic analysis allows for the identification of key themes such as leadership styles, organisational culture, and technological innovation.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the rigour of the study, several measures were taken:

- **Credibility:** Use of peer-reviewed and authoritative sources
- **Transferability:** Providing detailed descriptions of the research context
- **Dependability:** Follow a systematic data collection and analysis process
- **Confirmability:** Minimising researcher bias through triangulation

These measures align with qualitative research standards (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Since the study is based on secondary data, ethical concerns are minimal. However, proper citation and acknowledgement of sources were ensured to maintain academic integrity (Mannan & Farhana, 2026).

4.7 Limitations of Methodology

The study has several limitations:

- Reliance on secondary data may limit the depth of insights
- Lack of primary data may reduce contextual specificity
- Potential bias in selected sources

Despite these limitations, the qualitative approach provides valuable insights into leadership and technological creativity.

5. Findings and Analysis

This section presents the key findings derived from the thematic analysis of secondary data. The analysis reveals that leadership significantly influences technological creativity in fashion firms through multiple interconnected dimensions, including leadership style, organisational culture,

digital transformation, employee empowerment, and structural constraints.

5.1 Leadership Styles and Technological Creativity

The findings indicate that leadership style is a primary determinant of technological creativity. Among various leadership approaches, transformational leadership emerges as the most influential in fostering innovation.

5.1.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership plays a critical role in encouraging technological creativity by promoting vision, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation. Leaders who adopt this style motivate employees to challenge existing norms and explore innovative technological solutions. This aligns with Bass and Riggio's (2006) assertion that transformational leaders foster higher levels of creativity through inspirational motivation and individualised consideration.

In fashion firms, transformational leaders often encourage experimentation with emerging technologies such as AI-driven design tools and digital prototyping. By creating a psychologically safe environment, these leaders reduce the fear of failure, which is essential for creative risk-taking. Empirical evidence suggests that transformational leadership positively correlates with innovation outcomes by enhancing intrinsic motivation and creative self-efficacy (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009).

5.1.2 Participative Leadership

Participative leadership also plays a significant role in fostering technological

creativity. This leadership style involves employees in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing collaboration and idea generation. In the context of fashion firms, where interdisciplinary collaboration is crucial, participative leadership facilitates knowledge sharing between designers, technologists, and marketers.

The findings suggest that participative leadership enhances creativity by leveraging diverse perspectives. This is consistent with the literature on collaborative innovation, which emphasises the importance of teamwork in generating novel ideas (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Employees who feel valued and included are more likely to contribute creative ideas, leading to improved technological outcomes.

5.1.3 Transactional and Authoritarian Leadership

In contrast, transactional and authoritarian leadership styles are found to have a limited or negative impact on technological creativity. Transactional leadership, which focuses on performance and rewards, may ensure efficiency but often restricts creative exploration. Similarly, authoritarian leadership discourages autonomy and risk-taking, which are essential for innovation.

The analysis reveals that rigid leadership structures can stifle creativity by imposing strict controls and limiting employee input. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that controlling leadership behaviours reduces intrinsic motivation and creative performance (Amabile, 1996).

5.2 Organisational Culture as a Mediating Factor

Organisational culture emerges as a critical mediator in the relationship between leadership and technological creativity. Leaders shape culture by establishing values, norms, and practices that influence employee behaviour (Schein, 2017).

5.2.1 Innovation-Oriented Culture

An innovation-oriented culture is characterised by openness to new ideas, collaboration, and tolerance for failure. The findings indicate that such a culture significantly enhances technological creativity by encouraging experimentation and continuous learning.

In fashion firms, where creativity is central to success, an innovation-friendly culture allows employees to explore new technologies without fear of failure. Leaders who promote this culture create an environment conducive to creativity and innovation.

5.2.2 Learning Culture

A learning-oriented culture also plays a crucial role in fostering technological creativity. Continuous learning enables employees to acquire new skills and adapt to technological changes. Leaders who invest in training and development programs enhance employees' domain-relevant skills, a key component of creativity (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

5.3 Digital Transformation as a Catalyst

Digital transformation is identified as both a driver and an outcome of technological creativity. The adoption of digital technologies enables fashion firms to innovate and improve efficiency.

5.3.1 Role of Leadership in Digital Transformation

Leadership plays a critical role in driving digital transformation by setting strategic priorities and allocating resources. Leaders who embrace digital technologies create opportunities for innovation by providing employees with the necessary tools and infrastructure.

For example, the use of AI in trend forecasting and virtual prototyping has transformed the design process, enabling faster and more accurate decision-making (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Leaders who support these technologies enhance technological creativity by facilitating experimentation and collaboration.

5.3.2 Integration of Technology and Creativity

The findings highlight the importance of integrating technology with creativity. In fashion firms, technological creativity involves not only adopting new technologies but also using them creatively to develop innovative products and processes.

5.4 Employee Empowerment and Motivation

Employee empowerment is another key factor influencing technological creativity.

Empowered employees are more likely to engage in creative activities and contribute innovative ideas.

5.4.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is identified as a critical driver of creativity. Employees who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in creative problem-solving and experimentation (Amabile, 1996). Leadership practices such as autonomy, recognition, and meaningful work enhance intrinsic motivation.

5.4.2 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is also essential for creativity. Employees must feel safe to express ideas and take risks without fear of negative consequences. Transformational and participative leadership styles contribute to psychological safety by fostering trust and open communication.

5.5 Barriers to Technological Creativity

Despite the positive influence of leadership, several barriers to technological creativity are identified.

5.5.1 Structural Constraints

Rigid organisational structures and bureaucratic processes can hinder creativity by limiting flexibility and responsiveness. These structures often discourage experimentation and slow down innovation.

5.5.2 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is another significant barrier. Employees may be reluctant to adopt new technologies due to fear of uncertainty or lack of skills. Leadership plays a crucial

role in overcoming this resistance by providing support and training.

5.5.3 Resource Limitations

Limited access to resources, including technology and funding, can also restrict innovation. Leaders must ensure adequate resource allocation to support technological creativity.

5.6 Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings suggest that leadership influences technological creativity through a complex interplay of factors. Transformational and participative leadership styles are particularly effective in fostering innovation, while organisational culture, digital transformation, and employee empowerment serve as critical mediators.

6. Discussion

This section provides an in-depth interpretation of the findings, linking them to existing theories and literature. The discussion highlights the implications of leadership for technological creativity in fashion firms and offers a critical analysis of the results.

6.1 Leadership as a Driver of Technological Creativity

The findings reinforce the central role of leadership in fostering technological creativity. Transformational leadership, in particular, emerges as a key driver of innovation. This is consistent with the theoretical framework, which emphasises the importance of leadership in shaping employee motivation and organisational culture (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformational leaders influence creativity by providing a compelling vision and encouraging intellectual stimulation. This aligns with the Componential Theory of Creativity, which highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in creative performance (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). By fostering intrinsic motivation, leaders enhance employees' willingness to engage in creative activities.

6.2 Mediating Role of Organisational Culture

The discussion highlights the importance of organisational culture as a mediator between leadership and technological creativity. Leaders shape culture by establishing norms and values that influence employee behaviour (Schein, 2017).

An innovation-oriented culture encourages experimentation and risk-taking, which are essential for creativity. This finding supports previous research indicating that organisational culture plays a critical role in innovation (Teece, 2018).

In fashion firms, where creativity is a core competency, the role of culture is particularly significant. Leaders must create an environment that supports both artistic and technological innovation.

6.3 Digital Transformation and Innovation

Digital transformation is identified as a key factor influencing technological creativity. Leaders who embrace digital technologies can enhance innovation by providing the necessary tools and infrastructure.

The discussion highlights the importance of integrating technology with creativity. In fashion firms, technological creativity involves not only adopting new technologies but also using them creatively to develop innovative products and processes.

This finding aligns with dynamic capabilities theory, which emphasises the importance of adapting to changing environments (Teece, 2018). Leaders who develop dynamic capabilities are better positioned to drive technological innovation.

6.4 Employee Empowerment and Motivation

The findings underscore the importance of employee empowerment and intrinsic motivation in fostering creativity. Leadership practices that promote autonomy and recognition enhance motivation and encourage creative behaviour.

Psychological safety is also identified as a critical factor. Employees must feel safe to express ideas and take risks. This finding is consistent with research on innovation, which emphasises the importance of trust and open communication (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

6.5 Challenges and Barriers

The discussion also highlights several challenges associated with technological creativity. Structural constraints, resistance to change, and resource limitations can hinder innovation.

These challenges underscore the need for adaptive leadership. Leaders must be flexible and responsive to changing conditions,

aligning with the principles of dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2018).

6.6 Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to the literature by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives to explain the relationship between leadership and technological creativity. It extends existing research by focusing on the fashion industry, a relatively underexplored context.

6.7 Practical Implications

The findings have important implications for practitioners. Fashion firms should:

- Adopt transformational leadership practices
- Promote an innovation-oriented culture
- Invest in digital technologies
- Empower employees

6.8 Future Research Directions

Future research could explore the role of leadership in different cultural contexts or use primary data to validate the findings.

7. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the influence of leadership on technological creativity in fashion firms, highlighting the critical role of leadership in shaping innovation outcomes in an increasingly digitalised and competitive environment. The findings demonstrate that leadership is not merely a managerial function but a strategic driver of creativity and technological advancement. In particular, transformational and participative leadership

styles emerge as the most effective approaches for fostering technological creativity, as they promote vision, intellectual stimulation, collaboration, and intrinsic motivation among employees.

The study further reveals that leadership influences technological creativity both directly and indirectly through key mediating factors. Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in this relationship, as leaders shape an environment that either encourages or inhibits innovation. An innovation-oriented culture characterised by openness, collaboration, and tolerance for failure is essential for sustaining creative processes in fashion firms. Similarly, employee empowerment and psychological safety are critical in enabling individuals to experiment with new ideas and technologies without fear of negative consequences.

Digital transformation is identified as another significant dimension of technological creativity. Leaders who actively embrace digital technologies and invest in technological infrastructure create opportunities for innovation and competitive advantage. The integration of technology with creative processes allows fashion firms to enhance efficiency, improve product development, and respond more effectively to changing consumer demands.

However, the study also highlights several challenges that may hinder technological creativity, including rigid organisational structures, resistance to change, and resource limitations. These barriers underscore the need for adaptive and flexible leadership capable of navigating complex and dynamic environments. Leaders must not only drive

innovation but also manage change effectively by fostering a culture of continuous learning and development.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating multiple frameworks, transformational leadership, componential creativity, and dynamic capabilities, to provide a holistic understanding of technological creativity in the fashion industry. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for industry practitioners, emphasising the importance of leadership development, cultural transformation, and strategic investment in technology.

In conclusion, the study underscores that the future success of fashion firms depends on their ability to align leadership practices with technological innovation. Leaders who can effectively integrate creativity and technology will be better positioned to achieve sustainable growth and maintain a competitive edge in the evolving global fashion landscape.

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