Research Report
The Dynamics of Fashion Trend Forecasting
The Dynamics of Fashion Trend Forecasting

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# Structure

1. Introduction to the Research Report 5  
   1.1 Introduction 5  
   1.2 Rationale 5  
   1.3 The aim of the research 6  
   1.4 Research questions 7  
   1.5 Methodology 10  
   1.6 Theoretical framework 10  

2. Introduction of concepts 12  
   2.1 Trends 12  
   2.2 Trend forecasting 13  
      2.2.1 What is fashion trend forecasting? 13  
      2.2.1.1 ‘A good trend watcher’ 15  
      2.2.2 Traditional trend forecasting 15  
      2.2.2.1 What is traditional trend forecasting? 15  
      2.2.2.2 Qualitative market research forecasting 16  
      2.2.2.3 Visionary based forecasting 17  
      2.2.2.4 Will traditional trend forecasting survive? 17  
      2.2.3 Fashion Analytics 18  

3. The dynamics of fashion trend forecasting 19  
   3.1 What is the role of intuition in trend forecasting nowadays; what is the role of big data; and what is the relation between the two? 19  
      3.1.1 Intuition 19  
      3.1.2 Intuition in trend forecasting 20  
      3.1.3 Fashion analytics in trend forecasting 22  
      3.1.4 The limitations of big data 23  
      3.1.5 Fashion analytics in scientific research 24  
      3.1.6 Conclusion 25  
   3.2 What type of trend forecasting do fashion companies make use of; to what extent do they follow the advice of trend forecasters; and to what extent do they use their own ‘free creativity’? 26  
      3.2.1 Dependency on trend forecasters 26  
      3.2.2 Trend Reports 27  
      3.2.3 Free creativity vs. Following forecast advice vs. Use of data 28  
      3.2.4 Trend forecasting and high fashion designers 29  
      3.2.5 Conclusion 30  
   3.3 What is the role of the consumer in the creation and dissemination of fashion trends? 31  
      3.3.1 Fashion trend theories 32  
      3.3.2 Fashion innovators and the social image 33  
      3.3.3 The role of social media 34  
      3.3.4 Conclusion 34  
   3.4 How do consumers, forecasting agencies and fashion companies influence each other in the process of trend forecasting? 35  
      3.4.1 Influence of trend forecasters and consumers 35  
      3.4.1.1 Is it impossible to create a trend? 36  
      3.4.1.2 Deciding the trend 37  
      3.4.2 Influence of social norms and branding 37  
      3.4.3 Influence of high fashion designers 38  
      3.4.4 Standardization of the industry 38  
      3.4.5 The industry as a self fulfilling prophecy 39  
      3.4.6 Conclusion 40  

4. Conclusion: the model of the dynamics of fashion trend forecasting 41  

5. Reference list 43  

Appendix
1. Introduction to the Research Report

1.1 Introduction

In the past decades, the field of trend forecasting within the creative industries has expanded enormously and has become very influential. Modern trend forecasters do not solely ‘spot’ trends like they did in the 1960s and 1970s. Nowadays, trend forecasting agencies are concerned with a large amount of information gained through market research and scientific analyses (McKelvey & Munslove, 2008). According to WGSN data analyst Francesca Muston, data could never substitute traditional trend forecasting since trends have a subjective nature, yet it can be used to ‘enrich’ the forecasts they make (Glassman, 2014). In addition, trend forecasting as a profession is becoming more and more popular. In Italy, for example, there is a learning program called ‘Trends Gymnasium’ whose mission it is to teach participants how to spot trends (Brunini, 2011). According to trend watcher Jan Agelink “there is nowadays more interest in general for the study of trend forecasting. We can see that in education; there is a course in Tilburg named ‘trend forecasting’. Many want to become a trend forecaster” (Appendix, p.1).

The world of fashion trend forecasting is curious, complex and multifaceted. Today’s forecasting agencies predict trends; fashion companies translate the forecasts into their future collections and consumers, in their turn, buy what is ‘on trend’. As long as forecasting agencies (of whatever type and with whatever approach) exist and designers follow up their advice, this ‘trend cycle’ will be maintained (Dillon, 2012). The dynamics between the consumer, trend forecasting agencies and fashion companies require profound research if one would ever want to come close to understanding the complexities of fashion trend forecasting.

1.2 Rationale

There are several reasons for exploring the dynamics of trend forecasting. First of all, the trend cycle - which could be said to be a self fulfilling prophecy - could be argued to be quite a narrow minded, closed process, yet is a major part of the ‘creative’ fashion industry. These two characteristics of the fashion sector are contradictory and therefore demand an explanation. Companies within the fashion industry generally take predictions of trend forecasters seriously as forecasters combine factual market data and their intuitive talent - their talent to sense what is happening in the industry - and make that information easily accessible and usable for their clients. Secondly, there is little critical writing (in the positive, constructive sense) or academic thought on neither trend forecasting as a sphere of dynamic forces nor on the relation between traditional trend forecasting and data analytics. This research aims to touch on those subjects, which makes it innovative in its field. According to scholar Elisabeth Petermann (n.d.), the reason for the lack of academic thought on trend forecasting is that it is seen as an abstract concept because of the intuitive aspect that plays a roll in making predictions. As a result, trend forecasting is not valued nor recognized for the force it is in itself and is only externally examined without depth. Thirdly, as mentioned before, ‘intuition’ is an abstract concept yet it is an intricate part of trend forecasting. It is important and interesting to understand to what extent intuition plays a role in forecasting since we are, nowadays, increasingly focused on big data,
the quantifiable and the measurable. Intuition, however, will never cease to be a part - either small or large - of fashion forecasting, according to many\(^1\). Fourthly, big data is, as already stated, quickly gaining territory in the field of trend forecasting. It is important for the general knowledge of current fashion thinkers and practitioners to find out to what extent scientific data, next to intuition, is involved in predicting trends.

1.3 Aim

This research report and the product primarily aim to map out the active forces between consumers, trend forecasting agencies and fashion companies when it comes to the establishment of a fashion trend. The project also aims to give a critical and analysing view on the dynamic world of trend forecasting. That is to say, it focuses on trend forecasting as a diverse power in itself and the way it works, on which parties are involved in its process and on where its values and unexpected, alternative routes may lie. In addition, a strong focus will lie on the role of intuition in the process of trend forecasting. Along these lines, consumers, forecasting agencies and fashion companies may benefit from the eventual proposed model – the model of the dynamics of trend forecasting - and/or adapt their approach towards forecasting/designing processes or decisions, as the model’s purpose is to give an understanding of how the trend forecasting cycle functions and develops.

With regard to both academic thought on trend forecasting and the forecasting industry itself, this research will provoke thought and raise questions concerning the role of intuition and data in the trend forecasting process, which might stimulate a more creative approach to fashion and trends in general.

This ‘Research Report’ is a base of information upon which the ‘Product’ will be founded. Parts of the content of the product are sporadically in this report in order to bridge the research and the product. The ‘Product’ is an article that presents specific parts of a model (for an example of the visualisation of the model (hypothesis), see Figure 1) in which the dynamics between the consumer, the trend forecasters and the fashion companies are explained and are related to concepts of philosopher Gilles Deleuze. This model is also presented as a poster on the exhibition. In this research report, the dynamics of the subcomponents within the main components (the consumers, the forecasting agencies and the fashion companies) of the model will be analysed as well and will be related to the other components. The primary subcomponent focus lies within the area of ‘forecasting agencies’, in which a distinction is made between traditional trend forecasting - which comprises \textit{visionary-based forecasting} and \textit{qualitative market research-based forecasting} – and data-based trend forecasting (terms to be explained thoroughly later in the research).

\(^{1}\) Articles including viewpoints that stress the inevitability of intuition in trend forecasting to be found in
1.4 Research questions

The following section provides an overview of the questions on which the research is based. The questions consist of a two-fold main question and four subquestions.

The main question is

‘To what extent is trend forecasting actually “forecasting” and to what extent is it “determining what we will wear”? What are the dynamics between the consumer, forecasting agency and the fashion company in terms of determining the eventual fashion trend?’

The main question will be studied with help of the findings of the following subquestions.

Subquestion 1. What is the role of intuition in trend forecasting nowadays; what is the role of big data; and what is the relation between the two?

The aim of this subquestion is to reveal the dynamics between the function and power of intuition and of data analytics in different types of trend forecasting. In order to reach that target, an analysis will be made of what kind of (academic) research has been done on trend forecasting using data analytics and whether that research is actually being used by trend forecasting agencies. It also focuses on the subjective practices within the process of trend forecasting and to what extent those practices are present and of influence. The field of concern of this subquestion is visualised in Figure 2.
Subquestion 2. *What type of trend forecasting do fashion companies make use of; to what extent do they follow the advice of trend forecasters; and to what extent do they use their own ‘free creativity’?*

The aim of this subquestion is to gain an understanding of what type of trend forecasting fashion companies apply and the ways in which they do that. In other words, this section of the research will focus on the way fashion companies use or translate (if they actually do make use of trend forecasting agencies’ advice) the information provided to them by trend forecasting agencies. It will simultaneously focus on the dynamics between ‘free creativity’ of the fashion companies’ designers and the following of the trend forecaster’s advice. The field of concern of this subquestion is visualised in Figure 3.

Subquestion 3. *What is the role of the consumer in the creation and dissemination of fashion ‘trends’?*

This subquestion focuses on the dynamics between the consumer and the fashion company in relation to trends. Its aim is to investigate to what extent consumers – fashion innovators, in particular - influence the creation of a trend and how they are influenced by trends themselves. The field of concern of this subquestion is visualised in Figure 4.
Figure 4: Open hypothesis of subquestion 3

Subquestion 4. How do consumers, forecasting agencies and fashion companies influence each other in the process of trend forecasting?

The aim of this subquestion is to reveal the dynamics between all three main parties that are of importance in the research. It will discuss the influence that the consumer, the forecasting agency and the fashion company may have on the establishment of a trend. The field of concern of this subquestion is visualised in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Open hypothesis of subquestion 4
1.5 Methodology

For the purpose of answering the research questions clearly and in-depth, the following methods are used. First of all, databases, university libraries and Internet articles/websites have been consulted for research regarding the theoretical framework and for research regarding data analytics in fashion, the process of (traditional) trend forecasting and different (professional) views on trend forecasting. Secondly, interviews with a former insider from a traditional forecasting agency and current owner of a trend consultancy (trend forecaster Geraldine Wharry) and with an individual trend forecaster (Jan Agelink) have been conducted to find out about the process of trend forecasting they usually apply. Thirdly, it is important to reach out to fashion companies in order to gain an understanding of the type of trend forecasting they use and thus ‘believe in’. Both a commercial (Expresso Fashion) and a high fashion (ILJA) company have been approached to reach this goal.

The multi-disciplinary approach concerning the methodology of this research is key since fashion (and thus a ‘fashion trend’) is too complicated in nature to be explained from just one point of view. It demands to be approached from different angles for it concerns many different fields (aesthetics, sociology, politics) at the same time (Wilson, 2003 [1985]: 11). It is inevitable to use a combination of literature research and qualitative research methods in order to map out and comprehend the complex dynamics of the fashion trend forecasting process and to what extent data and intuition are involved. The methodology as presented here will contribute to the reliability of the research and the usability of the proposed model.

1.6 Theoretical framework

We can imagine the complexities that come into play when analysing intuition and the role it may play in trend forecasting, since intuition is a force in itself that is influenced by multiple factors. As mentioned previously, this report focuses on the distinction and dynamics between traditional trend forecasting (in which intuition is involved) and scientific data-based forecasting. Next to that, it zooms in on the use of trend forecasting (either traditional or data-based) and the use of ‘free creativity’ by fashion companies. With the purpose of shedding light on these matters, the connection between the unquantifiable and the quantifiable is discussed.

The unquantifiable, characterized by continuous revisions and shifts and different interpretations, can be found back in concepts like intuition, free creativity and the unknown future. The quantifiable, on the contrary, resembles the current developments in technology we use to measure everything, including social phenomena. In other words and put in the context of this research, the unquantifiable relates to the intuitive aspect of trend forecasting and the quantifiable refers to the area of data analytics within fashion, the data that attempts to quantify the, according to many, unquantifiable. What is taken into account is that although the words ‘subjective’ and ‘intuitive’ relate to the power of having an own opinion, this seemingly internal and individual ‘view’ is always influenced by external, experimental factors and is a dynamic force itself within the dynamics between the consumer, fashion forecasting agencies and fashion companies.

Data provides information about what fashion may do and or what a consumer does. Once forecasting
agencies get a grip on this data, it becomes part of a representative world; factual, objective data is translated into ‘visions’ by forecasting agencies and into ‘themes of a season’ by fashion companies and thus a trend could never have been ‘actually forecasted’: intuitive aspects of data-to-trend-translators will always play a role and thus the ‘forecast’ is not an ‘actual forecast’ anymore, it has become a vision. It will always be impossible to correctly predict - predicting in its pure form, where the aspect of ‘determining’ is not involved - trends since the future is a conceptual and abstract phenomenon; the amount of options of what will possibly happen is limitless and there is an infinite number of combinations of past and present that can be made (Pisters, 2012).

In order to put the above-described thoughts in perspective, the notions of ‘unquantifiable-quantifiable’, ‘intuition’ and ‘the unknown future’ will be linked to concepts of philosopher Gilles Deleuze in this project’s product. First of all, the smooth space and the striated space will be considered - in which the ‘smooth space’ resembles free forces and ever-changing directions and the ‘striated space’ is a result of interfering technological advances that aim to quantify and measure (Hubert, n.d.). Also, lines of flight are incorporated. Succinctly explained, phenomena operating along a line of flight can never be given a definition since its qualities constantly change (Deleuze and Guatarrri, 1987). In addition, Deleuze’s view on how the future is open and indeterminate (discussed in Difference and Repetition (1968)) will be of support for the article.
2. Introduction of concepts

2.1 Trends

“A trend may be a revision of a current trend or a change from the previous trend. A trend is the general increase in acceptance of a style or certain style features.” (Kincade, Gibson and Woodard, 2004:188)

Trends can be found in all different sorts of industries, from financial to medical to creative, like the fashion industry. In this research, however, we will exclusively focus on fashion trends. Fashion trends typically have a life span of 2-3 years, according to Henrik Vejlgaard’s Diamond-Shaped Trend Model, to run from ‘trend creators’ to ‘anti-innovators’ (Raymond, 2010).

Fashion trends are a product of the fluxes of society, caused by political, economical, social, technological and cultural issues (de Wet, 2008). In line with scholar AJC de Wet’s definition of trends is Martin Raymond’s (2010), founder of The Future Laboratory, when he says that when analysing trends, we attempt to make sense of what is happening at the moment, what will happen around us in the future and why it will happen that way. Trends thus have a sociological, psychological, emotional and physical character (Raymond, 2010).

Often a distinction is made between short, medium and long-term trends. The first are known as fads, the second are fashion trends that last longer than just one season and the third are more general trends which, as they are accepted throughout multiple groups of people, survive for a long time. Long-term forecasting involves the prediction of factors (social, economic) of a macro trend that could be a reason for changing the strategy of a company. Opinions are divided as to whether long-term prediction could ever be accurate (de Wet, 2008). Some argue that we can use micro trends to find out what is going on at macro level - instead of the other way around, which is the way trend analysts work according to analyst Katie Smith from data analytics company Edited (The Business of Fashion, 2015). These micro trends are, however, mostly not based on primary data yet on unscientific data like intuition and perception (Research Live, 2008).

During the fashion forecasting process, meetings take place continuously between members of the forecasting and design team (de Wet, 2008). In order to explain trend forecasting, trend watcher Christine Boland conceptualizes the process by comparing it to a wave that increases in size. Trend watchers detect the wave when it is still small; they are able to see where the wave is going and how it grows. The clients - the brands - are supposed to catch the wave at the right timing and use it to construct or complement their product so that it becomes a (temporary) success. According to trend analyst David Shah, and in line with Boland, trends mostly start in a small, unknown place and then grow into something big. In order to be a good trend watcher you need to spot such a trend in its initial stage (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016).

Fashion trends, in conclusion, are a product of society. They tell us what is happening, what will happen and why, and they tend to have a subjective character as intuition is involved in the process of the establishment of a trend.
2.2 Trend forecasting

2.2.1 What is fashion trend forecasting?

Trend forecasting is a complex and multi-faceted process. A good forecaster is constantly aware of the attitude and mindset of consumers - both in a global as well as in a specific cultural context - of developments in politics, economy, environment and technology (Wilson, 2001).

This research focuses on fashion trend forecasting\(^2\). De Wet (2008:13) describes fashion forecasting as a complicated chain of events, which includes (1) “identifying emerging trends in society” (2) “anticipating the accurate timing of change” (3) “determining the direction of fashion change” and (4) “projecting consumer’s preferences”. In order to further elaborate on the definition of fashion forecasting, De Wet cites Popcorn (1996:17), who describes trend forecasting as a view, constituted by notions and movements within society, on what will take place in the future and the reason why (de Wet, 2008). Fashion trend forecasting has thus to do mainly with the behaviour and wishes of society, the changes within society and the reason why this behaviour, wishes and changes come about.

Fashion trend forecasting is part of ‘Futures Studies’, which is still a vague area of expertise since its practices and approaches have not yet been defined clearly. Scholar Elizabeth Petermann (n.d.) describes an overview of futures studies methods and applications by scholar Sam Cole (2001: 376). From this overview, we can read that Cole mentions three main methods of Futures Studies: forecasting, polling and envisioning. Forecasting refers to the process of prediction based on calculations and prognoses. Polling is concerned with what consumers and businesses are expected to want and need in the future based on marketing research surveys. According to scholar Julie King (2011), this is the forecasting approach that is most evident, and which is very well applied by WGSN. It means that experts in the field of fashion forecasting give their ideas and opinions based on the experience they have in the industry, about the future and its factors of influence. Envisioning has a narrative character and primarily involves intuition in order to create a futuristic vision. We could conclude from this explanation that forecasting is a term that can best be used in the context of fashion analytics and big data. Polling can best be used with regard to predictions made based on qualitative market research and envisioning is the way of predicting the future and creating visions the way so-called ‘trend watchers’ (like Lidewij Edelkoort (Dhillon, 2015)) do.

In her article, Petermann (n.d.) explicitly focuses on the last category mentioned: envisioning. The current research however, aims to focus on the combination of the three since they are intrinsically connected. In order to find out more about trend forecasting based on the dynamics between the consumer, trend forecasting agency and fashion company, all three categories will be put in context. Petermann states that “not only the designer or client who uses forecasting information shapes the future, but the practice of trend forecasting can itself be a generator of change, and therefore holds discursive and political power” (ibid., 6). This research relates to Petermann’s view yet suggests to add the power of the consumer to the context as well.

\(^2\) Fashion trend forecasting should not be confused with sales forecasting, which is predicting the amounts of products that will be sold in a season for financial statements.
Each trend forecasting agency applies a different approach when it comes to forecasting a fashion trend. There are different models, applied by different forecasters, to filter the large amount of information gathered and translate it into a trend (King, 2011). According to King (2011), trend forecasters mainly take inspiration and information from (1) catwalk trends (2) socio-economic trends (3) technological developments (4) lifestyle trends (5) cultural events (6) exhibitions (7) film (8) music and (9) historical data from previous seasons. The type of source that an agency takes inspiration from depends on the type of forecasting method it applies.

For this research, the area of ‘forecasting agencies’ (see Figure 1) has been divided into traditional trend forecasting and Fashion Analytics. The former, on its turn, consists of qualitative market research forecasting and visionary based forecasting. These types of forecasting will be further explained in the next section. Figure 6 illustrates how the types of trend forecasting are constituted.

![Figure 6: The types of forecasting agencies and their characteristics](image)

According to De Wet (2008), fashion forecasting is a process of collecting information on both scientific (reports and studies of previous trends, consumers, politics, sales history, finances, etc.) and intuitive (analysis of cultures, technologies, fashion shows, creative industries, the spirit of the time, etc.) grounds. In this research, the first we use as the main source of information of fashion analytics. The second, intuition, is the main driver of traditional trend forecasting.

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^3 Examples of models used by forecasters are Brannon’s trend development model and Sproles’ general principles of forecasting (King, 2011)
2.2.1.1 ‘A good trend watcher’

A good trend watcher has to be sensitive and observe, watch and listen in order to detect clues about the future, says Ellen Sideri, founder/CEO of ESP Trendlab. As stated by fashion journalist and critic Rosemary Feitelberg, the popularity of the trend forecasting industry is growing, with many people claiming to be an expert in trend watching. Only few, however, seem to be actual candidates for the profession. As a trend watcher, you have to stick to what you think will be the next trend, despite the prediction being odd at times. David Shah agrees and adds that you need a good network since you need power to convince the industry of your opinion. Then, once the trend actually becomes visible in society, people start following it where after it might disappear again. The cycle starts anew. According to Christine Boland, a good trend watcher signals (parts of) trends right in their initial stage. These signals are to be found in the work of (fashion) designers, architecture and art since artists are able to detect trend signals early. He or she looks at what is going on in society and what that does to people. Trends appear in response to what consumers want or require. Moreover, as a trend analyst you have to be clear about what brands should form your client base, states trend analyst Cecile Poignant. In addition, you have to be aware of the difference between long-term trends, medium term trends and short term trends. Only long-term trends serve as a direction for the future. Also, one must not forget that trend forecasting is not just about spotting something on the streets; it is a process that requires skills and professionalism (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016). “What is of major importance”, says Jan Agelink, “I think, is being personal and having the right talent. It is also important to be able to present what you want to convey in the right way. I myself use media in different ways these days when I present for my clients. I am up to date when it comes to new and interesting ways of presenting.” (Appendix, p.1). David Shah concludes that we should not be secretive anymore about the process of forecasting. We all are the first to know nowadays due to the Internet. It is therefore about what you do with what you know and have (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016).

The above-described characteristics a trend watcher should possess are typical for a traditional trend watcher, as intuition is involved in each of the descriptions. If one wants to be a trend watcher, it seems necessary to possess a certain forecasting talent and cogency. Having a good network facilitates the process of being taken seriously. We can imagine that the establishment of such a network contributes to the self fulfilling aspect of forecasting trends, as clients will more blindly follow the interpretations of an acknowledged forecaster.

2.2.2 Traditional trend forecasting

2.2.2.1 What is traditional trend forecasting?

The main venues of trend presentations given by traditional trend forecasters are Trade Fairs (like the Première Vision), Trend magazines (like In View), Seminars (like Lidewij Edelkoort’s Trend Union) and the Internet (like WGSN) (de Wet, 2008). At a fashion fair, trend consultants show their information to the seriously interested (read: an agent from a fashion company who seeks for inspiration and is a possible buyer of the trend forecaster’s products/services). The trend forecaster strategically wants to keep the trend information ‘mystical’ to a certain extent for the sake of preserving the value of the information (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006).
Scholar Ingrid Giertz-Mårtenson describes trend agencies like Promostyl as businesses that operate using a set, conservative system, which includes providing trend information through seminars and on paper. Also, consultancy is part of their expertise (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006). In the current research, this kind of forecasting agency will be referred to as ‘traditional trend forecasting agency’. The company WGSN works in a slightly different manner yet is considered a traditional trend forecasting agency as well. WGSN, as opposed to the previously mentioned ‘conservative agencies’, offers only online information, which allows them to include real-time, updated trend information in their online reports (ibid.).

As mentioned in the previous section and shown in Figure 6, the term ‘traditional trend forecasting’, which will be used throughout this research report, is the umbrella term for **visionary based forecasting** and **qualitative market research forecasting**. Some trend forecasting agencies can be considered part of the ‘visionary based forecasting’ category, some in the ‘qualitative market research forecasting’ category and others operate using an approach that is a mix of visionary based tools and qualitative market research tools. In the next section, the types of traditional forecasting are further explained.

### 2.2.2.2 Qualitative market research forecasting

Qualitative market research forecasting is based on **polling** (Cole, 2001) and thus on predictions established through market(ing) research. An example of a typical traditional trend forecasting agency, which is mainly market research based, is Nelly Rodi. Nelly Rodi briefly explains its forecasting approach on its website. According to the website, step 1 in the process is ‘Observe internationally’. This step is described as ‘filtering sociological information and aesthetic signals with 3 forecasting tools’. Tool 1 is ‘Consumer attitudes’: *What is the economic context? What are the sociological evolutions? How do consumers behave and what do they want?* Tool 2 is ‘Creative culture’: *What are the principal influences? What are the emerging aesthetic trends? Who are the new talents?* Tool 3 is ‘Market innovation’: *What are the markets and what makes them tick? What innovations drive marketing, distribution and communication?* (Nellyrodi.com, n.d.). From this information we can conclude that the base of a new trend is formed by observations regarding the consumer, creative minds and the changes in the market. Step 2 is ‘Assimilate’, meaning recognizing *‘the first signs and organize them through collaboration and dialogue’* (ibid.). From the description of this step we can derive that the (still chaotic) base of the trends formed in step 1 is filtered and arranged by a group of analysts. Step 3 is ‘Formulate’: *potential scenarios about the type and direction of future behaviour/innovations and attitudes* (ibid.). In this step, the analysts probably set their interpretations free on the set of information constituted in step 2. They formulate possible directions in which they think the future will lead us based on their interpretations. Step 4 is ‘Inspire’: *creativity and stimulate brands’ insights with publications and forecasting studies* (ibid.), which implies the step of impersonally informing clients about the interpreted possible chain of future events. Step 5 is ‘Build’: *strategies for brands and offers with consulting services and personalized support*. Step 6 is ‘Develop and energize’, which entails creating *‘products and services with customized, long-term consulting and constantly updated trend books’* (ibid.). Nelly Rodi thus wishes to establish long-term relationships with its clients and makes sure to do so by providing constant personal trend information.

Qualitative market research forecasting is thus concerned with the observation of sociological and aesthetic developments of consumers and markets, the filtering and arrangement of these
observations and the interpretation (intuition!) of the information obtained. A summary of these key characteristics of qualitative market research forecasting can be found in Figure 6.

2.2.2.3 Visionary based forecasting
A visionary based forecasting approach revolves around Cole’s (2001) term envisioning as explained previously. Petermann (n.d.) takes trend watcher Lidewij Edelkoort (TrendUnion) as an example and explains her forecasting approach as abstract storytelling that results in a vision, which is translated into colours and materials. Edelkoort has created an aura of trustworthiness around her. Many companies are interested in what she has to say about the future in her biannual seminars.

Trend forecasters like Edelkoort apply an approach that is more abstract than other traditional approaches. Edelkoort explains how she does not rely on figures and factual market research but rather combines analyses of observations from people with different backgrounds she works with (designers, artists, et cetera) and her intuition when analysing trends (Lidewij Edelkoort cited in Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006). A summary of the main characteristics of visionary based forecasting can be found in Figure 6. Edelkoort condemns online trend forecasting agencies, like WGSN, for the pace in which they provide trend updates and reports, which makes the trends superficial. In her opinion real trends demand time to establish themselves (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006). By saying this, Edelkoort implies that trends are malleable. This will be elaborated on later in the research and in the article.

2.2.2.4 Will traditional trend forecasting survive?
The fashion trends landscape has changed considerably over the last couple of decades and has become challenging for the trend forecasting business, due to the rise of digitalisation and ways of sharing information (MacKinney-Valentin, 2010; King, 2011). Trends are picked up and forgotten about quicker than they were before; nowadays, fashion trends tend to last only a couple of months whereas they lasted around a year two/three decades ago (King, 2011). Trend forecasting agencies like WGSN.com and Trendwatching.com are able to offer direct fashion trend updates online as opposed to the traditional way of trend forecasting (forecasting trends years in advance). Trend reports are now readily available and more easily accessible than the big traditional trend books the industry worked with before (MacKinney-Valentin, 2010).

According to Giertz-Mårtenson (2006), traditional trend forecasting focusing on trends that will arise 2 years from now does not have a future. With the current speed of the market, the tremendous amount of information in terms of celebrity fashion, new products, artists, blog posts, television, et cetera it is impossible to forecast what will happen in the far future; trends are emerging everywhere and can only be spotted short in advance (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006). We should not forget, however, that fashion companies always need some time to respond (logistically) to real time trends. Even though forecasting agencies now combine their longer-term forecasts with real time trend spotting, it takes time for a fashion company to design, create and/or adapt a collection. According to Stylesight’s vice president, Stylesight therefore aligns the time frame of its forecasts to the industry’s lead times, meaning 18 months in advance (Barnett, 2011). Other current online players in the trend forecasting industry also still do provide longer term forecasting next to real time fashion updates (King, 2011; WGSN.com, 2016; Trendstop.com, 2016; Trendwatching.com, 2016).
Another factor influencing the fashion trends landscape is the availability of free trend reports, offered by companies such as Trendwatching.com. However noticeably, companies like WGSN, whose services cost money, remain steady players in the trend forecasting market (Barnett, 2011). A reason for this could be the reliability and customer base that WGSN has acquired and maintained over the years. Also, many brands do not only subscribe to one trend forecasting agency, yet are members of multiple in order to be more certain about trend developments.

Most trend forecasting agencies thus seem to partially adapt their approach to the changing pace of the fashion market by creating real time trend updates next to the traditional trend reports. The core of the fashion forecasting industry, however, remains unchanged, as the big trend forecasting agencies have built credibility and the response to trends is a time consuming process for most companies.

2.2.3 Fashion Analytics

Fashion analytics can be described as the use of big data and data analytics in the fashion industry with the aim to predict and analyse consumer behaviour in order to maximize sales and optimize business processes. ‘Big data’ is information obtained from all possible sources, such as historical analysis, Google search words, social media and GPS signals (The Business of Fashion, 2013). “Fashion analytics”, according to data analyst Karandeep Singh is “getting the right information about the right fashion to the right people at the right time, [so that] businesses will be able to make the right business decisions to forecast the next fashion trends” (Singh, n.d.). Data analytics in the fashion industry is about fashion trend forecasting and adopting the right strategies based on more than just the analysis of historical data (Manthan.com, 2016). Data analytics company EDITED makes use of machine learning to analyse online data of countless fashion companies and is able to translate that tremendous amount of data into understandable and useful information (EDITED, 2016).

In the next sections, the dynamics of fashion trend forecasting will be analysed by discussing each of the subquestions thoroughly. In the chapter of the first subquestion, intuition and big data will be related to the types of forecasting that have been discussed previously. The second subquestion focuses on the way fashion companies apply trend forecasting. Subquestion 3 revolves around the role of the consumer in the process of trend forecasting and the final subquestion deals with the influence that consumers, forecasting agencies and fashion companies have on each other in the process.
3. The dynamics of fashion trend forecasting

3.1 What is the role of intuition in trend forecasting nowadays; what is the role of scientific data; and what is the relation between the two?

3.1.1 Intuition

This section aims to explain what intuition is, as intuition is a concept that is crucial to this research. Giving ‘intuition’ a definite meaning is complicated, as people see it as a vague concept and tend to interpret it differently. Some define it as comprehending without having information to build upon. Others explain it as reacting without being actively aware that the reaction is based on something one has learned unconsciously (Gallate and Keen, 2011).

Scholars Jason Gallate and Shannan Keen describe three main views of intuition in order to shed light on the different interpretations people give to the concept. The first view is the ‘scientific-empirical’ view of intuition, meaning that people make ‘intuitive’ decisions based on information that has been unconsciously saved in their memories. The second view, the opposite of the first, is ‘artistic’, which can be described as an unknown, external force that mysteriously gives knowledge to a person so that the person can make use of that information to decide what to do. Another ‘mystical’ or ‘artistic’ view of intuition is that there is no source at all where the information comes from. The third view balances between the first two and is based on “the individual’s neural system, which takes partial information from experience and the environment and generates heretofore unrealized possibilities and then selects the ‘best’ solution to present to consciousness.” This process of selecting and presenting the ‘best’ solution is still an unsolved query (Gallate and Keen, 2011). The mystery of the second and third view of intuition makes it impossible to approach the views scientifically. If there is ‘something’ from outside that supplies information, then, according to science, that ‘something’ should be defined and pinpointed, which is impossible in current science. Intuition, therefore, has long been ungraspable for scientists and has thus not always been taken seriously in the scientific field.

Nevertheless, intuition is not the vague concept anymore that it has been before. Major steps have been taken in finding out more about the human nervous system in relation to intuition. It seems that the unconscious saves ‘reliable’, inherent information on which we rely with our consciousness even though we do not know precisely where the information comes from. Despite the advances in explaining intuition from a scientific point of view, Gallate and Keen deem it impossible to pinpoint what intuition is exactly from a scientific viewpoint as, according to them, too little research has been conducted successfully so far in order to discover the qualities and essence of intuition (Gallate and Keen, 2011). Gallate and Keen therefore define intuition as something that “occurs when a person apprehends a course of action, solution to a problem, idea, or feeling, in an immediate fashion (often in a pressure situation), without necessarily knowing from where or how the notion arose.” Gallate and Keen’s definition is the ‘umbrella definition’ of the three main views on intuition explained above. Sinclair (2005) defines intuition as “a non-sequential information-processing mode, which comprises
both cognitive and affective elements and results in direct knowing without any use of conscious reasoning” (Sinclair, 2005). In other words, certain information is dealt with and saved by the unconscious; when a person makes a decision based on this information, which is unconsciously stored yet easily accessible, it is unknown to that person where his/her knowledge came from. It thus seems as if he or she acts based on no specific method or reason. This view of intuition corresponds with Gallate and Keen’s ‘scientific-empirical’ view of intuition since it stresses that unconscious processing is the cause of immediate apprehension.

According to Professor of Cognitive Psychology Valerie Thompson (2014), the best way to explain intuition is by explaining a couple of processes that are the foundation of intuition. The first are processes associated with the memory. The second are processes that control how we process and store information. The third type deals with the way emotions drive intuitive sense and choices (Thompson, 2014). Intuition, according to Thompson, is thus intrinsically related to memory, information processing and storage, and emotions.

We can conclude, based on the given definitions and explanations of intuition, that intuition cannot be explained completely (yet) from a scientific viewpoint. What the literature agrees on, though, is that intuitive actions may be a result of unconscious processing and storage of information and that a person that experiences an intuitive moment is not able to explain where his or her intuitive feelings come from.

3.1.2 Intuition in trend forecasting

Little information can be found in literature on fashion forecasting and its influence in the fashion industry. One of the few researches that have been conducted on the topic examines the accuracy of fashion colour forecasts, their impact on the industry and how forecasts are established (King, 2011). King stresses the scarcity of academic interest in the field of forecasting and is forced to blame the degree of intuition (non-scientific) involved in forecasting for the limited amount of literature.

When discussing the definition and views on intuition, it is inevitable to mention that some view it as a psychic character trait, which one can develop and improve, that enables some to forecast the future. However, there is only little, unreliable research conducted in that field (Gallate and Keen, 2011). This way of explaining intuition - in relation to psychic powers - is how intuition seems to be used in visionary based trend forecasting.

De Wet highlights ‘intuition’ as an attribute that is needed in the fashion forecasting process. Many scientists, as mentioned, do not recognize the importance of intuition, as it is an abstract concept that is impossible to quantify and therefore unscientific. Others, however, do recognize the value of intuition and creativity and state that intuition is indispensable (de Wet, 2008).

Intuition is not all, though, according to trend watcher Jan Agelink (Appendix, p1):
Yet, it is not all about intuition. I read books and opinion magazines. I do visual research and I visit fairs for inspiration. I analyse the information that I collect. It is important to keep in mind the client you work for.

Author and political adviser Mark Penn explains that discovering micro trends is about complementing primary market research with intuition. In other words, it is about figures and individual observations. It is important to include market research and thus to not base predictions on intuition and personal observations alone. Market research might not be the best tool to predict the future yet it is a good tool to measure what is going on at the moment. We need an analysis of the now in order to say something about the future (Research Live, 2008). Professors Tracy Diane and Tom Cassidy (2005) and De Wet (2008) agree and stress the importance of combining both scientific and artistic approaches and thus recognize the value of intuition. Proponents of using big data in the fashion industry also see the value of intuition and experience. “Intuition is central”, state the authors of Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think in an interview with Business of Fashion when addressing fashion trend forecasting (The Business of Fashion, 2013). In line with these views on the importance of combining intuition with market research are quotes extracted from the findings of King’s (2011) research on the sources of inspiration of designers: ‘It is intuition first and you have to work with it then research’ ‘20% is intuition, 80% is sales research’ ‘Allowed to develop own individual ideas & use instincts’. A large chapter of King’s research is dedicated to ‘intuition’ in (colour) trend forecasting, stressing the importance of intuition in the process.

Lidewij Edelkoort takes the importance of intuition a step further as she claims that objectivity has no place in the process of fashion forecasting. The driving force behind a good forecast should be primarily based on intuition and creativity (Diane and Cassidy, 2005). Forecasting agency Trendwatching.com is a company that seems to base its information mainly on intuition. A spokesperson of the agency admits to that and adds that they do not conduct questionnaires or any such kind of market research; Trendwatching.com nonetheless does also focus on online research and the information they receive from thousands of ‘trend spotters’ across the globe (Research Live, 2008). A similar approach is adopted by forecasting agency Promostyl, who was quite surprised by the fact that trend books are working so well and were seen as important, almost sacred, trend indicators. The founder of Peclers Paris mentions the importance of intuition for his forecasting team (Loyer, 2002). After the turn of the century, forecasting agencies involved sociologists, psychologists and philosophers in the forecasting process, just to make sure that the predictions they gave were more reliable (Loyer, 2002). Interesting to note is that data analysts are not mentioned by Peclers Paris nor Promostyl; apparently, big data is of lesser importance for these companies. Their focus on intuition and lack of interest in big data makes them part of the traditional trend forecasting agencies.

From the literature on intuition in fashion trend forecasting we can conclude that each player in the field values the role of intuition differently. For some it is a crucial aspect; for others it is important yet not the only factor of influence. As de Wet (2008) argues as well, it is clear that there is no real consensus about the use of intuition in fashion trend forecasting.
3.1.3 Fashion analytics in trend forecasting

Even though the role of fashion analytics in the fashion industry is still a topic of discussion as many argue that the industry is a creative one that should be based on intuition\(^4\), the field of fashion analytics is developing and growing by the day (Bodeswa, 2015). Professor George Sproles (1981) argues in favour of using data analysis for market research in order to better predict trends\(^5\). It is clear that times are changing and big data is nowadays gaining recognition throughout the industry.

The fashion industry is an industry that is conservative concerning the way it adopts analytics since it is a business that is traditionally grounded on intuitive decision-making (Kumar, 2013). Data analysts are slowly convincing the fashion industry that big data can help to more accurately predict fashion trends (Bodeswa, 2015; Swayne, 2014). Analytics in the form of historical data could help companies to forecast long-term trends and explain why customers like specific items better than other items. Certain PLM systems are being used in combination with ERP systems to filter what aspects of items have contributed to the item’s success or failure. With this way of using historical analysis, brands can gain a better understanding of what decisions to make in terms of design (Kumar, 2013). In an article by Divante Business Services, WGSN data analytics services are projected as long-term trend forecast providers. Big data is also useful for the development of short term solutions, like supply chain related issues (Bodeswa, 2015).

German futurist Matthias Horx is firmly against the traditional approach to fashion trend forecasting. He views forecasting as something that should be practiced by gathering data and building models to understand society and psychology. According to him, that is the only way to make the most accurate predictions. The traditional trend forecasting industry still relies heavily on intuition and, according to Horx, on what forecasters and brands want to hear and what is most beneficial for them, which forms the eventual forecast made (Horx.com, n.d.). Horx’ view corresponds to how the traditional way of forecasting, based on intuition, seems to be a way of influencing the future in stead of actually ‘forecasting’ (without influencing) what will happen. Yet for forecasting based on data, the same may be said: if we predict the future with data analytics, companies will adapt their approach to that forecast and thus cooperate to changing the future in a specific direction\(^6\).

Based on Google search words and sentences, Google created a ‘Fashion Trends Report’ for Spring 2015 in which an analysis and overview is given of the trends that are up and coming and the trends companies should not invest in as they are fading away. The information that the search queries provide even illustrates how certain trends spread across countries as Google is able to see in which countries items have been ‘googled’, when and how often (Google, 2015). Fashion analytics company EDITED collects information from sources that cover 4 years back. These sources are texts, images and videos from social media platforms including trend blogs, websites from retailers and brands (over 1000 in total) and runway records. EDITED has also created a tool called ‘Social Monitor’, which consists of information provided by over 800,000 experts within the fashion industry (Noyes, 2014). EDITED’s primary aim is to provide its customers with real time data which is used to respond directly

\(^4\) Research by Giertz-Mårtenson (2006), for example, completely neglects fashion analytics and big data whereas it aims to reveal the entire process of trend forecasting.

\(^5\) Sproles’ argument is of course based on the data analysis that was possible in the 1980’s; major steps have been taken in the field of technology and data analysis in the last couple of decades.

\(^6\) This complex sequence of events will be further elaborated upon in the article of this project.
to changes in the market and thus to change assortment or strategy in time to boost sales and to make the right decisions concerning promotion of products. Of all data available (What is in stores? What sells well? What trends are here to stay according to social media commenters?), brands can choose their own output. Each customer is therefore presented the real time information they personally need (Noyes, 2014; Banks, 2013).

Companies have a lot of data available about consumers as consumers are, first of all, increasingly making use of purchase tracking tools such as loyalty cards. Secondly, retailers and brands nowadays also use facial recognition; they can read emotions so they know how consumers react to a certain product. Thirdly, companies know what colours and products are best sellers and in which season. Also, we can all directly see the newest collection of renowned designers as their runway shows are uploaded directly on the Internet. In other words, companies have a huge base of information available. They seek for confirmation of trend watchers to make sure that the information they have and the way they translate it into a forecast for next season complies with what trend forecast professionals say (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016).

Big data is a fundamental key to forecasting. With the tremendous amount of information available, data scientists are able to model trends and patterns based on sophisticated algorithms (The Business of Fashion, 2013). The fashion industry will change in the coming years due to the rise of big data, which will aid to, for example, forecast the colours of the following seasons. According to the authors of Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think big data, in contrast to the former, inaccurate ways of predicting based on a small amount of data, enables us to accurately forecast preferences of consumers (The Business of Fashion, 2013). Recently, online fashion companies have started to apply big data by creating intelligent models that can, for example, forecast what products consumers will buy and thus ship even before the order has been made (Singh, n.d.).

3.1.4 The limitations of big data

Despite the growing interest in fashion analytics, experts continue to stress the importance of intuition. According to a representative from Stylesight, trend forecasts are decided upon by a big group of experts. Emma Farrow, Design Manager at Topshop, agrees and adds that data should never become the only factor to rely on, as we would then ignore the aspects that actually have an impact on trends. In addition, fashion director Paula Reed says that intuition remains the most important instrument for predicting trends (Banks, 2013). WGSN data analyst Francesca Mustan says that data could never substitute traditional trend forecasting since trends have a subjective nature, yet data can be used to ‘enrich’ the forecasts they make (Glassman, 2014). Interestingly, fashion companies seem to want factual data as a support of the forecasts that trend forecasting agencies make. WGSN responds to that by investing in data analytics yet remains vigilant concerning data since, according to the editor in chief, the heart of fashion revolves around unpredictability (Banks, 2013).

Data analysts also seem to recognize the limitations of data when applied in the fashion industry. Data analyst Karandeep Singh declares that ‘free will’ cannot be quantified. It seems impossible to forecast something that we did not know we wanted before it appeared on the market (Singh, n.d.). According to philosopher Rebecca Louise Breuer (2016), the world we live today has quite some resemblances with the 19th century in terms of how much importance we give to measuring, documenting and
quantifying all that surrounds us. Paradoxically, even the creative industry, in which fashion is involved and which thrives on innovation, experiments and subjectivity, faces defining and determining forces. In her presentation, Breuer outlines Dostojewski’s view on how adventure and wishes disappear in our attempt to control everything around us. Determination, control, science, calculations and algorithms that capture and measure should not be seen as all-explaining powers like we are inclined to see them these days. Human beings live to desire; we cannot live without chaos or ungraspable phenomena (Breuer, 2016). Breuer’s and Dostojewski’s perspective can be linked to the current rise of data analytics within the fashion industry. Data analysts try to measure, determine and calculate market and sales figures in order to come to a concluding outlook of the future. However, we will never succeed to do so entirely according to Breuer and Dostojewski, since unexpected desires and wishes will forever remain beyond one’s grasp. Jan Agelink supports Breuer’s presentation as he says

I would say that inspiration is very important; I use it myself and I give it to my clients; yet that is not science at all. I do find data analytics very interesting. I am aware of what is happening in that field, it is a trend itself. Yet I do not use it, I am not a scientist. I think it is possible to apply statistics to everything including the process of trend forecasting, yet I think my work would loose its soul if I would try to quantify it. (Appendix, p. 1-2)

In line with Breuer’s argument that we will never be able to measure the future entirely due to unexpected elements is an article by Divante Business Services that concludes that big data can be a huge help and useful tool in the fashion industry. Yet since it is an industry in which intuition and creativity will always play a part, data will always remain solely an influence yet never the only factor which fashion depends on (Bodeswa, 2015). The accuracy of ‘forecasting’ thus may approach the 100%, yet will never touch the 100% of accuracy because a certain degree of unpredictability will always be involved in the process.

### 3.1.5 Fashion analytics in scientific research

There is a considerable amount of academic research available on applying machine learning to forecast what consumers will buy. Profound research has been conducted that deals with ‘deep learning algorithms’ (Vieira, 2015). The aim of the research by Vieira, for example, is to “predict the click decisions in specific contexts and recommend the right products by identifying the search patterns of the consumers” (Vieira, 2015). Since research on online buying behaviour is gaining more attention, one could imagine that we might be moving towards an even smaller trend forecasting cycle (and thus production/logistics cycle) since brands have to respond directly to consumers’ wishes. This type of research focuses on what a brand should offer to the consumer at this very moment, it does not yet forecast actual trends that will emerge in, say, 2 years.

Other scientific research, however, concentrates on machine learning systems that can predict colour trends of the coming years (Yu et al, 2010). Knowledge-based systems are created and algorithms make it possible for researchers to make a model ‘learn’ to predict trends, based on information about trends from the past years (Mello et al, 2008). Scholars Yong Yu, Chi-Leung Hui and Tsan-Ming Choi describe different methods of modelling fashion colour forecasts, including grey model (GM), artificial neural network (ANN) and traditional regression models (ARIMA). Fashion colour forecasting poses a
problem as the data that is used and needed for the forecast always includes unexpected elements. Therefore, a combination of the intelligent models is required to make accurate predictions. In their article, the authors propose a new model, constituted of a combination of forecasting models. For the research, they made use of men’s A/W colour trend data of 6 subsequent years. The data of year 1, 2, 3 and 4 is used to ‘train’ the model. The data of year 5 should verify the model. In this way, the hues and tones of the sixth year can be forecasted (as accurately as possible). According Yu, Hui and Choi (2012), their proposed new model can definitely be used in the fashion industry as a real tool for colour forecasting, since it is fast and most accurate of all analysed models in the article (Yu et al, 2012). The question remains as to whether this type of research is actually applied by forecasting companies already or that it is still too ‘young’ to be applied. For example, trend analyst David Shah shortly mentions ‘algorithms’ when explaining his way of working, yet does not elaborate on it (Close Up: Trends – Een verborgen wereld, 2016). In the same fashion, King (2011) uses the words ‘regression models’ once in her research on the process of colour trend forecasting yet neither digs deeper into the subject. We can thus conclude that machine learning and deep learning algorithms are not widely applied yet in the fashion trend forecasting industry.

3.1.6 Conclusion

Most professionals acknowledge that intuition is an important aspect in the fashion forecasting industry. Some see it as a crucial factor, others recognize its value yet do not agree that it is the only factor a trend watcher should depend on. Those against an intuitive approach to forecasting argue that only data can help to make accurate predictions. According to them, ‘forecasts’ based on intuition are prophetic and thus not real predictions. I argue that we may say the same for data-based forecasts, since once companies begin to follow advice based on whatever type of information, the future has already been influenced.

Fashion companies and forecasting agencies are increasingly implementing big data tools in an attempt to improve forecasting accuracy. The large amount of information available is difficult to filter and the expertise of specialists – data scientists – is needed. At the same time, though, companies are cautious with the implementation of data analytics tools, as most argue that the importance of intuition should not be forgotten. ‘Free will’ and ‘unpredictability’ will always be present. A data-based forecast will thus never be 100% accurate.

The research on fashion analytics in scientific research reveals that there are complex projects regarding the forecasting of trends which could very well be applied by forecasting agencies or fashion companies, yet implementation in the forecasting world is only done seldom. However, since the advances in technology are growing and companies seem to recognize the value of data analytics, it is expected that in the near future more complex data analytics approaches will be implemented by forecasting agencies and fashion companies.

Based on the research of this subquestion, we can fill in the first part of the model as presented in Figure 7. The forecasting agencies can be divided into fashion analytics, for which data is most important, and traditional trend forecasting, for which intuition is most important. Scientific research is not part of the forecasting agencies yet its models do seem to influence forecasting agencies (mostly fashion analytics).
3.2 What type of trend forecasting do fashion companies make use of; to what extent do they follow the advice of the trend forecasters; and to what extent do they use their own ‘free creativity’?

3.2.1 Dependency on trend forecasters

The fashion industry has come to rely and depend on the trend forecasting industry. Decisions made within a team of designers, marketeers, merchandisers and sales people are mostly founded on information from trend forecasters (de Wet, 2008). The main reason that fashion companies still rely on longer term (2 years in advance) forecasting, despite the fast pace and changes of the industry, comes from a commercial standpoint. The fashion industry has no mercy; one wrong step can have big consequences in terms of sales. People working in a fashion company mostly feel like they have the same (or more) knowledge about current trends as trend forecasting agencies have yet do still make use of trend forecasts; not as an advice that should be followed strictly, yet as a confirmation of their own analyses. Trend information provides a form of security since fashion companies trust in established forecasting agencies to provide good and reliable information (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006; Close up: Trends – Een verborgen wereld, 2016). This process of relying on trend information constructs a certain standardization of trends and unanimity in the fashion world.

As mentioned before, trend forecasting agencies involve sociologists and psychologists to add value to their predictions as society has become very complex and difficult to understand. Fashion companies are thus forced to rely on trend forecasters that can give clear directions about the on-
going fluxes of the fashion industry (Diane and Cassidy, 2005). Jan Agelink (Appendix, p.1) tunes his forecasting approach to the fact that most of his clients wish to receive clear, visual information:

I translate the information I find into visuals; I give visual presentations to my clients. I know that my clients find it pleasant to be presented with a visual story. I create a view of the future that can be used as an inspiration for my clients. I rarely use texts during my presentations, I only make titles and some keywords when presenting. I of course do tell a story, however, when presenting; a story is crucial.

Giertz-Mårtenson (2006) cites Sharon Graubard, Creative Director at ESP Trendlab in New York:

... I help the client to make sense of the chaos ... which is becoming a trend ... so much is happening at the same time – but I help clients interpret it into real understandable patterns and movements in a particular direction.

In other words, the world is chaos, it is an undefined mixture of events, yet trend forecasters seem to find ways to make ‘sense’ of it. This is, however, quite a simplified view upon the dynamics of chaos, since chaos per definition allows for an infinite amount of interpretations when trying to make ‘sense’ of it. Yet apparently, most fashion companies find themselves incapable of translating chaos into their own interpretation without interference of a trend forecaster. If they would do so, it would allow for a far less democratized and global view on fashion7.

3.2.2 Trend Reports

Scholar Nani Brunini (2011) found that many fashion designers make use of trend reports. As would have been expected, the more money available in the company, the more money is being invested in trend reports since trend reports tend to be expensive. Most of these designers were positive about trend reports yet did not classify them necessarily as ‘ahead-of-the-curve’, even though that is in general something a trend report ought to be. There were also, on the other hand, respondents that said that their company does not make use of trend reports, which could be due to social media and the huge amount of trend information available on the Internet (Brunini, 2011)8.

Research shows that for designers, trend reports were not crucial as it is not really important whether the trend forecasts are ‘right’ or not, yet served as an inspirational, visual, easy-to-understand, experimental, stimulating source, not to be followed strictly. Brunini questions whether designers will remain, in their view, independent of trend reports as the amount of trend information available on the web is increasing rapidly and may soon be too hard and time consuming to filter for designers themselves without help (Brunini, 2011). A reason for designers not to see trend reports as sources with a high level of ‘newness’ may be that designers and trendsetters usually are part of the same social webs and designers are thus very much up to date (ibid.). Trend watcher Christine Boland argues that trend books indeed do not show ‘newness’ in terms of pictures of art, designers, architecture, et cetera, since what the books show already exists. According to Boland, however, it is

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7 This idea will be discussed further in the article of this project.
8 Brunini’s research was about product designers, which consisted partly of fashion designers. The fashion designers are relevant for this research.
not about ‘newness’, it is about ‘relevance’. The books, which mirror the forecaster’s view on what is going on in society in terms of trends, colours and forms, are to be used as a source of inspiration and designers are supposed to find the inspiration that is relevant for them and translate it into their collection (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016).

Some product designers indicated that the management of their company put much value and trust in the expensive trend reports and thus follow what is in there, even though that sometimes might not be favourable or beneficial according to the designer. In addition, the interviewed product designers said that sometimes the trend reports served merely as a way of assuring the company’s non-designers of what the designer had created was in line with the forecast of trend professionals. Sometimes, trend mood boards were even created afterwards and were thus only there to assure the buyers of the trend directions. For some (bigger) companies, trend reports served as an essential tool to guide all designers in the same direction and to minimize the effect of the designers’ own style preferences in order to protect the focus on the strategy and image of the brand (Brunini, 2011).

3.2.3 Free creativity vs. Following forecast advice vs. Use of data

In this research, ‘intuition’ and ‘free creativity’ are used as separate concepts. Free creativity, in this research, is a combination of the intuition of a designer regardless of the forecasting advice that may have been given to him or her and the designer’s free will to design whatever he or she likes or thinks suits the brand.

King (2011) analysed the decisions on colour of two retailers and concluded that within different companies, different approaches are applied as experiences and general business approaches differ. For the one company, trend books, trade fairs and trend consultants were most important; for the other company, fashion capitals, core colours – colours that keep selling well - were most important, followed by trend books. Not all fashion companies choose to rely on external, commercial forecasting advice and opt to do their own, specific research that is in line with the image of the brand. King’s research shows in general that the main factors that establish the decisions for colours are: (1) design skills (2) culture (3) competition (4) trend monitoring (5) personal opinion (6) core/signature colours (7) historical data (8) fibre developments (9) internet (10) market forces (11) sales figures EPOS (12) problem colours and (13) benchmarking (King, 2011). In other words, companies do not rely on colour forecasts only; they also conduct their own research and base their decisions on a mix of factors. With regard to general fashion forecasts, the Head of Styling at Expresso Fashion says: “We create our own themes freely but we do so after a lot of research on fairs, catwalk shows, shopping, Internet and also based on information of different trend agencies. With all the information we collect we build a specific story for each delivery within a season” (Appendix, p.7). The word ‘freely’ seems a little out of place here, as Expresso Fashion puts a certain restriction of free creativity on itself already by creating the themes after taking into account information given by different agents. Giertz-Mårtenson illustrates the case of a designer who struggles between her will to create freely the designs she desires to create and the fear for dropping sales if she does not let her design be led by what the market demands in terms of trends. Therefore, she makes commercial decisions instead of solely the innovative decisions she would have liked to make in order to maintain her market position (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006). This example demonstrates the power of trend forecasting to globalize, democratize and thus design-wise flatten the fashion industry.
Some fashion companies nowadays make use of EPOS (electronic point of sale) data in order to forecast sales more accurately. In addition, they collect as much information as possible regarding consumer characterization. It seems, however, that brands do not make use of these data sources intensively when creating colour trends (King, 2011). The same could presumably be said about fashion trends in general. When visiting fashion company WE Fashion in The Netherlands, I asked the merchandise manager whether he thought that his company used all the information that was available to them through their use of Google Analytics, loyalty programs, et cetera in the most effective way possible. The answer was no. There is a tremendous amount of information available, yet companies need the resources to filter the relevant data. The Head of Styling of Expresso Fashion, on the other hand, says that her company schedules weekly meetings in which all data is analysed. According to her, this is of importance for the support of the development of new collections (Appendix, p.7).

Regarding colour trend forecasting, it seems that the more ‘trend-setting’ the fashion company is, the less the company relies on colour forecasting advice and the less EPOS data is used to make decisions on colour, as these companies tend to have their own signature colours and are able to decide upon the colours of the season in a later stage than fashion-led companies (King, 2011).

### 3.2.4 Trend forecasting and high fashion designers

Some high fashion designers say that they are up to date about the latest trends, just to make sure that that is what they are not going to do. A designer should, in their opinion, be the creator of a trend, not a follower. Tom Ford, for example, is firmly against paying for the latest trend updates (Brunini, 2011). In general, most high fashion designers are against the consultation of fashion forecasters (King, 2011).

Designers are forced, however, to adapt their commercial strategies to the changing market. The pace of fashion results in the appearance of in-between-season designer collections or products. For some designers this is beneficial, for some it is not (The Business of Fashion, 2015). Consumers want products the moment they see them on the catwalk. Burberry, for example, has made a ‘see-now-buy-now’ collection and Prada as well offers some products in store right after the catwalk show. Nevertheless, the rest of the Milan Fashion Week FW16/17 remained unchanged, which is illustrative for the conservative and traditional character of the fashion industry (Friedman, 2016; van Veen, 2016).

It thus seems that Haute Couture brands do not follow fashion forecasts. Designers are seen as the initiators of new fashion trends. An interesting question then is how it is possible that most of the time almost all designers, when showing their new collections on the runway for the next season, end up showing fashion with similar inspiration. Gucci, Prada, Cavalli and Pucci, for example, all showed 70’s inspired fashion on the FW16/17 runway (van Veen, 2016). When in Paris, the designers of ILJA, a small Dutch designer brand, visit stores of Gucci, Prada – all the big brands, but also the smaller ones – to see what everyone is doing. What they notice there is that, most of the time, brands head the same direction design-wise (Appendix, p.6). The standardization of the industry is thus noticeable, despite the fact that high fashion designers do not admit to look at trends.
The following small case study concerns a small haute couture designer brand named ILJA, which is based in Amsterdam and member of the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture. The purpose of discussing the information collected for this case study is to illustrate how the designers of this specific brand approach free creativity and forecasting advice. The information can thus not be generalised for all small designer brands.

ILJA bases its new collections mostly upon an idea that is created when the previous collection is being developed. Some elements that are interesting yet cannot be used in the previous collection could be used in the new collection. Also, elements that are ‘typically ILJA’ need to be present continuously in each collection. When the feedback received from Paris (bloggers, the public, newspapers) and from press agencies indicates that there is a certain direction the designers should follow, they try to translate that direction (for example, ‘more femininity’) into the style of ILJA. It is important to remain recognizable as a brand. Also, the Chambre Syndicale is quite conservative when it comes to couture and the designers of ILJA have to make sure that they do not ‘rebel’ too much against the rules of Parisian Haute Couture. Developing a new collection, in other words, is a combination of a lot of influential - limiting! - factors and feelings. Even though the designers of ILJA try not to follow trends, they are forced to listen to the feedback they are given by the Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture and the press agencies. This feedback is most probably based on what the industry demands and thus what the ‘trends’ are. The designer of ILJA admits that trends are not really important, yet at the same time you do pick up the signals of trends, since with couture you are working on a collection only half a year in advance. You cannot not look at what is ‘on trend’ at the moment, because then you take the risk of making a fool out of yourself. So it really is there, trends, but it is more about moving your own story a little towards what will be trending in the market at the moment that you will bring out your collection. (Appendix, p.4)

ILJA’s designers do not visit trend forecasters at, for example, trade fair Premiere Vision. ILJA neither is member of a forecasting agency. The inspiration of the brand comes from fashion shows of other designers and websites like models.com and editorials.com (Appendix, p. 2-6).

3.2.5 Conclusion

Commercial fashion companies see trend forecasting agencies as established, reliable sources of information. They use trend advice and trend reports as a confirmation of their own trend research, as a source of inspiration and as a confirmation not to miss out on something. We could argue that if such a trend report would be presented by the agency as a ‘prediction’ of the trends of next seasons, this ‘prediction’ can never be accurate since it is used as inspiration and is thus interpreted by its users in different ways.

Some fashion companies are unable to make sense of the information they collect and consult trend forecasters to filter the relevant information. This process of relying on forecasting agencies contributes to the standardization and unanimity of the forecasting industry. Some fashion companies say they make use of the data they have available, others want to but lack the resources. Companies
that do not use the available data are most of the time the more ‘trend setting’ brands that have their own signature colours and designs.

Haute Couture designers say they do not use forecasting advice. They are known to be initiators of trends. Oddly enough, these designers seem to end up with similar designs and ‘trends’ each season. This process leads to the standardization of the industry as well. From the mini case study we learned that small designer brand ILJA bases its new collections on specific personal information such as the feedback of previous collections, which probably results from what the market demands, and on the recognisability of the brand. ILJA does not make use of direct forecasting advice. Free creativity does play a role, yet is thus limited by these factors and also by the conservativeness of the rules of Parisian Haute Couture community.

Figure 8 shows that commercial fashion companies rely on forecasting advice – either for inspiration, confirmation or blindly following – and use less free creativity when developing collections as they feel they are too dependent on forecasters. High fashion companies, on the other hand, are led, according to them, mainly by free creativity and do not use forecasting advice. There should however exist factors (indicated with ‘?’ in Figure 8), which are unknown to this research, that lead to the unanimity between the collections of high fashion designers.

**Figure 8: Model of subquestion 2**

### 3.3 What is the role of the consumer in the creation and the dissemination of fashion trends?

When looking at the role of the consumer in the creation and dissemination of trends, there are numerous factors that can be considered. Consumers, in general, have a ‘free will’. They feel a wish or need to follow trends; they feel a wish or need to buy a specific garment or colour; they are dependent on their financial situation; they have a certain taste that may be influenced and they feel social pressure. There are thus countless factors involved regarding preferences of consumers and
how they respond to and influence trends. As it is impossible time-wise for this research to address all possible types of consumers and their specific behaviour, the focus of the following section will lie on a specific group of consumers, the fashion innovators, as fashion innovators have an extended reach of influence in the fashion industry. Fashion innovators – bloggers, celebrities, models - are considered to make the right fashion choices and are thus followed and copied by the rest of the fashion crowd, which makes them a crucial influential factor in the creation and dissemination of fashion trends. When discussing fashion innovators, it is important to involve the role of (social) media. Another influence on the creation and dissemination of fashion trends is the social image, which fashion innovators, as well as all other consumers, are concerned with.

In the following section, some of the most widely accepted fashion trend theories will be discussed in order to sketch some general views on how trends possibly develop throughout consumer groups. After that, the roles of the fashion innovator, the social image and (social) media in relation to the creation and dissemination of fashion trends are considered.

3.3.1 Fashion trend theories

Nearly all literature regarding fashion or fashion trends includes the theories known as trickle down (Simmel, 1904), trickle across (King, 1963) and trickle up (Field, 1970). According to the trickle down theory, the lower classes copy the fashion of the high classes, which results in fashion trends ‘trickling down’ the social ladder (McCracken, 2002). The trickle across theory states that people follow fashion trends that are established and spread out within their own social groups. Trickling across is facilitated by the current fast ways of communication (Sproles, 1981). ‘Trickle up’ means that groups with a higher income pick up trends that have started at subgroup/subculture/street level (Pundir, 2007). All three theories, however, do not seem to include the power and influence that fashion forecasting agencies and consumers have on the establishment and development of a fashion trend. In addition and according to King (2011), the theories do not seem to sufficiently and accurately describe the current state of the fashion industry, as the consumer landscape has become too complex and includes countless influential factors.

Another theory that attempts to describe the mechanism of fashion and trends is the collective selection theory, made known by sociologist Herbert Blumer (1960). This theory explains the way a fashion trend becomes widespread, which is through a collective acceptance of the style. This acceptance arises only if the style is close to the current preferences of consumers (Sproles, 1981). A trend analysis seems incomplete without the mentioning of sociologist Everett Rogers’ (1983) diffusion of innovation curve. The curve describes the way a fashion trend is created or picked up by ‘fashion innovators’, then moves on to the ‘early adopters’ and then increases more in popularity and is adopted by the ‘early majority’. Subsequently, the trend is accepted and followed by the ‘late majority’ and becomes mainstream. After that, the trend loses its popularity and is only still worn by a group named the ‘laggards’, where after it slowly disappears completely. Literature on the topic continues to refer to Rogers’ theory. However, just like the ‘trickle’ theories, Rogers’ theory seems to forget the initial stage of a trend. It ignores the influence of the fashion brands/designers and the influence of the forecasting agencies before the trend reaches the innovator.
The above presented theories all argue from the consumer point of view; they explain how a trend evolves due to the acceptance of a specific crowd. What is not considered in any of the theories, however, is the influence from the industry, which will be further elaborated upon in subquestion 4. I argue that we should not neglect the power of the media, fashion companies, forecasting agencies and high fashion designers when it comes to influencing preferences and tastes of consumers. In the same vein, David Shah states that branding has become one of the most important phenomena in fashion. Brands influence consumers in buying things they do not need and were not interested in before. Brands are number one; consumers follow (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016).

3.3.2 Fashion innovators and the social image

Even though it may have become harder to analyse trends as the pace of fashion is increasing and there is a growing amount of people looking for ways to express their individuality (de Wet, 2008), human beings in general feel the need to enhance also their social image instead of only their self image (Tian and Bearden, 2001). In other words, people will never fully neglect (consciously or subconsciously) what others think of them and will thus mould their individuality into society’s template.

Consumers, especially the fashion interested, are increasingly searching for as much fashion/trend information as possible to inform themselves and stay up to date. Apart from gathering information themselves, they are very willing to share their findings and interests with the rest of the world through social media (Hourigan and Bougoure, 2012). The fashion innovators form a specific group of consumers. Fashion innovators are known to be highly self-monitoring, meaning that they care about their presentation and about complying with the social situation they find themselves in. Also, they have a high self-esteem and fashion self-confidence, meaning that they are willing to make decisions and adopt and disseminate fashion styles with a higher risk of failure. Furthermore, they are expected to be materialistic and experience searching for new products and information as a pleasurable process. Fashion innovators are very important when it comes to the expansion of a trend: other consumers are very likely to follow the trend that fashion innovators set. Fashion innovators do not find the price of a fashion item of significant importance, which is why retailers should not focus too much on discounts and such, yet rather on what is important for the fashion innovator, namely extrinsic (brand and sales personnel related), aesthetic (look and fit of the garment), and usefulness (comfort, suited for the occasion) criteria (Muzinich et al, 2003). In the same fashion, Geoff Watts, founder of EDITED, discovered from his own collected data that ‘newness’ is a bigger sales driver than discounts are. He has also noticed the trend of increasing urge of consumers to share the purchases they have made and the way brands use this to build a reliable image (Gibbs, 2013). We can derive from this that if an aspirational trend is slowly starting to emerge, consumers themselves are the ones who tend to actively promote the emerging trend through information channels, which results in the trend to become ‘real’.

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9 A video from 1999 shows interviews with people on the street that say they do not have nor need a mobile phone as they think it is unnecessary (YouTube, 2014). In 2014 however, 4.23 billion people worldwide possessed a mobile phone (Statista, 2016).
### 3.3.3 The role of (social) media

(Social) media and celebrities have become of major importance for the world of trend forecasting, as they dictate the new ‘quick’ trends, which come and go before we can blink our eyes. In the media one can find the latest information about current trends and up-to-date sources of what is happening in fashion and how it might evolve. Remarkably enough, *consumers* – bloggers, for example – are the ones that are ‘in charge’ of social media and are being watched by the fashion world. Here, the circle and complexity of the fashion trend industry is apparent once again: fashion companies and forecasting agencies consult social media to remain up to date and to spot trends, while at the same time bloggers on social media are being paid to promote new clothing from certain fashion companies or designers themselves. In a NYtimes article called *Circus of Fashion*, fashion critic Suzy Menkes (2013) describes how the attention during fashion weeks is not so much centred on the fashion shows as it is on the celebrities, bloggers and models (fashion innovators!) *attending* the shows and what they are wearing. Here, the social image is important once again. The fashion innovators seek attention and are forced to dress as extravagant as possible.

The reach of famous bloggers is even bigger than already described, since their audience does not only consist of forecasting agencies and fashion companies, but evidently also of fashion-interested individuals. Influential fashion blogs may be followed and imitated by smaller bloggers, Instagram or Facebook users that in their turn continue to promote the trends set by the influential bloggers. The images and messages of these smaller fashion bloggers are likely to reach their direct social environment of friends and followers. These peers may be influenced by the images and messages, as the smaller bloggers are known to be trendsetters. This way, the blogger influences his or her own group of fashion followers.

The media – and social media specifically - could be seen as a threat to the forecasting industry. A representative of trend forecasting agency Stylus Fashion thinks that social media, at the cost of the traditional trend forecasting agencies, indeed are a main influential factor of trends (Fitzgerald, 2015). This representative thus also implies that forecasting agencies influence the development of trends as well, making both social media and forecasting agencies *creators* of fashion trends.

### 3.3.4 Conclusion

We can conclude that the behaviour of consumers and their role in the creation of trends is influenced by numerous factors. The consumers that play the biggest role are the fashion innovators, as they are the producers of (social) media content. Fashion innovators are followed by fashion companies, forecasting agencies and other consumers to stay up to date about the latest trends. Fashion innovators are, just like all other consumer groups, influenced by their social image and will therefore always care about what others think (see Figure 9). They do, however, take risks when it comes to adopting a new style and are thus ‘innovative’.

Fashion innovators are the disseminators of trends as they expose their fashion styles in the media. The styles they promote are, however, most of the time provided to them by high fashion designers. Designers thus influence fashion innovators as well.
3.4 How do consumers, forecasting agencies and fashion companies influence each other in the process of trend forecasting?

3.4.1 Influence of trend forecasters and consumers

There are those who argue that it is not possible for the fashion industry to control what consumers will demand and will accept. Some even go as far as saying that consumers are the ones completely dictating trends (Sproles, 1981). Giertz-Mårtenson (2006) however argues that trend analysts to some extent contribute to the establishment of a trend, since they filter and interpret signs and information.

Trend analyst Sharon Graubard from Stylesight confirms that forecasters have the power to shape the future of trends in a certain way. According to her, if a brand is told by the agency that a certain trend will be the next big thing, the brand will most probably adopt the trend and will further develop it (Barnett, 2011). Trend analysts thus somehow have influence on how a trend is formed. Yet, according to Giertz-Mårtenson, in the end the consumer chooses what the definite fashion/trend will be; they are the consumers, the buyers of fashion (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006).

Consumers can only buy what they are offered. If consumers want to buy something that is not offered in store or is too expensive, how can we ever measure the lost sales of fashion companies for missing
out on a possible trend? If this happens (hypothetically speaking), forecasting agencies did not succeed completely to ‘forecast’ the trend. Consumers are subsequently forced to accept an alternative offered by the fashion industry. Sproles’ research in 1981 indicated how the fashion industry played a role in deciding the fashion trends as the fashion companies only offered a certain amount of different styles in different colours. There is historical evidence of certain styles, however, which were widely promoted by designers and magazines yet did not find acceptance amongst the consumer public (ibid.). From this we can derive that it depends, amongst others, on the type of style, on the offering and promotion of the fashion industry and on the acceptance amongst consumers whether something becomes a trend. Sproles explains that it is not clear how big the power of the industry is exactly in the establishment of a trend. Nor is it clear who exactly - high fashion designers? Fashion companies? The media? Et cetera - is powerful (Sproles, 1981). It is very hard to say something about the exact influence that trend forecasting agencies and trend watchers have on those who are member of their services (Barnett, 2011).

3.4.1.1 Is it impossible to create a trend?
The paradoxes of the trend forecasting industry are hard to grasp. The players in the industry (an industry supposedly known for its creativity) who focus on art and open mindedness mostly end up telling the same trend story and thus cause a sameness of design. The professionals of the field, however, will probably always argue that they are not the makers of the trend, yet the spotters and are thus not responsible in their view for causing the uniformity of the industry (Loyer, 2002). We could argue, however, that once the influential people of the trend forecasting industries ‘predict’ a trend, they are co-creating the trend as the event of forecasting is self-fulfilling. In Lidewij Edelkoort’s opinion nonetheless, it is impossible for a trend forecaster to create fashion trends.

We can influence the inevitable trends so that they emerge faster and clearer – but it's totally impossible for us to create new trends ... whether in fashion or lifestyle ... which are not already emerging in society. // We invent nothing new – which means that this is not creative work, it is a noncreative job – the creative challenge is to create and present your idea. But the collection and analytical process is noncreative, so it's a mistake to call ourselves creators – we are not. (Lidewij Edelkoort cited in Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006)

In Christine Boland’s opinion and in line with Lidewij Edelkoort’s argument, it is impossible for a trend watcher to set or create a trend; he or she can only forecast it. A trend arises and is unstoppable (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016). Ironically, a Facebook post appeared on Facebook on the 19th of March, 2016, stating “send in your inspirations and ideas now for the cooperative summer 2018 Trend Report! #wecreatetrendstogether” (Trendtablet, 2016). This post assumes that a trend can be created by Trendtablet (a platform run by Lidewij Edelkoort) together with students, making Edelkoort the co-creator of a trend. Edelkoort’s denial of her power to create trends seems to be an attempt to provoke discussion and to defend herself against the critics that blame her for being prophetic. Such a Facebook post, however, only confirms the statement of her critics.

Trend analysts like Lidewij Edelkoort and the influential WGSN have, in their own way, created such credibility amongst fashion companies that their information has become very valuable, desirable and
influential in the industry. Even though Lidewij Edelkoort denies that she is able to create trends, she currently seems to try to use the power she has in the forecasting industry to lead brands and consumers to a more sustainable way of living, by ‘forecasting’ that we move away from the ‘old fashioned’ fashion mechanisms, away from ‘trends’, back to ‘celebrating’ clothes (Dhillon, 2015). This situation cannot be called a forecast - the article talks about Edelkoort ‘re-shaping’ the tastes of the consumer; we should then speak of ‘trend creating’, not ‘trend forecasting’, as discussed previously -, yet we should give Edelkoort credits for her attempt to save the fashion industry from being unsustainable. Many trend watchers, forecasting agencies, social media and other trend influencers could take Lidewij’s example and use the power they have to make an attempt to initiate more ethical or sustainable fashion trends.

3.4.1.2 Deciding the trend

Trend analyst David Shah is member of a colour committee, which consists of colour professionals of different countries, that decide upon the set of colours for the following season in a meeting organized by VIEW. The colours, Shah says, are secret since the first to receive the important colour information are the clients of the colour company (Close up: Trends - Een verborgen wereld, 2016). King (2011) explains how colour refinement meetings using expert panels work, and thus how colour palettes are being established by the main colour forecasting agencies. She concludes that the meetings are structured in a certain way, so that in the end a general colour agreement is established. Lidewij Edelkoort’s approach is based on gathering colour tones and hues, where after she randomly picks from the collected colours (Diane and Cassidy, 2005). This process implies that colour trends are a decision of a group of people, meaning that it would be wrong to call it forecasting. King (2011) states that “the notion of colour forecasters influencing and directing colour change can be challenged if indeed they are simply responding to social and cultural changes”. Yet by making a decision, whichever that is, the forecaster decides what the colours will be, even though it might be based on what they think they see happening on a social and cultural level. It remains an interpretation of observations and a decision based on intuition.

3.4.2 Influence of social norms and branding

What the fashion industry offers and promotes is important for a brand to mature. One of marketing’s aims is to influence consumers into buying products. What happens these days is that forecasting is seen as a marketing tool, which puts the forecaster’s role in a strange perspective (Piccalo, 2005 referenced to in King, 2011; Sproles, 1981). If the ‘forecaster’ is part of the marketing team, we can once again argue against the term ‘forecaster’ and in favour of the term ‘co-creator’. In addition, what the social norms put upon the group of consumers is of importance for the development of a trend as well (Sproles, 1981). Important to realize is that ‘what the industry offers’ is already a limitation to the infinite amount of options possible; the same goes for ‘what social norms put upon us’. Therefore, trends have already been influenced by multiple factors before they become widely spread out.

In this regard it is remarkable to consider that, for example, if a consumer wants to buy a shirt in colour purple, yet a store does not sell purple since it is not one of the colours of the season, it is easy to say

10 Remarkably enough, an earlier remark by Shah stressed the importance of not being secretive about trends anymore as they are all around us and what matters is what you do with it.
that the consumer did not buy a purple shirt since it was not on trend; no, it simply was not there. We can thus never know whether the purple shirts would have sold well that season. As Colour and Trends Consultant Hidefi describes in the book *Colour Design: theories and Applications* (2012: 377):

> In 2004 I was in Milan, Italy, with my husband and he had got me a pair of Casadei yellow-green shoes that I found fascinating. We were then living in Dubai. So when we returned home, I rummaged around all shopping malls in Dubai looking for a handbag to match the shoes, but to my disappointment could not find any. After so many days of searching and asking around, I realise the colour was not in the market yet. It took another year for this colour to reach Dubai, so I was basically ahead of the trend with my yellow-green shoes. When it comes to colour, consumer preferences can play the most important role in the purchase decision-making; however, if the colour is not available in the market, the colour the brand is offering will prevail.

What happens as well in the context of the development of trends in relation to marketing is that brands offer only a limited amount of a certain style in order to create demand amongst consumers. Of the shoe *Puma Creeper*, for example, only a limited number was made and sold in stores; they sold out in the blink of an eye. Consumers wanted the product because it was sparse; there was thus a major ‘trend’, which was not that much worn by consumers as the offered amounts were limited. We could thus speak of a partially ‘invisible’ trend.

### 3.4.3 Influence of high fashion designers

Fashion companies and forecasting agencies generally keep a close eye on what high fashion designers present on the runway. At the same time, fashion designers bribe bloggers into wearing and promoting their designs. As discussed in the previous section, fashion innovators such as fashion bloggers are highly influential when it comes to the establishment of a fashion trend. Fashion designers therefore have an impact on the creation and dissemination of fashion trends through multiple channels. A Penn State research project has succeeded in mapping out the main influential designers by analysing data (words and sentences from runway and fashion reviews) from the years 2000 to 2014 of Style.com. With this way of mapping and using data analytics, according to the researchers, it is possible to more accurately forecast what the next big trend will be based on which designers are highly influential (Swayne, 2014). In other words, fashion trends seem to emerge as a result of what the most influential designers of that season are doing. From this big data research we can thus conclude that designers are essential when it comes to the establishment of a fashion trend. Remarkably, as discussed in subquestion 2, high fashion designers do seem to head the same direction design-wise over the seasons.

### 3.4.4 Standardization of the industry

Developing a colour forecast seems to be quite a personal process - colour committees select a final group of colours from a large pool of colours and ideas (King, 2011) - , which is why it is remarkable that most forecasts end up having a lot of similar colours\(^{11}\). Does this mean that forecasting agencies

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\(^{11}\) King’s research shows that for a specific fashion season, forecasting agencies Promostyl, Peclers and Nelly Rodi developed colours palettes with a high degree of similarity.
have information available about what there competitors are doing? Or do they really end up with the same results because they have the same inspirational sources? "Yes", says Jan Agelink,

I do look at what my 'competitors' are doing. I think it is important to know what they are up to and I myself of course also look for some sort of 'confirmation' of what I am doing myself ... I think saying that we all 'follow' each other is quite a limited view. Yes, we do all have the same 'base' of information of the world around us on which we build our own views. Each forecaster makes his or her own choices and communicates in his or her own way. I really think we should not 'copy' each other, that is thus not what I am doing either. (Appendix, p.2)

Hart (2015) agrees and argues that the industry is becoming a threat to itself, since the pace of fashion trend developments has increased the uniformity of trend predictions as forecasters rely on the same sources of information (Hart, 2015; Close up: Trends – Een verborgen wereld, 2016). Since consumers are in-the-know, forecasters have to be more aware of what they 'offer' as trends to their clients; there is less space for innovation and new ideas. A point of discussion is then whether the forecasting industry should still be seen as a source of 'inspiration' and 'creative ideas'. Hart suggests a more inspirational and open-for-interpretation approach of trend forecasters when consulting clients. Trends should be defined and moulded by brands themselves so that the eventual trend is more of a custom-made product that complements the image of the brand - instead of the brand playing copycat of designers, as many brands are doing now (Hart, 2015).

According to Jerome Fisher, founder of shoe company Nine West Shoes, if we would show 10 different shoes to 10 different buyers, we would receive 10 different responds if we would ask them to choose which shoe would be on trend the following season (Kumar, 2013). This statement, however, is not in line with the fact that brands seem to showcase similar trends each season. This could be explained by the fact that what brands are actually being exposed to in terms of colours, themes, et cetera for a new season, is already a ‘direction’ that has been decided by trend agencies. Buyers or designers of a brand will thus always follow a certain set path. Fisher’s remark would be true if buyers are not influenced by any external factors; a mix of their own tastes and expert intuitions will then lead their decision, which will indeed probably result in 10 different answers.

3.4.5 The industry as a self fulfilling prophecy

Consultant and expert on business forecasting William Sherden (1998) condemns forecasting companies in general for being prophetic and speculative. It has become a billion dollar industry on which many businesses thrive. He blames the industry for giving lots of false information and missing out on very important events, such as the 1987 stock market crash. The statement he makes is that the vision of the world that many ‘forecasters’ believe in and earn money with is deterministic and thus that the future is moulded and formed according to specific patterns. Yet, he argues that the future cannot be predicted and does not have a repetitive characteristic, as ‘forecasters’ would say. The future will always be ungraspable (Sherden, 1998). Sherden’s critique is focused on the entire forecasting industry, yet even though many specific forecasting branches are mentioned, the fashion industry is left out of his tirade. In his view, many forecasters make terrible predictions and only a tiny

12 This suggests that we can thus ‘shape’ the future of trends.
amount of predictions actually comes true, since that is statistically inevitable (Sherden, 1998). Even though his theory may be based on reliable sources and holds some sort of truth, he does not, however, mention that ‘forecasting’ might actually possess power in itself and could be a motor of change, which is evident specifically in the fashion industry (Petermann 2014). Sherden only approaches the phenomenon from one single, external point of view. In the article of this project attention will be given to the process of forecasting in itself and the notion of the future being unpredictable will be profoundly elaborated upon.

3.4.6 Conclusion

The findings of this subchapter have been visualised in Figure 10. It is evident that consumers (including fashion innovators) influence both fashion companies and forecasting agencies in the forecasting process. Trend watchers as well as fashion designers follow social media in order to stay up to date about the latest developments in fashion. High fashion companies, in their turn, have an influence on consumers – especially on the fashion innovators – in the initial stage of the development of a trend. Forecasting agencies are the main influencers of commercial fashion companies, as these companies continue to rely heavily on the agency’s predictions out of insecurity. Fashion companies, in general, influence consumers by using branding and marketing strategies.

![Figure 10: Model of subquestion 4](image)
4. Conclusion: the model of the dynamics of fashion trend forecasting

Intuition and big data have proven to be crucial in the current world of trend forecasting yet opinions about the degree of importance of both concepts are divided. Fashion analytics is gaining territory, nevertheless the most complex research on deep learning algorithms seems not to be implemented yet in real life. However, the more data analytics is applied, the more people seem to feel the need to stress the importance of intuition. Even though the importance of data analytics in the forecasting industry is growing, the position of traditional trend forecasting seems to remain steady, which is mainly due to the credibility that fashion forecasting agencies have.

It seems impossible to name just one ‘establisher’ of a fashion trend as all individual players – consumers, fashion companies and forecasting agencies - with their specific forces influence each other. As a result, fashion trends are established (indicated with ‘X’ in Figure 11). This interchange of influences causes the standardization of the industry in which we all follow each other and end up with the same ideas. Influential players have the power to ‘mould’ parts of the development of trends while they think or pretend to predict what the consumer’s future wishes and needs are. Since fashion companies find themselves in an insecure position as they are forced to create fashion according to the demand of consumers for financial reasons, they will continue consulting fashion trend services to make sure not to miss a trend. This results in a low level of design creativity of the brand and a high level of ‘following trends’. It is therefore no wonder that ‘trends’ exist and that the trend forecasting industry is still thriving. On top of that, high fashion designers, who supposedly do not follow trend forecasting advice, seem to develop collections each season that are quite similar.

It is evident that (social) media plays a very big role in the creation and dissemination of fashion trends since fashion companies, forecasting companies and the consumer public seem to follow what fashion innovators on social media do and wear.

We should accept that the trend forecasting industry as we know it these days is self fulfilling. As soon as an influential agent claims to forecast what will happen and he or she is followed by the rest, this ‘forecast’ is prophetic per definition as we will never know what the uninfluenced future would have looked like. In addition, we should stop referring to this particular industry as the ‘trend forecasting industry’, as ‘forecasting’ is thus a wrong term to use. Fashion trend ‘interpreting’ would be more suitable instead.

In the article that is the product of this research report, the paradoxes of the fashion trend industry as presented in this report will be discussed. That is to say: the supposedly ‘creative’ industry in relation to the uniformity of fashion trends and the trickiness of using the words ‘forecasting’ and ‘predicting’. In order to explain and clarify these topics, particular dynamics of the fashion trend industry as illustrated in Figure 11 will be referred to.
Figure 11: Model of the dynamics of fashion trend forecasting
5. Reference list


Thompson, V. (2014). Wat Intuitions Are... and Are Not. Psychology of Learning and Motivation, 60, pp.35-75.


Appendix

A1 Interview trend forecaster - Jan Agelink

This interview was conducted through telephone

Q Which of the types of forecasting (Fashion Analytics or traditional trend forecasting (visionary based trend forecasting + market research trend forecasting)) would you consider yourself to be part of and why?

Q How does the main process of trend forecasting work? Which steps do you, as a trend forecaster, take in order for a new ‘trend forecast’ to be born?

Q What role does intuition play?

A I would classify myself as a visionary based trend forecaster. Yet, it is not all about intuition. I read books and opinion magazines. I do visual research and I visit fairs for inspiration. I analyse the information that I collect. It is important to keep in mind the client you work for. I have a design background – I studied at the Design Academy and did a ‘People & Identity’ course. I translate the information I find into visuals; I give visual presentations to my clients. I know that my clients find it pleasant to be presented with a visual story. I create a view of the future that can be used as an inspiration for my clients. I rarely use texts during my presentations, I only make titles and some keywords when presenting. I of course do tell a story, however, when presenting; a story is crucial.

Q What do you think of the term ‘forecasting’? When hearing about the way you work, ‘forecasting’ seems a strange word.

A I create trend stories, if I think about it this way, I do not really prefer the word ‘forecasting’, yet it is a recognition tool for the outside world. I would rather say that I am an ‘editor’, I give ‘directions’ rather than forecasts. One must not, however, underestimate the fact that you need talent to combine visuals and create something ‘new’ and ‘beautiful’. I find the aesthetic aspects important. I think clients find it important as well to be offered something that looks nice, that is very valuable.

Q Have there been any recent developments or changes with regard to the process of trend forecasting? If so, in what sense and to what extent?

A There is nowadays more interest in general for the study of trend forecasting. We can see that in education; there is a course in Tilburg named ‘trend forecasting’. Many want to become a trend forecaster. Yet what is of major importance, I think, is being personal and having the right talent. It is also important to be able to present what you want to convey in the right way. I myself use media in different ways these days when I present for my clients. I am up to date when it comes to new and interesting ways of presenting.

Q Do you make use of data analytics and/or neuroscientific modelling to forecast trends? If so, to what extent? If not, are you considering applying it in the future and why (not)?

A I would say that inspiration is very important; I use it myself and I give it to my clients; yet that is not science at all. I do find data analytics very interesting. I am aware of what is happening in that field, it is a trend itself. Yet I do not use it, I am not a scientist. I think it is possible to apply statistics to
everything including the process of trend forecasting, yet I think my work would loose its soul if I would try to quantify it.

Trends are everywhere; it is impossible to find something ‘new’. I think that is what Lidewij Edelkoort is referring to when she talks about ‘trends that are out of fashion’

Q  Lidewij Edelkoort argues with her anti-trend discussion that we should go back to clothing itself (SOURCE), back to the core of it. She uses this to indicate how wasteful the industry has become. What is your opinion about sustainability?
A  I am very much involved in sustainability, yet I notice that the industry and consumers are not so much interested in it yet. It’s about money! Young designers are, though; there are many good initiatives from young players in the field yet these do not have enough influence, of course.

Q  Do you continuously advise your clients about the newest trends you spot or do you provide them with information on a weekly/monthly/… basis? In which manner do you advise your clients (through what channels)?
A  I consult my clients 1 to 2 times a season. I visit them and give customized trend presentations. Apart from that, I organize ‘Trend Safari’ once a season, which is a general trend seminar.
I am working on a better e-mail system to send my clients updates, because, to be honest, I do not do that enough right now.

Q  Does your company benchmark its predictions to what other agencies have predicted in order to find out the accuracy of your own predictions?
A  Yes, I do look at what my ‘competitors’ are doing. I think it is important to know what they are up to and I myself of course also look for some sort of ‘confirmation’ of what I am doing myself. I think it is quite essential to have experience in the field, since it helps you build a sphere of authority around you. Yet I do appreciate young people’s fresh views, since they can be a good source of inspiration, they can be eye-openers.

Q  Do you agree that there is a certain form of uniformity concerning trend forecasting? Do you feel that, in the end, all players in the fashion business ‘follow each other’?
A  I think saying that we all ‘follow’ each other is quite a limited view. Yes, we do all have the same ‘base’ of information of the world around us on which we build our own views. Each ‘forecaster’ makes his or her own choices and communicates in his or her own way. I really think we should not ‘copy’ each other, that is thus not what I am doing either.
A2 Interview haute couture brand – designer Tosca Otten from ILJA

This interview was conducted in person

Q Does ILJA make use of an external companies to make trend forecasts or are the new collections/themes/concepts based on own research only?
A Own research

Q How do you do research? Do you visit specific websites?
A It differs very much, actually. Usually you start developing an idea for the new season while you are working on the current collection, so that new idea slowly ‘rolls in’. Like: oh, now we are heading in this direction and based on what in previous collections happens I sometimes think: oh, there is already quite a cool continuation already because it is interesting, or you use a certain element that is typically ‘ILJA’ to emphasize that and then you elaborate on that, and there is then a certain theme that matches with it. Like last season, we really wanted to show a more feminine side of ILJA since both news agency and reactions of other people showed that our collections were quite ‘heavy’. So yeah, how do you make a very feminine collection then to show the very soft side of the brand and simultaneously show ILJA’s signature; you constantly have to challenge yourself. So mostly, during the development of a collection and based on the reactions after the fashion show of the previous collection you get an idea about what we have not done yet, how can we position ourselves even better, and what kind of feeling do you have already with which you want to do something or, what we had as well, is that while designing a collection we realized we discovered something really cool which we could not develop enough in that specific collection, so we take it with us for the next collection. For ILJA, this mostly has to do with form or a combination of form and material that is really interesting. So… It’s not easy at all. It’s a combination of a lot of different things.

Q Yes, it is never one specific thing you base your collection upon. It is never one specific path you follow.
A No, never. We would never do “70’s”, for example. That is way too commercial, of course. We absolutely don’t do that. Also, we really try to establish ILJA as a brand that is recognizable for the press and public. So you are constantly analysing: what is ILJA, what elements do we want to use in the collection without those elements being too obvious, it is a lot of analysing both with what you want to say and with what the reactions are of press agencies and others.

Q Yes, so those reactions come from the press agencies…
A Yes, amongst others. Also the Federacion (Sindicale de la Mode) gives us feedback, as well as bloggers, the public and newspapers. It’s about analysing: what is the red thread of the feedback? What do we want to listen to? Some things just make no sense so you don’t use that feedback. I usually start analysing what has been experienced by the public after we’ve done the show.

Q And then, of course, you are already developing the next collection at the same time, so you use that information directly for the new collection.
A Exactly, and then you can check whether the initial ‘feeling’ you had was right and in tune with the feedback. Mostly, that is the case.
Yes, ok. So we could maybe say that developing a new collection is about 80% free creativity and the rest is not ‘listening to a forecasting advice’, yet listening to the reactions to the previous collection and analysing what worked and what did not...

A Yes, and the total picture, so that you think by yourself: ok, we want to be this kind of brand, this is how we want to portray ourselves, does that make sense? Do we have to alter things? Is it becoming too obvious since four other brands are also going that direction? If so, then you have to change direction a little like: we may have to bring in some femininity as the ‘sculptural’ thing is sort of passé. So it’s constant ‘tuning’ of each collection.

Q So it is also sort of ‘rebelling against’ others that are doing the same?

A Well, it’s not really ‘rebelling against’, since we all have to do our own thing, yet since we are a young brand, we need people to feel ‘oh, that is really an ILJA thing’. And that is something you reach through repetition, through ‘brainwashing’ the public; repeating forms and silhouettes so that they start recognizing it as ILJA’s signature. But you have to be careful, since it should not become too obvious as it will result in a collection that is out of balance. So it is constant thinking and tuning and adapting the collection. The collection really is finished only a night before the show. It happens a lot that we cut off a skirt the last moment, or we eliminate a coat last minute since it is too ‘heavy’ in the total picture or we make last moment changes in the way outfits are constituted. The collection is done only when it’s done. But that’s what makes it fun. If it wouldn’t be like that, I’d be done with a collection in two months.

Q OK, so I could conclude that ‘trends’ are not really important for ILJA?

A Well, they are not really important, yet at the same time you do pick up the signals of trends, since with couture you are working on a collection half a year in advance, as opposed to one year in ready-to-wear or commercial. So if you are working on something for a season and something has been put on style.com as ‘the thing’, then you should start worrying and slightly adapt the collection. You cannot NOT look at what is ‘on trend’ at the moment, because then you take the risk of making a fool out of yourself. So it really is there, trends, but it is more about moving your own story a little towards what will be trending in the market at the moment that you will bring out your collection.

‘interruption’

Q So, you still go to the PV, I suppose? Do you visit the trend stands there?

A No. I always skip them. Sometimes I pass it by accident and then I of course take a look. Yet we work with certain suppliers and since we are a small company with low amounts of meters that we order, we are ‘stuck’ to the suppliers we have and the things they offer. I have to maintain the good relationship that we have. So, I could take a look at the trend stands, yet at the end of the day I have to look at what my suppliers offer.

Q I understand. Also, I suppose that you could say that eventually what your suppliers offer you is ‘in tune’ with what the trend forecasters show at the PV.

A Yes. Mostly, what they show at the trend stands is very commercial. Also, I feel like the last couple of years they tell the same story over and over again. So, I don’t really look at it anymore. It’s
always lurex this, animal print there. Sometimes it's interesting to look at it just for the techniques they are using. Sometimes they mix certain techniques randomly, which is cool. But it is not essential.

Q  Ok, right, so you don't go there to look at what the trends are going to be.
A  No, it's more like: I pass them for 2 seconds but then I have to get back to the suppliers since time is tight.

Q  Which websites do you use when searching for inspiration? You mentioned style.com before.
A  Yes, for fashion shows. Models.com is handy as well, since they show the most recent editorials. Editorials.com as well. And Pinterest, random. That is an easy one.

Q  Now I don't think this is of importance, yet how important is ‘big data’ for you? This may be mostly related to commercial fashion companies, yet I am talking about customer information you have and then you make decisions based on that for the next collection. We talked about it before, actually...
A  Yes, it's more the feedback we take into account. And also what bloggers pick up and what is used in editorials and also what people ‘post’ on social media and sometimes there is are specific outfits that are picked out to be used and posted most of the times. Then you know: oh that is something iconic, we have to do something like that again next collection. Like supple dresses, for example. That is something that comes back. Or a bodycon dress with something sculptural on top is picked out a lot as well. This way you can analyse very well what people apparently remember of the collection; that is valuable information you can use if you want to build an image. Also for couture.

Q  In your fashion education, did you learn about fashion trends and trend watching?
A  Yes, for AMFI it was very important. AMFI was very much based on trends. Which is good, I guess. We really had to analyse: is it new? Why would you do this? We were pushed to think about that. We could not just do something randomly. That happened more in Paris, actually. Paris was more about researching: what is your inner feeling, what is your strength you can use for design? AMFI as well, but it is more commercial. How to bring it to the market? And why would you, there are thousands of other things heading the same direction, why is your idea better? I think that is a good thing to think about.

It is a good game to play. Looking at trends is about filtering what you can use and what you cannot. When we still did commercial, we did look at trends and the other designer picked up other things than I did because he had a very different taste. When you combine that, you head toward quite a funny and interesting direction. But there are sooo many trends. What I like most is looking at new fashion shows and discover new vibes that are going on. I recently discovered something interesting that came back in 4 or 5 shows, which apparently is trending all of the sudden. I think it is funny to see that that is what people want to see, apparently. Designers put it on the catwalk because they think it will sell. I think it is really interesting to see what is new and how that reflects on society, economy and art.

Q  So you look at art as well, for example? For inspiration?
A  Well, no not really, actually. It's more an interest. I am more the ‘feeling’ kind of person. Right now, I have a feeling for a new design direction for next collection. So I start looking: are designers
using this already? But no, I look at what the rest is doing and how brands are developing. Some are stuck, some not. It is interesting to see and analyse how they came to a collection, what they did, and what it has to do with a feeling you have. What fits ILJA? What is a cool element, silhouette? Can I emphasize a certain element we use already in ILJA collections that is suddenly popular? Or is there something that some designers do already but haven’t taken to the next or another level? Could we do that? It is very random, actually. But I don’t look at it like: these are the trends, so I have to use elements of all the trends directly in the new collection. No. But there are always things that are new and what is new, I use and translate into something for the brand, or the idea at least.

Q You were talking about ‘taste’ before. Do you have the idea that you sometimes have to forget about your own taste for the sake of the collection?
A Not really, actually. I am very lucky, as Ilja and I have the same taste mostly in design. We are on the same level. I really have to feel what Ilja’s taste is, of course, but that is therefore not really difficult.

Q Yes. But also, based on the feedback on the collection. I can imagine that there is some kind of feedback of which you think: well, that’s not really something I would like to apply in the new collection.
A Yes, regarding that, Ilja and I always agree but: some feedback we receive tries to direct us very much into a certain design direction, which we do not want. We do want to stay true to ourselves and to what ILJA stands for. So then we start thinking: how can we process this feedback in our own manner? In a way that we think it is cool again. That’s a challenge. So we do really listen to the feedback, of course, yet we don’t always literally and directly alter our collection accordingly if it is not in line with the image we want ILJA to have. We are suborn enough. Some things you have to listen to as you do want to convince people and you thus sometimes have to come out of your comfort zone. That is what we did for our last collection, by the way. We really stepped out of our comfort zone. In the beginning, we really had to get used to the ‘feel’ of the collection, which includes ruffles and pastel, yet it worked very well. It was the best collection till now. We did not receive negative feedback so far…
I usually search for negative feedback so I can use constructive criticism to improve the next collection, yet we didn’t get any so far for last collection.
What we always need in the collection is a reference to couture. We continuously try to ‘re-invent’ couture, yet when doing so it is important to continue referencing to couture in terms of finishes, for example, or embellishments. If you don’t, you will get the critique that the collection is close to ready-to-wear; which is what you want to stay away from as a haute couture brand.
Also, Paris (and the Federacion) is quite conservative when it comes to haute couture. What we try to do is being innovative, stepping out of our comfort zone with our collections; yet at the same time we have to make sure that we don’t rebel too much against the conservative nature of the Federacion. So, we do not follow trends yet we are limited in directions to a certain extent as there are rules we have to follow in Paris. It is quite a strategic story, actually.

When in Paris, I visit stores of Gucci, Prada – all the big brands, but also the smaller ones – to see what everyone is doing. What I notice then is that, most of the time, brands head the same direction design-wise.
A3 Interview mass market brand – Rianne te Winkel from Expresso Fashion

This interview was conducted through e-mail

Q Does your company make use of an external company to create trend forecasts or are the seasonal concepts solely based on own research? To what extent do the designers/concept developers etc. make use of trend reports made by trend forecasting agencies?
A We create our own themes but we do so after a lot of research on fairs, catwalk shows, shopping, Internet and also based on information of different trend agencies. With all the information we collect we build a specific story for each delivery within a season.

Q How important are fashion trends for your company?
A We are selective in assessing what trends work well for our target group. We of course follow trends yet we do not apply them all.

Q What type of trend forecasting does your company apply?
A It is a combination of trend forecasting, so all the aspects you mention in the definition overview are applied. The beginning of the season is visionary and abstract. When the design of the collection becomes more concrete, we implement more market research.

Q Could you describe the process of creating and developing the trends/themes of a new season?
A 1-Research - 2-Theme/ambience per delivery - 3-Materials/colours - 4-Silhouettes - 5-Design

Q According to you, how important is big data to your company? Does your company make use of the data and customer information that is available (or do you, for example, feel like they are missing out on important information that could be used in the following season because you do not have the resources?)?
A Our company schedules weekly meetings in which all data is analysed. This is of importance for the support of the development of new collections.

Q Could you give an indication, expressed in percentages if you like, how much of creating trends/moods for the new season is ‘free creativity’ and how much is ‘following the forecasting advice’?
A We freely compose our collections ourselves. We do of course look at trend forecasting but we always follow tendencies translated and applied to our own brand DNA and our target group.