The Dynamics of Fashion Trend Forecasting


Abstract
Fashion trend forecasting is a dynamic process in which consumers, fashion companies and forecasting agencies play a crucial role. Specific dynamics between these agents make clear that on the one hand intuition will never cease to be a part of trend forecasting, and on the other hand that data analytics is increasing in popularity. The conceptual pair of the smooth and the striated as coined by philosopher Gilles Deleuze clarifies intuition in relation to the unquantifiable and data in relation to the quantifiable. Both intuition and data, however, have their limitations and implications. A Deleuzian approach is applied to discuss the possible consequences of relying on either intuition or big data in fashion trend forecasting. The trend forecasting cycle is part of a creative practice yet, paradoxically, its process is self-fulfilling and causes a uniformity of trends. It is argued that the fashion industry is in need of an alternative approach with regard to ‘fashion trend forecasting’ since the current practice limits creativity and artistic freedom. In addition, ‘forecasting’ is an unjust term, as the future is unpredictable. Ultimately, Deleuze’s notions of the virtual and actual help to understand the impossibility of ‘forecasting the fashion future’.

I. Introducing the Dynamics of the Fashion Trend Industry
Fashion trend forecasting is a complex and diverse field. It concerns the behaviour and wishes of society, the changes within society and the reason why this behaviour, these wishes and changes come about (De Wet, 2008). Over the course of several decades, intuition has been key in the field of fashion trend forecasting. However, during the past couple of years big data have gained territory in the forecasting industry. The dynamics that come into play when a fashion forecaster – either a data analyst or an intuitive trend forecaster – advocates a fashion trend that is picked up by a fashion company cause a loss of creativity in the fashion industry. While Elizabeth Wilson in her book Adorned in Dreams writes that ‘fashion is one among many forms of aesthetic creativity which make possible the exploration of alternatives’, the current fashion industry is facing standardization (2003: 245). If fashion is about change, expressing individuality, creativity and exploring alternatives, why is it that the majority of us are wearing clothes that are very similar? The uniformity of trends and the unvaried way we dress as a result is problematic if we want to use fashion as a way to express ourselves as individuals and it is problematic for the fashion industry as a whole if we want it to be a truly creative industry. Gilles Lipovetsky (1987 [1994]: 36) states that ‘fashion is based historically on the value and claims of individuality, on the legitimacy of personal uniqueness.’ The current fashion industry, however, is threatened by sameness as forecasting agencies determine the fashion trends, which are subsequently adopted by mass market fashion companies. Also, a gap has appeared between the individual, truly creative, young, experimental designers and the mass market fashion companies – which rule the market and whose products we all wear – that follow the same fashion trends.
Consumers, fashion trend forecasting agencies and fashion companies influence each other when a trend is being established. Hence, this interplay of influences is what is named the ‘dynamics of fashion trend forecasting’. High fashion designers and consumers that produce (social) media content are followed by other consumers, fashion companies and forecasting agencies who want to stay up to date about the latest developments in fashion. Fashion companies, in general, subsequently influence consumers by using branding and marketing strategies in order to seduce the consumer into buying their products. With regard to forecasting agencies, a distinction is made between fashion analytics agencies and traditional trend forecasting agencies. Fashion analytics thrives on data whereas traditional trend forecasting is fuelled by intuition. These forecasting agencies are the main influencers of mass market fashion companies, as brands continue to rely heavily on agencies’ predictions (Giertz-Mårtenson, 2006; de Wet, 2008; Close up, 2016). Mass market brands’ free creativity is therefore diminished.

According to scholar Maria MacKinney-Valentin, fashion forecasters supply fashion companies with either ‘trend recipes’ (information on colour, materials and fabrics) or with visionary inspiration. Fashion companies use this information as an inspiration to base their collection on. This way, they know that they will not miss out on any information that is supplied also to their competitors, which leads to an industry in which all agents follow the same path (MacKinney-Valentin, 2010). Discussed in this paper is the lack of creativity and, as a result, the uniformity of the fashion industry and the question whether ‘trend forecasting is actually ‘forecasting’ or ‘determining what we will wear’? ’ To a large extent this concern is caused by the dynamic between trend forecasting agencies and mass market fashion companies, where the fashion company follows the advice of the forecaster. The focus lies on the interplay between forecasters and mass market brands, as trend forecasting agencies have proven to play a crucial role in determining trends and influencing mass market fashion companies. A distinction is made between intuitive trend forecasting and data trend forecasting, as the two operate differently and their distinct approaches influence the dynamics. Although the consumer plays an important role in the dynamics of trend forecasting as well, for reasons of relevancy for the main concern of this article the consumer is not the main focus of attention.

Elements of the dynamics of the trend forecasting industry – in particular the dynamics between the trend forecasting agencies and the mass market fashion companies – will be discussed in relation to philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s concepts of the smooth space, the striated space, the virtual and the actual. A critical look will be taken at the fashion industry, which is supposedly a ‘creative practice’, yet which is plagued by standardisation and uniformity. This paper thus aims to grasp the dynamics of fashion trend forecasting and discusses the curiosities of the trend forecasting process.

II. Intuition and Big Data in Relation to Fashion Trend Forecasting

The types of fashion trend forecasting

As shown in Figure 1, within fashion trend forecasting a distinction can be made between traditional trend forecasting – which consists of visionary based forecasting and qualitative market research-based forecasting – and fashion analytics. Visionary based trend forecasting can be described as abstract storytelling. For this type of forecasting, intuition is central. Qualitative market research-based forecasting companies focus on market(ing) research and on observations of consumer and market developments, which they later translate into usable
material. Here, intuition is at play again. The basics of fashion analytics, on the contrary, do not leave room for intuition. For this type of forecasting, data analysis and machine learning is of utmost importance for making forecasts. In Figure 1, the difference and relation between the different types of forecasting is visualised. Some forecasters or forecasting agencies possess characteristics of both traditional trend forecasting and fashion analytics, like WGSN, or of both visionary based forecasting and qualitative market research-based forecasting, like Peclers. These agencies are indicated in the ‘fusion’ sections of the Figure.

![Figure 1. The types of forecasting agencies and their characteristics](image)

**Intuition in fashion trend forecasting**

Opinions about the importance of intuition in traditional fashion trend forecasting are divided. Many scientists do not recognise the importance of intuition, as it is an abstract concept that is impossible to quantify and is therefore unscientific. Others, however, do value intuition and creativity and state that intuition is indispensable. A good trend watcher, according to some, should possess a certain – intuitive – forecasting talent (de Wet, 2008; Close up, 2016). Proponents of using data analytics – which could be regarded as the opposite of intuition – in the fashion industry also acknowledge the significance of intuition and experience (The Business of Fashion, 2013). Dutch trend watcher 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, according to her, should be solely based on intuition and creativity (Diane and Cassidy, 2005). In conclusion, while some professionals argue that intuition is crucial, others do value intuition yet recognise that it is not the only factor of influence in the forecasting process. As scholar AJC de Wet (2008) argues as well, it is clear that there is no real consensus about the use of intuition in fashion trend forecasting.
Data analytics in fashion trend forecasting

Data analytics in fashion trend forecasting, just like intuition, faces both negative and positive reactions. Since the fashion industry is conservative in its nature and has until recently relied exclusively on intuitive forecasting processes, it only slowly adopts data analytics as a new forecasting tool (Kumar, 2013). Data analysts argue that big data can help to more accurately predict fashion trends (Swayne, 2014; Bodeswa, 2015). According to data analyst Francesca Muston of trend forecasting agency WGSN, data can never substitute traditional trend forecasting since trends have a subjective nature, yet it can be used to ‘enrich’ the forecasts they make (Glassman, 2014). Even though most data professionals still see the value of intuition, as has been mentioned before, there are also those completely against the traditional approach to trend forecasting since gathering data and building models would be the only way to correctly predict trends without intuitive interference (Horx.com, n.d.). It is evident that the use of big data in fashion trend forecasting will rise in the coming years – be it at the cost of intuition or hand-in-hand with intuition – since the tremendous amount of information available enables data analysts to model trends and patterns based on sophisticated algorithms (The Business of Fashion, 2013).

The smooth space and the striated space

With the purpose of understanding and discussing the connection between intuition – the unquantifiable – and data – the quantifiable – in trend forecasting, I will turn to the conceptual pair of the smooth space and the striated space, introduced by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their book A Thousand Plateaus. The smooth space allows for continuous revisions, interpretations and shifts; it indicates free forces and ever-changing directions. Contrary to the smooth field, the striated is a result of interfering technological advances that aim to quantify and measure (Hubert, n.d.). In this paper’s context, the smooth space can be tied to the intuitive aspect of trend forecasting, creativity and the unknown future. The striated field is concerned with the area of data analytics within fashion; the data that attempts to quantify the according to many, unquantifiable.

Intuition can be explained as a phenomenon that operates along a ‘line of flight’ (Deleuze and Guatarri, 1987), meaning that it can never be given a definition since its qualities constantly change. Intuition is about inventing thoughts anew on the one hand, about the internal ‘gut’ feeling that may create a new thought, which we then call ‘intuition’, yet on the other hand intuition is also unconsciously influenced by external factors (Sinclair, 2005; Gallate and Keen, 2011). As philosopher Rebecca Louise Breuer (2015) outlines in her dissertation Fashion Beyond Identity, what fashion can ‘do’ and what it can ‘say’ is connected to each other when we talk about phenomena that operate in the smooth space. Intuition, which operates along lines of flight and thus finds itself in this sphere of smooth space, allows for new expressions, forms and materials to occur. Yet we have to be careful, since even though intuition is at play in smooth, heterogeneous space, it may be unconsciously influenced by external, overcoding factors. When an object or phenomenon becomes overcoded, brands have given it a certain value within society. If this happens, we can imagine that what something ‘does’ becomes disconnected from what it may ‘say’; it moves from the smooth into the striated sphere, in which societal norms and values rule. In other words, although the terms ‘subjective’ and ‘intuitive’ relate to notions of freedom and infinite potential, a seemingly internal and individual intuitive thought is always influenced by external factors. Intuition as used by forecasters moves to the striated space as soon as an intuitively established ‘trend’ is promoted and disseminated by a forecaster; the intuitive trend becomes part of the striated – it becomes part of
certain set ideas within society – and it is not a free, unlimited and creative element anymore. Intuition is thus a dynamic force itself within the dynamics between the consumer, fashion forecasting agencies and fashion companies.

In the field of fashion analytics, data driven forecasting agencies such as Edited aim to quantify the fashion trend industry by creating forecasts based on large amounts of information – like GPS signals, Google search words, social media and historical analysis – collected from all over the world and the Internet. Machine learning enables these companies to analyse data and translate it into usable information (Edited, 2016). Data analytics in fashion can be directly connected to striated space. The approach of data driven forecasting agencies implies their belief in the possibility to measure and quantify fashion trends. All information that is collected and measured by forecasting agencies becomes part of a representative world in which factual, objective data is translated into ‘visions’ or ‘themes’ by fashion companies. Data analysts thus try to determine and calculate market figures and sales figures in order to come to a concluding outlook of the future. However, they will never succeed to do so entirely, since unexpected desires and wishes will forever remain beyond one’s grasp (Breuer, 2016).

When applying the conceptual pair of the smooth and the striated to fashion trend forecasting, it becomes evident that the process will always end up in striated space. This means that it becomes part of an overcoding fashion industry in which certain norms and values are present and in which trend forecasting agencies and fashion companies have a particular way of working which leads to a restriction of creative, free and unlimited practices. Intuition may initially be part of the smooth field, yet this is only the case when an intuitive feeling has not yet been overcoded by the industry. It is, nonetheless, inevitable for intuitive thought in fashion forecasting to become part of the striated as trend watchers are forced to translate intuition into visions that are usable for fashion companies. Data, on the other hand, are and will always be part of the striated world that aims to quantify all practices. Our overcoded, need-for-measure society will, however, never be able to fully quantify all that surrounds us, as unpredictable and ungraspable elements will exist forever. The dynamics of fashion trend forecasting are thus impossible to concretise.

III. The Complexity of Using the Term ‘Forecasting’

In ‘The Namesake: Futures; futures studies; futurology; futuristic; foresight–What's in a name?’ writer and cultural critic Ziauddin Sardar explains how Western culture attempts to ‘label’ everything in order to make communication easier. However, the practice of ‘naming’ forces limitations upon us since we, as a result, live according to the labels and rules we have set ourselves. We disregard all other perspectives, views and cultures and build a world around our own interpretations of social bodies. It is therefore impossible to ‘know’ the future, since forecasts and visions (fashion forecasts specifically, in this context) just give us a restricted amount of possible outlooks; they do not teach us what the future is (Sardar, 2010). Trend forecasters do the same when they label their presentations ‘fashion forecast AW 16/17’, for example. By doing so, they ignore the limitless amount of other possibilities and perspectives of the future and thus imply that there is just one ‘future’. It is for this reason that it is important to think about future in plural (ibid.). In the same vein, Deleuzian theory explains that it will always be impossible to correctly predict trends - predicting in its pure form, where determining forces are not interfering (Deleuze 1968 [1994]; Pisters 2012). The future is beyond our reach or common sense;
all that could possibly happen enjoys unlimited potential and there is an infinite number of combinations of past and present that can be made. We call this the *virtual*, in Deleuzian terminology. The *actual*, on the other hand, is what we can see and recognise directly in our everyday lives. We need not forget about all that could possibly happen or could have possibly happened – all the possible past, present and future scenarios – before certain events are *actualised*: in other words, before they become what we perceive (Colebrook, 2002).

Within the realms of traditional fashion trend forecasting, the intuition of the trend watcher is crucial. Intuition is about personal interpretation, the ‘gut’ feeling, unconscious knowledge and experience. In its pure state, it is part of the virtual since it allows for a limited amount of possible interpretations. Here, ‘forecasting’ is a wrong term to use as each individual owns personal intuitive feelings, making each individual intuition unique. All other possible scenarios are shut out of a ‘forecast’ as soon as a trend watcher puts his or her label on it and thus determines what he or she thinks will happen; in other words, we move from the virtual to the actual. Once fashion brands put faith in such a prediction and follow its course, the forecaster has succeeded in **moulding the future** according to the intuitive forecast. With regard to fashion analytics, for which big data is central, the virtual is disregarded entirely. The tremendous amount of real time customer data leaves no room for other possibilities; forecasting based on big data is a process of rigid labelling and measuring. Some may say that data forecasts ought to be reliable, as the information is based on a large amount of accurate customer data. However, we have to take a step beyond that assumption, as the same mechanism that is at play in traditional trend forecasting exists in fashion analytics. As soon as fashion companies rely on and follow the forecasting advice of a data analyst, the data analyst has succeeded in adjusting the future approach of a brand and thus also ‘moulds’ the fashion future. ‘Forecasting’ is not ‘actual forecasting’ anymore; it is an interpretation and determining force of the trend forecaster.

The determining power of forecasters is stressed by Sardar (2010: 184) in the following quotation:

> All futures activities, from forecasts to visioning, ... have a direct impact on the present: they can change peoples’ perceptions, make them aware of dangers and opportunities ahead, motivate them to do specific things, force them to invent or innovate, encourage them to change and adjust, galvanise them into collective social action, paralyse them with fear, empower them, marginalise them, or tell them they and their cultures and belief systems are important or unimportant.

In other words, fashion forecasters pretend to have knowledge about future events, yet what they do is merely provide us with an infinitesimal possibility in an infinite web of possibilities. *As a result of* giving a prediction that is deemed credible in the industry due to the image of the fashion forecaster, the forecaster succeeds in directly influencing people’s views – fashion companies value the perspective of the forecaster and do something with it – and thus in changing the present and direct future.

In conclusion, the term ‘forecasting’ in the context of fashion trend forecasting is misleading as it suggests that we can know what the future will bring us. We can never really call the process ‘forecasting’ in its most actual form, since once a forecasting agency claims to predict the future, it has already moulded and changed the heading of events in the preferred direction. Many will follow the advice and will create collections based on the
so-called ‘forecast’. Dutch trend watcher Jan Agelink uses the term ‘forecasting’ yet admits that it may be a misplaced word to use as he says in an interview:

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.

I argue that the word ‘forecasting’ is misleading and ought not to be used since the process is actually a subsequent chain of active translations from intuitive thoughts of the trend forecaster to visions of the trend forecaster to a vision of the designer on his/her collection. This process has nothing to do with ‘predicting’ yet has to do with creating or editing a trend, even though some trend forecasters argue the opposite. Mass market fashion companies are likely to follow the same trends because they believe in the supposed forecasting talent of the agencies, which causes a lowered level of design creativity and similarities between collections. This has a negative effect on the creative image that the fashion industry is supposed to have and it stresses the self-fulfilling characteristic of the trend forecasting industry.

IV. A Self-fulfilling Industry

The self-fulfilling character of traditional forecasting

Marc Worth, founder of forecasting agencies WGSN and Stylus, claims that it is no longer the case that there is a group of people that chooses what the trending colours of the coming seasons will be (The Business of Fashion, 2015). His claim is not in line with trend analyst David Shah’s explanation of the way Shah works at Pantone every season. Colour trends, he says, are just a decision of a group of elite colour ‘forecasters’, who meet twice a year to choose the colours of the seasons to come (Close up, 2016). According to scholar Julie King (2011), colour forecasting agencies organise meetings of which the outcome is a colour agreement. With regard to fashion trends in general, a representative of trend forecasting agency Stylus Fashion states that trend forecasting agencies indeed are an influential factor on trends (Fitzgerald, 2015), which implies that these agencies are the creators or editors of a trend rather than actual forecasters. Brands, however, are afraid to miss out on a trend – disregarding trend advice is a financial risk since it could cause a loss of sales – and often decide to take the advice seriously, which results in the actual development of the trend (Marritz, 2011). This process diminishes the creativity of fashion brands and is self-fulfilling. Some forecasting agencies even admit to the prophetic characteristic of trend forecasts (King, 2011).

The self-fulfilling character of fashion analytics

Fashion analytics, just like traditional trend forecasting, is unable to avoid operating along the lines of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Whereas Geoff Watts, CEO of data analytics company Edited, argues that his company enables brands to let their own opinions and tastes rule instead of following what the industry has put upon them (Noyes, 2014) I would rationally argue that it is quite the opposite. The more data brands have available about competitors and the industry, the more restricted they are and the more they think they know what they can offer and should offer in order to boost sales. Brands may not let their own creativity, interpretations, innovative thoughts and opinions manifest if there is a large amount of information available that tells them what is best to do. Contrary to Watts’ words, these brands may be pushed by companies such as Edited to follow the industry
even more strictly than they did before they had access to the tremendous amount of market and consumer information provided to them. Following data forecasts equals following established norms and expectations of society, which makes fashion brands follow a predictable path, set for them by data analysts. As opposed to what Watts says, this process causes a standardisation of trends and a decrease of creativity and innovation. The uniformity is maintained by fashion brands’ urge to make safe design choices as a consequence of high profit targets, which results in the reconstruction of a trend-determining, uncreative industry.

V. Concluding Remarks and Suggested Approaches

Conclusion

Established fashion forecasting agencies have made themselves credible in the eyes of fashion companies by claiming that they are able to accurately forecast the fashion future. The future, however, is unpredictable since before we perceive something at a certain moment – which we call the actual – there is an unlimited amount of scenarios that could possibly happen – the virtual. ‘Forecasting’ is thus a paradoxical term. The reason why trend forecasts may be regarded as accurate is because the process is self-fulfilling. This prophetic characteristic of fashion trend forecasting, both in traditional trend forecasting and fashion analytics, causes a uniformity of trends and disregard for innovation since fashion companies follow the advice of the same trend forecasters blindly.

In a Deleuzian context, we see that since the dissemination of trends based on intuition is partially influenced by external factors, the process that ‘allows for new expressions, forms and materials to occur’ – the smooth space – is partly disrupted. Social norms come into play, which limit the free creation of new expressions and cause the heterogenetic nature of intuition to succumb to order on the base of hierarchy, representation and overarching structures; in other words, to become more homogeneous. With regard to fashion analytics, there is no room for the occurrence of unexpected newness at all. A data based forecast is born and always remains in the striated world of representation and hierarchy. This striating process is the cause of the uniformity of the fashion industry. It causes the different players of the fashion trend cycle to follow each other and thus to head the same direction, diminishing creativity. Forecasting agencies determine the trends to come and fashion companies are reluctant to take risks and to deviate from the path that forecasters have set them as their main aim is to make profit. This process causes a loss of creativity in designs. Trend forecasting agencies, in their turn, do not encourage creativity and risk taking since they strive for the highest profit as well. In conclusion, the sameness of forecasted trends that are being followed, the lack of design creativity as a result and the inaccurate claim of forecasting agencies to possess predictive powers form a threat to the fashion industry. The uniformity, monotony and predictability of the fashion industry are problematic since they hinder the industry to be truly creative and they limit consumers in using fashion as a means of self-expression.

An example of a designer that understands the standardisation of the fashion industry very well is Aitor Throup. Throup, like more young, independent designers, has never really been interested in the fashion cycles and fashion seasons, which is why he does not present his work in the conventional catwalk way. It is clothing design, experience design and different art directions that he is interested in with the aim to create newness, not re-designing the already existing. As Throup puts it:
The problem we’ve got when our natural instinct of conserving energy connects with creativity is that with laziness comes industrialisation, and with industrialisation comes standardisation, which encourages us to become lazy on a creative level. It’s very hard to step out of these conventions and stop using other people’s pre-conceived solutions. (Skidmore, 2015)

Just like young artist Throup, there are successful, well-known designers that have found a way to continuously draw artistic energy from within and express creativity that has not been inspired on other designers’ work, like Rei Kawakubo (Frankel, 2015). This artistic, truly creative approach to fashion prevents designers from becoming stuck in conventions, as warned of by Throup.

**Suggested approaches**

It is clear that the field of fashion trend forecasting may be approached and regarded differently in order to stimulate creativity and prevent the fashion industry from being or becoming boring and monotone. Therefore, I will now suggest some approaches that may open up our view on fashion, trends and the fashion industry. According to Anthony Dunne, author of the book *Speculative Everything*, we should stop forecasting and start ‘imagining possible futures’. The author discusses culture, design and concepts through the spectacles of futurology, politics, technology and creative domains in order to open up the consideration of possible scenarios (Dunne, 2013). This approach to forecasting in general is liberating and makes us aware of how we, these days, try to set the future by predicting in a restrictive sense and thus narrow down scenarios that could have possibly happened if we would not have shaped the future the way we did. Dunne’s suggestion connects to the virtual and the actual. When taking these concepts into consideration, one may recognise our tendency to label what we actively see and experience and what image we have of the world, the actual, as ‘real’, in stead of also taking into consideration the immeasurable possibilities that lie beyond our perceptions – the virtual (Colebrook, 2002).

If creativity is not controlled and if brands would not rely on forecasting agencies, it would be possible for creativity and innovative ideas to spread out through society despite their possible oddity at first notice. This flow of events would be possible since creative and innovative ideas would not be judged upon by society – a nation founded on certain rules and values; a striated world – in the very instant they appear. Creativity and innovation would flourish and the fashion industry would develop into a genuine creative practice: the uniformity of trends would disappear. This suggestion is a hypothetical step towards a more open-minded fashion industry; it is a suggested step to change fashion minds. It is, nevertheless, impossible to escape from the striated entirely, as socio-economic aspects will always be involved in our modern society. However, if the fashion industry would succeed to open up to smooth space, it would allow for a more open and free of judgement approach in which designers – designers, not trend ‘forecasters’ – follow their own intuition and are able to change design direction any time they want; a ‘nomadic’ approach to fashion design, free from trends that have been set by so-called ‘forecasters’. This way, the fashion industry could be called a ‘creative’ industry again and individuals would be able to fulfil their need of self-expression more profoundly. An interesting, conceptual example of a collection that ‘goes off in all directions’ and illustrates heterogeneity is designer Iris van Herpen’s S/S 2016 collection Quaquaversal. For this collection, Van Herpen was inspired by the growing process of the roots of plants and trees and during the presentation of the collection a root-like dress creation was robotically made on a model that was lying down on a round table. Details of the designs show smooth, felt-like structures (Hoop Doop Magazine, 2016). Van Herpen’s approach may not be applicable to mass market fashion
companies, yet the unpredictable and complex structures of her designs embody the many paths that intuition and creativity could lead to.

On a final note, Sardar argues that doubt – which is understood as the acceptance of unpredictability in this context – is crucial in our everyday lives. When applying doubt to the future, we are open to other perspectives, open to other ways of interpretation, open to unlimited options (Sardar, 2010). Fashion is change, just as life itself. And this change does not have a set future, as it is part of the virtual. Only if we would stop trying to predict this change, we would allow for a more creative, impulsive and interesting fashion industry to develop.

Notes

1. Concepts such as the smooth space and the striated space, as introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri (1987), have proven to be useful tools to research, explain and understand many topics and phenomena in disciplines such as film studies (Pisters, 2012), fashion theory (Breuer, 2015) and many other fields.
2. The power of the forecasting industry in terms of how many companies thrive on it and how influential it is is clearly noticeable in an article on fashionunited.nl (Buis, 2016). At the beginning of a forecasting seminar, trend watcher Christine Boland argues that trends are ‘out of fashion’ and that what is important now, is movement and visual language. She talks about the fusion of disciplines and on how movements are involved. Later, however, the article states that even though trends are apparently ‘out of fashion’, Boland was nevertheless willing to give her trend view on SS 2016/2017. This opposition illustrates how forecasters are (economically) driven to give trend predictions since they know that their clients, the brands, remain dependent on them.
3. This example cannot be compared to mass market brands’ design aesthetics. It is meant to open up thought about possible ways of approaching fashion.
References


