

Essential facts: the nature of designer fashion and its markets

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ABSTRACT

Designer fashion receives little serious attention in the Cultural Management and Policy fields, because it remains largely private with little public sector engagement or funding Intervention. It is, however, a recognised sub-sector of the cultural industries, (Eurostat ONS, Australia Bureau of Cultural and Leisure Statistics), which continues to contribute to the cultural economy in countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy and China.

This paper sets out to provide empirical data on the designer fashion sub-sector, including employment, size of businesses, type of businesses, location, markets, training and development, Investment profiles and priorities, based on primary research funded by the Department of Culture Media and Sport, in the North-West and Yorkshire and Humber regions of England.

These regions have long traditions stretching from the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth-century in wool and cotton production and clothing. However, this production has progressively declined to be replaced with the “new economy” activity including media and designer fashion.

The research described in the paper addresses definitional questions, which arise from a sub sectoral analysis, provide important data on the sub-sector, which has explicit policy implications for cultural agencies, business support organisations and economic development activities. Perhaps more significantly it poses important questions for public policy makers and managers with regard to the purpose of public sector interventions in the designer fashion sub-sector of the cultural industries.
