talent & fashion: a toronto case study

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presentation outline

• overview
• regulation
• space
• talent
• gender
• next steps
overview
overview

- size and strengths of industry
  - 550 apparel manufacturers
  - 50,000 employees
  - contractors known for quality garments, flexibility and quick turnaround (ICF Consulting, 2000)
  - large fashion houses: Roots, Joe Fresh, Lida Biday
  - competitive strength in independent design
toronto’s strengths: multicultural, niche, small scale

Saniya Khan

Fashion Nation

Comrags
‘Collective’ selling items made by / staffed by local designers on Queen Street W.
overview ii

• industry composition

  - ‘layers’ of industry: design, production, distribution, retail, marketing, media

  - industry focus: women’s clothing
overview iii

• recent change
  - recession
  - international competition
  - trade liberalization
    • NAFTA
    • expiration of MFA
regulation
regulation

• sunset industry

• designated as one of ten key clusters in Toronto (2000)

• fashion cluster offers substantial competitive advantage to other Toronto clusters

• promotes overall economic vitality
toronto fashion incubator (TFI)

- toronto as first to innovate
- spearheaded by TEDCO and FILC
- programs: outreach and resident
- focus on business advice, equipment and resources
Susan Langdon, Exec Dir, TFI

"Designers need more than raw creative talent to survive. They need to understand what marketing and cash flow mean. That’s where TFI comes into play. No one else in the country is offering this type of niche market [support]. I see TFI as the hub of a passionate design community that wants to keep jobs, production and industry here in Canada.”
TFI new labels, fashion show
l’Oreal fashion week, FDCC
l’Oreal fashion week, march 2007
fashion magazines
training

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF FASHION

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE

Vietnamese English Spanish Chinese Korean Japanese
showcasing student talent

Signatures 2007
Cocktails at the Castle
Annual Fashion Gala
George Brown College - Center for Fashion Studies
Thursday, April 26th, 2007
At Casa Loma, 1 Austin Terrace
Tickets: $35 in advance/ $40 at the door
Cocktail Reception 7:00pm
Show at 7:30pm

SCHOOL OF FASHION

Tickets Available for:
Wednesday, April 11th, 7:30pm
Thursday, April 12th, 5:00pm,
and 7:00pm.
Prices are $15, $20, and $25 for
the Evening Gala show.

Ryerson Theatre—43 Gerrard
Street East.
Reception one hour before every show in the commons.

Curves  le château

MAKE UP FOR EVER
PROFESSIONAL!
challenges for governance

• hybrid nature of fashion design encompasses both art & commerce

• not included in the Ontario Ministry of Culture mandate
“While a skirt has no plot and you can’t hum a pair of pants, fashion sometimes involves human intellectual achievement that might qualify it as a cultural industry like literature, music, and film. Other times fashion is just another name for overpriced goods.” (Toronto Star, March 2007)
space

Spadina Avenue, historic fashion district

Spadina / Richmond
spadina production chain
newer spaces

Northwest Toronto, Simon Chang
west queen west
talent
portrait: Joe Mimran

• serial fashion entrepreneur

• spaces of city nurture homegrown talent

• city generates spill across effects (Florida, 2006; Markusen, 2006)
talent & teamwork

• literature focuses separately on:

  - process of conception ‘as moment of innovation’ (Rantisi, 2004)

  - unskilled ‘uncreative’ exploitative nature of sewing

• range of other talented workers also key to artistic and commercial success of sector

  - photographers, art directors, makeup artists, editors, pattern makers, cutters, graders, pressers
comrags

• Many independent designers source locally

• ‘Our studio has a relaxed and team-oriented atmosphere, encouraging staff to stick with us. Susan, our production manager and her team of seamstresses, sample maker, cutter and presser have worked with us for a million years. Laurie works directly with us finishing samples, pattern grading and indulging our whims ... it is a team effort that has brought us to where we are today’

the comrags ‘team’
increasingly skilled talent

- Scott (2002) and Kessler (2004) find that overall number of jobs declined in LA, but non-operator occupations actually increased
  - i.e.: professional and semi-professional occupations such as pattern makers, quality control experts, import-export and production managers

- growing shortage of qualified skilled workers (Scott, 2002; Kessler, 2004; Larner & Molloy, 2007; interview UNITE, 2007)
gender
gender

• literature emphasizes socio-spatial dimensions of quality of life
  
  - diversity, tolerance, social inclusion, public space

• Donald and Morrow (2003) suggest literature has not paid adequate attention to gender and life cycle issues
“Fashion is of course an almost wholly feminized industry. Apart from a few men at the top, including manufacturers and retailers, celebrity designers and magazine publishers, it is and has been a female sphere of production and consumption. For this reason alone fashion is a feminist issue.” (McRobbie, 1997, p. 84-85)
women and fashion

- disconnect between design and manufacturing

- celebrity ‘star system’ leads to dilution of talent and corrosion of creativity in a ‘talent-led economy’ (McRobbie, 2002)

- explore mutual dependence between sites and actors

- emphasize spaces of collective consumption and reproduction

- emphasis also on social and ethical issues relevant to attracting and retaining female talent
social construction of talent

• industry roles seen as being ‘talent based’ tend to be populated by men

• need to consider gendering of talent and creativity

• also to consider: race and ethnicity in talent
next steps
next steps

• interviews

• statistical analysis

• policy recommendations
thank you