

Introduction to Fashion Design

Unit

1

Unit 1

Introduction to Fashion Design

Upon successful completion of this unit the learner will be able to:

- Explain how the elements of fashion appeal influence the purchaser
- Describe the classification of clothing according to their use and types
- Explain factors which affect the decision to buy in the fashion industry
- Describe the process of product development in fashion industry
- Explain the main areas of the production of fashion wear; including an understanding of the key terms, concepts, facts and principles, rules and theories of the field, discipline or practice.

Fashion Design

One of the most important factors which differentiate humans from animals is their use of clothing. Not only does it provide a micro-climate for the wearer's body, but also conceals the body and reveals its wearer's status and personality to others. A diverse range of clothing is used in this concealing and revealing process and creates one of the most mysterious aspects of the clothing industry, fashion.

A person's clothing expresses their status, for example a boss's suit shows his power compared to the workers jeans and t-shirt (however this difference may disappear during the weekend). Throughout our lives the clothing we wear changes, from diapers and pajamas as infants, to a school uniform and then also upon starting a job and getting promoted, even death has a special wardrobe in our society, both for the dead and the mourners. Clothing also helps to establish a person's identity, it reflects the wearer's goals and moral principles in life, communicates self-assurance or the lack there of to the rest of the world and conveys the activity a person is about to engage in, for example a person going to play tennis would be in fitness clothing, not evening attire. Clothing may also be used as costume, to represent something a person is not, or as a uniform to express a person's membership in a defined group.

Fashion could be defined in a very limited way, as the changing of clothing. This originates from peoples need to be accepted and idolized and also the desire to display personal style or indicate a position in society when among a crowd of people. Fashion is not the only consideration we must make in developing a garment for a market however, the overall appearance (style) as well as the use of the garment (ex. fitness) and care (washing) must also be considered.

When creating or styling the appearance of a person using different clothing, accessories and beauty items, you must ensure that the items used reflect the personality of the individual. This is known as fashion designing.

Fashion Design Terms

- A fashion designer creates the garment combinations in a line, they decide elements such as proportion, colour, and texture. He or she may or may not know how to sew or make patterns but formal training is always essential for them. Most fashion designers are formally trained through an apprenticeship and have attended school.
- A pattern maker's job is to draft the shapes and sizes of a garment's pieces with paper and measuring tools, occasionally an AutoCAD computer software programme, or by draping muslin on a dress form (this is the original way to create the garment). The resulting pattern pieces must come together to create the intended design of the garment and they must fit the intended wearer properly. Formal training is essential for working as a pattern marker.
- A tailor makes custom designed garments crafted perfectly to the client's measure for example, suits (coat and trousers, jacket and skirt, etc).
- A textile designer creates or designs fabric weaves and prints which are used for clothes and furnishings. Most textile designers are formally trained as apprentices and in school.
- A stylist is the person who creates outfits by co-ordinating the clothes, jewellery, and accessories. These combinations are used on models for fashion photography and catwalk presentations of clothing collections. A stylist also acts as a designer whose designs are based on unusual or creative things, trends, and the collections of other designers.
- A buyer is in charge of ordering the stocks of clothes produced by the designer for shops, chain stores, and other stores who sell the designers line. Most fashion buyers are trained in business studies.
- A teacher of fashion design teaches the art and craft of fashion in art schools and fashion design school, both privately for younger children or at a university level.
- A custom clothier makes custom made garments to order, for a given customer. They are designed and created to the customers wants and measurement.
- A dressmaker specializes in custom made women's clothes. This includes day, cocktail, and evening dresses, business clothes and suits, trousseaus, sports clothes, and lingerie.
- An illustrator draws and paints clothes for commercial use. They create the ideas for each garment on paper for the designer before it is produced.
- A model wears and displays clothes at fashion shows and in photographs. They often become the face of well known fashion lines.

- A fashion journalist attends fashion shows and events to write fashion articles describing the garments presented, for magazines or newspapers.
- An alterations specialist (alterationist) adjusts the fit of completed garments, usually ready-to-wear, and sometimes re-styles them. NOTE: despite tailors altering garments to fit the client, not all alterationists are tailors as tailors also create clothing.
- A wardrobe consultant or fashion advisor is hired by an individual and recommends styles and colours that are flattering to the client.
- A photographer captures photographs of the clothes on fashion models for use in magazines, newspapers, or adverts.

Chic

The term Chic originates in France and has been established in the English language since at least the 1870s. It has come to mean smart or stylish and is often used to describe a clothing garment or outfit. Over the years "chic" has been applied to a wide variety of things such as social events, situations, individuals, and models or styles of dress. Recurring generic terms include "designer chic" which means that the thing being described is associated with the style of certain couturiers from the 1980's (which became known as the "designer decade". "Retro-chic" is also a generic term which means the object being described has adopted elements from fashion in the past (e.g. "Victorian chic", "sixties chic", "Georgian chic", "1920s Riviera chic")

Collection

Each season (spring, summer, fall and winter), the design and merchandising departments of each designer are responsible for creating a new line, which is the seasonal collection of garments that the manufacturer will sell to retail store buyers. So for the winter season the line may consist of a winter coat, sweaters, long pants, and a pair of boots, for example. The terms "line" and "collection" have the same meaning, however the term 'collection' is used primarily in Europe or for high-period apparel in the United States. 'Line' is used more often in the United States for moderately and popularly priced fashion, however these terms can be interchangeably used.

Fashion shows

Fashion shows are special events that communicate a fashion story through the medium of models displaying fashion garments on a runway. A fashion show is the combined effort by all departments in a fashion company. The selection and organization of the garments and model bookings may be done by the fashion office, whereas invitations, the venue, seating

arrangements and other arrangements may be handled by the special events department. There are four possible ways that a fashion company can organize these presentations ; in a formal show, in a department show, as a designer trunk show, or as informal modelling.

a) Formal Fashion Shows

Formal fashion shows take a great deal of advance planning by the fashion company, it is a highly organized and anticipated event. It involves booking models and fittings and arranging for a runway, scenery, lighting, microphones, music, seating, and assistants. The clothes that are being displayed are generally grouped according to styling, colour, or other visual criteria. Models and music are selected to complement the clothes and set a mood.

b) Designer Trunk Shows

Designer trunk shows are put on in coordination with a store to display the collection to the best customers. These shows are a popular way for designers to sell expensive collections. Invitations are sent to customers who purchase the most items according to records kept by sales associates. The designer or a representative travels from store to store with the collection, showing it to the customers. The collection is often shown on models and the customers get to see the entire collection unedited by a buyer and may order from the samples in their size. Although some designers and retailers do 50 percent of their total business through trunk shows, others find them time-consuming and exhausting work, and have given them up because they don't see the benefits or reward of it.

c) Department Fashion Shows

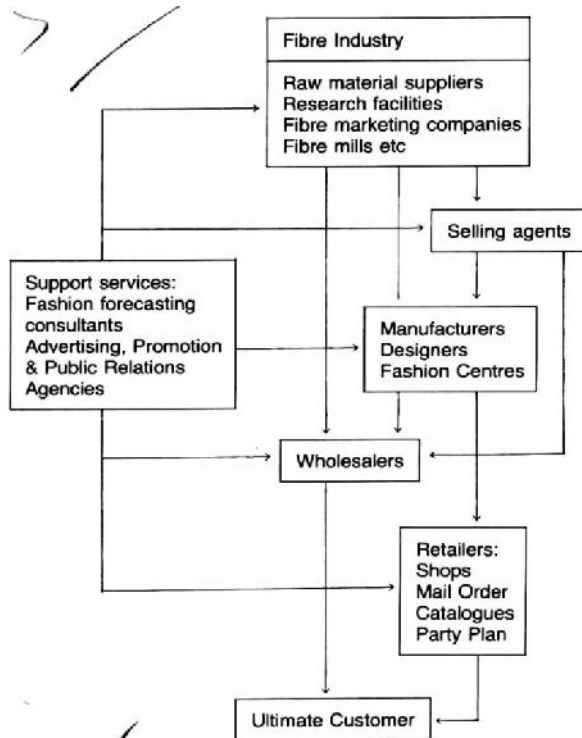
Department fashion shows are on a much smaller scale than formal fashion shows. They are created right in store to generate immediate sales. Usually, a platform is set up directly in the department that carries the clothes, so that customers can easily find the clothes that they are seeing on the runway.

d) Informal Fashion Shows

Informal fashion shows are the easiest to produce. A few models walk through the store showing the clothing that they are wearing to customers who are shopping or having lunch in the store's restaurant. The models can take their time, and customers enjoy asking them questions. This is often done in conjunction with a trunk show or special promotion. This

type of show allows for more customer interaction and gives the customers a personalized feel.

Fashion Flow Chart



Fashion flow chart.

Classification of Fashion

The duration of fashion trend's importance to customers and society is fashion designers and manufactures biggest concern. A fashion can have brief or long duration, for example a certain colour can be "in" for a season, whereas a trench coat could be trendy for multiple years. Once having identified how long or how big a trend is, a designer can assess how important it will be to include, and how significant it should be, in their inventory.

Fashion trends can be classified into many types, such as:

- Style
- Basic or classic
- Fad
- Trends
- Fashion Forecasting

a) Style

A style is always constant, it will never change like fashion changes. Style is how a garment has been modified, and is usually described as the basic outline. When a different neckline, different sleeves or trimming is added to a basic garment, the basic garment is modified into a different look or a different outfit, this modification is known as a new style.

The term “style” is a popular word in the fashion industry, and is considered a sub-division within the category of fashion. By definition, it is “things which have certain characteristics that distinguish the garment from other designs”. For example, the fashion could be a pleated skirt, but the style is a box pleat. It is a common mistake to believe that the famous designers create fashions, rather they created styles, which they hoped would be accepted by the public. If consumers accept the style and buy it, it then becomes a fashion. It is very important to stress that something can only be a fashion if it is accepted by the consumers.

b) Basic or Classics

When a fashion trend lasts a long time, for example the trend of T-shirt and skirt, it is called “Basic” or “Classic”. Like a popular type of music in the music industry, the T shirt and skirt become part of the fashion scene. If the fashion is a classic, a customer has one or more in her wardrobe, because it has become an essential and can be worn in daily life and to every occasion. In certain times, the basic fashion is promoted in all aspects of the fashion industry because it is so important. Whether a basic fashion is in or out, it remains part of the fashion scene. There are many outfits that fall into this classification, such as, shirt and trousers, plain or pleated skirts, denims, etc. There are also basic fashions that last for years, such as, the skirt and the single breasted men’s suit. Basics or Classics are the outfits which stay in the fashion scene for a long period of time. They can be seen in the past and in the present and will appear in the future. When we watch old movies and compare them to current ones, we can see that basic fashions will appear in both of them. However they might have a slight change or modification to suit the time period.

c) Fad

A fad can be defined as a fashion that lasts for a short period of time. A fad is made popular only by a certain group of people, for example, hippies support certain clothing, accessories and hairstyles. A fad could also be short lived because the item is very expensive and only a very limited audience can afford it. A fad can either make a designer's life more interesting or more stressful. Often something appears on the fashion scene that captures their imagination, only to fizzle out a short time later.

d) Trends

Fashion trends are styling ideas that major collections from different designers all have in common. When all the collections have something in common, it indicates the direction in which fashion as a whole is moving. Fashion forecasters look for the styles in the collections that are consistent through each different collection, ideas that capture the mood of the times and could signal a new fashion trend.

Several designers may have similar fashion ideas because they have been inspired by common things. The similarities may be in a fabric, a silhouette, or a design element that is found in several different collections. Very often, a new trend appears in a few collections and then "catches on" when other collections use the same idea. As the press notices similarities between collections and highlights them to the public, the media exposure also helps makes the trends popular.

Researching collections and finding similarities becomes one way a designer, working for a mainstream manufacturer, can research fashion direction. Designers are not invited to the shows so they must predict future trends by shopping in major fashion capitals or using design services, magazines, and newspapers in order to research collections and find consistencies among them.

For retail buyers, it is becoming difficult to figure out which trends will become fashion basics (ex. Capris) and which ones are only fads (ex. Pony prints). Buyers have watch what they buy and be careful with their inventory management as they don't want to get caught with extra, unwanted inventory. If the market is flooded with a new trend, consumers may react negatively to the overwhelming amount of that trend .

The Internet and television allow global trends to catch on quicker than ever before. The life-span of a trend, due to how fast trends now spread, is now about five months instead of a year. For the junior market, the span is only three months.

e) Fashion Forecasting

Fashion Forecasters predict upcoming trends from around the world. A Fashion forecaster's job is to predict the colours, fabrics and styles that will be seen on the runway and in stores in the upcoming seasons. All levels of the fashion industry including haute couture, ready-to-wear, mass market, and street wear attempt to predict things for the upcoming seasons. Fashion forecasting is a branch of Trend forecasting, which is a process that happens in other industries as well, such as automobiles, medicine, food and beverages, literature, and home furnishings. Part of a Fashion forecasters job is attracting consumers and helping retail business's and designers to sell their brands. Today, fashion industry workers rely on the Internet to stay informed on new looks, hot colours, celebrity wardrobes, and designer collections.

Fashion Forecasting uses many forms of media such as, cinema, fashion shows, press, magazines, newspapers and window display to gather information and predict the future of the fashion industry.

It includes:

- Market research
- Consumer research
- Surveys
- Consumer focus groups
- In-store informal interviews
- Shopping
- Sales Records
- Evaluating the collections
- Fashion Trends
- Trend for Target Markets

Fashion forecasters must do all of the following: -

- Decide which fashions are prophetic of future trends in the making.
- Estimate which part of the market will accept a particular fashion.
- Determine at what time these fashions will be accepted and enjoyed by target customers.

Identifying Prophetic Styles

Fashion forecasters study designer's collections to find what they call "prophetic styles", fresh ideas that capture the mood of the times and have the potential to become a trend. If several designers all move in the same fashion direction (that is, if they use similar elements such as a colour or silhouette in their designs), they do so because they had common sources of inspiration, based on current interests or events. The fact that several designers simultaneously responded with similar ideas, to the same inspiration, may indicate the birth of a fashion trend.

Adapting a Trend to a Target Market

A trend must be adapted so that it is appealing to the group of people who will potentially buy it. The influences and methods used to adapt the product depend on the demographic of the consumer, including their age range, income level, lifestyle, and fashion preferences. Fashion can have different styles depending on where it originates from, French fashion tends to be extreme, either to express the creativity of the designers or to draw attention to the individual. American designers on the other hand tend to be softer than the French silhouettes and extremes, because their life-style is more casual than the European.

How Location Affects Timing

The timing of when a fashion-trend is put on sale and how it is adapted depends on the geographical location of potential customers. Designer fashions from Paris and Italy are quickly accepted around the world by those who can afford them and want the opportunity to wear European fashion. Otherwise, it usually takes one or two years for the ideas that are created in Europe to be accepted in America. New York designers fashions are accepted more easily in America because they are specifically designed for the country's needs, unlike European fashions. In either case, people who live a high income and sophisticated urban lifestyle will accept fashion change more quickly than others, because the influences on their lifestyle is different. Manufacturers and retailers adjust their trend predictions according to these lifestyle influences and how long it takes the consumers to accept the trend. In order to determine how long the trend will take to be accepted, they measure the length of time between fashion origin (when a fashion was first designed) and fashion acceptance (when the customer first bought that fashion, or a modification of it). Merchandisers then use this information to know if their customer will accept a current fashion immediately, six months from now, or a year from now. This system has spread across many other industries, from cosmetics to cars and from politics to sports. Many industries also observe fashion and the fashion system as an endless source of inspiration.

It is very important to forecast the future demand for particular styles, fabrics and colours in the fashion industry. Textile specialists work two years ahead to determine the general guidelines for each fashion season. Fashion forecasting is especially important to ensure that

the process of short and long term planning can be based on true facts rather than hype. Forecasting can also help design teams to make the right decisions for future clothes.

Long term forecasting, which forecasts two or more years ahead, is used by executives of large companies for planning purposes. Marketing managers also use long term forecasting to ensure that products are in the right position in the market, at the right time, in order to be competitive (ex. in production, in planing or in stores).

Short term forecasting helps product developers, merchandisers and production managers to develop the style and shape collections. Short term forecasting reports are provided to apparel companies through one or more services, which are hired to scan the market and report on the direction that colour, textiles and style are headed.

Forecasters report the earliest views on trends about eighteen months (a full year and a half) in advance of the season. At this stage, yarn mills must take colour into crucial consideration in order to produce the right colours. Fashion forecasters predict colour trends by analyzing yarn and fabric trade shows and combining that information with their socio-economic and cultural analysis. Major trends in lifestyles, attitude and the culture seen in music, sports, cinema and television are clues used by forecasters to predict changing consumer demands.

Fashion forecasters studying market conditions, analyze the life style of the people, research sales statistics, evaluate popular designer collections, survey fashion publications (such as magazines) and observing street fashions in order to make good predictions.

The Direction of Fashion Change

Some trend watchers use a pyramid shape to represent the dynamics of fashion, each level of the pyramid represents a status level in society. Some theories say that fashion is first worn by the highly visible elite (celebrities, models etc) and then moves down the pyramid. In other theories, fashion moves up the pyramid from the street (lowest level), once it is discovered by the fashion elite, and then is introduced to mainstream audiences in a different modified version. If a fashion look is promoted by the media and manufactured rapidly enough, the look can trickle across all levels of the market simultaneously. Forecasters can then map the pattern of acceptance (or rejection) over time.

The acceptance or rejection by consumers forms a feedback loop between the fashion industry and the consumer. This loop allows the two parties to communicate and is controlled by trends and the social-psychological processes of consumers.

Main Areas in Fashion Forecasting

Colour forecast

Colour dictates the mood and attitude of the season. On-trend colour is directly related to the consumer (their moods and aspirations) and if designers get the shades of their clothing right they can increase their sales considerably. Trend savvy clients demand that the products they purchase come in the latest fashion trend shades, therefore it is critically important for a designer that he/she is aware of the latest colour trends.

Trend Forecasts for material such as woven, knits, denim, leather & non-woven materials give designers the idea for the types of materials which are going to be in demand for the upcoming season.

Usually the for pattern trends such as weaves, denim and woven are predicted 18 months ahead of season. Visual texture and fibre analysis is presented to designers to judge in close-up detail, along with an idea of product direction and references to relevant mills and resources where the product can be found.

Forecast for Lifestyle Materials

Forecasters can also provide lifestyle material predictions for home decor. They provide inspiration for interiors, homeware and other areas of product design for the home.

Knits & Jersey

Jersey and knit forecasts predicts new concepts and the key trends that are related to knitted materials. They consider street style, runways, trade shows, retail and vintage in order to find new trends. This type of forecasting includes areas like yarn, texture and stitch looks, as well as knit patterns and new silhouettes.

Leather & non-woven

The forecasts for skins and non-wovens predict what the future fashion is for leather and non-woven materials. The forecasts investigates different looks and surface treatments for the material. The forecast also predicts what the most popular non-woven material will be in the upcoming seasons.

Print & Graphics

Graphic trend research forecasts the most up-to-date trend ideas for graphics, prints, patterns and embellishments.

Women's Apparel

Women's forecast's cover every product for the upcoming season, it is known as the "ultimate forecast". This forecast includes all the seasonal key trends for women's apparel including tops, shirts, skirts, dresses, denim, knitwear, pants & trousers, coats and jackets. Designers must stay updated with innovative detailing techniques (trims and embellishments to pockets, fastenings, collars, panels and sleeves) in order to be competitive.

Women's wear Accessories

Trend forecast for accessories such as bags, belts, and jewellery, eyewear, headwear & soft accessories provides designers with information on key elements that could make or break on outfit.

Women's Footwear

Footwear forecasts allow designers to create trendy shoes, boots, sandals, heels and flats to please consumers. The forecast includes predictions about skins, leather colours, materials and texture developments, heel, toe shapes, concepts & novelty ideas, relevant vintage inspiration and influential street style looks.

Men's Fashion

Just as there is a women's apparel forecast, a designer must also know about the latest men's fashion trends. This includes styles, colours, designs, and patterns for the upcoming Fall/Winter or Spring/Summer season collections.

Children's Fashion

Fashion forecasting helps companies decide on the right colour, and themes for both the Boy's and Girls' markets. Colour boards, palettes, theme descriptions and visual clues help designers to capture the mood of the incoming season.

Fashion Forecasting Process

Trend forecasting companies

Due to the demand for trend forecasting, whole companies have dedicated their work to it. French companies based in Paris have traditionally dominated in this field, however a few niche forecasters have formed in different countries around the world. Some better-known trend forecasting companies include: WGSN, Style sight and Trendstop.com.

Consumer research

Manufacturers and retailers sometimes ask consumers directly about their buying preferences and compile their reactions to find preferences for certain items (garments, accessories, colours etc). Manufacturers and retailers often hire publication and research companies to conduct surveys, which include questions about income, life-style, fashion preference and shopping habits. In-store informal interviews can help researchers obtain information and customers are selected by the marketing firm to meet with the retailers and are asked what they would like to buy, what styles they like that are currently available and what merchandise they want, but cannot find. Small business owners have the ability to do this more effectively because of their close contact with customers. Overall consumer research figures are important to manufacturers for decisions about product development, brand marketing and retailing.

Colour Forecasting

Colour forecasting is an essential factor in sales growth and profitability for a company. Colour grabs the customers' attention, makes an emotional connection and leads them to the product. Even if the basic product stays the same, a change in colour gives the consumer a sense of something new. Colour consultants specialize in helping companies decide on the right colour to use on their product. Some consultants use colour forecasts as part of their overall product development rather than just specializing in it. Professional colour organizations bring together multiple experts to collaborate on forecasts for industries like women's wear, men's wear, children's wear and residential and non-residential interiors. Some large companies even have departments dedicated to setting the colour directions for their lines.

Sales Forecasting

Forecasting is relatively easy, straightforward and accurate for products with a long lifetime and a steady sales pattern. However, the fashion apparel business is one of the most volatile markets because it creates products that are new, seasonal and that have short lifetimes. In such situations it becomes harder to forecast and it becomes increasingly inaccurate. Errors in sales forecasting result in two kinds of losses:

Markdowns: When retailers have unwanted goods remaining at the end of a selling period (such as a season ex. winter), such goods then must be sold, even at a loss.

Cultural Indicators: In the fashion industry companies need to be able to recognize when certain products need to be adjusted to follow upcoming trends. While timing is important as an experienced and responsive company will be able to capitalize on trends whenever they are spotted, no matter if they are just a glimmer far in the future or sometimes a phenomenon in the building stage. Dying trends are another signal that companies need to watch out for, when a certain trend or phase in society loses power, it is a good time to survey the information landscape for the next big thing.

Final Stage of Forecasting

The theme for each season's collections is therefore the result of the collaboration of textiles and product trade show, forecasters, designers buyers and ready to wear shows. Like a puzzle, the final picture emerges after all the pieces have come together. Even though fashion shows have an impact on some last sales, their major impact is to reflect the final views on trends have emerged for that season. The media coverage of the shows is then another important dimension in the trend development process. Media coverage highlights fashion trends that fashion editors believe will be strong for the next season. The medias attention on 'must-have' looks, colours and products influences the consumers' acceptance of hot trends for a season.

The Future of Forecasting

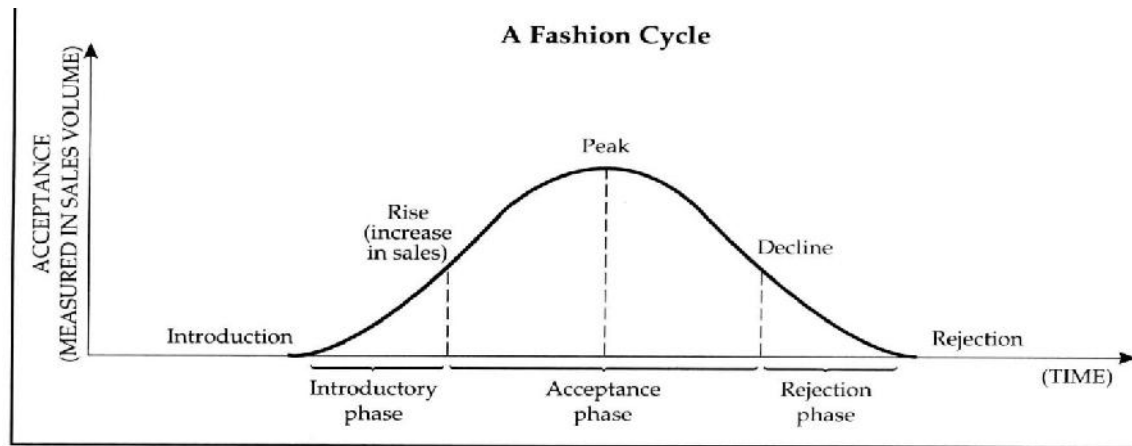
For apparel executives, being successful requires them to balance between anticipation of future developments and improvising when trends change. In the marketplace, those changes may be a result of:

- Changes in taste or lifestyles.
- Immigration.
- Technological developments.
- Shifts in the prices of raw materials.

Fashion forecasting is used within the fashion industry to direct companies to new ideas of colour, fabric, theme, mood and yarn developments to use in their products. Knowledge of these trends and the trends of future markets is becoming increasingly important to be competitive in the fashion industry. Accessing the right colour palette, researching fabric and styling trends and knowing your customer profile is essential. The degree and quality of information available to designers (and their ability to interpret it) dictates their success.

Fashion Cycles

Consumers are exposed each season to a multitude of new styles created by designers. Some of these styles are rejected immediately by the buyers on the retail level, but others are accepted (which is demonstrated by consumers purchasing and wearing them). The way in which fashion changes is usually described as fashion cycle. It is very difficult to discuss this fashion cycle without oversimplifying. It is most often depicted as a bell shaped curve, cut into five stages: introduction, rise in popularity, peak of popularity, decline in popularity, and rejection. The cycle can be used to reflect the acceptance of a single garment from one designer, or of a general style (ex. the shirtwaist dress or the miniskirt).



Introduction

A designer interprets current trends in a creative form (the garment), and then a manufacturer creates and offers the new styles to the public. When we talk about new fashions or “the latest fashions” we must remember that this doesn’t mean that this fashion has been accepted by the consumer yet. At this stage of the cycle we are only discussing the style and its newness. Designers, whose names are respected for both their creativity and their sense of timing (which results in success), are often given financial backing. This sometimes unlimited financial backing allows them to design with very few limitations on creativity, quality of raw materials, or amount of fine workmanship. Naturally, this causes production costs to be high and only a few people can afford the resulting clothes and most of these new styles are introduced at a high price level. Designers, whose clothes are works of art, do not expect to sell in quantity as production in small quantities gives a designer more freedom, flexibility, and room for creativity.

Increases in Popularity

As the new fashion is purchased, worn, and seen by more people, it may begin to rise in popularity. In the case of an expensive item, sales will never be high however the item can still become the most popular in a designer's collection or even the most popular of all high-priced fashions. The popularity of the style can then increase again through copying and adaptation, some manufacturers may buy the right to produce exact copies of the original style, which they then sell at somewhat reduced prices. Other manufacturers then may try to copy it with cheaper fabric and less detail, and sell at even lower prices. Other designers or stylists may modify the original style to suit the needs of their customers. Volume production of a style requires that much of society accepts the style and will buy it. Large manufacturing firms cannot have the creative freedom that high fashion designers have because they don’t have the ability to create as much detail. This restriction means larger firms must follow pre-established trends rather than create new ones."

Peak of Popularity

When a fashion is at the height of its popularity, there might be so much demand that many manufacturers copy or produce adaptations of it and sell it at many different price levels. Styles with great appeal such as this can be produced at many different price and quality levels.

Declines in Popularity

Eventually, so many copies of a style is produced that it becomes boring or ordinary to fashion-conscious people, and they begin to look for something new. Consumers still wear the garments, but they are no longer willing to buy them at regular prices because they aren't a must have item. Retail stores then put these declining styles on sale racks, in hopes to make room for new merchandise.

Rejection of a Style, or Obsolescence

In the last phase of the fashion cycle, consumers find new looks and trends, this is the beginning of a new cycle for another style.

Length of Cycles

Although all fashions follow the same cyclical pattern, each style will stay popular for a different period of time. Each fashion will take a different amount of time to peak and then some decline slowly while others decline swiftly. Some styles stay popular for a single selling season while others can last for several seasons, some styles however fade quickly but never completely disappear.

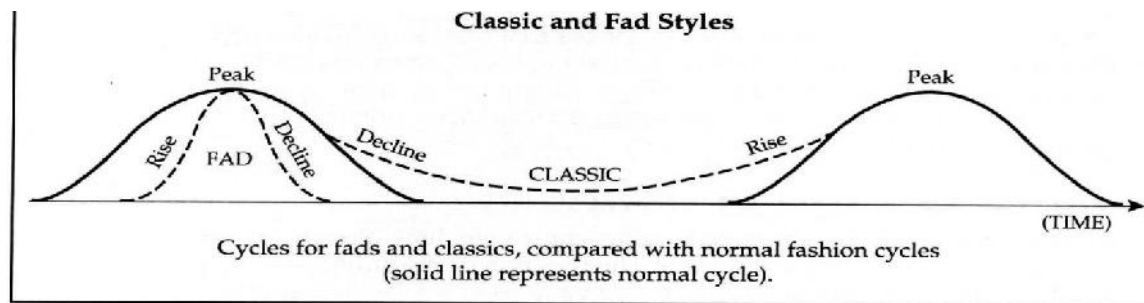
Classics

Some styles defy the usual fashion cycle and never become completely obsolete, but instead remain accepted by society for an extended period. A classic is characterized by simplicity of design, which keeps it from being easily dated. As mentioned before it is a staple in a person's wardrobe. An example is the Chanel suit, which peaked in fashion in the late 1950s and became popular again in the late 1970s. Over the decades the house of Chanel in Paris, as well as other manufacturers, have continued to produce the suits for a small, dedicated clientele.

Fads

Short-lived fashions known as fads, can come and go in a single season. They lack the design strength, also known as character, to hold consumer attention for very long. Fads usually affect only a narrow consumer group, are priced quite low and are relatively simple and inexpensive to copy. Due to the fact they are easy to copy and inexpensive to make the style floods the market in a very short time. Because of the abundance of the style in the market, the public

gets tired of them quickly and they die out. The fad of the early 1980s was the punk look from England, which heavily influenced the international junior market.



Cycles within Cycles

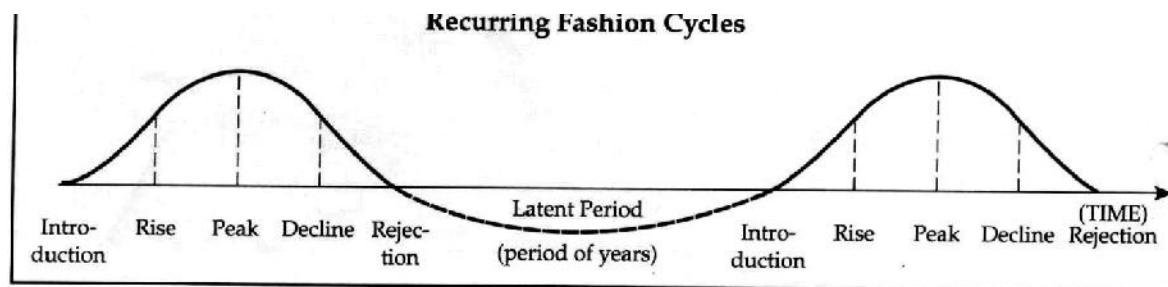
Design elements (such as colour, texture, silhouette, or detail) may change even though a style itself remains popular. For example jeans became a fashionable item in the late 1960s and remained popular throughout the 1970s, therefore, their fashion cycle was very long. However, a many different jean silhouettes were seen during that time- including bell, cigarette, and baggy legs.

Interrupted Cycles

Sometimes a style is discontinued because manufactures no longer want to risk making and stocking the style because they know it will decline soon. This type of cycle is obvious to consumers who try to buy summer clothes in August because stores have already shifted to stocking their fall apparel. Sometimes the normal progress of a fashion cycle can interrupted or prolonged by social upheaval, economic depression, or war. For example think of the large shouldered, wedge shaped silhouette that was all the rage in women's fashion in the 1930s. When World War II broke out the last thing women were worrying about was their fashion, so the same silhouette continued to be produced without being rejected. When the new look of 1947 emerged with its sloping shoulders, tiny waists and longer skirts, it was a radical change because the old cycle had been unnaturally prolonged.

Recurring Cycles

Even though a fashion may die, it may resurface again as designers will often borrow ideas from the past. When a style reappears years later, it is reinterpreted to suit that time period. A silhouette or proportion may resurface, but it is interpreted with a change in fabric or detail. Nothing in fashion that reoccurs is ever exactly the same, yet nothing is totally new either. As the century and millennium draw to a close, designers are showing many similar looks to those seen in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and even the 1980s. However, the use of different fabrics, colours, and details make the looks unique and fitting to the turn of the century.



Consumer Identification with Fashion Cycles

Taste

An individual's preference is referred to as their "taste". Good taste in fashion implies that the person has a good sensitivity to what is beautiful and appropriate. Acceptance of a style by the public does not prove that a design is necessarily beautiful, only that its timing of its production is right. Really beautiful design is often not accepted by the general public at all, either because it is too extreme or because it is too expensive. Watered-down copies or reproductions adapted for use in everyday life, on the other hand, often lose their original beauty.

Consumer Groups

Different types of consumers can be matched with different stages of the fashion cycle. Fashion leaders buy and wear new styles at the beginning of their cycles, then the general public follows. Because of differences in taste, what is fashionable for one group may not be for another group, for example what is in fashion for fashion leaders may be too extreme for followers and when followers finally accept the fashion, it is already out of fashion for leaders. Manufacturers and retailers can also be identified as either fashion leaders or followers, depending on which consumer groups they target.

Fashion Leaders

Although fashion leaders are not usually the creators, they may give their input by discovering and wearing a certain style. Fashion leaders are a very small percentage of the public as most fashion leaders are members of higher income groups because high quality fashion is expensive.

Fashion leaders constantly look for interesting new styles (colours and fabrics) and different ways to accessorize their clothes. They often go to great lengths to find unique fashion, they might go to and out-of-the-way boutique, or even to another country. Fashion leaders have good shopping and judgement skills and would rather have a few beautiful garments than a

multitude ugly garments. Many fashion leaders occupy prominent positions in society that give them exposure and influence over the way others dress. The press often reports details of what they wear, and they are seen at public events, in films, or on television.

Most fashion leaders are confident in their own taste and do not need others' approval of what they are wearing. They would much rather be unique individuals than blend in with the crowd. They dare to be different, and their acceptance of a designer's clothes makes the clothes fashionable to the rest of the world.

Fashion Followers

Most men and women have the need of a role model before they feel comfortable wearing a new fashion. They follow the lead of world, national, or community fashion leaders in order to feel confident in wearing a new look. Fashion followers will only imitate fashion leaders after they are sure of fashion trends.

Consumers become fashion followers for several reasons:

- 1) They lack the time, money, and/or the interest to devote to fashion leadership.
- 2) They need a period of exposure to new styles before accepting them.
- 3) They are insecure about their tastes and therefore turn to what others have already approved as acceptable and appropriate.
- 4) They want to keep up with their neighbours or peers group or want to be accepted by them.
- 5) They tend to imitate people they admire. Because of the abundance of fashion followers, the fashion industry mainly consists of copyists or adapters. From a marketing point of view, fashion followers make mass production very successful, because volume production of fashion can only be profitable only when it can be sold to many consumers.

Adoption of Fashion

All together there are three variations of the fashion adoption process: traditional adoption, reverse adoption, and mass dissemination. It is important to understand how new fashion ideas are disseminated, or spread, and how they can be adapted to the tastes, life-styles, and budgets of various consumers.

Traditional Fashion Adoption

Innovative designers have the courage and confidence to try new looks. At first these new looks seem outrageous to many people, until customers see how it can be adapted. However not every extreme design is accepted by the general public, a top designer may design harem pants, but that does not mean that everyone will wear them, however this may create a trend toward ankle interest. In order to grab consumers attention and change direction of fashion even moderately, high fashion often seeks to be and must be extreme.

The traditional adoption theory is based on the fact that most high fashion is expensive, and therefore affordable to only a few people. As the new fashions are worn by fashion leaders or shown in fashion publications, more consumers are exposed to the new look and some will desire to have it for themselves. To appeal to this broader group of consumers, manufacturers can then produce less expensive versions or adaptations of high fashion. This process then happens again and again at lower prices, until the fashion has been seen often enough to become acceptable to even the most conservative buyer. The cheapest versions are seen at discount houses soon after. Consumers then tire of the look and its popularity fades.

Fashion is always thought of as new and fresh. Yet as a fashion is copied, modified, and sold at lower and lower prices, it loses its newness, quality, and other essential design elements. Therefore, one disadvantage of traditional adoption is that the original fashion is often modified so much that it isn't attractive or even recognizable.

Reverse Adoption

Although most often fashion filters down from high-priced designer clothes, sometimes fashion can begin with the consumer. For example, in the 1960s and early 1970s, young people in London and San Francisco influenced the whole fashion industry by creating unique combinations of old, new, and handcrafted clothes.

Mass Dissemination

This type of adoption is more conservative and adapts proven or accepted designer looks. They generally use less expensive fabrics and less extreme silhouettes to re-create the fashion. Also known as "Missy market styling", styles are generally adapted from designer fashion through the traditional process. Styling ideas can come from the consumer or designers, however the ideas are precisely produced to please a wide range of people (a large portion of the market).

Criteria Consumers Use in Fashion Selection

To determine the acceptability of a certain fashion, manufacturers and consumers consider a set of criteria which ensures the selected item will be successful on the market. The Elements of Fashion Appeal are a set of elements that draw the consumer's attention to a fashion. There are also practical considerations, including what quality and price will be acceptable to the consumer in order to ensure the style will be sellable.

Elements of Fashion Appeal

The elements of fashion appeal are very similar to the elements of design, except for the fact that the elements of fashion are viewed by the purchaser rather than the creator:

a) Colour

Usually the first aspect of a garment or accessory that consumers look for is its colour. People relate very personally to colour, usually selecting or rejecting a garment because the colour does or does not appeal or flatter them.

The surface of the fabric used for a garment or accessory is called the texture. Consumers relate to texture because of its sensuous appeal, it can have indents or shapes that create patterns or designs.

b) Style

The elements that define a certain style include line, silhouette, and details. The “hanger appeal” of a garment is also essential to whether or not the consumer will be drawn to it. Depending on how fashion conscious the consumer is, their judgment will be influenced by what they think is currently fashionable.

Practical Considerations**a) Price**

Price is probably the most heavily weighted consideration for the average consumer. The consumer will evaluate the total worth of all the fashion appeal aspects of the garment/ accessory and decide how close that worth is to the actual retail price.

b) Fit

Trying on a garment is one of the most crucial steps in the customers selection of a garment, as sizing on labels do not guarantee a perfect fit. The Department of Commerce has tried to set sizing standards, but each company tends to vary somewhat. Each company uses sample models of the typical customer in order to size the garments, however it is very difficult to set size ranges to fit every figure. Trying on the garment also allows the customer to decide if the fashion appeal elements of the garment flatter their figure type and general appearance.

c) Appropriateness

It is important that a fashion item be suitable and acceptable for a specific occasion or to the consumer's life-style. For example, life in a large city requires more formality in clothing than life in the country. Impulse shoppers struggle with this aspect as they don't consider appropriateness and therefore purchase items that do not fit into their wardrobe or lifestyle.

d) Brand

Branding is a manufacturer's way to identify their product in the market and for consumers. Some consumers buy products due to a particular brand's reputation, which is often as result of heavy advertising.

Areas of Fashion Design

Many professional fashion designers start off by specializing in a particular area of fashion. By focusing on a smaller, more specific market a company becomes more likely to design clothing with the right look and feel. It also becomes easier to establish a company or designer brand in the fashion industry, if a company is known for one type of specialized product. Once a fashion company becomes established (that is, has regular buyers and is well-known by both the trade and the public), it might decide to expand into a new area. It is usually safest for a company, when expanding, to move into a similar market area to the one it already knows, for example, a designer of women's sportswear might expand into men's sportswear.

a) Women's Wear

Women's clothes have many different categories: lingerie, dresses, evening clothes, suits, outerwear, and sportswear. There are also specialty categories, such as bridal gowns and maternity clothes. In addition, there is a huge array of accessories within the general categories of wraps, head coverings, handbags, and footwear.

b) Lingerie

Lingerie includes undergarments, sleepwear, and loungewear. There is an increasing interest in designing lingerie because women again desire pretty things and will spend the money to have them.

c) Dresses

Dresses can range from the very tailored with crisp lines (meant for a professional environment), to very soft designs with gathers and ruffles, meant for a dressy occasion.

d) Evening clothes

Evening clothes range from anything such as party pyjamas to long and short cocktail dresses or even opulent gowns.

e) Suits, jackets and skirts

Suits are the combination of a jacket and skirt (or pants) which are sold together as a single unit. Suits can range from the soft "dressmaker" suit to being very strictly tailored.

f) Outerwear

Outerwear is most importantly meant to have or provide a function to the wearer: it covers us and keeps us warm or dry. Outerwear includes coats, capes, and heavy jackets. Traditional wool and quilting is used to provide warmth and rainwear receives a treatment to become water-repellant.

g) Sportswear

Sportswear is the category that has grown the most over the years, as leisure time and disposable income levels have increased. Sportswear can be classified as active or spectator. Spectator sportswear is designed for watching sports events, although the term now includes sportswear worn for day-to-day activities. Active sportswear is designed to be worn in sports events and allows freer movement. Sportswear lines are often organized in one of two ways, Separates include individual garment designs such as skirts, shirts and sweaters, whereas Coordinated is pieces that are sold separately but are meant to be worn together as a “set”.

h) Men's Wear

There are now almost as many categories of fashion available to men as there is to women. Stores use elaborate promotions to lure in male customers who are becoming increasingly fashion-wise.

i) Tailored clothing

Tailored clothing for men includes suits, overcoats, topcoats, sport coats, and trousers for both day and evening wear.

j) Furnishings

Furnishings include shirts, neckwear, sweaters, tops, underwear, socks, robes, and pyjamas

k) Sportswear

Sportswear is made up of casual garments that fill the demand for leisure and casual wear.

l) Active sportswear

Active sportswear includes windbreakers, ski jackets, jogging suits, tennis shorts, and the like.

m) Work clothes

Work clothes include overalls, work shirts, and pants that are required by labourers; they are now also worn by women.

Designing a Collection

- Planning a collection: Every collection is very carefully researched and planned so that all the items complement each other. Each garment is designed to have the particular fashion look which the company is known for.
- Predicting trends: One of the hardest skills a fashion designer must master is predicting future trends. To do this they have to look at what the fashion directions have been in previous seasons, keep an eye on what others in the fashion business are doing, and read fashion forecasting magazines. Designers must also rely on the knowledge of their own customers to see which styles were loved and which were less popular in past seasons. Perhaps most importantly, designers must use their imaginations to come up with new ideas, and they often find inspiration from different themes.
- Choosing a theme: The theme of a collection can be a period in history, a foreign place, a range of colours, or a type of fabric - anything which has a strong visual impact.

Designing a Garment

- The design: Different designers work in different ways, some sketch their ideas on paper while others drape fabric on a dress stand and pin, fold and tuck it until the idea for a garment emerges. A third method is to adapt their own patterns from previous seasons (this method allows the creations and ideas of a fashion studio to continue on).
- Making a toile or muslin: After making a rough paper pattern or a life-size 2-D plan of the garment, a sample machinist (a skilled sewing machine operator) then makes a trial version of the garment out of plain-colour calico. The toile (called muslin in the U.S.) when completed, is put on to a dress stand (or a model) to see how it fits and whether it hangs properly.
- Making a card pattern: When the designer is completely satisfied with the fit of the toile (or muslin), it is shown to a professional pattern maker who then makes the finished, working version, of the pattern out of card. The pattern maker's job is very precise and painstaking. The fit of the finished garment all depends on their accuracy.
- The finished dress: Finally, a sample garment is made up in the proper fabric.

Areas of Work

There are three main ways in which designers can work:

- Working freelance: Freelance designers work for themselves. They sell their work to fashion houses, directly to shops, or to clothing manufacturers. The garments are

sold under the buyer's label.

- Working In-house: In-house designers are employed full-time by one Fashion Company. Their designs are the property of that company, and cannot be sold to anyone else.
- Setting up a company: Fashion designers often set up their own companies. Many designers find this more satisfying than working for someone else, as their designs are sold under their own label.

Computer Aided Design (CAD)

CAD in textiles is now highly sophisticated and precise, making the design process fast and inexpensive because actual samples are not required as early or as frequently. CAD for clothing is much harder to create, but there are a growing number of systems which can contribute to the initial design, especially in the case of very simple garments. In the process of translating the initial design into two dimensional patterns CAD has become more helpful, however there is still room for improvement. Once a prototype pattern has been produced CAD can play a much bigger role in the job of pattern adaptation and grading. Computerized marker planning systems have also been in use for some years. They provide markers for the cutting room quicker, more efficiently, more accurately and with more information. The sequence from initial design to marker planning is usually combined into one system, because one supplier provides all the equipment.

Suggested Further Reading:

- ✓ *Fashion Design Essentials: 100 Principles of Fashion Design (By Jay Calderin)*
- ✓ *Fashion Design Course: Principles, Practice and Techniques (By Caroline Tatham, Julian Seaman & Thames and Hudson)*