BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

**CAN YOU PITCH YOUR PRESENTATION IN FLIP-FLOPS AND STILL GET MILLIONS IN FUNDING?
FASHION IN SLOVAK START-UP ENVIRONMENT**

BACHELOR THESIS

Bratislava 2024   **Paulína Boleková**

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this bachelor´s thesis is my own work and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in References.

Acknowledgements

Boleková: Can you pitch your presentation in flip-flops and still get millions in funding? Fashion in Slovak start-up environment

Abstrakt

Móda je mocný spoločenský fenomén, ktorého sila a vplyv na naše sociálne životy je často podceňovaná. Táto práca skúma módu v slovenskom start-upovom ekosystéme a opisuje či sa zakladatelia start-upov a ľudia z venture kapitálového prostredia svojím oblečením odkláňajú od noriem biznis formality. Výskum sa pozerá na meniace sa dynamiky módy v start-upovom prostredí pomocou kvalitatívnej analýzy hĺbkových rozhovorov s kľúčovými ľuďmi z tohoto prostredia. Keďže táto téma je stále značne nepreskúmaná, tento výskum vrhá nové svetlo na fenomén módy v start-upovom prostredí.

Kľúčové slová: dynamika módy, oblečenie, manažment imidžu, autorita, hierarchia, start-up, Slovensko

Abstract

Fashion is a powerful social phenomenon even though its power and influence on our social lives is often overlooked. This research explores fashion in the Slovak start-up ecosystem by examining whether start-up founders and people from venture capital deviate from the established norms of business formality. The research unravels the changing dynamics of fashion in a start-up environment through a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders. As the topic has not been extensively researched yet, the research sheds some new light on the phenomena of fashion in the start-up environment.

Key words: fashion dynamics, clothing, image management, authority, hierarchy, start-up, Slovakia

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1   Introduction

And there she is. The woman in the flip flops. On the hike. We immediately know that the flip-flops are inappropriate. Some might say that the thought in our mind just came because of the practicality of the clothing, but sociologists would come up with a more comprehensive explanation of the scene.

We interact with other people and the clothes we wear are what people notice at first glance. The general public might see fashion as a hobby for some people, or just as an area of interest they may decide they are not a part of. Unfortunately, one cannot decide to simply ignore fashion. Simmel (1957) argues that fashion makes even an unimportant individual an embodiment of their social class, (p. 548). In addition, we manage our image when we are interacting with others, as suggested by Goffman (2022, p. 187) and the clothes we wear is one of the ways in which we do it. In one chapter of her book Hyland (2022) implies that fashion is vital even for the world of politics (p. 183 - 199). Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021) highlight that we can examine gender hierarchies by examining dress in the start-up environment (p. 1374).

This research examines the fashion dynamics in the Slovak start-up ecosystem through qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with the key stakeholders. It interviews twelve key stakeholders – seven founders, one head of coworking, three people from VC and one woman who was the head of an accelerator programme.

It sheds light on the question of whether the Slovak start-up ecosystem's fashion follows business formality or deviates from it. The thesis hypothesises that the start-up community has either its own distinctive fashion or that its fashion is being adjusted when they are dealing with others who are not from the start-up community.

By detailed examination of interview data, this thesis explores how fashion dynamics in Slovakia differ from those from other countries, what are the trends in venture capital fashion, how fashion dynamics differ for women, to what extend are people from the start-up environment casual and much more. In short, the research describes the complex fashion dynamics in the Slovak start-up ecosystem.

2   Theoretical framework

The first chapter of this thesis serves as a theoretical background for research. It examines Goerge Simmel's theory of fashion, Goffman's Impressions Management, fashion and its role in politics and other resources relevant to the thesis.

2.1   Georg Simmel's Fashion Theory

Fashion according to the German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel (1957), is a "form of imitation and so of social equalization," (p. 541). He notes that because of its changing nature, it divides time. He adds that fashion is a universal phenomenon in human history (p. 547).

Simmel (1957) notes that there are two contradictory forces or tendencies in people and societies which are fashion's vital conditions (p. 542). There he proposes that one tendency is to fit in and adapt and it is connected to generalization and uniformity. The second tendency is to distinguish oneself, representing motion, differentiation, and contrast. Simmel (1957, p. 542) sees the whole history of society reflected in this dualistic conflict. Also, he claims that without these two tendencies, fashion would not come into existence. Simmel (1957, p. 542) notes that the first tendency is carried on by the psychological tendency for imitation which is displayed easily and gives people the satisfaction of not being alone in their act. He emphasises that it frees the individual from the burden of making a decision. One simply appears as a part of the group (Simmel, 1957, p. 543).

Fashion came to be a product of class distinction, it serves to show who is ingroup and who is outgroup according to Simmel (1957, p. 544). He uses the metaphor of a framed picture, highlighting the differences between classes. Fashion shows the uniformity of the same class and at the same time, the exclusion of others. For him, fashion is only a product of social demands, nonetheless, when being created it may represent individual needs more or less (p. 544). That can be seen when examining the power of fashion which can be seen in the adaptation of hideous things just for fashion's sake, Simmel (1957, p. 544) adds.

Because of fashion's connection to class distinction, fashion is not present in primitive societies, the classes that are present in more developed societies make it reasonable notes Simmel (1957, p. 546). Therefore, in highly civilized societies there is a need for different tastes, manners, and clothing. By presenting the example of Bushmen, Simmel observes that classless societies do not have fashion, and that there isn't any interest in changing the apparel (1957, p. 547). In primitive societies, there is less demand for new impressions and life forms, making fashion more stable (Simmel, 1957, p. 547). On the other hand, fashion changes more rapidly in the nervous age because there is a desire for differentiation (p. 547). Moreover, fashion comes with a socializing force making people who are similarly dressed demonstrate relatively similar.

He suggests that even an unimportant individual is made into a representative of their class and embodiment of the common spirit. By accepting the standard, the individual does not draw attention to themselves (Simmel, 1957, p. 548). Moreover, he asserts that the positive importance of the norms for the individual is not assumed until the individual does not conform to them. Any difference is immediately noticed and called into attention (Simmel, 1957, p. 548). His work suggests that fashion has a unique quality that makes social compliance feasible and at the same time, it still allows individual uniqueness because in its nature it sets a standard that not everyone can live up to (p. 549). He claims fashion is on the dividing line between the future and the past, creating a feeling of present, which is a combination of fragments of past and future (p. 547).

Simmel (1957, p. 548) claims that when we think something will vanish as quickly as it came, we call this fashion. He notes that we can consider the increased power of fashion by looking into how it moved from being only personal externals to influencing moral foundations, taste, and theoretical convictions (p. 548).

There are gender differences when it comes to how men and women perceive fashion. Simmel (1957, p. 551) highlights that when women did not take part in individualistic development, they adopted extravagant styles of dress and exercised their individuality there. At this point, he provides an example of Germany where women did not get a chance for individualist development, where women developed extravagant dress. He further notes that Italian women during the Renaissance had a chance for individualistic

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development as their male counterparts, so there was no special extravagant female fashion. Besides this, he argues that woman's lack of position is in some sense compensated through fashion. In contrast, men are often reduced into a relatively uniform class which often illustrates their vocation or class (p. 551).

Simmel (1957, p. 552) pinpoints that fashion allows the individual to belong to a group which is recognized by society based on their fashion choices. By doing so, it compensates an individual's lack of importance, he claims. Even though it may simplify the individual personalities into a common style, the style chosen by the individual still brings a unique social aspect (Simmel, 1957, p. 552). He implies fashion treats everyone the same, but never alters the whole nature of the individual. He observes it is always seen as something external, even beyond the clothing styles. In its constantly changing nature, it contrasts the stable sense of self, he comments. Fashion stands at the periphery of the personality, where it can be followed or resisted (Simmel, 1957, p. 552).

He proposes that fashion can also serve as an individual's mask and protective barrier between the individual inner self and the external world. Simmel (1957, p. 552) implies fashion allows us to navigate social interaction while keeping our true selves private.

Fashion has one of the sharpest consciousness curves of any societal phenomenon, (Simmel, 1957, p. 547). When the social consciousness reaches its peak in following fashion trends, it signals the decline of these trends, he points out. The transitionary character of fashion is not degrading for it, but it brings a new attractive element, he emphasises.

Simmel (1957, p. 549) claims that democratic times also brought another element of blending the roles of following and leading when the group leader is also bound to follow it. Simmel (1957) mentions a 'dude' (p. 549) who balances between social and individualizing impulses. Fashion is built on a cycle of destruction and upbuilding and in this way, unusual uniformity elements cannot be separated from one another (p. 549).

Simmel (1957, p. 550) also implies that resisting fashion may produce the same results as giving it complete obedience. Moreover, when individuals decide not to follow trends, they achieve a sense of individualization by rejecting the social example, without making any personal qualifications. Simmel (1957) notes that consciously

disregarding fashion creates a comparable imitation, but with the opposite sign, if obedience to fashion requires copying such an example (p. 549 - 550).

Simmel (1957, p. 553) states that the individual is protected from the unpleasant feeling that would come with the attention to the extravagant look they have when the appearance is considered fashionable. He notes that there is a strange socio-psychological phenomenon when breaches of modesty are tolerated when something is dictated by fashion (p. 553). This allows fashion to shape social norms.

Fashion is a social tool of amazing expediency, notes Simmel (1957, p. 554). Similar to the law, it influences life's external aspects, those which are visible to society he adds. Also, it gives us a way to demonstrate our obedience to social norms and standards set by our era, our social class, or our smaller social group, (Simmel, 1957, p. 554). He argues that fashion gives us the ability to take the freedom life has given us and focus it more and more on our inner selves (p. 554).

Often individuals establish a style for themselves, Simmel (1957, p. 554) suggests. He emphasises, that young people especially do that exhibiting unexpected or strange. This is an analogy of social fashion, called personal fashion, he notes. The need for imitation is in this case fulfilled in the individual himself when he imitates his own self (Simmel, 1957, p. 554).

Simmel (1957) compares the middle class to the upper branches of trees which are responding to the air (p. 555). He notes that this group is most transformed and affected by new influences, while the highest class of society is conservative (p. 555). Simmel (1957, p. 556) implies that with middle-class influence on the world, fashion became more animated and broader. Following this he notes that people who want constant change because of rapid development which helps them to have an advantage over others, find fashion as something keeping the tempo with the movements of their souls. Fashion also returns to old forms over and over Simmel (1957, p. 557) highlights, which is particularly visible with apparel. Additionally, when the earlier fashion is forgotten, it may come to fashion again, he suggests. According to him, any opinion clothing, art, or conduct may become fashionable. Still, there is the "classic" which is remote from fashion, even though it occasionally becomes fashion, Simmel (1957, p. 557) observes.

Simmel (1957) notes that people get tired of bizarre and eccentric forms, and from a psychological point of view long for the change that fashion brings (p. 558). He further argues that fashion seems to be completely natural for social beings and despite some unnatural form, may have the stamp of fashion for some time (p. 558). Fashion lies in contrast to being widespread and rapid decline Simmel adds (1957, p. 558). Despite that, he notes that fashion strives for permanent acceptance (p. 558). He claims fashion creates distinctions within social circles and at the same time separates them from others (p. 558). Simmel (1957, p. 558) argues that by demanding mutual imitation fashion releases people from aesthetic and ethical responsibility. "Thus, fashion is shown to be an objective characteristic grouping upon equal terms by social expediency of the antagonistic tendencies of life" (Simmel, 1957, p. 558).

It is important to take into consideration, as Loschek (2009, p. 1) highlights, that when it comes to fashion theory there is none which is taking into consideration fashion complexity and differentiating between fashion and clothing.

2.2 Social Context in Fashion

Goffman (2022) claimed that we all play a theatre. His work suggests that as an actor who plays, we manage our performance based on the length of the play and the audience we play for, whether it is the now we know or the one we do not. The performer notices the responses from his audience and carefully watches (p. 187 - 215).

He claims that when one appears before others, what he does will influence what definitions will others have of the situation. One sometimes acts in a calculated manner to create a specific impression of himself to get the specific response he wants (Goffman, 2022, p. xviii). The performer has to act responsibly because even some minor unmeant gesture can create an impression which would be at the time inappropriate (Goffman, 2022, p. 187). In addition, some facts, such as well-kept secret might come up during the performance and discredit it, resulting usually in embarrassment. He proposes they may be called 'faux pas'. After this the audience may start a 'scene' by interrupting polite interactions and confronting the performer (p. 188 - 189).

Goffman (2022, p. 191) highlights that the audience and outsiders might also employ protective measurements on behalf of the performer. Goffman (2022, p. 194) proposes that each of the team members have dramaturgical discipline which he uses when playing his part. A disciplined performer remembers his part and does not make unwanted gestures, he notes (p. 195). Besides this, Goffman (2022, p. 197) claims that if the performer is aware he is likely not being seen he can use this to relax. The performer will try to select such an audience which would give him the minimum trouble in a sense of which show he wants to perform and which one he does not, Goffman (2022, p. 197) assumes.

Goffman (2022, p. 198) uses an example of an operating room when there is only one member of the audience who is weak to show reaction so the team can devote themselves to the actual operation and not dramatic performance.

He highlights that the performer adjusts the performance based on the conditions under which is the play performed (p. 200). The performer also takes into consideration the information the audience already has about them, he emphasises (p. 201). After this, he notes that performers are rather careful around audiences they do not know. The performance for people he does not yet know, must be careful, and on the other hand, the performer can relax while acting for those he knows for a long time (Goffman, 2022, p. 201). He puts forward that the performer adjusts the act according to the character and tasks which are connected to it (p. 202).

Furthermore, Goffman (2022, p. 204) proposes that when a performer knows there would be important consequences for the conduct, he takes great care. An example of this is a job interview, he notes. Moreover, Goffman (2022, p. 209) suggests that there is an elaborate etiquette which helps people to navigate themselves when they are members of the audience which includes for example showing the proper amount of interest. He notes that the audience can show extra consideration for the performer about whom they know is a beginner (p. 210).

Goffman (2022, p. 212) asserts that the performer should be aware of hints and be able to modify the play in order to save the situation. He notes that uncertainty and feelings of shame are some shared staging problems that humans experience (p. 215).

Another important theory for this thesis is the looking-glass self. In this theory Cooley (1902, p. 149) highlights that we cannot think about the sense of "I" without its correlation to the social context and relations to other people. He proposed a looking self-glass theory which contains three elements (p. 152). First, we imagine our appearance to others, we imagine their judgement and we have a self-feeling, for example, pride. He puts forward that the element of imagined judgment is rather essential (Cooley, 1902, p. 152). Also, the feeling of shame or pride comes not only from our reflection but also from the imagined reflection of what others might think, he claims. Cooley (1902, p. 153) argues that "we always imagine and in imagining share, the judgement of others in our mind".

Our consciousness about the judgement of others should not be overlooked even when we study the phenomena of fashion.

2.3   Fashion and Politics

Fashion is a complex social phenomenon and therefore it is connected to other areas of human social life. Hyland (2022, p. XII) claims that we can track everything through clothing, from societal shifts to the advancement—or lack thereof—of women's rights to the underlying reasons behind the clothes we wear to fit in with a particular social group. She adds that questions of sexuality, class and power can be unlocked by fashion, that it sends a message to the world, even when people are just wearing basic jeans and a T-shirt.

Fashion intersects not only with our social lives but with politics as well. It is even vital for it. As Veronique Hyland writes in her book Dress Code (2022) fashion comes into the politics in its purest form, as a costume (p. 185). She notes, that even for men fashion statements, are depending on the context, political assets or liability (p. 185 - 186). She describes Reagan who tried to make himself look like a 'man of the people' with his denim looks. Following this, she argues that politicians roll up their sleeves to show they will have things done. Kennedy was aware of the importance of the visual side, and he wore make-up for his presidential debate against Nixon in 1960. The people who watched it on TV considered him as the victor, while people listening to it on the radio said that Nixon was the winner (p. 186).

The politicians she mentions in the US context also use military fashion as a display of their masculinity and also to show their affiliation with the army (p. 186).

Hyland (2022, p. 188) emphasises that women in politics are in a difficult position when it comes to fashion because they need to find a balance between the red carpet and the common person look. She provides an example of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, also known as AOC. This young democratic congresswoman said: "If I walked into Congress wearing a sack, they would laugh & take a picture of my backside. If I walk in with my best sale-rack clothes, they laugh & take a picture of my backside" (p. 184). She was referring to how people complained about her looking too put together to be a person who struggles. Hyland (2022, p. 185), explains that women and their self-presentation in politics are doomed either way – they are criticised if they don't put in effort as well as when they do. She used Margaret Atwood's quote "Politics is hell in general, but I think it's probably double hell for women because not only do you have to have a position, you have to have a hairstyle" (p. 189).

Barbara Lee Family Foundation's research memo Politics is Personal: Keys to Likeability and Electability for Women (2017, p. 1 - 11) found out that for women candidates, likeability is more important than for men. A picture of a woman behind a mahogany desk, which is the way to traditionally show executive leadership, is the least likeable. The study notes that people reacted most positively for pictures and videos where women interacted with people in informal environments. In addition to this, women also have to articulate their ability to get things done. For men, people already assume that they are competent, the study suggests.

When women create an image of themselves in this way, the performance as Goffman (2022) would put it, is more complex and they have to think about more criteria by which their performance will be judged. Hyland (2022, p. 189) notes that fashion comes into play here as well because the likeability of female political candidates is communicated through it, but not in a way as the likeability of male candidates. The participants of the study of the Barbara Lee Family Foundation (2017, p. 4) suggested that the wardrobe, make-up and appearance of the female candidate must be flawless. This shows the double standards that female politicians face.

Hyland (2022, p. 190) mentions that the senate doors used to be monitored so women were forced to change from their pants into dresses. She asserts that male senators could wear casual sportswear at weekend sessions, but women still had to wear skirts, pantyhose or dresses, and it took many more female senators to change the standards. These restrictions were placed on women even though pants in Congress were not explicitly banned, she points out.

Fashion is essential in candidate image as Hyland (2022, p. 191) points out. Candidate pictures can be eroded if their fashion does not match the message they are trying to send. She uses the example of Bernie Sanders, who says he never wore a tuxedo, but he wears a 700 dollar jacket. After this, there is also the example of Sarah Palin, Republicans spend 150,000 dollars on clothes for her and the family to create an image of a hockey mum, to make her look like a candidate of the common people.

On the other hand, fashion can also enhance the images that the candidates want to send (Hyland, 2022, p. 191). When Nancy Pelosi wore a rust-red coat meeting Trump regarding the looming government shutdown, Friedman (2018) wrote that "the coat whispered 'burn' with a wink and a swish. It also helped to transform her from a seemingly tired symbol of the establishment to one of well-dressed revolt." Lawler (2018) highlighted the symbolism because Pelosi wore the same coat for Barack Obama's second inauguration.

Hyland (2022, p. 190) uses Hillary Clinton as an example of a female politician who is, among politicians, most criticised for her fashion choices. She was the only first lady wearing pants while posing for her official portrait. Throughout her career, she came up with her signature pantsuits and claimed she "thought it would be good to do what male politicians do and wear more or less the same thing every day" (p. 192).

On the other hand, when men do the same it goes unnoticed, Hyland (2022, p. 192) noted. Barack Obama wore mostly grey or blue suits which was praised by a magazine as a productivity secret. His fashion was only criticised once when he wore a tan suit when discussing ISIS in Syria and the military response to it. Women's fashion choices are being called upon. Hyland (2022, p. 192) uses an example of a Fed chair nominee, when she wore the same outfit twice it got into the news. Following this, she notes that Hillary Clinton's pantyhose were commented upon all the time. She was criticised for

her headbands in the 90s and when she changed her style, the critics used it to point out that she was indecisive and could not be trusted. One reporter called it "discomforting for the national sense of identity," (p. 193) stating that one would not like the Statue of Liberty to change its hemline every week. Hyland (2022, p. 193) points out they wanted her to be unchanging. She highlights that her authenticity was questioned based on her appearance.

Hyland (2022, p. 194) added that especially during the presidential campaign, Clinton was reduced to her fashion, and it seemed like they needed to have her summed up in some fashion statement, posting flashback pictures of her which were fashion-centric. After this, Hyland (2022) implies that this shows the high standards that are held upon female politicians.

In the chapter, 'Politics and Fashion' (p. 183 - 199), she also pinpoints the case study of Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg, emphasising that her fans did not notice the controversies around her. Rather they were observing the accessories she wore around her to decrypt her next decisions (p. 195).

Hyland (2022, p. 196) suggests that as more women enter the world of politics, they make casual fashion more acceptable. In addition, political fashion is also becoming more practical. Hyland (2022, p. 197) mentions Wendy Davis who did a filibuster in Texas Senate that lasted 13 hours and she wore bright-pink sneakers. Her shoes were celebrated by the press, overshadowing the actual substance of the debate.

Hyland (2022) implies that nowadays politics have the fineness of professional wrestling, and we see images of tearing up papers, "fashion statements are becoming par for the course" (p. 197). She adds that as an only way to communicate, style also gains significance, communicating silent rebuttal. For example, to protest against Trump's agenda, Democratic congresswomen wore white which is a suffragette's signature colour (Hyland, 2022, p. 197).

Even though some female politicians tried to fully reject fashion, Hyland (2022, p. 198) notes that the majority uses it to their advantage. The Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, used to soften her suits with pearls and pussybow blouses. She proposes that the New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern wears local designers which can boost the country's GDP.

Hyland (2022, p. 199) proposes that the savviest politicians know that what they wear will be decoded so they use this power. She observes that in 2018 Congresswoman Omar wore a hijab and by doing so successfully challenged the headwear ban in Congress. She even said it was not the last she was going to lift. AOC apparel paid tribute to suffragettes and her Bronx heritage with her outfit.

To sum up, fashion cannot be separated from the world of politics. It is being observed all the time and the standards for women and men differ, being harsher on women.

2.4   Fashion in the start-up environment

In the beginning of this chapter, I will define the words "start-up", "venture capital" and "exit" which are essential for the further understanding of this thesis.

Chen (2020) defines venture capital funds as funds that manage the money of investors who want private equity in start-ups and even medium-sized companies which show great growth potential. He suggests that generally, these investments are high-risk ones. He highlights that venture capital (VC) is an equity financing which gives entrepreneurs a chance to raise money before they begin operations or earn revenues. These funds give funding for companies with high-growth potential, and they have an active role in the investment by providing guidance, Chen (2020) notes.

When it comes to the definition of "exit", MacSween (2020) proposes that exit in the start-up world refers to founders leaving the company and either selling the whole company, their shares, or a majority stake in it.

Defining start-up, McGowan (2022) puts forward how Eric Ries defines start-up, as "a human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty" and notes that such a definition is broad. She emphasises that a start-up is a company whose development is typically in the early stages. Also, the founders capitalize on perceived market demand by developing services, platforms, or products. Most of them secure funding through VC, she notes. Start-ups are focused on growth, which is something most of definitions have in common (McGowan, 2022). Her article suggests that start-ups are looking for growth and scaling of their business, they experiment and fill a market gap. She adds that start-ups change the way how

things are traditionally done, they start from scratch, and they are completely independent, adaptive, and lean. McGowan (2022) states that they look for a sustainable business model. She emphasises that start-ups are about change, and she quotes a CEO who suggested that "A startup is the largest group of rebels, rule-breakers, and unconventional thinkers that you can find, convince and inspire to create breakthrough change in the world."

Because the topic of the start-up world is quite exciting, I thought it might be interesting to look at how this specific environment is affected by phenomena of fashion and dress. I found only one research focused specifically on fashion in a start-up environment, other research is mostly concerned with the fashion of entrepreneurs.

Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021) study fashion in the Australian start-up ecosystem. They talk with over 50 key stakeholders. They argue that by looking at fashioning gendered entrepreneurial identities they can understand inequities in the ecosystem. By examining the value of dress, they explain its role in reestablishing the gender hierarchies.

Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021, p. 1366 - 1368) notes that both founders – Jobs and Holmes were fond of the idea of business uniforms, in their case with the prominent turtleneck, which would help them avoid decision-making about the dress, so they could be more focused on their work. Holmes's colleague claimed that Holmes changed her fashion when she started her company. The research study suggest that this was a calculated custom she would display. Holmes, who turned out to be a fraud, used it to gain a reputation and create a professional image. The paper notes that both Holmes and Jobs created a dress code entrepreneurial look which was afterwards replicated around the world. They hypothesise that because masculine characteristics might receive more investment and interest, Holmes's adaptation of the turtleneck also served to reduce feminine appearance.

Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021, p. 1369) also imply that in the start-up world dressing informally is seen as democratizing and equalizing. Despite that, the research points out that there were differences between what women and men wore in incubator program. The researchers note that men often wore branded T-shirts, sweatpants and

sneakers but when a woman participant wore something similar, she was met with disparagement.

The paper notes that the sense of dress code in a start-up environment is not an official one, but rather it is an unspoken uniform (p. 1369 – 1370). It suggests that while male founders can capitalize on their casual nonconformity look, female founders can do so by adapting the unwritten codes of professionalism. The research points out the fact that there are super successful founders who dress as if they were homeless, and they turned clothes that usually signal low status into something that symbolises the opposite. However, these were all men.

Further, Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021, p. 1370) highlight that men use the more casual look for their benefit but a female founder they observed was feeling pressure to conform to the corporate look. Another woman in the accelerator program noted that the CEO wears sweatpants but "other managers, especially girls are always very much well put together" (p. 1370). The authors of the paper noted that the casualness which comes from Silicon Valley gives male entrepreneurs the chance to use nonconformity to show their autonomy and status, but this freedom is not extended to women. They highlight that even though people might make fun of Zuckerberg's hoodies and flip flops, he is not being taken less seriously because of his fashion choices (p. 1371). They point out that something that is overlooked is that all the hoodie-wearing CEOs are men. In contrast, when women fashion themselves as founders they are doing so by high heels and corporate attire.

Another point that their research makes is that by choosing their outfits, founders regulate their identity (p. 1372). They propose that aesthetic labour can be traced back to the "dress for success" manuals and that the aspiring entrepreneurship environment encourages dressing the part. They note that all founders want to optimise the success of their companies, their research proposed that female founders are driven to do it all the time and they are also always optimizing their self-image as well. Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021, p. 1372) suggest that women are stuck between either highlighting their femininity or restraining it in order to fit into the masculinity of the environment.

The research also observes that there are also male founders who opt for a more formal look, to display professionalism and a suit is enough to show the masculine professional

look and might serve as a form of armour (p. 1374). They noted that for women it is more complicated, and that they are asked questions that no one asks the male founders. One woman closed her company after a breakdown during which the push to fit into the entrepreneurial masculine ideal also played a role.

Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021) propose that in the Melbourne ecosystem, male founders show evidence of both the nonconformal clothes and also the conformal one which is more formal, but female founders show "the ongoing, everyday aesthetic labour" (p. 1374).

The study concludes that even though the start-up world is supposed to be diverse and inclusive, the opposite is true (p. 1374 – 1375). The gender gap is present in all sectors from founding to investing. They investigate dress as a significant visual symbol, and it shows the gender inequities in its depth. The paper suggests the sector should move the exception that female founders have to look "put together" when male founders can "get away" with gym clothes. To sum up, the study identifies and explores the inequalities which are shown through fashion.

3   Methodology

The thesis research employs qualitative methodology to gain a comprehensive understanding of the fashion dynamics in the Slovak start-up ecosystem. The qualitative approach is suitable for exploring such complex social phenomena as fashion. Moreover, it is relevant because the studied topics haven't gotten much academic attention to date.

The research collects data through in-depth interviews with twelve key stakeholders from the start-up ecosystem, mostly start-up founders and people from venture capital funds. The interviews are semi-structured, so they allow the exploration of participant perspectives of different aspects of the topic. By collecting interview data, the research can look into topics which might not come to life if the topic was examined by a questionnaire.

The research uses purposive sampling, which is defined by Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016) who note that it is "also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses" (p. 2). The research interviewed key stakeholders with significant experience and insights that are relevant to the research topic. The data from in-depth interviews are analysed through thematic analysis. The research identifies and interprets patterns in the data and uncovers the changing dynamics of fashion in the Slovak start-up environment.

The participants were provided with detailed information about the research and signed informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process. The research interviews were conducted through Zoom and in-person interviews. Participants of the study were curious about the topics and the majority suggested that they would like to read the finished thesis.

To sum it up, through in-depth and a qualitative analysis of the interviews with twelve key stakeholders – seven founders, one head of coworking, three people from VC and one woman who was head of an accelerator programme, the research provides valuable insight into the role of fashion in the Slovak start-up environment, demonstrating the key findings with quotes from the interviews. As a whole, it sheds light on a relatively underexplored area.

In addition, Microsoft Word and Google document processors were used for the
correction of grammar and spelling mistakes.

3.1   Interview Questions

1.   What is your relationship to the start-up environment?
2.   Is your apparel important to you?
3.   According to which criteria do you choose your apparel in the start-up
     environment?
4.   How do you prioritise comfort and style when deciding what to wear for work?
5.   If you can't wear what you want to, is your performance affected?
6.   In the start-up environment, can you say who you are talking to based only on their
     apparel?
7.   Do you think your clothing choices may reflect aspects of your personality?
8.   Do you think your clothing choices may reflect your brand's image?
9.   How would you describe the factors that influence your clothing selection for
     work?
10. Are there any professional occasions when you change your typical work outfit?
     (For example, going to another company etc.)
11. How do you choose your outfit for your pitch presentation?
12. How would you describe the evolution of your clothing choices in the start-up
     environment?
13. Do you feel pressure to dress in some specific way? Do you feel it coming from
     men or women? Is it coming from peers or somewhere else?
14. What is your observation about the clothing choices of start-up founders or venture
     capitalists?
15. Do you perceive differences between what women and men wear?
16. What fashion trends do you observe in the Slovak start-up environment?
17. Are there any differences in clothing choices between start-up founders in Slovakia
     and those in other regions?
18. What do you think are the potential advantages of dressing formally or informally
     in the start-up ecosystem?
19. Can you share your observations on the potential impact of clothing choices on
     professional relationships in the start-up environment?
20. Do you have any rules regarding apparel in your start-up/VC funds?
21. If you have ever dealt with state/government officials and institutions, has the way
     you dressed influenced your relationships/deals?
     a.   What were you wearing?
22. Do you think there is start-up-specific fashion?

4   Analysis of the interviews

4.1   Visibility of positions and hierarchies through clothing

For this question, I got five straight "no" answers. Following their answer, four of them highlighted that in this environment you can see successful and rich people who are dressed in way casual clothes. The six other answers were ranging from "not really" to "sometimes," some highlighted that you can spot developers, sales people and VCs who are generally more formal. The female founder implied that she felt that in the start-up environment it is harder to say. She noted that: "the presumption is still there, and sometimes it is right, but not always." This was also a comment from two young founders.

Only a general partner in a VC fund stated that it is visible, stating: "Yes, it's very easy. You can spot the specific type of people, right? So, you can spot, engineers and technical people who are working on the product quite easily. They are usually the ones in the hoodies and flip flops and with the company merch wearing as well. You can spot the founders, which tried to blend in more with a different type of business environment," and noted that sometimes founders use fashion to stand-out. He added that "you can spot the investors in startups quite easily as well. So, they're usually the little bits, differences, Patagonia brand, for example, or something similar when it comes to investors or basically white shirt and something, something like that."

4.2   Accomplished people might be dressed more casually

More people pointed out that accomplished people wear quite casual clothes. The two young founders told me that in the office building they work in, there was a homeless looking guy, and the receptionist did not want to let him in, but it turned out the man owned the company which had the highest floor in the building. Another thing that I was told by the male head of coworking was that the founder of the company that owns the coworking walkes around barefoot.

One of the two young founders noted that "sometimes the people who are richer or have a higher position dress worse or are less cautious about it." A male founder explained it by implying that new start-up founders in Slovakia don't have many exits so it's

important for them to impress through their clothes, but people who exit 2-3 start-ups don't care anymore and they can wear whatever they want. Likewise, the man who is around start-ups a lot pointed out the most successful often do not dress "really formally." He observed that the people at pitch presentations who have the least experience dress the most formally.

This might be explained by Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003, p. 265) whose study suggests that power is linked to disinhibited behaviour whereas reduced power is connected to inhibited social behaviour and attention to punishment, threat, and others' interest.

4.3   Start-up world is not a world of suits, but not a world of sweatpants either

Even though people noted that you can meet a successful person wearing sweatpants, overall the data from the interviews suggest that it is not a prominent trend. I asked the male head of coworking specifically about sweatpants and he argued that: "That's in fact very rare." One person noted that in the start-up environment "I would say 80% of people I met wear something what probably you could also see in a different business environment," and there were others suggesting that business casual is the most prominent trend they observe, even though clothing with company branding is quite visible as well.

4.4   VCs dress more formally

All of the people I talked with proposed that compared to start-up founders, people from VC are more formal, even though it does not necessarily mean they go around wearing business formal clothes. A few people added that it is connected to the fact that these people are in an environment where money plays a role. "Around venture capital funds, you feel that they are daily around finances and something, where integrity and uniformity is important," one of them argued. Another added that VC people, "they really do not go around wearing hoodies."

4.5   Fashion might depend on the industry

When we talked about fashion in start-up the female CEO of a biotech start-up proposed that "I think it rather depends on the industry you are in," and the general partner from

VC funds also suggested the same. The female founder emphasised that in her industry (biotech), founders who she thought of dressed more elegantly and suggested that "it probably seems more trustworthy in some way," and the general partner from VC also claimed the same. Others proposed that people in the technological and IT industry were more casual.

4.6   Fashion might depend on the type of founder

Another explanation for fashion dynamics was suggested and that there are two types of founders – technical and business ones, and their fashion might differ. One of two young founders, the one who is more business oriented pointed out he dresses more formally "I'm meeting heads of departments and I noticed a difference in communication when I dress casually or formally." Another, technical founder also noted that his co-founder who is more business and marketing oriented wears a suit and shirt every day. People highlighted that IT guys and technological people mostly do not care about fashion.

4.7   Fashion might be influenced by girlfriends

Interestingly, two interviewed people noted that having a girlfriend is an important factor. Female founder described that she knew of the people who were founders and their style changed drastically because of the girlfriend, she commented: "they understood that when you are going to sell something to your potential business partner, who is also CEO from another company, it is not really always okay to come there in a hundred-year-old pulled out sweatshirt, if you want to appear trustworthy."

A man from VC implied that he wore the clothes his girlfriend chooses in the morning and that his girlfriend is the "number one factor" who determines what is he going to wear.

4.8   Fashion dynamics at pitch presentations

A pitch presentation is a short presentation which shows potential clients and investors an overview of the services, products, and business plan (Sheikh, 2023). The answers about pitch presentations differed and showed that there is a variety in the clothing choices. One man who is around start-ups a lot noted that in his experience "people

who are new to start-ups are more formal than the ones familiar with the environment who are wearing branded hoodies." Another VC woman pinpointed that she sees hoodies more often. However, the people I interviewed, who pitched their presentation, mentioned they wore more formal outfits for their presentation, something that would be defined as business casual. One man stated that he would make sure that his outfit will make him stand out. The female founder of a biotech start-up noted that her outfit for pitch presentations was business formal and elegant. Two young founders suggested that the outfit depends on for whom the presentation is for, but added they mostly wore business casual. Three other founders also wore business casual. The male head of a coworking space stated that on start-up weekends presentations clothing was not important, but it was mostly jeans and t-shirt. Alternatively for other events and ends of programmes people would wear more formal clothes, he commented. Moreover, majority of people described that women seemed to be more put together than men.

4.9   Dynamics of fashion are different for women

When studying the start-up environment, we must take into consideration that women are highly underrepresented. Bergendorff, C. L. (2020) asserts that when it comes to gender representation, only 8% of women are partners at top VC companies proposing that people from venture capital are quite a homogenous group. The European Institute of Innovation and technology (n.d.) declares that women make up just 14.8% of startup founders.

The woman who is a head of an accelerator program noted that after she hosted an event in the acceleration program one of the investors told her that "the program was nice, but there was a lack of male energy from the organizers." She commented that it "adds pressure to choose the right clothes to fit in." She further noted that these situations did not happen in Silicon Valley or Denmark where she felt more respected and accepted. When she described criteria for choosing what to wear, she emphasised that she sometimes wore clothes that would match the vibe of "tech bros or tech guys from startups," and noted that it "also makes life a bit easier, because they just have black t-shirt and jeans."

All of the people I talked with proposed that women were generally dressing more formally and putting more effort into their look. Their clothes are more colourful and

diverse. One female founder noted that she felt like she was dressing less formal than men because she perceived the suits some men wore at conferences more formal than her skirt and top. When I asked her more questions, she stated that in coworking spaces men were probably less formal than women.

Female founder of biotech start-up noted that she was previously at Central European Start-up Awards and that all women were "wonderfully put together" and most of them wore dresses, while men's outfits showed more variability from suits without tie to hoodies.

When I was asking whether female and male fashion in start-up environment differed some of the people even highlighted it was difficult for them to say because there were many of them, one male founder noted that he "didn't see that many women in the startup world that are founders." It was proposed by some that women needed to prove they fit it.

General partner in VC fund suggested that women "don't go too much into the completely relaxed (outfit) or something like that." Another guy who is around start-ups and was in VC pinpoints that he did not see women in hoodies. Woman for VC shared that she felt "natural impulse to were something more beautiful" for events. She noted that women are taken more seriously when they wear more formal clothes.

One of the two young founders proposed that women are trying to show the integrity which is inherent for men through clothing. He highlighted that even when it is a casual meeting women come in formally dressed, as if they wanted to assert that they belong there and they wore more typically masculine clothing, such as blazers.

So even though most of the people including the three people from venture capital environment proposed they do not care about the clothing, but are only interested in the idea presented, the findings observe that women are doing much more aesthetic labour than men, and it seems like some women are trying to declare they belong there by wearing more formal clothes. Why women need to show their competence through dress may be explained also by the study by Guzman, J., & Kacperczyk, A. (2019, p. 1666) who suggest that female founders are less likely to find high-growth VC and that

ventures led by women are less likely to get funding. Also, women-led funds are 63%
less likely to get external funding compared to men-led ventures.

4.10 Impression management

The interviews I conducted demonstrate that Goffman's Impression Management
theory (2022) is still relevant. All interviewed admitted their considered their audience
when choosing what to wear. Some even changed the dress dramatically, as the female
founder who normally prefers alternative fashion and for investors meeting choose
more of a business look.

One of the two young founders noted that when they are around less conservative
people, younger people or investors who are around IT software start-ups they would
dress less formally and it might not even be business casual clothing.

A number of them commented that they considered whether the clothes were creating
the first impression which seems to be the most important. The male general partner in
VC argued: "I think the important part is the first impression. And that's the damage.
Also, also with the team, also with developers, also with students, also with investors,
I think the first impression is the only important thing, after that, once you build the
trust and the initial rush, I believe you can dress whatever the fuck you want."

In addition, more people suggested that they were more cautious about their clothes
when meeting people who they considered to be more old-fashioned or conservative. If
they were meeting those, they would adapt their clothing. The people also thought of
clothes in a way they can dress to fit in or to stand out, which also implies that Simmel's
fashion theory (1957) which highlights these two tendencies is still relevant today.

4.11 The start-up environment has almost no rules regarding apparel

Eleven people said that they have no rules. One female founder of biotech start-up
firstly answered that they do not have a dress code, but afterwards noted that they have
one. The genetics consultants should go more formal on some occasions because "they
really represent the scientific," she proposed.

Even though people said they do not have rules some interesting answers emerged. One female founder noted they do not have rules, but when they met with older investors they tried to dress more formally, but it was not written rules. She noted that when her male IT colleagues wore sweatpants for meetings with investors, "so of course we looked at them like yeah, what the fuck," she added that there was an unwritten rule about the dress code.

The female head of accelerator programme mentioned they had no rules, but there were occasions when her boss might have told her that it was an important meeting, but very few situations. I did not ask her whether that was connected to the start-up accelerator or other start-ups she worked with.

In conclusion, out of twelve people I interviewed only one female founder of biotech start-up said that they have a dress code and that was only for the genetic consultants. Eleven people said that have no rules. All the three people from VC funds said that they do not have rules regarding their apparel. It seems that there are some sort of expectations people put on others and on themselves regarding their apparel. However, in majority of cases no rules are written down.

4.12 Interaction with government officials and institutions is prone to be more formal

When I asked them whether the way they dress influences their relationships with state/government officials and institutions they answered as followed. General partner in a VC fund who was a man said: "Yeah, but I do it strategically, so actually with government people in Slovakia, I dress down completely. I go as a cliche start-upper. Just on purpose. Just to show them that I'm different from them and I represent the tech world and let's talk about, you know, what the tech world needs. When I deal with government people outside of my country, I dress formally, or I dress more business casual because I want to build a relationship. I want to build ties and bridges between the countries, I represent not only the tech environment, but I also represent Slovakia, I also represent my company, et cetera."

A woman who used to be the head of an accelerator programme explained that for her it was hard to say, because people do not give you feedback on that. She added that for

her it was important to choose an outfit that would make her feel confident. When I asked what she was wearing she said that the people from governmental institutions she met were not on the top positions but added that: "I adapted a bit to the situation and I was wearing a bit more, slightly more formal."

A female start-up founder implied that she thought the dress influenced the deals and relationships and noted that: "like government, they tend to dress very formal and they expect you to wear something formal when meeting them. So, if I ever went for a meeting with someone from the government, I would definitely wear something formal. And I would never have an open belly or something." She highlighted that for such occasions she would definitely wear something formal.

Another female founder said she did not have experience with making deals with the government but mentioned that she was in a panel discussion with the Slovak prime minister. For the discussions she chose clothes that were even more elegant than the ones she wears every day, putting forward that the clothes were more formal. In her opinion, it should be like that on such occasions.

A male founder said he did not know whether it influenced the deals and explained that for such meetings he would wear "classy trousers and a white or black shirt. That's it."

Another male founder commented that he thinks that the dress influences the relationships and deals because these organisations are not quite progressive, and in his opinion, they still care about the dress code. When I asked him what he wore he said it was more formal. It was a founder who otherwise enjoys wearing nonformal clothes.

A man who was in a VC fund and is around start-ups a lot said that when he was dealing with these people (when he had a company which was concerned about safety at school) he always went there dressed more formally, "even more formally than to any start-up event." He further stated that he perceived the Slovak government as conservative. He highlighted that "I saw it as a risk that I can offend them if I would come wearing casual clothes." He argued that by dressing formally he showed respect to people who have succeeded in government when he was the one who needed something from them. He proposed that it was quite possible that it influenced the relationships and deals.

The other two male founders I interviewed also pointed out that people in government are often more conservative, so they might not like to work with you when you are not dressed appropriately, and your credibility can go down. They both said that when in that context they wore formal clothes, one said he had a suit and another stated he had a shirt. They are both students, so they said the government people do not want to work with students, they want to work with someone "who is at least pretending he is professional."

On the other hand, one female from the VC fund said that she did not think her clothes influenced it and when I asked her what she wore she said that she wore business casual or formal. "More the formal one" she commented.

Similarly, another female founder said that she never thought of what she wore when she went to the police or court. She asserted that even though her look might have been quite controversial, she referred to her colourful hair and the platforms she wore, she never had troubles with it, and she had only positive experiences regarding the authorities.

Alternatively, the male head of a coworking space commented that there were not many such occasions but when he goes to events of an official character, he does not have a problem wearing a full suit. He pinpointed that when being in a more formal environment, he tries to adjust to it and therefore it might affect the deals and relationships there. He noted that his clothes were more formal, and it could have been from jeans, a blazer and shirt to pants, blazer and shirt.

All in all, all people except the one female founder mentioned above, dressed quite formally when they interacted with the state or government institutions. Some even highlighted that they were cautious about creating a professional image of themselves.

4.13 Start-up specific fashion

Some people answered that they did not think there was a start-up specific fashion, but when I asked them about the clothing choices of start-up founders and ventures capitalist, many trends emerged. Majority of them commented that Apple was most prominent brand for laptop and watches. It was suggested that people in this

environment are fond of biohacking and optimizing their body so many of them use either Apple watch, Garmin, Whoop band or Aura ring.

A number of people specifically pointed out that the start-up environment is characterized by people being first adaptors, so they try out new things. The male head of the co-work noted that quality coffee with alternative milk is popular along with Maté drink.

Regarding the clothing choices, it was obvious that wearing merchandise is quite typical, not only the clothing, mostly t-shirts and hoodies, but some people noted they also see that people have merch stickers on their laptops. Most of the people mentioned Patagonia brand, and specifically Patagonia vest. Besides these items people observed that sneakers and caps are also a prominent item. Some people suggested that being environmentally friendly is also a thing but observed that it is more prominent in the US.

4.14 Slovakia compared to other regions and the possible imitation of Silicon Valley fashion

A male founder noted that fashion in Slovak start-up environment compared to the Netherlands is "a little bit more conservative and formal." The people who visited Germany and France noted that the fashion was similar as it is in Slovakia. Another person implied that in Denmark, it was less formal. One person from VC noted that in the Middle East, "the differences between the industries or between the segments of the markets where they work, it's less evident." Most people who had experience with US and Canada environment noted it was less formal and founders were not afraid to stand out, which is something not seen often in Slovakia. A female who was in US for quite some time proposed that "in many countries in Europe, the notion of hierarchy or status, is so much stronger and still it feels like there's more pressure and requirement to be kind of representative or to represent your status with your formal clothes." However, some people commented they thought the fashion is similar everywhere.

4.15 Other trends in data

Most people seem to be aware of the fact that clothing and fashion is a form of communication (Barnard, 2002, chapter 2). Some noted that clothes can offend someone and they can also be a way how to show respect. Moreover, wearing more casual and nonformal clothes seemed to be associated with a feeling of equality, which connected to the fact that fashion can be equalizing as suggested by Simmel (1957, p. 541). Majority of people said they did not feel pressure to dress in some way. Besides this it was interesting to hear from some people that there are some start-up events and conferences that have a dress code. In addition, it was suggested that clothes can play a role in trust building either by being formal and creating professional image, or by being casual and bringing people together. For some occasions it might even decrease trust when someone dresses too formal.

4 Conclusion

To sum it up, fashion in the Slovak start-up environment is deviating from the business formality, however the dynamics of that deviation are much more complex than anticipated. It seems that the Slovak start-up environment does not have its own distinctive fashion, but it is generally more of a "business casual" fashion which sometimes shows more casual and formal style employing fashion trends coming from Silicon Valley.

Majority of people from the start-up environment indeed adjust the clothes when they are dealing with people who are not from that environment, but it is important to note that most of them adjust their dress based on who are they interacting with, even within the start-up environment. This implies that Goffman's theory of impression management is relevant even today. Furthermore, it shows that Simmel's fashion theory is also in some part relevant, because fashion in some sense shows separation between social circles, in this context of technical founders and business ones. Also, it releases people from responsibility of acting alone when they adjust their fashion based on some specific trends present in the start-up environment. Moreover, the tendencies for imitation and differentiation are also present in the fashion dynamics of this environment.

The research contributes to the study of fashion in Slovak start-up environment by studying an almost completely unexplored area. In addition, the research differs from Richards, H., & Mattioli, F. (2021) study because it also explores general fashion dynamics which show general trends and not only the gendered inequalities, highlighting that VCs fashion style also differs, and that interactions with government officials and institutions is prone to be more formal, and many more.

Naturally, the research has limitations, because it does not include interviews with people who exited their start-up, because unfortunately they answered the messages only after the data collection. The future research might also include interviews with them. In addition, it might be interesting to use observation of coworking spaces or analysing pictures from start-up conferences and accelerators as research methods.

5   Résumé

Móda je téma, ktorá je vo všeobecnosti podceňovaná a môže byť vnímaná skôr ako záľuba alebo niečo, čo je bežnému človeku vzdialené. Pritom práce sociológov a iných vedcov naznačujú opak. Táto práca skúma doteraz nepreskúmanú tému a tou sú dynamiky módy v start-upovom prostredí na Slovensku.

Teoretická časť tejto práce približuje teóriu módy od Georga Simmela, kde ukazuje na špecifické tendencie a vlastnosti tohoto univerzálneho fenoménu, ktorý má tendenciu buď imitovať alebo zvýrazňovať individualitu. Simmel poukázal napríklad na to, že móda rozdeľuje spoločnosť na skupiny a robí z jednotlivcov reprezentantov svojej skupiny, ovplyvňuje naše morálne presvedčenia, či slúži ako maska pre jednotlivca. Teoretická časť tejto bakalárskej práce na seba ďalej napája teóriu Ervinga Goffmana, ktorý poukazuje na to, že každý človek hrá akési divadlo a prispôsobuje svoje predstavenie svojmu publiku a ostatným okolnostiam. Práve móda je jeden zo spôsobov ako toto divadlo hrať. V tejto časti tiež opisujeme teóriu Coolyho, ktorý zdôrazňoval, že si vždy predstavuje čo si o nás druhí myslia. V tejto časti je spomenuté aj akým špecifickým spôsobom môžeme sledovať vplyv módy na svet politiky. V poslednom rade teoretická časť práce spomína jediný výskum, ktorý špecificky skúma dynamiky módy, špecificky v austrálskom start-upovom kontexte.

Empirická časť tejto práce približuje ako prvé metodológiu tejto práce, ktorou je kvalitatívny výskum, ktorý je robený pomocou polo-štruktúrovaných rozhovorov s predpripravenými dvadsiatimi dvoma otázkami. V rámci tohoto výskumu sme sa rozprávali s dvanástimi kľúčovými ľuďmi z tohoto prostredia, konkrétne siedmimi foundrami, tromi ľuďmi z prostredia venture kapitálových fondov, jedným šéfom coworkingového priestoru a jednou ženou, ktorá bola šéfkou v akceleračnom programe.

Práce na záver zhŕňa množstvo zistení, ktoré vyplývajú z analýzy rozhovorov s kľúčovými osobami z tohoto prostredia a kategorizuje ich do menších podkapitol, kde najviac výrazné fenomény ilustruje pomocou starostilo vybratých citátov. Tieto zistenia poukazujú na celkovú komplexnosť toho, akú dynamiku má móda v slovenskom start-upovom prostredí.

Tento výskum teda približuje komplexné dynamiky módy, skúma ako sa mení oblečenie týchto ľudí na základe toho s kým interagujú, a mnohé iné špecifiká, ako napríklad to, že tieto dynamiky sa menia na základe typu zakladateľa, či úspechu jednotlivca v tomto systéme. Výskum poukazuje na to, že dynamiky sa menia napríklad pri ľuďoch z venture kapitálových fondov, ženách a type odvetvia start-upu. Väčšina ľudí, s ktorými sme sa rozprávali sa pri interakcii s ľuďmi zo štátneho sektora oblieka viac formálne. Výskum tiež poukazuje na to, že v start-upovom prostredí takmer neexistujú písané pravidlá ohľadne toho čo si majú ľudia obliekať.

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