Communicating Fashion: Trend Research and Forecasting

COMMUNICATING FASHION: TREND RESEARCH AND FORECASTING

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INTRODUCTION

This textbook was created by [faculty](#) at two universities and is tailored to their classes. At the University of Minnesota College of Design, the class is ADES 3217, Fashion Trends and Communication. At the University of California, the class is DES 148, Trend Research and Forecasting in Design. These classes are required for product and apparel designers, but are also taken by students in other topical areas such as journalism, retail, marketing, and business. The book is accessible through the link, and free to use in part or whole for classes taught on these and related topics.

Thank you to the Imagine funding at the University of Minnesota, which allowed completion of the book by providing funds to hire students: Rachel Bodine, a Senior in Product Design, contributed sketches to illustrate concepts throughout chapters authored by DeLong. Graduate students on assistantships, Nancy Martin and Shiman Li, helped edit the chapters, especially the material on Trend Challenges.

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–Marilyn DeLong

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Creative Process & the Fashion industry for 14 years, from its inception in 2009 until 2022. She has authored numerous journal articles in such venues as *Fashion Theory, Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, *Senses & Society*, *Textile, Qualitative Market Research*, and the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, and has given presentations at global conferences throughout the U.S. and in 11 countries—Canada, Spain, Portugal, France, England, Denmark, Korea, China, HongKong, Australia, and Brazil. She has taught graduate and undergraduate classes at the University of Minnesota in Material Culture, Aesthetics of Design, Innovation Theory, Trends, and the History of Fashion and Ethics, and her graduate students are situated at universities and in the fashion industry around the globe.

CHAPTER 1 - TRENDS RESEARCH & FINGERTIP DICTIONARY

Marilyn Revell DeLong

Trend research starts with you—how you become aware of and understand the interrelationship of factors involved in change. The way in which you communicate that story through a forecast may include your current knowledge or a reinvention of the past. The goal of the trend forecaster is to reduce risk in the marketplace by predicting what the user needs and desires. To do this, the trend forecaster observes and recognizes interrelationships among the product, the user experience, and contextual factors. The ability to predict what the user needs and wants reduces risk in producing and marketing undesirable products.

This framework for researching and communicating trends is used throughout this digital book, which is to be used freely in learning about trends. A series of projects—individual and team-based—will challenge your thinking and intuition, and help you learn about the process of desk and field research. Activities dispersed throughout the chapters called "Trend Challenges" will help you apply the ideas and concepts from each chapter; you'll add your completed challenges to your blog or notebook, where you collect ideas and journal about what is happening around you.

You will find a common structure

This book's framework offers a holistic view of the interrelationships involved in trend research, including data collection, analysis and reporting, and forecasting what that direction means for design. The book's primary focus is on the process of observing and collecting desk and field data to understand interrelationships among products, user experience, and contextual factors.

The book also focuses on finding ways to effectively communicate predicted trends and possible new product opportunities. Trend research can be change-making, and the aim is to change according to effective use of those resources we have at hand to ultimately communicate a message that the user needs and wants to hear.

Becoming a Trend Forecaster

The professional whose role is to research, observe, analyze and interpret data and communicate the trend in a forecast is called a trend forecaster. To research trends, the trend forecaster must be aware of what has occurred

before and what is happening now to detect patterns of change. Change involves interrelationships—what is occurring in the product, the viewer, and the cultural milieu.

By product, we are primarily focused on product designs that inherently could involve innovation and change in their design. But this means understanding what occurred in the product before the change—in other words, what is familiar or considered traditional or expected by the user. The product life cycle is an important consideration in a forecast as a measure of acceptance.

Along with understanding the product, the forecaster must also be knowledgeable about the responses of the viewer, user, and consumer. The "viewer" is the person viewing the product; this may be the user or consumer, or the trend forecaster attempting to recognize trend patterns from a professional perspective. The "user" is the individual wearing and caring for the product throughout its life cycle (who may or may not be the original purchaser), and the "consumer" is the individual in the act of purchase and acquisition. The user is engaged in the product life cycle, and the trend for a particular product will be influenced by its life cycle and who will use it.

The cultural milieu is what we consider the context within this framework. This includes the background of culture, society, the economy, and technology—all embodied within the current context. "Zeitgeist" refers to the spirit of the times; it arises from the current cultural climate. In this instance, we use "culture" to refer to the climate within one cultural group, such as a societal group within the U.S. Age, for example, can be considered a subgroup or category that influences acceptance of a product in many cultures. Because experience influences expectations, an older individual may be influenced differently. Religion is another example; some religions specify certain customs of dress that identify their members for both everyday and special occasions. Among subgroups such as Native American or Hmong people, however, traditional dress might be worn only for special occasions.

The interrelationships among product, viewer, and cultural context offer the means to detect a trend. Being able to weigh options for the future as a change agent is part of the job of a trend forecaster, as is being able to communicate to the industry what those options mean for the product. Examples of these interrelationships abound. Trends in certain materials or color palettes might mean a kitchen remodel for a user who changes for fashion or for a functional need. Change in how coffee as a drink is made, how it tastes, and where it is consumed can motivate innovations by those who make coffee. You've see the proliferation of drive-by coffee shops that offer a quick cup. How has this influenced design? Then consider products like toys: if Legos are introduced at an early age, how does that influence the product offered and related user expectations? When will interest in this product wane? Will it wane according to aging out of the related activity, while remaining popular with younger age groups?

Then, of course, product designs can become worldwide trends. Though the popularity of denim jeans originated in the U.S., they are produced and worn all over the world. Because the apparel industry operates on a global scale, with apparel produced in many countries, it stands to reason that people in other countries would follow product trends such as wearing denim jeans. However, the context of wearing a product over time has changed in this process. In the early 20th century, for example, blue jeans were worn because of their

durability for work environments that required heavy labor. Today, they're bleached and torn in strategic places by the manufacturer before being sold as a fashion statement to be worn in many casual situations. This process greatly increases their fragility and obsolescence.

What is a Trend?

A "trend" is a general direction in which something is developing or changing. A trend can be short-term, offering a signal of change or a direction of movement, or long-term, with a change occurring in user attitudes and behaviors. Patterns can be detected with information gathered from such movement. It is important to understand design in this context, as this understanding can lead to innovative opportunities.

The process of forecasting involves knowing the following:

1. What is now! References will proliferate about what is perceived as the normal and familiar.
2. What is changing! To detect patterns of change you must understand what is changing and for whom and for how long. Innovations may diffuse through a group at different rates depending upon the user's penchant for change as well as the magnitude of the change within the cultural context.

How do Trends Spread?

Trends as memes: Memes can be regarded as the building blocks of a trend. A meme can involve ideas, products, clothing, behaviors, tunes, or catch phrases. It acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through speech, writing, images, rituals, or other imitable phenomena. Memes can diffuse by imitation, either consciously or unconsciously. A meme replicates, mutates, and evolves in response to social and environmental changes. Trends can include any form of behavior in culture that develops among a large population.

Trends as tipping points: Many of the ideas products, messages, and behaviors we find in society can be characterized by their rapid and exponential spread through a population, almost as a virus or epidemic. They can be set in motion by a seemingly tiny cause, compared to their effect. There is a particular moment that Gladwell (2002) calls a "tipping point," when an epidemic breaks loose from being contained within a small population and begins to spread. All successful trends must reach this point—the point at which they move rapidly from being unnoticed or unheard of to being widely noticed. A trend will often catch on because of a very small change in content: the people who spread the trend, sometimes called influencers, and the context or environment in which the trend is being spread.

What are Trend Characteristics?

Trends as directional shifts have several critical characteristics.

Scale

The trend scale involves the length of time and impact of a directional shift.

Mini/micro trends are specific to small groups of people and are usually associated with a specific industry or marketplace. They operate within a short time frame of 1–2 years, or even for just a season.

Mega/macro trends are major shifts in the society that have definite impact on individual lifestyles. This impact can be on a global scale, and may include social economic, political, environmental, and technological change. They are slow to form and, once in motion, continue to influence for 7–10 years.

The aging of the U.S. population is an example of a mega trend that affects micro trends. In the past decade, the number of baby boomers—those born between the mid 1940s and the early 1960s—has increased faster than the under-age-18 population and the U.S. population as a whole, according to 2020 Census data (census.gov). This growth is a demographic mega trend that is influencing micro trends across industries, including those focused on health management. As this population grows, so does the number of older people remaining in the workforce, along with the need for assisted living facilities, senior housing complexes, and home health care. And more fashion icons, influencers, and brands arise that target this age group.

Speed

The lifecycle of a trend is characterized using a trend curve that involves the speed at which a trend rises, peaks, and decreases. A "fad" is usually a specific product or a detail of a look with a short lifecycle. Fads come and disappear within a season or a year.

There are seasonal trends that include groups of products that become fashionable for a period, such as the summer, and influence the user primarily for that season, but also may carry over into the next season. This especially occurs in regions with distinct seasons.

A "classic" is an item that is foundational to one's wardrobe and that lasts for many years, such as a cardigan sweater or white shirt. Certain categories of product lend themselves to a longer lifecycle, such as underwear or loungewear, especially if not meant for public viewing.

What is the Objective of Trend Forecasting?

Trend forecasting is about alignment of the industry with user's needs and desires. The professional trend forecaster learns to observe and interpret the broad directions of change within the culture and their influence

upon the user. This includes understanding the user in terms of geographics (e.g., place or location), demographics (e.g. ,age, gender, race, employment), and psychographics (e.g., personality, values, attitudes, interests, lifestyle) that can be discovered through interpreting data.

The trend forecaster is looking for change. The search process involves research—collecting data, analyzing, interpreting, predicting, and communicating. Forecasting the trend then involves interpreting what is changing in the product or service design and in the target market. Finally, the trend forecaster must find ways to communicate the observed trends to influence the target market.

Categories of Research—Desk and Field

To interpret and predict change requires preparation. Engaging in research to predict change means collecting data to understand the interrelationships among product, user experiences, and contextual factors. Data comes from two important sources—desk and field research.

Desk research involves paying close attention to what is already available to you, such as general population trends, news about changes occurring within the culture (e.g., psychological, technological), and the many networks offered on the world wide web and in current media. It is important to consider historical references, and design history can be found in many resources that provide needed continuity with product design. Journalists writing about current events offer images and commentary useful in outlining a direction for trend research. Services provided by the Worth Global Style Network (WGSN) offer commentary about the current and future consumer, designer collections featured in fashion weeks in New York, London, and Milan, and more. Rich sources of innovative ideas also include high-end custom designers who display their work seasonally, and fashion blogs and videos that offer advice on product use. All of this information is available at your desk, but need you to follow these sources with enough persistence that you can interpret and consider what will be of value and serve the needs of your target market.

Field research involves careful observation and interpretation of what is happening around you, so you can be aware of where change is occurring. You must learn to use your own intuitions and observations as a laboratory for what is to come based upon what you experience yourself. To detect trend patterns, you will need to learn how to view your surroundings with some objectivity, looking for connections that the cultural context, your targeted user, and the products on offer. Paying attention to your surroundings and making connections in this way takes constant vigilance (DeLong, 1998), but trend patterns only become evident through awareness of what is happening around you.

Trend Challenge

The observation of what is happening around you is critical to your experience as a trend forecaster. Awareness of the familiar is a first step. Select a familiar and short-term event such as riding the bus, walking to class, or eating dinner with a group of friends. Note and describe your habitual way of experiencing this event, including what you notice or don't notice. Then expand your experience of the event to include something you aren't usually aware of—e.g., a new sensory experience, more detail about the conversation, or how people are dressed.

This Trend Challenge is meant to increase your awareness of familiar and everyday experiences that form trend patterns. In research, this powerful tool is called participant observation. Faith Popcorn, a prominent trend forecaster, calls it "cultural brailling," a way of keeping your finger on the pulse of what is happening around you.

The data you will need, however, cannot be captured completely through observation. Field research involves another type of data that comes from surveys, focus groups and interviews with your target market. This data helps you comprehend your user's needs and desires, preferences, influential experiences—things that are not readily observable. The process of trend forecasting must therefore include a variety of field research methods.

What Skills are Needed to Forecast Trends?

A trend forecaster detects patterns and shifts in attitudes, mindsets, and lifestyle options that run against current thinking in lifestyle, dress, trade consuming, and communication. They find information within the cultural milieu on the streets and at fashion shows, museum exhibitions, expos, and festivals. Continual awareness and observations in your everyday life can be a fertile means of discovering such changes.

To become a forecaster requires many abilities, foremost of which is the ability to observe, link, and integrate what you discover as it relates to product innovations and outcomes. Also needed are curiosity, detective-like research instincts, familiarity with foresight methodologies (e.g., cultural scanning, analysis, and interpretation), an understanding of human and cultural values and how they impact behavior, knowledge of related industries like advertising and marketing, and the ability to thrive in ambiguity. Finally, the communication of outcomes requires systems thinking and the ability to logically connect complex and, at times, unrelated ideas into a focused story.

Forecasting is needed in many industries that focus on the relationship of the product to the user, including product design, manufacturing, and retail. Jobs in trend forecasting include both full-time and part-time positions. For those working in large corporations, positions may be full-time, focusing on, perhaps, color analysis in a paint company, or interpreting trends for large research services such as Fashion Snoops or

WGSN. However, even if not working in a defined trend-forecasting position, an individual who is a technical pattern-maker or a designer, for example, needs to keep abreast of what is happening within the culture and how it will influence their products.

Terms and Definitions to Know

Aesthetic Response: A response involving the interrelationships of form, viewer, and context. Personal, and important to understand for oneself and as it relates to a collective within the culture. An individual response is characterized by "me" or "my personal response," while "we" is the collective response of a culture or subcultural group, and a "universal" response is one occurring world-wide.

- **Form**: The product, with its relational and dimensional shapes and surfaces. If viewed on the human body, the relationship includes the body characteristics of physical coloring and the head-to-toe structure of the body.
- **Viewer**: The individual—in the role of, for example, consumer, user, or professional trend forecaster—observing a product to understand its style details and entirety within the current milieu.
- **Context** The culture, society, economy, technology—all embodied within the current milieu or Zeitgeist.

Change Agent: An individual or group undertaking the task of initiating and managing change in an organization. Change agents can be internal, such as managers or employees who oversee the change process, or external, such as a forecaster outside the firm.

Cocooning: A specific term used by Faith Popcorn for a trend that began in the 1980s based upon the user's interest in a cozy, comfortable lifestyle.

Consumer: The individual purchasing products in the marketplace—in store or online, and new or used products.

Demography: The statistical study of populations, especially human beings. Demographic analysis is the study of a population-based factors such as age, race, and sex; it can cover whole societies or specific groups defined by criteria such as education, religion, and ethnicity. Demographic data refers to socioeconomic information expressed statistically, including employment, education, income, and birth, marriage, and death rates.

Fashion: The style that is accepted and popular within a culture or community, and that identifies the time and place for that cultural group.

Fashion Forecaster: A trend forecaster who specializes in predicting what is considered up-to-date in apparel products and in the ways they are offered to the user.

Influencer: One who encourages the rate of adoption of a trend through observable actions.

Innovation: Introduction and implementation of a new product, method, practice, service, or idea, or a change made to an existing good, service, method, or practice.

Market Segmentation: Formation of groups according to demographic and psychological traits that influence consumption habits drawn from people's lifestyle and preferences.

ME to WE Response: A ME response is related to an individual's personal and individual preferences, and includes personal language to communicate that individual's preferences within their group. A WE response is collective and related to the needs and desires of a group of people or a targeted market; it includes language related to what that market understands.

Mega-trend: A designation of a long-term cultural shift that influences the user's lifestyle. See trends definition.

Meme: A unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, images, rituals, or other imitable phenomena. A meme can be an idea, product, article of clothing, behavior, tune, or catch phrase.

Modernity: What is or is perceived as current or up-to-date in thinking, actions, and images among a societal or cultural group.

Niche: A designated product market for a specific user. A niche market is a segment of a larger market, but defined by its own unique needs, preferences, or identity.

Persona: An imagined or fictional user of a target market that involves lifestyle characteristics; used by designers, manufacturers, and marketers to define a focus for needs and desires.

Preferences: Recognizable patterns of response that can relate to the aesthetic responses of an individual ("I like it;" I don't like it") or a group or collective ("we like it;" "we don't like it").

Psychographics: The qualitative methodology of studying consumers based on psychological characteristics and traits such as values, desires, goals, interests, and lifestyle choices. Psychographics in marketing focus on understanding the consumer's emotions and values for the purpose of marketing more effectively.

Research, Desk: Observation of the data are available to one as a trend forecaster, such as general population trends, news about directional changes occurring within the culture (e.g., psychological, technological), and networks on the web and in current media. This includes the work of futurists who inform about and help forecasters imagine long-term trends and options as well as consequences of change.

Research, Field: Detection of trend patterns through observation; use of systematic methods (e.g., participant observation, survey, interview, and focus groups) for observing and questioning a targeted group; use of analysis and interpretation of data through intuition and looking for connections among the cultural context, the targeted user, and the products on offer. Paying attention to your surroundings and making connections about the direction of change

Style: The characteristic manner of expression in lifestyle, art movement, or products. Regarding a product, this might include details such as the shape of a collar, the use and combination of colors, or the configuration of details into a total identifiable look such as a silhouette—i.e., the way the user puts together a look that

is characteristic of the time and location. Styles can repeat (e.g., the 1990s style or the Art Nouveau style). The term can be applied widely to what identifies the expression of a particular time, such as art movements, decorative accessories, furniture, and appliances.

Style Tribe: Cultures or subcultures that are recognizable groups of people with expressive patterns that are similar enough to be identifiable to both the viewer and user. The term was coined by Ted Polhemus (1994), an anthropologist writing on popular culture, to describe the trickle up of trend patterns from various groups such as flappers, swing kids, mods, rockers, surfers, hippies, punks, disco, hip hop, Harajuku, and hipsters.

Style Tropes: Basic categories of clothing designed to be supported by production processes within the apparel industry and the user's culture. Appear repeatedly to become part of the language of dress for the user within a marketplace, with a common language developing for each—e.g., trench coat, blazer, caftan, t-shirt, newsboy cap.

Systems Thinking: The ability to make linkages within the design thinking and trends framework.

Sustainable Practices: to look at the effects of product design, manufacture and distribution on the environment and coordinate user's needs with these opportunities and limitations.

Tipping Point: As used by Malcolm Gladwell (2002), the point at which a behavior or lifestyle breaks loose from being contained within a small population and begins to spread; a point at which a product or way of using a product moves rapidly from being unnoticed or unheard of to being widely noticed. See above for further definition.

Trend: A shift in patterns in attitudes, mindsets, or lifestyle options that runs against current thinking.

Movement of Trends: Movement down, up, or across within a society.

Mega or Macro Trend: A change in direction of the culture that is significant enough to alter user behaviors and lifestyles over a long period of time across large populations.

Micro or Mini trend: A change in direction affecting the user within a cultural group for a short period of time; can often be linked to a megatrend.

Trend Adoption: A process that classifies adopters of trends based on their level of readiness to accept a newly emerging trend. Adoption rate depends upon the user's awareness and acceptance of a trend. Categories of adoption include innovator, early adopter, early majority, late majority, and laggard.

Trend Drivers: Forces that drive a trend forward. Can include a change in value or behavior, or an influencer who turns a weak signal into a strong signal.

Trend Forecaster: One who observes changes in a given society, and who collects data and analyzes and interprets these data to predict change in user needs for new or modified products. Communication of the change is couched in a language that is professional, i.e. objective and understandable within the industry and to the user.

Trend Lifecycle: A process that shows how trends rise, peak and decline throughout their existence. A fashion trend's lifecycle, for example, involves five stages: introduction, rise, peak, decline, and obsolescence.

User: The individual who wears or uses, takes care of, and discards products throughout a product's lifecycle.

Zeitgeist: German word interpreted as the "spirit of the time;" the defining mood of a particular period of history as shown by the ideas and beliefs of that time. In trend forecasting, particularly related to modernity and the looks that appear up-to-date.

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Book Illustrations by Rachel Bodine, Product Designer

# CHAPTER 2 - UNDERSTANDING YOUR AESTHETIC RESPONSE

Marilyn Revell DeLong

To become a trend forecaster, you must first examine your own aesthetic response to designed products. This involves examining your current likes and dislikes, your ongoing preferences, your needs and desires, your biases, and your assumptions—all of what makes the total of your "ME" response. What you bring to the table is important—your unique experiences, your attitudes, and your behaviors as you engage in the world around you. In other words, as an observer of trends, you need to know yourself and to recognize and reflect upon your aesthetic response. This becomes a basis for understanding others.

Attending to Form and Meaning

An aesthetic response includes its resulting experiences, such as what one selects as an expression of preference (DeLong, 1998). A person may focus their preference for a particular product on the way it looks, such as its color or texture, the way it fits and moves with the body, or how it makes the person feel up-to-date. Or they may simply focus on the way the product functions in use, and not be aware of its other attributes.

An individual's aesthetic response is often not brought to a level of awareness, and making quick judgements of "I like it" or "I don't like it" becomes a habitual shortcut. Your aesthetic response, however, is much deeper than these surface judgements, and is based on the sum of influences of your past experiences, present expectations, attitudes, and underlying preferences. What you pay attention to, whether focused narrowly or ever expanding, is critical to your understanding of yourself and your relation to trends.

The outcome of your aesthetic response is influenced by your reflections upon the **form, viewer,** and **viewing contexts**. We will consider each separately while, at the same time, realizing the importance of their interactions to create meaning.
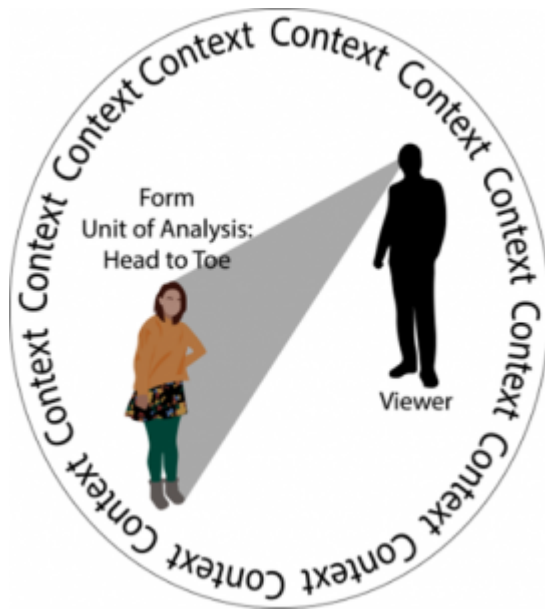
Form

Form is the distinctive arrangement of colors, textures, lines, and shapes created by the interaction of the body with all that is put on or done to manipulate or modify the body (DeLong, 1998). Attending to form means paying attention to all the design elements and their interactions and relationships, as we will discuss in a later chapter.

Unit of Analysis For the best understanding of the aesthetic response, the unit to analyze must be the entire form—what we consider as the whole designed entity. If examining the design of an interior room, for example, the unit of analysis would include the furniture, floor covering, and wall coverings—all that is within the viewer's scan.

When examining your look or appearance, the unit of analysis is the entire body from head to toe, including what is attached or placed upon it (e.g., hats, eyeglasses, hosiery, jackets), what may be inserted (e.g., earrings that fit into pierced ears), and how it is modified (e.g., hair styles, including hair color, texture, and shaping, and tattoos). Though your aesthetic response includes all the senses, we are primarily focused upon the viewing relationships usually involved in trend forecasting. But remember that your response also involves your other senses. Think of the sounds made when the body is moving—the rustle of a taffeta skirt, or the click of leather boots a cement pavement.

You may focus on the "form" as a body view when not in motion. This body view is what you see in a catalog or a photograph. When a body view is what is available for viewing, the silhouette and limitations of movement must be considered. Sometimes this limitation of what can be seen is so prevalent that it is labeled, i.e. the pandemic view of only the upper body in a Zoom meeting.

Trend Challenge

Select a head-to-toe look from a selfie or some other image that represents you and what you would wear. Think about the head-to-toe look of each of the following as related to the body:

Which items are attached to your body? (e.g., shoes, T-shirt, hair band)

Which items are inserted in your body? (e.g., tattoos, earrings, studs)

Which items modify your body or increase its functions? (e.g., hair dye, bras, mobile phone)

If the unit of analysis is limited to separate and discrete products, the viewer can get caught up in one product. If the product is footwear, for example, you learn something when you examine a shoe for its heel height, color, and textural details—but only about shoes. Unless you also consider how this footwear affects the whole form and the relationships involved, something is missing in your understanding of the aesthetic response.

Viewing Relationships within the Form

Individual products, such as shoes, handbags, or trousers, interact with the body to result in a look or appearance. The unit of analysis includes how products look on the body in its entirety. This analysis involves recognizing details of surfaces (e.g., color and texture) and perceptible lines and shapes (e.g., sleeves and silhouettes), along with relations of part or parts to the whole (e.g., the relation of surface details of color and texture to the silhouette). Analysis of the entire unit of the form must include the information received from the interaction of the body and the wearer, including body proportions, hair shape and texture, and skin color and texture—every physical aspect present. Also note how the viewing relationships within the form attracts and then holds attention. The character of these details, and how they are combined and arranged, provide definition and distinctiveness to the form.

Meaning Related to the Form

In the study of trends, the elements that provide meaning in viewing the form require attention and understanding. Norman (2004) defines meaning as involving three levels of processing our response to products. Level 1 is visceral: our immediate impression, and the initial impact of the appearance. This level involves our first rapid and automatic judgement of what we think is good and bad: "I like it" or "I don't like it." Level 2 is behavioral, and involves our experience with a product; how well, for example, will the product function? This level involves actions we habitually take without much conscious thought, such as driving an automobile, playing an instrument, or using a computer keyboard while contemplating something else. In terms of appearance, Level 2 might include be the pleasure you gain from your use of products, and the preferences you have developed over time for colors and textures. Level 3 is reflective, the home of your conscious thought and memories that relate to your life experiences and cultural values. This level is where we learn new concepts and how to contemplate and understand meaning. You may, for instance, reflect upon your past and your experience of hating a product, and discover that, through further exposure and reflection, you can tolerate it.

The effective trend forecaster learns to consider responses from all three levels, and to reflect upon

differences in user response. These levels interact continuously. And while a user's processing can begin at any level, it is at the reflective level where interactions with the user matter most. This is where the trend forecaster can become aware of and sensitive to differences among users (Norman, 2004).

Your Schema. Research shows that you hold an image, or schema, in your mind that provides you with an instant judgement of "I like it" or "I don't like it" (Norman's Level l). This **schema** relates to what you pay attention to, and offers an instant shortcut past the myriad of images available to you that could overwhelm your attention. We make categories and code what is important to us. If what is new and up-to-date is important to you, it will become a part of your schema (DeLong et al., 1986). Your schema is ever changing based upon new images you become aware of. It continually evolves and changes in response to what you are currently experiencing.

What you pay attention to affects your schema—the image in your minds' eye—and this plays a part in what becomes your aesthetic response. Under normal circumstances, a schema is mostly intuitive and not necessarily a part of conscious thinking. Your response is a rapid means of reaching a judgement that is dependent upon what attracts your attention. As you respond to various products, familiar patterns, or styles, become a critical part of your schema (Level 2).

As a trend forecaster, however, you must train yourself to notice and reflect on such things as new color combinations or design details that express the body in a new way. In other words, you need to be aware of what has become familiar and what is new. You can train yourself to consciously pay attention to what you pay attention to. You can then expand and deepen your schema. By being aware of your patterns of attention, you can become more attuned to what you experience and its relation to yourself and your world. Our response to the form is understood as involving all three levels, but the reflective level is where you can begin to understand meaning.

As a trend forecaster, you must slow down your response to become more reflective. This takes time, and an awakening of curiosity. Meaning can occur within the form through its expressive visual effect. An expression that reflects simplicity, for example, may arise from a simple and coherent look created by one focal point and an analogous color scheme that leads your eye based upon a simple shape of the silhouette. If you become aware of such a pattern in your viewing, you may learn to prefer this look, and it may become part of your schema. Or an expression of femininity (Level 3) may arise because of combinations you have learned from past experience (Level 2). Your definition of a feminine look arises from your reflection based upon meaning derived from the interaction of certain colors, textures, lines, and shapes, such as light values and muted hues, curvilinear lines, small shapes, and smooth textures that define the wearer's body.

Reflective meanings also arise from viewing the form and its associations with past experiences and emotions. A mature, experienced viewer, for instance, may reflect upon a product that reminds him of what he wore as a teenager or upon color popular that invokes a previous decade. Or a viewer may smile from seeing bright ,cheerful colors on a small child and remember skipping along the street in the same way. Though individual, these reflections may relate to associations made by others because of this common experience.
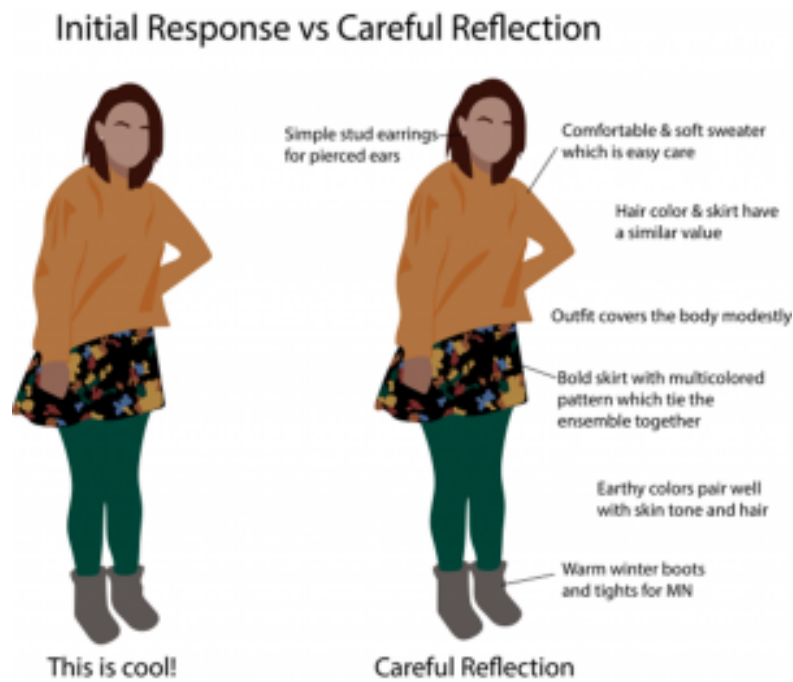
Viewer

Aesthetic response is dependent upon the viewer of the form. Generally, the viewer is the observer of the form, but motive becomes important here. The viewer may also, for example, be the user, the person wearing an ensemble who becomes the viewer when looking into a mirror to assess their appearance. The viewer may also be the consumer who is motivated by shopping for a new purchase. Each type of brings individual traits such as gender, age, personal aptitudes and skills, knowledge, experience, and likes and dislikes (DeLong, 1998), all of which affect their aesthetic response.

Great pleasure may be found in recognizing good design, or even in asking questions such as "What product gives me pleasure?" and "What message do I want to give to others?" Learning through personal experiences of good design related to ourselves can be translated into understanding others. Have you ever said to a friend, "But that is so YOU!," and in responding in this way, recognized that while it is not something you would select to wear, it is perfect for your friend? It's fun to reflect upon our own preferences and experiences. Learning how to gauge your aesthetic response compared to that of someone else is good practice, and is initiated at the reflective Level 3 of Norman's processing model (2004). As you can imagine, processing our responses at Level 3 requires the greatest amount of effort and creativity.

The viewer who understands preference can recognize when a fashionable image provokes a favorable collective response from self and others. You might, for example, prefer blue, and know that a certain blue is forecasted to be very popular in the coming season. From your data analysis of the U.S. market, you also know that your target market prefers the hue as well. It is not a stretch for a trend forecaster to promote a color related to what is current with both the zeitgeist and the target market—a winning strategy.

Understanding the Familiar and the New

The viewer who brings patterns from their experiences to their present aesthetic response is confronted with expectations of both the familiar and the new. The past influences the present and the evolving nature of one's schema. To be understood, this schema needs to become part of consciousness. Perceived patterns that form a schema become an aspect of the expectations brought to the next experience (DeLong et al., 1986). Reflecting upon viewer expectations is important in understanding both your aesthetic response and that of others—in understanding, for example, how different combinations of lines, shapes, colors, and textures are preferred in summer and winter seasons. Though certain expectations have developed and become familiar over time, you must be aware of and try to understand what is new, what is different from the familiar.

Initial Response vs Careful Reflection

Simple stud earrings for pierced ears

Comfortable & soft sweater which is easy care

Hair color & skirt have a similar value

Outfit covers the body modestly

Bold skirt with multicolored pattern which tie the ensemble together

Earthy colors pair well with skin tone and hair

Warm winter boots and tights for MN

This is cool!

Careful Reflection

This relationship of familiar and new can vary depending upon your target market. A change in a familiar product category may cause you to change that product's focus. A product that previously blended in as part of an entire ensemble, for example, might now be made a focal point, requiring a conceptual change in how we recognize what could be new for that product in a particular market.

As a trend forecaster, you must be skilled in finding the right combination of the familiar and new for the user. Training yourself to look for what could be new in a product's design means recognizing what is familiar and how that is changing. For example, the way a jacket closely fits the body has become familiar. But the familiar look of a closely fitting jacket may no longer be perceived as up-to-date when the jacket either abruptly or gradually becomes less fitted; this requires a change in focus from the familiar.

Over time, changes in the physical nature of an individual may influence how they appear up-to-date. This is a continual challenge. The child has the opportunity for change in appearance simply because clothes are outgrown before they wear out. A person whose body shape has not changed in years, however, may not be aware of needing to make strategic selections to continue to appear up-to-date. While changes can occur as part of the collective demographic, they are still experienced individually in terms of timing and duration: one's age or personal health may change body weight or physical coloring.

Context

As used here, **context** is considered in a broad sense. It includes both the physical space that immediately surrounds the form and the broader cultural milieu—the aspects of time and place important within a culture.

First consider the immediate physical space surrounding the form. Think, for instance, about how adjacent

surface colors and textures are influenced by the immediate surround in the display of a product, such as how colors bounce off shiny surfaces or are absorbed. Try to see a color in daylight instead of artificial light; through experience, you may have discovered that this matters in matching two surfaces. While those such as fashion photographers and designers of theater costuming are especially aware of these differences in aesthetic response based upon control of these immediately adjacent surroundings, this awareness of physical space is also important for the trend forecaster.

The broader context also includes the time, place, and current and past values and ideals held by the viewer(s) within their society (DeLong, 1998). Appearing up-to-date is an evaluative criterion of aesthetics related to the context of a particular time, place, and situation. The look accepted by a selected societal group at a given time is an expression of currency: current technology, current cultural events, and current designer creativity. Appropriateness of the look planned for that specific time and place—for the context of situation and event—may relate to what we value, and to the nature of what appears up-to-date and just right for this season. Recognizing these interrelationships within a particular context of time and place is particularly important when considering markets other than the one to which you belong. A trend forecaster who ignores such factors runs the risk of offending the target market or, worse, causing legal or public relations issues.

Context involves meanings that can become a focus in viewing, especially as they relate to what is valued by a certain group. Such focus may be on just one product, and it is important to recognize the connotations of meaning related to that product. Understand that what we value as a group can take on nuanced meaning. For teenagers, for example, blue jeans can become a valued product focus, and they pay attention to details and meanings that others might not see or understand. The teenager may ask: Which pair of jeans are appropriate to wear for a certain situation? I asked a group of teenagers how many pairs of blue jeans they had in their wardrobes, and was surprised by the number—15 on average. When I asked why so many, the conversation turned to all the nuanced ways in which the owners perceived and valued variations in fit, stitching, embellishments, and modifications. Being "in the know" about teenagers and the nuance of meanings they ascribe to their jeans is vital to understanding that market.

Also vital, however, are the ways in which a product interacts with other products and how these products are worn. Through the products we select to wear together, we suggest our age, gender, or occupation (demographics), as well as how much attention we would like from others (psychographics). In the jeans example, we need to look not just at the product itself, but at what the teenagers are wearing with their jeans and what they are doing while wearing them.

Context also includes the meaning associated with cultural traditions. Use of the same color in different cultural contexts may change its meaning. In the U.S., for example, it is traditional for brides to wear white. In Korea, however, brides traditionally wear red; white is traditionally worn for funerals, and is only adopted for weddings when the bride wishes to emphasize a cross-cultural expression.

What does this broad examination of aesthetic response have to do with explanations about meaning? As we think about Norman's three levels of processing, we can now apply the concept to what makes us exclaim, WOW!

What Is Behind this "WOW!"

Let's explore what attracts your attention enough to make you exclaim "WOW." At the visceral stage, aesthetics involves one's immediate reaction of pleasure and satisfaction derived from sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste, and sense of being. But one's response also occurs on the behavioral level that includes the sum of past experiences and preferences and what you have come to value—referencing your schema. Stop and ask yourself what is behind your WOW! You may never probe further about why or what details made such a positive response. But the more reflective you are, the more aware of your past experiences, and the more varied and diverse your exposure has been, the more likely you are to be open to change.

You can't, however, stop with only understanding your own response. As you think about trend forecasting, the need to pursue and understand more than your individual response will become apparent. Forecasting trends is all about being open to what is new, and sometimes even strange. Understanding what we value, both in form and physicality as well as in the messages we express, requires reflection. But as you notice something strange and unfamiliar, you may ask, how do I move from understanding the form to understanding values, especially those of another person?

Using an understanding of your own response to understand another's WOW response is the start. You'll need to listen and understand WOW from their perspective. Ask the question, "Do I agree?" If the answer is no, ask "How and why do I disagree? Am I open to understanding their WOW even if it is not my response?" Understanding any group beyond your own requires you to engage in discovery, as members of that group may not always be reflective about their aesthetic response, and you may need to probe to understand what they value, and examine how that response might relate to a collective point of view. Be curious and open to others when they express their responses.

Trend Challenge

Return to your previous selection of a head-to-toe look from a selfie or some other image that represents you and what you wear. Which elements of your appearance choices are important to you? For example, do you wear glasses or contact lenses? What does that choice say about you? Identify at least five important appearance choices, and describe how each choice makes you appear up-to-date.

Critique for Trend-Spotting Savvy

A good critique requires the ability to recognize the subjective nature of your response and then justify it through reasoning and reflection. This is quite different than the rush to judgment that often occurs when one becomes satisfied with "I like it" as a sufficient response. A pleasurable WOW experience may occur without a conscious understanding of how and why it took place. Much in understanding aesthetics and how it relates to trend forecasting comes from your ability to engage in good and useful critique.

To understand trends, you need to move to thoughtful critique, which involves being aware of and expressing the reasons for your aesthetic response. Focus first on your reflective response on the designed product. Then explore the patterns and characteristics of the product that provide meaning for you—how it is used, for example, and how it relates to your lifestyle. Then, if you can move on to how the product will relate to the cultural context, you can develop a more professional stance involving analysis and critique.

Challenge Trend Thinking Activity

Select a head-to-toe example of a form that you consider to be up-to-date and that includes one or more products that attract your attention. Now slow your viewing. Describe the form as thoroughly as you can. Examine the words you use, and note those that would be understood by others and those that would be understood only by you.

Critique in Forecasting a Trend

When engaged in critique of a product that you consider to be trending, it is important to understand your own subjectivity. One way to understand what is valued is to learn to be curious, and to create an inner dialogue with what you see, touch, and smell. This includes your instantaneous reaction, any rush to judgment (liking or hating the product), all the way to reflection. You may learn about another's values and decide whether you agree or disagree with what they think and feel. To make a judgment, however, you must engage in critique: an open and inner dialog about the product and its relation to the whole form. Ideally, you will examine the reasons for such peak experiences and how they relate to what is valued. You may express your "WOW" because of soft-to-the-touch fabric quality, impeccable tailoring, or the way in which colors are put together, or because of the care in which a friend has chosen to appear at a special event or has simply a pulled together look that captures the essence of the zeitgeist.

Learning how to do a thoughtful critique brings us closer to understanding the complexities of what we experience—the layers of our first response, affirmation of the product's use, and the ways in which it fits into its intended cultural context. Analysis and critique require experience with in-depth and systematic examination. Analysis of any product starts with focus on the form and moves to relational aspects of viewer and of contextual perspectives within a culture. We've defined form as the unit of analysis—the "look" or appearance of the human body with all that is placed upon it, all that modifies, enhances, and disguises it. This probing is necessary for developing the educated eye and seasoned response that are so important in trend forecasting.

To be a great trend forecaster you want to be the first to spot a trend. For this, observation and a measure of intuition are key. American forecaster Faith Popcorn calls this **cultural brailing**—fully immersing yourself, with all your senses, to track changes in how consumers live. Brailing involves being hyper-observant and alert to any new thing that widens the horizon, and thinking outside the box. It combines observation with intuition. And it requires research—taking pictures of what you see on the street; going to museums, galleries, and trade shows; taking notes. Your research does not need to be about fashion itself; it can be about technology, architecture, or graphics. It should also involve using the internet, looking at blogs, news sources, and trend-forecasting websites such as WGSN and Trendcouncil. All of these sources can help you discover trends, as a trend can start and emerge from anywhere.

Understanding How Critique Helps to Assess the Marketplace

As a trend forecaster, you can make your personal response and schema work for you. They need to become part of your conscious viewing and your continual exposure to new experiences. You need to be able to express the form and meaning relationships in what you see, and to open yourself to examine the implications of new experiences that broaden your aesthetic response. Setting up a dialogue with yourself helps you learn how to use your schema for professional reasons. While you may want to forecast trends for a niche market like

yourself, you may also find yourself forecasting trends for users unlike yourself. In both instances, you need to understand more deeply your own aesthetic responses.

1. Use your schema as a guide to develop trends for a niche market. You will be good at working with this market if your knowledge and understanding of the similarities to your own likes and dislikes, behaviors, and past experiences reflect this market niche. For example, regarding her rapid rise to success in the apparel industry, Tory Burch explains: "it was a tremendous amount of work to find that one opening, that niche where we knew we would fit. We specifically targeted that customer who wanted fine crafted things that didn't cost a fortune. We knew that woman was out there but didn't want to wait for her to come to us. We decided we'd have to reach out directly to her." Explaining what attracted Tory Burch to this particular customer, she said: "Like minds, perhaps. As a woman, it's natural to want to design the clothes that I personally want to wear, because they suit my work, they suit my life, they suit my age. And in doing so, you want to celebrate and incorporate the inspirations that excite and inspire you" (Rubenstein, 2014, p.82). Tory Burch found a market by understanding the trend in others that related to her own wants and needs. Her tagline, found on her website, is:

   Tory Burch is an American lifestyle brand that embodies the personal style and sensibility of its Chairman, CEO and Designer, Tory Burch. Launched in February 2004, the collection, known for color, print and eclectic details, includes ready-to-wear, shoes, handbags, accessories, watches, home, and beauty.

You will need to practice forecasting trends for niche markets—first, those like your own, and then branching out to other markets.

2. Consider broadening your perspective beyond your own likes, dislikes, and preferences. Learning to know when you are responding from your own perspective, you realize that your preferences are yours and not another's. By understanding yourself well enough to separate your own preferences from those of others, you are free to listen to and learn from your potential users about their schema and preferences and become more focused in serving their needs, wants, and desires.

Not everyone is going to find a niche for their professional energies and dreams that appeals directly to their own likes and dislikes, as Tory Burch did. You may find yourself marketing a product for children whose likes and cultural aspirations are different from yours. Or you may find yourself studying the demographic trending of an aging population, and developing a niche that relates to their likes and dislikes, behaviors, and past experiences. It is important to be open to these other perspectives—particularly in the global marketplace of the twenty-first century. Fashion professionals must push themselves beyond their own comfort zone or frame of reference into understanding the market segments they will serve. Engaging in critique is the beginning of understanding aesthetics and what will make for a successful market niche.

   Shared meaning =relationships for communication

The persona is the icon of your target market.

Communication means shared meaning, and the trend forecaster must be skilled at understanding and communicating such relationships. One way to communicate effectively is to think about your intended audience as a target market for the design and distribution of products. As a trend forecaster, put yourself in the shoes of someone vastly different from you and predict the products they will need and want.

Persona describes what many in the apparel industry refer to as the typical individual they imagine for their target market. This persona is often named and described to include demographics such as age, gender, body size, location, (geographics), employment, activities, and psychographics such as likes, dislikes, and ongoing preferences. This link to the individual user continually references an intended audience, and aids those in the industry to come together in their thinking about form and meaning relationships in the marketplace.

Trend Challenge

Think of a market category in which you enjoy shopping. Create a persona for that market. Consider a name, gender, activities, and lifestyle help you better focus on and understand that market. A persona might be something like: Lizzy is 30 years old, with two children; she is always busy with lots of activities both for her children and herself. Then consider how that persona influences the products you might offer.

Trends as Link to Context and Communication

Trends link a product to the historical context of time and location. Much of what we find offered in the marketplace is familiar, with only a few changes in details. When a product evolves from one season to the next, for example, it may simply have a new color or a slight change in shape. At times, however, a cultural shift becomes influential in changing how people see themselves. Social media is this type of cultural shift, influencing new products and the speed at which products must change. As exposure to new products increases, our propensity for boredom with these products increases as well.

When an abrupt shift occurs within a culture, it may result in an abrupt change in what is offered in the

marketplace. In the U.S., for example, World War II created a major shift in how men and women viewed themselves. Suddenly, men were off serving their country and women became part of the war effort with administrative or service-related jobs. These changes created a shift in thinking, and put marriage and family on hold. At the end of the war, when servicemen returned home, both men and women wanted to marry and start a family. Restrictions on fabric lifted. The "New Look" was so called because it signaled a definite shift in clothing products on the market for women. The practical and economical look of women during the war changed dramatically to a look that emphasized the curvatures of the feminine body, with dropped shoulders, nipped-in waistlines, and longer, more flowing skirts. The male look changed. The man in uniform, or in the grey flannel suit, moved to the suburbs to marry and start a family. Suburban living, with casual pastimes such as barbecue, outdoor grilling, and golf, created a market for men's casual clothing. These trends went well beyond clothing as well. With the shift to a suburban lifestyle came an increased interest in casual entertainment. Products like disposable paper and plastic dinnerware (with their quick clean-up) became very attractive. A large, new market opened with this societal shift.

For trend forecasters, understanding abrupt and broad societal shifts like these requires an knowledge of the complexities of aesthetic response in order to consider the opportunities for change.

Trend Challenge

The pandemic has been a major societal shift. In your notebook, record two products whose use you saw change during the pandemic (e.g., masks, yoga pants, roller skates). Forecasting for the coming year, what do you think might be modified in those products? In your notebook, make a note of these modifications, or find and create images illustrating them, and describe why you think the modifications could occur.

Trends are always referenced from what has happened or is happening within a culture. Knowledge of your own aesthetic response is a central point of reference. Understanding this response as it relates to your target user allows you to understand what has become familiar and accepted, both in the short term and long term within the cultural context.

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CHAPTER 3 - DEVELOPING A COLLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Marilyn Revell DeLong

A collective perspective is needed to understand how trends work within the marketplace. To capture the trend outlook involves becoming aware not only of one's personal aesthetic response and how one's likes and dislikes influence selections, but of the perspective of the user groups involved in a trend who may have different needs and desires. Understanding one's personal response is the first step in learning about trends. The next step is to develop a collective perspective that involves the user and the context of the time and place in which the trend is occurring.

Remember! Zeigeist is the spirit of the times.

The times in which we live change continuously. In this regard, the **zeitgeist**, a German term meaning "spirit of the time," is prevalent in thinking about trends. As a forecaster, you'll need to recognize what is considered an expression of the current time—what is perceived as new, up-to-date, and modern and attractive for yourself and other individuals. But this is not easy.

Though living at a particular time and in a particular place, an individual is often not fully aware of the shifts in societal directions that are trending as harbingers of change. It takes practice, and a large measure of curiosity and intuition, to become aware of this zeitgeist. To describe this zeitgeist, you need to be able to distinguish individual, collective, and universal perspectives.

Individual, Collective, and Universal Perspectives

Fashion is influenced by how we choose to design our **individual** appearances. But what an individual wears and how they choose to appear is ever changing because of the zeitgeist of the time. Today you may be wearing a particular ensemble with a particular scarf or tie to set it off; tomorrow, wearing the ensemble minus the scarf or tie but with the addition of a jacket and brightly colored shoes. The zeitgeist reflects the current mood and affects changes in what individuals consider up-to-date. This includes the products we select, the way we use them in combination, and when and how we discard what is perceived as out-of-date.

Individual selections can influence the spirit of the times and fashion. It is important to consider the individual who plays an active role in selecting product innovations: some people are influential in the way they accept products to attract special attention because they like to be first to appear in or own the latest

products. As such, they influence others because of their quick adoption of an innovation. Such individuals may be like chameleons, changing from one product to another. By contrast, others may have settled upon their own individual style; they are comfortable with a product or wearing the same style that varies little from year to year. They may not be a great influence on others, and may be oblivious to product innovations offered in the marketplace. We will learn more about these variations in how individuals directly or indirectly reference the collective experience that is fashion.

To be fashionable means recognizing the relation of your individual response to the **collective** response of the group or groups with which you currently associate. Relating significantly to a time and being able to say that something is "so current" or "so retro" illustrates reference to a collective response within a given societal group—or multiple reference groups, i.e., the people you work with, the group you exercise with, those who live in your city. Fashion becomes a back-and-forth negotiation that occurs between wearing what provides an individual identity and what still conforms to a collective audience.

This collective response was noted by Blumer (1969) in his early research on collective selection. Members of the apparel industry selecting for a target market from current designer collections gave evidence of the spirit of the times in making their selections. Though their target markets differed, their selections were surprisingly similar and mirrored the zeitgeist. Selecting wisely meant both recognizing the zeitgeist and understanding what would be accepted as a current look among individuals in their specific target market. Both the zeitgeist of the collective and the wants, needs, and desires of the individual were therefore recognized in their selections.

Realizing that fashion is about both an individual's identity and their conformity within a group, how do you assess the cohesiveness of a collective? A target market identified by age, lifestyle, or other demographics may be marked by specialized characteristics. Such a group may become a **style tribe**—a group within a culture whose members wear a recognizable and distinctive look. Ted Polhemus (1994), the anthropologist who coined the term, pointed out the need for individuals within a group to dress and appear alike. This collective response is a congregating force of style tribes. Sometimes the tribe is named because the identifying characteristics are so distinctive they gain recognition as a group different from the wider collective. The use of the term recognizes the decentralizing nature of fashion today. We select products based upon the zeitgeist, but also upon factors such as lifestyle and demographics (e.g., age and gender).

To observe and describe the zeitgeist involves cultural brailing—gaining an awareness of what is happening around you and then assessing its meaning. A first step is becoming aware of how others within your group look and act like a collective that is distinguishable from other groups. An individual's aesthetic response is not formed in a vacuum independent of others. To assess a trend, a person must be aware of similarities as well as differences among members of associated groups. This includes not only features of how we dress, but motivating needs and wants. A collective need based on function and comfort, for example, may be expressed in a number of ways that relate to the zeitgeist—the way we appear, but also, simultaneously, the cars we drive, the furniture we use, the houses we live in, and the type of entertainment we enjoy. All are part of the zeitgeist!

A **universal** perspective arises when many people across groups and cultures agree upon and adopt a similar innovation or style. Many factors of a global dimension can arise to increase such a universal response.

Traveling, for example, makes a person consider the types of clothing that might be acceptable to wear when visiting another country and culture. An example of a universal perspective might be a casual look involving blue jeans, a T-shirt, and a mobile phone. Even though these products reflect the zeitgeist of the West, they have become products of a universal response that function around the world as an expression of fitting in, of being recognized and accepted. As products are designed and manufactured globally, the market for them may be increasingly distributed and accepted worldwide.

The rise of global communication via the Internet has created the potential for an increase in universal responses that span a variety of cultures. The widespread influence of social media is a factor in this spread, and the global reach includes acceptance of distinguishable styles by subcultural groups. The "Emo" style of 2020, for example, has been influenced by style icon Billie Eilish and adopted mostly by younger age groups with some style characteristics of punk, such as heavy use of black and metal, wearing Converse shoes or combat boots, styling dyed hair with a side part and swept over one eye, and wearing dark eye liner and lipstick. Another example is "Anime," a style of Japanese animation, often with adaptations of comic characters with large and emotive eyes. Anime has spread beyond the culture of Japan where it originated, and has become an aesthetic response recognized as it distinguishes a subcultural group that has evolved into a universal perspective.

Reflecting upon your aesthetic response and sorting out what is individual, collective, and universal is useful in trend forecasting. Your ability to forecast change may depend upon whether you are looking to satisfy only your individual aesthetic response, the collective nature of a specific group, or a more global perspective.

Trend Challenge

Look over a current fashion magazine. Identify and paste into your notebook three products you're unfamiliar with. Use bullet points to describe them. Looking at the three together, what similarities do they share? How can you describe those similarities in terms of style trends? You might, for example, notice a new lipstick that features a shiny gold case and a bright, bold, and shiny-wet look. Or perhaps a natural look is trending in shades of nude, with matte textures. Look for similarities in the three products and translate those similarities to trends. Be sure to name the style. It okay to use the name the company has assigned to it.

Fashion and Style in Trends

Fashion involves both order and the change occurring in a society where social movement is possible. According to Entwistle (2001), fashion in one's dressing is a specific system for the production and organization of dress grounded both in time and location: "it is a system of dress found in societies where social mobility is possible, . . . and it is characterized by a logic of regular and systematic change" (p. 41). Kaiser (2013) confirms its collective as well as its evolving nature:

> ...fashion involves becoming collectively with others. Fashion materializes as bodies move through time and space. Time and space are both abstract objects and contexts: the process of deciphering and expressing a sense of whom we are (becoming) happens in tandem with deciphering and expressing when and where we are. (p. 1)

While related, fashion and style are not synonymous in meaning. In aesthetics, **style** is the distinctive pattern and characteristic expression that defines a product or an art form (Nystrom 1928, p. 3). Style is about those characteristics that define one product or combination of products, but style does not necessarily reflect acceptability or currency. It can thus be recognized as new, but also as historic or recently outdated. An individual may choose to dress according to an individual style, but not necessarily be in fashion. **Fashion**, in contrast, is defined as the prevailing style, with an emphasis on an accepted and recognizable pattern of expression. Fashion involves the zeitgeist, the expression of what is recognized and accepted as current and up-to-date at a particular time and place and as defined by a specific group of people.
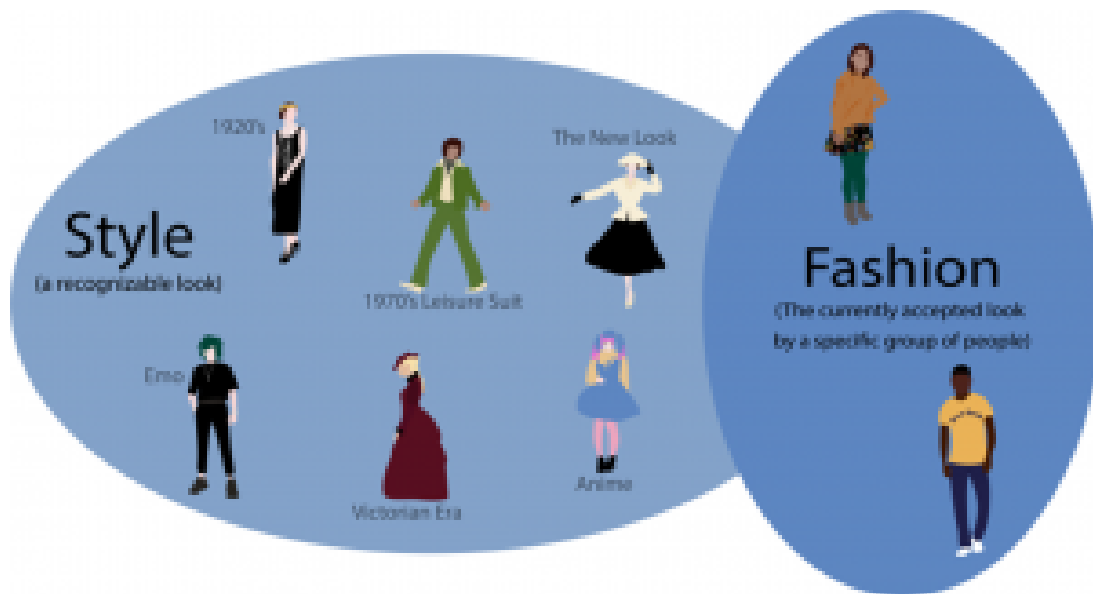
Fashion in Appearance

Fashion related to appearance is the way a group of people at a given time and cultural setting choose to look. Fashion in clothing, defined as the currently accepted style in the appearances of a group of people, evolves

and changes with time and cultural values. Being fashionable is thus about appearing current and up-to-date, which often means focusing on a myriad of details such as how clothing fits and moves with the body, how it is proportioned, and how it combines colors, textures, lines, and shapes into currently accepted product designs.

Being in fashion involves a balance between expressing one's individuality on one level and conforming to a group on the other. This tension and balancing act may be understood as a continuum between individuality and conformity. Today we label generations for when they were born and what happened historically to influence their cultural identity (e.g., the baby boomers, born 1946–64; Gen Z, born 1997–2012). In DeLong, et al.'s study (2018) comparing two generations in the same locality, the older females matured during a time when coordinated ensembles were popular, with clear divisions between formal and informal occasions. Conversely, the younger females grew up within a culture where boundaries between types of occasions were blurred.

The motives underlying how we appear can change during our lifetime. For example, in a study of baby boomers, they were asked how the motives underlying their choices of appearance had changed since high school. They responded that in high school they were more concerned with dressing individually, but were now more interested in dressing to conform with their group. They agreed that the desire to dress to express their individuality had waned. As they are now retiring, they wanted to appear a bit more like their friends.

Today there are a multiplicity of fashion sources that depend upon style tribes—groups that identify with each other by conforming in their appearance. These include punk, goth, and the Red Hat Ladies. Such groups have become important in creating the zeitgeist. And increasingly, this multiplicity of what we know as fashion is evident in social media, where people are free to explore many sources of style and fashion.

Our concept of fashion is formed from our instantaneous perceptual response to what we see, such as "I like it." This judgement may be an unconscious part of our experience, as described by Norman's three levels of visceral, behavioral, and reflective (2004). We rush to judgement (Level l) rather than ponder the reasons for our judgement (Level 3). Then, if our judgements are confirmed repeatedly, they develop into recognition of a pattern and habits of thought and behavior (Level 2). We recognize a necktie, for example, through its shape and its placement on the body, and we often see it being worn with a white shirt. This is especially true for those who frequently see this combination, confirming it as part of the professional appearance of adult men in certain occupations. And because we recognize this pattern, it becomes a construct of certainty—a code. To recognize and understand a trend, the trend forecaster needs to make conscious this unconscious coding. We can only do this by internalizing and reflecting upon what is so familiar that we take it for granted. Becoming aware of what is familiar as pattern or code is the first step in recognizing a new pattern that deviates from the familiar.

The limits of design lie first in the imagination and second in our readiness to accept change (Loschak, 2009). So if we can become aware of the basic construct, we can then recognize a change in the pattern or code. High-end designers constantly push boundaries and expect that, if we are to appreciate their work, we will first recognize the familiar construct or code and then see what has changed—the deviation from what is familiar.

Martin Margiela, for example, is an innovative and futuristic designer of the Belgian Antwerp Six. He is

recognized for always pushing the boundaries of our expectations about how clothing should look, so much so that he is sometimes referred to as a disruptive designer. From a rational perspective, we know that the body is symmetrical and that a jacket usually has two similar sleeves for the two arms. Margiela pushes the edges of that boundary, creating asymmetrical design that does not recognize or accommodate the two arms. Asymmetry as it is expected to relate to the symmetrical human form is reimagined. A trend forecaster recognizes and reflects upon this asymmetry as an abstraction that permeates the products we see and wear, even though it is modified to accommodate human movement.

Fashion is a non-linguistic sign system based upon such constructs and codes. We need to perceive and recognize how a sleeve is a sleeve and how it differs from a trouser leg. The specifics of clothing involve how parts combine and relate with the human body. For a design to be perceived as new requires that it differ from the basic code or construct. How would you respond to a sweater with five sleeves, for example? To perceive it as new, you would need to recognize the difference from the basic construct. To notice details that deviate from the familiar, you must first understand the familiar and not take it for granted; it must reach your awareness. Barthes (1990) describes fashion as a sign system that requires a language to communicate; fashion is a language that defines a collective imaginary.

Being fashionable in one's appearance is about continually changing that appearance to reflect the zeitgeist. "Fashion" means a style that is both distinguishable and accepted by some group of people, which may be a subculture or mainstream group. You could, for example, refer to the fashion of teenagers at a specific school and the way they identify with each other to look similar in their style of dressing. Or you could refer to the pattern in dressing, the style, considered fashionable in the city where you live.

Trend Challenge

This activity will help you develop your ability to see distinctive characteristics of appearance. As you go about your daily activities, take note of the dominant appearance choices made by different consumers or groups in different places. At the local Target store, perhaps many customers are dressed in black jeans with dyed black hair with pink and purple highlights. At Trader Joe's, in contrast, perhaps the prevailing look is bra-less T-shirts, wrinkled cargo pants, and a loose bun. Is there a name for these current trends? Identify three of these prevailing looks and find an image online that exemplifies each one. Call out at least three features in each that make up that look. Give a name to the look.

Style in Appearance

Styles are established and recognizable patterns of the overall expression created by one's appearance, and involve categories and combinations of shapes, lines, colors, surfaces, and silhouettes that become recognizable because they are repeated or strongly related to a specific time, group of people, or location. A term like "1970s retro" is a reference to past fashion in clothing that is recognized as involving specific interrelationships of lines, shapes, surfaces, colors, and silhouettes. Streamline Moderne, a style that emerged in architecture and design in the 1930s, is characterized by rounded edges and horizontal "speed lines" inspired by aerodynamics. This style continues to be referenced because of these expressive interrelationships.

Sometimes a pattern of relationships within a product category becomes an enduring style—a recognizable pattern or image that may be reintroduced from time to time with minor variations. The trench coat is such an example. The coat's design is memorable because of its smooth surfaces, tailored collar and lapels, front opening (often with a double row of buttons), belt, and khaki fabric. The trench coat flatters many body types for both men and women, and in the U.S. has been associated with detectives and private investigators. As a style, it has been worn throughout much of the 20th century, even though designers may change details to make it fashionable once again.

Examples of the Burberry Trench Coat
Photos Courtesy of Goldstein Museum of Design

c. 1975–85
#2010.031.040

c. 1980–89
#2015.013.009

c. 1980–89
2015.013.010

Styles can also be identified in terms of how they differ from other similar styles. In examining a blazer and suit jacket, for instance, we recognize the blazer as having a distinctive pattern of relationships—a tailored piece of outerwear fitted to the upper torso with long sleeves, a center front opening, tailored lapels and pockets, as well as other tailoring details. So far, the blazer could be considered synonymous with the style of the more formal suit jacket that accompanies a two-piece suit with matching trousers. But as fashion, the blazer is

considered less formal and is defined as a casual accent by the way it is worn—often with blue jeans, T-shirt, or open-collared shirt. We recognize the style of the blazer as a distinctive pattern of features that provides a characteristic expressive effect in the wearing, one that is more casual than that of a suit jacket with matching trousers worn with a buttoned-up shirt and tie.

Be aware of the language used to describe a style. This includes the commonly understood language that traverses groups, as well as the nuanced language of those "in the know." The term "style" is used in a variety of ways that shorthand its meaning. "This person has style," for instance, means that the individual consistently looks and acts in a distinctive and characteristic manner. Here, the term is used primarily as a reference to details that may or may not be recognized by the receiver of this information. In another instance, "style" identifies an expressive pattern of shapes and surfaces as the basis to categorize and give meaning to what is viewed, even though the details are not provided. Examples might include "The style of this ensemble is defined by the 1940s," referencing a group of characteristic and defining features of 1940s dress, or "The style of the designer portrays a soft and feminine look." In these instances, the language is shorthand and does not provide the details needed to understand the meaning. In this case, the trend forecaster must find ways to more clearly describe and communicate a style.

Trend Challenge

Think of products whose terminology gives reference to several of its features, but is shorthand for the meaning and make it clear only for those "in the know." For example, what is implied by the terms "blazer," "onesie," "crop top," and "Bermuda shorts"? Is the term clear in communicating how the product looks? Is there room for confusion? What details may be needed to further describe the product itself, and describe how it would be used and by whom?

A single word may be used to communicate the complexity of details that make up a style or "look." Such a look may be understood by those "in the know" about the details. A "Chanel" suit, for example, is named for the French designer of the early 20th century who dressed women in casual clothing that contrasted dramatically with previous styles. In the U.S., a Chanel suit probably references her comeback in 1954, when her signature look for women became a two-piece pencil skirt with a jacket, often with a geometric surface pattern such as checks, and with coordinating braid around the neckline and jacket front. The suit pictured includes three pieces, with jacket, skirt, and a coordinating blouse to be worn along with chunky costume jewelry—the signature Chanel suit style of 1955. (Photo courtesy of Goldstein Museum of Design Catalog #1986.034.001). Recognizing these details is necessary for understanding the references made to Chanel in 2021, in a comparison with the work of Virginie Viard, Chanel's creative director.

Style as an expressive effect can apply to a single category of product form or permeate several categories—e.g., clothing, painting, and interiors. Alessi, for example, is an Italian kitchenware company, recognized today by its playful design features embedded in functionality and its use of bold colors. Art Nouveau, on the other hand, is recognized across product categories as an art movement that flourished from about 1890–1910 throughout the U.S. and Europe and that is defined by a characteristic pattern of expression. It is defined by natural and organic shapes that result in elegant designs with long, sinuous, lines. The style was an attempt to modernize many forms of design, and it has been employed most often in architecture, interior design, jewelry and glass design, and illustration. The photos below, from the Goldstein Museum of Design, show design inspired by Art Nouveau. Art Nouveau is a consistent and recognizable style that references the early 20th century. As a past style its characteristics are still distinctive, but the style is not considered in fashion today.

Examples of Art Nouveau Style c. 1900-1925
Photos Courtesy: Goldstein Museum of Design

Art Nouveau textile c. 1900-2020
Catalog # 1997.069.601
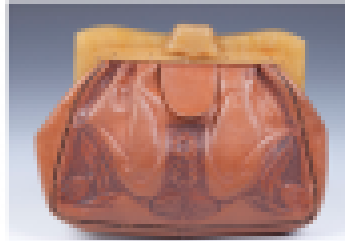
Leather purse with plastic closure
Catalog # 1960.129.027

Silver Compact: Art Nouveau
Catalog # 1984.049.002

Trend Challenge

In a previous Trend Challenge, we identified characteristic appearance choices among consumers and small groups that we encounter. Let's take those elements into a broader context, working backwards to identify how those characteristics emerged. First, select a small group recognized for its characteristic style:

1. Create a customer profile: What do they have in common? How old are they? Where do they work? What do they do for fun?
2. Describe the style as clearly as you can. Do you recognize where they shop?

Fashion Is Both Familiar and New

Wearing what is "in fashion" is a way to appear accepted by an identifiable societal group or subculture. This might involve the products selected to be worn, how they are worn on the body, or the different ways of combining them on the body to achieve a particular look. Every group, or target market, will select from

what they accept as fashion in the marketplace and from their own ingenuity in putting together a look. The acceptable look may be more evolution than revolution.

In the introduction of any new look, it is important to recognize what is familiar and what is new. It's a bit like the adage that you must understand the ground rules of a style before you can break those rules. Acknowledging how the rules are broken means you have taken the first step towards understanding the concept.

Consumers may differ in the amount of familiar and new they tolerate. You must understand the tension that may result from wanting some measure of both the familiar and the new. Rarely does a new look appear that is completely new, demanding a total replacement. What is up-to-date is usually a combination of the familiar and the new. You may, for example, see a style that is familiar but with a few noticeable new details—a color or texture or a different relation to the body, such as a more fitted or loose look or cutouts in the fabric that expose the body in new ways.

A disruption of a fashion trend is rarely all new unless there is a jolt that causes a complete change in direction. This has occurred a few times in our history, when a war or pandemic has limited the normal process of acquisition and evolutionary change in what is accepted as up-to-date. In such a case, prior limitations and pent-up demand can influence a more urgent need for a new look following the disruption.

<u>Fashion and Boredom</u>

You may ask why humans need to update the way they look, according to the zeitgeist? Laver (1973) suggests that, with time, response to what the eye sees may vary from taking delight with the new to eventual boredom. A style that has immediately passed from fashion may thus be perceived as out-of-date, might even be considered disgusting and ugly. Years later, however, the same or a similar style may be perceived as attractive and pleasurable once again, because enough time has passed for it to be perceived as new. This cycle means the style appears new to a different generation, 15–20 years later.

This need for a refresh may be why we have forecasters who focus on evolutionary details such as color or texture. Color forecasters analyze the color wheel to develop a color or colors of the year. Textile forecasters focus on the qualities of the fabric they recommend, such as a fluid drape or an animal print. This type of forecasting helps the apparel industry focus and coordinate what is offered and provide users with a small but possibly needed and understandable refresh.

Fashion and Trend Forecasting

While trend forecasting is about predicting the future, Faith Popcorn defines the future as starting now. As we discussed earlier, she has coined the term "cultural brailing" to describe learning about the bumps in the culture through a combination of astute observation and intuition. This process is about using your senses: sight, taste, hearing. It could be a matter, for example, of walking into a retail store and noticing the lighting and music, feeling the different textures, and fully immersing yourself into whatever the environment offers. Brailing is difficult and all-consuming, something you must do wherever you are and no matter who is with you. You

must ask the questions and be aware of the answers: What change am I aware of, where did it originate, and why is it emerging at this time? Then, what products could be associated with the trend, how long will it last, and what groups will accept it?

You will need to be open to new ideas, curious, and aware of what is happening around you, observing changes in user behaviors and thinking critically about relationships occurring in society. You will need to find ways to expose yourself to new experiences, observe those taking part in unfamiliar events and considering how they might influence the zeitgeist. Above all, you will need to develop your curiosity enough to reflect upon the data you collect and, ultimately, the meaning of it all.

You will also need the ability to reflect on current societal trends, how they relate to the meaning of products, and their relationship with the body and the environment. There are assumptions that we all live with and need to question. In the 20th century, for example, there was an assumption that gender could be determined by the clothing you wore. Categories of clothing in the marketplace characterized femaleness and maleness. In the 21st century, those categories are blurring. Men are wearing colors and shapes that previously were considered female, and vice versa. And emerging categories, such as androgynous and transgender, defy the assumption that genders should be distinguished by their appearances. The pandemic changed a different assumption. Before, those working in the public sphere may have thought they must wear something different each day, and must accept wearing products that were uncomfortable. With many people working at home and in private, the pandemic changed this assumption, and comfort took priority over variety and discomfort. We're now faced with what this means to the products offered in the marketplace.

Remember that fashion may refer to many aspects of our lifestyle, including up-to-date furnishings, cars, interiors, restaurants, and food venues, and even how we think and act and what we do in our leisure time. Quilting, for example, is a leisure activity that has come back into fashion. The trend forecaster who recognizes this current interest may understand the trend as being influenced by societal needs and relationships—what Faith Popcorn calls "cocooning," referring to the cozy, comfortable things people do because of "the need to protect oneself from the harsh, unpredictable realities of the outside world" (Faith Popcorn's Brain Reserve, 2020).

Trend Challenge

As you think of fashion more broadly, consider a venue that you haven't considered fashionable before, like kitchen remodels or food served at a restaurant. Describe the current practice, the length of time it has been a current practice, and perhaps an influence on that practice.

As we look to discover trends that involve a change in the direction of a society and of groups within a society, it is useful to consider fashion more broadly. Cultural brailing is about being constantly aware of these directional changes and of how they may influence the collective marketplace.

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CHAPTER 4 - TREND INDUSTRY AND FORECASTING

Marilyn Revell DeLong

Trend forecasting today is about alignment of the industry with the user's needs and desires. The forecaster must observe and interpret the broad directions of change within the culture and the influence of these trends on their user. Forecasting involves research and interpretation of what is acceptable and changing, or what could change, in the products offered, and finding ways to communicate those observed trends to the targeted market.

Trend Forecasting as Practice

Trend forecasting as a practice has existed for just over a century. Originating in the U.S. and France, the industry began with people tracking and forecasting colors and materials. The first color forecasts were created in 1915 to help the industry focus on what was likely to appeal to users, thus limiting markdowns and waste in the industry. These first forecasts, however, essentially dictated what colors and textiles were produced, which gave users limited choices.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the focus of trend forecasts shifted from narrowing user choices to presenting a broadened trend report to inspire new directions and design ideas for products. Seasonal trend reports became tactile and colorful, and were meant to respond to the needs of the user (Holland & Jones, 2017). Forecasters who rose to importance included Li Edelkoort (Trend Union), Nelly Rodi of Paris, David Wolfe of New York (Doneger Group), and Faith Popcorn (BrainReserve). In 1998, the online service called the Worth Global Style Network (WGSN) broadened the scope of the industry once again. Today, the expanded forecast industry includes multiple lifestyle categories and more user-centered trends that examine the culture of entertainment, food technology, and product design.

The Structure of the Fashion System

The trend forecasting industry is part of the complex structure of the fashion system. Payne (2021) simplifies the system by dividing its structure into three essential and inter-related contexts: industry, culture, and change. In this course, we focus primarily on change, but it is crucial to understand how these contexts function together.

1. **The context of industry** includes designers, manufacturers, and everyone involved in the designed object and its material production and distribution. Broadly speaking, the industry is a means to shape and to make, using labor and technology to transform raw materials into clothing and bring that clothing to people. Trend forecasters can become involved in industry messaging with such current issues as sustainability, biodegradable products, and use of deadstock.

Offerings in the marketplace can be aimed at cultural groups in a variety of ways, such as the ways in which categories are used to market products. Style categories can differ according to size (e.g., plus size, or big and tall); to styles that span many size ranges (e.g., athleisure, formal, or professional clothing); or to subcultural groups such as campers who spend vacations outdoors, or rappers who are inclined to focus on rhythm and performance. As outdated categories fade in importance and meaning, new ones appear, such as the category called "androgynous." How these marketing categories come about involves the context of culture.

2. **The context of culture** involves symbolic meanings in fashioning the self within a community with customs of time and place, and includes the symbolic attributes of clothing and appearance in making meaning within one's culture. such practices are in continual motion as cultures and individuals ascribe and re-ascribe meanings to what we wear.

Meaning and expectations related to how a woman looks differ, for example, are rooted in the generation into which the woman was born. Entwistle (2000) notes that each generation is born into a certain set of moral codes and patterns of dressing that are influential for life. Twigg (2013) defines "age ordering" as the systematic patterning of cultural expression according to an ordered and hierarchically arranged concept of age that operates across the life course. Being correctly dressed for your generation thus involves conforming to rules of dressing and conventions of one's upbringing experiences within a historical and cultural context.

Patterns occur in the structured expectations related to age, and norms can arise both for what is expected and what is considered appropriate. Twigg (2013) believes that age has come to operate as a diffusional structure within the fashion system (p. 270). She outlines expected patterns of dressing for women age 55 and older, which include suggestions for age-related styling as a general covering up and toning down of one's sexuality. Twigg believes that the media's message is that older people no longer need to or even want to dress distinctively. Stereotypes for the 55+ woman include the "mother of the bride" look, an outfit consisting of an elaborate dress, coat or jacket, and hat, or the "sweet old lady" pattern of dressing characterized by floral patterns, frills, high necks, and long sleeves.

In contrast, people such as Iris Apfel (2018), a leader in the fight against ageism, resist the notion that age requires an expected pattern of dressing. Apfel believes in dressing for a personal style and for who you are, and is unapologetic about her cause. She focuses on combining clothing, jewelry, and eyewear in an unexpected and unusual head-to-toe appearance. As she delights in creating her individual style, Apfel has gained attention for

defying cultural stereotypes for the 55+ woman. Her style was featured in a 2005 exhibition at the [Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#).

Culture's interaction with the industry may take on meaning in several ways. Sometimes the industry designs and produces a category of styles because of their emergence within the culture. Punk style, for example, became popular as a category of dressing in the late 20th century, signaling resistance to cultural norms. The industry recognized the category after the punk subculture had created the meaning by uniquely combining existing products, such as Doc Marten boots. These products were readily available for purchase or could be easily modified by this emerging subcultural group. The industry introduced the category not to suggest how punks should look in their dressing styles; but because meaning had already been created by the subculture.

Above all, then, the context of culture is the systematic encryption, transmission, and interpretation of social meaning. Fashion is the vehicle that transports cultural information to its destination—the consumer and user (Payne 2021).

3. **The context of change** includes the ways in which styles, practices, or ideas are introduced, gain popularity, and then fade over time. The continual striving for a new direction in what is considered modern or up-to-date involves change and impermanence. Along with clothing and appearances, this impermanence occurs in many other areas, such as furniture, food, architecture, television programming, child raising, and lifestyles.

The general direction in which something is changing is a trend. Products and appearances are always changing, but the rate of change varies; the trend may spread and diffuse through a community quickly, or do so slowly over several years. In Western cultures, fast-fashion products have been changing ever more quickly (Payne 2021).

Look to memes to spread images and ideas!

A product that changes quickly is often spread via memes, defined as a particular and catchy idea or image that spreads through a community. A meme may be spread within a subgroup or entire community, and usually involves something that attracts attention easily, like a catchy musical tune or slogan. In clothing, a meme is easily recognized and usually visibly apparent, such as the "cold shoulder," a rounded shape cut out at the shoulder of women's and then children's dresses and tops. This meme has since spread to include similar cutouts over body parts.

Change in dressing practices happen in all cultures and historic periods. The traditional dress worn in Korea, "hanbok," though appearing to the outsider as a recognizable but somewhat static form, changes in a recognizable way for the Korean insider every 3–5 years (DeLong & Geum, 2004). The amount and length of time for such change to take place can vary, but changes in dressing practice must occur within a person's lifetime to be perceived (Roach 1980); otherwise, there is no trend because no change is recognized.

Trend Challenge

Go to the website "Faith Popcorn of Brain Reserve" and select one prediction of a trend direction. Consider how that direction could be or is being translated into products.

OR

Looking at WWD or WGSN from the last week, pick one featured product category that covers new directions. Cite the article and copy the contents into your notebook. Below, in list form, summarize the predicted changes. In an adjacent list, note how you see those changes affecting

your own apparel choices. As a forecaster, what recommendations would you make to push the trend forward for that product category?

Interactions within the Trend Industry

Trend forecasting involves the need to consider interactions that work together to limit the risk involved in challenging the status quo of the user. You must be attuned to change, which can occur in any part of the system. In the 21st century, for example, lifestyle is evolving in the U.S. We no longer live in spatially closed communities where most who live there know everyone in the community. We are increasingly mobile, and it is not unusual to move several times within a lifetime. Neighborhoods are increasingly diverse, and the individual feels more autonomy—freer to express beliefs and values with others who are not spatially close. This autonomy means that individuals can have the freedom to design how they want to appear and how they want to live as significant aspects of well-being.

Vinken (2005) believes that, in the 21st century, designers are no longer in charge of our unified appearance in the products they design. We increasingly look to the designer for product ideas, but not for head-to-toe ensembles. The increase in the sale of separates means the user oversees the product mix-and-match for a total effect. Manzini (2019) believes that, in this fluid world, we all make design choices, which potentially means that everybody is a designer. But not everyone is interested in spending the time to design a look, and some appreciate the suggestions of an expert. Companies such as Stitch Fix, for instance, have created a business out of narrowing the choices users must make. Nordstrom and other companies are offering access to a personal shopper and mini videos to suggest how to coordinate an ensemble with their products.

Lantz (2016) observes that the speed at which change occurs in the industry makes it difficult to know what is considered up-to-date. Wide or narrow silhouettes, bold or muted colors—all can be found, and any centralized story continues to blur. These multiple versions of what is considered up-to-date can be confusing, and consumers/users may decide to ignore forecasts and explore more personal styles through creatively combining what is available in the marketplace with what is already in their wardrobe. This can involve multiple possible relationships for the individual within the current milieu, such as the physical coloring, body shape, and size of the user. Body surfaces themselves expand creative possibilities, with quick changes allowing greater freedom in self-expression in terms of body modification—e.g., body tattoos arranged effectively and artistically to accompany an ensemble of clothing.

Ideas are understood through basic language that cycles through the fashion system—language that is understood because it is repetitive and familiar. Style terminology includes language basics: garments come in predetermined shapes and forms that are understood in terms of how they function on the body for comfort, mobility, and so on. Styles can be reinterpreted and push the limits, but remain unpopular if mobility is

impeded too much. Jumpsuits for females, though popping up frequently on designer catwalks, fall into this category because they are less functional for women's anatomy. Trousers that extend beyond the foot to pool on the floor would not be expected to be adopted broadly, as walking would be difficult.

Product design includes coordination of colors, lines, shapes, and proportions, all existing as part of the material object itself. We often think about the design process as involving all that goes into creation of this physical product. But as we think about the fashion system and design, we should also consider elements that, while immaterial and not part of the physical product, still greatly influence fashion. The industry must find ways to use the culture and what it offers in the process of design. These immaterial aspects of the design process include consideration of stories, such as trend and brand stories (Payne 2021).

The trend story is an expression of fashion as change, and interpretation is often necessary for the user. Trend stories are important to the trend forecast. They shape diffuse ideas about societal mood and preferences into a focused narrative that can be summed up in a few words and evocative images related to the consumer in the target market. And they place place a narrative and purpose around a cultural phenomenon that is changing, and seek to predict fashion's near-term future (Payne 2021). A trend story will succeed, however, only if it captures what the user is thinking and feeling and motivates that user toward a change in purchase behavior.

Forecasters seek to predict future trends in taste by analyzing the existing direction of trends in design, lifestyle, and consumer behavior, and extrapolating these into future-looking stories. Forecasting predicts upcoming seasonal colors, textiles and other materials, and garment styles. As such, trend forecasting is generative—design stories are generated that are compatible and integral to a range of fashion processes. They are useful because they focus the information and data to be received by the user. But they are also reactive, in that forecasts react to shifts in taste, the zeitgeist, and data gathered from algorithms worldwide.

Stories can originate on and trickle up from the street, or trickle down from the catwalk. They are assembled by futurists, forecasters, and trend spotters. Futurists examine overarching trends and communicate through scenarios that help us imagine what the future could be like. Trend forecasters create trend books, presentations, and trade shows meant for communication with designers and manufacturers. Services such as WGSN create trend reports for many products such as clothing, textiles, and

homewares; WGSN forecasts are available for a subscription fee and communicated through their website. Large companies often hire their own trend forecaster to help interpret and focus their product for their user. And trend spotters are an emerging group gaining influence by communicating through social media.

Trend forecasting and its resulting trend stories aim to supply consumers with the products they desire, playing an important part as an expression of change. They also aim "to reduce the risk of unsold stock for companies" (Payne 2021, p.131).

The brand story is how a fashion brand differentiates its product offering from other similar products. With so many similar products in the marketplace, the brand story is carefully constructed. The intention is to present the consumer with a means of expressing personal preferences, individual tastes, or prevailing style trends. A brand story that emphasizes classic shapes, durability, and functionality will be slower to change, while a brand story for fast fashion will emphasize those variations that are changing the product.

Brand stories must be factored into the industry's communication with the consumer/user, and used in the marketplace to tie together a company's different products. Brand stories are designed to keep the user emotionally connected to the brand as a whole rather than to a single product, and answer the question of how the brand differs from its competitors. This difference could relate to its consumer/ user, to design differences and their origins, or to an association with subcultural groups. Ralph Lauren, for example, has designed the USA identity for Olympic athletes for years. This identity is then diffused to other cultural groups as a part of his brand.

Trend Challenge

Trend Challenge: Select a product brand that you are familiar with. What is the brand story? Why are you attracted to this brand? How does your attraction relate to the brand story?

OR

Log on to WGSN's Fashion Feed, at https://www-wgsn-com.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/fashion (UMN only). Click on one of the brands to open their website. Note the brand name and website in your notebook. Collect five pictures from their current line and store them in the notebook. Write a press release describing their brand story, OR write the commentary for their runway show. What design elements are used to capture their story? Use the terminology presented in this chapter.

Interaction Summarized

Though complex, the fashion system can be better understood when its three contexts are examined separately: the industry, the culture, and fashion as change. Together, these facets of the system form an analytic framework, and it is necessary to understand the interconnection of all three. For our purposes in trend forecasting, our focus is primarily on change and how it intertwines with culture and industry.

As a forecaster, you need to learn how to think outside of the box. Users have needs, and those needs can translate to changes in fashion trends or style tropes. Increasingly, the assumptions that accompany design must be questioned. For example, does the design of fake pockets for an adult, slightly overweight woman who wants to look slim over the hip carry over to the design of clothing for children?

An interesting news story illustrates the interconnection of industry within the fashion system and the influence of one user. A 7-year-old recognized the power of her persuasive voice when she learned how to write a letter. She wrote to Old Navy, requesting that the retailer create jeans with real pockets (Trent 2021):

> Dear Old Navy. I do not like that the front pockets of the girls' jeans are fake. I want front pockets because I want to put my hands in them. I also would like to put things in them. Would you consider making girls jeans with front pockets that are not fake. Thank you for reading my request.

One trend direction in the fashion industry involves listening to the young consumer's voice, expressing appreciation for it, and acting upon it. Old Navy did just that; they responded by sending this 7-year-old four pairs of jeans and jean shorts with real pockets, along with a letter saying "Thank you so much for taking the time to write us about pockets on girl's jeans. The Old Navy kids product team appreciate your information. It's great feedback for us as we develop new product."

History is often taught with attention to changes in appearance, which usually happen over the span of a decade. Changes in dressing practices relate to replacing an old product with a new one over time. How swiftly this occurs is important to note. Athletic shoes or sneakers, for instance, have been a pervasive product category in Western culture, worn for casual or sporting functions. Their style can be long-term, involving classics, or short-term, involving fads. Some athletic shoes are static in appearance because they are valued as a classic staple. Consider how long the sneaker has been popular, especially the Converse athletic shoe, which continues to be valued by certain groups of teenagers and has been resuscitated by the current generation; this style of footwear has not gone out of fashion. Change can also happen quickly, however, like in the case of Vans or custom painted versions.

Change can happen at different speeds within one product category. And while a product may be a constant in terms of a market category, its details may change frequently. A desirable sneaker may be altered in its details of lacing, color, or shape. The current shoe may be brightly colored or stark white, and often is further distinguished by its sole, lacings or other closures, and logos.

Fashion change can range from systematic—significantly altering the product, to incidental—not changing the product much at all (Payne 2021). The hi-lo hemline popular several years ago is an example of a systematic

change; it would have been difficult for the consumer who desired this irregular hemline to create it from what was already in a wardrobe of short skirts. A change in the way baseball caps are worn—with the bill sideways, perhaps, or to the back—is an example of an incidental change. This change may not alter the product, but the user's perception of that product may be refreshed. All such changes are important for the trend forecaster to note.

Trend Forecaster Characteristics

The trend forecaster needs to think outside the box.

By now you realize that forecasting trends is not a simple process, and that engaging in trend forecasting means recognizing what it takes to become successful. Characteristics of a successful trend researcher include the following (Dragt, 2017 p.25):

Curious: You are inquisitive and always wonder about the "why" of things happening around you. You ask a lot of questions.

Holistic: You look at the bigger picture and how it fits the details. You can zoom in and zoom out during your research. You consider that the whole is more than the sum of parts and don't get stuck in details.

Interdisciplinary: You can think and work across boundaries, combining knowledge from different fields and domains.

Analytic: You examine signs of change in a careful and objective way.

Relational: You seek to identify the relationship of data to causes and key factors behind shifts in direction, and arrange and organize information into categories.

Non-judgmental: You are unbiased about opinions and behaviors different from your own. You think "that's interesting," rather than "that's not right!"

Creative: You see connections between snippets of information that at first seem unrelated, and can interrelate these snippets into imaginative trend stories.

Persistent: You are not satisfied until you dive deep into the information and process it.

Visual: You have a flair for the visual and you don't hesitate to bring visual aids and pictures into your findings.

Storyteller: You can translate and communicate your trend story for your audience by combining words and visuals in understandable language to create a coherent and inspiring storyline.

These characteristics can be strengthened through practice.

Trend Challenge

Which characteristics of a trend researcher do you possess? Which do you need to develop? Given your strengths and opportunities for further development, how will you undertake your journey toward becoming a trend forecaster? Brainstorm about the above qualities and about the activities you do currently or that you could do in the future to develop these qualities.

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Note: Illustrations in this chapter are by Rachel Bodine.

CHAPTER 5 - TREND DRIVERS AND MEGA TRENDS: LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Gozde Goncu Berk

A trend forecaster uses both rigorous research methods and intuition to mine potential emerging trends. A trend is a change in the societal direction over time. **Trend drivers** are the series of underlying causes and forces that shift new developments in a particular direction. They are what influence and trigger the change. By studying the trend drivers in multiple local and global contexts, a trend forecaster can consider how they will influence lifestyles and ultimately the offering of products and services in the marketplace.

Trend drivers are not mutually exclusive; all are interwoven with complex cause-and-effect relationships. The coalescence of trend drivers in common directions in global contexts form the long-term **megatrends**, called "macro trends" in other resources. Megatrends, in turn, affect large numbers of industries and markets. They can be thought of as a macro umbrella that governs smaller, short-term trends in different markets (Figure 1).
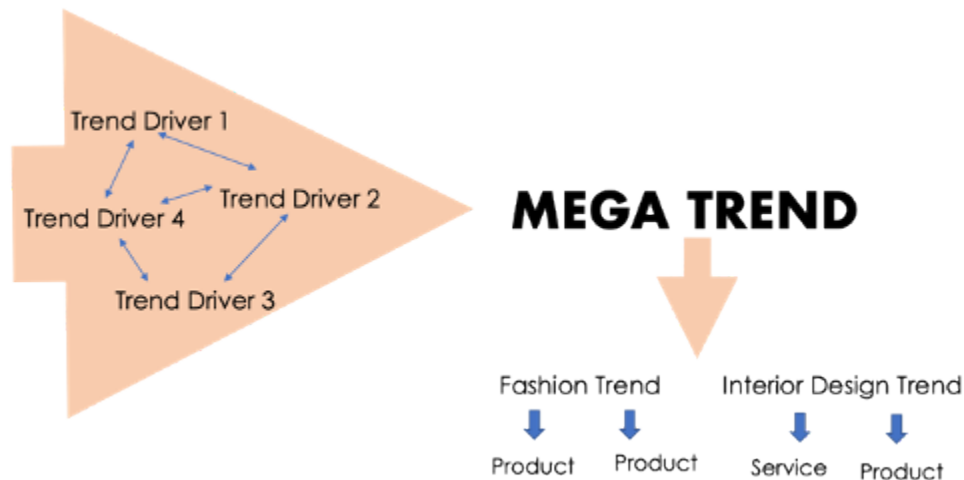

Figure 1: Relationship among trend drivers, megatrends, and trends.

Understanding megatrends, and interpreting how they will create short-term trends in specific industries and markets, requires a thorough assessment of the trend drivers embedded in local and global contexts. In predicting future long-term megatrends and analyzing today's short-term trends, one needs a systematic perspective to analyze, interpret, and understand the trend drivers. In this chapter, we discuss six trend driver categories that inform trend research and forecasting: 1) socio-cultural, 2) economic and politic, 3) science and technology, 4) environment, 5) social psychology, 6) unexpected events.

Mega Trends and Their Influence

Forecasters and futurists who focus on change are a good source of information on the megatrends setting the direction for change. In the late 1980s, for example, Faith Popcorn, a globally renowned futurist and trend forecaster, predicted a megatrend that she called "cocooning," a direction of change towards "the need to protect oneself from the harsh, unpredictable realities of the outside world." It continues as an influential megatrend today (Popcorn, 2020).

This megatrend continues to be driven by trend drivers embedded in local and global contexts. The most significant—the Covid-19 pandemic, which in 2020 made stay-at-home life the new normal—falls under **unexpected events**. From a **socio-cultural** point of view, we might look at the overstimulation and exhaustion caused by technology in our daily home and work lives, and the desire for safety, comfort, and privacy. From the perspective of **global economics and politics**, we can examine the rise of nationalism globally, with developments like Brexit (the British exit from the European Union), or the trade tariffs between the U.S. and China, referring to the idea of cocooning or turning inwards at the global scale. Developments in **science and technology** also drive this megatrend, as cable TV and the internet bring entertainment into homes, mobile applications allow users to order food on demand, and social media platforms provide new ways of socializing and working from home. **Environmental influences** such as air pollution, food safety, and unsustainable farming practices affect how individuals seek comfort and security in their everyday lives through, for example, organic backyard/roof farming and beekeeping. And p**sychological influences** driving this megatrend might include anxiety related to busy lives and overstimulation by technology.

We can continue to reflect on the influences of the cocooning megatrend in specific industries and what they mean for designers. In the fashion industry, comfortable clothing and sportswear have been on the rise as people spend more time in their homes. The pandemic also increased the need for protective clothing. Face masks became a commodity, with different styles, colors, and cuts sold in fashion retail stores. Networked smart-home technologies have become mainstream, including everything from security systems to vacuum robots. And specialized home exercise equipment, cooking instruments, and new online-work/study applications started to fill the marketplace.

Interpreting Trend Drivers

Discovering trend drivers and interpreting them are not easy tasks, and require constant and conscious research efforts. Andrew and Gaia Grant of *The Innovation Race* discuss the psychological block of "concept blindness," which causes us to view and interpret the world in the way we expect to see and therefore miss the details. It is crucial that a trend forecaster overcome the concept blindness our brains are hardwired to develop, and avoid stereotyping and jumping to conclusions.

Amy Webb (2016), a technology futurist, created a system for detecting early patterns so as to interpret trend

drivers. She defines a six-step process to monitor what's happening in the present and determine how it relates to the future:

1. **Study the fringe.** This could include the use of the different research methods described in the "Toolkit for Research" to harness information from the fringes of a society.

2. **Uncover hidden patterns** by categorizing information using the lens of contradictions, inflections, practices, hacks, extremes, and rarities (or what the author calls the CIPHER). *Contradictions* refer to oxymorons—things that fail or succeed simultaneously even though they should be progressing in opposite directions. *Inflections* are sudden changes, such as unanticipated events, that cause innovation to accelerate. *Practices* to look for are those that threaten the established orthodoxy. *Hacks* involve the unintended use or redesign of something that make it become more useful. *Extremes* refer to research efforts into areas no one ever attempted before. Finally, *rarities* are very unusual movements, objects, or practices that turn into a solution for a fundamental user need.

3. **Ask questions to determine whether a pattern really is a trend.** Challenge potential assumptions, and create counter arguments by asking questions such as: What does the pattern mean? How does it impact society? How does it impact industries? Work to validate the findings.

4. **Calculate the timing** of the likely impact of the trend driver (ETA) and determine what the trend could be in the near term (1–5 year), mid-range (5–10 years), long-range (10–20 years), longer range (20–30 years), or even the distant future (more than 30 years).

5. **Develop potential scenarios and accompanying strategies** related to the impact of the trend driver at the expected ETA.

6. **Pressure test the future.** Revisit the scenarios created in the previous stage, and challenge them with questions such as "what if the scenario and strategy taken in response to a trend driver is the wrong one?"*pressure testing the future* or in other words revisiting the scenarios created in the previous stage and challenging them with questions such as what if the scenario and strategy taken in response to a trend driver is the wrong one.

Sociocultural Trend Drivers

At the sociocultural level, trend divers relate to the combination of social and cultural factors affecting different local and global human populations. While variations exist between different populations based on differences in geographical, political, economic, or religious contexts, major trend drivers at the sociocultural level do not trigger entirely disparate results. In today's very connected global environment, with freely flowing information, it is possible to detect trend drivers in one geography and then observe similar shifts and changes in multiple countries.

Through close readings of the projections of trend forecasters and futurists, we determined that the changing demographics of the world's population is an important trend driver at the socio-cultural level. It is well-known that the world population is getting older as a result of higher life expectancy and low fertility rates. For the first time in history, the number of people older than 64 has surpassed the number of children under 5. What does this major shift indicate for humanity, for a specific country, or for a specific industry?

Parallel to the aging of the population, other demographic changes are taking place. More people, for example, are living in urban cities. In the 1950s, only 30% of the world's population lived in a city. By 2050, this number will exceed 70% (Liang, 2018). Gen Z'ers (those born after 1996) are becoming the majority in the workforce. Digital natives who have never experienced life without the internet, members of this generation will be making the decisions and policies that affect health and well-being of the older generations.

Demographic changes like these could indicate that people today are likely to have fewer children, and less likely to live with and care for older family members. We may see increased costs, such as additional taxes on members of the younger generation to help sustain elderly care. In the short term, this trend driver translates into product and technology trends such as location trackers and fall detection devices, and functional products for daily life needs like easy-don/doff clothing. In the long term, we may expect to see major innovations in robotics and artificial intelligence for smart independent living for the elderly.

Trend Challenge

As a team, pick a megatrend from Faith Popcorn's Trend Bank (faithpopcorn.com/trendbank) and describe it briefly. Identify sociocultural trend drivers influencing formation of this megatrend, citing at least three sources (e.g., books, journal articles, reports, statistics). Discuss the short- and long-term potential product trends relating to this megatrend in a field of design of your choice (e.g., fashion, product, interior, architecture). You can also choose multiple design fields. Turn in your individual response to the trend challenge you discussed as a team.

Economic and Political Trend Drivers

Economic and political shifts can also drive trends. Western economic dominance is currently shifting towards a global multipolar system, with rising economies in countries like China and India. Since no trend driver exists in a vacuum, the demographic changes we discussed above relate directly to economic and political trend

driver. While China also faces the challenges of an aging population, it still holds the advantage of being one of the largest populations, with a huge market for any product. For instance, China has more than 900 million internet users, making it an extremely profitable market for any internet-related product (Liang, 2018). In addition, the increase in the quality of education—with China ranking first in PISA test rankings for math, science, and reading in 2018 (Liang, 2018)—and the full attention of parents and grandparents on the single child (due to China's long-lasting one-child policy), is leading to a larger talent pool, fueling the country's economic development and its switch from low-cost manufacturing capabilities to capabilities in innovation.

What does this economic trend driver indicate to a trend forecaster and to a designer? Will Chinese users become more satisfied with local sources? Will international companies rethink their approaches and speed up local innovation efforts? We see more and more western companies developing and marketing products for the Chinese market. The increased spending power of families and their desire to provide the best for their children have fueled a child-themed trend, making China a very attractive market for products ranging from toys to luxury children's wear.

Political environments and government policies can influence trends. There are many examples of governing powers regulating clothing fashions through sumptuary laws or wars, driving disruptive material and product innovations. In the 1930s, for example, U.S. access to silk was in jeopardy as a result of political tensions with Japan. This led to the invention of nylon, which offered a large variety of potential uses, from clothing and toothbrushes to military products. While nylon was not intended for use in stockings—a market worth an estimated $70 million for Japan silk producers—nylon stockings were increasingly popular as hemlines continued to rise.

Trend Challenge

Interview five people in your network to identify an emerging economic trend driver related to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Discuss the trend driver and related potential emerging trends regarding a specific field of design of your choice (e.g., fashion, product, interior, architecture).

Science and Technology as Trend Drivers

Because advances in science and technology go hand-in-hand in shaping the future, they are important trend

drivers. In recent decades, the internet has been one of the most significant technological paradigm shifts, changing lives at all levels—from the way we communicate, shop, and travel to the ways in which we take care of our health. Digital technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and material science are often described as the grand scheme trend drivers by futurists. Supported by the availability of big data and the possibilities of machine learning, AI is expected to become ever more important for the fashion industry, from design to retailing. Europe-based online fashion retailer Zalando (zalando.com), for example, harnesses machine learning in its "Algorithmic Fashion Companion," which identifies ensemble recommendations based on users' personal preferences. And developments in material technology have led to smart textiles capable of sensing vital signs. While the range of smart clothing and wearable technology products is limited as of 2020, we can expect different forms of wearable or body-embedded (e.g., smart tattoos) technology, especially in applications related to healthcare and well-being.

Trend Challenge

Augmented reality (AR) is the overlaying of digital content and information onto the physical world in real time. IKEA currently uses AR technology in its IKEA Place app, which allows users to select products and see how they will look, in scale, anywhere in their house. The popular Pokemon Go game allows players to catch Pokemons by looking through their phones at the real world, and Google offers views of some search results in 3D and AR.

Discuss possible future application scenarios of this technological trend driver in three different industries of your choice (e.g., healthcare, fashion, military, education) using online research. Cite your sources.

Environmental Trend Drivers

Environmental changes are a significant trend driver. Upcycling old clothing, for example, is a DIY user trend arising in response to the harmful impacts of fashion on the environment. It has also been adopted by designers and in curriculums of educational institutions of fashion as an alternative design method. Companies like Patagonia offer repair services for their products, while H&M and The North Face provide clothing recycling.

In today's context, global warming and natural resource scarcity are two central issues shaping industry and people's lives. Let's discuss some examples of the current implications and potential future impacts of these environmental trend drivers for design.

The fashion industry relies heavily on water, from the production of fibers to the care of clothing. Freshwater reserves are diminishing, in part because of growing demand for the raw materials for textiles such as cotton. In addition, man-made synthetic textiles have a huge impact on water resources, with plastic microfibers released from clothes every time we wash them. Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic, less than 5 mm in length. Microfibers are a type of microplastic released when we wash synthetic clothing made from plastic such as polyester and acrylic. These microplastics pollute the oceans and end up in the food chain of different species. In response, household appliance companies have started developing microplastic filters for washing machines, and campaigners in the U.K. are asking the government to require that all new washing machines are fitted with these filters.

The recent rise of biodesign practices, and new research into bio materials, are addressing the environmental impact of fashion. Biodesign incorporates biological systems such as yeast or bacteria, or bioplastics made from chitosan or other biodegradable materials technologies, into the creation of products. Bolt Threads, for example, located in California, defines itself as a material solutions company. It offers numerous biomaterial technology such as Mylo, a leather alternative grown from mycelium, the branching underground structure of mushrooms, and Microsilk, a fiber made of fermented proteins inspired by the proteins spun by spiders. New biomaterials and products are also being used in design fields beyond fashion. Researchers at Technical University Delft (NL) and at the company Basilisk Concrete have developed self-healing concrete using bacteria mixed into the mortar; the bacteria multiply and produce calcium carbonate, filling the cracks when it comes to contact with oxygen and water. With applications of biodesign replicating in different industries in response to the growing environmental crisis, there are many possibilities for detecting future trends.

Trend Challenge

Trend forecasting requires both intuition and research. As a team, develop an educated and informed discussion about how environmental trend drivers can affect bio-design in different product categories.

Unexpected Events as Trend Drivers

While it is possible to research past and current patterns to project as future trends, unexpected events—such as natural disasters, pandemics, terrorist attacks, or wars—can also create immediate pattern changes that become permanent in many aspects of life. Since 2019, we have been experiencing how a global pandemic can drastically disrupt well-established patterns in our daily lives, and create new trends. Everything from travel and retailing to work and education changed in ways that were beyond imagination. Protective face coverings became a part of daily regular attire. Face masks of different styles quickly became fashionable merchandise, available from brands such as GAP and Nike. Spending preferences shifted towards home entertainment, outdoor activities, and gear that allow socially distanced entertainment. Especially for the fashion industry, traditional shopping malls and fashion retail stores were challenged by online shopping as well as by shifts in consumption patterns in clothing. Traditional elements of education and work have been replaced by online options, leading to questioning the status quo. From the perspective of a trend forecaster, these changes offer many possibilities for to identify major trends in different industries during and after the global pandemic.

Trend Challenge

Research online the impacts of Covid-19 on different design industries, and project these findings to possible trend scenarios after the pandemic. Turn in a one-paragraph discussion, citing your resources.

Socio-Psychological Trend Drivers

Social psychology is about cognition, emotions, and behaviors in social contexts; all of these can be drivers for new major trends. Consider the overwhelming amount of information to which individuals are exposed. In the entire period between the beginning of civilization and 2003, humans created five exabytes of data; currently, we create the same amount of data every two days (Bosker, 2013). The proliferation of choices in products and services, the always-on digital experiences provided by smart devices and wearables, and increasing expectations of work productivity are increasing the amount of stress for people already short on time. Research evidence shows, for example, that choice overload— from milk varieties in a grocery store to mobile phones to clothing

options—is creating mental clutter. The pressure that accompanies information and product overload is a good example of a psychological trend driver that points to megatrends towards decluttering, streamlining, and simplifying lives.

Trend Challenge

Using the example of the proliferation of choices as a psychological trend driver, pick two different demographics and discuss how this trend driver is leading to different challenges and opportunities for new products and services in a design field of your choice.

To predict future trends, it is important to thoroughly analyze potential drivers, including counter-trends and unexpected results. A counter-trend is a trend that is in response or opposition to another trend. According to Pelc (1999), counter-trends in the embryonic state—reactive tendencies oriented in the direction opposite to the well-known and fully identified trends—can lead to future major trends. Localism, for instance, can be regarded as the counter-trend of well-established globalism.

Let's revisit one of the examples of scientific and technological trend drivers. What would be the consequences of wearables that gather health-related data? Would such technological developments create strong counter-trends? For instance, parallel to the scientific and technological developments in healthcare and well-being, data show that spending also skyrocketed in alternative healthcare that uses different forms of art, massage, or homeopathy.

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CHAPTER 6 - TREND LIFECYCLES AND ADOPTER CATEGORIES

Gozde Goncu Berk

Future trends manifest themselves in the behaviors, needs, and wants of today's niche user, and in novel product, service, and process innovations that break existing patterns. To identify a trend at its emergence, it is vital to detect these pattern changes early, and to differentiate a trend's lifecycle stages. Just as trend forecasting requires systematic research and analysis, and is not a sudden spark of insight, trends themselves do not appear out of the blue. Trends diffuse within a society over time based on their own characteristics and those of the people who adopt the products, ideas, and services that represent those trends.

Trends do not take place in a vacuum; they are embedded in the context. A trend forecaster needs to know where to look for signs to capture an emerging trend in its infancy. Trends are driven by large forces, and manifest themselves through certain types of behaviors, new styles, products, or services. As noted earlier, for example, it is expected that population aging will be a central megatrend of the future, driven by falling fertility rates and increased life expectancy. A trend forecaster trying to discover specific trends that fall under this umbrella megatrend might narrow their scope to places like Japan, with its large aging population, to track down innovators and early adopters of functional, personalized, or individualized products and services for older individuals. On the other hand, policies related to healthcare, infrastructure, housing, culture, and family dynamics all affect the lifestyle and trend adoption rate of aging baby boomers.

Trend forecasters use their understanding of the trend adoption and trend lifecycle processes to narrow down and target research efforts with a structured plan for where and how to look for early signs of new trends. The "Diffusion of Innovations" theory, developed by Everett Rogers in 1962, addresses how and why new ideas diffuse and get adopted in a society. While originating in communications studies, the theory is often used in other fields, including fashion and design, to understand the spread of trends.

Trend Adoption Process

As discussed earlier, trends encompass many emerging user behaviors, needs and wants, and novel products and services. Faith Popcorn, for example, describes a trend she calls "Eve-volution," referring to the rise of women in the culture and their impact on businesses. Many products and services that relate to women cluster around the Eve-volution trend. SuperShe Island, for instance, is a female-owned, private island resort exclusively for women that offers motivational talks and activities such as yoga and meditation (see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SuperShe_Island). We'll use the term **trend adoption** to refer to adoption of products, services, or user behaviors clustered under a specific trend.

According to Rogers (2003), an individual's decision to adopt something new is a process that occurs over time, in five stages: 1) knowledge, 2) persuasion, 3) decision, 4) implementation, and 5) confirmation. **Knowledge** occurs when a potential adopter learns about the existence of the new idea and becomes aware of how to use it. With **persuasion**, the individual forms a positive or negative opinion towards the new idea based on its perceived attributes, such as its advantages; its compatibility with the individual's needs and wants; its level of complexity, trialability, and observability; and information gained from the evaluation by peers. **Decision** happens when the individual makes a choice to adopt or reject the idea based on the persuasion stage. In **implementation**, the new idea is put into use until it loses its distinctive characteristics and is no longer identified as new. **Confirmation** happens when reinforcement is needed about a decision to adopt or reject the new idea after implementation. How early or late an individual goes through this adoption process, as well as its speed, are related to the individual's personal characteristics and to attributes of the new trend.

Other authors have adopted similar models to describe how trends are adopted within the fashion field. Kim et al. (2011) introduced a five-step fashion trend adoption process, including 1) awareness, 2), interest, 3) evaluation, 4), trial, and 5) adoption. With **awareness**, an individual becomes aware of a trend for the first time. **Interest** is the process of gathering more information about the trend based on piqued curiosity. In the **trial** stage, the user tries and tests the new trend to see if it meets their expectations. Finally, in the **adoption** stage, the user fully adopts the trend. In contrast to Roger's model, the trend adoption model does not include the post-adoption stages that can illustrate the point in time at which the new trend begins to wind down.

Innovation Adoption (Rogers,2 003)	Trend Adoption (Kim et. al., 2011)
Knowledge	Awareness
	Interest
Persuasion	Evaluation
	Trial
Decision	Adoption
Implementation	
Confirmation	

Table 1: Models that compare stages of innovation and fashion trend adoption as depicted in the literature.

Other authors define fashion trends as cyclical patterns that reoccur over time. According to Easey (2009),

the fashion cycle starts with the introduction of a new style, continues with growth—where the style spreads in a population, gains popularity, reaches maturity, and is accepted as a major trend—and then loses popularity in the decline phase. Rousso (2012) defines the fashion trends cycle in five stages: introduction, rise, culmination, decline, and obsolescence. The fifth stage, obsolescence, refers to the end of the fashion cycle for a trend.

Trend Challenge

Think about a new product, service, or lifestyle change you recently adopted or tried and rejected. Consider the following questions, and note your answers in 1–2 paragraphs for each question:

1. How did you first learn about it? (It could happen simultaneously through multiple channels)
2. What sparked your interest or persuaded you to try it?
3. How did you evaluate whether it fits your expectations?
4. When and how did you fully adopt or reject it?
5. If you adopted the product, service, or lifestyle change, how would you define its novelty and how well it currently meets your expectations?

Rogers (2003) also describes five perceived attributes that influence rate of adoption of a new product or service:

Relative advantage is the perception of the improved benefit of adopting a new product, service, or trend in comparison to the one it supersedes. The greater a new trend's relative advantage, the faster its adoption. A smart watch is an example of a product associated with the health consciousness megatrend. The relative advantage it offers compared to a traditional watch is improved wellbeing and health through real-time monitoring of vital signs such as heart rate, sleep, or calories burned.

Compatibility refers to how a new product or service fits with the experiences, needs, values, and existing habits or products of an individual. If the new idea is compatible with these factors, its rate of adoption is much faster. A new smart watch, for instance, will be adopted fairly quickly by a person who owns a smart phone and has experience with the operating system, and less quickly by someone with no experience using a smart communication device. Individuals who need to track their health or athletic performance will also be more likely to adopt a smart watch.

Complexity is the degree to which a new product is perceived as difficult to understand and use. Unlike relative advantage and compatibility, complexity is negatively correlated with the rate of adoption. The more

a new idea is easy to understand and implement, or a product is intuitive and easy to use, the faster is its adoption. Compared to a traditional watch, a smart watch is harder to operate and maintain; it requires navigating a user interface, synchronizing the watch with other devices, and charging its battery. On the other hand, a smart watch with an intuitive user interface or one compatible with the operating system of an already-owned smart phone is likely to be adopted more quickly than a more complicated or entirely new one.

Trialability is the ease of testing a new trend before a potential adopter adopts and implements it. Being able to try out the new idea reduces the risk for adopters and increases the rate of adoption. Marketers use trialability to increase the adoption of a new product. Smart watch retailers, for example, offer possibilities of interaction by displaying the watches in user-friendly retail settings and organizing try-on appointments and demonstrations.

Observability is how visible the product is to others. New products that are used publicly, like a smart watch, spread much faster than products used in private. Social media has been a highly effective tool for increasing the observability of new ideas. Marketers utilize popular social media accounts to increase the observability of their new offerings.

The speed at which a trend adoption process takes place, and whether a new product is adopted or rejected, are influenced by these five attributes. While the relative advantage and compatibility of fashion products such as clothing and accessories may be less obvious, product trends have very high observability and trialability and low complexity. A fashion trend in 2021, for example, was pairing chunky boots with dresses, skirts, and ankle-length trousers. The relative advantage of following the trend was being able to identify with the latest fashions and to showcase a fashionable identity; most users likely had prior experience wearing boots and and the trend was compatible with the need for comfortable footwear; trying this trend is not a complex task and anyone can do so at a store before making a purchase; and the observability of the trend was very high publicly as well as in online realms.

Trend Challenge

Think back to the product, service, or lifestyle change you analyzed in the previous trend challenge activity, and write 1-2 paragraphs in answer to each of the following questions:

1. What were the main relative advantages it provided?
2. How would you evaluate its compatibility with your previous experiences, needs, and values and your other existing habits?

3. How would you discuss its complexity? How easy is it to use or understand?
4. How would you rate its trialability and why?
5. How observable was the trend? How did you learn about it?

Adopter Categories

New ideas are not accepted all at once. Some people are more apt to try the new trends at their emergence, while others need more time or don't ever adopt. This process of adoption, or the diffusion of the new idea in a society, takes place over time following an S-shaped curve (Figure 1). Only a few individuals initially adopt the new trend, but over time and if it becomes popular, more and more individuals adopt it and the adoption rate increases (Goncu-Berk, 2015).
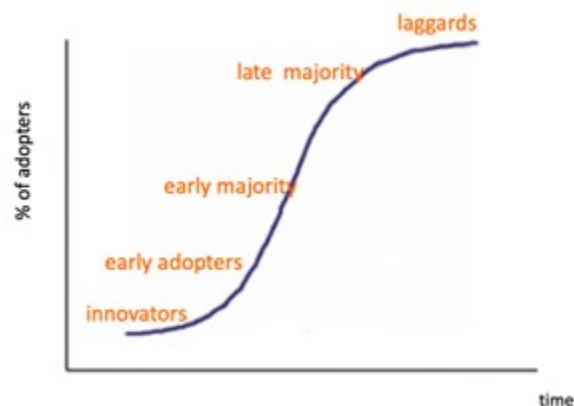

Figure 1. S-shaped adoption process curve.

Rogers (2003) introduced "adopter categories" based on the pace at which individuals react to something new, such as using or purchasing a new product. The distribution of the percentage of adopters over time forms a bell-shaped curve (Figure 2), divided into the five adopter categories of (1) innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority, and (5) laggards, based on the degree to which an individual is relatively early in adopting new ideas compared to other members within a system. Another way to examine adoption over time is the relative percentage of adopters of a new trend. In this case, 2.5% of the population are innovators, 13.5% early adopters, 34% early majority, 34% later majority, and 16% laggards.
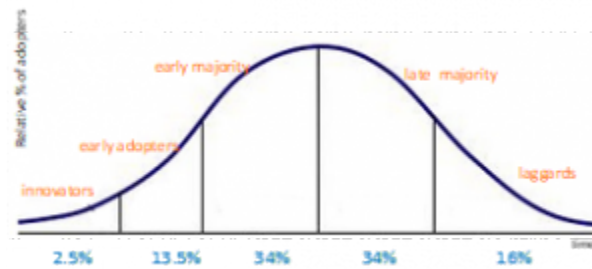
Figure 2. Distribution of the percentage of
adopters over time, forming a bell-shaped curve.

In the adoption process, the tipping point refers to the critical mass or threshold at which an emerging trend becomes widespread and highly visible (Figure 3); it's the sweet spot of diffusion from early adopters to early majority. Trend researchers and forecasters study innovators and early adopters to discover an emerging trend and evaluate whether it will become mainstream—whether it will pass the tipping point. Trend forecasters are also interested in what is called the flat line or the laggard's leap, the point at which the trend is no longer novel and is at the end of its lifecycle (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The tipping point and the Laggard's
Leap (or flat-line) in adoption process.

Innovators are the first group of people a trend forecaster needs to track to detect a trend in its infancy. A recent innovation related to clothing and textiles is the application of 3D printing technology for the design and manufacture of garments. Several new ventures retail 3D printed clothing, and haute couture designers are experimenting with the technology. Julia Daviy (juliadaviy.com), for example, offers made-to-order 3D printed items such as the mini skirt. Innovators who would be first to adopt a skirt like this would need to be knowledgeable about 3D printing technology and its application in the fashion industry in order to seek out such a product, and would also need the financial means to acquire it.
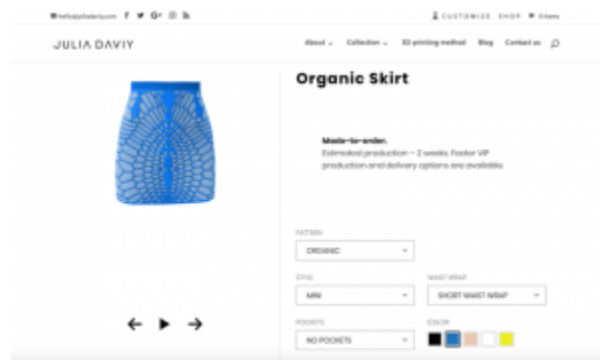
Figure 4. A 3D printed skirt with organic patterns. (Retrieved from: https://juliadaviy.com/after-forever-collection)

Early adopters follow innovators' implementation and adoption of the new idea. They operate as opinion leaders in the diffusion process, and other potential adopters look to early adopters for information and advice about the new trend. Early adopters are highly interconnected and visible; their opinion leadership can therefore influence the mass opinion. Early adopters have a critical role in triggering what is known as the "critical mass"—the point at which adoption of a new idea by enough early adopters leads to adoption by a much larger number. Trend forecasters study early adopters to understand the spread and impact of a trend, since they mark the tipping point from a minor trend to a major, highly visible, and influential one (Raymond, 2010). Especially with the spread of social media, the sharing of pictures, videos, or recommendations by early adopters with many followers is a highly effective way of influencing the opinion of the masses.

Early majority and **late majority** adopters are two subsequent groups which make up 68% of the population that adopts an innovation, and represent individuals who are more deliberate and skeptical in their decisions (Goncu-Berk, 2015). Early majority adopters are also socially active, but they are not opinion leaders. They are deliberate in adopting a new trend and stick with it the longest, while late majority adopters are the quickest to drop a trend. Trend forecasters track early majority adopters to assess profitability of a trend, and later majority adopters to understand when a trend is at a downturn (Raymond, 2010).

Laggards are the last, slowest, and most resistant to adopt new ideas in Roger's Diffusion of Innovations model (2003). They are defined as the most traditional and reluctant to change. Trend forecasters track this group to verify that a trend has reached its limits and that new related ideas are already emerging and diffusing in the first adopter categories. The point at which a trend reaches the laggard is defined as the "laggard's leap" or "the flat line," denoting no potential increase in the number of adopters after this stage.

Vejlgaard (2008) defines adopter categories in a similar way, using the "Diamond Shape Trend Model." This model includes eight adopter categories, with the widest, middle section representing most of the population, and the two narrow ends the adopter categories with the smallest number individuals. Trend adoption travels from one adopter category to the next, from the top to the bottom. In this model, the more visible and observable a trend is, the faster it flows. For example, it takes one to two years for cosmetic trends to travel from trend setters to mainstreamers, two to three years for clothing and accessories, and five to seven years

for interior design. The speed of the diffusion is highly dependent on contextual factors such as geographic location, political environment, and socio-cultural and religious values of the population.

At the top of Vejlgaard's trend adoption model are trend creators, who represent a small group of risk-taking inventors, designers, or entrepreneurs who create and launch the new ideas. Trend setters, the first to accept and try a new product, are usually young, wealthy, and style-conscious individuals, celebrities, or social media users. They are influential in promoting the new idea or the trend, and in making it visible to the trend followers, who need the assurance of others in accepting the new. Early mainstreamers mark the diffusion of the trend to the majority, while mainstreamers adopt a new trend when everybody else has done so. Late mainstreamers adopt the trend a few seasons later, and conservatives prefer to stick with fewer older styles. Finally, anti-innovators refuse any new change or trend.
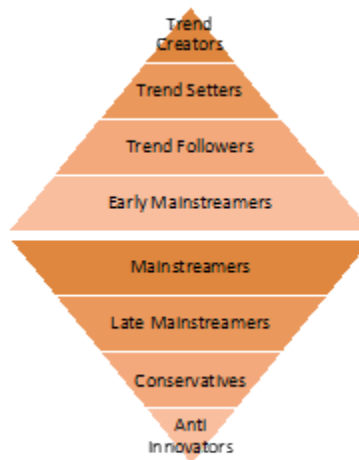

Figure 5. Vejlgaard's (2008) Attributes of an innovation and rate of adoption.

Trend Challenge

1. Write a paragraph discussing similarities and differences between Roger's and Vejlgaard's adoption categories and how they relate to one another.
2. Browse through trendhunter.com and identify a trend you are interested in. Write a paragraph briefly defining the trend, and discussing who would be the innovators and early adopters of that specific trend. What are their likely demographic characteristics?

Fashion Adoption Process

Fashion is one of the most visible expressions of trends, reflecting changes in the collective aesthetic and behavior through multiple mediums. In this book we define fashion not only as clothing and accessories, but as personal expression and a channel for identity. Fashion adoption decisions can be made based on factors other than a product's functional and practical relative advantage. Individuals don't adopt high heels, for instance, because they offer a better walking experience; they do so because they like the message the shoes convey—of being up-to-date or in fashion.

Fashion products can become a fad or a classic, depending on the duration of their effect. "Fad" and "classic" are often used in fashion-forecasting literature (Figure 6). A fad is a short-paced, popular collective behavior that fades rapidly once its initial novelty is gone. Recent fads include videogames, the Ice Bucket Challenge (raising awareness for ALS), or posting pictures of what a person might look like as they age. Small sunglasses, transparent accessories, and the hipster beard are fashion-related fads that did not have long life spans. Fads are easily recognized and adopted as short-term ephemeral trends. A classic, on the other hand, is a more durable product with a longer lifespan and a lasting significance. Leather jackets, the little black dress, Hunter rainboots, and Duluth Pack bags are examples of classic fashion products. Classics are often priced higher than fads, but not always.
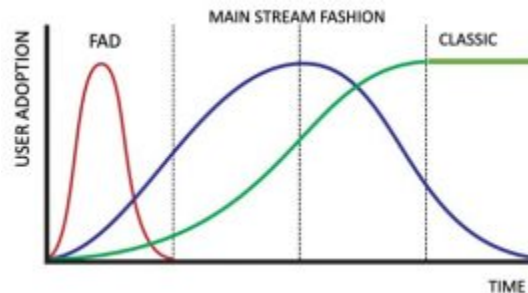

Figure 6. Fad, mainstream and classic fashion.

Trend Challenge

Write a paragraph describing a fad and a classic product. Discuss the features of each, their adoption timeframe, and who their adopters might be.

How and why fashions change has been studied by many in various disciplines over the years. Related theories each depend upon a recognizable change in direction of the trend, and change is depicted in various ways such as the attributes of a look, the origin of the style, and its distribution and adoption.

Pendulum Swing: Pendulum swing theory defines fashion trends as periodic movement between two opposite points of exaggeration in a style. These swings may occur over decades, or over a fashion season. When a trend can no longer proceed in one direction, it starts moving the other way. Such swings are defined and delimited as they relate to the body. When the heel height of a shoe is extreme, for example, it can become a stilt.

Brannon (2010) suggests that an idealized version of the pendulum would pause at a compromise point and then swing in the opposite direction. Once waistlines reach a level where they cannot go any higher, for instance, it would be expected that they would lower quickly to call attention to the change. When the fit of close-to-the-body leggings is extreme, the opposite movement would be toward wide-legged trousers as another extreme, before possibly settling somewhere in the middle as a less extreme and accepted fashion.

Trickle Down: The oldest theory of fashion distribution is described by Veblen (1899), an economist. In this theory, a social class is distinguished based on conspicuous consumption and leisure. Fashion originates within the upper social class and trickles down to the lower classes through imitation, as the upper class recreates new forms of fashion to affirm their status in the society. Similarly, Simmel (1904) defines fashion change from the perspective of social distinction and integration, with the lower class trying to obtain the status of the elite by imitating their fashion, and the upper class subsequently creating new innovations and obsolescence to maintain the demarcation. While the trickle-down theory can be related to the flow of some trends from haute couture to fast fashion or from celebrities to the majority, the flow of trends based on social hierarchy may no longer be as relevant as it once was. With the advent and rapid spread of social media, anyone can create trend-related content and influence others.

Trickle Across: The trickle-across theory claims that new styles diffuse horizontally among similar social groups and communities within a short timeframe (King, 1963; Robinson, 1975; Blumer, 1969). New styles emerge from a process of collective selection, in which collective tastes are formed by many people. Collective taste functions as a selector for the acceptance or rejection of ideas, and as a formative agent for innovation. In the 21st century, mass production combined with mass communication makes new styles available simultaneously to all socioeconomic classes. Again, social media may become influential in defining groups who adhere to certain styles and, through their promotion and acceptance, define those styles as fashionable.

Trickle Up: A relatively newest theory of fashion flow by Field (1970) suggests that new styles emerge

from the street, a subculture, or lower-status groups, and are then adopted by higher-status groups or the mainstream. Sproles' (1979) subculture leadership theory also defines fashion trends in an upward direction from subcultures to the mainstream. Styles that emerge from lower socioeconomic groups are usually generated by adolescents and young adults who belong to subcultures. Age replaces social status as the variable that conveys prestige to the fashion innovator. Punk fashion, for example, with roots in the British youth subculture, has been disseminated and commercialized by designers, led by Vivienne Westwood, a prominent London designer of the 20th century. Today, fashion companies and trend-spotters pay close attention to street styles to detect emerging trends that have potential for mainstream acceptance.

Trend Challenge

Using online research, find a product that illustrates the trickle-up theory of fashion, and one that illustrates the trickle-down theory. Write a paragraph discussing each product's adoption timeframe (relating back to the "diffusion of innovations" curve) and their potential innovators, early adopters, and main-streamers.

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CHAPTER 7 - THE TREND RESEARCH TOOLKIT

Gozde Goncu Berk

Forecasting trends starts with a thorough assessment of society's long-term direction and the implications across multiple industries. A common direction in several factors—emerging socio-cultural, economic, political, environmental, and socio-psychological trend drivers; unexpected events; and developments in science and technology—indicates megatrends that affect multiple industries. Once such a megatrend is identified, the next step is to focus on its meaning for users in the context of a specific industry, and to determine its applications in competition and in industry-specific shows and publications. The final step is to interpret and synthesize this data into new product attributes such as function, style, color, materials, and textures for future product design and development.

To research and interpret future trends, forecasters need a fusion of objective and subjective skills. Objective and analytical skills are required for systematic data sourcing, data analysis, and interpretation. More subjective and artistic skills and characteristics, such as awareness and intuition, help forecasters sense newly emerging directions and make predictions about their future implications. Subjective skills do not exist at birth or appear suddenly, but are built over time through experiences such as methodological research and interaction with the constant information flow from networks. Forecasting trends thus requires rational research, a well-established network, and intuition to predict where, when, and why new things happen.

This chapter introduces methods of conducting research to discover trend drivers and megatrends and to interpret their effect on a specific industry so as to guide design decisions. It focuses on **desk research** and building an online trend network to ensure and up-to-date, constant flow of information, as well as on formal methods of conducting **field research** to gather original data about the specifics of a trend for different user groups and geographical locations.

Desk Research

The work of forecasting trends starts with desk research, where forecasters use online and offline platforms to scan and review emerging shifts in economics, politics, science and technology, arts, entertainment, and new ideas across industries, attempting to capture how trend drivers coalesce and to identify emerging megatrends. Desk research is essential in identifying potential innovators and early adopters of an emerging trend, and in defining the general target user population, to whom, during the field research stage, the forecaster will reach out to gather in-depth understanding of needs and motivations related to the specific emerging trends.

Trend forecasters also use desk research to identify experts and professionals—academic researchers, futurists, trendsetters, and many others—with specialist knowledge about a component of a detected emerging trend, who can validate the information and insights they develop.

Desk research is a scanning phase, an ongoing, continuous process in which forecasters constantly look for "the new" across many different sources—ranging from digital platforms such as websites (including online magazines, newspapers, company sites, and industry-specific sites) and social media to TV programs, radio shows, industry-specific expos, fashion shows, art and music festivals, and global street styles and fashions. Although there are many online tools to help you research and store ideas and inspirations about future trends, it is still important to include traditional ways of conducting this research. Following news from physical newspapers and magazines, reading books, and following influential TV shows and radio shows, are still effective in understanding the spirit of times. As trend forecasters employ online and offline resources to detect and track changes in the way people live, the following questions help build insight (Raymond, 2010).

- **Who:** Who started the trend? Who are its innovators and potential early adopters?
- **What:** What would you name the trend?
- **Where:** Where is the physical or virtual space in which the trend emerges?
- **Why:** Why is the trend emerging now?
- **When:** When was the trend first noted?

It's very useful to have a physical trend notebook for documenting your research findings and ideas. You may not be online when you have an idea or when you see or read something interesting. Use a robust notebook and keep it with you at all times to sketch ideas, take notes, make diagrams, and attach images and materials. Trend notebooks do not have rules set in stone; they're completely personal, like a personal diary of the new things you have detected.

Building a Trend Information Network

A tremendous amount of existing research is available on the internet to guide the trend forecasting process. Some is paid for, while some is freely available. When we consider the number of online daily newspapers and magazines, blogs, social media platforms, and websites dedicated to sharing new ideas, the amount of readily available data can be overwhelming. The first step it is to establish a library of favored information sources and build a personal online **trend information network**, a hub which constantly harnesses data from multiple resources, and in which you can store, record, and access material. This network can help you scan new ideas, products, services, and cultural shifts on a regular basis. To manage this daily information flow you can use an online bookmarking services like Google Bookmarks (google.com/bookmarks), where you can

create a personal rack of your favorite blogs and websites, or a more focused tool such as pearltrees.com, a visual curation tool that allows users to organize, explore, and share any URL they find online.

Trends do not take place independently or exclusively in a single industry. All industries respond to major cultural shifts and to the zeitgeist. A strong trend shows signs of existence across multiple industries (e.g., architecture, interior design, product design, food, entertainment, and cosmetics). It is vital, therefore, not to to limit yourself to the fashion industry or build a trend information network composed only of similar interest groups. People who share similar interests generally know similar things, so the more diverse your trend information network the greater the diversity of ideas you can reach. Below are examples of online resources you can use to start your personal trend information network.

1. Collaborative Websites That Scan New Trends Globally

Most of today's trend-spotting websites benefit from crowdsourcing—obtaining ideas and content from a large online community. Often these communities are global, with members helping to spot new and hot ideas and happenings in their localities. Instead of relying on guru trendsetters, these websites build a collaborative hive where thousands of people around the world share these new concepts. Their information is usually reviewed by an editorial team and then published in a blog format, often as free daily, weekly or monthly newsletters. Resources you can monitor include—but are not limited to—the following:

springwise.com publishes information on new business ideas, technologies, and products from a wide range of industries, with free daily and weekly newsletters.

trendwatching.com publishes free monthly trend briefings addressing megatrends, with product and business examples from a variety of industries around the world. The website offers free tools—"consumer trend canvas" and "consumer trend radar"—that can be used to analyze any detected trend in depth.

trendhunter.com crowdsources new ideas about fashion, technology, design, business, and culture, publishing yearly trend reports specific to each industry. The website allows users to filter trends for each industry; lists top-20 trends of the day, week, and month; and provides interviews with influential professionals.

jwtintelligence.com publishes trend research and analysis across industries and geographies as well as through in-depth yearly trend reports.

PSFK.com is a content network that leverages its broad community and research methodology to create inspiring editorials, videos, and events for readers.

NOTCOT Inc is a network of design sites: notcot.com visually displays editorial ideas and products in fashion, design, technology, home décor, and food and drink; notcot.org displays ideas submitted by trend spotters; and notcouture.com focuses solely on the latest fashion and beauty trends.

Cassandra Daily, at trendcentral.com, is a free daily email newsletter and website featuring lifestyle, fashion, entertainment and technology trends and social happenings of the day. It uses the research and insights of the global trendsetter network The Intelligence Group.

CoolBusinessIdeas.com, based in Singapore, shares editorial and informer/trend spotter ideas on emerging trends and new innovations at global and local scales. It covers a wide range of topics from fashion and design to music, automobiles, retailing, and health and beauty, and offers a free weekly newsletter.

2. Websites and Online Magazines

The number of websites available to trend forecasters is almost endless, and can change based on the forecaster's specific focus. The list below provides general resources that report on new products, services, fashions, and technologies.

coolhunting.com covers innovations in design, technology, style, culture, food, and and travel in a categorized format, along with weekly videos and interviews.

davidreport.com is an online magazine and blog that explores everything from art, architecture, culture, design, and fashion to food, innovation, music, sustainability, and travel.

trendtablet.com is a free social media platform designed and curated by Lidewij Edelkoort, on which you can see examples of her recent works for clients.

trendland.com is a highly visual online magazine covering new ideas in fashion, design, lifestyle, music, art, and architecture.

refinery29.com is an independent fashion and style website in the U.S., covering everything from shopping and beauty to wellness and celebrities.

designboom.com is a digital magazine for architecture and design culture.

futurism.com is a website that covers future of science and technology.

mocoloco.com is a web magazine dedicated to modern contemporary design and architecture.

thedieline.com is a creative platform for packaging design and sustainability through innovation and design.

design-milk.com focuses on interior design, architecture, modern furniture, and home decor.

fastcompany.com is a business site with a focus on innovation in technology, leadership, and design.

3. Trend Forecasting Agencies

Trend forecasting is a cyclical and on-going process that requires constant research and analysis of new ideas and socio-cultural happenings. It takes a great deal of time, effort, and financial investment to forecast trends, and many companies fully or partially outsource this type of research and analysis. Professional trend-forecasting agencies operate at many different levels. The World Future Society and the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies, for example, systematically analyze future trends that will shape humanity. Studio Edelkoort and BrainReserve, companies owned by leading global trend spotters Li Edelkoort and Faith Popcorn, operate at a macro level and offer trend forecasting services to many different industries. Companies like WGSN and Stylesight, in contrast, focus solely on the fashion industry; they have staff travelling around

the world looking at street fashions and lifestyles, and they monitor all sorts of online and offline sources to identify the new and the next. Fashion forecasting agencies visit trade shows to look at colors and textiles, scan fashion merchandise around the globe, and attend designer shows during fashion weeks. While some forecasting agencies share parts of their information online, full access to their projective reports usually requires paid membership.

The Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (cifs.dk/en) identifies and analyzes trends that influence the future, using statistical analysis and research by interdisciplinary staff in economics, political science, ethnography, psychology, engineering, PR, and sociology. Most of the content requires membership.

The World Future Society (worldfuture.org) investigates how social, economic, and technological developments are shaping the future.

StudioEdelkoort (edelkoort.com), headed by trend guru Lidewij Edellcoort, offers consultation on trends and product identity to a wide range of industries, from automotive to home environments and fashion. The firm publishes limited quantity trend books targeting fashion, interior design, and cosmetics. Edelkoort creates audio-visual presentations about upcoming trends, and gives seminars around the world.

BrainReserve (faithpopcorn.com), led by American futurist Faith Popcorn, offers predictions of megatrends that will shape society. The company provides consultation at many levels, with publications, seminars, and future-focused discussions.

WGSN (wgsn.com/en) was launched in 1998 as a trend forecasting service for the fashion industry. Today it employs over 300 editorial and design staff in its offices throughout Europe, Asia, North and South America, and the Middle East. WGSN provides seasonal coverage and analysis on key looks, colours, and fabrics from all significant Fashion Week shows, and offers specialized insight to an international clientele that includes Marks & Spencer and Target. The company partners with *Vogue* to offer a digitized repository of every issue of American *Vogue* since 1892, and with the technology company Lectra to offer a starter pack filled with sketches, patterns, and prints to create 3D virtual prototypes.

Trendstop.com, Trendbuero.de, and Japanconsuming.com are other agencies that offer localized and global trend forecasting services for their clients.

4. Social Media

The more people you are involved with, the more interesting the ideas you are likely to receive. Many social media platforms can be utilized for trend forecasting research. But when you consider the amount of information available in these networks, the number of people with whom you need to interact may be overwhelming. Taking advantage of social media for trend forecasting research requires careful management for the effective use of time and effort. According to Vanston (2011), the first step in managing a social network is to select the general areas of interest. These should be broad enough to allow you to uncover promising ideas, but narrow enough to prevent the need for excessive effort. The next step is to identify subject-matter experts who can provide new insights, and then engage and maintain relationships with these people.

Instagram and TikTok can be especially useful in following experts, influencers, companies, and organizations on a regular basis. Instagram is a web-based social media platform where original photos are shared on a daily basis, while TikTok is a social media platform containing millions of personalized short videos. These platforms resonate with Millennial consumers more than any other age bracket, and can thus be effectively utilized to receive up-to-date visual information on their lifestyles.

Pinterest is a significant social media channel on which millions of consumers interact with millions of websites on a daily basis, extracting ideas and sharing them with others. Pinterest is useful not only for building a social network for receiving ideas, but for storing and organizing visual information.

All of the websites, blogs, and companies listed in this chapter, including those that require a subscription, publish on one or several different types of social media. Using social media to follow new ideas from a selected set of companies is a useful way of staying up-to-date and of conducting continuous desk research.

5. Other Online Tools

Google Zeitgeist reveals the spirit of times by aggregating millions of search queries received every day. The site statistically displays searches done during one year, and shows the top ten searches of the year to illustrate the current worldwide zeitgeist.

Google Trends, another statistical tool that can be helpful when examining megatrends across industries, provides data on the frequency of searches for a specific term over time; data can be limited to different geographic areas.

You can set up Google Alerts to monitor a query of your interest. When there are new results, Google Alerts sends them to you in an email format. Your query can be a topic as wide as fashion itself, or very focused.

A blog is a personal website where an individual records personal opinion on a regular basis. Fashion blogs fall into two main categories: independent blogs, which are personal postings of an individual or group of people, and corporate blogs, which are run by a magazine, brand, or store (Rocamora, 2013). Fashion blogs have gained mainstream presence and influence in the fashion industry. Independent fashion bloggers are invited to fashion events, sell advertisement space to fashion retailers on their blogs, and review and promote fashion products. Numerous fashion blogs are dedicated to sharing new trends, ideas, and street fashions in trend-forward places around the world. You can use Google Blog Search to search for blogs and blogposts. Some well-known blogs that can guide desk research are listed below:

thesartorialist.com was launched in 2005 by Scott Schuman, who was listed in Time magazine's Top 100 design influencers. The blog captures street styles throughout New York and Europe as well as in fashion shows. Similar blogs for street fashion around the world include streetpeeper.com.

tavigevinson.world was started in 2008 as thestylerookie.com by 11-year-old Tavi Gavinson, whose blog on teen style became very popular. She was invited to fashion weeks, styled looks for well-known companies, and gave talks. Opopular personal style blogs on women and men's fashion include theblondesalad.com, cupcakesandcashmere.com, and bryanboy.com.

Trend Challenge

Individually, scan through the list of online resources introduced in this chapter and identify two that captured your interest. Spend some time reading through these two resources plus the WGSN platform (you can use insights and/or fashion tabs).

Make note of common repeating patterns and ideas you identify in these resources. Expect your research to be very open at the beginning, and to get more focused as you start seeing patterns. Make a list of repeating patterns and ideas you identify, answering the following questions:

1. What is the repeating pattern or idea you detected? What common characteristics of this pattern or idea have you have detected across various industries?
2. Who might be potential innovators and early adopters of these commonalities, leading to an emerging trend? Define them in detail using the list below:

    ◦ demographics: age, gender, occupation, socioeconomic status
    ◦ geographics: where they are likely to live
    ◦ psychographics: general values, attitudes, behaviors, leisure activities, aspirations

Individually write a two-paragraph discussion, include links to the resources you discuss in Question 1.

Analyzing Desk Research Results

While gathering data from different online and offline resources and networks will provide you with insights about what is new and hot, it is not enough to predict future trends. You will need to start analyzing this data in order for it to make sense and carry you to the next stage of field research.

Analyzing any sort of data requires editing, selecting, and categorizing findings into a logical and coherent framework. Storing findings from desk research in a methodological way can make the data analysis phase a lot easier. As discussed earlier, you can use online bookmarking or organization tools, or you can capture data captured physically on a large surface such as a wall. The data at this stage can include images, articles, quotes, and statistical facts from online resources, along with your reflections about them.

Affinity Diagramming

Affinity diagraming is a method of organizing a large amount of visual and textual information into clusters according to affinity or similarity, and determining relationships among the clusters. Looking at the raw data from your desk research on a digital platform or a physical space such as a wall, a large table, or the floor, you can start forming groups of similar findings, and title them with descriptive and short statements. Once the data is sorted into groups and titles, you can rearrange the groups into parent and sub groups, and mark relationships among groups with arrows.

In forming affinity diagrams, refer to the who / what / where / why / when questions (Raymond, 2010) to categorize your data. Findings about the emerging trend's innovators, early adopters, and experts, including their common characteristics, can form a group answering the "who?" question. Examples of products, new technologies, materials, or services that represent how the trend is manifesting itself across different industries can be grouped as an answer to the "what?" question, while global and local locations in which the trend is emerging can answer the "where?" question. To answer "why?," refer to the trend drivers leading to the creation of the trend, validating your findings with statistics and quotes. And to answer "when?" you can categorize your data in terms of the timeline of the emergence of the trend and its status in the diffusion of the adoption process.

Three Times Rule

The "three times rule" is a method to help you decide whether the emerging threads of commonality in your desk research could lead to a substantial megatrend. It involves spotting three applications or examples of a trend with noticeable characteristics in three unrelated industries (Raymond, 2010). Once you have identified three products with common characteristics pertaining to a trend, you need to detect three examples of the same trend in three other industries; these could include retail, interior design, automotive, product design, beauty, technology, food, or packaging. If you find common examples, you may have identified a megatrend.

Trend Challenge

You can use the "three times rule" to prove the credibility of an emerging trend when analyzing the results of your desk research. Referring back to the previous trend challenge, look at all of your

findings and identify three examples of a product or service that corresponds to the emerging megatrend, one with noticeable characteristics in common in the same industry. Then identify three different products that share similar reference points in three non-related industries.

Innovators, Early Adopters

Once you have identified innovators and early adopters of a detected emerging megatrend, the field research stage allows you to focus your research on a specific target population. Based on your desk research so far, you can create a list of demographic, geographic, and psychographic characteristics of the megatrend's innovators and early adopters. **Demographics** include characteristics such as age, sex, income, marital status, family size, education, religion, race, and nationality; **geographics** are about where people live, including information about which country, state, or city, and the population in each area, and **psychographics** include attitudes, tastes, values, and fears.

Experts

During desk research you will also develop a list of experts related to the emerging megatrend—knowledgeable professionals who can provide in-depth knowledge or coherent insights. They can be academicians, journalists, economists, editors, psychologists, or industry professionals like marketers, designers, and retailers. Interviewing these experts in the field research phase adds credibility, a depth of understanding, and validation to your trend forecast.

Field Research

After an emerging megatrend is identified through desk research, the next step is a deep dive that focuses on the specifics of the trend by researching its potential impact on users for a specific industry. As we've discussed, for example, the aging population is a megatrend, and it may contain less obvious, industry-specific trends, such as new sizing systems and materials in clothing that are sensible and aesthetically pleasing to older adults.

The main goal of the field research is to discover and/or validate the specifics of an emerging trend within a specific industry by developing an in-depth understanding of target users and of the state of the trend in the marketplace. Innovators, early adopters, and experts identified during the desk research phase are primary

sources of information during field research, as are physical environments such as streets, malls, stores, campuses, bazaars, concerts, festivals, theaters, bars, pubs, and many others.

Field research yields valuable original data. Understanding the human component of a trend is a vital part of understanding the trend's impact and importance within an industry. Today there is a deeper collaboration between creators and individuals. Individuals see themselves as active participants in the creation process rather than as consumers, customers, or users of products. Understanding behavioral and attitudinal needs, expectations, and aspirations of individuals in the context of a megatrend is thus crucial in forecasting industry-specific trends and developing new products. But because understanding people, and what they will want in the future, is not straightforward, conducting field research is much more ambiguous than desk research. If you ask people what type of garments they would like to wear next season, for example, they will probably mention the things they see around them. This won't lead to anything new, but only to a repetition of what is already available. It is your job to discover unarticulated aspirations and needs. Field research requires you to work like a lifestyle detective, using observations, interviews, and surveys. You will extract knowledge first by observing what people do, then asking questions and listening to the answers.

1. Observation: Sensing vs. Looking

Trends have social, cultural, and lifestyle aspects that can be observed more effectively than they can be articulated or described. Observation involves seeing and understanding the world through images and senses, then articulating this understanding with words. As we've discussed, "cultural brailing" is a term popularized by influential American trend forecaster Faith Popcorn and her trend forecasting agency BrainReserve. It can be defined as being open to anything new with all your senses, wherever you are and whomever you are with. Susan Choi, Trend Track director at *BrainReserve,* describes this process:

> "Brailing is a way of communicating language through bumps on a page. We take that same technique here and feel the bumps in culture. The bumps are everything. Again, it is about using all of your senses: things that you see, things that you taste, things that you hear. For example, it could be a matter of walking into a retail store and noticing the lighting, the music, feeling the different textures, just fully immersing yourself into whatever environment that you are in."

Like cultural brailing, observation is a transformative experience and requires immersing ourselves with all of our senses to see, listen, and feel new things and form impressions about them. When we observe something, we see not only the big picture but all of the elements that unite to create it. As the observer, we should be able to briefly take ourselves out of the story, seeing the patterns we miss when we are too close to the subject. Observation requires seeing the parts as well as the sum of the parts. Think of it as zooming in and zooming out—zooming in to see the details, the leaves and branches of the trees, and zooming out to see the bigger picture, the forest as a whole.

Observation also requires freeing ourselves from the biases and prejudices we hold towards people and

things. Observation involves feeling, thinking, and responding to something without passing judgments, in contrast to just passively looking at something. When all we do is to look at something, meaning is lost. We look at the screen of our phone or at a penny, and we don't consider the context beyond this simple act. This applies to most of the objects we see around us. If asked right now to draw a quick sketch of a bicycle, you would probably have hard time remembering all the details. When we *look* at something, although our mind may be active, we are not fully engaged in creating and embedding every detail to memory. On the other hand, *seeing* something means to "understand" it in a deeper way. The combination of seeing something and understanding it at a level on which you can identify its details and surrounding context is the process of observation.

There are two formal ways of conducting observations. *Non-participant observation* involves collecting data by observing behavior; it does not include interaction with people or the environment. The observer is quiet, watching and trying to understand people's lives, behaviors, and environment. This type of observation helps you develop a preliminary understanding of the social and cultural context.

Participant observation involves interacting with people and their environments, experiencing the phenomenon studied. Observers actively experience and feel people's way of life by shadowing them. This type of observation can be conducted in two ways. In *covert observations*, the viewer blends in and their identity as the observer is not revealed. In *overt observations*, the researcher reveals their identity as the observer. While covert observation has the advantage of allowing you to see how people behave naturally, it is open to many ethical concerns, as you are covering your identity, actively engaging in an activity, and not telling others that you are conducting an observation.

Additional environments for observing fashion trends are fashion weeks, trade shows, and street fashion in world fashion capitals. Some of the influential trade shows for fashion include:

Premiere Vision: Textile and fabric shows that bring around 700 weavers from 28 countries; held in Paris and NY.

Pitti Immagine Filati: Knitwear for men and women, held in Florence, Italy.

Bread & Butter: Latest trends in street and urban wear, held in Berlin, Germany.

Interstoff Asia: Textile and apparel show held in Hong Kong.

In conducting observations, it's important to never rely on memory, as it is very easy to forget details. It is best practice to use notebooks, pens and pencils, sketchbooks, video cameras, and voice recorders to record your observation data. It is also helpful to rely on multiple methods to capture observations, and to include both visual data and written notes. When you physically take notes in addition to digital recording, you not only record what you see but reflect on it. When taking notes, it is very important to be descriptive about what you observe rather than prescriptive or judgmental. Use descriptive adjectives and nouns that help you visualize the subject and the context of you observation. For example, describing a shoe by saying "a navy sneaker" is being prescriptive. Being descriptive, however, can be like this: "Navy color ankle sneaker with large logo on the side, white thick sole and checkered print behind ankle." Such descriptions not only help you remember, but might trigger subconscious insights and associations.

Raymond (2010) describes several techniques for building a visual memory and recalling things effectively

when observing a person or an environment. When looking at what a person is wearing, including jewelry and body adornments, note items by placing the person in a north, east, south and west axis. You can also note items from head to toe and from inner layers to outer layers. While observing an environment, you can place it in an imaginary 3×3 grid, noting characteristics in a clockwise direction from top to bottom and left to right.

Trend Challenge

Choose a location in campus (e.g., student center, library, recreation center) and conduct a 10-minute non-participant observation, noting interesting and repeating patterns in the way individuals appear (e.g., dress, hair, accessories) and their behavior, using descriptive language in a notebook. Identify and describe a common trend represented in your observations.

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2. Interviews

An interview can be described as a conversation with a purpose. Interviews are very useful tools for gathering information from innovators and early adopters of an emerging trend, and from experts. In situations where we can't observe, we have to ask people questions. We can't, for instance, observe thoughts, feelings, or intentions. We can't observe behaviors or things that took place in the past. Private situations might preclude the presence of an observer. In these situations, interviews will provide the best opportunities for gathering information.

Traditional methods of interviewing empower the interviewer, as they are the person in control of the discussion content and the time spent. Interviewers should purposefully develop and plan their interview strategy, bringing individuals into the partnership and avoiding researcher/respondent or expert/novice perceptions (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1998). Host/guest perception is another obstacle in building rapport (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1998). The presence of interviewers as strangers in the interviewee's environment may result in the host role for the interviewee and the guest role for the interviewer. In this type of relationship, people may try to please the person conducting the interviews and make them comfortable.

Building a relaxed rapport is key for a successful interview, as is creating a mutual relationship where both parties are equal, honest, and open. People usually are not aware of the reasons for their actions, as these actions are based on years of experience or may have simply become habits. Build rapport through listening

and empathizing, being quiet and letting the participant talk, using encouraging probes to trigger more stories, and mirroring participants by nodding when they nod or smiling when they smile.

Creating interview questions is the most important step of gathering rich data from your interviews. Descriptive questions are especially useful for starting A conversation and keeping a participant talking freely. Descriptive questions might start as follows:

- Could you describe a typical...?
- Could you tell me how you usually make...?
- Could you describe what happened from the moment...until ...?
- Could you show me...?
- Could you give me an example of...?
- Could you tell me about some experiences you have...?
- If..., what would you do/say/think?
- Imagine yourself...; what would you...?

In asking questions, avoid interrupting, and avoid putting forward your own idea by asking leading questions. "Do you follow the latest fashion trends?" is a leading question that might imply that your interviewee doesn't seem to like following fashion trends. And questions such as "What do you mean by that?" contain a hidden judgmental component. Such questions imply that the interviewee isn't clear, hasn't adequately explained something, or is hiding the true reasons behind what they've said. (Spradley, 1979). Instead, it's best to ask questions such as:

- What are some other ways you could talk about...?
- Can you think you think of some other examples of...?

It is very important to avoid asking multiple questions at once, and asking yes/no questions. Asking a question like "Do you like simplicity trend in fashion?" will not elicit much other than a yes or no. During interviews, make repeated explanations and restate your goal help to put the conversation in context (Spradley, 1979).

- As I said earlier, I'm interested in finding out....
- I want to understand...from your point of view.

During the interview, you can also select key phrases and terms used by the individuals and restate them. This reinforces what has been said, and demonstrates your interest in learning the interviewee's language and culture. Restatement must be distinguished from reinterpreting, a process in which the interviewer states in different words what the other person said. Reinterpreting prompts interviewees to translate, while restating prompts them to speak in their own ordinary, everyday language (Spradley, 1979).

Trend Challenge

Think back to the repeating patterns/ideas and potential innovators and early adopters you identified in the Desk Research trend challenge.

1. Name the emerging megatrend and define it in detail, including the innovators and early adopters.
2. Settle on a specific industry you would like to investigate.
3. Develop five interview questions you would use to interview innovators and early adopters of the emerging megatrend within the industry of your choice.

People tend to summarize their experiences by abstracting from a number of concrete experiences. It is human nature to provide a general impression instead of focusing on the details that formed it. You can overcome this tendency by using probes in addition to supportive and encouraging manners (Chambers, 1992). The use of **cultural probes** is a technique for gathering data about people, lives, values, and thoughts (Gaver et al., 1999).The probes are small packages that can include any sort of artifact (e.g., a map, postcard, camera, or diary), along with evocative tasks, which are given to participants to allow them to record specific events, feelings, or interactions. For example, you can ask people to keep diaries or record photos that capture a sense of their day or a specific activity like dressing up; to record places they visit for fashion shopping on a map; to upload visuals or texts to a social networking site about favorites items they own, things they aspire to, technology they use. You can then use this information as a guide during your interviews and as a referral point for deeper questions. By sharing data this way, the information becomes public, with both the researcher and user able to point out, manipulate, and discuss the information.

Focus groups are group interviews where the overlapping spread of knowledge is examined at once. They are useful for understanding some sensitive topics that may be discussed in a group more easily than individually, and for eliminating the dominance of single voice. One significant disadvantage of focus groups, however, is that participants influence each other. Participants may be affected by others' ideas or intimidated about answering questions in a group. Focus groups are rarely successful where one person has the power card and is in charge of the whole process. For focus groups to be successful, they should be done with mutual relaxed rapport, in an environment where people can freely share ideas.

As with observation, you should record your interview data in physical and digital mediums. Notetaking

should be always supported with voice and/or video recording. Having multiple interviewers in the field can help you better focus on the process, as one person can ask questions while another takes notes and is in charge of video recording. But as the number of interviewers increases, participants can become intimidated; it is therefore very important to balance the number. After you complete your interviews, transcribe your notes and recordings. This will help you validate your prior findings, develop new insights, or discover new veins of research, which may require additional online or face-to-face follow-up interviews.

3. Surveys

Once you have fully established a clear understating of your topic using interviews and observations, you may want to move onto quantitative research. Using surveys in addition to interviews and observations helps you triangulate your research results. Triangulation, or cross-examination, is the use of more than two methods in a study (Beebe, 1995). The idea is that one can be more confident in a result if different methods lead to the same result.

Observations and interviews are qualitative in nature, promoting understanding of needs, aspirations, and limitations, while surveys allow you to statistical and numerical data. Interviews and observations are about things that are hard to measure with numbers; surveys are about things you can easily measure using numerical scales. Surveys are helpful in identifying some general facts about people involved in a trend and for creating typologies. You might gather generalizable data about the demographics of your target population—age, gender, ethnicity, income levels, geographic regions, and so on. You can also gather psychographic data by using a scale to ask people how they value something. When surveys are carried over time, it is possible to determine the status of a trend—whether, for instance, it is at the beginning of the adoption curve or moving from innovators to the mainstream.

Using surveys requires careful identification of target populations. People who are not part of the target population skew the data when they are surveyed (Raymond, 2011). For example, if you are forecasting children's trends, you probably want to target people who have children and exclude people who do not. How can you do this? You can use a screener or trick question that will help you identify people who are not part of the target population. A screener question is asked as the first question in a survey, and should be asked so that the respondent can't guess the correct answer in order to proceed to the next question (Raymond, 2011). If you're working on activewear trends, for instance, you will want to exclude people who do not exercise by using a screener question such as:

How many times do you exercise a week?

- I do not exercise
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Three times a week

In this case, a person who answers "I do not exercise" can be excluded from the sample.

Developing survey questions that will lead to meaningful data requires very careful planning and understanding of the types of questions you can ask and the types of answers they can elicit.

Demographic Questions

Demographic information describes a person. Demographic questions ask about age, gender, occupation, education, family, nationality, income, and so on. These types of questions help you compare results across categories. For example, you can compare female respondents' answers with male respondents' answers.

Behavioral Questions

These questions are about how a person behaves and about certain actions. For example:

How many pairs of jeans have you bought in the last three months?

- In the last three months I bought
    - one pair of blue jeans
    - more than two pairs of blue jeans
    - no blue jeans

Attitudinal Questions

These questions are about how a person thinks and feels about something rather than what a person does. For example:

On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you feel about simplicity in fashion?

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

There are different ways of asking demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal questions. You can ask participants to choose from set of answers, you can ask them order things, or you can have them use a scale to determine their position on a subject matter.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions consist of three or more mutually exclusive answers. These types of questions are widely used for demographic and behavioral questions. For example:

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- No schooling completed
- High school degree
- College degree
- Graduate degree

Rank-Order Questions

Rank-order questions allow things to be ranked based upon a specific attribute or characteristic. You can also use images of products and compare products, tastes, aesthetics preferences, or mainstream and emerging trends. These questions are especially useful in attitudinal surveys. For example:

Please rank the following brands according to their aesthetic appeal. Place a "1" next to the brand that is most aesthetically pleasing to you, and so on.

__ GAP
__ Abercrombie
__ H&M
__ Urban outfitters

Rating Scale Questions

A rating scale question requires a person to rate something along a well-defined, evenly spaced continuum. Because rating scales are often used to measure the direction and intensity of attitudes, they are good for attitudinal surveys. For example:

Which of the following categories best describes your last experience with ...?

- Very pleasant
- Somewhat pleasant
- Neither pleasant nor unpleasant
- Somewhat unpleasant
- Very unpleasant

The Semantic Differential Scale (Likert Scale) Questions

You can ask people to choose where their position lies on a scale between two bipolar adjectives. The semantic differential scale asks a person to rate a trend, product, brand, or company based upon a five-point or seven-point rating scale that has two bipolar adjectives at each end. For example:

Would you say simplicity in fashion is:

(5) Very attractive

(4) Attractive

(3) Neither attractive not unattractive

(2) Unattractive

(1) Very unattractive

Common rules applicable to all survey question types include avoiding yes/no questions similar to interviews and developing first response statement answers, which are more emotional and subjective.

Many organizations, companies, and governmental agencies conduct surveys and build databases, including Mori, Mintel, YouGov, Harris Research, and Pew Global. Such firms base the number of people who should take a survey on the population of the geographic area. For example, 1,000 is the minimum standard requirement for most European countries, while in the U.S. this can reach 10,000 (Raymond, 2011). How many participants should you have when you conduct surveys? The minimum number for statistical significance is 30. With at least 30 participants, you can generalize for those results.

In addition to physical surveys, you can use free online tools like surveymonkey.com or limesurvey.org to conduct online surveys. You can also use social media and platforms like Facebook to reach out to your target population and conduct your survey.

Trend Challenge

Visit trendwatching.com, and choose and read about a trend listed on the website. Create one attitudinal question, one semantic differential scale question, and one rank order question you would ask users in order to gain a deeper understating of the trend you have chosen.

Analyzing Field Research Results

Interviews and Observations

As with desk research, analyzing qualitative data from interviews and observations requires strategic documentation of field notes, transcripts, photos, and recordings, and organization of the data into key concepts. You can add these concepts to the affinity diagram you developed from your desk research as extensions of existing groups or as new groups. You can also extend the affinity diagram with new relationships that show how new and old concepts, subgroups, and groups are connected. The process of editing, assessing, and arranging is a an iterative one; you must repeat it until you can concisely communicate the specific trend.

Surveys

In analyzing survey results, your first step is to list your key findings. Survey results can show common threads, but they can also display anomalies, and you need to detect these anomalies. Once you've listed all of your findings, analyze them in relation to the findings from your desk research and qualitative research (observation and interview). As stated earlier, one of the benefits of combining desk research and methods of field research is data triangulation—verifying a finding with multiple research methods. This adds to your credibility and strengthens your findings and predictions about future trends.

Competitive Research

In addition to desk and field research, competitive research monitors the activities of competing companies with similar consumer bracket and product categories. Competitive research should be used to identify the offerings of competing companies and to predict their responses to future trends and market conditions. It offers potential benefits for understanding the market in which a company operates, targeting users, and finding niche user segments. It is also highly beneficial in determining pricing strategies.

Competitive research can, however, be a dangerous tool, as companies may replicate their competitor's strategies. What is happening in the marketplace today is obvious to everyone and does not create new opportunities. Trend forecasting should be about finding out what's going to be big and unique tomorrow. Competitive research should be used as a tool to differentiate brands and products from those of competing companies in the context of future trends.

Many designers and merchandisers shop the marketplace locally and globally to benchmark and also to collect inspiration from innovative companies. Visiting competition first hand, and experiencing competitors' products and pricing as users, provides valuable insight for gaining an understanding of the marketplace and positioning trend forecasting efforts within the competition.

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CHAPTER 8 - INNOVATIONS AND TREND FORECASTING

Gozde Goncu Berk

The term **trend** has been used to refer to a change in opinions, attitudes, behaviors, expectations, or general patterns within a society. Being able to detect and reflect on these changes is the core of the trend forecasting process. Mason et al. (2015) defined the three fundamental and interacting elements that cause a trend to emerge: 1) basic human needs, 2) drivers of change, and 3) innovations.

Basic needs are fundamental to all humans. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) includes physiological needs such as food, water, and rest, and safety needs such as environmental protection and security. Once an individual satisfies their needs at the bottom of the "needs pyramid," they will try to satisfy other needs and wants at the higher levels, such as the psychological need for belongingness and love, along with self-esteem and self-fulfillment needs. Monitoring pattern shifts on the levels of a population's basic needs and its in-between need levels can help a forecaster identify emerging trends. The Covid-19 pandemic, for example, triggered an immediate and sudden shift to lower-level needs like safety, protection, and food. Basic face masks were in high demand when people first sought protection from the virus. As people adjusted to the new norms of the pandemic, face masks evolved into fashion statement pieces instead of being only a medical necessity. We started seeing masks with colorful prints and patterns, embroidered statements, or designer brand logos, with such options fulfilling higher-level desires.

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs.(Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs#/media/File:Maslow's_Hierarchy_of_Needs2.svg)

Drivers of change can be slow, long-term macro changes that take place over a long period of time, such as the aging of a population, or faster and more immediate changes such the creation of a new technology, an economic crisis, a political shift, or an environmental incident. Futurist Patrick Dixon (2015) defines long-term trends as relatively more predictable in long-range forecasting. Some of the profound long-term megatrends he identifies are gradual falling rates of growth in world population; more automation of routine tasks in homes, offices and factories; and increasing concern about the environment.

We can see the impacts of these macro trends in the fashion design industry and beyond. Many fashion brands, for example, market collections designed for older populations, factory robots cut and sew fabric, artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms predict style trends, and virtual reality (VR) mirrors display a user's image on a screen with virtual clothing automating, personalizing, and speeding up the fashion space. Environmental concerns are reflected in the use of biodegradable textiles such as the vegan leather made from pineapple leaf fibers (ananas-anam.com). Faster and more immediate changes are less predictable, but can also translate quickly into trends. As people shifted to remote work and distance learning during the Covid 19 pandemic, virtual meeting platforms became popular not only for work-related activities but for online playdates, birthdays, and family reunions. Fashion stylists and designers started giving advice on how to dress for "waist-up" online meetings, emphasizing bright colors, bold patterns, and form-fitting tops. Chapter Five, "Trend Drivers and Megatrends," provide a detailed discussion of the factors that trigger change and trends.

Innovations that shift people's behaviors, needs, and wants can lead to new trends, which can in turn springboard other related innovations. Innovations can include novel products, services, or processes that lead to new user experiences.

As we've discussed, trend research and forecasting is a complex process that requires far more than spotting the latest styles, colors, or hi-tech gadgets. It requires

> Innovations that shift people's behaviors, needs, and wants can lead to new trends, which can then springboard other related innovations.

in-depth, structured research and analysis to make educated guesses about the future. Mason et al. (2015) introduces a layered framework for forming trend insights that can help you understand where to look for changes in pattern. At the top layer are the megatrends—the large social, economic, political, environmental, or technological changes that are slow to form that but affect people on many scales and across many industries (Goncu-Berk, 2015). On the middle layer are the individual trends, which are supported by the clusters of innovations that sit on the bottom layer. When new innovations don't fit existing patterns and start to cluster around a new trend, or when changes on the macro level start to point in a new direction, they signal emergence of a new trend. Monitoring changes in macro-level long-term developments and innovations is therefore crucial in detecting the emergence of a new trend as well in evaluating the lifecycle of existing trends and their diffusion within a society.

Megatrends
Driven by the large social, economic, political, environmental, or technological change that is slow to form, affecting people on many scales and across many industries

Individual Trends

Clusters of Innovations

Figure 2. Layered framework by Mason et. al (2015) to form trend insights.

Invention, Design and Innovation

While the terms **invention**, **design**, and **innovation** are often used interchangeably, they have quite distinct meanings. Before proceeding further, it is worthwhile to clarify these and other related terms.

An **invention** is "a novel scientific or technical idea that is transformed into reality, achieving a completely unique function or result." It is a radical breakthrough, usually in technology. One example from in fashion is VELCRO®, invented by engineer George de Mestral. He mimicked the hooks of the burrs trapped in his dog's fur, and named his invention after the French words for velvet and hook (*velours* and *crochet*). Today, VELCRO® is a versatile product used in everything from apparel to packaging and medical industries.

Product design is "The activity in which ideas and needs are given physical form, initially as solution concepts and then as a specific configuration or arrangement of elements, materials and components" (Walsh et al., 1993, p. 18). Unlike invention, product design does not imply a radical breakthrough, but instead entails improvement of functionality and appeal to create novel product ideas which may address unsatisfied user or market needs. Mamalila, a German company which offers a versatile, convertible jacket for different phases of parenthood, is a good example of novel design. The Mamalila jacket does not offer any superior technology compared to readily available outdoor jackets, but it targets a latent user need and improves functionality and appeal need through a novel design feature. Design that is induced by unsatisfied user need is defined as **market-pull**, referring to the need for a solution to a user problem stemming from the users themselves or, in other words, the marketplace.

Figure 3. Mamalila babywearing jackets. (Retrieved from: https://www.mamalila.de/ Softshell-Babywearing-Jacket_info)

New technologies and inventions can also inspire design and lead to novel product ideas. When design is induced by technological and technical advancements or inventions, it is called **technology-push.** In this approach the technology provides a clear competitive advantage in meeting the user need, and alternative technologies are unavailable or very difficult to utilize. Tyvek®, for example, is a nonwoven textile material of high-density polyethylene fibers. It is extremely durable, lightweight, and breathable, and is also water resistant. These properties have made Tyvek® especially useful in construction applications like house wraps for insulation. The designers of UT.LAB benefited from the properties of Tyvek® in their design of fashionable and functional sneakers, pre-wrinkling the material for better fit and comfort, and using a unique printing technique to print patterns on the material.

Figure 4. Tyvek® material surface (Retrieved from https://www.dupont.com/tyvekdesign/ design-with-tyvek/why-tyvek.html)

Tyvek® shoes by UT.LAB (Retrieved from:
https://www.designboom.com/design/
light-wing-tyvek-paper-shoes-weigh-150-gram
s/)

Another example technology-push in product design is GORE-TEX, a textile material originally used in the design of outdoor apparel because of its combined waterproof, windproof, and breathable characteristics. The properties of GORE-TEX technology have made it suitable for medical application in the design of vascular prosthetics.
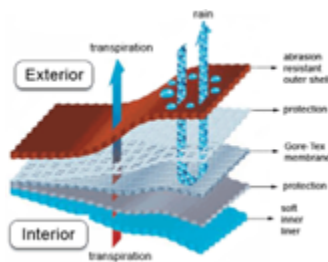
Figure 5. Examples of Gore-tex technology applied in apparel and medical industries. (Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gore-Tex#/media/File:Goretex_schema-en.png; https://arcteryx.com/no/de/shop/mens/beta-jacket; https://biotextiles2014.wordpress.com/vascular-prosthesis-for-coronary-artery-bypass/)

As with technology-push, designers of **platform products** assume a product will embody a particular technology platform. Platform products are built around a preexisting technological system or a platform, such as the Mac operating system OS X. With large investments made to develop these platforms, they are incorporated into as many products as possible. For example, Nike Dri-FIT technology, for example, features microfiber, polyester fabric that can move sweat away from the body and to the fabric surface, where it evaporates. Nike employs this technology in the design of a variety of products, including shirts, socks, pants, shorts, sweatshirts, sleeves, hats, and gloves. Since the technology platform has already demonstrated its usefulness in the marketplace, it is simpler to develop new products than if the technology had to developed from scratch.

Innovation is defined as "an idea, service or practice that is perceived as new by individuals or by a society" (Rogers, 1962), and as "The whole activity from invention (the discovery of a new device, product, process or system) to the point of first commercial or social use" (Walsh et al., 1993, p. 16). Innovation therefore involves

the development of a novel idea, its exploitation as a market opportunity, and its potential to add value to a society. Innovations can be the results of an invention or of new product development and design activities.

Innovations can also occur at different levels, such as product, service, or process**. Process innovation** is about finding a novel way of achieving an output. In process innovation, the final product does not change, but the techniques or equipment for creating the product is improved. Although process innovation is less known compared to product and service innovations, it has greater impact on society. The introduction of automation in manufacturing, for example, enabled products to be produced faster and cheaper. **Service innovation** involves "changes in the process of delivering existing services or the development of completely new services" (Rothkopf, 2009). Stitch Fix, an online styling and retailing service offering personal styling services, is a good example of service innovation. An alternative to traditional retailing, the company sends kits with clothing and accessories from different brands hand-selected for a user's size, style, and price range. Process innovation is also seen in the company's technology, which uses AI algorithms and human stylists working in combination to make recommendations to clients for clothing, shoes, and accessories. Finally, **product innovation** is the introduction of a good that is new or significantly improved with respect to its characteristics or intended uses. Product innovation is closely related to product design.

The Innovation Spectrum

In *The Four Lenses of Innovation: A Power Tool for Creative Thinking*, Gibson (2015) discusses innovations from the perspective of "the pattern recognition principle," defining trends as patterns of change and innovators as creatives who can recognize these patterns. Gibson introduces the concept of patterns with an term from cognitive psychology called **automaticity**, which help us form habits that, through repetition and practice, become automatic and reflexive response patterns requiring lesser brain activity (e.g., being able to talk to another person while driving). Collective patterns or trends can also be formed in societies, with, for example, large numbers of people watching the same TV shows, following the same clothing fashions, or using the same social media applications, and making subconscious choices based on what other are saying or doing. Some innovations alter these existing societal patterns or trends, while others introduce products, services, or processes that entirely disrupt existing patterns and form new trends.

Innovation is a buzzword that means different things to different people. There have been many attempts to classify innovation into dichotomous scales relating existing societal patterns. Abernathy and Utterback (1978) differentiated incremental and radical innovation, while Porter (1986) similarly illustrated continuous and discontinuous technological changes. Authors have also defined incremental vs. breakthrough innovations (Tushman & Anderson, 1986), and conservative vs. radical innovations (Abernathy & Clark, 1985), and efficiency, sustaining, and disruptive innovations (Bower & Christensen, 1995). If we were to think of innovation on a spectrum based on the degree of the novelty, on the most conservative end of the spectrum are the **incremental innovations,** followed by **radical innovations**, and finally **disruptive innovations**.

Incremental innovations involve modest changes to existing patterns over time, such as new product features and service improvements. These are enhancements that keep a business competitive—simply the next version of an existing product or a service perpetuating its existing performance. New versions of Nike Air Max shoes, with improved technical characteristics and minor changes in appearance, are a good example of incremental innovations. These shoes are characterized by pressured air pouches in the midsole that create cushioning and impact protection during the gait cycle. The pouches, visible from the exterior of the shoe, have taken many different forms and sizes over time, with improvements made for different purposes. This cushioning system then evolved into another product called Nike Joyride, featuring midsole pouches filled with colorful beads instead of air for improved and softer cushioning.

Figure 6. Evolution of Nike's air-filled midsole pouches (Retrieved from: https://sneakernews.com/2015/03/12/ nike-presents-the-evolution-of-visible-air/)

Nike Joyride (Retrieved from: https://www.nike.com/joyride)

Proceeding along the spectrum, **radical innovations** represent a significant change in patterns, with distinct novelty in a product, technology, service, or business model compared to existing solutions. Radical innovation takes a current process or product and provides a significantly greater efficiency or superior technology. The first Nike Air Max, introduced in the 1980s, was a radical innovation, introducing the idea of using pressurized air for cushioning in a sneaker sole. Later versions of the Nike Air Max were based on this first radical innovation. As a radical innovation, Nike Air Max added a significant level of novelty to sneakers, but it did not make existing sneakers or shoes obsolete, disrupting related social and business patterns.

At the most radical edge of the spectrum are the **disruptive innovations** — ideas that disrupt societal patterns, entirely change an industry or a marketplace, and force competitors to adjust their view of the business. Disruptive innovations are cannibalize existing products or markets, or radically change a market or industry. For example, the invention of Nylon, the first commercial synthetic fiber, not only created a fashion revolution but impacted the course of history during World War II. The fiber was used to manufacture ropes and parachutes, which allowed the U.S. to be better equipped. And as skirt hemlines, nylon stockings became a coveted product, with thousands of women lining up to compete for the limited supply. The nylon stockings' elasticity, light weight, strength, and ease of care made silk stockings, which did not stretch and required a garter belt, obsolete. In addition, the sheer nylon stockings created new behavioral patterns such as removing leg hair—still a mainstream trend, and one which has led to many other related products and services.

Another potential disruptive innovation which can completely change the way clothing is designed, produced, and retailed is 3D printing. Fashion designer Iris Van Herpen and several start-up companies have been experimenting with 3D printed clothing, which could create a completely new user experience in which users can download and print the latest designs in their homes. 3D printing also has the potential of making mass production obsolete, creating a new reality of on-demand, totally customizable clothing.

Trend Challenge

Discuss what innovation spectrum category the following product examples could fit. What characteristics make them to fit into one of these categories?

The Adidas smart bra features heart rate sensing technology knitted directly into the fabric. (Image retrieved from: https://www.amazon.de/-/en/ Adidas-Heart-Rate-Monitor-Smart/dp/ B018RIB7TO)

Mylo is a biomaterial which can replicate the look and feel of real leather across a range of colors and textures. It is grown from mycelium, a thread structure in mushrooms and other fungi. (Image retrieved from: Bolt Threads)

The Sony FES watch uses e-ink technology. Users can download designs on the watch, and change its look and style by simply pushing a button.
(Image retrieved from: https://www.sony.com/en/brand/stories/en/our/products_services/signature-series/)

Innovation and Trends

We live in a time of constant change. As a result, what individuals expect from products, services, and brands also changes. Trend research is about seeing these changes happen and evolving strategies to fit or even stay ahead of them. Trends manifest themselves at multiple levels from economic, social, political, and cultural contexts and through innovations. The stronger the trend, the more that related innovations will proliferate across different and sometimes unrelated industries. It is thus possible to define a trend as a change that is reflected in innovations. Detecting and filtering emerging trends and turning them into innovation opportunities can have a dramatic impact on an organization. Recognizing shifting trends and emerging hot-spots is critical to channeling innovation efforts to maximum effect. By dissecting a trend to its core components—adopters, location, timeframe, and drivers—you can begin to identify innovation opportunities.

The relationship between innovation and trend is chicken-an-egg; it's difficult to identify which of the two exists first. While trends lead innovations, innovations can also start new trends. Especially disruptive innovations can transform current behaviors and create new ones, kickstarting new trends. Innovations stemming from new technologies which create completely new products or experiences and make existing alternatives obsolete can create new trends. The wide accessibility of mobile internet technology, for instance, has led to an on-the-go lifestyle trend in which all aspects of life, from work to personal, are intertwined and managed from mobile devices and, lately, wearable technologies and smart clothing.

Scientific and technological advancement can be a significant source of innovation. While technology-push creates new fields of opportunities for innovations, it requires user demand in order for people to feel motivated to change their existing patterns. Another important source of innovation is unmet latent user needs and wants, which can be traced by investigating changing trends and patterns in lifestyles.

Most often, innovations arise from the interplay of technology-push and market-pull, embedded in trends that manifest themselves in changing patterns. Recognizing the future potential of emerging trends opens up opportunities for new innovations. Researching trends requires in-depth study of changing patterns and shifts in people's needs and wants. These trend insights, developed through in-depth research.

Trend Challenge

Using online research, identify a product, process, or service innovation in your design field. Discuss changes in patterns such as new technologies, economic crises, political shifts, environmental

incidents, sociocultural shifts, or basic human needs that may have led to this innovation. Include an image of your innovation, describe it, and write a one-paragraph discussion supported by online references.

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CHAPTER 9 - THE FORM OF THE TREND: DESIGN AND THE BODY

Marilyn Revell DeLong

This chapter introduces design elements and their role in creating a coordinated visual effect of head-to-toe products for the body. Coordination, or coherence, is a trend strategy in which all elements of a presentation combine to create a look that is unified in its visual effect. Such coordination involves the relationship of the elements to one another, but also to the body surfaces, sizes, and shapes. For the trend forecaster, coordination is an important component in the trend report.

The trend forecaster must be able to describe design elements as they relate to the body and the to visual effect of a product or combination of products. Trends in products can be featured alone (i.e., not on a human model), but forecasts often include the human form in products as it is a magnet for attention.

The Body and its Relationships

The **form** is the distinctive arrangement of colors, textures, lines, and shapes created by the interaction of the body with all that is put on or done to manipulate or modify the body. In Chapter 2, Understanding Your Aesthetic Response, we learned that the whole form is the unit of analysis to consider. The body is thus important in our perception of the visual effect. It interacts with products we wear and use to create a look—how we appear to ourselves and to others.

The human body is a destination for many products—outerwear, underwear, shoes, make-up, tattoos, and accessories, as well as devices such as smart phones, walkers, and wheelchairs. Our choices are many, but a common concern in their design is their relationship to the body.

Considerations of body characteristics in design need to consider its preexisting form—its sizes, shapes, and surfaces. The body comes in many sizes, from the tiniest infant to the tallest athlete. It usually has an upright position and symmetrical extremities. Its shapes are varied, including those that are angular and rotund. Surfaces include physical colors and textures of skin, hair, and eyes, with skin occupying the largest area, followed by body hair, and finally the eyes, which can feature a multitude of colors and textures.

It is vital to relate these preexisting body characteristics to good design. If the body, from head to toe, is the unit for analysis, then the entirety of the body—its 2D and 3D character—is an important consideration in creating the visual effect and in understanding the trend.

Products are source of senses and sensory relationships for the user. Perfume involves the sense of smell. We touch the resilient and soft fabric as it surrounds the body, and we hear fabrics that rustle as we walk or shoes

that click on a hard pavement. And the visual sense creates the visual effect—the overall impression one chooses to give to self and others. The visual effect is the focus of this chapter.

Processing the Visual Effect

Remember! Figure is the focus, ground is what surrounds.

The visual effect is created by viewing the relation of parts to the whole—that is, to the form that includes the body. The form is the unit of analysis head to toe— the whole considered as the body and all that modifies, is placed on, and defines the body in viewing the visual effect. The design of products involving this head-to-toe unit of analysis can be displayed on a model on the catwalk, as the way a person appears to others, or as the self reflected in a mirror or a head-to-toe selfie.

Visual parts may be defined as any unit that stands as **focus** or **figure**, distinguished from what is **ground**—that which is perceived to surround or lie beneath the part. A part can be any unit that comes to focus in our viewing, and can include such body parts as the head, the upper torso, hands, or feet. The form also includes what we see on the body, such as shirt and trousers, gloves, hats, or footwear, along with how the body is modified, such as how hair is styled or tattoos are used to define body parts.

The parts and whole can be combined, and can result in chaos or order depending upon how they relate to one another. Descriptions of this relationship can include form relationships as well as their expressive effect. Remember the three levels Norman (2004) uses to discuss how we process meaning: visceral, behavioral, and reflective. Though the expressive effects are present at all three levels, comprehension of meaning occurs at the reflective level.

The visual effect of the body involves this contrast and blending of parts, and depends upon coordination of these relationships. The viewer's eye moves because of these contrasting and blending relationships that create opportunities to focus and scan, and we perceive visual movement through this process.

Focus is what first attracts attention; there can be a single focus or multiple foci. It is about those visual parts from head-to-toe that attract the viewer's attention—as *figure* that stands apart from *ground*. The visual part usually stands out by contrast in shape, line, color, or texture. This focus can be any part of the body, and

often its location is a notable aspect of the trend. The center of attention may, for example, be the head, with a contrast in hair color or texture. Or a product, like a scarf, necktie, or brightly colored shoes, may become the figure. If the entire head-to-toe look is our unit of analysis, we may perceive multiple foci or find that we shift our focus from one part to another.

Scanning is about taking in the entire form. The surface of a blouse, for example, may have an all-over pattern or texture. Though the shapes cover the surface, you find that you don't need to focus on each shape, and you scan the printed surface. Textural variation created by gathers of the surface may be scanned for the direction of folds. Products are created by the interrelationship of the design elements.

Let's take each design element and consider its role in products as they relate to each other and to the body.

SHAPES + FORM

Shape refers to a bounded area, and is often distinguished by being two-dimensional. Common two-dimensional shapes include the circle and triangle. Shapes can be regular and geometric, such as circles, triangles, and squares, or more irregular and free-flowing, as in the organic shapes found in flowers, animals, seashells, and flowing rivers.

Shapes can become important in design if they are understood as creating potential for order in the visual effect. An all-over small and repeated polka dot, for instance, can become a source of visual activity, especially in terms of figure/ground. But shape can also become a key organizing factor when large product shapes are planned to relate to body shapes, and have the advantage of ordering how the body is viewed. For example, the viewer takes in the body by following the repeated pattern of the shapes of plaid throughout the design of a shirt or trouser. And shapes may be placed on the body to further this ordering effect, such as when care is taken with the placement of plaids so that they match at the armhole and sleeve to create continuation for the eye. Another relationship that provides order is when a shape is graduated from small to large size on the body. Such a gradation provides order by encouraging the viewer to compare one shape with the next, thus creating rhythmic visual movement in the visual effect.
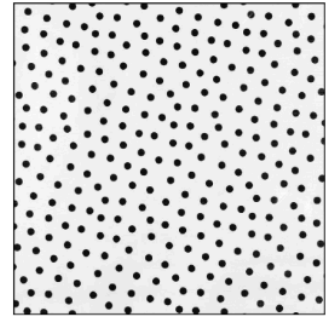
Shape in Apparel Design

Silhouette

Patterns

Visual Texture

A

B

C

Form refers to three-dimensional shapes. The human body is a universally recognized three-dimensional form. Though it is three-dimensional, it can be viewed in the round as a three-dimensional form, or two-dimensionally as a series of body views, as when a body view is photographed.

Product shapes can interact with the body shape or body form. When considered on the body, shapes and surfaces may appear as two-dimensional or three-dimensional. When surfaces disguise the three-dimensional body, we are often only aware of the two-dimensional silhouette.

Silhouette is the outline created by the edges of shapes, a representation of a shape, a bounded area expressed as a two-dimensional shape. The silhouette appears to the viewer as a boundary. This is especially true when the eye takes in a surface, such as matte black, that hides a part such as a pocket. When such a surface is worn on the body, the eye slides immediately to the silhouette.

Silhouette is further created by the edges of whatever is placed on the body, and this involves proportion. The placement of a hemline, for example, affects the silhouette in a head-to-toe analysis because of what becomes focus and what becomes ground. Another example is the hemline of a suit jacket, which is usually related in proportion to the length of the arms and the torso.

The placement of a skirt hemline is related to history and to the zeitgeist. Is this placement a defined and closed shape, or an open hem such as the high-low effect or the irregular handkerchief hem with its points surrounding the body? Silhouettes are important in identifying various styles and time periods because the outline defines the relationship of the body to various design shapes. Silhouette is a most significant shape related to trend and style patterns.

Trend Challenge

Take a head-to-toe photo of yourself and trace it in black and white. Limit the detail to indicating, through line, only how the limbs or appendages differentiate from each other. What shapes are suggested by the different parts? Include this 2D image in your notebook and play with ways to create a different order of viewing. Try out three different sketches, using the same base image. Do you always look first at the round head with round eyes? Perhaps if you make the arm red, it would grab your attention first? Below your sketches note the order of viewing that you are seeking.

LINE

Key feature in clothing are line and, most importantly, the direction in which the line is moving. At its simplest, line refers to a long narrow mark or band. When related to the body, line can provide visual movement and an expressive effect based on how it orients to the body. Line that leads the eye when related to the body can repeat vertical or horizontal body lines. A vertical line that repeats body verticality may help enhance the visual effect of height and dignity. A horizontal line at the waist may provide focus and define the torso when it is a contrasting part in how it relates to other parts in the head-to-toe analysis of the visual effect. Horizontal lines on the body can create a stable, calm expression of rest; vertical lines can express dignity and strength. Curved lines are often considered graceful, relaxed, or carefree. Diagonal lines suggest movement and can create a sense of excitement, especially when oriented against the basic horizontal vertical aspect of the body.

The source or origin of lines is worth considering. Lines can be printed on the surface of a fabric or created in the way in which the parts of the whole are arranged. They can be created, for instance, by edges of shapes as

they appear when placed on the body. Lines can be printed onto the surface of a textile or be created in the way an ensemble is designed to be worn, such as the vertical line created by a row of buttons on a jacket or the line created when a jacket is worn open with its edges revealing a contrasting shirt or sweater.

The expressive effects of line can vary from, from hard-edged to soft and blurred. Hard edges can be created with a contrast in value—in a dark blue suit jacket, for example, whose edges show contrast with a light-yellow shirt. Soft edges can be viewed in the gathers of light and shadow in the folds of a skirt of middle value. They can also be created using colors whose hues are similar in value and chroma.

Placement of lines on the body can create interesting visual effects. Repetitious lines placed horizontally on a T-shirt also create a vertical movement when the eye moves upward from one to another. Repetitious lines that have little to no relation to the body may become interesting when they are placed on the body and as the differences are noticed in their placement.

Line may be obvious or subtle. For example, a line printed on the surface of a fabric and placed on the body would be an actual line. But there are many visual effects created by more subtle lines. Buttons on a jacket, for example, may invite the viewer's eye to connect the buttons to another. Or the eye may line up a center front opening at the neckline with a belt buckle centered at the waist.

Always observe carefully and consider the visual effect of the head-to-toe examination of line direction. Beware of generalized statements, such as vertical lines on the body are always slimming. If the direction of the viewer's eye in taking in a series of vertical lines is across from one line to another, it offers a horizontal direction in ordering the body shapes and surfaces.

Trend Challenge

Pick two advertisements in which line has been applied to the body in clothing or another product. Put those images in your notebook and analyze them. How does the line affect your viewing? Point out first the line you see, and describe it visual effect. (For example, a belt will highlight a waistline, break up or emphasize color, or emphasize long legs because you know where the top and the bottom are.)

TEXTURE

Texture is defined as how surfaces appear visually, such as smooth, matte, or shiny. Textural variation more often functions as a nuance of the surface rather than a figure-ground effect. These variations provide variety to the eye and, when combined, can help to create order on the body.

Textures are often combined and featured together on the body to create contrast. They are visually apparent and noticed because of their difference, such as smooth and shiny contrasting with coarse and matte. A smooth and shiny leather jacket might be paired with trousers that have a coarse, textured tweed surface. A surface with some fiber variation can be viewed as having visual activity. For example, the viewer may perceive a tweed surface as thick and warm to wear, and therefore associate the fabric with winter use.

In a head-to-toe analysis, consider the textures of the body. Think of the variety of body textures, such as hair textures that are glossy and smooth, braided or curled. Skin surfaces can be hairy or freckled, smooth or wrinkled.

Visual textures more often provide an opportunity for scanning than a focusing function in taking in the body as the unit of analysis. Surfaces that are matte and have little surface variation, for instance, are simple to view. A black suit jacket with a matte surface that the viewer can scan quickly yields a no-nonsense visual effect. By contrast, the soft and yielding surface of a pink chiffon evening dress invites a lingering scan of the surface, with its soft folds and the play of light and shadow along the surfaces. The expressive effect is quite different in these instances.

Consider the relationship of visual and tactile textures. The experience of how a surface appears visually is **visual texture**. How a product material feels to the touch is its **tactile texture**. Visual and tactile characters can interact in our experience, as we see the visual texture and infer how a material might feel. Some textures are visually easy to experience and remember, and they look the way they feel. The velvet surface of a middle value blue looks soft and feels soft to the touch—a confirmation of the similarity of the visual and tactile character. Other visual and tactile characters may be quite different. Some textures require hands-on experience, such as when the texture is different in the wearing. A texture may look soft but feel scratchy in the wearing.

With the increase in online shopping, this difference in visual and tactile texture is important to consider. Textures that are entirely visible (e.g., smooth or rough) can determine visual effect, but if not actually touched it may be impossible to know the experience of wearing them unless the fiber content and finishing details are described and the user in the target market has previous experience with such textures and fiber content. Some textures that become a trend may need a descriptor to attract attention and ensure comfort in wearing.

Touching is an experience of the senses that becomes an anticipation. Children like to touch everything in their environment, and the pleasure of some textures become an expectation. Often a product's tactile qualities are important not only to the experience of how it feels, but to how it will look. But a consumer may buy a product based upon touch alone. This is especially important in products like bath towels or bed sheets that require close-to-the-body contact. Think how difficult it is to judge these tactile qualities when a product is wrapped in plastic. How often do you want to break open the packaging to touch it?

Think of the expressive meaning of various textures you have seen featured together. Sumptuous textures are often indicators of a mature elegance. A texture that is light in weight and flows into folds on the body may appear as elegant in formal wear. Some designers are known for featuring these textural qualities, such as Issey Miyake, a Japanese designer who designs using textures to great advantage. Italian designers with the Missoni

label create surfaces that are characteristically expressive because of their visual texture; so too are the surfaces of Coogi. The signature looks of the sweaters by Coogi (left) and Missoni (right) are based upon visual texture.

GMD
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2014.010.
003male
sweater
Coogi
Partners,
LLC

GMD Missoni
1992
2003.080.020

Trend Challenge

Find an example of a trend promotion that is primarily about textural variation. Put it in your notebook and describe the textures as a selling point for the trend.

OR

The Look: Two stores are selling jeans that vary in texture—one is blue with bleached surface variation, the other a solid dark blue denim. Put both images in your notebook and describe the textural differences in the jeans. Find a marketing story online about jeans. Copy and paste it into your notebook. Using it as a structure, write over it to highlight the textural qualities of the story.

COLOR

Color is a critical factor in trendsetting. Because many users prioritize color in their selections, color often functions to attract attention among the trends offered in the marketplace. It is important to realize that we view color as individuals and that our individual viewing is influenced by our previous experiences with color, including preferences that begin at an early age and the capability of our eyes to see color.

Color relationships are important to trends, as coordinating colors in eye-pleasing arrangements offer a powerful attraction in the marketplace. These include how colors relate to one another on the color wheel. The language of color is important to learn. Traditional combinations are often challenged with new colors put together in pleasing arrangements.

The basic language of color:

- ◦ **Primary colors** are red, yellow, and blue. These are equidistant from each other on the color wheel, and other colors are formed from them.
  - ◦ **Secondary colors:** orange, green, and violet are formed by combining primary colors. They are opposite each primary hue on the color wheel.
  - ◦ **Tertiary colors** are formed by mixing primary and secondary colors in combinations.
  - ◦ Depending upon the hue, colors are considered to have a **temperature**, from warm to cool.
  - ◦ **Warm colors** (hues) are reds, yellows, and oranges.
  - ◦ **Cool colors** (hues) are blues, greens, and some purples.

By manipulating value and intensity, same cool hues can appear to be warmer. The warm hue of yellow appears with coordinating HVC values as a gold called burnt sienna and appears cooler. Green, usually considered a cool color, can appear warmer with yellow added for a spring green.

Communicating Color in the Industry

So that you can effectively communicate color within the industry, you need to be familiar with two color-coding systems: Munsell and Pantone. Both are readily accessible on the Internet.

Munsell Color Theory is based on a three-dimensional model in which each color is comprised of three attributes of hue: the name for color family (e.g., red, orange, and yellow), value(he lightness or darkness of a color; often called a **tint** when lightened by adding white, and a **shade** when darkened by adding black), and chroma (the saturation or brilliance of a color; also called **intensity** for the degree of saturation). Hue, value, and chroma are also referred to as HVC.

The Munsell Color system is set up as a numerical scale with visually uniform steps for each of the three color attributes. In Munsell color notation, each color has a logical and visual relationship to all other colors.

Colors in combination are coordinated into color schemes, which are determined by their position on the color wheel. Combinations called **monochromatic** are composed of all one hue, varying in value and/or chroma. An **analogous** combination involves adjacent hues on the color wheel, and a **complementary** combination combines hues opposite each other on the color wheel. Such combinations are used often by designers in marketing trends, but are not usually part of the user's awareness.

Pantone is a second color system. The [Pantone](#) website includes information about developing products and explains how their color-coding system uses numbers, making it easier for designers and trend forecasters to communicate product details. Pantone colors are often referenced in trends. The site features the color of the year and other trend information, such as current colors used during Fashion Weeks around the globe.

You may want to dive more deeply into color by enrolling in a color theory course. In addition, check out the references at the end of this chapter and the Pantone and Munsell websites.

Trend Challenge

Find examples of three different color schemes used in head-to-toe examples of a coordinated look. In your notebook, describe the schemes using the terminology of the Munsell system. Then go to the Pantone website and choose the color numbers associated with the color schemes. You can also use Photoshop to identify the Pantone colors.

Communicating with Color

Think about your experiences of color and how you learned about color. Early in your life, you may have learned about color expectations—that grass is green, and sky is blue. Your color preferences have been influenced by your awareness—e.g., "I like to wear purple because, when I wear that color, people compliment me and tell me I look good." Later you may realize that color is more complex, and that these color descriptions are just simple descriptions of hues. If you were to reproduce a color, you would need to know more about its value and chroma or intensity.

Any colors found on the body (e.g., hair color, skin color, eye color), need to be considered in relationship with what is put on the body. The trend forecaster benefits from an awareness of body colors in a color story. Skin HVC, for example, may be warm or cool, light or dark. In color matching, colors are laid adjacent to the skin, hair, and eyes to determine color characteristics. In the late 20th century, the "Color Me Beautiful" experts did this quite effectively with swatches of colors that helped bring awareness of a person's physical coloring and its potential in relationships in visual effect. Physical color can be complex, because of the variety

of color characteristics that can be found in the hair, skin, and eyes. While hair may be a cool black, for instance, the skin may be a warm tone. Awareness of these differences is useful in creating a visual effect. The Munsell website includes color charts of recognizable variety in body colors that help identify physical coloring through adjacent matching.

Color relationships are created by combining surfaces that are similar in hue, value, and intensity. Color relationships occur across the entire head-to-toe appearance and must include consideration of the coloration of the physical characteristics of the wearer.

Colors need to be consciously related to body surfaces as potential and important relationships with the body. For example, think of all the variations we call white. There are cool and warm whites depending upon the mixture created. Then think about how the color white has potential for color relationships on the body: a person with a warm skin tone may relate more to a warm creamy white with a bit of yellow added. A person with a cool skin tone may like a white with a cool blue tinge.

Trend Challenge

Using a color system, identify the name or number of your flesh color. (Again, you can do this in Photoshop or Illustrator.) Then think about three colors that others have said look good on you. Compare them with your body coloring and think about why they work for you. Using bullet points, note how the colors relate to your coloring.

Being able to specify HVC in color is an important tool in communication. For example, there are many variations of white that may be considered "white" for a wedding in western cultures—cool white with blue added, or a warm white with a bit of yellow added. The HVC of a dress should be noted as it relates to a bride's physical coloring.

The expressive character of colors differs with cultural context. Western cultures favor white for brides, while Eastern cultures favor red. And certain color combinations are also cultural traditions. For example, colors combined by those living in a hot climate often differ from those combined and favored within a cold climate. Such combinations familiar within one culture can be a source of communication about that culture in another.

The communication of colors in trend thinking is influenced by what they are called. Sometimes the same hue can occur repeatedly from year to year and span several seasons by being named differently in the trend message. The same HVC of red blue (maroon hue) may be called burgundy in one season, and beet root in a successive season. Green can be named for the season, with spring green a green mixed with yellow and named

for the new growth of trees and shrubs, and Christmas green a green mixed with blue of a darker value. Blue is a color that crosses seasons, but it appears differently based on surfaces that may be variously textured and light or dark in value.

Each year the color forecasting industry announces a color of the year, based on analysis of possible variations on the color wheel, for all sorts of products including clothing and interiors. Such forecasting provides a focus for the industry and for the products offered. Some users enjoy having a color of the year as one of their must-have purchases. Other users ignore such specific forecasts, and may believe that the practices related to color of the year forecasts limit their choices.

Trend Challenge

Color is a powerful tool for expressing mood and for emphasizing certain features or relationships. Think about certain colors that have been combined for so long that they have become traditional. Find examples and post them in your notebook.

OR

How many names can you think of that could refer to a blue hue to keep it uppermost in the minds of your user from one season to another? Would you change the value or intensity as you change the name for marketing purposes?

OR

Product colors are often divided into groups according to their intensity. This creates a natural relationship that blends. Find combined colors that would fit two of the following product color groups:

- Brights—primary and vivid color intensity
- Pastels—hues with added white to soften and lighten
- Neutrals—hues that blend with other color groups; often considered background colors
- Midtones—in-between values of similar intensities
- Muted–midtones with added gray to create a dusty effect
- Jewel tones—royal hues often used in jewelry
- Earth tones—colors related to the earth, e.g., sand, rocks, rust, brown

The Visual Effect—Achieving a coordinated look!

Coordination of the visual effect occurs when the elements of a presentation combine to make a whole look, and when the trend forecaster considers the relationship of the elements both to each other and to the body surfaces, size, and shapes.

Coordination involves many choices, and the current look includes many ways in which an individual can appear that are accepted in the spirit of the zeitgeist. Such variety has not always been accepted. In the past, a more centralized period style could be identified as characterizing the decade. For example, in the 19th century, decades were characterized by changes in the silhouette, such as the crinoline period with the bell-shaped, full-length skirts at midcentury evolving into the bustle silhouette. Some historians even consider that similar characteristics occurred with all categories of appearance, for men, women, and children, and that a period can be identified by these characteristics. In the mid-20th century, hemlines were considered such an important part of the silhouette that they were measured from the floor rather than considered in terms of how a hemline looked on the wearer's body. Today, hemlines are more often determined by relating to the wearer's body proportions as well as to the visual effect of the current look.

Designers who rose in popularity throughout the 20th century offered coordinated looks for the user by designing and branding every item a person would wear from head to toe—hats, jackets, trousers, shoes, and handbags. Wearing all designs from one brand or designer was a solution to coordinate one's appearance. YSL, a designer of the 20th century, was known for coordinating a look across seasons and years.

In the 21st century, the marketplace is oriented to brands and purchase of separate items that offer mix-and-match options. Today the marketplace encourages all categories of user—from those who enjoy creating their own look to those who seek help or prefer to turn the process of coordination over to a service.

Many products are sold individually that may require suggestions for coordination through window or store displays. Some products are sold individually but are designed to coordinate, such as swimming trunks and top, or casual sweats. The consumer may buy the coordinated top and bottom or chose just one and coordinate it to create a different look.

There are many resources for inspiration in coordinating a look, including videos, blogs, and other social media. Catalog shopping has evolved to include such help, and personal shoppers have been a popular solution for those who want more specific help in coordinating their appearance. Online companies such as Stitch Fix, offering product coordination, are becoming popular.

Trend Challenge

Do this, not that: Magazines often offer advice for coordinating products. Find a few unsuccessful coordinated looks and include them in your notebook. What would you do to improve the look? Make a collage of images, colors, and words that would direct the consumer to make a better coordinated look.

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CHAPTER 10 - RECOGNIZING TREND PATTERNS IN PRODUCT RELATIONSHIPS

Marilyn Revell DeLong

To forecast trends for a marketplace that includes fluctuating tastes and fashions, you will need to develop a sharp eye, a curiosity for detecting changes in direction of the society, and a willingness to examine how these changes are influencing your target market. Forecasts include big-picture thinking as well as attention to what product categories are trending and to a product and its function.

This chapter is about the processes of recognizing trends and trend relationships. The aim is to increase understanding of the role of trend patterns in the way we organize or coordinate products and what factors to consider in marketing to your user.

The Innovative Product? How is it Trending?

Trend forecasters make the invisible visible.

When you look at products that are trending, think about differences in how products have influenced changes in behavior. Two contrasting examples are the smartphone and the T-shirt. Smartphones have a relatively short history, but they have changed the ways in which we interact with others and have influenced behavior globally. We are motivated to buy a smartphone because of its influence in messaging others and in communication generally. Smartphones are an innovation which could be considered *revolutionary*, with a wide impact in a relatively short time. The T-shirt, on the other hand, could be described as *evolutionary*, with changes in appearance and use occurring over an entire century. The T-shirt began as underwear in the early 20th century when the U.S. Navy began issuing standard undershirts in white cotton to help keep crew members warm. By the middle of the century, it had

transitioned from undergarment to general-use casual outerwear, and in 21st century, the T-shirt continues as a strong product offering.

To extend the impact of both the smartphone and T-shirt as trends, both have been modified. The smartphone may continue to extend its impact with new technological advances that include more functions. You might ask: what other modifications could be added to extend the smartphone's impact? Details of shape or convenience, perhaps? What other products could accompany the smartphone? Think of protective cases that have become tools of personalization, or matching accessories or clothing. While the t-shirt is now worn by all ages of men, women, and children, it has used essentially the same layout for the last 100 years, named for its T-shape to fit the torso and sleeves to accommodate the arms. But today, modification of the T-shirt continues: the product is altered by introducing colors, patterns, and messaging details. Surfaces are printed with messages about how we think and feel. Other changes have had an impact as well, such as the way in which the T-shirt is combined within a head-to-toe ensemble, or with other products like a blazer. A significant trend pattern for the T-shirt is relates to how it is worn and how it is combined with other product categories.

In observing such trend patterns, you need to pay attention first to the product and its function, then to how product categories are trending in combination.

Trend Challenge

Consider how many ways the T-shirt has changed as a product and the way it is worn with other products. From your own closet, choose three T-shirts that you wear often. Photograph each one flat, and answer the following questions for each.

1. Describe what you like about each T-shirt.
2. When wearing this T-shirt, what do you pair it with? Why? Include images.
3. Speculate on the transitions that may have contributed to how your T-shirt was designed as a product or worn with other items. Identify at least three innovative transitions in the T-shirt from the last five years.

Coordinating a Look

Whether a product is sold singly or in combination with other products, product relationships are involved. To achieve a coordinated look, these product relationships must ultimately be considered on the body—including

all that is placed on the body and modifying it. These relationships of products with one another and as they relate to the body can result in a coordinated effect that is an attraction in the marketing story.

Products need to be considered both from the standpoint of design and their visual effect. Designers are continually pushing the edges of user acceptance, and the trend forecast must balance between perceived chaos and order. Users will then assign meaning to products based upon their visual effects. We return to the three levels of processing meaning described by Norman: visceral, behavioral, and reflective. The trend forecaster is wise to become aware of the meaning associations trending within a society. Pets, for example, have long been a trigger for positive emotional associations, especially soft and furry pets. But with the pandemic, many more families have been buying pets, and trend forecasters have found it useful to encourage this emotional connection by including a pet in marketing a look. In addition, many pet clothing lines have emerged for sale.

Product Categories & User Expectations

As a trend forecaster, be on the lookout for how product categories, and the ways in which they function and are worn, can appear and reappear in the marketplace. Some product categories are style tropes, "classics" that have stood the test of time for their users and don't change much from season to season. Users expect such a product to have some familiar and unchanging characteristics. The trench coat, as mentioned before, is a classic product that has not changed much over time; it has continued to be recognized and have value in the marketplace. Other product categories have changed in function and appearance over the past century. The tuxedo, for instance, became popular in the late 19th century as a more casual category of formal wear. Today it is considered an ultra-formal two-piece suit worn to weddings and proms, and it continues to be modified; what was originally only black now comes in vibrant colors that often are created to match with the event. Such examples need to be noticed not only for their relevancy and staying power, but for what has changed. They must be understood over time, and a look backward can be useful to the trend forecaster.

Some style tropes are accepted as familiar and foundational, such as some underwear or nightwear. Products like these that function more privately are so familiar to your target market that little change is needed for their continued acceptance. Modifications such as a new color or print may be all the change necessary to continue their value in the marketplace.

Familiarity and surprise

The right combination of familiarity and surprise often depends upon who the user is and how familiar a product has become. Though the viewer expects some familiarity in products, the attraction is often to the surprise. To comprehend surprise for the user, the trend forecaster must consider what has come before and what is familiar to the target market. Scarves, for example, have been a familiar accessory used by the mature woman to coordinate and change an ensemble. But the shape and length of a scarf can vary, from a small square to a large rectangle, from a flowing to a stiff fabric, from subtle to brightly colored. These variations affect the wearing, and the shapes and materials used can expand how the scarf can be worn. Wearing a scarf in a new way and modified by size, shape, or patterning can be a surprise that is easily recognized but also accepted as familiar. For many users, such a balance of familiar with new and surprising needs to be considered in the trend story.

Trends can repeat over time. James Laver suggested a period of at least 20 years—the length of time it takes for a trend to pass from the memory of one generation and be perceived as newsworthy and attractive again, this time to another generation (Laver, 1973). Examples include a silhouette, such as the shift silhouette of the dresses of the 1920s repeated in the 1950s, or the length of a necklace, that can be designed to extend over the chest or shortened to adorn a neckline to focus the face and upper body. Such repetition can involve a range from small to full-on changes in product detail or in the product category.

Product categories that change to attract the viewer need the attention of the trend forecaster in telling the trend's story. What attracts may be color, silhouette, line, or shapes featured on certain areas of the body. Athletic shoes that were once in colors to go unnoticed on the body are produced in bold colors that attract attention and become a source of focus. When one area of the body becomes focus, the ways in which it is coordinated with another product could become worth pursuing as newsworthy. Boldly colored socks, for instance, have retained popularity along with boldly colored athletic shoes. In both cases, the user has the option to focus attention on the feet.

Extending wear from a functional product to a decorative one involves change. Masks, for example, worn as protection during the pandemic, may become newsworthy if wearing is extended beyond the pandemic. The mask that was at first totally functional is now becoming both functional and designed to consider the wearer's

age and occupation. Masks are being designed with patterns or colors to coordinate with the T-shirt or evening dress.

Sometimes the combinations selected by the wearer become newsworthy. For example, suits are familiar as business wear, as a matching jacket and trouser or skirt with coordinating footwear. Increasingly, as values shift, a change occurs, such as athletic shoes worn with the suit as a nod to comfort and the busy life of the wearer. Product coordination is thus viewed differently, even though the athletic shoes may be changed quickly to coordinate with business wear upon arriving at the office.

Recognition of what offers surprise in product categories familiar to the user is useful to note as a trend forecaster. What is changing in the product category must be recognizable to the user and understood in terms of other products in the marketplace. When the product change is trending, store displays often feature the product but newly combined with other products.

Marketplace Categories

Marketplace categories are in constant flux, and how these categories are currently defined is important to note as related to your target market. Product categories can evolve and become so valued that they can change marketplace categories. The term "athleisure," for instance, is a combination of athletic and leisure created for comfortable clothing that serves multiple functions, from exercise workouts to casual everyday wear for the busy mom or student. Beginning as a popular target for the young and fit, this category has expanded into other markets and is now often worn for traveling comfort.

A product category can be marketed as defining what is formal or casual in the marketplace. Displays using such categories become important to understand, especially in what is selected as an upcoming trend. But the definition of the product category may differ depending upon the user. For many users, a special formal event means that the wearer strives for a coordinated, head-to-toe look, often involving multiple purchases. By contrast, a casual look may be defined as coordinating a group of separates that are put together in a sort of mix-and-match manner. Such marketplace categories may create change in how the target market considers them.

The casual look has been a continuous and evolving trend throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century, and has evolved into fewer categories of dress that are worn strictly as appropriate to the occasion. Blue jeans, for example, were originally worn for physical labor, where priorities included durability and ease of care. Now blue jeans are worn to theater and concerts, and by ages and users in certain situations. Indeed, they have become a ubiquitous staple. But when the product becomes a style trope that has been in the marketplace for an extended time, details begin to count more. In this case, the user finds a need to increase the numbers of blue jeans in the wardrobe, with differences in fit, exact color, or brand logo. And more thought is put into what is worn with the jeans to signify various occasions. For a more formal occasion, they may be worn paired with a velvet jacket and special high-heeled footwear.

Evolving categories in the way products are marketed can influence trend forecasting. For example, the

category called *athleisure*, mentioned earlier, has evolved in the marketplace and has become understood as a style of casual sportswear. Defining a newer category of casual, athleisure is an ever-increasing influence on fashion and trend forecasting. In addition, with more people working from home during and since the pandemic, another potential category is being created. A combination of products to wear to work that have features related to athletics, and sportswear, and comfort, are evolving into a category called *athwork*, defined as sportswear to wear for both work and workouts.

Trend Challenge

What product categories do you notice evolving? Identify a style trope that may be evolving (for example, how Juicy Couture re-introduced sweatpants). Find 3–5 images that begin to show that evolution. In your notebook, identify what is familiar and what is new. How can you push that trend forward? What is your suggestion to capitalize on that evolution? What would you name it?

Product Feature Details

Let's now consider product features that are trending, with examples such as how colors can become a feature of the trend story. The trend forecaster might feature a color if it is new this season or is featured as the Color of the Year by Pantone, and then consider how the product color might be put together with a familiar one. The way in which the colors are combined becomes the trend story.

As a trend forecaster, how will you select color to present the product features? Think about the details of hue, value, and chroma (HVC). If the color you will feature is middle value and muted in chroma or intensity, it will reveal folds and tucks more readily than either a black or white surface. A fabric of middle value that drapes around the body and forms diagonal tucks at the waist thus creates a subtle accent at mid torso, with the tucks easily viewed because of the middle color value. Such a middle value surface would appear differently if the user decided to select a darker value surface where the silhouette becomes more prominent than the diagonal tucks. These differences in how colors are presented along with the other product features have created the necessity of featuring online products in a variety of colors.

Some new materials are noteworthy for their associations with user values, such as a biodegradable athletic shoe or blue jeans. A user who values the effects of products on the environment could be attracted to an accompanying story about biodegradable products.

The hand and drape of materials can become a feature. For example, a classic shirt could be produced in a

transparent black fabric that extends to the floor rather than ending at the hip. The fabric is crisp enough to move with the body but also has a subtle drape that is attractive in the way it encompasses the body. All such details are important for the trend forecaster to attend to in the trend story.

Trend Challenge

Futurist Faith Popcorn of the Brain Reserve identifies overarching societal changes and influences. On her website (faithpopcorn.com/trendbank) select one societal direction (e.g., cocooning, 99 lives, or eve-olution). What products or looks might relate to the societal direction you chose? Devote one page of your notebook to this topic. Identify the societal change and at least three products that can be associated with it. Write a 150-word paragraph reflection about how you have experienced this change and the sewn products associated with it.

Ground Rules for Observing Trend Patterns

Remember that observing trend patterns in a product relies on first the big picture, on understanding the societal directions occurring in the culture, then on cultivating a deep knowledge of your user and lifestyle and of what constitutes familiarity and surprise for your target market. Lastly, you will need to cultivate an ability to analyze trend patterns in what designer and brand ideas are available that can become fashion for your user—the styles your target market will accept as fashion. Ground rules for observing trend patterns are as follows.

Form and Meaning Relationships

Consider the head-to-toe form as the unit for observation and analysis. Your observation should consider products, how they are put together, and their relationships with the body. Whenever possible, start with observing the head-to-toe entity—all that is placed on and modifying the body surfaces, shapes, lines, and textures. The unit of analysis must include the body, as many dynamite visual relationships can occur when colors are placed adjacent to or in proximity to the skin and hair of the model displaying the product. Finally, consider how form relationships affect the expression and therefore the meaning.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Understanding Your Aesthetic Response, there are different sources of

meaning. Here we are first focusing on the meaning that arises from the product itself. For example, the selection of design elements can affect the expressive effect. Color can be bold and cheerful or muted and subdued. The resulting expressive effect is one that arises directly from the product. A simple silhouette with an arrangement of lines that follow that silhouette can be an expression of simplicity and minimalism, easy to observe and read. The message is simple and clear and arises from the design elements selected. Brands are created using such an expressive effect as a tool for recognition of both the products and their marketing.

Figure-Ground Relationships

Consider the figure-to-ground relationship. Figure is what becomes focus for the viewer and ground is what appears behind or surrounding the figure. This relationship is also called positive and negative space. The trend forecaster needs to be aware of both.

This figure-ground relationship influences how the form occupies space. The body and its silhouette related to the surrounding area can appear closed and compact or open to the surround. An example of a closed and compact form is a person in a dark business suit surrounded by a light background. In this instance, the form itself can become figure. The dark value makes features such as the edges of pockets or lapels less noticeable, with the resulting silhouette appearing more definite and closed. The expressive effect is very familiar in the arrangement of the form; we may say that the person "means business."
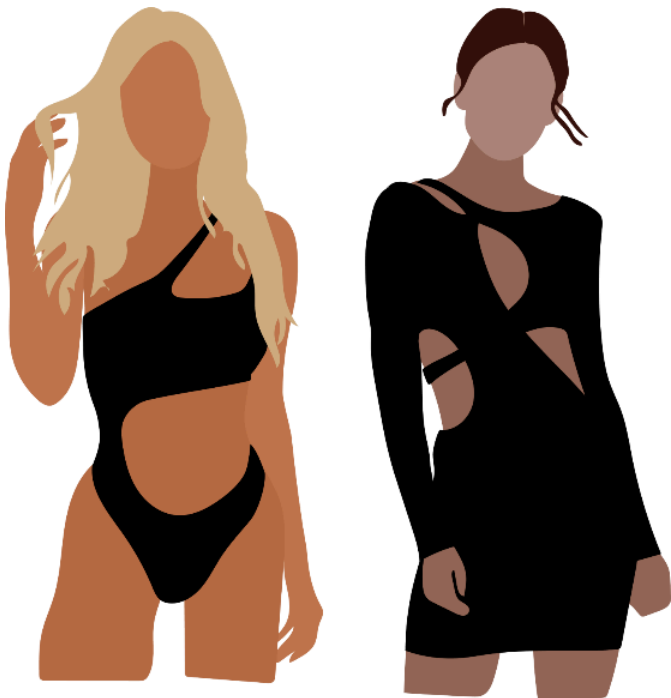
With the aid of fabric, the body can also occupy space in a voluminous way and appear more open to the surround. The veil worn as headwear by a bride is often perceived as open to the surround. What could be worn to extend the body both vertically, through a heightened hair shape and high-heeled shoes, and horizontally, through an extension of skirts or trousers? History includes many such examples. Today, a bride may create a flowing movement that extends the space of the body by wearing a dress with a train that drags along the floor and slightly resists forward movement.

Next consider the space occupied within the form. The source of such visual parts perceived as figure includes repeated printed shapes, shapes of pockets and collars, and relationships of the products with the body. A bare midriff or a cutout on the shoulder or thigh, for example, creates a relationship of the product with the body. What becomes focus and how it relates to what appears as ground is a means of creating a relationship with the body. This interactive pattern is used often in the design of swimwear, such as

the bikini, where there is an interaction of the two surfaces with the body, of skin to garment. What becomes figure is an interesting exercise in perception of the form.

Consider what becomes figure or focus as you examine the head-to-toe form. Try to always consider the entire head-to-toe unit in your analysis. What does your eye land on, first, second, third? If you first see the head of the wearer, are you then attracted to other parts of the body? How do you take in the entirety? Is there anything in the unit that attracts you to the whole form? What you see first is the focus, but there can be more than one source of focus causing you to move throughout the form. In the case of a dark two-piece suit worn with a light valued shirt and colorful tie, for example, we may focus first upon the head of the wearer, then the tie and shirt that contrasts with the dark suit, and then upon the silhouette of the form.

Shapes printed on the surface or textural patterns are often useful in analyzing the use of figure-ground in determining user preferences. First observe the pattern and whether there are shapes that become figure—a focus for you. Then consider how close the surround appears to be to the shapes that appear as figure. Such print variations may be a trend, including, for instance, whether the figure and ground relate in a similarly shallow space or the figure seems to stand away from the background.

Trend Challenge

Select a head-to-toe image, and then consider figure-ground relationships in your analysis:

Silhouette: How much space does the entire form occupy? Does the silhouette follow body lines and shapes or does it stand away? Does the silhouette become figure, or are there other shapes or surfaces that you are more aware of than silhouette?

What is the character of that unit in a head-to-toe analysis? Is it closed to focus upon silhouette as one large figure or open to the space around it? Is it viewed as a whole or in parts? What prompts you to observe the form in its entirety?

What is the character of the shapes within the form? Do they become focus as visual parts or are they textural in effect, adding surface interest but not becoming a source of focus?

Movement Relationships

Visual movement is defined as an ordered, recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements, called *rhythm*. When viewing the head-to-toe form, does your eye move throughout the form as you are viewing the whole? If so, identify the relationships that create this visual movement. A gradient of size or density of shape, such

as small to large shapes or thin to thick lines, can create movement. Color blocking—defined as creating parts with different colored surfaces—can be repeated within the form, serving as a source of movement. In the process of viewing the form you observe this order and it creates visual direction within the form. Strong and weak elements can be defined by gradations that serve to direct the eye: shape size, pattern density, textural variations. If you perceive such visual movement, you may first ask its source and then its direction: vertical, horizontal, diagonally with the silhouette or diagonally around the body, and so on.
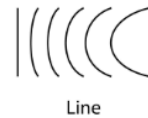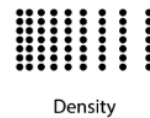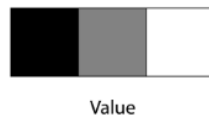

Geoffrey Beene, c. 1985   Bonnie Cashin, c. 1968   Dior, c. 1974   Elsa Schiaparelli, c. 1934

Gradation

Size   Value   Density   Line

Contrast

Yves Saint Laurent, c.1975   Yves Saint Laurent, c. 1980   Geoffrey Beene, c. 1985   Yves Saint Laurent, wedding dress

What relationships do you see that help to lead your eye in taking in the form? Is there texture or a surface print that fills the area? For example, a printed pattern may be recognizable—the shape of a flower, an animal skin, a geometric shape like triangle or the circles of polka dots. Ask: what is the function of the pattern? Shapes can

become focused parts that lead the eye, and the size relationships play a part in their function. They also help create meaning based upon experience. Polka dots, for example, may be perceived differently depending upon whether they are in fashion, and animal prints recycle often, though the pattern may be modified as leopard, zebra, or snake. Sometimes such patterns appear up-to-date, while at other times they appear to be from a past decade. When recognized as from the past, we may call them *retro* or *vintage* to garner meaning, familiarity, and acceptance.

Now consider movement that involves actual body movement: when the body is in motion, does the silhouette of the ensemble stay intact in its definition or does it move against or with the body? Increasingly, the visual effect of actual body movement is being used as a feature in a display. Clicking on an image in an online catalog, for instance, might show the model in motion while wearing the item.

Size Relationships and Proportion

Proportion is about comparative size—what looks appropriate in relation to the visual effect of the whole form. How a part is compared in relation to the whole influences the visual effect. In fashion, the effect of this proportional relationship may change and become a trend pattern to note for your target market. A change in the position of shorter or longer lengths of the sleeve on the arm, for example, may become the trend story for your target market. The category of footwear may become a trend in the way it is proportional to the head-to-toe look. A shoe with a platform will appear heavier in proportion to the rest of the body. For a dark enclosed boot, we may say "that shoe certainly grounds the body," a popular trend for the Emo or punk look. Or the opposite may occur when a competitive skater wears flesh-colored skates that make the body in movement appear airy and light in proportion.

Proportions also include comparative sizes of shapes that originate from accessories or printed patterns. Surfaces printed with large bold shapes attract more attention than those with small and subtle shapes. Accessories are often selected based upon proportion—for example, a small bag that appears acceptable for a petite body but not for a tall individual. When the fashion is for tiny handbags, how do we speak about proportion for a tall or plus size person? What are the options? That person could choose to adopt the trend for tiny handbags or find something larger that is more in proportion to the body.

Shapes need to be considered as they are proportioned to body shape and size. Notice the proportions of the body related to what is put upon it. A petite-size individual, for example, is one whose body height is under 5 feet 4 inches, and U.S. women's sizing is designed to accommodate this petite scale with reduced sleeve and torso lengths. But what about the proportion of the pockets and collar—are they also scaled to the petite size? Or, conversely, do we expect the pocket on the jeans of a plus size to be scaled larger? What about the function of the pocket needing to fit the hand, and the decorative stitched applied? These questions are all about size relationships and proportion.

Sensitivity to proportional relationships for your target market is key. Clothing can modify how we view body parts by their size relationship to the whole. Notice fit related to the body as part of any trend, and the

proportions your target market is accustomed to. For example, the tailored suit jacket worn by younger age groups may fit more snugly than what is preferred by an older person who wears the jacket fitted in a more familiar, traditional way, with shoulder pads and surfaces fitted to skim over body shapes and appear wrinkle-free. The proportional relationship of the clothing to the body may spell acceptance or rejection for your target market.

Steps in the Organizing Process

As you increase your understanding of what is trending in a particular product category, you will need to assess the relationships of visual parts within the whole unit. How relationships become viewing priorities in the organizing process can be a clue to a trend pattern. These relationships include those within the product, those with other product combinations, and those with the physical characteristics of the person wearing the product.

Relationships involving the product in use are important to feature in product trends. The visual relationships we have just discussed create reasons to focus and scan. Remember from the previous chapter that, as viewers observing a head-to-toe form, we process by focus and scan. We focus upon what attracts our attention—those visual parts of a form, from head to toe, that attract by contrast in shape, line, color, or texture. Scan is about the process of viewing the whole and connecting the foci in viewing. Remember to notice your focus and scan eye movement in taking in the entire form and its relationships.

How we perceive those relationships makes a difference in how they will become accepted. We reviewed the language of color, texture, line, and shape, and how they provide visual definition, in the previous chapter. The idea of relationships within the form must be considered and accepted by the target market to be successful. The ways in which those relationships are recognized as patterns in the viewing process can help tell the story for your target market.

Trend Challenge

This exercise will challenge you to recognize trends through the analysis of a head-to-toe look.

1. Garment image: Select a current head-to-toe image from an advertisement or from an online source such as WGSN. Paste it into your notebook. Scan the whole look from head-to-toe. Look at the body- skin and hair color, the garment as well as the background. Pay attention

to what you see, and note whether you are particularly attracted to something or not.

2. Order of characteristic: What do you see first, second, third? Write down the order next to the image. Be sure to include in your analysis any physical characteristics of the person wearing the ensemble.

3. Examination: Consider how you ordered step #1: with one focus or several points of focus? If several, consider why you ordered them the way you did. Jot down how the design elements and their relationships function in this order.

4. Viewing priorities: What seems to be the priority in viewing? Does one focus point the way to another? Identify five relationships that you find—in surfaces of the skin and hair, for example, or in the expression of the body. Then consider how the body is being treated. Write a few sentences about whether those relationships lead your eye to a destination that attracts you.

5. Now select another head-to-toe look (within the same designer or brand) and repeat steps 1, 2, and 3. Then compare your findings, considering first what is common: are there certain recognizable patterns that are occurring in this designer or brand?

As you develop a way to think in terms of these comparisons, branch out and consider what is common to the season or time across many such products and product combinations.

Messaging the Trend Patterns

The trend story with a consistent degree of simplicity and complexity is often a source of user preference. There are brands that depend upon these preferences to attract their user. Eileen Fisher, for example, tends to brand her products with simple shapes and silhouettes in middle value muted and dark value colors, while Ralph Lauren tends toward more visual complexity in his brand and his messaging of Americana. Choosing the trend story is influenced by preferences of your user.

Once you are aware of and understand the influence of the design elements and their relationships, consider how the look featured will affect your target market, and then examine what message can be used to engage your user. How can you use your own responses to understand trend patterns that would appeal to your target market?

What is familiar and new in what you are seeing? What do you find exciting and new, a surprise that would attract your target market? A new material, a new way of treating the body? Such consideration of what attracts attention need not be revolutionary; it often involves subtle details that are just different from what came before.

What attracts may be a combination of product details that is appealing, a certain relationship that is

different for your user. How will your target market accept these new details? Here is where you need to consider the process of analysis to synthesis. For example, in research of the 55+ user population, participants interviewed often expressed the need for actual, not fake, pockets in their trousers. Pockets for women may be an expressed need for a place to put items so they don't need to carry a handbag. You as a trend forecaster can abstract from the need expressed to possible reasons that would help in the messaging. For example, while your user may not recognize the relationship, this need could point to the Popcorn trend of "eve-olution," describing women who are asking for equal opportunity and treatment. This response may occur for women because they see the convenience of men's trousers and jackets that have ample and functional pockets.

Remember that the user in your target market may be aware of a trend pattern if its pointed out, but would otherwise not be conscious of or have words to describe the trend. The notion that a visual picture is worth a thousand words is a consideration here. Often the user recognizes the trend pattern and would select it as up-to-date even though they might not understand or even care about describing the visual relationships involved. But as the trend forecaster, you need to understand these relationships that create the trend pattern and have the language to describe them.

Here is where the trend story becomes important as you select the message appropriate to your target market. By knowing your target market, you will be able to present the story in a way they will accept. How products are presented to the viewer often requires forward thinking. The trend forecaster needs to understand the target market, what is familiar and what is new and could become acceptable to the user. Though your target market may be made up of a variety of users, from innovators to laggards, your user—with the right messaging—may be willing to step away from the familiar and try something new.

Trend Challenge

For a congruent trend message, think about how to communicate line direction. This communication is so important that even traditional and familiar brands are often updated. Target, for instance, changed the name of its activewear to "All in Motion." How is this a better name for a Target brand than the former, more traditional Target brand "Merona" for this product category? What would you expect the direction of line to be for "All in Motion"? What about other design elements? Can you think of a better name for activewear?

Do a Google search to find 2–3 recent brands that have updated their line direction with a new or altered brand name. Create a chart of the three brands noting the following: 1) the original name, brand direction, and user, 2) the new name and brand direction and user, 3) changes that you notice in design, and 4) a suggested better/ different name for the brand. Defend your decision.

Example: Target Merona	Target: All in Motion	Changes in design	Different name Brand? All One
This is a mass-market brand appealing to a wide variety of women. Clothing is inexpensive but trendy and wearable for all occasions. Target is about one-stop shopping, clothing included. The name Merona sounds like a woman's name or a color, so it is appealing to business, casual, teens, moms.	Changes the focus specifically to activewear. Reflecting the athleisure trend. Retains the one-stop shopping angle. Now you can go from office to gym to home to daycare and never change clothes. The user is the same, although maybe more youthful? Appealing to those looking for athletic and yoga clothing.	Athletic focused-sports bras, yoga pants. All include spandex. Motion is the message. All is the message. They are working toward inclusivity in branding. All are welcome here. I don't shop there so I should go and look.	Target continues to take on big issues like sustainability, clothing for disability and LGBTQ. This appeals to younger generation and may be in competition with Walmart in inexpensive clothing for mass. Walmart has rep for conservative and Target may be trying to appeal to liberal mindset?

How is a Product Marketed as a Trend?

What is trending is often a complete look that involves a head-to-toe coordination of products on the body. David Wolfe, a 20th century trend forecaster working with the Doneger Group, recognized this attraction of selling a complete "look." His illustrations showed how a product would relate to the look of the form. He illustrated these coordinated looks—that is, the entire unit of analysis. He understood that the purchaser often needed, searched for, and appreciated help in imagining how a product would come across combined with other products as a "look"—a coordinated visual effect.

The forecaster needs to ask what specific elements of the product are trending, and then incorporate this information into the trend story to include that look. For example, what is trending may be a single product that is advertised and sold as a brand with recognizable details. Athletic shoes, for example, are heavily branded for their function and style. Usually they are sold as a single product, but we see them frequently worn by athletes on the golf course, on a running track, or on a friend out for a morning walk. They are combined with the other elements making up the head-to-toe look for the user. In the U.S., products are often marketed together but sold as separates, even those that are coordinated and meant to go together, such as a sweatshirt and sweatpants ensemble. Sometimes this separation in marketing is featured as an accommodation so that the user can purchase a different size top and bottom. But also consider that the purchaser may still be attracted to and want to see the product as an ensemble.

Should a product be marketed by itself or in combination with other products? A product such as an accessory handbag is often featured by itself as well as with other similar handbags, but is also often featured in

advertisements as combined in a head-to-toe ensemble, suggesting how it would appear if it were carried by a model. Of course, the model has been selected for being in the right proportion with the product. Regardless of how a product is marketed, a selling point in trends is how the product will look as it relates to other products; the product is thus displayed with other products on the body to create a coordinated "look" that will attract the user.

Product Expectations for your Target Market

Pay attention to what your user pays attention to, and how it contributes to the collective lifestyle of your target market. Importantly, consider the age and activities of the user in your target market. For one user, a product may require change or modification that is not suited to another target market. Modesty may become a factor of age and acceptance. Think about how product characteristics repeat and become new again over time. A pairing of the familiar cardigan with a body-conscious halter helps the cardigan be perceived as new again—and in the process may make attractive to a younger target market. The pendulum swings from one extreme to another, attracting attention before settling into a less extreme form. Products repeat in both foundational and new categories. There may, perhaps, be a move away from woven to knitted shirts and back again.

Which categories of clothing will continue as basics for a target market, and which might be expected to change? For example, the turtleneck cotton shirt that glides over the upper torso with long sleeves and a band at the wrist may be an important style trope and classic for users of a certain age with a range of mobility. Paying attention to the preferred neckline for an older target market or for babies, both with limited mobility, may mean consideration of a neckline that can easily be maneuvered over the head.

What the user in your target market intends for the product involves their expectation for durability in the wearing. Some product categories, such as a wedding dress, are expected to be worn to one event and then stored. A wash-and-wear wedding dress may give a mixed message. Evening gowns designed to be worn and publicly viewed by millions, such as those worn at the Academy Awards ceremony, may be borrowed and returned, as the gown is unlikely to be worn again by that celebrity. In South Korea, renting is an option for wedding attire, and the expectation is for careful reuse. But other products are considered for their long-term durability in wearing. The user would not, for example, expect blue jeans to disintegrate in the first wash. The expectation of a long-term wearing cycle should occur more often when durability is a feature. Patagonia, an outdoor brand, tells their story of durability by offering to repair problems such as a broken zipper or frayed cuff. Other companies that stress environmental concerns offer to recycle by redesigning their products for sale again. This becomes the story for those users who value such practices. What attracts your user may be the message of a long-wearing product or one that can be repaired or recycled.

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