Tourism Heritage and Cultural Studies

Volume: 6 Issue: 3
(July-September), 2026
(ISSN: 2791-2620)

KMF Publishers

www.kmf-publishers.com /thcs/

OPEN ACCESS Freely available online

Tourism Heritage and Cultural Studies

Research Article

The Role of Organisational Culture in Fashion Innovation: A Multiple Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping innovation capabilities within the global fashion industry, a sector characterised by rapid trend cycles, digital transformation, and increasing sustainability pressures. This study investigates how organisational culture influences fashion innovation through a qualitative multiple case study approach based on secondary data. Drawing upon established theoretical frameworks such as Schein's organisational culture model and the Competing Values Framework (CVF), the research analyses selected fashion brands, including sustainability-driven, digitally innovative, and culturally embedded firms. Findings reveal that innovation in fashion is strongly influenced by cultural dimensions such as openness to risk, cross-functional collaboration, leadership vision, and alignment between internal values and external brand identity. The study further demonstrates that organisations fostering adaptive, learning-oriented cultures are more likely to succeed in implementing technological innovations, sustainable practices, and creative design processes. Conversely, rigid hierarchical cultures tend to constrain innovation. The research contributes to the literature by linking organisational culture with fashion-specific innovation dynamics and offers practical implications for managers seeking to build innovation-oriented cultures.

Keywords: Organisational Culture, Fashion Innovation, Qualitative Research, Multiple Case Study, Sustainability, Digital Transformation

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Received: 20 May 2026; **Accepted: 30 June** 2026; **Published: 3 July 2026**
Citation: Murmu. A., Monika, S.J., & Mannan, K.A. (2026). The Role of Organisational Culture in Fashion Innovation: A Multiple Case Study. *Tourism Heritage and Cultural Studies*, **6**(3), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.v6i3.thcs.7

1. Introduction

The global fashion industry is characterised by rapid change, intense competition, and continuous demand for novelty. In this dynamic environment, innovation has become a central strategic imperative for fashion organisations seeking to maintain relevance and competitive advantage. Innovation in fashion extends beyond aesthetic design to encompass technological integration, sustainable production, and novel business models. While much of the literature emphasises external drivers of innovation, such as market trends, digital transformation, and consumer behaviour, less attention has been paid to internal organisational factors, particularly organisational culture, that shape the capacity for innovation.

Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide behaviour within an organisation (Edgar H. Schein, 2010). It influences how employees perceive problems, generate ideas, and respond to change. In creative industries such as fashion, where innovation is closely tied to creativity and symbolic value, culture plays an especially critical role. A supportive organisational culture can foster experimentation, collaboration, and risk-taking, while a rigid or hierarchical culture may inhibit creative expression and limit innovation potential (Amabile, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

The fashion industry presents a unique context for examining the relationship between organisational culture and innovation. Unlike many other industries, fashion operates at the intersection of art, commerce, and technology. Designers and creative teams must continuously reinterpret cultural trends while responding to market demands and sustainability challenges. This dual pressure requires organisations to balance creativity with efficiency, tradition with innovation, and risk-taking with strategic control. As such, the internal cultural environment becomes a critical determinant of how successfully organisations navigate these tensions.

In recent years, the industry has undergone a significant transformation due to digitalisation and sustainability imperatives. Digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and blockchain have reshaped design processes, supply chains, and consumer engagement. At the same time, growing awareness of environmental and social issues has led to increased emphasis on sustainable innovation, including circular fashion, ethical sourcing, and eco-friendly materials (Fletcher, 2014; Niinimäki et al., 2020). These developments require organisations to adopt adaptive and forward-thinking cultures that support continuous learning and innovation.

Theoretical perspectives on organisational culture provide a useful lens for understanding these dynamics. Schein's (2010) model conceptualises culture as existing at multiple levels, from visible artefacts to deeply embedded assumptions. Similarly, the Competing Values Framework (CVF) developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011) categorises organisational cultures into four types: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy, each with distinct implications for innovation. Adhocracy cultures, characterised by flexibility and risk-taking, are generally associated with higher levels of innovation, while hierarchical cultures may constrain creativity through rigid structures and formalised procedures.

Empirical research supports the link between organisational culture and innovation. Studies have shown that cultures emphasising openness, collaboration, and learning are more conducive to innovative behaviour (Hurley & Hult, 1998; Jaskyte & Dressler, 2005). In the context of fashion, this relationship is particularly significant because innovation often emerges from collaborative processes involving designers, marketers, technologists, and supply chain actors. The integration of diverse perspectives requires a culture that values communication, trust, and shared vision.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of organisational culture, there remains a lack of comprehensive research examining its role in fashion innovation. Existing studies tend to focus either on innovation in general or on cultural aspects in isolation, without fully exploring their intersection within the fashion industry. Furthermore, much of the research relies on quantitative methods, which may not capture the nuanced and context-specific nature of cultural dynamics in creative industries.

To address this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative multiple case study approach based on secondary data to explore how organisational culture influences innovation in fashion firms. By analysing diverse cases, including sustainability-oriented brands, digitally innovative companies, and culturally embedded artisanal firms, the study aims to identify common patterns and unique variations in how culture shapes innovation processes.

The objectives of this research are threefold. First, it seeks to examine the key cultural dimensions that influence innovation in the fashion industry. Second, it aims to analyse how different types of organisational culture facilitate or hinder innovation. Third, it intends to contribute to both theoretical and practical understanding by integrating established cultural frameworks with industry-specific insights.

This study is significant for several reasons. From a theoretical perspective, it extends existing research on organisational culture and innovation by applying it to the fashion industry, thereby addressing a notable gap in the literature. From a practical standpoint, it provides insights for managers and practitioners seeking to foster innovation through cultural transformation. In an industry where success depends on the ability to anticipate and shape trends, understanding the cultural foundations of innovation is essential.

In conclusion, organisational culture is a critical yet underexplored factor in fashion innovation. By examining its role through a qualitative multiple case study approach, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how internal organisational dynamics shape creative and innovative outcomes in the fashion industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualising Organisational Culture

Organisational culture has been a central concept in management and organisational studies for several decades. It is commonly defined as the shared system of values, beliefs, and assumptions that influence behaviour within an organisation (Schein, 2010). Culture shapes how individuals interpret their environment, interact with others, and respond to challenges, making it a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness.

Schein (2010) conceptualises culture as existing at three levels: artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Artefacts are the visible elements of culture, such as organisational structures, dress codes, and communication patterns. Espoused values represent the organisation's stated principles and goals, while underlying assumptions are deeply embedded beliefs that are often taken for granted. These levels interact to create a coherent cultural system that influences organisational behaviour.

Another influential framework is the Competing Values Framework (CVF) developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011), which categorises organisational culture into four types: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy. Clan cultures emphasise collaboration and employee involvement, adhocracy cultures prioritise innovation and risk-taking, market cultures focus on competitiveness and results, and hierarchy cultures stress stability and control. This typology provides a useful lens for analysing how different cultural orientations impact innovation.

Research suggests that organisational culture is not static but evolves in response to internal and external factors. Leaders play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing culture through their actions, decisions, and communication (Schein, 2010). In the fashion industry, where creativity and change are constant, the ability to adapt cultural norms is particularly important.

2.2 Innovation in the Fashion Industry

Innovation in the fashion industry is multifaceted, encompassing product, process, marketing, and business model innovation. Unlike traditional industries, fashion innovation is closely linked to cultural and symbolic value, as products often serve as expressions of identity and social meaning (Crane, 2012).

Product innovation involves the creation of new designs, materials, and styles. Process innovation includes improvements in production techniques, such as the adoption of digital manufacturing and automation. Marketing innovation focuses on new ways of engaging consumers, including social media campaigns and influencer marketing. Business model innovation involves changes in how value is created and delivered, such as subscription services and circular fashion models.

The rise of digital technologies has significantly transformed the fashion industry. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and 3D printing have enabled new forms of design, production, and consumer interaction (McKinsey & Company, 2023). For example, virtual fashion shows and digital garments have emerged as innovative ways to engage consumers and reduce environmental impact.

Sustainability has also become a major driver of innovation. The fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to environmental pollution, prompting increased demand for sustainable practices. Innovations such as eco-friendly materials, recycling technologies, and circular business models are gaining prominence (Fletcher, 2014; Niinimäki et al., 2020). These developments require organisations to integrate sustainability into their core values and practices.

2.3 Organisational Culture and Innovation

The relationship between organisational culture and innovation has been widely studied in the management literature. A strong and supportive culture can enhance innovation by encouraging creativity, facilitating knowledge sharing, and promoting risk-taking (Amabile, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

Amabile (1996) emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation and a supportive work environment in fostering creativity. Organisations that provide autonomy, resources, and encouragement are more likely to generate innovative ideas. Similarly, Martins and Terblanche (2003) identify key cultural dimensions that support innovation, including strategy, structure, support mechanisms, and communication.

Hurley and Hult (1998) argue that organisations with cultures that value learning and openness to change are better positioned to innovate. Such cultures promote experimentation and continuous improvement, enabling organisations to adapt to changing market conditions. Jaskyte and Dressler (2005) further highlight the role of cultural values in shaping innovation outcomes, noting that flexibility and adaptability are critical for innovation.

The CVF framework provides additional insights into the relationship between culture and innovation. Adhocracy cultures, characterised by flexibility and creativity, are most conducive to innovation. Clan cultures also support innovation through collaboration and knowledge sharing. In contrast, hierarchical cultures may hinder innovation due to their emphasis on control and formalisation (Cameron & Quinn, 2011).

2.4 Organisational Culture in the Fashion Industry

In the fashion industry, organisational culture plays a particularly important role due to the creative and collaborative nature of work. Designers, marketers, and technologists must work together to develop innovative products and experiences. This requires a culture that supports interdisciplinary collaboration and open communication.

Research on fashion organisations highlights the importance of creativity, experimentation, and cultural awareness. Fashion firms often draw inspiration from diverse cultural sources, making cultural openness a key driver of innovation (Crane, 2012). At the same time, the industry's fastpaced nature requires organisations to be agile and responsive to change.

Luxury fashion brands, for example, often balance tradition and innovation. While maintaining their heritage and brand identity, they must also adapt to new technologies and consumer preferences. This requires a culture that values both stability and flexibility.

Sustainability-oriented fashion brands provide another example of the role of culture in innovation. These organisations integrate environmental and social values into their culture, influencing decision-making and innovation processes. Employees are encouraged to experiment with sustainable materials and practices, leading to innovative solutions.

2.5 Gaps in the Existing Literature

Despite the extensive research on organisational culture and innovation, several gaps remain. First, there is limited research focusing specifically on the fashion industry. Most studies examine innovation in manufacturing or technology sectors, which may not fully capture the unique characteristics of fashion.

Second, existing research often treats organisational culture as a static variable, without considering its dynamic and evolving nature. In reality, culture is continuously shaped by internal and external factors, particularly in industries undergoing rapid change.

Third, there is a lack of qualitative research exploring the nuanced relationship between culture and innovation. Quantitative studies may overlook the complex interactions and contextual factors that influence innovation processes.

Finally, few studies adopt a multiple case study approach to compare different cultural contexts within the fashion industry. Such an approach can provide deeper insights into how culture influences innovation across diverse organisational settings.

The literature suggests that organisational culture is a critical determinant of innovation, influencing creativity, collaboration, and adaptability. In the fashion industry, where innovation is essential for competitiveness, understanding the role of culture is particularly important. However, there is a need for more comprehensive and context-specific research to fully understand this relationship.

3. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the relationship between organisational culture and innovation in the fashion industry requires a robust theoretical foundation that integrates established cultural theories with innovation studies. This research adopts a multi-theoretical approach, primarily drawing on Schein's Organisational Culture Model, the Competing Values Framework (CVF), and insights from innovation theory to explain how internal cultural dynamics shape innovation outcomes.

3.1 Schein's Organisational Culture Model

The foundational framework for this study is the model proposed by Edgar H. Schein (2010), who conceptualises organisational culture as a system of shared assumptions developed through collective learning. According to Schein, culture operates at three interrelated levels: artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions.

Artefacts represent the visible manifestations of culture, including organisational structures, communication patterns, and workplace design. In the fashion industry, artefacts may include studio layouts, collaborative design processes, and digital innovation tools. Espoused values refer to the organisation's declared principles, such as commitments to creativity, sustainability, or innovation. Underlying assumptions, the deepest level, consist of unconscious beliefs that guide behaviour, such as attitudes toward risk-taking, experimentation, and change.

This model is particularly relevant to fashion innovation because it highlights how deeply embedded cultural beliefs influence creative processes. For example, an organisation that implicitly values experimentation and tolerates failure is more likely to foster innovative design and technological adoption. Conversely, organisations with risk-averse assumptions may limit creative exploration and innovation potential.

3.2 Competing Values Framework (CVF)

To complement Schein's model, this study incorporates the Competing Values Framework developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011), which provides a typological approach to understanding organisational culture. The CVF categorises cultures into four types: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy.

Adhocracy culture is particularly relevant for innovation, as it emphasises flexibility, creativity, and risk-taking. Organisations with this culture encourage employees to experiment and develop novel ideas, making it highly conducive to fashion innovation. Clan culture, characterised by collaboration and a strong sense of community, also supports innovation by facilitating knowledge sharing and teamwork.

In contrast, a hierarchical culture prioritises stability, control, and formal procedures, which may hinder innovation by restricting creativity and limiting flexibility. Market culture focuses on competitiveness and performance outcomes, which can drive innovation but may also create pressure that discourages experimentation.

The CVF framework allows for a comparative analysis of different cultural orientations within fashion organisations, helping to identify which cultural types are most supportive of innovation.

3.3 Innovation Theory and Organisational Context

Innovation theory provides additional insights into how organisational culture influences innovation processes. Innovation is commonly defined as the implementation of new or significantly improved products, processes, or practices (OECD, 2018). In the fashion industry, innovation encompasses not only product design but also business models, digital technologies, and sustainability practices.

Scholars such as Amabile (1996) emphasise the role of organisational context in fostering creativity and innovation. According to the componential theory of creativity, innovation is influenced by individual creativity, domain expertise, and the organisational environment. A supportive culture enhances intrinsic motivation, encourages idea generation, and provides the resources necessary for innovation.

Similarly, Hurley and Hult (1998) highlight the importance of organisational learning and openness to change as key drivers of innovation. Organisations that cultivate learning-oriented cultures are better equipped to adapt to evolving market conditions and technological advancements.

3.4 Integrative Conceptual Framework

Based on the above theories, this study proposes an integrative conceptual framework linking organisational culture to innovation outcomes in the fashion industry. The framework suggests that:

Organisational Culture (Artefacts, Values, Assumptions) → Innovation Drivers (Creativity, Collaboration, Risk-Taking) → Innovation Outcomes (Product, Process, and Business Model Innovation)

At the core of this framework is the assumption that culture shapes the behavioural and cognitive processes that underpin innovation. Cultural elements such as openness, trust, and shared vision influence how employees interact, share knowledge, and generate ideas.

Furthermore, the framework acknowledges the moderating role of external factors, such as market trends and technological developments, which interact with internal culture to shape innovation outcomes. For example, the adoption of digital technologies in fashion requires not only technical capabilities but also a culture that supports experimentation and change.

3.5 Relevance to the Fashion Industry

The integration of these theoretical perspectives is particularly relevant to the fashion industry, where innovation is both a creative and strategic process. Fashion organisations must continuously balance artistic expression with commercial viability, requiring a culture that supports both creativity and discipline.

By combining Schein's model, the CVF, and innovation theory, this study provides a comprehensive framework for analysing how organisational culture influences innovation in fashion firms. This framework serves as the foundation for the empirical analysis presented in subsequent sections.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a multiple case study approach to explore the relationship between organisational culture and innovation in the fashion industry. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for examining complex social phenomena, such as organisational culture, which involves subjective meanings, values, and interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The multiple case study method allows for in-depth analysis of different organisational contexts, enabling the identification of patterns and variations across cases (Yin, 2018). By examining multiple fashion organisations with diverse cultural orientations, the study aims to generate rich insights into how culture influences innovation.

4.2 Data Sources and Collection

The research relies on secondary data, which includes a wide range of publicly available sources such as:

- Academic journal articles
- Industry reports (e.g., McKinsey & Company, Business of Fashion)
- Company websites and sustainability reports
- News articles and case studies

Secondary data is particularly useful for studying organisations that may not be easily accessible for primary data collection. It also allows for the analysis of multiple cases across different geographical and organisational contexts.

To ensure reliability and validity, data were selected based on credibility, relevance, and recency. Peer-reviewed academic sources and reputable industry reports were prioritised.

4.3 Case Selection Criteria

The study employs purposive sampling to select cases that represent different types of organisational culture and innovation strategies. The selection criteria include:

- **Relevance to the research topic** (organisations known for innovation)
- **Diversity of cultural orientation** (e.g., sustainability-driven, digital-first, heritage-based)
- **Availability of sufficient secondary data**

Based on these criteria, the study includes three broad categories of fashion organisations:

- Sustainability-oriented brands
- Digitally innovative fashion companies
- Heritage and artisanal fashion brands

This diversity enables comparative analysis and enhances the generalizability of findings.

4.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employs thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying and analysing patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process involves several steps:

- **Data familiarisation:** Reviewing and organising collected data
- **Coding:** Identifying relevant themes related to organisational culture and innovation
- **Theme development:** Grouping codes into broader categories
- **Interpretation:** Analysing relationships between themes

Key themes identified in this study include leadership, collaboration, risk-taking, sustainability orientation, and digital transformation. Thematic analysis allows for a flexible and systematic examination of qualitative data, making it well-suited for this research.

4.5 Ensuring Research Quality

To enhance the rigour of the study, several strategies were employed:

- **Credibility:** Use of multiple data sources (triangulation)
- **Dependability:** Transparent documentation of research procedures
- **Confirmability:** Minimisation of researcher bias through systematic analysis
- **Transferability:** Selection of diverse cases to enable broader applicability

These criteria align with established standards for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

As the study is based on secondary data, it does not involve direct interaction with human participants. However, ethical considerations were addressed by Mannan & Farhana (2026):

- Properly citing all sources
- Avoiding misrepresentation of data
- Ensuring academic integrity

4.7 Limitations of the Methodology

While the use of secondary data provides valuable insights, it also has limitations. The study relies on existing information, which may not capture all aspects of organisational culture. Additionally, the interpretation of data is subject to researcher bias. Despite these limitations, the multiple case study approach provides a robust framework for exploring the complex relationship between organisational culture and innovation.

5. Case Studies

This study adopts a multiple case study approach to explore how organisational culture shapes innovation across different segments of the fashion industry. The selected cases represent diverse cultural orientations, including sustainability-driven, digitally innovative, and heritage-based fashion organisations. These cases provide a comparative perspective on how internal cultural dynamics influence innovation processes and outcomes.

5.1 Sustainability-Oriented Culture: Ganni

Ganni, a contemporary Danish fashion brand, is widely recognised for embedding sustainability into its organisational culture. Unlike traditional fashion firms that treat sustainability as a peripheral initiative, Ganni integrates environmental and social responsibility into its core values and strategic decision-making processes. This cultural orientation significantly influences its approach to innovation.

At the level of espoused values, Ganni explicitly promotes transparency, responsibility, and continuous improvement in sustainability practices. These values are reflected in its initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, use innovative materials, and adopt circular design principles. According to Fletcher (2014), sustainability-driven innovation requires a cultural commitment that goes beyond compliance, aligning organisational values with environmental goals.

At the artefact level, Ganni's culture is evident in its collaborative design processes and cross-functional teams that work on sustainability projects. Employees are encouraged to experiment with new materials and production techniques, reflecting an underlying assumption that innovation is essential for achieving sustainability objectives. This aligns with the argument by Niinimäki et al. (2020) that sustainable fashion innovation is driven by organisational cultures that prioritise long-term environmental impact over short-term profitability.

Ganni's case illustrates how a strong sustainability-oriented culture can foster innovation by encouraging experimentation, collaboration, and alignment between organisational values and external brand identity.

5.2 Digital Innovation Culture: Gucci

Gucci represents a leading example of digital innovation in the luxury fashion sector. The brand has embraced emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and digital fashion platforms to enhance customer engagement and brand experience. This transformation is closely linked to its organisational culture, which emphasises creativity, experimentation, and technological adoption.

Under visionary leadership, Gucci has cultivated an adhocracy-oriented culture that encourages risk-taking and innovation. Employees are empowered to explore new digital concepts, such as virtual fashion shows and digital collectables, which have redefined traditional fashion experiences. McKinsey & Company (2023) highlights that digital transformation in fashion requires not only technological investment but also a cultural shift toward agility and innovation.

Gucci's culture also promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together designers, technologists, and marketers to develop integrated digital solutions. This collaborative approach aligns with the findings of Hurley and Hult (1998), who emphasise the importance of knowledge sharing and organisational learning in fostering innovation.

The case of Gucci demonstrates how a digitally oriented organisational culture can drive innovation by enabling the integration of technology into creative processes and customer experiences.

5.3 Heritage-Based Innovation: Gunia Project

The Gunia Project, a Ukrainian fashion and homeware brand, offers a unique perspective on innovation rooted in cultural heritage. The organisation's culture is deeply embedded in traditional craftsmanship, ethnographic research, and cultural preservation. Rather than viewing tradition as a constraint, the brand leverages it as a source of innovation.

At the level of underlying assumptions, the Gunia Project values authenticity, cultural identity, and artisanal knowledge. These assumptions guide its design philosophy, which involves reinterpreting traditional motifs and techniques in contemporary contexts. Crane (2012) argues that fashion innovation often emerges from the reinterpretation of cultural symbols, making heritage-based approaches particularly relevant.

The organisation's culture also emphasises collaboration with local artisans, fostering knowledge exchange and preserving traditional skills. This collaborative model reflects a clan-oriented culture that prioritises relationships and community engagement. Martins and Terblanche (2003) note that such cultures support innovation by facilitating communication and shared learning.

The Gunia Project illustrates how organisational culture can drive innovation by integrating tradition with modern design, creating unique products that resonate with both local and global audiences.

5.4 Entrepreneurial Innovation Culture: Hugo Boss

Hugo Boss represents a case of organisational transformation toward an entrepreneurial and innovation-driven culture. Facing challenges in a rapidly changing market, the company has adopted strategies to enhance its innovation capabilities, including digital transformation and brand revitalisation.

The organisation has shifted from a hierarchical culture to a more flexible and market-oriented culture, emphasising agility, customer focus, and performance. This transition reflects the importance of cultural adaptability in fostering innovation. According to Cameron and Quinn (2011), organisations that successfully transition toward adhocracy or market cultures are better positioned to respond to dynamic market conditions.

Hugo Boss has also invested in digital technologies and data-driven decision-making, enabling more efficient product development and customer engagement. This aligns with the findings of Amabile (1996), who emphasises the role of organisational support and resources in facilitating innovation.

This case highlights how cultural transformation can enable organisations to enhance their innovation capabilities and adapt to changing industry dynamics.

5.5 Cross-Case Insights

Across the cases, several common themes emerge. First, organisations with strong innovation-oriented cultures tend to emphasise flexibility, collaboration, and openness to change. Second, the alignment between organisational culture and strategic goals, whether sustainability, digitalisation, or heritage preservation, is critical for successful innovation. Third, leadership plays a key role in shaping and reinforcing cultural values that support innovation.

These insights provide a foundation for the subsequent analysis of how organisational culture influences innovation in the fashion industry.

6. Findings and Analysis

The analysis of the case studies reveals several key themes that illustrate the relationship between organisational culture and innovation in the fashion industry. These themes highlight how cultural dimensions influence innovation processes and outcomes.

6.1 Leadership and Vision as Cultural Catalysts

Leadership emerges as a central factor in shaping organisational culture and driving innovation. Leaders play a crucial role in defining organisational values, setting strategic priorities, and creating an environment that supports creativity and experimentation. As noted by Edgar H. Schein (2010), leaders are the primary architects of organisational culture.

In the case of Gucci, leadership has been instrumental in fostering a culture of digital innovation. By promoting experimentation and embracing new technologies, leaders have enabled the organisation to redefine luxury fashion experiences. Similarly, Ganni's leadership has embedded sustainability into the organisation's core values, driving innovation in materials and production processes.

These findings are consistent with the literature, which emphasises the importance of visionary leadership in fostering innovation (Amabile, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Leaders who prioritise innovation and provide support for creative initiatives create a culture that encourages employees to explore new ideas.

6.2 Risk-Taking and Experimentation

A key characteristic of innovation-oriented cultures is a willingness to take risks and experiment with new ideas. The case studies demonstrate that organisations that tolerate failure and encourage experimentation are more likely to achieve innovative outcomes.

For example, Gucci's adoption of digital technologies involved significant uncertainty and risk. However, its culture of experimentation enabled the organisation to explore new opportunities and redefine customer engagement. Similarly, Ganni's experimentation with sustainable materials reflects a cultural commitment to innovation despite potential challenges.

This finding aligns with the concept of adhocracy culture in the CVF, which emphasises flexibility and risk-taking (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Organisations with such cultures are better equipped to navigate uncertainty and drive innovation.

6.3 Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

Collaboration emerges as another critical factor influencing innovation. The case studies highlight the importance of cross-functional teams and knowledge sharing in generating innovative ideas.

In Ganni, collaboration between design, production, and sustainability teams facilitates the development of innovative solutions. Similarly, the Gunia Project's collaboration with artisans enables the integration of traditional knowledge into contemporary design.

These findings support the argument by Hurley and Hult (1998) that organisational learning and knowledge sharing are essential for innovation. Clan cultures, which emphasise collaboration and trust, are particularly conducive to this process.

6.4 Alignment Between Culture and Strategic Objectives

The analysis reveals that successful innovation is closely linked to the alignment between organisational culture and strategic objectives. Organisations that integrate their core values into their innovation strategies are more likely to achieve consistent and meaningful outcomes.

For instance, Ganni's sustainability initiatives are deeply embedded in its culture, ensuring that innovation efforts are aligned with environmental goals. Similarly, Gucci's digital innovation strategy is supported by a culture that values creativity and technological experimentation.

This alignment enhances organisational coherence and ensures that innovation efforts are not fragmented or inconsistent. It also strengthens brand identity, as external stakeholders perceive a clear connection between organisational values and products.

6.5 Cultural Diversity and Innovation

Cultural diversity, both within organisations and in their external environments, plays a significant role in shaping innovation. The Gunia Project demonstrates how cultural heritage can serve as a source of inspiration for innovation, while global fashion brands draw on diverse cultural influences to create new designs.

Crane (2012) argues that fashion is inherently cultural, and innovation often involves the reinterpretation of cultural symbols. Organisations that embrace cultural diversity are better positioned to generate creative ideas and develop unique products.

6.6 Organisational Learning and Adaptability

The ability to learn and adapt is a critical component of innovation-oriented cultures. The case studies show that organisations that prioritise continuous learning are more likely to respond effectively to changing market conditions. Hugo Boss's transformation illustrates how organisational learning can drive cultural change and enhance innovation capabilities. By adopting new technologies and business models, the company has adapted to evolving consumer preferences. This finding is consistent with the literature on organisational learning, which highlights its role in fostering innovation and competitiveness (Hurley & Hult, 1998).

6.7 Barriers to Innovation: Hierarchical Culture

While the case studies primarily focus on successful innovation, they also highlight potential barriers associated with hierarchical cultures. Organisations with rigid structures and formalised procedures may struggle to foster creativity and innovation.

Hierarchy cultures, as described in the CVF, emphasise control and stability, which can limit flexibility and discourage experimentation (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This suggests that organisations seeking to enhance innovation should consider adopting more flexible and collaborative cultural models.

6.8 Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that organisational culture is a critical determinant of innovation in the fashion industry. Key cultural dimensions that support innovation include:

- Visionary leadership
- Openness to risk and experimentation
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Alignment between culture and strategy
- Embrace of cultural diversity
- Continuous learning and adaptability

These dimensions interact to create an environment that fosters creativity and innovation, enabling fashion organisations to remain competitive in a rapidly changing industry.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how organisational culture influences innovation within the fashion industry using a qualitative multiple case study approach. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Schein's model of organisational culture and the Competing Values Framework (CVF), the findings provide important insights into the cultural mechanisms that enable or constrain innovation in fashion organisations. This section discusses these findings in relation to existing literature and highlights their theoretical and practical significance.

7.1 Organisational Culture as a Foundation for Innovation

The findings of this study reinforce the argument that organisational culture is a foundational determinant of innovation. Consistent with the work of Edgar H. Schein (2010), culture shapes not only visible practices but also the underlying assumptions that guide employee behaviour. In the context of fashion, these assumptions influence how creativity is expressed, how risks are managed, and how new ideas are evaluated.

The case studies demonstrate that organisations with cultures characterised by openness, flexibility, and shared vision are more likely to foster innovation. This aligns with previous research indicating that supportive organisational environments enhance creativity and innovative behaviour (Amabile, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003). In particular, the presence of a clear and coherent cultural identity appears to be a key factor in enabling innovation. When employees understand and internalise organisational values, they are better equipped to contribute to innovation processes.

Moreover, the findings suggest that culture operates as a "soft infrastructure" that underpins innovation. While technological resources and financial investment are important, they are insufficient without a culture that encourages experimentation and collaboration. This insight contributes to the growing recognition that innovation is not solely a technical process but also a social and cultural phenomenon.

7.2 The Role of Adhocracy and Clan Cultures

A central finding of this study is the importance of adhocracy and clan cultures in fostering innovation. According to the CVF, adhocracy cultures emphasise flexibility, creativity, and risk-taking, while clan cultures prioritise collaboration and trust (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Both cultural types were evident in the case studies and were strongly associated with successful innovation outcomes.

Adhocracy cultures were particularly prominent in digitally innovative organisations, where rapid experimentation and adaptation are essential. These organisations demonstrated a willingness to embrace uncertainty and explore new technologies, reflecting the importance of risk-taking in innovation processes. This finding supports the argument by Hurley and Hult (1998) that openness to change is a critical determinant of innovation capability.

Clan cultures, on the other hand, were evident in organisations that emphasised collaboration and knowledge sharing. In the fashion industry, where innovation often emerges from interdisciplinary teamwork, such cultures play a crucial role in facilitating communication and idea exchange. The findings are consistent with Martins and Terblanche (2003), who highlight the importance of supportive relationships and shared values in fostering creativity.

However, the study also suggests that a balance between different cultural types may be necessary. While adhocracy and clan cultures promote innovation, elements of market and hierarchy cultures may be required to ensure efficiency and strategic alignment. This highlights the complexity of managing organisational culture in the fashion industry.

7.3 Leadership as a Driver of Cultural Transformation

Leadership emerged as a critical factor in shaping organisational culture and enabling innovation. The findings indicate that leaders play a central role in defining cultural values, setting strategic priorities, and creating an environment that supports creativity. This is consistent with Schein's (2010) assertion that leaders are the primary agents of cultural formation and change.

In the case studies, leadership was instrumental in driving both digital and sustainability innovations. Leaders who articulated a clear vision and demonstrated commitment to innovation were able to influence organisational behaviour and foster a culture of experimentation. This aligns with Amabile's (1996) emphasis on the role of leadership in providing support and resources for creativity.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of transformational leadership in facilitating cultural change. Organisations that successfully transitioned toward more innovative cultures did so through leadership that encouraged learning, adaptability, and employee empowerment. This finding contributes to the literature by emphasising the dynamic relationship between leadership, culture, and innovation.

7.4 Sustainability as a Cultural Imperative

One of the most significant contributions of this study is the identification of sustainability as a key cultural driver of innovation in the fashion industry. The findings demonstrate that organisations that integrate sustainability into their core values are more likely to develop innovative solutions related to materials, production processes, and business models.

This observation is consistent with the work of Fletcher (2014) and Niinimäki et al. (2020), who argue that sustainable fashion requires a fundamental shift in organisational values and practices. In the case studies, sustainability was not merely a strategic objective but a deeply embedded cultural principle that guided decision-making and innovation.

The integration of sustainability into organisational culture also enhances brand authenticity and consumer trust. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, organisations that demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainability are better positioned to differentiate themselves in the market. This underscores the strategic importance of aligning cultural values with external expectations.

7.5 Digital Transformation and Cultural Adaptability

The findings highlight the critical role of cultural adaptability in enabling digital transformation. Fashion organisations that successfully adopted digital technologies were characterised by cultures that embraced change, encouraged experimentation, and supported continuous learning.

This is consistent with McKinsey & Company (2023), which emphasises that digital transformation requires not only technological capabilities but also a cultural shift toward agility and innovation. In the fashion industry, where trends and technologies evolve rapidly, the ability to adapt is essential for maintaining competitiveness.

The study also reveals that digital innovation often involves cross-functional collaboration, requiring organisations to break down silos and foster communication across departments. This further underscores the importance of collaborative and flexible cultural environments.

7.6 Barriers to Innovation: The Limitations of Hierarchical Culture

While the study primarily focuses on enabling factors, it also identifies barriers to innovation associated with hierarchical cultures. Organisations characterised by rigid structures, formalised procedures, and centralised decision-making may struggle to foster creativity and innovation.

This finding aligns with the CVF, which suggests that hierarchy cultures prioritise stability and control at the expense of flexibility (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). In the fashion industry, where innovation requires rapid response to changing trends, such rigidity can be particularly detrimental.

However, it is important to note that hierarchy is not inherently negative. In certain contexts, it may provide the structure and discipline necessary for efficient operations. The challenge for organisations is to balance stability with flexibility, ensuring that control mechanisms do not stifle creativity.

7.7 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The study makes several contributions to the literature on organisational culture and innovation. Theoretically, it extends existing frameworks by applying them to the fashion industry, highlighting the unique cultural dynamics of this sector. It also integrates insights from multiple theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between culture and innovation.

Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for managers and practitioners. Organisations seeking to enhance innovation should focus on cultivating cultures that support creativity, collaboration, and adaptability. This may involve redefining organisational values, investing in leadership development, and promoting interdisciplinary teamwork.

8. Conclusion and Future Research

This study has demonstrated that organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping innovation in the fashion industry. By examining multiple case studies through a qualitative lens, the research highlights how cultural dimensions such as leadership, collaboration, risk-taking, and sustainability orientation influence innovation processes and outcomes. The findings confirm that innovation is not solely driven by technological or market factors but is deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of organisations.

The integration of theoretical frameworks, including Schein's model and the Competing Values Framework, provides a comprehensive understanding of how different cultural orientations facilitate or hinder innovation. In particular, adhocracy and clan cultures were found to be most conducive to innovation, while hierarchical cultures may present challenges.

While this study provides valuable insights, it also highlights opportunities for future research. First, future studies could incorporate primary data collection methods, such as interviews and surveys, to gain deeper insights into organisational culture. Second, quantitative research could be conducted to measure the relationship between culture and innovation more systematically.

Third, comparative studies across different regions and cultural contexts could enhance understanding of how cultural factors influence innovation globally. Finally, future research could explore the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, in shaping organisational culture and innovation in the fashion industry.

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