

GLOBAL MARKETS, LOCAL CREATIVITIES
Master Thesis

THE ROLE OF LONDON FASHION WEEK MEN'S IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE MENSWEAR FASHION INDUSTRY

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THE ROLE OF LONDON FASHION WEEK MEN'S IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MENSWEAR INDUSTRY

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*I want to thank Joyce Stefanova
for making me a better person and getting me through this two years
journey.*

Abstract

London Fashion Week Men's is a lens for the analysis of the menswear fashion industry in the UK since the fashion week is both a response to the changes that occurred in the industry before its establishment, but also an accelerator of internal dynamics of these changes. This study focuses on the participants of the fashion week, designers, brands and labels, those who create the content of the event and bring the audience in. The dynamics of their participation, their background and path through the platform are the aspects that define the image of the fashion week and evaluate its sustainability as a business model. At the same time, this thesis is an attempt to tell the history of the menswear fashion week in London and analyze the process of institutionalization of the menswear fashion industry in the UK. Hence, the key research question is aimed to identify the impact of the menswear fashion week in the development of the menswear fashion industry in the UK. This research is inspired by a knowledge gap on menswear fashion weeks in academia, but also by the evolving role of the menswear in market shares of the fashion industry.

The novelty of this thesis is rooted in the analysis of the data that is introduced in this study. The core of the analysis is placed within the schedules of the fashion week, the British Fashion Council press portal and news about menswear and various brands and labels in the UK.

The impact of the fashion week can be traced within different aspects, but this study shows how London Fashion Week Men's actually became a platform for the development of the designers, revitalizing the heritage of the menswear capital and promoting the growth of British menswear brands.

The structure of the thesis includes an introduction, a chapter on the history of menswear in London and construction of the discourse of the menswear fashion capital, a chapter on the history of the fashion week itself, two chapters focused on the data about the fashion week and its participants, that are analyzed in two samples, conclusions with a final discussion.

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List of Abbreviations

AW – Autumn-Winter Season

BFC – British Fashion Council

LC:M – London Collections: Men

LFW – London Fashion Week

LFWM – London Fashion Week Men's

SS – Spring-Summer Season

S1 – Sample 1

S2 – Sample 2

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Chapter I. Introduction

Background

The debate over the future of fashion weeks is accelerating while we are entering 2020s. The most recent article on Vogue.com published before the global pandemic became a reality has already included the opinions of the most prominent insiders of the industry that the fashion week model is struggling, there is room for improvement and perhaps it will remain one of the key constituents in the fashion world, but in a different shape.¹ In a way, that was prophetic, since this challenge is certainly going to change rules for many industries and fashion is not an exclusion. The global pandemic is already transforming fashion ecosystem, sales, since the shops are closed and representation models, since most of the fashion weeks were cancelled or held in digital format. According to the BOF founder and editor-in-chief, Imran Amed, "the fashion week as we knew it is over".²

That is why a closer look on the fashion model the way "we" knew it is needed in order to understand what was missing and how the future transformation is possible, especially in the context of a menswear fashion week. Since the pandemic

¹ Steff Yotka, "What Is the Future of the Fashion Show?" *Vogue.com*, February 4, 2020. <https://www.vogue.com/article/what-is-the-future-of-the-fashion-show>.

² "Jefferson Hack and Imran Amed on Fashion After Coronavirus," *AnOther*, May 5, 2020. <https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/12482/jefferson-hack-and-imran-amed-fashion-after-coronavirus-bof-dazed>.

is changing everything completely it also gives this research an opportunity to set a clear framework, having the beginning of the crisis as end point.

London Fashion Week Men's, as one of the youngest in the family of fashion capitals is a unique example for the fashion week analysis, since its history can be traced through fully digitalized archives. Even though it is still struggling to position itself and the prospects of it are even less clear than in the case of the fashion weeks showcasing womenswear, the most striking thing with this particular fashion week is that it dwells on the notion of the capital of menswear in fashion industry. At the same time, it is often challenged. "Does London need Men's Fashion Week?" was the title of the article by Alexander Fury, one of the key journalists covering the last edition of LFWM in January 2020. Indeed, how relevant this event? Fury emphasized on a high degree of talented designers the platform accommodates, but challenged viability of it with the lack of interest in it from the actual spectators from the industry. While the debate on the fashion week is intensifying with the global restructuring of the industry, London remains one of the least competitive as regards sales. Most of the sales for the participants of LFWM, even for London-based menswear designers are happening in Paris and Florence, not in London and there is a tendency for more and more designers to showcase their collections either completely outside of the UK

during Pitti Uomo in Florence and Paris Men's Fashion Week or additionally to the event at home.³

Interestingly enough, covering its previous edition in June 2019, Fury also expressed concerns about the fashion week, calling it a "still-fledging" fashion week with a small financial role and inability to compete with Milan, Florence and Paris, but at the same time emphasizing and underlining its talent-generating value and cultural importance.⁴ So London is still remaining a talent-generating city and that is how its fashion weeks are usually perceived. Despite this, there were no indications of plans to cancel the event and the upcoming seasons were scheduled up to the end of 2021 before the pandemic changed everything.⁵

The menswear fashion week in London built upon its menswear heritage and the status of the capital of traditional menswear. The dilemma of LFWM is not only how to survive, but also whether it was an efficient platform with a viable business model or it was just exploiting the elaborated status of the capital of new talent in menswear and could not create a sustainable fashion event. Evaluating its effectiveness and defining its role in the whole canvas of the menswear fashion

³ Alexander Fury, "Does London need Men's Fashion Week?" *The Financial Times*, January 8, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/d3b673ea-3168-11ea-9703-eea0cae3f0de>.

⁴ Alexander Fury, "Why London Fashion Week Men's is still a must-see," *The Financial Times*, June 9, 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/98cce036-8ae0-11e9-a1c1-51bf8f989972>.

⁵ "Calendar," British Fashion Council, accessed March 6, 2020. <https://www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/About/Calendar>.

industry in the UK is a solution to this dilemma and the answer, whether it had any future before the pandemic hit the world.

The development of menswear fashion in London in the recent decades remains an understudied topic, especially if economic and business perspectives are taken into account. While the history of London menswear throughout centuries, its origins, cultural value and analysis of styles are well-covered within academia, it seems quite unclear what is happening in the industry and its economy right now, what are the main bodies and agencies, how did the geography of London's menswear evolve. This topic is becoming more relevant since the menswear is becoming more globally and economically significant, especially if market shares of the industry are taken into account.⁶ The BoF concluded that globally "men's lines will outperform women's between 2017 and 2022," since the growth rate for them hits 2% annually and womenswear is either predicted to have a slight decline or lower than 2% growth rates adding up each year in comparison to menswear.⁷ The same forecasts are relevant for the UK market, where the growth rate for menswear are already higher

⁶ "Global Menswear Market 2020-2024: 6% CAGR Projection Over the Next Five Years: Technavio," *Business Wire*, January 8, 2020. <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200108005415/en/Global-Menswear-Market-2020-2024-6-CAGR-Projection>.

⁷ Sarah White and Feyi Adegbite, Johnny Cotton, "Luxury Menswear Growth to Outpace Womenswear," *The Business of Fashion*, June 26, 2018. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/luxury-menswear-growth-to-outpace-womenswear>.

Alessandro Carrara, "The global growth of menswear and what's next for men's fashion," *RetailSector*, January 22, 2019. <https://www.retailsector.co.uk/4341-the-global-growth-of-menswear-and-whats-next-for-mens-fashion/>.

than for womenswear, forecasted to outpace it by 5.8 points.⁸ Even though the market share of menswear fashion still accounts only for a quarter, it does show very positive dynamics, reaching 14.5 billion pounds in the UK as for 2017.⁹ That is why fashion houses more often open men lines and develop their marketing strategies in order to target men. That is dictated by the fact that men's consumer behaviour is gradually changing, they started to spend more on clothes, and this dynamic is forecasted to accelerate. Hence, in way men, are becoming the biggest sales drivers of the industry.¹⁰

Together with the old and established fashion houses, such as Burberry, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen etc. the independent fashion scene of London represented at LFWM, also becomes an influential and significant player not only as an image, but also economically. Nowadays the demand for those independent menswear designers, such as Craig Green, Charles Jeffrey, Edward Crutchley and many others, is growing, assuming the growth of menswear sales in general. The growth in the number of independent fashion business reached 37% in

⁸ "The UK Clothing Market 2017-2022," *PR Newswire*, July 5, 2017. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/the-uk-clothing-market-2017-2022-300483862.html>.

⁹ Vivian Hendriksz, "Key facts on the booming UK menswear sector," *FashionUnited*, January 9, 2018. <https://fashionunited.uk/news/fashion/key-facts-on-the-booming-uk-menswear-sector/2018010927555>.

¹⁰ White, "Luxury Menswear Growth to Outpace Womenswear."

2015-2016 in London and performed high growth rates in sales around other cities in the UK.¹¹

Tracing the fashion industry developments is possible within the lens of a fashion week, which both accommodates the old and the new players and the city itself. In a way, it might be considered as a culmination of fashion life in the local industry and a bi-annual litmus test of changes and dynamics in it. London is considered to be one of the four major fashion capitals together with New York, Paris and Milan, both accommodating womenswear and menswear fashion weeks. The key institution in the structural organization and development of the fashion industry in the UK is the British Fashion Council (BFC), "a not-for-profit organisation that harnesses the collective power of the industry to enable sustainable growth and strengthen British fashion in the global fashion economy".¹² London Menswear Fashion Week, which was established in 2012 by the British Fashion Council will be placed in the focus of this research, as it is the main institutionally-led initiative for menswear development in the UK. Moreover, this event opens the global fashion season each year, since it is the first fashion week in the calendar of the fashion year.

¹¹ Bonny Dellow, "Independent fashion businesses on the rise as London Fashion Week ends for another year," *Simply Business*, February 28, 2017. <https://www.simplybusiness.co.uk/knowledge/articles/2017/02/independent-fashion-businesses-up-52-per-cent-as-london-fashion-week-continues/>.

¹² "About BFC," British Fashion Council, accessed January 23, 2020, <https://www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/About>.

Research question and academic novelty

The menswear fashion week is the best lens and framework in order to trace the dynamics and recent developments in menswear fashion from an economic and business point of view. Precisely, the focus on its participants, fashion enterprises presenting their collections at the fashion week. The analysis of the fashion week within the category of its participants, fashion designers and brands, is aimed to deconstruct the effect the fashion week had on them by examination of their relation and life cycle within this platform. The presenters at the fashion week are not the only lens through which it can be analysed, but the one that is often overlooked. The focus on them is also justified within the whole discourse of new talents generation behind LFWM.

The main research question of this thesis is:

What is the impact of London Fashion Week Men's as a platform for the development of the menswear fashion industry in the UK?

The sub-questions that are defining the structure of this research are as follows:

- What makes London a fashion city and the capital of menswear?
- How did LFWM evolve throughout its history?
- What data is available and what does it tell about the development of the fashion week?
- How do the participants of LFWM define the image of the platform?

The impact of the fashion week can be traced within different categories, but all of them would remain slightly approximate. For example, an objective factor would be the amount of revenue accumulated throughout sales of the designers initiated during the fashion week. But in this perspective, it becomes almost impossible to tackle the moment, when a buyer makes a decision to order one or another collection, whether it happens during or after the show, or in a showroom, or he or she already had an intention to order the designer's collection before even visiting a show. A gross value of sales of the designers presenting solely during London Fashion Week Men's could be used to see the tendencies in growth, but it would have too many ifs, especially within the framework of digitalization and the fact that designers might also increase their sales independently. Another quantitative factor, which is often used in the BFC reports is the value of press coverage generated by the fashion week through the press pull of both local and invited foreign press. This one can also be used as minor indicator, but at the same time, there is no data to validate this information and the algorithm for the estimate value for one or another media recourse can be extremely different for every next season of the fashion week.

One of the main benefits for a designer to participate in the fashion week is about indirect economic and social awareness that he or she might receive through participation in this event, in other words a degree of their exposure to cultural intermediaries of the industry. That is why this study has designers at its core. The impact of the platform can be traced throughout the activity of its participants,

whether they come back every season to the platform or prefer showcasing their collections elsewhere. How inclusive, exclusive or diverse is this platform? Who are the most successful designers and what is the role of the platform in the development of their labels. After the analysis of the fashion week organization itself and its history the focus on its participants is required.

Sources and methodology

The main analytical framework of this research corresponds with the approaches of business history and the concepts introduced by business historians. Taking into account the importance of a fashion trade fair or a fashion week in the representation of dynamics in the industry, it has to be considered as a gatekeeper, hereby a subject for the analysis. The fashion week assumedly has to dwell on the interaction between all the actors, such as producers, retailers, consumers, policy-makers and cultural intermediaries as press and social influencers involved in the life cycle of the fashion industry. Every one of these actors can be analysed separately and perhaps the conclusions might be completely different since all of them are drawn to the fashion week because of different reasons. This research focus on designers is chosen in order to identify the impact of the fashion week on the development of the menswear industry, which obviously starts with the designers in the first hand.

The fashion week mirrors the development of the industry because the creation of the fashion week itself is already a response to some changes in the field that started occurring since the 2000s. These are either growing demand and proposition or a result of the policy-making process or intervention of private actors, both of which are based on an expectation of further growth. The menswear fashion week in London has been already existing for 8 years, which allows to tackle and determine the evolution and changes that occurred in the process of its organization and role of its activities for the industry.

The key source for the empirical part of this research is the public data, press portal and annual reports published online by the BFC, both in relation to menswear and functioning of the organization in the last 11 years (from 2009 to 2020). The BFC as the main organizer has been regularly issuing information on the fashion week, such as press releases and schedules, but also different statistics, facts, figures and news covering menswear development, and statements with its position and plans for further development of this segment of the industry and the fashion week itself. That is why this thesis focuses on the analysis of LFWM discourse and its self-positioning in the development of the industry. The focus on the narrative the organizers construct around the event itself allows extracting its pronounced and real impact.¹³

¹³ Nelson Phillips, "Power, Discourse and Institutions: Institutional Theory and the Challenge of Critical Discourse Analysis." In *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies*, ed. Robert Westwood, Ian and Stewart Clegg, (Oxford; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 220.

At the same time, the key aspects of institutional theory in organization studies are applied in this research as well. Firstly, understanding it within the categories of institutional entrepreneurship, having market demands and production as the main reason for the creation of the fashion week, and inter-organization structure within the BFC. Moreover, the focus on the brands and designers participating in the fashion week allows tackling “tangible impact” of the institution itself and how it changed after the menswear was institutionalized. Thus, the institutional theory is also applicable in this case, because the creation of the fashion week overlaps with the changing role of the menswear in the market, shaping and expanding this market sector, persuading consumers in the growing value of menswear fashion.¹⁴

An explanatory case-study approach, “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident, ” as it is defined by Robert K. Yin, is also applied in this thesis, identifying how the designers are actually affected by the platform and hence how they define the image of this platform.¹⁵ That is why the major focus of it is designers or brands and their participation patterns in the fashion week. In order to do that the analysis is based on collected data from 16 seasons’ schedules, official designers’ profiles and media

¹⁴ Robert J. David, Pamela S. Tolbert, and Johnny Boghossian, "Institutional Theory in Organization Studies," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management*, December 23 2019, <https://oxfordre.com/business/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.001.0001/acrefore-9780190224851-e-158>.

¹⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (California: SAGE, 2018), 15-16.

publications about the fashion week. Furthermore, the method of exploratory data analysis is applied in order to create visuals and cover broad aspects of designers' and brands' participation at the fashion week in order to estimate the effect of the platform on them.¹⁶

This approach also allows creating a completely different perspective on the fashion week analysis. The data used in this thesis is gathered and organized for the first time, hence the evaluation of the fashion week impact is innovative in its sense. Moreover, this research allows profiling of the fashion week activities and its participants; these profiles, based on the schedules of the fashion week, press-coverage and self-descriptive information of designers available in their web-resources are gathered in a separated database for further usage.

Following those, applying the methods of comparative analysis of the fashion week year by year is used in order to determine the developments that occurred within the platform and the industry. The method of economic geography is used in order to tackle the relation between the menswear designers, the fashion week and the city of London, resulting in the London menswear fashion map.

Information and data published by the BFC from 2009 to 2020 serve as a core primary source for the empirical part of this research in the third and the fourth chapter, since they are providing distinct narratives and specific tools available for the

¹⁶ John T. Behrens, "Principles and Procedures of Exploratory Data Analysis," *Psychological Methods* 2, no. 2 (1997): 131.

analysis of the industry developments. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that it represents a self-centred perspective of an organizer of the fashion week without any criticism and debate; hereby this information will be only taken into account as data sources providing a range of calculations, facts and figures for the further process and analysis; the other information will be analysed in order to construct institutional discourse behind LFWM.

Most of the analytical or business articles in relation to LFWM are press and periodic materials, which are covering the fashion week, its participants and growing role for the business side of the industry. The most reliable sources among periodicals which are going to be included in this research are published either by The Business of Fashion or The Financial Times. They can provide valid information for general overview and perception of the event in the public discourse, but also public debate on the role of the fashion week as well as related numbers and facts. Media coverage of both UK and international magazines and editions will be used for the deconstruction of public discourse behind the LFWM. At the same time, the amount of media coverage related to the evolution of style, cultural value and esthetical analysis is expectedly quite overwhelming. Another particularly important source to trace the developments of menswear are annual reports issued by the BFC.

The analysis of literature for this thesis can be defined with a specific structure, dividing contextual literature about the history of menswear fashion in London and theoretical literature, outlining the main frameworks of the analysis. These includes

the key concepts and categories applied in the research and the main characteristics of London as a fashion city.

As mentioned before, the question of LFWM is extremely underrepresented in the academic field. Since it still remains a relatively new event, there is a less focus on it or its role in the development of the menswear industry, since the economic discourse in relation to menswear is still very underdeveloped and has just started intensifying with the recent positive changes in market dynamics.

Structure

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. After the introduction, the second chapter concludes the analysis of historiography on the development of the menswear industry, the main changes after 1980s in London and key categories attributing London as a fashion capital. The third chapter is focusing on the institutional discourse of the BFC and narrates the history of London Fashion Week Men's, identifies current issues with the fashion week. The fourth chapter consists the analysis of the participants of the fashion week throughout its history, the dynamics of their participation, creates a framework for comparative analysis of every season of the fashion week, but also a profile of an average edition of the event. The fifth chapter identifies two samples of the most successful designers based on frequency of their participation at the fashion week. As a result, this chapter contains findings on the way of these designers through the fashion week, their background and relation to the city of London.

Chapter II. Attributing London as a fashion city and the capital of menswear

Historical context

The construction of historical narrative behind menswear in London can be perceived as a relatively new field, especially in the definition of business history. The words “menswear” and “London” often come together in the literature, outlining that the city has always been distinctive and influential in men’s clothes. Mainly the literature is focused on cultural aspect of menswear, evolution of styles and the image they project in the history of London. Rarely academia actually focuses on the history of production chains, manufacturing districts or the analysis of the producers. The discourse behind London as the capital of menswear was revitalized with the introduction of the menswear fashion week and institutional attempts to boost the development of the industry. *London: Home of Menswear* written by a researcher from University of Edinburgh Keren Protheroe and commissioned by the BFC and Victoria and Albert Museum can be seen as one of those attempts to bring up and cement the brand of London as the place where menswear in its fashion terms originated and “has been an inexhaustible source of style and innovation”.¹⁷ This particular study is outlining general discourse and covering the timeline from 1666 to 1980s trying to tackle the heritage upon which the new brand can be built.

¹⁷ Keren Protheroe, *London: Home of Menswear* (London: Pencil, 2013), 5.

Briefly, the historical context behind the menswear can be constructed either in the framework of socioeconomic changes or within the evolution of various styles that actually mirror those changes. The origins of three-piece suit for example are combined in historical role of London as the cultural and manufacturing hub and demand of the evolving fashion of totally male ruling elites in 17th century.¹⁸ The defining changes in the development of menswear followed the process of industrialization and resulted in rationalization of the common menswear style and shaped more commonly known version of this suit.¹⁹ The development of the British empire and its capital formed an enriched and privileged class of male elites that were the main drivers of men's fashion, creating such famous styles as dandy with the production and tailoring center in Savile Row.²⁰ In the beginning of 20th century and inter-war period menswear fashion went through urbanization, democratization and modernization process together with the society. The post-war dynamics were fueled both by reinvention of traditional heritage, but also new wave of independent design. That was born in the club scene in Covent with Blitz nightclub, Culture Club, Spandau Ballet, Bodysmap and many others that challenged the conservative perspective on how man should look like.²¹ This developments in esthetics according to Bowstead were related to the challenge of class, gender, sexuality and growing impact of

¹⁸ Protheroe, *London: Home of Menswear*, 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 12-13.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 17-20.

²¹ *Ibid*, 29-34.

youth.²² According to Protheroe, the menswear history happened in such areas as Mayfair, north of Piccadilly, Bond Street, Chelsea and both East and West part of throughout 19th and 20th centuries and became something that is traditionally associated with menswear fashion areas in the city.

Menswear Revolution by Jay McCauley Bowstead (2018) from London College of Fashion is focused particularly on the evolution of men's styles, the perception of masculinity and premises of current trends and male's fashion looks. Again going deep on the cultural and historical side of menswear in London, this study allows understanding the actual development of men's fashion and London's role in it, especially stressing on changes through the 1960s-1980s. While still, it might be out of the focus of this research, the last parts of the book are actually based on the analysis of the collections from London Menswear Fashion Week.²³ The industry of menswear fashion started being shaped in this time period together with consumerism culture, but at a slower pace than womenswear that traditionally had a more significant role in purchasing patterns. Noticeable changes in male consumer behavior accelerated in 2000s.

Bowstead has explained the other aspect of industry transformation – its visual developments, nature, origins and heritage. The author outlines the growth in importance of independent designers' scene through London Menswear Fashion

²² Jay McCauley Bowstead, *Menswear Revolution: The Transformation of Contemporary Men's Fashion* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 32–34.

²³ *Ibid*, 129–170.

Week and its impact on the current men's fashion look, saying that the acceleration of dogma's deconstruction and abandonment of conservatism are the main dynamics of recent years.²⁴ According to Robert O'Byrne, the whole definition of London as a fashion capital formed in 1960s-1980s, ending with punk explosion and new wave of designers. At the same time menswear again is mentioned in his book rather sporadically, since the author is only acknowledging the role of such prominent designers as Paul Smith, Michael Fish and Wendy Dagworthy and their creations for British celebrities.²⁵ Sonnet Stanfill's *80s Fashion: From Club to Catwalk* (2013) is also elaborating a further perspective in understanding of dynamics in the city of London in the 1980s, mainly focusing on womenswear again.²⁶

According to Edwina Ehrman London's establishment as a fashion capital also started in 1960s with the increasing role of youth movements and tastemakers in various creative industries. The author analyses the city within the framework of a global fashion system, elaborating on the role of education institutions, introducing the concept of a "swinging city" and describing the main city areas related to the production, without clear distinction between menswear and womenswear. At the same time Ehrman also mentions that the first menswear education programme and menswear department were opened in the Royal College of Arts' Fashion school in

²⁴ Bowstead, *Menswear Revolution*, 129-170.

²⁵ Robert O'Byrne and Annette Worsley-Taylor, *Style City: How London Became a Fashion Capital* (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2009), 26-27.

²⁶ Sonnet Stanfill, *80s Fashion from Club to Catwalk* (London: VA Publishing, 2013).

1964, even though the school had been operating already from 1948. The emergence of education in menswear design should be perceived as one of the key milestones in the development of the menswear fashion industry. Importantly, the author outlines that London, first of all, holds a symbolic and cultural role in the global fashion scene.²⁷

David Gilbert also supported the idea about the defining the role of youth and cultural movements in the development of London's fashion status. At the same time he outlined that London represents a completely different model of a fashion city. The key difference is who were the main drivers of consumerism culture. The development of the fashion industry in the UK, both womenswear and menswear, was rather aiming youth markets and altering the dynamics of cultural life of the city, such as music, contrary to Paris and its focus on elite base.²⁸ At the same time in "Fashion's World Cities", edited by Christopher Breward and David Gilbert, the latter also outlines significant impact of imperialism and multiculturalism in London that set a trend for diversity in fashion and created a ground for any kind of trendsetting. Moreover, Gilbert emphasizes on the importance of fashion's urban order analysis and its embeddedness in the history of the city.²⁹

²⁷ Edwina Ehrman, "London as a Fashion City," in *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: West Europe*, ed. Lise Skov (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 299–304.

²⁸ David Gilbert, "Paris, New York, London, Milan: Paris and a World Order of Fashion Capitals," in *Paris, Capital of Fashion*, ed. Valerie Steele (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 89-90.

²⁹ David Gilbert, "From Paris to Shanghai: The Changing Geographies of Fashion's World Cities," in *Fashion's World Cities*, ed. Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 3–32.

Christopher Breward might be named as the main scholar of London's fashion. Most of the contemporary studies on fashion in the UK almost always citing his works on fashion culture in London. One of his books, "Fashioning London: Clothing and the Modern Metropolis" (2004) is analysing the most iconic styles originated in London from the end of the 18th century, again exploiting framework of styles but combining this approach with the analysis of various socioeconomic agencies, such as market culture and district formations. The author is covering most of the periods in London's fashion industry through the introduction into history of different districts and areas of the city, mainly outlining traditional and historical areas, where manufacturers and later designers resided. Analysing the 1970-2000 period Breward focuses on Camden Market in North-Western part of the city and the origins of street style and street market culture. East and West London historic fashion districts are only covered from 1840-1914, which is important for understanding the historic backgrounds of those areas and the impact of immigrants in there, especially considering the fact that London Menswear Fashion Week is now based in East London.³⁰ At the same time, the post-war history and development of West End allowed to maintain its role of a fashion retail area of the city, but also justified the importance of urban order in attribution of London as a fashion capital.³¹

³⁰ Christopher Breward, *Fashioning London: Clothing and the Modern Metropolis* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

³¹ Bronwen Edwards, "Shaping the Fashion City: Master Plans and Pipe Dreams in the Post-War West End of London," in *Fashion's World Cities*, ed. Christopher Breward and David Gilbert (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 159–174.

In the post-war era, London's manufacturing of garments and the whole fashion industry in general declined significantly and lost its previous economic value. According to Bethan Bide, at the same time this era became time of reinvention and city branding since the industry could not become to the previous state; in a way the symbolic value of London as fashion city intensified, became more exploited, even though the production decreased. In a way, the industry in London was challenged to adapt and offer something new to its main rival – Paris. That is how the discourse of champions in creativity and innovation was constructed in relation to London.³²

“Fashion and Everyday Life” by Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark (2018) provides an additional comparative perspective on the formation of London as a fashion city. The authors, analyse London and New York in the period from the end of 19th – the beginning of 21st century. This work perceives London more through the menswear lens, arguing its important role for the development of womenswear segment of the industry. The role of menswear is perceived as more significant for the whole industry through comparison of manufacturing and production facilities. London is also opposed to Paris as the fashion capital, but for men.³³ Even though this study also focuses more on fashion styles framework and the evolution of clothes than business history it still provides contextual information on how the industry developed in historical perspective and explores the distinctive features of those two cities.

³² Bethan Bide, “London Leads the World: The Reinvention of London Fashion in the Aftermath of the Second World War,” *Fashion Theory: Fashion Capitals* 24, no. 3 (2020): 365-366.

³³ Cheryl Buckley and Hazel Clark, *Fashion and Everyday Life: London and New York* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

Overall, London was always a city of menswear, that is why it is often attributed as the capital of menswear and contrasted to Paris in this matter. At the same time, the development of contemporary menswear fashion started together with womenswear in the 1960s, but at a slower pace. The strong presence of menswear heritage and traditional cloth remained unchallenged for a longer period of time than female look and in the end, it is still keeping its traditional layer strongly influential.

London's specifics as a fashion city

Following the historical context of the development of menswear fashion industry in London, it is important to outline specific characteristics of London as a fashion city. According to Patrizia Casadei and David Gilbert the main distinctive feature of London is that fashion industry in here is rather defined by its creative significance and value than massive economic benefit or production clusters. The origins of that are also rooted in the deindustrialization of the 1960s. The strong presence of London as a fashion city is also justified with the number of cultural institutions, like museums, fashion schools and archives, that are involved in the construction of this fashion discourse behind the city.³⁴

That is why the designers are also more focused on symbolic value than business aspect of their activities. At the same time, London is perceived as the major

³⁴ Patrizia Casadei and David Gilbert, "Unpicking the fashion city: global perspectives on design, manufacturing and symbolic production in urban formations," in *Creative Industries and Entrepreneurship: Paradigms in Transition from a Global Perspective*, ed. Lazzeretti, Luciana, Marilena Vecco and Edward Elgar. (Northampton: Edward Elgar Pub., Inc, 2018), 89.

city in fashion education, an “incubator of globally important creative talent”. Moreover, the predominant role of symbolic value also defines the specifics of the education, which is more focused on creativity than technical aspects of production.³⁵

The authors also outline the fact that manufacturing is rather decentralized, hence more expensive and inaccessible for smaller enterprises. The other important feature of London as a fashion city is that historically it does not have a lot of big fashion houses, that could promote young fashion talents as it is the case in Paris for example.³⁶ Consequently, the perception of the fashion weeks in London was constructed around the large number of unnoticed fashion talents that the city generates.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework behind this study has to be constructed within business history. The discourse behind global centers in fashion industry, according to Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Véronique Pouillard, emerged in the beginning of 20th century and was based on Paris’ role in womenswear and London’s role in menswear. The authors emphasize on the category of “fashion intermediaries”, those who are often left out of focus in academia in favor of designers.³⁷ The category introduced basically adapted the definition of “cultural intermediaries” for the fashion industry,

³⁵ Patrizia Casadei and David Gilbert, “Unpicking the fashion city...”, 89.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Veronique Pouillard, *European Fashion: The Creation of a Global Industry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 3-5.

outlining all those professionals that stand between the producers and the market. Blaszczyk though distinguishes fashion intermediaries from taste makers, emphasizing on those who represent the business part of the industry.³⁸ Defining fashion she uses term "jigsaw puzzle", meaning that it is important to understand that this industry as any other field is an intersection of various subjects, such as society, market and culture.³⁹ The application of this concept for this study is important more in indirect way, since the collective effort of those who are standing behind the BFC is analyzed in order to trace their actual impact on designers.

Such category as a fashion district allows understanding the development of the industry in local terms. That concept was elaborated by Norma M. Rantisi (2002). In her own terms fashion district is representing industry dynamics on the scope of a geographical setting such as an area of a city. This definition provides an additional scope for the identification of menswear dynamics in the city of London. Hereby, the analysis of the fashion geography in the city is conducted in the same manner as Rantisi did it, mapping designers' offices in relation to retail, press and exhibition facilities. In this particular study the focus is rather shifted in order to test whether the traditional geography of menswear in London changed and how it correlated with the geography of emerging talents and the fashion week. The process of integration between the traditional Garment District and the independent designer cluster in Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York might reflect the same dynamics in

³⁸ Blaszczyk and Pouillard, *European Fashion...*, 6

³⁹ *Ibid*, 18.

London's West End, the area of traditional tailoring houses, and its coexistence with new menswear designers outside of it. In Rantisi's terms, those new areas became sub-systems, inspiring, rich for new ideas and free from corporate rules, hence the development of the industry was decentralized in a way.⁴⁰ This analysis can serve as a framework for the identification of interaction between the key actors in London's menswear industry and also help in definition of the role of independent designers and their involvement in the traditional areas of menswear in London.

Rantisi also adds on intermediary institutions, which are conducting the transfer of ideas between two different geographical settings. While the difference between two innovation flows is explained by lower monetization level in Lower East Side of Manhattan (absence of corporate players, retailers and buying offices, hereby slower and way more open and independent process of design), the importance of common spaces of interaction is still perceived as an extremely important factor in this process of design innovation. London Fashion Week Men's is a common space for interaction between the main players of the fashion industry in London and more importantly it both welcomes already established designers and complete newcomers.⁴¹

The other important concept Rantisi dwells on is 'variance' or diversity within the district and how it influences the process of design innovation.⁴² That again justifies the importance of identifying where those designers at London Menswear

⁴⁰ Norma M. Rantisi, "The Local Innovation System as a Source of 'Variety': Openness and Adaptability in New York City's Garment District," *Regional Studies* 36, no. 6 (2002): 590-592.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 596-598.

⁴² *Ibid*, 590-591.

Fashion Week are coming from, how many of those based in London are of immigrant origin etc.

Tracing this interaction is possible within the fashion week and within the city itself. The focus on its participants can be narrowed to brands' locations, their interaction with cultural heritage, the main image of the event itself that they are attracted to and institutional support. The fashion week that can be compared with a trade show can reflect what was happening in the field already or both stimulate changes within it. At the same time, the specialization of that kind of event is highly dependent on cultural heritage and whether it can be reintroduced for the economic benefit.⁴³

The research conducted by Patrizia Casadei can serve as a waymark in the analysis of London as a fashion city. Firstly, the author is bringing up the debate on the definition of a fashion centre and how it has evolved in recent times. Casadei used social media coverage on Twitter in order to trace the symbolic representation and perception of London as a fashion city; one of her designs was conducted on the basis of London Menswear Fashion Week. Developing on the concept of symbolism, the researcher has tried to cement the specific features of London's character as a fashion city that are extremely useful for this study.⁴⁴ Casadei also provided insights into the internal perceptions of fashion events in London and the perspectives of

⁴³ Harald Bathelt, Francesca Golfetto, Diego Rinaldo, *Trade shows in the Globalizing Knowledge Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 93.

⁴⁴ Patrizia Casadei, "Unpicking the fashion city: Theoretical issues and ideal types. An empirical analysis of London" (PhD dissertation. University of Trento, 2018), 280-284.

politicians and policymakers. Hence, London is seen rather as a platform for newcomers, which is relevant both for womenswear and menswear. It serves as an entry point for designers to make themselves known globally. Moreover, the commerciality of the fashion weeks is not even perceived as a designated and required feature.⁴⁵

The study of Pitti Uomo by Mariangela Lavanga provides an insightful descriptive model which is used as an example in the analysis of the history of London Fashion Week Men's. Even though Pitti Uomo is an event of a different format, as a trade fair it does have a pretty much similar purpose, showcasing collections for buyers and journalists.⁴⁶ This article provides a deep perspective, which elaborates on a modern fashion event dedicated solely to menswear. The author used qualitative methodology, also focusing mostly on data and facts provided by the event itself.⁴⁷ Developing on the role of "cultural intermediaries," Lavanga creates a different scope, within which a fashion event might be analysed, particularly through the participation of those intermediaries, arguing that physical communication and knowledge exchange between the key player in the industry will still be crucially important, despite all-encompassing digitalization of the industry.⁴⁸ This is particularly relevant for this research, since the specifics of a fashion trade fair are basically

⁴⁵ Patrizia Casadei, "Unpicking the fashion city: Theoretical issues and ideal types," 192-193.

⁴⁶ Mariangela Lavanga, "The Role Of The Pitti Uomo Trade Fair In The Menswear Fashion Industry" in *The Fashion Forecasters: A Hidden History of Color and Trend Prediction*, ed. by Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Ben Wubs (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), 191-192.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 192-194.

defined with the experience its participants are getting. A fashion show or an event is usually used in order to express the ideological message behind a new collection, present it in a setting which allows to highlight the main messages and hereby deliver to trendsetters. It seems quite important to understand, that for most of the fashion brands participation in trade fairs or fashion weeks is also stimulated by content-creation and public image this participation generates. Interestingly, Lavanga mentions East London as an example of an alternative geographical setting to a concept of a trade fair, where this communication might be happening.⁴⁹ Therefore, the focus of this research on contemporary fashion geography in London is even more justified. The article also covers the role of different agencies, such as educational institutions, magazines and state intervention, in the formation of Pitti Uomo.⁵⁰ Applying this approach to London Menswear Fashion Week is also important, especially identifying the role of the state policies and support in its creation.

The discourse of a trade show is extremely important concept for the analysis of a fashion week, even though the first one does not define the second. Regardless of the industry, it is considered to be the driver of either sales or knowledge exchange and business cooperation.⁵¹ A fashion show might be seen as a crucial part of marketing communication of the brand, since live communication is a part of a more structured process and preparations and basically can serve as a stimulus for future

⁴⁹ Lavanga, "The Role Of The Pitti Uomo.," 195.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 197-201.

⁵¹ Manfred Kirchgeorg, Christiane Springer and Evelyn Kästner. "Objectives for Successfully Participating in Trade shows," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 25, no. 1 (2009;2010): 63.

traditional communication and basis for digital campaigns.⁵² During such events a brand receives an opportunity to shape its positioning in the market, hereby it also might be considered within the fashion industry. While a decision to participate in a fashion week might be influenced by different factors, the framework offered by Manfred Kirchgeorg and others is allowing to define it in key ideas, such as target audience, the way it behaves and communicates and how the platform of the fashion week is competitive with analogue events.⁵³ According to Kirchgeorg, the definition of a trade show is identifying them as market events, with set duration, format and frequency, with the main purpose to stimulate sales, showcasing samples of the product.⁵⁴ LFWM can be also analysed in relation to the effectiveness of communication happening during the event in order to stimulate trade deals or sales in other words, whether it attracts attention of key retailers and provides opportunities, such as showroom spaces, guides, consultancy to its participants or the event is rather held in order to achieve reputational goals.

According to Lise Skov "trade fairs are important nodal points in the global fashion business, located at particular interfaces in the value chain," meaning that they usually emerge in the areas that already have generated value in the industry.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Skov argued that seasonal character of fashion fairs is rather symbolic

⁵² Kirchgeorg, "Objectives..," 63

⁵³ Ibid, 64.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 63.

⁵⁵ Lise Skov, "The Role of Trade Fairs in the Global Fashion Business," *Current Sociology* 54, no. 5 (2006): 765.

and does not really have any economic justification behind it anymore.⁵⁶ In other word, fashion week is perceived as a “contact zone” for all representatives of the industry.⁵⁷ Skov also proposed an additional framework, which is useful for the analysis of an international fashion week, – intermediary fairs, meaning those, that are disconnected from production base and are opened for participants from outside.⁵⁸

Ben Wubs also emphasized on the importance of connections and relations that are established at trade fairs. In his opinion this often can lead to innovation, since exhibitors use this platform for knowledge exchange. Deconstructing the role of fabric trade fairs through the lens of trendsetting provides an additional perspective on how a more industrial event could define itself and compete with the others. Moreover, the analysis of Interstoff’s internationalization strategy and conquest of Asian market is a useful model for the analysis of a fashion week as well and can be applied in the case of the BFC attempts to establish its activities in China.⁵⁹

On the other hand, a fashion week, as a form of an international fashion fair, should also be regarded in connection to communication ecology or “global buzz”.⁶⁰ It is providing a temporary, but regular platform for problem solving and basically consists foundations of networking between the key players of the industry.⁶¹ Bathelt

⁵⁶ Skov, “The Role of Trade Fairs..,” 774.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 768.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 771-772

⁵⁹ Ben Wubs, “Interstoff’s Fashion Table: The Internalization of Fashion Forecasting in the World’s Most Important Fashion Fabric Fair,” in *The Fashion Forecasters: a Hidden History of Color and Trend Prediction*, ed. Ben Wubs and Regina Lee Blaszczyk (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 167-187.

⁶⁰ Harald Bathelt and Nina Schuldt. “International Trade Fairs and Global Buzz, Part I: Ecology of Global Buzz,” *European Planning Studies* 18, no. 12 (2010): 1957.

⁶¹ Ibid, 1958.

and Schuldt are considering international trade fairs as sort of clusters, which are providing “access to new technologies, market trends and potential business partners”, emphasizing on the concentration of participants and information flows in a limited amount of time.⁶² In order to evaluate this eco-system the authors are bringing up the analysis of communication patterns between different participants of a trade fair. Aside from importance of business to business communication outlined by the authors, the reputational benefits from participation are also mentioned.⁶³ Those are particularly important in the application of this framework in the analysis of a fashion week and how it is treated by its participants from this perspective. At the same time, the formation of this communication system within a trade fair is considered to be defining for knowledge exchange and the process of innovation, adaptation of new strategies and networking.⁶⁴ In the case of a fashion week this might be particularly useful in tracing the influence of key participants on the way London Menswear Fashion Week is perceived in media for example.

The distinction between virtual and physical international trade fairs and buzz they generate might not be useful for this thesis, since in the fashion industry a physical fashion week often becomes a basis for digital marketing and positioning of the firms. The fashion week has to be perceived more through the symbolic capital it can offer to its participants, since it rarely generates immediate sales. In other words,

⁶² Bathelt and Schuldt, “International Trade Fairs and Global Buzz, Part I,” 1957

⁶³ Ibid, 1970.

⁶⁴ Nina Schuldt and Harald Bathelt. “International Trade Fairs and Global Buzz. Part II: Practices of Global Buzz,” *European Planning Studies* 19, no. 1 (2011): 19.

a fashion week is placed in between creativity and business.⁶⁵ Agnes Rocamora outlines that basically fashion shows “have turned into media events – a public spectacle and entertainment addressed to a worldwide audience”, meaning that the virtual aspect of a fashion trade fair is basically the most defining and that is why the first rows at the fashion shows are more often taken by digital influencers.⁶⁶ Moreover, fashion is mainly articulated through digital media and both positioning, sales, consumer-behavior are retranslated through it.⁶⁷ The other important study of Rocamora is focused on power relations within fashion scene on the example of London Fashion Week. The main idea of the author is that the fashion week reproduces dynamics of exclusivity and is not about trade or sales. The fashion week as a model is more about symbolic value and identification of key players, that are able to attend it.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the main function of it is to promote producers and connect these key players.⁶⁹

Another important concept used in this research is independent fashion brands, designers or labels. There is no common definition on that in academia, but overall, an independent fashion designer is an independent business, meaning that

⁶⁵ Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, “Between Art and Commerce,” in *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries: Fairs, Festivals and Competitive Events*, ed. Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 249.

Bathelt and Schuldt, “International Trade Fairs and Global Buzz, Part I,” 1961.

⁶⁶ Agnès Rocamora, “Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion,” *Fashion Theory* 21, no. 5 (2017): 509.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, “The Field of Fashion Materialized: A Study of London Fashion Week,” *Sociology* 40, no. 4 (2006): 748-749.

⁶⁹ Joanne Entwistle and Agnès Rocamora, “Between Art and Commerce,” 267.

it is not a part of a larger company or corporation and owned by a designer. In classification outlined by Emily Huggard and Jon Cope, an independent fashion brand is the same as a fashion startup, operated on a small-medium scale and different from luxury or ready-to-wear designers like the one that is less established and present in the market. Hence all of the brands considered in this research can be divided into these three categories, but the most important feature is that they are perceived as independent and relatively new businesses.⁷⁰

In most of the cases articles related to the topic of trade fairs are based on empirical research, such as interviews and surveys with different participants of the trade fairs. Even though, an interview as a primary source might be quite representative and convincing tool in order to formulate the main argument, it still seems quite vague, when the whole argument is only based on them. Moreover, the discussion on effectiveness of a trade fair based on incomplete samples seems also extremely unconvincing, hereby this method might be only used in order to contribute any other sources. That is why, taking into account the perspective of the organizers of a trade fair seems quite important and even more effective, since usually the evolution and the developments in the management are already dictated by the demand of the market and more effective cooperation with the participants of the trade fair, if it is already considered to be a valid platform.

⁷⁰ Emily Huggard and Jon Cope, *Communicating Fashion Brands: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), chapter 1.

The debate on what makes a fashion capital is thoroughly elaborated within the academia, but usually it is based on the dominant role of womenswear, hereby the definition of a menswear capital might be slightly different. Overall, the main characteristics can be adjusted in the analysis of the balance of power between cities hosting menswear fashion week. Frederic Godart's elaboration on the power structure between fashion capitals can be taken as a framework in positioning London as a fashion capital of menswear and how important it is in comparison to other fashion capitals and menswear fashion weeks. Through the deconstruction of the role of Paris, New York, Milan and London, Godart explains what were the reasons for them to become those global players and what are the most possible scenarios for them in the nearest future. While being quite disconnected from the inside perspective, the author provides essential background and outlines the power balance between these cities. According to him, London specifically focused on the menswear was the only other fashion capital after Paris before World War II.⁷¹ The period beginning in the 1960s is indicated as the most influential one in the process of establishment of the contemporary role of London as a fashion capital. Godart also emphasized the importance of creativity and heritage of local designers in contrast to their rather poor economic value.⁷² Scenarios described by the author conclude that the power balance of the main fashion capitals will either remain the status quo

⁷¹ Frédéric Godart, "The power structure of the fashion industry: Fashion capitals, globalization and creativity," *International Journal of Fashion Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, (2014): 44.

⁷² *Ibid*, 44-45.

or there will be possible additions of a few new fashion capitals or it will take a form of rotation between existing fashion capitals, which actually seems quite doubtful since capitals are not defining global styles in four different ways and they are rather creating global platforms for different players.⁷³ The last scenario indicates elimination of fashion weeks as a business model because of digitalization, which is also quite doubtful since Godart does not take into account the importance of experience, content creation and the role of fashion fairs and fashion weeks as common spaces for communication and knowledge exchange, as it was outlined by Mariangela Lavanga.⁷⁴

It is important to understand, that the current power balance between four capitals and the argument of Godart are based on the roles of those cities in womenswear fashion, while in menswear the power balance is not that clear and established. Menswear fashion weeks in London and New York are quite recent events, found in 2012 and 2015 respectively and they are far behind Paris Menswear Fashion Week and Pitti Uomo in its global importance, financial role and attention the former generate. Godart also introduces the concept of "mobility network" which can be applied in this thesis since it might help to actually indicate the global role of London in menswear through the movement of talents between different fashion

⁷³ Frédéric Godart, "The power structure of the fashion industry..," 49-51.

⁷⁴ Lavanga, "The Role Of The Pitti Uomo.," 195.

weeks and countries if there is one within the analysis of participants of London Menswear Fashion Week.⁷⁵

“The Geographies of Fashion” by Louise Crewe (2018) has also a few contextually applicable takeaways on geography, space and value in fashion industry. The author outlines the importance of interdependency between different fashion cities, arguing that they form a system.⁷⁶ Hereby, the analysis of international activities of the fashion week is needed.

Conclusions

To sum up, even though there is not enough literature focusing on London Menswear Fashion Week, there is a quite significant amount of data published by the BFC, which is going to conclude the novelty aspect and empirical part of this research. In order to conduct the analysis of this data some conceptual frameworks are needed to be applied, as well as a general context related to the development of the fashion industry in the city of London. Considering the creation of a fashion week as a response to local dynamics and increased market share of menswear, it is important to provide an overview of how the industry has evolved in recent decades. Mainly, the historiography is focusing rather on womenswear, its cultural aspects and evolution of styles rather than business history.

⁷⁵ Frédéric Godart, “The power structure of the fashion industry..,” 52.

⁷⁶ Louise Crewe, *The Geographies of Fashion: Consumption, Space, and Value* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 1-13.

London has been always perceived as a city of menswear. Building upon this heritage in menswear in order to become a fashion capital in modern standards resulted in the establishment of a fashion week. The city already had everything for that, except for the event that would proclaim it officially.

The historical context is crucial for understanding how this status of menswear capital evolved and what are the roots of it. Most of the authors are emphasizing on the dramatic changes that shaped the current menswear starting the 1960s and culminating disruption in the 1980s culture led by the post-war youth. The analysis of this contextual literature uncovers a research gap in the business aspect of menswear development as it is often out of focus and overshadowed by womenswear, hence only appears sporadically in connection to industry clusters in the city of London.

The conceptual framework of trade fairs, fashion weeks, independent fashion brands, fashion capitals and fashion cities allows to uncover the whole background of the fashion industry in London and understand the methodological categories for the further analysis.

Chapter III. History and Modus Operandi of London Fashion

Week Men's

The history of London Fashion Week Men's is inseparable from the history of the organizer of the event itself – The British Fashion Council (BFC), a non-profit organization established in 1983 in order to stimulate the development of the fashion industry in the UK and export it outside of the country. Initially, the focus of the BFC was on the development of womenswear segment of the industry, since it was in the core of something that nowadays is perceived as fashion. The role of the BFC can be outlined in organization, regulation and development of the platform known as London Fashion Week, inaugurated together with the foundation of the council itself. Since then the life of the fashion industry and many other initiatives connected to the fashion week were circling around this institution. Meanwhile, it was leaving the development of the menswear segment of fashion unnoticed.

The problem of menswear place in the fashion world lies far behind institutional perception in the development of the industry. Menswear truly entered the world of the fashion world at the beginning of the 21st century, stimulated by the accelerating consumerism among men. The BFC response towards this process was institutionalized for the first time in 2009, which can be counted as one of the starting points in London Fashion Week Men's history. At the same time, this question remains more complicated and needs a more precise look into what were the roots of these developments. This chapter aims to answer what was the reasoning behind the

creation of LFWM, how its organization and relations with participants have evolved, what are the key challenges for the platform at the moment.

The creation of the menswear fashion week in London can not only be perceived within the framework of an event itself. Hereby, the key initiatives executed within the organization of the fashion week in order to stimulate and promote menswear fashion designers together with the key partners and sponsors behind it need to be analysed. Overall, the process of the creation of modern London Fashion Week Men's can be divided into three main stages: the introduction of Menswear Day at London Fashion Week (2005-2012), London Collections Men's (2012-2017), London Fashion Week Men's (2017-onward).

Menswear at LFW (2005-2012)

Even though, there were seldom menswear shows at London Fashion Week before, there was still a little representation of a growing menswear scene in London's fashion world before Lulu Kennedy stepped into the game.⁷⁷ The beginning of menswear fashion at London Fashion Week indeed has started with the initiative run by Lulu Kennedy, former fashion designer herself, that founded a non-profit organization called Fashion East in 2000 in order to scout and support young womenswear designers and provide them with an opportunity to showcase their

⁷⁷ Charlie Porter, "The inside Leg," *The Guardian*, September 10, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2005/sep/10/shopping.fashion>.

collections in a group show or installation in during London Fashion Week.⁷⁸ From 2003 Fashion East event was included in official schedule of London Fashion Week.⁷⁹

In 2003 Lulu Kennedy visited Central Saint Martins graduation show for MA in womenswear and menswear design and noted high quality of young menswear designers. Later on she had a meeting with Topshop's representatives, a key sponsor of Fashion East, and got an opportunity to share her experiences with Topman's (a division within Topshop) design director, Gordon Richardson and Jason Griffiths, Topman's marketing director responsible for the collections of Topman Design already being showcased during LFW.⁸⁰ Topman had already been providing opportunities for young menswear designers involving them into the production of the Topman Design collections, but they were never presented to the public independently.⁸¹ As a result of this meeting, the idea of a similar project to Fashion East, only targeting menswear was born. Having been already securing funds from Topshop and The Greater London Authority and later on from Topman, allowed Fashion East to launch an identical scheme targeting menswear designers in 2005.⁸²

⁷⁸ "Lulu Kennedy Is Part of the BoF 500," *The Business of Fashion*, August 21, 2019, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/lulu-kennedy>.

⁷⁹ "Don't Call Her a Fairy Godmother: Lulu Kennedy," *1 Granary*, July 8, 2019, <https://1granary.com/interviews/dont-call-her-a-fairy-godmother-lulu-kennedy/>.

⁸⁰ Lulu Kennedy, "London who's who: Lulu Kennedy," interview by Charlie Porter, *Charlie Porter Blog*, June, 2012, <http://charlieporter.net/stories/3080>.

⁸¹ James Sherwood, "A Vibrant New Music Scene is Pushing Menswear Forward," *The New York Times*, September 21, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/21/style/a-vibrant-new-music-scene-is-pushing-menswear-forward.html>.

⁸² "About Us," Fashion East, accessed June 28, 2020, <http://www.fashioneast.co.uk/about.asp>.

From that moment, the platform created by Lulu Kennedy was providing three womenswear and three menswear designers with financial support, counsel and mentoring, production, resources and venues in order to organize an event and showcase their collection during London Fashion Week. Moreover, the designer were also supported through her own PR team.⁸³ The first group of menswear designers, labelled as Fashion East MAN on the schedule of the fashion week, consisted Siv Stoldal, Benjamin Kirchhoff and Patrik Söderstam. They were selected by the newly created menswear committee chaired by Lulu Kennedy herself. Eventually they were presented to the public on 22nd of September, 2005 at Old Truman Brewery, where the office of Fashion East was located, in Brick Lane during the last day London Fashion Week spring/summer 06 edition. Since than Fashion East MAN and its main venue of Old Truman Brewery was regularly a part of the last day in the schedule of London Fashion Week⁸⁴ According to Charlie Porter, that was for the first time that “men's fashion will take bold steps on to the schedule of London fashion week”, calling even for bigger adjustments and representation.⁸⁵ Moreover, the initiative was warmly-welcomed by media, that started a debate on the revival of London's role as the capital of menswear and greeting this as the first revolutionary idea.⁸⁶

⁸³ “Lulu Kennedy Is Part of the BoF 500,” *The Business of Fashion*.

⁸⁴ Lulu Kennedy, “London who’s who: Lulu Kennedy,” interview by Charlie Porter, *Charlie Porter Blog*, June, 2012.

⁸⁵ Porter, “The inside Leg,” *The Guardian*.

⁸⁶ Sherwood, “A Vibrant New Music Scene is Pushing Menswear Forward,” *The New York Times*.

The next important development in menswear representation at London Fashion Week was also related to Lulu Kennedy. As far as Fashion East MAN initiative was regularly represented on the schedule and incrementally gathered more attention of the press together with increasing amount of other menswear event during the fashion week, a new initiative was started. In 2008 after meeting with a novice menswear designer, Martine Rose, Lulu Kennedy realized that there were plenty of very good designers, which were still not ready to present their collection in a runway show, but could use a different format.⁸⁷ While Fashion East MAN was as usual being a part of the official schedule, having already 13 designers showcased in different formats, including individual and group shows, installations, presentations and film screening, promoted by The British Fashion Council, the new format had emerged off schedule. This change was described as “the first dedicated menswear line-up” and was recognizing the leading role of Lulu Kennedy’s Fashion East and its collaboration with Topman.⁸⁸

Following on the idea to involve more young designers and provide them with a platform of a different kind, Fashion East launched its Menswear Installations on 25th of February, 2009. That day four young menswear labels, Katie Eary, Jaiden RVA James, Sibling and Martine Rose, were showcased in the format of a curated installation in Old Embassy Building across Natural History Museum in London, where

⁸⁷ Lulu Kennedy, “London who’s who: Lulu Kennedy,” interview by Charlie Porter, *Charlie Porter Blog*, June, 2012.

⁸⁸ Press Release, “Dedicated Menswear Showcase on London Fashion Week Schedule,” January 29, 2009, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2009.

MAN show took place on the same day. Even though it was not included in the official schedule of the fashion week unlike MAN, the organizers still got an opportunity to introduce the designers to the visitors of the activities from the programme of the fashion week and the press pull of the BFC.⁸⁹ Some of the designers participating in installations were also applying for the support within MAN scheme and were looking forward to participate again in the fashion week with the help of Fashion East.⁹⁰ Seemingly, Fashion East Menswear Installations became an incubator for the future applicants to MAN, providing recent graduates with an opportunity to debut with their first collections and obtain some attention from the press.

In August 2009, celebrating its 25th anniversary, the BFC has completely restructured its organization, appointed a new set of positions in order to develop the industry within settled goals to “nurture, support and showcase British design talent.”⁹¹ One of those developments was an initiative aired in order to support menswear. In a way this was a step forward in building “London's reputation for pushing the boundaries and discovering new talent”.⁹² Following on the success of MAN, led by a non-profit organization Fashion East, the BFC cloned its own designer

⁸⁹ Press Release, “Dedicated Menswear Showcase on London Fashion Week Schedule,” January 29, 2009, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2009.

⁹⁰ Susie Lau, “Fashion East Menswear Installations A/W 09,” *Dazed*, February 27, 2009, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/2187/1/fashion-east-menswear-installations-a-w-09>.

⁹¹ Press Release, “British Fashion Council refines management structure,” June 22, 2010, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2010.

⁹² Simon Chilvers, “London Fashion Week: the Verdict,” *The Guardian*, September 24, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/sep/24/london-fashion-week-menswear>.

support scheme NEWGEN and created a replicant platform for menswear NEWGEN MEN. The platform was also supported by Topman, representatives of which were presented in the selection board. Technically, NEWGEN MEN was an identical platform to MAN, the only difference was that it was focusing rather on more mature and not debutant designers. At the same time it was providing them with more serious guidance through the BFC organization and access to its resources and facilities, such as Somerset House, but also securing their individual and independent representation on the schedule of the fashion week in different formats, such as catwalk show, presentation, salon show and installation.⁹³

Being appointed in the role of the BFC's Ambassador of Emerging Talent Sarah Mower emphasized that the development of menswear in the recent years had indeed accelerated and reached the point when it needed serious support in order to shift from being a "spontaneous outpouring of creativity" into something more successful. ⁹⁴The first two designers supported by this new initiative were announced together with its launch and they were Carolyn Massey and James Long, which were about to present their collections in the upcoming edition of London Fashion Week. This statement from the BFC had also elaborated on something that was called in previous seasons "a dedicated menswear line-up" or "menswear showcase". The BFC announced that the trial launch of a solely devoted to menswear day in the last

⁹³ Press Release, "British Fashion Council Launches NEWGEN MEN," August, 2009, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2009.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

seasons would be continued and officially announced a menswear day in the schedule of London Fashion Week.⁹⁵ On the 23rd of September, The BFC together with its partners Fashion East and Topman held a full day of events dedicated to showcase menswear 26 designers, strengthening the institutional position of menswear at London Fashion Week.⁹⁶ As a result, Menswear Day would become a regular practice in the schedule, closing London Fashion Week's activities until the beginning of 2012.

LONDON show ROOMS MEN was another initiative designed to support British menswear designers and was launched on 24th-27th of June, 2010 during Men's Paris Fashion Week. The programme had been operating already for two years showcasing womenswear designers in Paris and this time was only extended to incorporate menswear as well. As a result it was a collaborative project between BFC, Fashion East, Centre for Fashion Enterprise, Tranoi with financial support of UK Trade & Investments, the London Development Agency, the European Regional Development Fund.⁹⁷ Mainly, the idea was to bring more attention to the British designers and according to Caroline Rush, the BFC CEO "further their global profile and businesses", in other words, stimulate their sales abroad.⁹⁸ The programme was managed and executed by Anna Orsini, Barbara Grispi and Sarah Mower, different associates of the British Fashion Council. The selected participants were able to

⁹⁵ Press Release, "British Fashion Council Launches NEWGEN MEN," August, 2009, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2009.

⁹⁶ London Fashion Week. Schedule – SS10, September 2009.

⁹⁷ Press Release, "LONDON show ROOMS Men Launches in Paris," June 15, 2010, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2010.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

present their collections in a showroom space in Paris, gaining PR support and communication resources from the BFC. Over time the programme became a regular activity, expanding its geography and presenting British designers also in Milan, New York, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Sao Paulo.⁹⁹ At the moment, the active destinations are in Paris, showcasing both womenswear and menswear, and Milan with a platform for menswear in collaboration with Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana launched in 2020.¹⁰⁰ Defining the criteria for the applicants a securing an exclusive right to represent designers, the BFC placed LONDON show ROOMs a complementary project, prioritizing designers supported within other BFC's initiatives.¹⁰¹

In 2011, The Fashion Awards, organized and hosted by the BFC as a fundraiser event since 1984, created the Emerging Talent Award - Menswear nomination with the first winner - Christopher Raeburn. Later on, in 2013 it was renamed as Emerging Menswear Designer nomination. The menswear designer of the year has been sporadically awarded since 1997.¹⁰²

Among other initiatives, the BFC was actively involved into supporting fashion education and recent fashion graduates. In July 2010, Thomas Crisp was selected to

⁹⁹ "LONDON Show ROOMS," The British Fashion Council, accessed June 28, 2020, <https://www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/business-support-awards/LONDON-show-ROOMS>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "LONDON Show ROOMS / Apply," The British Fashion Council, accessed June 28, 2020, <https://www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/business-support-awards/LONDON-show-ROOMS/Apply>.

¹⁰² "Archive," The Fashion Awards, accessed June 28, 2020, <https://fashionawards.com/Archive>.

be the first student in menswear design to receive The BFC MA Scholarship, supported by the Princess of Wales Charitable Trust.¹⁰³

London Collections Men's (2012-2017)

At the beginning of 2012, on 12th of January, the BFC announced the inauguration of Fashion 2012 Menswear committee within the organization and appointed Dylan Jones, the editor-in-chief of a leading male-oriented magazine British GQ, as a chairman. The intensification of the activities happened within the BFC Fashion 2012 plan aimed to boost the British fashion industry and benefit from massive interest and media coverage of London as the capital of the 2012 Olympic Games. The role of the committee was defined "to formalize the working party and advisory committee to assist in curating, launching and delivering its ambitious plans for the year."¹⁰⁴

Acknowledging growing success of Men's Day during London Fashion Week and announcing new developments, the BFC hereby laded the foundation of the future menswear fashion week and 2012 as a decisive year in the development of the British menswear. The creation of the fashion week itself was announced in ten days, on 22nd of January in Paris by Dylan Jones and the Chairman of the BFC, Harold Tillman.¹⁰⁵ The future event was entitled London Collections: Men (LC:M), the first

¹⁰³ BFC Annual Report 2010-2011, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Press Release, "The British Fashion Council appoints Fashion 2012 Menswear Committee Chair," January 12, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Press Release, "London Collections: Men. The British Fashion Council announces plans for new menswear showcase in London," January, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

edition of which was scheduled on 15th-17th of June, 2012, having three full days for menswear event.¹⁰⁶ The decision to expand Men's Day at LFW into a separate fashion week was explained with the need to fit into the regular international schedule for menswear fashion weeks, but also with the fact that the capacity of the industry had already outgrown the previous format both commercially and talent-wise.¹⁰⁷

This was also outlined in Dylan Jones's comment for Vogue.com following the announcement, where he argued that the BFC is "aiming to give menswear a bigger and better platform in this country, and to try and emphasize its commercial and creative importance".¹⁰⁸ He also mentioned three key reasons for the rapid growth of menswear in London, the industry defined as a "sleeping industry". Those concluded the rapid appearance of new talents in menswear, growing institutional support of menswear in the previous decade and defining role of the British menswear fashion heritage.¹⁰⁹

That is why the organizers aimed to create a synergy of traditional British menswear culture, represented by tailoring houses in Savile Row, beknown and established British designers and the generation of new talents. The board of the committee was also announced and included the most influential people in British menswear industry, including representatives of Esquire magazine, British GQ,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Press Release, "London Collections: Men. The British Fashion Council announces plans for new menswear showcase in London," January, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Ella Alexander, "A Man's Man," *British Vogue*, January 13, 2012, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/dylan-jones-named-bfc-fashion-2012-menswear-committee-chair>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Selfridges, MR PORTER, Topman, Style.com, Tom Ford and the office of the Mayor of London.¹¹⁰ The support from the Mayor of London would be intensifying over time, especially with Boris Johnson playing a prominent role in it, who mentioned that he is “delighted to support LC:M, which with great aplomb shows why London is the menswear capital of the world.”¹¹¹ He was hosting events and receptions in the name of the British menswear and the fashion week, acknowledging its economic impact and accelerating growth rates.¹¹² The office of the Mayor of London would also launch the Menswear Strategy Group in 2014 in order to raise the awareness about the impact of the menswear industry in the economy of London.¹¹³

The British royal family was also involved in the process of inauguration of the fashion week and announced a special reception by The Prince of Wales on 14th of June, 2012, one day before the beginning of the showcase.¹¹⁴

The Hospital Club was defined as the main hub for the upcoming LC:M, locating the fashion week headquarters in the heart of the city. Over time, the event would expand to other locations, such as The Old Sorting House, Victoria House and The Store Studios, having lots of other events in independent venues as well.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Press Release, “HRH The Prince of Wales to host a reception for The Best of British Menswear Design,” February 22, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹¹¹ BFC Annual Report 2013-2014, 141.

¹¹² Press Release, “London Collections” Men SS14 Schedule announced, “ April 18, 2013, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2013.

¹¹³ BFC Annual Report 2014-2015, 181

¹¹⁴ Press Release, “HRH The Prince of Wales to host a reception for The Best of British Menswear Design,” February 22, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹¹⁵ Press Release, “London Collections: Men provisional schedule out now,” April 24, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

In May 2012, the BFC aired a replica of Fashion Forward scheme for menswear with financial support of Ebay. Fashion Forward became an additional instrument and provided sponsorship and guidance for emerging menswear designers, securing their participation in the fashion week. The first winners were Christopher Shannon, E.Tautz, J.W. Anderson and James Long.¹¹⁶ The programme itself lasted for three seasons in a row and the last set of designers were awarded in 2013.

The first schedule of LC:M included 47 designers, 6 of which were supported within NEWGEN MEN scheme, one group show of three more names organized by Fashion East MAN initiative and Fashion East Menswear Installation with 12 emerging designers. Around 30 designers were presented in a collective showroom hosted within The Hospital Club.¹¹⁷ An important part of the fashion week Savile Row & St James's Showcase was dedicated to the tailoring houses from Savile Row, which since the first edition of the fashion week and until June 2015 were usually presented in an outdoor catwalk show, showcasing up to 15 different labels. Sometimes some of the labels were also holding independent events on the schedule of the fashion week.¹¹⁸

The set of sponsors for the first edition included The Hospital Club, Lavazza, Mercedes-Benz, Radisson Blu, MR PORTER, Nyetimber, P&G Grooming, Saint,

¹¹⁶ Press Release, "BFC announce menswear designer to be awarded Fashion Forward Sponsorship," October 31, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹¹⁷ Press Release, "What's on London Collections: Men," June 15, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

SWAROVSKI, Topman, Vodafone, The Telegraph, The Woolmark Company, some of which would establish a long-term cooperation with LC:M.¹¹⁹

The International Guest Programme operated in order to bring buyers and press to London Fashion Week was also extended for the needs of LC:M. Hereby, the BFC CEO Caroline Rush emphasized on “a strong attendance of international buyers”.¹²⁰ Even though the information about the guests itself were not disclosed throughout the seasons. The BFC was only announcing the amount of countries represented by the guests and the value of media coverage that they generate. Overall, the practice to bring the first row VIP guests is a common activity during most of the fashion weeks and the specific focus on representatives of menswear segment of the industry was indeed needed.

Among other things, LC:M was pioneering digital innovation at the time, using Pinterest and Twitter resources in order to bring more attention to the event. The BFC also announced the launch of a separated modern website, allowing to stream most of the events of the schedule online and making it free and accessible from any kind of device.¹²¹ With future season the fashion week would also take over Instagram and introduce augmented reality apps to diversify experiences at the event.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Press Release, “London Collections: Men Sponsors,” June, 2012, Press Portal – 2012.

¹²⁰ Press Release, “What’s on London Collections: Men,” June 15, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹²¹ Press Release, “Digital Innovation at London Collections: Men,” June 13, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹²² Press Release, “Digital Innovation at London Collections: Men,” January, 2013, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2013.

The second edition of LC:M was announced in October 2012 with a preliminary schedule for 5th-7th of January 2013, building upon the success of the first event in June and cementing its future. The event continued NEWGEN MEN, Fashion Forward scheme and its cooperation with Fashion East initiatives and Savile Row tailoring houses. It was also announced that Alexander McQueen and Tom Ford would present their collections in London instead of their usual platform in Milan.¹²³ Burberry also would announce its plans to showcase at the menswear fashion week in London.¹²⁴ In its 2011-2012 annual report the BFC defined 2012 as a year of “a major push for British menswear.”¹²⁵

The BFC was also developing its cooperation with local influencers, appointing them as official ambassadors of the fashion week. David Gandy, Tinie Tempah, Nick Grimshaw, Dermot O’Leary were the first ones selected to promote British menswear in the UK. In 2015, the BFC announced its first international ambassador, Hu Bing, declaring its intentions to reach Asia Pacific markets with British menswear.¹²⁶ Lewis Hamilton also was appointed as an ambassador in June 2015.¹²⁷

In April, 2014, another sponsorship initiative for menswear designers was established. This time it was a collaboration between British GQ and the BFC with

¹²³ Press Release, “London Collections: Men AW13 Schedule announced,” October 31, 2012, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2012.

¹²⁴ Press Release, “Burberry to move menswear show from Milan to London,” March 13, 2013, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2013.

¹²⁵ BFC Annual Report 2011-2012, 43.

¹²⁶ Press Release, “BFC appoint first international menswear ambassador, March 4, 2015, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2015.

¹²⁷ Press Release, “New statistics and ambassador for London Collections: Men SS16,” June 12, 2015, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2015.

incorporation of private funds from Vertu for an inaugural edition of the BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund. The programme was aimed to help already established brands, present at least for 3 years in the market, to expand, selecting one winner and offering substantial financial grant of £150,000 and mentoring and support services over 12 months, valued as £50,000. The applicants were judged on the basis of their business plans.¹²⁸ The first winner, Christopher Shannon, was announced on 9th of June, 2014 chosen by the judging committee involving the most prominent industry insiders, the BFC top management, retailers and sponsors.¹²⁹ The fund was dependent of the external sponsorship, hereby the winners were announced only for three times with the last one in 2016.¹³⁰

Overall, in this period of time a separated ecosystem for the support of menswear designers was formed. Having different layers for each initiative within its structure. The BFC managed to create a path, in which any designer could enter, starting with independent initiatives of Fashion East, then more sophisticated NEWGEN MEN, LONDON show ROOMS, Fashion Forward and the most significant one – BFC/GQ Designer Fund. Other than that the BFC established grassroots support through education scholarship and startup workshops. In its annual reports, this

¹²⁸ Press Release, "Shortlist for BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund 2014 announced," April 23, 2014, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2014.

¹²⁹ Press Release, "BFC announces winner of BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund 2014," June 9, 2014, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2014.

¹³⁰ Press Release, "Craig Green wins BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund 2016, " May 18, 2016, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2016.

system is merged together with womenswear and illustrated as a triangle of different stages, having BFC patrons at the top for such labels as Burberry or Jimmy Choo.¹³¹

In the end of 2014, the BFC announced that LC:M would be expanded and from that moment consist and additional day of event, moving from traditional three days to four.¹³² Educational activities were also developed, since 2016 the event had also accommodated a small-scaled conference, London Men's Week Talk Series, providing a platform for the most successful and prominent insiders and influencers within the industry and aiming to accelerate the growing role of the menswear.¹³³

LC:M was scheduled for a regular biannual event until June 2016, resolving all the overlapping issues with other international events dedicated to menswear.¹³⁴ From this point on, it secured its traditional dates for an autumn-winter edition at the beginning of January, being the first fashion week on the international schedule, and for a spring-summer showcase at the beginning of June. According to Dylan Jones in this period "the British fashion industry has never been stronger nor has its reach and scope...British Fashion is the most influential in the world, especially its menswear."¹³⁵

¹³¹ BFC Annual Report 2015-2016, 86-87.

¹³² Press Release, "London Collections: Men to increase four days with Topman design opening the schedule, " October 20, 2014, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2014.

¹³³ Press Release, "London Men's Week Talk Series, " December 17, 2015, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2015.

¹³⁴ Press Release, "London Collections: Men Dates," April 11, 2014. The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2014.

¹³⁵ BFC Annual Report 2014-2015, 10.

London Fashion Week Men's (2017-onward)

The initial rebranding of LC:M was announced in June 2016 during its spring-summer showcase. The growing numbers of menswear industry and its share in sales were outlined as the main argument in order to rename the event and make it more consumer focused. Hereby, starting from the next autumn-winter edition it had to be called London Fashion Week Men's (LFWM). According to the chairman of LC:M, Dylan Jones, the rebranding was explained in those words: "as fashion weeks change and our businesses start showing to consumers, we need to open our doors to more consumer-facing content...LC:M will embrace London Fashion Week Men's as a title to better engage with a consumer audience."¹³⁶

The beginning of a new phase in the history of a menswear fashion week in London started on 6th of January, 2017 with celebration of the tenth independent menswear showcase and inauguration of London Fashion Week Men's by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and the BFC top representatives in the new headquarters of LFWM at The Store Studios.¹³⁷

The BFC had also continued its education activities and in 2017 the biggest number of menswear recipients was awarded. Among 9 students and recent

¹³⁶ Samantha Conti, "London Collections: Men Gets a New, Consumer-Friendlier Name," *WWD*, June 10, 2016, <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/london-collections-men-gets-a-new-consumer-friendlier-name-10450679/>.

¹³⁷ Press Release, "London Fashion Week Men's January 2017 opened by Mayor of London," January 6, 2017, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2017.

graduates from leading British universities 5 were specialized in menswear.¹³⁸ The most prominent activity of 2018, held together with LFWM, was Fashion Forum, a platform or rather a think tank for more than 140 representatives of the industry gathered to debate the changing dynamics of fashion and impact of technology on it. The key topics raised during the conference were related to diversity, sustainability, customer-oriented approach, expansion to new markets, especially China, and innovation.¹³⁹ The intensification of activities related to education would take place over this period as well. According to the BFC report in 2019, the amount of scholarship recipients would double in the period of 2018-2019.¹⁴⁰

In 2018 a few key developments in reshaping LFWM's image took place. Opening the autumn-winter season in January with a slogan dedicated to celebration of diversity of the participants of the fashion week, the BFC laded the grounds of a more inclusive platform. Both Dylan Jones and Caroline Rush emphasized on the wide representation of designers of different origin and background at the fashion week, but also outlining an intracultural impact of the fashion week that bring different creative industries together creating a synergy of talent.¹⁴¹ The same message was

¹³⁸ Press Release, "British Fashion Council 2016/2017 Education Programme," May 2017, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2017.

¹³⁹ Press Release, "British Fashion Council Host Fashion Forum Thought Leadership Event on Breaking Through Barriers in the Industry," June 13, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

¹⁴⁰ Press Release, "British Fashion Council Celebrates Support for Fashion Designer Talent in the UK," April 30, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

¹⁴¹ Press Release, "London Fashion Week Men's January 2018 Opens as a Celebration of Creative Diversity," January 6, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

also chosen for the spring-summer edition in June and complemented with celebration of discovery of new talents in London.¹⁴²

The BFC also continued to develop its ambassador programme, hereby in May, 2018 David Beckham was appointed as Ambassadorial President, a new position created to coordinate and enforce previous activities related to the promotion of the fashion industry overseas. This appointment was aimed to broaden the BFC's activities especially in the US and Asia using the recognition and network of David Beckham. At the same time Beckham was supposed to provide a new push for internal BFC's activities and bringing more attention to them. These included education programmes, various scholarships, internships and apprenticeships.¹⁴³ According to Stephanie Phair, BFC Chair this decision was also correlating with the response of domestic fashion industry to the challenges of Brexit.¹⁴⁴ Even though the involvement of David Beckham was not strictly defined only in the menswear segment of the industry, his global recognition and support of fashion industry overall had to had a positive effect over menswear fashion as well. That is why Beckham from this point on was also involved into regular activities during LFWM, hosting his own events

¹⁴² Press Release, "LFWM June 2018 is a Celebration of Discovery & the Creative Diversity of London," June 7, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

¹⁴³ Press Release, "BFC Appoints David Beckham as Ambassadorial President," May 11, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

on the schedule and investing into menswear fashion labels such as Kent & Curwen, a regular participant of LFWM.¹⁴⁵

In 2018 The BFC also expanded its partnership with the state agencies, such as the Home Office and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. This allowed receiving a status of an Assessor for Tier 1 Exceptional Talent visa. Also presented as a response of the council to the challenges of Brexit, this allowed the BFC to independently work on the involvement of fashion talents from overseas, pursuing its goals in the diversification of the fashion scene in the UK and maintaining its growth.¹⁴⁶

On the 25th of September 2018, The BFC announced its major news in relations to its activities in reaching Asian markets, especially China. The recent involvement of David Beckham as Ambassadorial President led to a set of international events hosted by the BFC and him, one of which was held in Shanghai. As a result, it allowed conducting successful negotiations with two Chinese companies JD.com Inc and Ruyi and secure two years funds for the reestablishment of the BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund.¹⁴⁷ Thus, a new recipient of the support could be announced for the next spring-summer season in 2019. At the same event,

¹⁴⁵ Press Release, "David Beckham & Dylan Jones Celebrate New Creative Talent & NEWGEN at London Fashion Week Men's," June 12, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

Luke Leitch, "David Beckham Expands His Empire With a Stake in British Heritage Brand Kent & Curwen," Vogue, May 25, 2017, <https://www.vogue.com/article/david-beckham-kent-curwen-empire-british-heritage>.

¹⁴⁶ Press Release, "BFC Announces Partnership Granting Access for International Designers, Talent and Creatives to Work in the UK," July 6, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

¹⁴⁷ Press Release, "BFC Announces Two-Year Partnership with JD.com and Ruyi in Support of BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund," September 25, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

China Partnerships Strategy was announced. This program was aimed to focus on the development of the network of partners in China covering all aspects of the business part in the fashion industry, including retail, manufacturing, advertisement, communications etc. The programme also included the BFC involvement into support and mentoring of emerging Chinese designers, partnership through fashion week, but mainly accesses to funds and investments and business networks. According to David Beckham this partnership was fairly mutual: "the opportunity in China for connecting creatively and driving investment into British fashion is huge... today we are able to show real commitment from Chinese businesses to future fashion leaders in the UK and in parallel, share our experience, knowledge and platforms with emerging Chinese designers."¹⁴⁸ As a part of this cooperation in March, 2019, the BFC would organize a showcase, including menswear designers, in Shanghai.¹⁴⁹

The main location of the event had been moved in for the autumn-winter season in the beginning of 2019. From this moment, the main hub of the menswear fashion week was placed in the East London at the Old Truman Brewery, contrary to its central locations in the past.¹⁵⁰ The new hub for LFWM consisted the main catwalk used for the shows of designers who were not presenting their collections offsite, traditional Designer Showroom and DiscoveryLab, a new format, allowing to host

¹⁴⁸ Press Release, "BFC Launches China Partnerships Strategy in Shanghai with Ambassadorial President David Beckham," September 26, 2018, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Press Release, "The British Fashion Council in Shanghai," March 13, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

¹⁵⁰ Press Release, "LFWM January 2019 Facts & Figures," January 4, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

events, such as presentations and installations on site. The event itself also continued to promote and support various activities related to arts, cinema, music and fashion across the city, claiming the right to be a city-wide celebration of creative diversity.¹⁵¹ With the opening of the spring-summer edition in June, 2019 a new recipient for GQ/BFC Designer Menswear Fund was announced.¹⁵²

The key challenge for the BFC in 2019 was outlined in its September announcement and was related to the analysis of the state of the industry in case of no deal scenario for Brexit. Acknowledging the growth of the industry in the recent decade, the council expressed its fears that the industry might suffer a sudden drop in its share. Defining fashion industry as the most significant segment of creative industries in the UK, the BFC called for a precise evaluation and inclusion of the industry in the negotiations with the EU, creation of new supportive funds and advisory boards for the representatives of the industry. The main concerns were related to the impact of WTO rules applying to all trade operations in case of no deal scenario, but also definitions of samples, VAT regulations and logistics system.¹⁵³

In November 2019, the BFC also launched a new membership programme. The idea was to create an online platform bringing together all industry representatives in the UK in order to stimulate communication between them, but

¹⁵¹ Press Release, "London Fashion Week Men's June 2019 is a City-Wide Celebration of Creative Diversity, May 30, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

¹⁵² Press Release, "A-COLD-WALL* Wins 2019 BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund 2019," June 11, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

¹⁵³ Press Release, "The Impact of No Deal Brexit for British Fashion Industry," September 2, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

also provide them with the most important and relevant information related to the changes and developments in the industry. The programme was meant to support various mentorship projects and involve more people into fundraising campaigns for the BFC's charity initiative, but also vote in the election of The Fashion Awards nominees.¹⁵⁴

The autumn-winter edition of the 15th season of LFWM was held in January 2020.

Conclusions

It could be said, that the LFWM had lived already 20 years of its history, even though its official establishment happened only in 2012. LFWM has secured its place as an influential and quickly developing platform. Even though there were seldom showcases of menswear lines during LFW, the process of institutionalization of menswear as part of the fashion week schedule started with an independent initiative, such as Fashion East. Later on, the focus of the BFC was also shifted towards the development of its menswear destination, acknowledging growing attention at menswear generated by the independent initiative. That is how a full separate day was introduced on the schedule of the fashion week.

Building upon that success and generating more funds through sponsorships the institution could build up more supporting schemes in order to boost the growth

¹⁵⁴ Press Release, "British Fashion Council Announces Launch of New Membership Programme," November 20, 2019, The British Fashion Council, Press Portal – 2019.

of menswear designers and bring more attention to them. NEWGEN MEN, Fashion Forward, BFC/GQ Designer Fashion Fund, LONDON show ROOMs, as well as various educational activities, helped to guarantee sufficient growth within this segment of the industry and accumulated enough talent to showcase it separately from the womenswear fashion week. The amount of various supporting programmes has played another role, attributing London as a menswear fashion capital, but more importantly the status of a generator of new talents in the industry. At the same time, the BFC was also narrating its discourse as one focusing on nurturing creativity and diversity first of all, and only in recent years started smoothly shifting towards sales and markets expansion. The challenges related to LFWM are mainly related to Brexit, but also the positioning of the fashion week in regards of other menswear fashion weeks, especially those taking place in Milan and Paris. While LFWM has been collaborating with both, it is still often perceived as the one lagging far behind in commercial way.

At the same time, discovering the history of the fashion week and its success through the eyes of its organizers provides only a one-sided perspective. This only allows to tackle the place of the fashion week within the BFC's agenda and identify its main developments according to official sources. Hereby, more deep analysis of its development will be conducted in the next chapter, challenging its diversity, creativity, independence and growing incremental success.

Chapter IV. The inside of LFWM: Data perspective

There are various ways through which the analysis of a fashion week could be conducted. Whether it is representation and activities of a platform on different social networks or the analysis of media discourse or just simply through interviews with the industry insiders. As it was outlined by Patrizia Casadei in her study of London as a fashion city, the previous research was usually conducted within the framework of mixing less of a quantitative data related to employment and retail with the prevailing role of a qualitative data focused on the key actors in the industry. In her own study, the author followed the approach of semi-structured interviews, which she tried to expand and gather a range of different samples of the most important actors within the industry according to different categories. Covering such topics as economy, education, institutions, media, retail, which according to Casadei are valid to represent the process of formation of London as a fashion capital. Those categories are set to create a full picture of an ecosystem of the city and explain how it rose into the status it has. Her research was also complemented in data collection of Twitter posts covering the combination of London and fashion, allowing to examine media life of it, hence its recognition and role.¹⁵⁵

At the same time, her study and the others tend to overlook internal dynamics within those categories in recent times. While they can cover the changes within

¹⁵⁵ Patrizia Casadei, "Unpicking the fashion city: Theoretical issues and ideal types. An empirical analysis of London"(PhD dissertation. University of Trento, 2018), 141, 215.

education or human capital for example using interviews, but those would be rather based on qualitative indicators and hence could be always questioned, whether the sample chosen was representative enough. This argument also reinforces with a commonly accepted idea of the enormous speed of the fashion industry, which also can often make qualitative data less valid.

Hereby, the analysis of institutional infrastructure can be done both through the qualitative data, but also its quantitative indicators. The question is what are those quantitative indicators? The approach taken into this study focuses precisely on the "filling" of the fashion week itself. With "filling" meaning either the main stakeholders or basically for whom this platform was created and operates for. These could be international guests, buyers, press and other various types of cultural intermediaries in the industry, but they all are gathered in the same place with the same purpose – to attend fashion shows and presentation of fashion designers.

Hence, the definition of "filling" is simple since the main object of representation at any fashion week is first of all designers and their labels. More precisely, their labels and brands, which are serving as a fundamental category in the definition of a fashion week chosen in this thesis. Hereby, these quantitative indicators defining the impact of the fashion week can be extracted through the analysis of its participants and everything that stays behind this participation: numbers, frequency, sponsorship, promotion schemes etc. Taking into account all the designers who went through the fashion week would also allow identifying the exact dynamics in the

success of the fashion week itself, its growth, diversity, inclusion. This analysis provides an opportunity to identify the most active participants, which could be taken as a sample for further examination since their path within the fashion week could be discovered as well. Moreover, it would allow to identify the most successful seasons and tackle the development of the event in more precise manner.

Data collection

The collection of data was mainly based on the schedules of the fashion week and separate figures about participation published by the BFC. While at the same time, there is no open archive of the schedules, each edition of the fashion week could be found via web archive of the websites of London Fashion Week, London Collections: Men and London Fashion Weeks Men's. It is important to bear in mind that very often the data published on the official website and in the press-releases is either incomplete or has slight variations in numbers. One of the key reasons for this difference is the way the website was operating and the fact that some of the designers did not have an individual profile on the list of designers published on the website. Sometimes, the list of designers was not updated with the schedule of a current season and was showing designers that were not participating during that season. That is why every each schedule had to be validated with the designer list. If the needed information couldn't be found on the archive of the official website or some of the files were invalid and broken, some of the data gaps were fulfilled with media publications covering the fashion week schedule and sourcing the BFC. The

BFC press releases that were announcing the schedule or the highlights of every next season were often concluding approximate information about the number of participants on the schedule, in various group formats of representation and via designer showrooms. Consequently, there are three types of the participants of the fashion week: 1) designers hosting a separated event and having a separated slot on the schedule; 2) designers participating in group events that are mentioned in the schedule under the title of the platform supporting this event; 3) designers showcasing their collections in various designer showrooms formats without being mentioned in the schedule, but using official venues of the fashion week.

The official schedule was taken as an etalon for identification of the participants of the seasons since it had the most complete and reliable data. Some of the designers on the schedule were not mentioned individually since they were presenting their collection in group events, such as MAN show, Fashion East Menswear Installations (later just Fashion East), Savile Row and Savile Row & St James's showcase. The participants of the group event for MAN and Fashion East could be identified in most of the cases, so they were counted in the category of designers on the schedule. As for the Savile Row and Savile Row & St James's showcase the data about participants were rarely mentioned, except for the fact how many brands were presented within this group event.

The other participants of the fashion week that were showcasing their collections only in collective showrooms within one or a few venues in the format of

an ongoing exhibition or a trade show sometimes could conclude the bigger amount of the total number of the participants. At the same time it is important to mention that this kind of participation certainly had less media attention and was much easier to organize. The purpose of this whole format was created in order to fulfill the need of buyers to manually experience the items from the collections and see them off the runway. In most of the cases, the BFC provided only the estimated number of those who were presenting in the showrooms, often counting in those who were also presenting on schedule. That resulted in some sort of exaggeration of the actual total number of participants, unless both on schedule and showroom designers were counted separately. For the first seasons of the fashion week most designers participating in showroom activities had separated profiles on the website, so their numbers were also included in the estimated profile of each season in order to trace the general picture of how many designers went through the platform over the years. The general numbers of designers in showrooms were also found in the BFC's press releases. Overall, in the first seasons of LC:M, the profiles of designers showcasing only in showrooms were published more rigorously, but with every next season it was becoming more complicated to identify the real number and the actual list of the designers participating only in this format of the fashion week. That is why, the designers on the schedule and within group events would be used to analyze the dynamics within each season since this data is more stable.

As a result the schedules of 15 editions of the menswear fashion week in London were analyzed, starting from the first summer-spring season in June, 2012 and ending with the last autumn-winter event in January 2012. Moreover, the analysis of 6 seasons of Menswear Day on the schedule of London Fashion Week from September 2009 until February 2012 were analyzed as well in order to create a broader picture of the menswear designers participating in the fashion week activities.

Season profile

The analysis of 16 seasons starting from the first edition of LC:M – SS13 in June 2012 and finishing with the last edition of LFWM AW20 in January 2020 was conducted with application of the same framework. Season profile includes the list of total participants, their division into three different formats of activities and labelled as ones "On Schedule", meaning those designers or brands that were individually mentioned in the schedule of the fashion week and were hosting a presentation or a show without any other events overlapping with them. The others were labelled as "Group" participants, identifying designers who were showcasing their collections on schedule as well, but within-group activities and were listed on the schedule under the name of the platform they were supported by (MAN, Fashion East etc.). The others were identified as participants of showroom activities only. In a few of the seasons, a couple of designers were identified as those holding "Off-schedule"

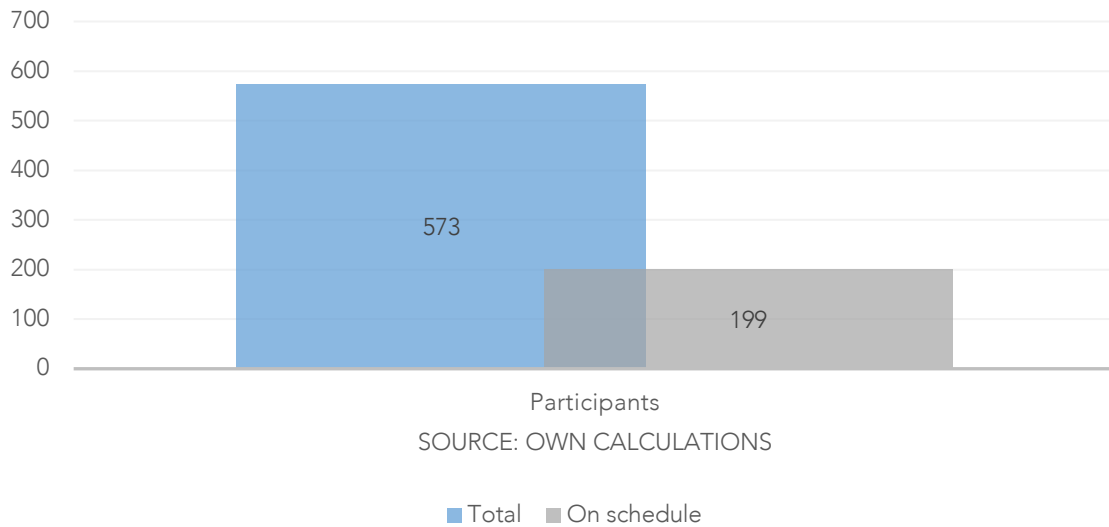
activities, meaning that they were still supported by The BFC, but were showcasing their collection either before or after the schedule of the fashion week.

The first season of SS13 concludes a separate column identifying designers which were showcasing their collections on the schedule of LFW, either during Menswear Day or presenting their womenswear lines. All further seasons consist of a column identifying whether a brand or a designer participated in the previous season, allowing to identify continuity and patterns of participation. Starting from SS14 season, the designers who returned to the platform were identified as well, meaning those who did not participate in the previous season but participated before. Finally, a column of “Newcomers” is outlined for each season of the fashion week after its launch, allowing to tackle the degree of inclusivity of the platform and its openness to relatively less or newly established brands.

Additionally, every season profile includes information on all the supporting platforms or sponsorship schemes (MAN, Fashion East, NEWGEN MEN, Fashion Forward, BFC/GQ Menswear Designer Fund, Dazed and GQ China), but also information of the locations of the fashion week and the amount of days.

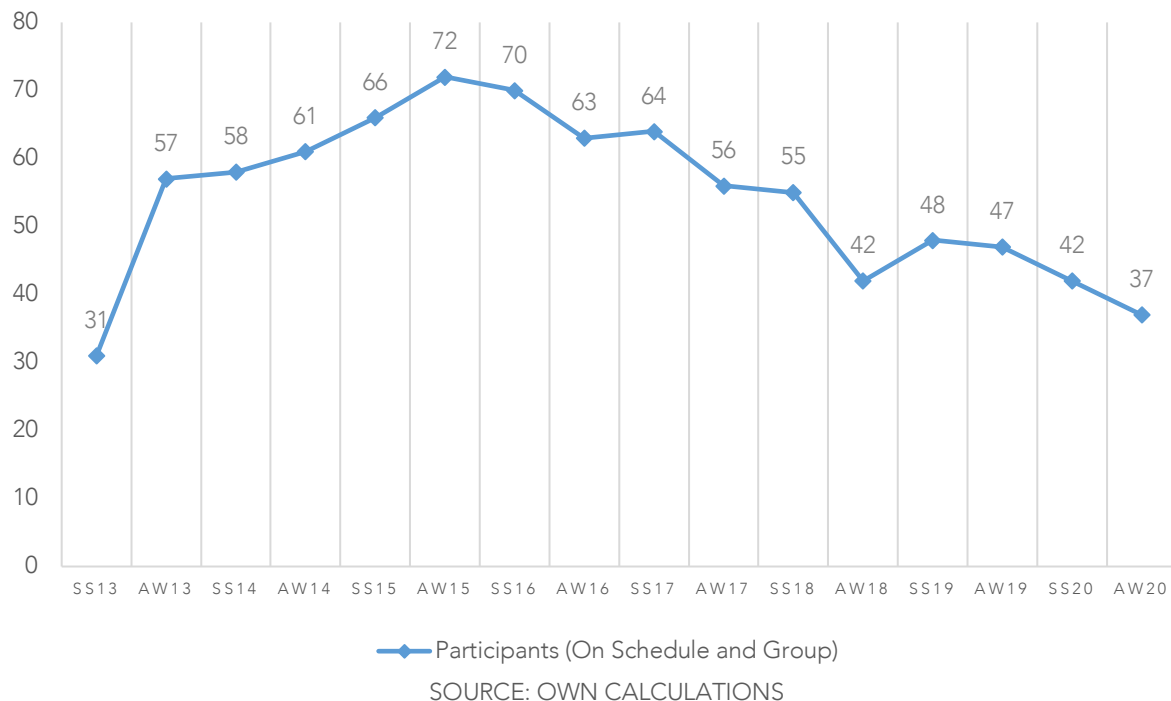
Overall, throughout 16 seasons of London’s menswear fashion week at least 573 designers have participated, 199 of which participated either on schedule or within-group events (Figure 4.1).

FIGURE 4.1 PARTICIPANTS 2012-2020



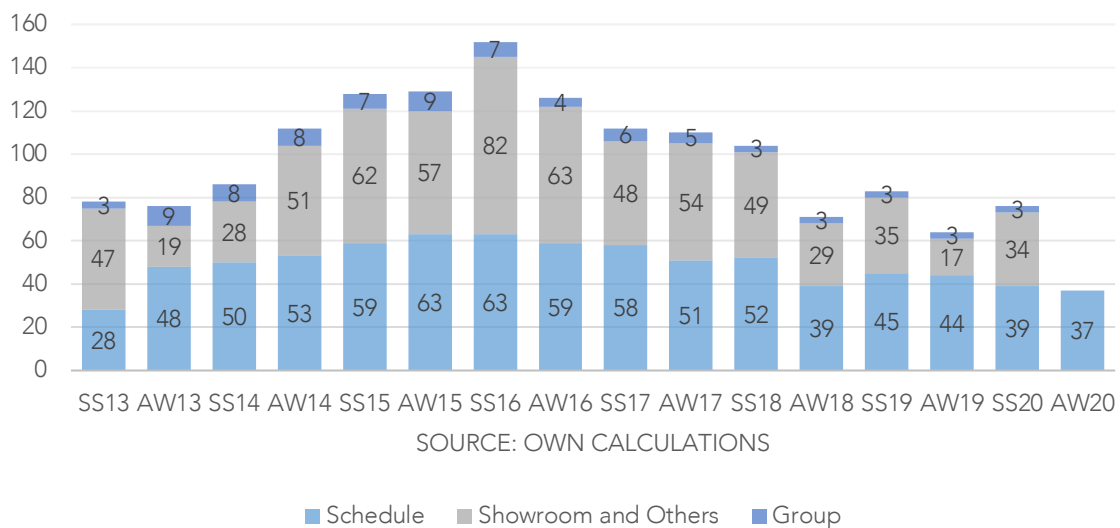
The dynamics of participation represent incremental growth starting from the first season and reaching its pique of participation in 2015, having the largest number of participants on the schedule both for AW15 and SS16 season and a record number of designers showcasing in showroom format (Figure 4.2). After 2015, the participation of designers started to go down: for the next two years on schedule

FIGURE 4.2 PARTICIPATION (BOTH ON SCHEDULE AND GROUP TYPES)



remained around 50 designers or brands, at the same time the trend for less showroom participation started after the pique year and continued throughout all next season until it was completely abandoned with the most recent edition of the fashion week in January 2020. After SS18 in 2017, the number of designers showcasing on schedule remained relatively stable and amounted on average 40 designers or brands on schedule per season (Figure 4.3).

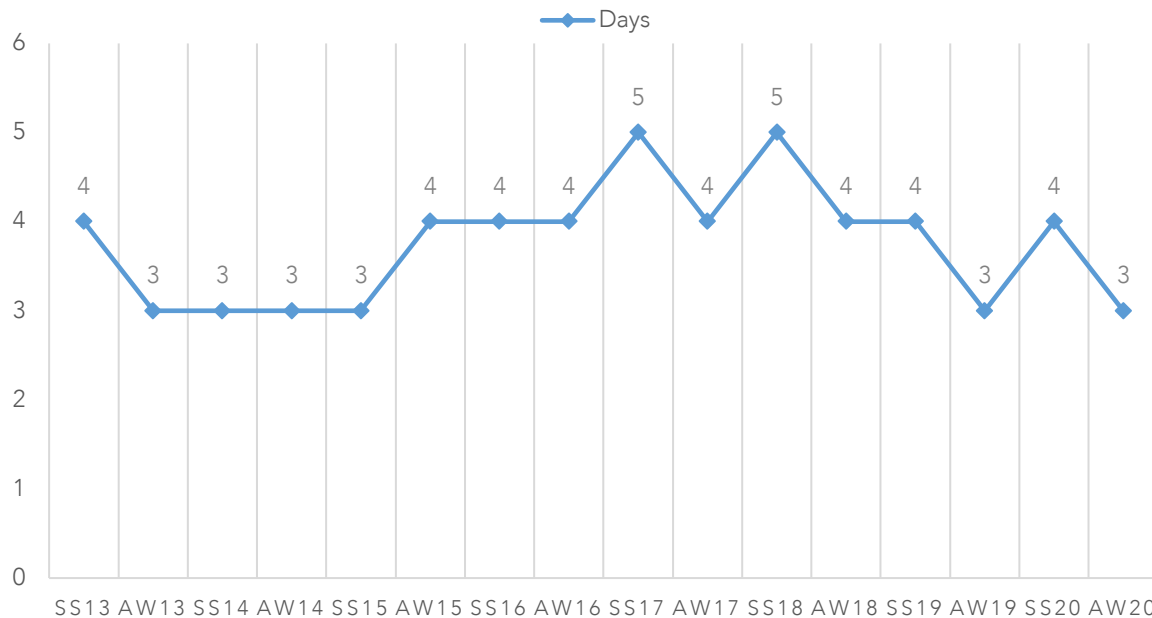
FIGURE 4.3 PARTICIPATION STRUCTURE (TYPES OF PARTICIPATION)



The dynamics of participation are relatively connected to the number of days during which the fashion week was being held (Figure 4.4). Out of 16 seasons, the majority of 9 seasons had 4 days on the schedule, while 2 seasons reached 5 days and the rest had only 3 days. On average, 3 days would be still the most appropriate number, since in most of the schedule the first day was only held for events such as official openings, receptions and press gatherings in the second half of the day and seldomly a few shows or presentations. The correlation between the number of days

of LFWM and the dynamics of participation is not very positive, even though some tendencies could be still noticed. While the pique seasons of AW15 and SS16 hit the

FIGURE 4.4 THE NUMBER OF DAYS



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

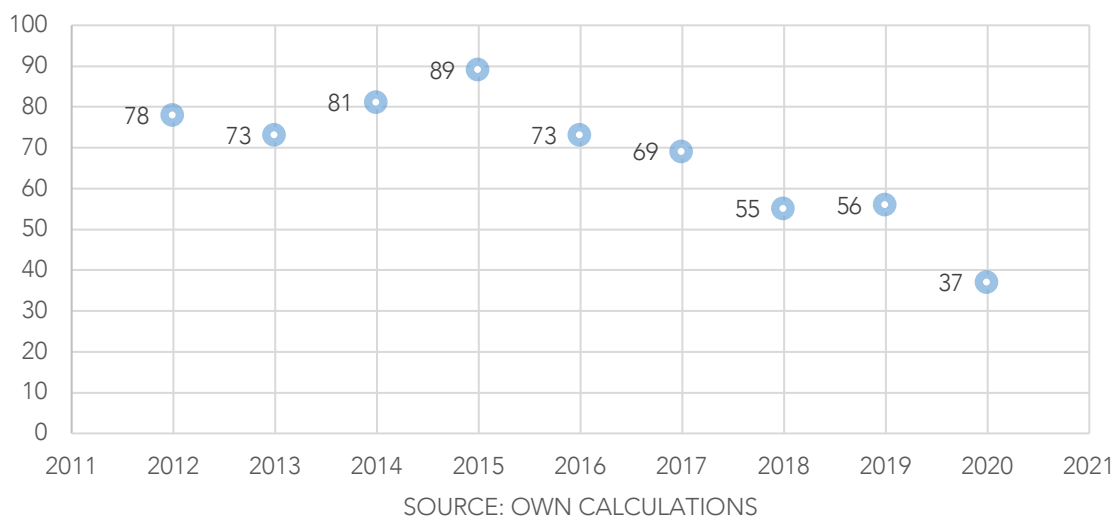
record for The BFC menswear event, they only had 4 days on schedule per each season, packed with activities. At the same time after its relative success, The BFC tried to increase the number of days on the schedule, hereby the next seasons of SS17 in 2016 and SS18 in 2017 had already 5 days, though the first days were still relatively free from the events and shows and could only have an opening ceremony.

Over the years, the number of venues activated by the fashion week had also decreased. Starting with 2 locations in 2012, the fashion week had up to three locations on its pique but ended up with only one venue since 2017. That correlates with the fact, that showroom participation was less significant over the years, so there was no need in providing a bigger venue to accommodate designers' stands in a

trade show format. The other reason is also that partnership activations became different as well, as for example with Topman, that organized its own show space for the first seasons of the fashion week.

The participation dynamics could be both analyzed within the frameworks of seasons, but also how many designers actually participated throughout the whole year, meaning both in January and in June (Figure 4.5).

FIGURE 4.5 THE NUMBER OF UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS PER YEAR



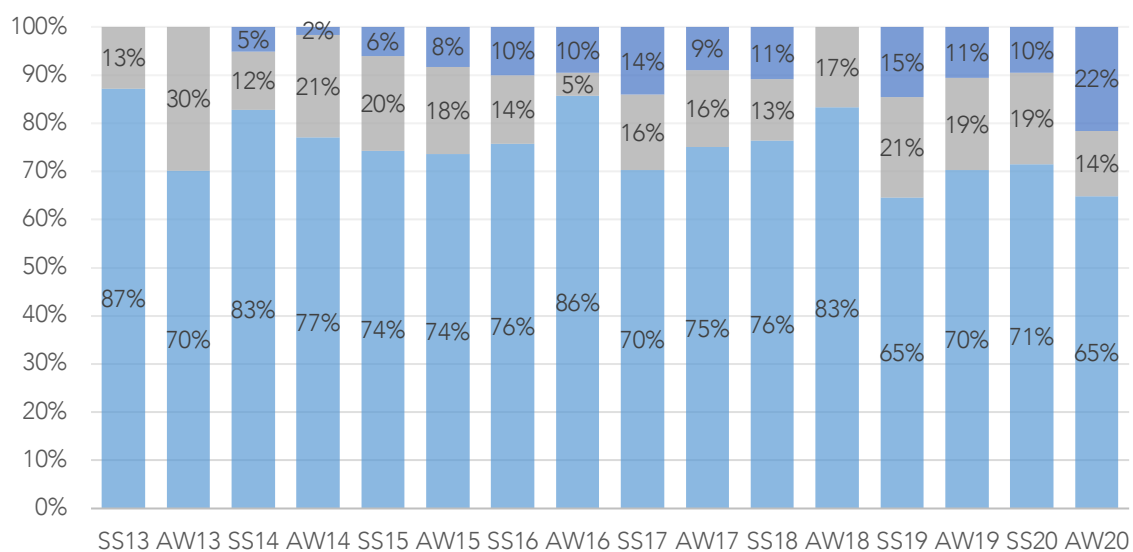
As soon both 2012 and 2020 had only one edition of the fashion week, this data could have been calculated only for 2013-2019, representing how many unique names presented their collections on schedule of the fashion week. In this case, it also correlated with the analysis of each season separately. In 2015 the biggest amount of designers showcased at the fashion week, the number reached of 89 names. At the same time this framework allowed to identify, that even though overall the seasons were smaller in 2014, both seasons also accommodated almost the same amount of designers – 81. This allows to conclude that even though the seasons in

2014 and 2016 were relatively the same by its size, but overall in 2014 the participants were for autumn-winter and spring-summer edition were less the same, as in the case of 2016. That means, that the platform adopted more coherent pattern of participation, when each new season had less new designers, but continued to work with those who participated before.

Participation Structure

Analyzing designers' participation patterns allows to tackle the same characteristic. The first seasons were more open to newcomers, those who did not participate before and were showcasing their collection at London's menswear fashion week for the first time. Before its pique year in 2015, on average (Figure 4.6) around 18% (maximum up to 30%) of participants on the schedule were new to the platform, while after a sudden drop to 5% in 2016 AW16 season, on average

FIGURE 4.6 PARTICIPATION STRUCTURE BY CONTINUITY



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

■ Previous Season ■ Newcomers ■ Came back

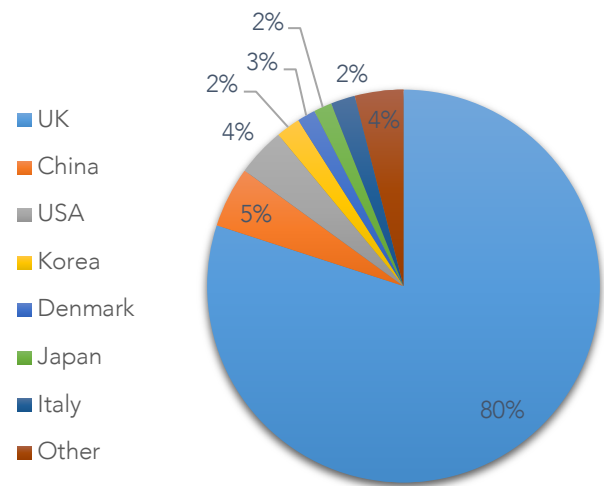
newcomers concluded 15% of total participants on the schedule of the event. Overall, the percentage of newcomers was higher during spring-summer seasons. On average, the pattern of continuity in designer's participation hasn't changed over the years, the majority of the designers were the same from season to season. As it can be seen, on average 75% of the designers of each season participated in the previous season. The fluctuation between numbers of those who participated in the previous seasons and newcomers was often compensated by those who came back to the platform after a break. Though this is the least significant group having on average 8% of participants per season. Breaking it down more precisely allows to see that before 2015 the participation pattern was more consistent, since the number of designers was in general growing and only 4% of designers had breaks in their participation. While after 2015 an average number is almost 11%, meaning that more designers were in the category of those who were coming back to the platform after a break. It also correlated with the percentage of newcomers and shrinking number of the participants on the schedule of the fashion week in general. Consequently, an average season profile would consist 75% of designers from the previous season, 17% of newcomers and 8% of those who came back to the platform.

Origin

The perspective on the origin (Figure 4.7) of designers participation "On schedule" allows to talk about how international is the scene and whether there is any balance between local and foreign designers in general. The origin of the brand can

be identified either if it is stated in the brand description on its official website and the BFC sources or if the brand is in general based in another country. The analysis of all 199 designers is showing that predominantly the participants of LFWM are British (159 out of 199), the second biggest group are Chinese designers (10 out 199), the majority of which were

FIGURE 4.7 ORIGIN OF THE BRANDS PARTICIPATING ON SCHEDULE



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

introduced to the platform within the partnership between GQ China and the BFC. The third significant group represents designers coming from the USA (8). The designers from Korea (4), Denmark (3), Japan (3), Italy (4) represent the minor groups, while the rest (8) were the only representatives of their own countries.

Promotion schemes

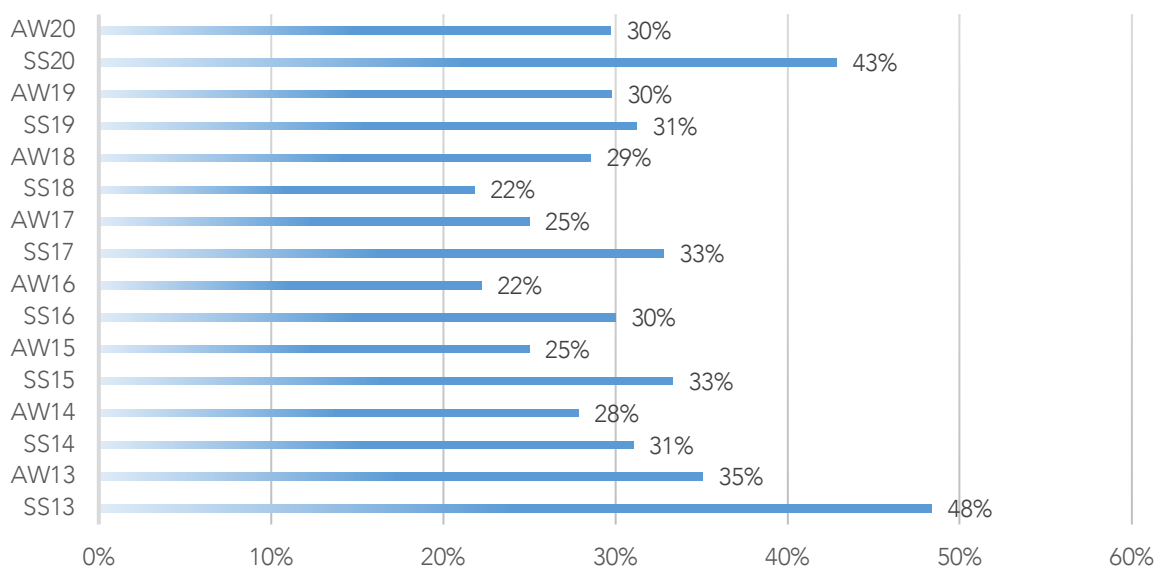
The development of the fashion week itself was strongly connected to the emergence of different promotion schemes and accumulation of funds by the BFC in order to support menswear designers and secure their participation at the fashion week. These schemes include Fashion East, NEWGEN MEN, MAN, Fashion Forward, BFC/GQ Designer Menswear Fund. While some of them were not active through all the seasons and had structural changes throughout their history, every edition of the

fashion week had a share of designers, whose participation was sponsored and supported within one or another platform.

In a way, these schemes can be understood as a direct investment provided or at least coordinated by the organizers of the fashion week, the BFC, into the industry, hence shaping its impact on the development of menswear. Throughout 16 seasons, at least 59 designers were supported in order showcase their collections either “On schedule” or within “Group” events at the fashion week, accounting for a quarter of all designer showcasing “On schedule”.

If a more precise look is taken into each season (Figure 4.8), then on average 31% of designers are supported within every edition of the fashion week. The seasons that are held in June have a tendency to have more designers supported which correlates with the fact that on average there are more designers participating and

FIGURE 4.8 SHARE OF SUPPORTED PARTICIPANTS



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

■ Share of Supported

summer editions are longer. The inaugural season has the highest share of supported designers – 48%, which is understandable since the event was just launching. At the same time, the dramatic increase of supported designers in the second last season of the fashion week also correlated with the whole process of degradation of the platform and decrease in participation, signaling that the platform is struggling to involve more independent participants. The reason could be either because there are not enough of them or because the fashion week cannot actually ensure effective brand representation, attracting enough attention.

On the one hand, the BFC is not only supporting the participation for the designers, hence securing at least a third of its schedule, but also it creates the whole ecosystem of various incubating schemes that actually allow new menswear talent to enter the industry. On the other hand, this high percentage of financially supported designers also raises a question of how sustainable is the business model of LFWM and whether the industry is indeed capable of fulfilling the schedule with only independent participants.

The other important factor that identifies the impact of the platform for the menswear industry is hidden in the correlation between the share of supported designers and the share of newcomers per season. While on average, there are 17% of newcomers, it is almost a half from the share of supported participants. Even though the newcomers are not always dependent on funds, there is still a tendency that if the brand is participating “On schedule” for the first time, it is either supported

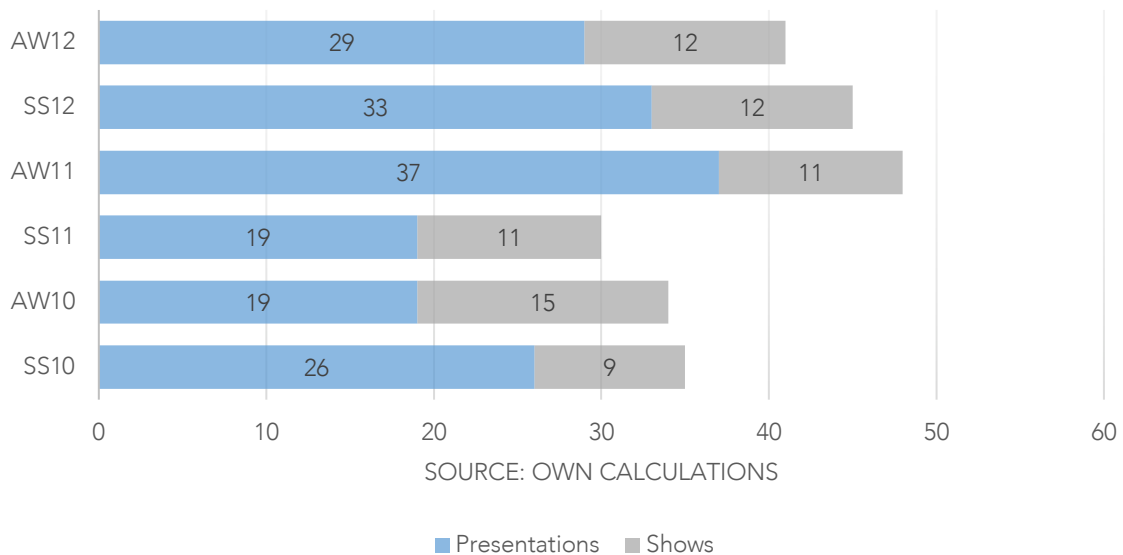
within one of the schemes or is supported within “Group” type of participation, which is by definition was created to promote young designers. The lack of correlation between newcomers and supported participants can be explained with the fact that usually, designers go through at least two different promotion platforms, graduating from one they become members of another one before they are able to participate independently. Usually, the path starts with Fashion East group presentations, go to MAN group catwalk show and end with NEWGEN MEN, which allows them to showcase independently “On schedule”.¹⁵⁶ This again justifies a more incremental impact of the platform on the development of the industry, which is based on growing its own brands and maintaining their brand image through the platform of the fashion week.

Hence, the identification of the best season is rather impossible, since the criteria can be extremely various. It might be that the best season from participation perspective would be the one with the highest percentage of newcomers and the lowest share of supported designers, allowing the BFC to hold a sustainable event. From this perspective, SS15 and SS19 could be called as the most successful seasons, hence in both cases, the percentage of newcomers was higher than average 20% and 19% respectively and the share of supported designers was close to average 33% and 31%. The AW16 season though it had a high participation rate, had the lowest

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix 1.

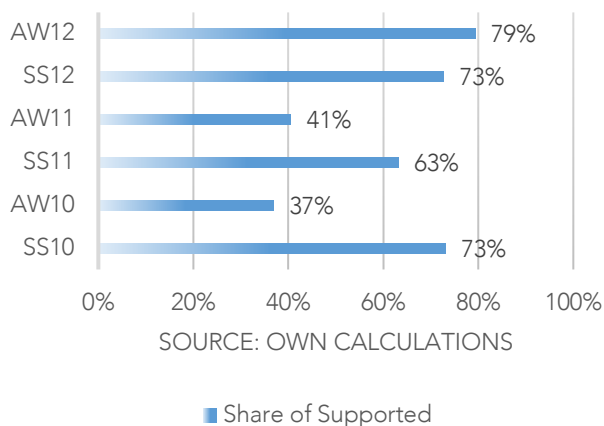
newcomers share – 5%, and the lowest possible support share – 22%, defining this seasons as one of the least diverse and inclusive.

FIGURE 4.9 MENSWEAR AT LFW 2009-2012



A retrospective look into the menswear representation at LFW can also provide an addition perspective on how dramatically the numbers increases starting from the first seasons (Figure 4.9). On average there were around 12 menswear designers “On schedule” of the fashion week and the rest were presenting either in showrooms or

FIGURE 4.10 SHARE OF SUPPORTED MENSWEAR PARTICIPANTS AT LFW 2009-2012



within various presentation formats. So with the introduction of the fashion week, the participation at first tripled and reached its peak in a couple of years. Interestingly, that the participation rates came back closely to the same level that was in the first season, being only slightly higher and

with a lower share of supported designers. The share of supported menswear designers had decreased significantly with the introduction of the fashion week as week. Before LC:M, on average 61% of the menswear designers at LFW were sponsored (Figure 4.10).

Conclusions

The analysis of the data allows to evaluate the development of the fashion week throughout its history numbers. Having designers' participation types, structure and patterns allows to tackle dynamics in the life of LFW. Firstly, the fashion week introduction was indeed an effective response to the growing role of menswear designers, allowing them to triple their representation in comparison with Menswear Day at LFW. Secondly, the fashion week under the name of LC:M was growing up from its first edition in 2012 and reached its peak in participation in both seasons of 2015; after that the fashion week started to gradually decrease its number of participants and had almost the same number of designers for its last season in January 2020 as it did for its first season. Thirdly, even though the participation structure of the fashion week hasn't changed over the years, the fluctuation that mainly occurred within newcomers and those who were coming back to the platform allowed slow rotation of designers, having only 5 of those who made through the first and the last season. Fourthly, the role of "Showroom" and "Group" as types of participation had completely degraded towards the last season. Fifthly, the origin of the designers participating in the fashion week "On schedule" is mainly British – 80%,

which consequently means that the fashion week is focused on representation and development of the local industry. Finally, the share of supported designers from season to season remained extremely significant, justifying the role of the platform in bringing up new talents through accumulation of funds for them.

Chapter V. The heritage of LFWM: Top designers

The future of London Fashion Week Men's remains uncertain, especially because of a global pandemic, since that is going to reshape the future of the fashion industry in general. The heritage of LFWM can be defined within designers that went through the platform and became something that is attributed to this particular fashion week and the city where it is held. The analysis of the paths of the most successful designers at the fashion week allows deepening the knowledge about the platform itself. Breaking the platform down to those who certainly as the key constituent were forming the image of it throughout 16 seasons and 8 years of history.

Sampling

Identifying the most successful designers might be a difficult task since a lot of different approaches could be applied in this case. The first most obvious one is certainly related to the sales and brand value, but this study focuses on LFWM and its role in the development of the industry, hence the most successful designers will be identified within its framework. In other words, those who participated more times in the fashion week could be called as ones who were successful and developing their brands within the platform of the fashion week. More precisely, being the most active participants these designers and their labels were defining the image of the fashion week for all industry insiders. These particular designers could be called top designers of the fashion week, and a closer look into their background is required. Examining their participation patterns and paths through the platform, education, origin, etc.

can open another, more precise perspective on the effect of the fashion week. In other words, this allows to see the fashion week from the bottom and grasp the impact of the platform on a separate designer.

Hereby, the analysis of the participants of the fashion week is conducted within two samples.¹⁵⁷ The first sample (S1) is based on the designers that participated at least 8 and more times out of 16 seasons. The second sample (S2) is concluded from those who participated at least 4 times in the last 8 seasons, including the last or second to last season of the fashion week in order to make sure that the brand is still active. The S2 is introduced in order to diversify and test the results from the S1. The other reason for that is also the fast-changing speed of the industry and the fact that S2 allows understanding a more recent image of the participants of the fashion week, meaning that the conclusions of the S1 would be complemented and specified with the results of the S2.

The extraction of this sample became possible through creation of a database and calculation of the number of participation times for each brand represented in on the schedule of the fashion week within 16 seasons, which accounted for 199 designers.

As a result, this analysis is only based on the most successful designers which in total represents around 25% of total participants on schedule of the fashion week within its 8 years of history. At the same time these designers represent almost 50%

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

of all activities held on the schedule of the fashion week, meaning that the rest 75% of participants accounted for the other half of the activities at the fashion week. That is why this sample is representative enough for the purpose of this study.

The S1 accounted for 39 labels, but 6 of them, such as Belstaff, Chester Barrie, Hardy Amies, John Smedley, Richard James and Topman Design were extracted from the sample since they represent tailoring houses or mass-market companies and were participating at the fashion week within Savile Row partnerships or commercial activities. That is why the main sample includes only 33 brands. The S2 accounted for 18 brands, which in total makes 57 brands being analyzed within the same categories. As a result, for each brand the number of times participating in the fashion week and the last season, the year of establishment, current status of the brand, the reasons to suspend participation in LFWM, sponsorships, origin and where the brand is or was based, education of the head designers, type of the brand (menswear only or both menswear and womenswear lines), the British Fashion Awards and CFE Support.

Establishment

The establishment year can provide another important perspective that would allow to answer the question whether the creation of the fashion week was a response to the growing menswear fashion industry and whether it stimulated the emergence of new brands. In order to estimate the impact of the platform in the UK, those who are based outside of the country were excluded from the calculations.

In the case of S1 most of the brands were established already after 2000, except for Burberry (1856), E. Tautz (1876), Kent & Curwen (1926), Margaret Howell (1970), YMC (1972) and Alexander McQueen (1992), Xander Zhou (2007) and Astrid Andersen (2011). The last brands were excluded from the calculation of an average year since they either stand out from the definition of an independent fashion designer, they have a longer history, were established first as womenswear brands only or based outside of the UK. Overall the picture with the establishment represented in. As it can be seen for the first sample an average year is 2009, having 15 designers out 25 being established before the fashion week and 12 before the introduction of Menswear Day on the schedule of LFW. The rest of the brands were founded already within the timeline of the fashion week.

For the S2, such brands as Chalayan (1994) and MICHIKO KOSHINO (1987) JOHN LAWRENCE SULLIVAN (2004) and PROUNOUNCE (2016) are excluded for an average year calculation, since they either have a longer history in the fashion industry and were represented in different international platforms or are based outside of the UK. The average year for the S2 is 2014, having 12 designers out of 15 founded after 2015.

These calculations allow to say that the fashion week indeed was a response for the growing number of menswear designers in the UK and the speed of their emergence accelerated after the fashion week was inaugurated. In total, out of two

samples 20 brands were created already after the fashion week was established in 2012.

Current status and promotion schemes

Both of the samples have a high percentage of designers being supported through various promotion schemes. For the S1 63% or 21 out of 33 designers were accepted at least into one promotion scheme operated within or coordinated by the BFC. At the same time, 13 of them were accepted into two different platforms and 4 in three. In the case of the S2, the rate is a bit lower and only 55% or 10 out of 18 were sponsored and in most of the cases, those designers were involved in one scheme only. Overall, the percentage for both samples is relatively high, meaning that half of the designers were dependent on sponsorship and support in order to enter the fashion week.

The dependency between the current status and promotion schemes can be useful for identification of efficient allocation of funds and investments coordinated by the BFC. In the case of the S1, only 8 out of 21 designers that were supported within one or another promotion scheme are still continuing to participate in the fashion week, while the rest are not. As for the S2, only 2 of supported designers dropped out from the fashion week. Overall, the designers which were at least in two promotion schemes are still connected to the fashion week; and in the case with three platforms of support, all designers remained on the schedule of the fashion week.

Another important correlation between institutional support and success can be traced within the analysis of Centre for Fashion Enterprise (CFE) graduates, which included Liam Hodges, Alex Mullins, Craig Green, PER GÖTESSON, ART SCHOOL, Bethany Williams , FENG CHENG WANG, JORDANILUCA, Nicholas Daley and PHOEBE ENGLISH. The CFE is providing various mentorship programmes and workshops for the SMEs to grow and financed within European Regional Development Fund and other public agencies.¹⁵⁸ All of these designers, who underwent business development programmes provided by the institution remained at LFWM with the exception of Alex Mullins who suspended his brand and Craig Green who chose to showcase his collections in Paris from 2020.

In addition to that, all of the designers that were awarded British Emerging Menswear Talent within British Fashion Awards, among which are CHRISTOPHER RÆBURN, Agi & Sam, Craig Green, Wales Bonner, Charles Jeffrey LOVERBOY, A-COLD-WALL, Bethany Williams were all graduates of either one or more promotion schemes at LFWM, with the exception of Jonathan Saunders. The same goes for British Designer of the Year – Menswear that was three times awarded to Craig Green (2016, 2017, 2018) and twice to J.W. Anderson.

The perspective on current status also raises another question: why designers actually leave the platform. Out of 51 designers of both of the samples 25 designers are still involved in LFWM. The reasons to leave the platform were: 1) suspension or

¹⁵⁸ "About," CFE, accessed June 29, 2020, <https://fashion-enterprise.com/about>.

transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation (7); 2) switch to another platform outside of the UK (5); 3) closure of the brand (4); 4) suspension of menswear line (2); 5) switch to LFW showcasing both womenswear and menswear lines (3); 6) off-schedule presentation (2); 7) no new collection (2).

The most common reason for the brands to leave the fashion week was actually the reason for either completely suspending their brand activities and in some cases transforming their presentation formats, showcasing collections only online for example. As it is seen the second common reason is related to the fact that the most successful designer prefer a platform that can provide them with higher public exposure. That is why such brands as J.W. Anderson, Kiko Kostandinov, Craig Green and Cottweiler moved their events into the schedule of Paris Fashion Week Men's after reaching the limit in London. Alexander McQueen started presenting their collection within Milan Fashion Week Men's. The other three brands – Burberry, Bobby Abley and Margaret Howell showcase both of their lines with LFW, both because it can generate higher media exposure, but also because it fits in their brand strategy better than showcasing their collections separately, the same goes for those two designers showcasing off-schedule of the fashion week in general.

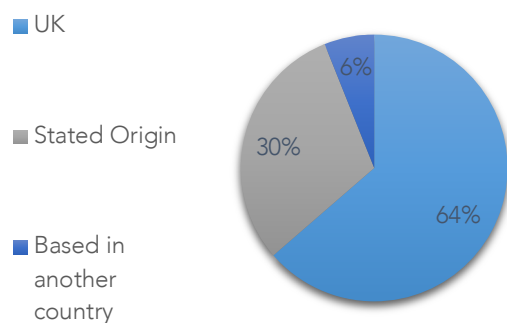
All these reasons, including those who closed their menswear lines or brands completely, are indicating that some of the menswear fashion brands are either not satisfied or struggling with the framework of the fashion week or they just do not need

a menswear fashion week in order to present their collection. Consequently, it raises another doubt in the relevancy of the fashion week with such a high rate of sponsored participants in addition to those who are leaving the platform for various reasons mainly related to the fashion week itself. Importantly, 14 out of 25 designers that dropped out from the fashion week were supported within at least one of the promotion schemes operated or coordinated by the fashion week. Thus, designers who made it within at least two promotion schemes have a tendency to stay connected with the platform. At the same time, the efficiency of funds allocation is still relatively high since 51% of all supported designers remained at the fashion week.

Background and Origin

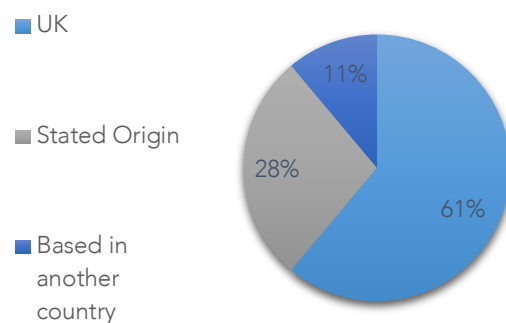
The analysis of the origin of both samples might show relatively the same results, but it does show a tendency that started in the second half of the history of LFWM. Though the core of the fashion week is still British, overall the percentage of (Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2) of designers of other than British origin has increased.

FIGURE 5.1 ORIGIN (S1)



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

FIGURE 5.2 ORIGIN (S2)



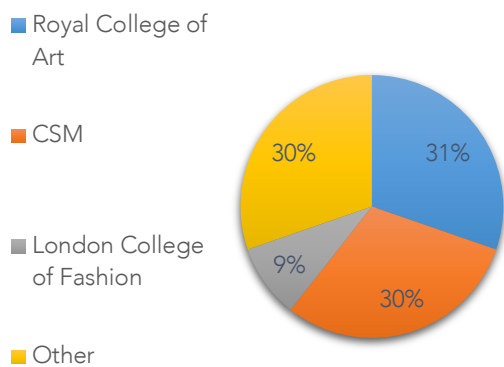
SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

Having those who stated their origin other than British and are based in the UK with designers who are based overseas, the balance has changed quite significantly between the S1 and the S2. Breaking down S1 shows that 21 designers are British, 10 are based in the UK but stated their origin and only 2 are outside of the country. In the case of the S2, 11 are British brands, 5 stated their origin and the same number of 2 accounts for those who are based outside. The growth in the share of the designers who are not only of a different origin but also are based in different countries shows the process of internationalization among participants of the fashion week. At the same time, bearing in mind the fact that overall the number of designers in total participating on the schedule of the fashion week has been decreasing since 2015, the presence of international designers remains quite small.

The other important factor that can tell about diversity of the platform is educational background (Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4) of the most successful designers.

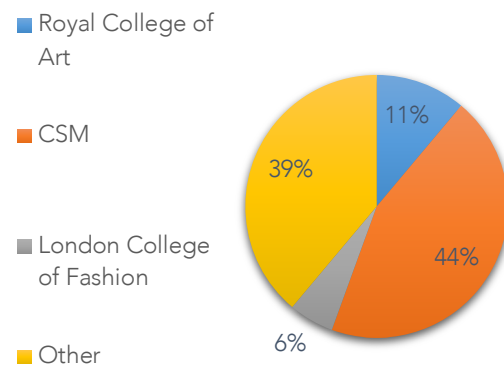
In the case of S1 the distribution between different schools remained equal, Royal

FIGURE 5.3 EDUCATION (S1)



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

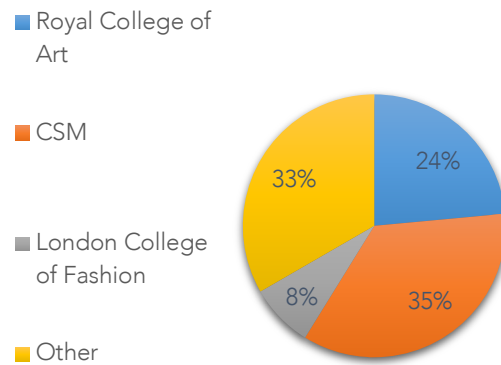
FIGURE 5.4 EDUCATION (S2)



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

College of Arts and Central Saint Martins were the top schools each accounting a 30% share, while London College of Fashion had only 9%; the other designers were coming from a more diverse educational background. In the S2, the structure has changed dramatically, the graduates of Central Saint Martins accounted almost for a half of all designers and the rest were of a various background with the role of Royal College of Arts completely degraded. Overall, the division among both of the samples is in favor of Central Saint Martins and designers from various educational backgrounds (Figure 5.5). This data also outlines the fact that the platform of the fashion week overall remains exclusive, mainly dominated by the graduates of two different schools.

FIGURE 5.5 EDUCATION (S1 AND S2)



SOURCE: OWN CALCULATIONS

Furthermore, the specialization of the brands can also identify how relevant is the platform of the menswear fashion week. Having a few brands moving their menswear lines to showcase during the womenswear fashion week raises the question of whether the menswear platform is still needed. For the S1, 14 out of 33 brands, which is 42% are brands that have both menswear and womenswear lines. In the S2 the ratio is relatively the same with 38% brands having both menswear and womenswear lines. Thus, almost 40% of the top designers are not solely menswear,

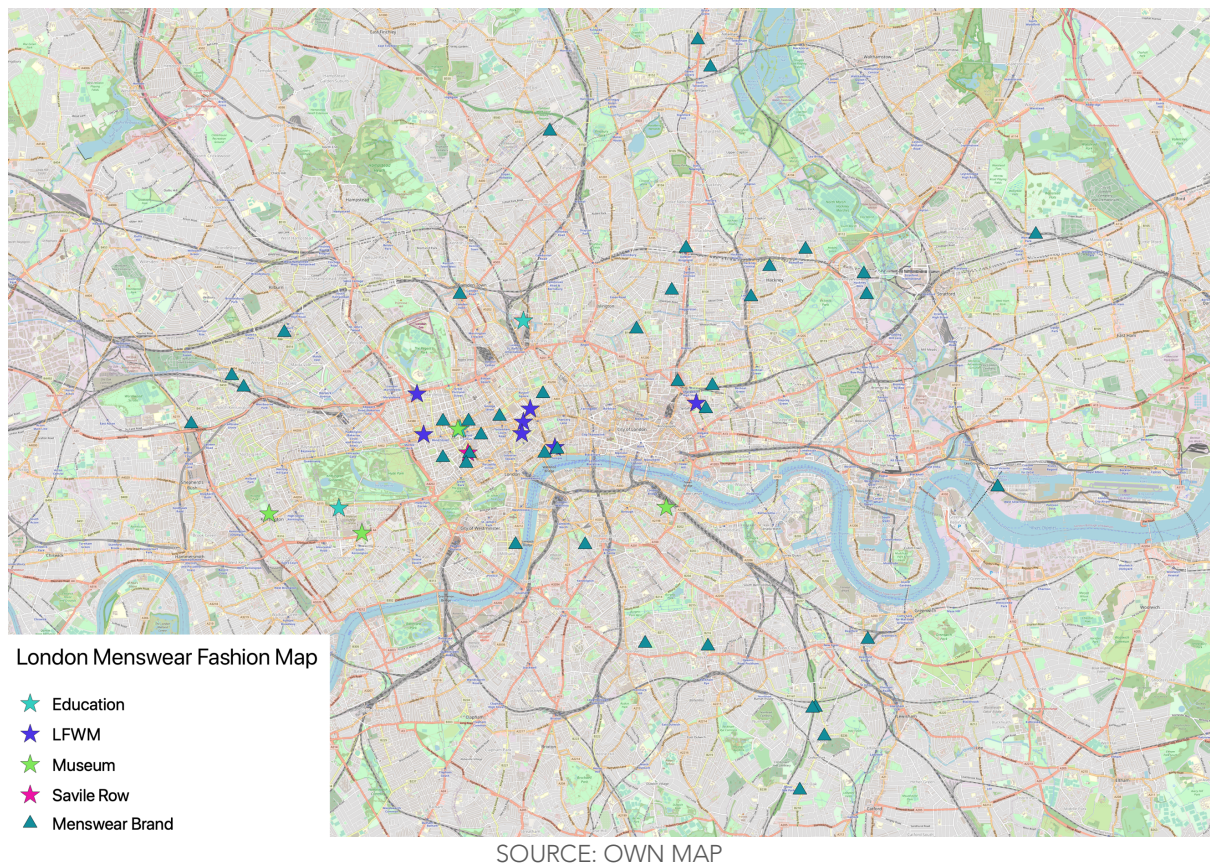
meaning that either they opened their menswear lines after womenswear or started with both lines from the beginning. Consequently, that would explain the tendency for a few designers that left LFWM because they closed their menswear lines for the sake of womenswear which they continued to showcase at LFW, that signifies that menswear lines were of a secondary role for these brands.

Geography

As it was outlined before, there are areas of London which are considered to be traditional for the development of menswear. The recent move of the main venue of the fashion week from the city centre, close by to historic centre of menswear in Savile Row, to the East London was also justified with the increasing role of the area for the development of menswear brands. The analysis of the official addresses of the most successful designers that are based in the UK allows identifying whether there are any tendencies in clustering of the menswear fashion industry or precursors of district formation in London. All of the designers from S1 and S2 that are based in the UK, are based in London, which is again proving the idea of dominating role of the city in the way industry is organized, but also it underlines its inclusivity and inaccessibility for talents to operate outside of London, without moving its headquarters there. For 8 designers from both of the samples, the address couldn't be identified or they are based outside of the UK, hereby, there are only 43 brands included in the analysis. The addresses for the analysis were gathered either from the official websites of the brands or their profiles at LFWM website.

As a result, the GIS analysis of the designers from S1 and S2 shows that there is no tendency for any district formation and the brands are spread relatively equally across different parts of the city (Figure 5.6). At the same time, a significant share of

FIGURE 5.6 LONDON MENSWEAR FASHION MAP



the brands is located outside of the city of London. That could be explained with the fact that the majority of the brands within the analyzed sample are newly established brands, highly dependent on institutional support and they are not able to locate their offices or showrooms within the city centre. The museums and education institutions did not play a significant role in the formation of any clusters. The traditional area around Savile Row (indicated with a purple star on the map) with Mayfair and Soho is the only place that creates outlines of a cluster, with both

educational and museum agencies within, but they rather mirror the traditional area which was always considered to be the centre of the menswear in London. Furthermore, London did not form an sub-system, as it happened in the case of New York, described by Rantisi.¹⁵⁹ In a way, there is a tendency in East London, but at the same it, traditional historical area is sort of placed in the centre and circled by independent designers outside of the city.

The fashion week with its main venues has very limited geography, mainly operating within the city centre, close to Savile Row. At the same time, the reasons for this particular geography are clear, hence the fashion week has to be accessible for the visitors and be central in case the designers host events outside of the official venue. The recent move to the Truman Brewery in East London still has some tendencies for clustering, since there are already a few brands residing there and possibly the fashion week will become a magnet for others.

Overall, the geography of the designers in relation to the fashion week allows concluding that the menswear segment of the fashion industry is still growing and the scale of it is not big enough in order to outline any clusters or strong tendencies.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the sample analysis of the most frequent participants of the menswear fashion week allows outlining the image the fashion week has based on who participates in it. Consequently, this image in precise numbers defines the

¹⁵⁹ Norma M. Rantisi, "The Local Innovation System..," 590-592.

impact of the fashion week itself. The sample of 25% of total participants who actually created 50% of the activities on the schedule of the fashion week already created a disproportion, meaning that the rest of the participants are less active and hereby less impacted by the fashion week. The establishment criteria show that mainly menswear brands were established after the process of menswear institutionalization at the fashion week started in 2009.

At the same time, the fashion week was not only a response to the growing number of the menswear brands but also an intention to revive the menswear segment of the industry, hence the majority of the designers within the sample were supported within one or another promotion scheme. However, the support generated by the BFC was not always successful and as a result, only half of the designers made it through and remained connected to the fashion week. The key reasons for them to leave are either transformation or suspension of their brands or preference of another platform.

The analysis of the background and the origin of the participants shows that the community is relatively exclusive and far from being diverse, having the overwhelming majority of British designers based in London with an educational background from one of three different schools. The focus on the geography of the most frequent participants of the fashion week with their relation to the most significant fashion agencies, such as museums, educational institutions and the fashion week venues itself did not show any new clusters and proved the independent

character of the majority of the participants, locating them outside of the city of London.

Chapter VI. Final Discussion

Findings

There are various approaches that could be applied in the examination of the impact of a fashion week. London Fashion Week Men's was established as a response both to the growing menswear fashion scene, but also to the always present heritage of being the capital of traditional menswear. The main lens for this study was chosen in order to trace how the platform and its internal development actually influenced those for whom this platform was created in the first places. A designer or a brand – is not the only participant of the fashion week, but it is the one who generates the content of the fashion week and hence is placed in the centre of this research.

Analyzing different approaches to the definition of a fashion city, it is important to understand that every major fashion capital, among which London is as well, has completely different distinctive features. In the case of London, one of those features is actually menswear. The significance of menswear heritage in London is deeply studied within its cultural perspective and evolution of styles. At the same time, the topic of menswear in the discourse of business history is not very elaborated and this thesis is a contribution aiming to fulfil this knowledge gap.

The premises of the menswear fashion week in London occurred during the period of 1960s-1980s, when major changes happened in various aspects of society's life, including culture and consumerism. Even though, menswear was lagging far behind the industry of womenswear, both in its sales and in the fashion scene,

including menswear design education, as well. The male consumer behavior has started changing dramatically only in 2000s, and it still only gradually accelerates.

In other words, the menswear fashion week seems rather an attempt to both follow the development of the market, but also revitalize the significance of the heritage that the UK has and turn it into profit.

The history of LFWM did not start with the official establishment of the event itself. Firstly, it is deeply rooted in the dynamics in the fashion scene that occurred at the end of the previous century, but also it was a gradual evolution. The menswear representation at LFW grew from rare menswear shows organized by originally womenswear labels to a separate dedicated only to menswear day on the schedule of LFW. The key people in the introduction of the menswear fashion to the fashion week in London were Lulu Kennedy and Dylan Jones, both of whom were involved into the process of institutionalization of menswear since the first initiatives, such as Fashion East and MAN.

The evolution of the menswear fashion week hence included the stage of independent menswear showcases at LFW, then a full day of menswear events in 2009, followed by the establishment of London Collections: Men in 2012, that was only in 2017 transformed into London Fashion Week Men's.

The key actor in the promotion of the menswear fashion industry is the British Fashion Council. The fashion week itself is only the culmination of the activities of the BFC. In the reality, the organization nurtures the development of the industry on the

grass-root level through the accumulation of funds and investments in young talents, various educational programmes and internationalization attempts aimed to increase the export of the industry. The key challenges that the BFC is facing today are related to Brexit and the global pandemic. The last one resulted into cancellation of LFWM. Instead, the event was merged with LFW into a gender-neutral platform and its future remains uncertain.

This research's novelty is based on the range of sources and their analysis. The data that is available about the menswear fashion week in London has not been analyzed in this manner before. This includes in-depth schedule analysis. The numbers of the participants, participation types, patterns, frequency and background of this participation throughout 16 seasons of the fashion week shows the actual impact of the platform on the development of the menswear fashion industry in the UK.

The establishment of the fashion week was indeed a response to the dynamics in the fashion scene, but it allowed to increase the representation of menswear in three times starting from its first season. At the same time, the fashion week went through its internal dynamics of growth, having different capacities for each season. After reaching its peak in the number of participants in 2015, the fashion week in its last season returned to the level of its first season.

The fashion week's main impact is in nurturing and growing menswear designers by investing in them and providing with a platform for representation. The

average number of supported designers per season accounted almost for 31% of the total number of participants. The BFC could gather or provide with funds 56 menswear labels in the framework of menswear fashion week. At the same time, the allocation of the BFC's investments is only half-efficient, since almost 50% of designers supported throughout the history of the fashion week dropped out from it. Those designers, that graduated through at least 2 different promotion schemes were more likely to remain with the fashion week or in the industry in general, proving that the designers and their brands are highly dependent on continuous institutional support in order to survive.

The overwhelming majority of the participants of the fashion week are British or based in the UK, meaning that international aspect of the fashion week is still underdeveloped or that this fashion week is rather of a local significance, mainly attracting British designers. At the same time, the fashion week attracts some designers from China, Korea, Japan and the USA.

The sample analysis of the participants of the fashion week showed that only 25% of all who participated in the schedule conducted 50% of events on the schedule of the fashion week. That means that the majority of the participants did not stay with the platform, whether because they could not build productive relations with it or because it was not beneficial for them. That appears to be possible since the most common reason for a brand to leave the platform was the preference of other platforms outside of the UK. This raises another doubt, whether the fashion week is

actually capable of keeping the designers on board. Overall, the structure of an average season of the fashion week was dominated by 75% of the designers that participated in the most recent previous season, around 17% of new designers and 8% of those who participated before and returned to the platform after a break.

The fashion week indeed accelerated the emergence of new menswear brands, but their survival and success were only possible if the organizers of the fashion week were providing them with extra support, both with financial sponsorship and various forms of mentorships. At the same time, the second-largest group of designers that dropped out from the fashion week had to do it because of the transformation of their brands and business models, which is raising another discussion about the sustainability of a fashion week as a platform for representation.

The scale of the menswear fashion industry remains small and in fact, it develops at a slow pace, if the participation dynamics at the fashion week are taken into account. The image that the participants project through the fashion week is not international and diverse, even though that is what stated by the platform. In reality, it is a relatively closed community of people, who come from 2 or 3 different schools and create the biggest part of the content at the fashion week. Moreover, the fashion week helps them to finance this participation. In other words, London Fashion Week Men's has a very specific agenda and mainly is focused on raising new designers like some sort of start-up incubator. The geography of the fashion week and new emerging designers does not overlap, neither creates any new clusters in the city.

The role of traditional menswear area with heart in Savile Row remains significantly strong. The new designers are mainly situated outside of the city center.

As soon as the last seasons of the fashion week in London was combining both womenswear and menswear and presenting it in a digital format, trying to adapt to the realities of the new world in 2020, there are high chances that London Fashion Week Men's will not survive the pandemic, especially regarding the fact that most of its participants are supported within the BFC. At the same time, the fashion week was not showing positive dynamics in the recent years and the last live season of it had very low participation of designers. The debate remains open, whether "we" need a menswear fashion week in London and this study attempts to provide a business perspective on its real impact. In fact, the fashion week's real impact was and is in providing almost 600 designers with an opportunity to showcase their collection within the platform that brings them some level of international exposure. Furthermore, its impact mainly is about selecting, growing and promoting the best of them, in a way building the contemporary menswear fashion industry in the UK.

The menswear fashion industry would probably continue to grow, but maybe it will not need the fashion week as an intermediary structure in order to reach its consumers. On the other hand, the role of the fashion week as a contact area for industry representatives and innovation will still be valid. The fashion week framework is not the only one for the examination of the menswear fashion industry, but it can

serve as a ground point for that, the same way it serves as an entry point for so many emerging menswear designers.

Limitations and potential further research

The limitations of this study are mainly based on the lack of comparative perspective with other menswear fashion week or fairs, like Paris Fashion Week Men's or Pitti Uomo. In case the same data is analyzed for those events, the impact of the menswear fashion week in London could be understood in more precise categories. The interviews with the organizers of the fashion week and some of the designers from the analyzed samples could probably have provided a broader picture of what is really happening at the event and how it impacts the industry. At the same time, this thesis was only focused on a very specific data and what it can show about the role of the fashion week for those who participate in it. The other aspects of its impact like sales campaigns organized by the BFC, international guest programmes and media coverage have great potential for further research.

Appendix 2.

Sample 1 – S1 (all who participated 50% and more throughout 16 seasons).

Name	Est	LFWM	Sponsorship	CFE Support	Current Status	Last Season	Reasons	Based	Address	Origin	Education	Type	BFA	Sources (Accessed May 15, 2020)
Agi & Sam	2008	10	M/ NM		No	AW 17	closed the brand	UK	STUDIO 3, MAINYA RD STUDIO S 90 MAIN YARD WALLIS ROAD LONDO N E9 5LN	USA	Other	M	BFA- 2013	https://www.notjustalabel.com/agi-and-sam https://www.fashionmodeldirectory.com/brands/agi-sam/ https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2013/may/14/agi-and-sam-menswear-topman

Alex Mullins	2014	11	NM	Yes	No	AW 19	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	34 New Inn Yard, London, England, United Kingdom.	UK	Central Saint Martin / Royal College of Art	M	https://showstudio.com/news/south-london-forever-alex-mullins http://alexmullins.co.uk/collections/ellesse/ https://www.linkedin.com/company/alex-mullins-limited/about/
Alexander McQueen	1992	8			No	SS20	moved to MFW	UK	27 OLD BOND STREET LONDON W1S 4QE	UK	Central Saint Martins	M /F	https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2020-menswear/alexander-mcqueen https://www.vogue.com/article/designer-sarah-burton-alexander-mcqueen-history-future-of-brand https://wwd.com/runway/mens-fall-collections-2020/milan/alexander-mcqueen/review/

Astrid Andersen	2011	15	M/ NM		Yes		continues	Denmark	JAGTVE J 19 ST. TV. 2200 COPEN HAGEN N DENMA RK	Denmark	Royal College of Art	M /F		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1787
Baartmans and Siegel	2010	8			No	AW 16	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	72B Princess Road London NW6 5QX	Dutch	London College of Fashion	M /F		https://www.notjustalabel.com/baartmans-and-siegel https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1668 https://www.instagram.com/baartmansiegel/?hl=en
Bobby Abley	2012	11	FE/ M/ NM		No	AW 19	switch to LFW showcasing both womenswear and menswear lines	UK	329 Latimer Road North Kensing ton London W10 6RA	UK	Other	M /F		https://www.bobbyabley.co.uk/ https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2142

Burberry	1856	9			No	SS18	switch to LFW showcasing both womenswear and menswear lines	UK	Horsefer ry House Horsefer ry Road London SW1P 2AW	UK	Central Saint Martins	M /F		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?designerID=1245
CHARLES JEFFREY LOVERBOY	2016	10	FE/ M/ NM		Yes		continues	UK	Charles Jeffrey Loverboy Vault 10, Somerset House Studios Somerset House, The Strand London WC2R 1LA	UK	Central Saint Martins	M /F	BFA-2017	https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2763
Christopher Kane	2006	8			No	SS17	suspension of menswear line/ LFW	UK	London Flagship Store 6-7 Mount Street London W1K 3EH	UK	Central Saint Martins	M /F		https://www.christopherkane.com/nl/brand-story

CHRISTOPHER RÆBURN	2009	14	NM /FF	No	AW 19	off-schedule	UK	RÆBURN Studio 1, The Textile Building 29a Chatham Place Hackney, London E9 6FJ United Kingdom	UK	Royal College of Art	M /F	BFA-2011	https://www.raeburndesign.co.uk/explore/about http://web.archive.org/web/201202222020123/http://www.londonfashionweek.co.uk/ChristopherRaeburn
Christopher Shannon	2008	10	FF	No	AW 17	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	Studio 3, 90 De Beauvoir Road London N1 4EN	UK	Central Saint Martins	M		https://www.linkedin.com/in/christopher-shannon-09149036/?originalSubdomain=uk https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1354 https://www.instagram.com/christopher_shannon/?hl=en

Cottweiler	2012	8	NM		No	AW 19	showcasing at PFW M	UK	Workshop A Gillett Place London N16 8JB	UK	Other	M	https://hypebeast.com/2019/6/cottweiler-spring-summer-2020-collection-paris-fashion-week https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2725 https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/cottweiler-wins-british-woolmark-prize
Craig Green	2012	14	M/NM	Yes	No	SS20	showcasing at PFW M	UK	Silver Building 60 Dock Road London E16 1YZ	UK	Central Saint Martins	M	https://craig-green.com/pages/about https://finance.yahoo.com/news/bye-bye-london-british-fashion-star-green-makes-065923433.html https://www.londonfashionweekmens.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?designerID=2051

E. Tautz	1867	15	FF		Yes		continues	UK	3 Cawnpore Street Gipsy Hill London SE19 1PF	UK	Other	M	BFA- 2010	https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/patrick-grant
Edward Crutchley	2015	10	FE		Yes		continues	UK	98 Peckham Hill Street London SE15 5JT	UK	Central Saint Martins			https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2492 http://www.edwardcrutchley.com/about/ https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/edward-crutchley-1

J.W. Anderson	2007	10	FF	No	AW 17	showcasing at PFW M	UK	21 Parr Street London N1 7GW	UK	London College of Fashion	M /F	BFA- 2014,15	https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/42553/1/jw-anderson-paris-aw19-menswear-schedule-loewe-show-debut https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/jonathan-anderson https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/jw-anderson-biography
James Long	2008	8	FF	No	AW 16	closed the brand	UK	Studio 8, The Tramper y Fish Islands 60 Dace Road London E3 2NQ	UK	Royal College Of Art	M		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1664 https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/james-long https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/sponsored-feature/james-longs-story

Katie Eary	2008	11			No	SS18	closed the brand	UK	Exposure 22-23 Little Portland Street London W1W 8BU	UK	Royal College Of Art	M /F		https://www.notjustalabel.com/katie-eary-0 http://www.inteveo.com/demos/fashion/lfwtv/londonfashionweek.co.uk/designer_profile8afe.html?DesignerID=1352
Kent & Curwen	1926	8			No	SS20	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	14 Savile Row Mayfair London W1F 3JN	Ireland	Royal College Of Art	M		http://web.archive.org/web/20190708063936/ https://www.londonfashionweekmens.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2367 https://www.linkedin.com/in/daniel-kearns-b31b0253/?originalSubdomain=uk
KTZ	2003	9			No	SS18	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	KTZ STUDIO 14 SOUTH AM STREET LONDON W10 5PH	Northern Macedonia	Central Saint Martins	M /F		https://fashionwindows.org/short-bio-marjan-pejoski/ https://k-tz.co.uk/biography/ https://www.instagram.com/ktz_official/

									UNITED KINGDOM					
Liam Hodges	2013	12	FE/M/NM	Yes	No	SS20	off-schedule	UK	The Silver Building 60 Dock Road London E16 1YZ	UK	Royal College Of Art	M		https://liamhodges.co.uk/ https://www.10magazine.com/shows/liam-hodges-menswear-aw20/ https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2256
Lou Dalton	2005	16	NM/FF		Yes		continues	UK	Two Eagles House 27 Austral Street London SE11 4SJ		Royal College Of Art	M		https://liamhodges.co.uk/ https://www.10magazine.com/shows/liam-hodges-menswear-aw20/ https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2256

Margaret Howell (Men's)	1970	9			No	SS17	switch to LFW showcasing both womenswear and menswear lines	UK	6 Welbeck Way London W1G 9RZ	UK	Other	M/F	https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?designerID=205 https://www.margarethowell.co.uk/about/ https://london.ac.uk/margaret-howell
Martine Rose	2007	8	NM/FE		Yes		continues	UK	Unit 14 Old Dairy Court 17 Crouch Hill London N4 4AP	UK	Other	M	http://www.martine-rose.com/ https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/martine-rose-1 https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1160

Matthew Miller	2009	12	NM		No	SS19	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	157 Homert on High Street London E9 6AS	UK	Royal College Of Art	M	http://www.inteveo.com/demos/fashion/lfwtv/londonfashionweek.co.uk/designer_profile6d7e.html?DesignerID=1662 https://www.instagram.com/StudioMatthewMiller/ https://matthewmiller.eu/about https://www.coggles.com/life/fashion/meet-matthew-miller-menswear-designer-taking-politics/
Nasir Mazhar (Men's)	2008	8	FE/NM		No	SS17	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	NASIR MAZHAR STUDIO Arch 434, Avenue Road Forest Gate, E7 0LB	Turkish	Other	M/F	https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/kz47px/nasir-mazhar-london-fashion-fanastic-toiles-interview https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?designerID=937

Oliver Spencer	2002	15			No	SS20	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	62 Lambs Conduit Street Bloomsbury London WC1N 3LW	UK	Other	M	https://oliverspencer.co.uk/about http://web.archive.org/web/20191010060328/http://www.londonfashionweekmens.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1767
PER GÖTESSON	2016	8	M/NM	Yes	Yes		continues	UK	Unit 6 2 Norman Road London N15 4ND	Sweden	Royal College of Art	M	https://www.showstudio.com/contributors/per_gotesson https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2936
Qasimi	2015	9			Yes		continues	UK	3rd Floor 250 Tottenham Court Road London W1T 7QZ	UAE	Central Saint Martins	M	https://www.qasimi.com/pages/brand https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2740

Sibling	2008	9	NM/FF		No	AW 17	closed the brand	UK	Unit 11 Links Yard 29a Spelman Street London E1 5LX	UK	Other	M		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1161 https://www.wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/london-sibling-shuts-down-operations-10842587/
Wales Bonner	2014	8	FE/M/NM		Yes		continues	UK	180 Strand C/O 2 Arundel Street London WC2R 3DA	Jamaica	Central Saint Martins	M	BFA-2015	https://www.businessoffashion.com/organisations/wales-bonner https://www.londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2652#RL?rl_playlist=playlist_digital&rl_id=0
Xander Zhou	2007	16			Yes		continues	China	Beijing	China	Other	M		https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/xander-zhou-1 https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?designerID=2016

YMC	1972	10			No	AW 17	suspension or transformation of brand activities and abundance of the fashion week model of representation	UK	11 Poland St London W1F 8QA	UK	Other	M /F	https://www.youmustcreate.com/ https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=1244
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Appendix 3.

Sample 2 – S2 (all who participated 50% and more in the last 50%, including at least two last seasons).

Name	Est	LFWM	Sponsorship	CFE Support	Current Status	Last Season	Reasons	Based	Address	Origin	Education	Type	BFA	Sources (Accessed May 15, 2020)
A-COLD-WALL	2015	7	NM /G Q		Yes		continues	UK	First Floor 2 Arundel Street London WC2R 3DA	UK	Other	M	BFA- 2018	https://www.businessoffashion.com/organisations/a-cold-wall https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3140 https://a-cold-wall.com/ https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/38666/1/samuel-ross-a-cold-wall-on-how-to-break-into-fashion-industry-guide-advice

ART SCHOOL	2016	7	FE/ M/ NM	Yes	Yes		continues	UK	Flat 3 Goldcoat House 16 Coulgate Street Brockley SE4 2RW	UK	Central Saint Martin/Ra vensbour ne College	M /F		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3062 https://fashion-enterprise.com/supported-businesses/art-school
Band of Outsiders	2004	6			Yes		continues	UK		USA	Other	M /F		https://hypebeast.com/tags/band-of-outsiders https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/intelligence/band-of-outsiders-reboot-clc-niklaus-hodel-matthias-weber-florian-feder

BETHAN Y WILLIAM S	2017	4		Yes	Yes		continues	UK	27 Sansom London SE5 7RD	UK	London College of Fashion	M /F	BFA- 2019	https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3173 https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/bethany-williams-1
BIANCA SAUNDE RS	2017	4	NM		Yes		continues	UK	2 Orchard House Meadow s Way SE4 2FR	UK	Royal College of Art	M		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3377
CHALAY AN	1994	7			Yes		continues	UK	5/6 Stucley Place London NW1 8NS	UK	Central Saint Martins	M		https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/hussein-chalayan https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3265
Daniel W. Fletcher	2015	5			Yes		continues	UK	07C HONOR OAK PARK, LONDON	UK	Central Saint Martins	M		https://www.danielwfletcher.com/about https://www.linkedin.com/company/daniel-w.-fletcher-limited/about/

FENG CHEN WANG	2015	4	M	Yes	Yes		continues	UK	Feng Chen Wang Unit 5.3 Bayford Street Industrial Centre London E8 3SE	China	Royal College of Art	M		https://www.businessoffashion.com/organisations/feng-chen-wang https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2935
JOHN LAWRENCE SULLIVAN	2003	6			Yes		continues	Japan		Japan	Other	M/F		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2942 http://www.john-lawrence-sullivan.com/collection/
JORDAN LUCA	2017	5		Yes	Yes		continues	UK	Unit 112 Buspace Studios Conlan Street London W10 5AP	Italy	Other	M		http://www.jordanluca.com/collection.html https://www.londonfashionweekmens.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3153 https://uk.fashionnetwork.com/news/Punchy-emerging-london-label-jordanluca-makes-paris-debut,990207.html

KIKO KOSTADI NOV	2016	7	NM	No	SS2 0	showcasing at PFW M	UK	Unit 1, Bittern Place Coburg Road London N22 6TP	Bulgaria	Central Saint Martins	M	https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/people/top-central-saint-martins-ba-graduates-2014 http://web.archive.org/web/20170608145346/http://kikokostadinov.com/ http://web.archive.org/web/20170610215544/http://londonfashionweekmens.com/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=2912 https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2020-menswear/kiko-kostadinov
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MICHIKO KOSHIN O	1987	6			No	SS2 0	no collection	Jap an		Japan	Other	M /F	https://shop.michikokoshino.co.uk/about/
NICHOLA S DALEY	2015	6	NM	Yes	Yes		continues	UK	Enterpri se Building Unit 17/18 Bernie Grant Arts Centre Town Hall Approac h Road N15 4RX	Jamaica	Central Saint Martins	M	https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3141 http://www.nicholasdaley.net/

PARIA /FARZAN EH	2017	4	NM		Yes		continues	UK	Studio 5 2A Comerford Road London SE4 2AX	Iran	Other	M		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3378 https://www.pariafarzaneh.com/
PHOEBE ENGLISH MAN	2011	6	NM	Yes	No	AW 19	suspension of menswear line/ LFW	UK	London SE8 4SA	UK	Central Saint Martins	M /F		http://www.phoebeenglish.com/collections/aw20/ https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?designerID=2758

PRONOUNCE	2016	5			Yes		continues	Italy	N/A	China	Central Saint Martins	M		https://www.londonfashionweekmens.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3368
Rottingdean Bazaar	2015	5	FE/M		Yes		continues	UK	N/A	UK	Other	M/F		https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/j5meeg/10-things-you-need-to-know-about-rottingdean-bazaar https://www.dazeddigital.com/projects/article/35370/1/rottingdean-bazaar-designers-biography-dazed-100-profile

STEFAN COOKE	2017	4	FE/ M/ NM		Yes		continues	UK	N/A	UK	Central Saint Martins	M		https://londonfashionweek.co.uk/designers_profile.aspx?DesignerID=3281 https://www.stefancooke.co.uk/
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The photo used on the title page is made by the author on 7th of January, 2019 at LFWM during the show of Oliver Spencer AW19.

Key words: "fashion", "fashion city", "business history", "London Fashion Week Men's", "fashion capital", "fashion designer", "fashion week", "menswear", "British Fashion Council", "London".