

IDENTIFYING FASHION-TECH OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

Identifying opportunities when developing new fashion-tech products, services or business models is essential to the successful implementation of design concepts. The ability to analyse and critically evaluate societal trends is key to positioning innovative ideas in the right place at the right time to the right audience. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of fashion and technology; there is a continuous stream of innovative products coming onto the market however, to exploit these ideas efficiently, an understanding of how consumers engage with fashion and technology needs to be integrated into product development.

UNIT OUTLINE

The premise of the unit is for the students to work through the zones of a specified trend forecasting methodology in order to arrive at a creative output – fashion-tech product, service or business proposition, which the consumer has not yet understood or anticipated they need. An example of this would be 'iTunes' as presented in the BBC's programme *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy* (2004). The sharing of musical MP3 files was common in the early 2000s, although it infringed on intellectual property rights, and the development of the iPod was in itself not revolutionary. Rather, the innovation was in the iTunes platform which enabled consumers to buy music for their iPods legally. This in turn radically changed the way society started to buy music rendering CDs virtually obsolete. It could also be said to have liberated musicians in accessing a platform without the need for a recording label thus changing the power and dynamics of the music industry. In this example we can see how a trend or behaviour revealed a gap in the market which Apple were able to exploit to great effect from a financial perspective and affect an industry's infrastructure.

Using Martin Raymond's 'Trend Funnel', from *The Trend Forecaster's Handbook* (2010, pp. 185-199; 2019, pp. 202-209), as a methodological structure, the students will work through the 6 zones of the funnel to arrive at an innovative concept (see Indicative Content below). A class of 25 students could work in teams of 4-5 and then share their findings with others in the wider group. This would enable students to place their trend and findings in a broader context, and to explore the similarities or differences in their assumptions and findings with others' trends.

The students will require access to:

- Internet
- Library resources – digital databases
- Magazines/Newspapers/Periodicals (for paper imagery and trend research)
- Creative software: e.g. InDesign, Premiere Pro, Adobe XD
- Art boards, glue, pens, Post It notes
- Student imagery

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At the end of the session/s, the students should deliver their creative output in the form of a proposal for a fashion-tech product, service or business proposition.

INDICATIVE CONTENT AND TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

- Lectures. See Teacher's Toolkit, tool 'Lectures' (available at <https://www.e4ft.eu>)
- Seminars: e.g. could include showing documentaries, TED talks, You Tube films as a starting point for discussing innovation
- Workshops: creating consumer boards, societal behaviours etc.
- Verbal communication skills e.g. Presentations to class and academics.
- Visual research
- Team work and collaboration

This unit should aim to present:

- Trend 'cartogram' or 'wall' (Raymond [2010, pp.185-189])
- Visual expressions of behaviours
- Building visual descriptions of consumers
- Presentations
- Disruptive business models
- Martin Raymond's Trend Funnel (2010; 2019)

Proposed Scheme of Work

THE ZONES OF RAYMOND'S TREND FUNNEL

ZONE 1

SHORT DESCRIPTION (25 WORDS) OF MACRO/MICRO TREND WITH 5/8 IMAGES THAT VISUALLY DESCRIBE IT.

The focus of this stage of the funnel is to identify a societal trend. Students often go straight to the business, product or service but the key is to focus on why a particular behaviour is happening. This is the 'what' of the trend observation and is the most time-consuming stage of the funnel. Here, images and the precise use of key words describe the behaviour. The outcome of the 'Qualitative Research: Ethnographic Filmmaking' unit could be used as a starting point for zone 1, and thus reduce the time needed to complete this section.

ZONE 2

LIST THE KEY DRIVERS DETERMINING THIS TREND AND ADD VISUAL SAMPLES

Here the students need to be able to explain the impact of societal changes explaining why a trend is

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occurring. Students will need to be able to critically analyse academic and industry reports quickly extracting key information and make judgements as to what has the most impact upon the trend using key language and imagery. This is the 'why' of the trend.

ZONE 3

DESCRIBE THE TARGET CONSUMER & USE 5 - 8 IMAGES TO ILLUSTRATE THEIR DEMOGRAPHICS

Here you can focus the students' experiences from their earlier work in 'Qualitative Research: Ethnographic Filmmaking'. However, if this unit is run independently of others, then as educators, we need to encourage students to be highly granular in their understanding of the trend tribe i.e. they need to 'know' the people in depth. For example, to reduce single use plastic consumption, how could this be described in their lifestyle, would it be the use of Zero plastic retailers such as 'Bulk Market' in Hackney, London. What does their taste in music and entertainment/media platforms say about them? How open are they to new ideas and ways of engaging with technology and how does this intersect with fashion?

Key sentences/quotes and imagery the students have found in reports will be the main outcome of this stage - it is the 'who' of the whole proposition

ZONE 4

VISUALISE AND DESCRIBE THE PRODUCTS THEY CURRENTLY PURCHASE

This is finally when the students can start to look at the opportunities for fashion-tech to meet needs that the consumer hasn't identified they have. The brands their target audience currently buy, will give an indication of their preferences and self-image. This is also the opportunity for students to discuss emerging business models, why they are or are not innovative and the business/consumer fit with the emerging tech trend they are focusing on. At this stage describing the 'trend tribe' brand loyalties will help the students to define what they 'want' from brands, products or services.

ZONE 5

HOW IS THE TREND AFFECTED BY THE ENVIRONMENT THEY LIVE/WORK IN

In this section the students need to spend time debating how cultures will change globally and whether aspirations will change, how fast and why. Are there changes in lifestyles in another global region, will this present a new market and how can the students support their assumptions regarding cultural aversion or openness to specific behaviours they have highlighted earlier in the trend funnel process. This stage defines the impact of the 'where' on the trend and its consumers.

ZONE 6

USE THE ABOVE DATA TO CREATE CONCEPTS WHICH CAN LEAD TO TWO PRODUCTS/SERVICES

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In this final stage the students should be able either to arrive at a product/service/process themselves or could do a sweep of fashion-tech to identify which might be suitable for their workshop findings.

This unit is proposed as either a one-day activity or a series of 1.5-hour sessions run over 6 consecutive weeks to integrate with a wider curriculum, that could be used to identify such an opportunity or predicted need.

The unit could be delivered independently, or as a precursor to the Wearables Technologies Workshop and Entrepreneurship and Small Business Start-up units. While the Qualitative and Ethnographic Research Methods unit could inform the trend consumer phase (zone 3) of the funnel.

A 'trend cartogram' i.e. a visual mapping process of a trend, could be the basis of this activity (see: Gaimster 2014, pp. 119-122; Raymond 2010, pp. 60-63) to enable the students to fully investigate and understand the anatomy of a trend, its impacts, consequences and future trajectory.

The unit workshop/sessions will need to be supported by the appropriate resources (see resource list below) and subject knowledge in trend analysis and product/business development.

For further guidance see: Teacher's Toolkit, Tool 2 > 'Workshops', 'Research for fashion-tech', Tool 3 > 'Interdisciplinary group working' Tool 7 > 'Learning Through Research' and Tool 9 – 'Self-directed learning' (available at <https://www.e4ft.eu>) together with the 'Reading and Resource List' (below) for further support.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the unit the students will be able to:

1. Present a creative and innovative fashion-tech product/service/business model using the 'Trend Funnel' process.
2. Demonstrate critical analysis and reflection of trend research, consumer profiling, merchandising research and concepts of stylistic codes;
3. Plan and evidence the management of creative output in response to a societal trend.
4. Collaborate effectively and record individual contribution in teamwork to deliver an innovative proposition in fashion-tech.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Assessment product: Holistic Portfolio

Trend Funnel Boards and presentation, possibly using InDesign but could just as easily be a simple

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webpage or film. Students could embed music, clips of film as well as business and media reports

Possible assessment method: verbal feedback, an internal review within the group with perhaps 15/20 minutes to look and compare findings against other groups' results.

READING AND RESOURCE LIST

Essential Reading and Resources

Bulk Market (2020). Available at: <https://www.bulkmarket.uk/> [accessed January 20, 2020].

Raymond, M (2010) The Trend Forecaster's Handbook. 1st Edition. London: Lawrence King.

Raymond, M (2019) The Trend Forecaster's Handbook. 2nd Edition. London: Lawrence King.

Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy (2011) BBC4, 14th December 2011. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2132457/> [accessed January 20, 2020] – relevant section 30 minutes into the broadcast.

Trendhunter <https://www.trendhunter.com>

WGSN (2020). Available at: <https://www.wgsn.com/fashion> [accessed January 20, 2020].

Further Reading and Resources

Burrows, P., Grover, R., and Lowry, T. (2004) 'Show Time! Just as the Mac revolutionized computing, Apple is changing the world of online music', Business Week, Issue 3868, pp. 56-64.

Collins, H. (2010). Creative research: The theory and practice of research for the creative industries. Lausanne: AVA.

Gaimster, J. (2011) Visual Research Methods Oxford: Berg.

LS:N Global (2020). Available at: <https://www.lsnglobal.com> [accessed January 20, 2020].

Pink, S.; Kurti, L. & Alfonso, A. (2004). Working Images: Visual Representation in Ethnography. London: Routledge.