mini
PROCESSBOOK

GRADUATION 2015 - MARIT BOHNENN
This mini processbook serves as an executive summary of my extensive processbooks. It covers the process towards the end product of my graduation project, The inherent qualities of a garment.
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PHASE 1

The preliminary research started with my fascination for the relationship between clothing and identity. After taking the first steps into the subject, I stumbled upon a postmodern paradox. We wear clothing to express our identity, while in modern day society clothing no longer serves a means for expression, with fast fashion as a notive cause for homogeneity in both clothing and appearance. A second cause is clothing itself, because its meaning is highly depended on context.

THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

The postmodern dilemma in the relationship between bodily adornment and identity can be described as follows. On the one hand, clothing is used to express ones identity (although briefly), while on the other hand clothing expresses less and less, because it is continuously put into different contexts, and as a sign it simply doesn’t signify anymore. (Beaudrillard, 1993: ‘dress and bodily adornment have become “free-floating” signifiers, signifying nothing beyond themselves’)

It is in this paradox I see similarities with philosopher Barthes’ theory The Death of the Author. In his theory a paradigm shift occurs - the focus first was completely on the author, but the author is no longer the sole bearer of the meaning of a text. In a new paradigm the three parties are of equal importance and the focus can be arbitrarily on the author, reader or text. The meaning of a text can be interpreted by the reader or assigned by the text itself. (Barthes, 1967)

This paradigm shift is visible in fashion as well, in which the designer - formerly on top of the pyramid, dictating meaning to clothing and styles to the wearer - is no longer rightful to assign value or meaning to a garment. The wearer hijacks garments and assigns its own meaning - up to the extent that in modern day society, a garment is worn in so many different contexts, the meaning is alienated. When in this new paradigm we focus arbitrarily on the designer, the wearer or the garment, I foresee a new focus on the garment to carry out this meaning itself.

THE DEATH OF THE DESIGNER

 Former paradigm  →  New paradigm

 Former paradigm  →  New paradigm
“Marketing’s perversion has ultimately helped kill the fashion industries. And with fashion dead, clothes will become the new name of the game. The economy of clothes will take over.”

Anti-Fashion Manifest - Trend Union Presentation Paris, February 2015, Lidewij Edelkoort
RELEVANCE

CLOTHING OVER FASHION

The conclusion I drew from my preliminary research was underpinned by the Anti-Fashion Manifest by Lidewij Edelkoort, that was published a few weeks later.

In this manifest, Edelkoort states that the fashion system is obsolete. Due to commercialization, media and fast fashion, the most quintessential to it all, the garment, has become subordinate and meaningless. (Edelkoort, 2015)

But, as she says, since the fashion industry is declared dead, an economy of clothes will take over.

This links to my previously drawn conclusion: In the balance of power between the designer, wearer and garment, the designer now must compromise on originality - since the fashion system demands 12 collections a year - and the wearer has alienated the meaning of clothing. Full of hope, we are looking towards the garment to no longer be subordinate and rise as the autonomous bearer of its own meaning.

Next to that we see a disjunction occur between haute couture and fast fashion. (ING, 2015) (Lampe, 2015) (Rabobank, 2014) The mid-segment is slowly fading out as they are facing tremendous difficulties, as discussed further on in this process book. If the mid-segment was to disappear, qualitative clothing would only be available in the higher segments, for a limited group of people. To me, this is a serious concern that I wish to annul with my graduation project.

These two problematic elements, the subordinate garment and the threatened mid-segment - researched and defined during my preliminary research -, are the starting point of my in-depth research phase and the focus points in my research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do mid-segment brands need to adjust their brand strategy in order to survive in 2020?

1 What does the focus on the garment mean?
2 How is this focus on the garment visible?
3 What is the trendframe?
4 How can mid-segment brands adapt to the focus on the garment?
1 WHAT DOES THE FOCUS ON THE GARMENT MEAN?

Used research methods: desk research, literature

Desk research showed that garments encompass three intrinsic qualities. These qualities are used by the wearer, whether or not consciously.

**Functional**
Looking at functionality, garments protect the body. Clothing serves as a boundary between the private sphere (the intimate body) and public sphere (the representation of the body in the public realm) (Entwistle, 2000).

**Tactile**
The meaning of clothing is closely related to the body. This is revealed through the preference for certain tactility, and memories that are inherent to sensory experiences (Delong, Wu and Park, 2012). Consumers prefer certain tactility because they relate it to the way it would feel on their body (Workman, 2009).
To conclude: Touching a fabric evokes memories.

**Expressive**
The body is seen as an expression of internal identity, and therefore is treated as a communication tool. The communicative meaning of clothing is contextual, highly dependend on the zeitgeist and therefore unstable. As soon as a garment is accepted by the mass it loses its communicative value. (conclusion made by analyzing (Barthes, 1985) (Svendsen and Kull, 2007) and (Worsley, 2011))
After online desk research can be concluded that the focus on the garment is mainly visible with brands in the higher segment, as with product designers and design agencies. A commonly seen way to do so is by introducing mono-product lines, in which all attention and energy is concentrated in perfecting and emphasizing the qualities of one garment.

This focus is also seen in visual communication in which not a whole look is presented, and in releasing ‘series’ instead of collections, in which the focus is also more on individual pieces. Lastly, a garment gets more attention through anonymity - when the designer/the brand or the wearer (unisex garments, think of “Rainjacket, size L” vs. stripped down “Jacket”) is unknown, the focus automatically shifts towards the garment itself.

**2 HOW IS THE FOCUS ON THE GARMENT VISIBLE?**

Used research methods: desk research

The Amsterdam label And Beyond decided to change course due to a lack of sales and selling points. They decided not to design full collections, but to concentrate on ‘series’, with a particular item per season. In Series #1 (2007) the printed silk scarf was central, in a next series it could be a dress.

Fuse collection by Nendo, a collection of five shirts studying the use of the white shirt.

Agender by Selfridges shows that when the target group is unknown, visual communication differs from more known ways of brand communication.
3 TRENDFRAME

Used research methods: desk research, field research, experts, literature (The Trend Forecasters Handbook)

MACRO TRENDS

Urban transition
- Urbanisation
- Emerging megacities reach a peak in 2020, in which 60 cities will house a population over 10,000,000 (Keller et al., 2015)

Economic insecurity
- Lingering economic crisis

Globalisation
- Global connectivity
- Socio-demographic boundaries are shifting

Governmental disappointment
- Loss of power and possibilities of governments
- Unstable times

Rich-poor divide
- Due to urbanization, technology and demographic factors (Piketty and Goldhammer, n.d.)

CONSUMER TRENDS

Awareness - mindful lifestyles
Consumers are increasingly aware of the evanescence of natural resources and gain interest in alternative lifestyles. (JWT Intelligence, 2015)

Ascetic
The new makes place for the trustworthiness and qualitative. Consumers live modest and consume less. (Edelkoort, 2015)

Nature
Consumers celebrate live and nature as a counter reaction to digitalisation. (Tabarki, 2015)

Post-demographic consumerism
Consumption patterns are no longer defined by traditional demographic segments such as age, gender, location, income, family status and more. (Trendwatching.com, 2015)

Focus on the product
Brand communication is slowly shifting towards a product-based marketing. Consumers look for trustworthiness and quality, and want to know the ins and outs about the products they are to purchase. (Field- and deskresearch)
**FASHION TRENDS**

**Elemental**
Minimal consumption of basic garments (white t-shirts, oversized sweaters, cardigans).

**Autistic**
Calm, collected collections made of traditional pieces with blind detailing and hidden closures.

**Core**
Fabrics are collected based and presented based on their intrinsic beauty and strength.

**Adventure**
Natural materials and animal skins - wool, leathers and fur with rugged quality.

**Anarchism**
Colourwoven textiles, patchworking, worn, thorn and vintage.

**Craft**
Knits, felts and constructions around the body, changing proportions - saturated colours, expressive patterns.

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**RETAIL TRENDS**

**Uncomfortable experiences**
Experiences in retail are getting darker and tend to be uncomfortable, aiming to get consumers out of their comfort zone.

**Experiential public spaces**
‘Multisensory experiences’ in the public space immerse consumers in the world of a brand, merging it into their everyday life. (JWT Intelligence 2015)

**Seasonless, genderless and unbranded**
Globalization is blurring weather-related seasons and because of a confident individualism among consumers, they dress for themselves and are reluctant to follow trends or seasons.

**Recycling reinvented**
Re-use is gaining popularity, and brands use innovative recycling strategies as a marketing tool.

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**Flexible store design**
All elements are adaptable and will change continually to reflect the themes of new collections. (WGSN 2015)

**Everyday utopias**
Fresh, clean and minimalist displays: shoppers aim to experience moments of solitude within the busy store environment. The blank canvas is interrupted by (the careful curation of) everyday objects. (WGSN 2015)

**Mono-products**
Brands create mono-product lines and department stores and malls will increasingly see more mono-shops, dedicated to the craftsmanship of one item.

**The experience economy**
This trend has been with us for a while; people are looking for something more in the mundane. They look for special, personalized experiences, not only off- but also online.
STRUCTURING THE TRENDS

By analyzing and structuring the trends I saw three overall clusters in fashion trends; clean, adventure and artisan. To truly let garments be leading, I decided to subdivide all trends under these fashion trends. I came to the conclusion that the three clusters in which I could subdivide all trends, resembled the three inherent qualities of a garment. This is the point at which the main trends were created.

MACRO
- Urban transition
- Economic insecurity
- Digitalisation
- Ecological

MESO
CONSUMER TRENDS
- Awareness - mindful lifestyles
- Autistic
- Transparency

MICRO
RETAIL TRENDS
- Everyday utopias

MICRO
FASHION TRENDS
- Elemental
- Autistic

ASCETICISM
Ascetic: a person who abstains from the normal pleasures of life or denies himself material satisfaction.

TERRA FIRMA
Terra Firma: firm or solid earth; dry land.

ANARCHISM
Anarchist: Urging the abolition of government as the indispensable condition for full social and political liberty.
“Maybe this is someone finally acting on the belief that what the cycle now demands from designers — to be creative and original about every two months — is not sustainable.”

Behind Jean Paul Gaultier’s goodbye - New York Times, September 2014, Vanessa Friedman
After desk research and talking to experts could be concluded that of all issues the fashion industry is facing, the mid-segment is challenged with the most difficulties. This is, amongst others, due to over-saturation of the market. Mid-market brands try anything to differentiate their selves, up to the point of losing their identity. Brands in the mid-segment will increasingly experience difficulties because they have to compete against the qualitative, creative clothing in the high-segment and the unethical low prices in the low-segment. They continue to grow towards either the high or low segment. This results in the fact that qualitative, creative clothing will soon be available for only a small percentage of consumers.

Consumers are increasingly shopping for discounts and are tempted by low, unethical prices and the idea presented by the media that garments can only last for one season. The constantly changing collections with low quality, trend-related items encourage people to throw away clothing after one season.

On the supply side of the chain, designers increasingly turn away from ready-to-wear (as seen with Jean Paul Gaultier and Viktor & Rolf) because the pressure and frequency of collections are too high. They have to compromise their originality and creativity and decide to focus on haute couture alone.

As translated from Dutch in 'We zouden helemaal niet zo blij moeten worden van mode'
- Het Parool, 23-01-2015, Claudia Hulshof en Lynsey Dubbeld

“Fast fashion-chains and discounters seduce consumers with cheap runway-copies. Price therefore becomes paramount in buying decisions. And in terms of price, mid-market brands and small (web)retailers can impossibly compete with the big, fast guys.”

PROBLEMS

Saturation
The market is over-saturated as a reaction, brands need to try their best to distinguish their selves

Brands loose focus to get attention of consumers, they try everything up to the point of losing their identity (desk research)

Brands don't adapt to the new consumer
Consumers look for luxury (de Bijenkorf) of very low prices (Primark, H&M). For all the other shops, they shop online 77% of internet users shops online

Mid-segment brands have a troubling image (Mexx, Miss Etam)
Consumers are looking for innovation, but these brands trust the old system (V&D, Miss Etam)

Mid-segment brands don't adapt to new times consumers want to show their identity with brands consumers look for more flexibility, longer opening hours, availability anytime

Unsuitable online communication by Mexx

Battle between high and low
The competition of fast-fashion chains is inevitable consumers are seduced by low prices and the idea that clothing lasts just one season consumers spend more money on services as Netflix and Spotify, but don't earn more. They cut down by going Lidl instead of Albert Heijn and Primark instead of Zara. (Fygi, 2015)

Brands don't offer enough luxury to compete with the highsegment and have too expensive shops to compete with low prices.
OPPORTUNITIES

To survive, brands in the mid-segment must offer a distinctive brand identity, or a distinctive product. An opportunity is to show that clothing can last longer than one season, and to be untied to seasons and fast changing collections.

A brand can distinct itself by putting the focus on its garments, because little mid-segment brands truly incorporate this in their strategy. By doing so, a brand inherently emphasizes its USP and unique qualities.

Brands that already focus on their product are firmly positioned and have a well-known, strong image, resonating in turnover. COS and G-Star are good examples of mid-segment brands that incorporated the focus on their product in their brand strategy.

After desk, field and visual research amongst different mid-segment brands it can be concluded that there are opportunities to profile their product better, both on- and offline. Mid-segment brands therefore would benefit from this durable approach to fashion and adjustment of brand strategy.

To stay relevant in the battle between the high- and low segment, mid-segment brands must profile themselves as highly qualitative: they can’t lower their price due to production costs and expensive stores, and their product isn’t qualitative enough to truly shift towards the highsegment.

“You could define the mid-segment as the alternative; not everyone is fond of this fast, undefined, liquid society and not everyone wants to or can participate. The mid-segment can serve this niche group, for whom this is the limit.”

Interview Farid Tabarki, Trendwatcher of the Year 2012-2013, April 2015, Marit Bohnenn
RESEARCH QUESTION

How do mid-segment brands need to adjust their brand strategy in order to stay relevant in 2020?

KEY INSIGHTS

MID-SEGMENT
_The mid-segment can be formulated as the alternative to the fast fashion system – with a slower and more durable alteration level, opposed to joining the rat race and rapidly changing collections.

_CONSUMERS
_Product marketing is gaining ground. Saturation is turning consumers away from too much sameness and irrelevance; instead they are susceptible for transparent communication about the product.

QUALITY WITHIN REACH

THE INHERENT QUALITIES OF A GARMENT

A trend forecast for 2020, online and in print, in which is discussed how brands can adjust their brand strategy in order to fit consumer needs.

In the trend implementation book I discuss the focus on the garment in terms of design, fashion, product, retail, communication and online. These features are explained throughout three trends in which the qualities of the garment come across. Brands can determine which of these three fit them best and select their own and shuffle with the given examples.

For the distribution of the book, a supportive website is designed. On the website a subscription is required to view the in-depth trend implementation. With a subscription, the trend implementation book is send to brands.

ANSWER

In order to survive, brands in the mid-segment must position themselves as quality brands. Their key advantage is that they offer considerably better quality than the low segment, while being more accessible than the high segment. They offer quality within reach.

This accessible quality can best be expressed by putting the focus on the product itself. Consumers look for transparent communication and their needs link to values that are immanent to clothing. The garment can function as a cornerstone for a durable brand strategy.
WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO EXPLAIN THIS TO THE TARGET?

Used research methods: desk research, literature, experts

TREND IMPLEMENTATION BOOK

Throughout a trendbook the focus on the garment is explained to mid-segment brands. Instead of offering them another vague trendbook which colours and material, this trendbook executes the first steps in implementing the trends in terms of product, retail, communication and online environment.

It is much more focused on looking at their own product and highlighting its best features, instead of dictating how their product should look. This is a way of counteracting to the saturation of the market and making sure that not all the mid-segment brands will look alike.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

**general**

In the general part of the book, I explain where this trend comes from (macro trends) and how it is visible in design and fashion.

- _trend drivers
- _trend description
- _design
- _fashion

**specific**

In the specific part of the trendbook, I want to take the first steps into implementing the trend, so it gets more pragmatic for the brands. In this part I work with examples and case studies to be as clear and inspirational as possible.

- _product
- _retail
- _communication
- _online
- _case studies

DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL - WEBSITE

Instead of solely offering a tangible book, a website is created to distribute the book. The website functions as a first touch point with the brands. They can view the trends partly online, but the view all trends in-depth, a subscription is required. This subscription gives access to the full trend information and a personal page on which subscribers can save images separately, creating their own moodboards and

OBJECTIVES

1 inspire
2 call to action

SITEMAP

Without a subscription, you can view the first chapter of each trend. To get more in-depth, you have to subscribe.
WORKING UP THE TREND BOOK

To fully put the garment first, first was determined how brands can focus on the three inherent qualities of the garment, within the three trends.

ASCETISISM

FUNCTIONAL
/ basic
/ quality
/ simplicity
/ multi-functional
/ considerate
/ minimalistic

TACTILE
/ tactility brought
/ online
/ textures
/ soft
/ protecting
/ firm

EXPRESSIVE
/ basic
/ communication for oneself

TERRA FIRMA

FUNCTIONAL
/ sportswear
/ resistance
/ climate conditions

TACTILE
/ natural materials
/ animal skins
/ multisensory experiences

EXPRESSIVE
/ different natural contexts
/ expressivity of a fabric

ANARCHISM

FUNCTIONAL
/ symbolism
/ strip from function
/ multi-functional
/ non-seasonal

TACTILE
/ torn
/ worn
/ colourwoven textiles
/ crafted

EXPRESSIVE
/ colourful
/ energetic
/ different bodily proportions
/ genderless
The Inherent Qualities of a Garment, a trend forecast and implementation book, offers a tangible forecast and a durable approach to fashion. Focusing on the garment as cornerstone for brand strategy, the content is divided in three trends – Asceticism, Terra Firma and Anarchism.

In each trend the book portrays the first steps to implement the trend in terms of product, retail, communication and online environments. The result after implementation is a steady brand image and a focus point in communication.
WEBSITE - WITHIN REACH

The book is distributed through the website Within Reach, for which a subscription is required. As a place of first contact, a supportive medium of content and distribution channel, the website functions as a mediator for the book.

Within Reach is an online source of inspiration for professionals in fashion and related industries. The site functions as a mediator between the book and the professional.

Each year Within Reach publishes a trend forecasting and implementation book, changing the theme of the environment of Within Reach with a relevant topic or term. This year the theme of the site is Quality Within Reach.

When you subscribe you get:
- The yearly trend forecasting and implementation book
- Access to in-depth content
- The implementation of trends on all subjects
- Additional features such as:
  - Curate and share images
  - Export presentations

WEBSITE - WITHIN REACH

PHASE 3

CONCEPTING - EXPERIMENTING

PRODUCT MOOD

WEBSITE - WITHIN REACH

YOU JUST SAW THE FIRST CHAPTER OF ASCETICISM IN PREVIEW MODE

Like what you see? Be sure to sign up.
- Get access to the ready-to-made product, retail, communication and online implementation of all three trends
- Case studies of COS, A.P.C. and Carven
- Easy curating, highlighting and sharing of content
- Export to PPT or PDF and share with your colleagues

SUBSCRIBE
CONTINUE AS SAM COOPER
CREATING OWN IMAGES

To empower the trends, I created my own images. The objective was to conceptually visualize the foundation of the trends (the trend description in the implementation book).

STEP 1 - DEFINING THE MOST IMPORTANT VALUES

ASCETICISM

tactility / texture / organic / dry
ground / nature / mindfulness / sensory / experiencing / natural resources

TERRA FIRMA

functionality / light / clean / basic / abstination / reduction / emotional / balans / transparency / visibility vs. hiding / cocoon

ANARCHISM

expressive / coming together / explosive / colourful / woven

STEP 2 - VISUALISING THE VALUES

ASCETICISM

tactile
organic
sensory

TERRA FIRMA

functionality
transparency
light

ANARCHISM

expressive
colourful
coming together
EPILOGUE

Thank you sincerely for viewing my work. For inquiries about the end result or extensive processbooks, feel free to contact me.

Marit Bohnenn
Amsterdam Fashion Institute
Fashion & Branding

Graduation project
The inherent qualities of a garment

maritbohnenn@gmail.com
+31 6 43 05 78 71
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THE MID-SEGMENT

NEWSPAPER / MAGAZINE ARTICLES
THE GARMENT


**TRENDS**


**FIELD RESEARCH**


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