

Trends Studies' Contributions For The Definition of the Fashion Brand's Target

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of Fashion Branding methodologies is closely related to the characteristics of your target audience. Thus, it is necessary to find methods to understand the consumer, in particular with regard to their motivations, habits, and preferences. Attracting the consumer's attention is to generate products that are able to satisfy the needs of an audience that lives the immediate. In the current society of the instant, where we all share information and we all reach an audience, understanding the dynamics of social influence and the motivations of consumption allows us to adapt the contents in such a way that they can be fully created to think about their final consumer. Therefore, the review of the literature on fashion, branding and trend studies leads to a cross-referencing and selection of information that, as a whole, will allow us to understand and define the target, through the definition of a persona, which represents the brand's ideal audience. This persona acts as a representation of the ideal target audience and can serve as a guideline when creating the products and contents of a brand. The aim is to study the audience and their motivations in a profound way first, in order to be able to create targeted products and brands. In this context, it is intended to give an explanatory and comprehensive approach to the component on the definition of the persona in said work, in order to clarify the utility thereof for the approximation of the brands to their audience.

Keywords: branding, trends, persona.

Contributos dos Estudos de Tendências Para a Definição do Target da Marca de Moda

RESUMO

A eficácia das metodologias de Branding de moda está intimamente relacionada com as características do seu público alvo. Assim, torna-se necessário encontrar métodos que permitam compreender o consumidor, em particular no que respeita às suas motivações, hábitos e preferências. Captar a atenção do consumidor é gerar produtos que sejam capazes de satisfazer as necessidades de um público que vive o imediato. Na atual sociedade do instantâneo, onde todos partilhamos informação e todos alcançamos uma audiência, compreender as dinâmicas de influência social e as motivações de consumo permite adequar os conteúdos e de tal forma a que estes possam ser totalmente criados a pensar no seu consumidor final. Assim, a revisão de literatura de temáticas de Moda, Branding e Estudos de Tendências conduz ao cruzamento e seleção de informação que, no seu todo, irá permitir compreender e definir o target, por meio da definição de uma persona, que representa o público ideal da marca. Esta persona funciona como uma representação do público alvo ideal, podendo servir de orientação quando da criação de produtos e conteúdos de uma marca. Procura-se, assim, estudar o público e suas motivações de forma profunda em primeiro lugar, para depois poder criar produtos e marcas a ele direcionados. Neste âmbito, pretende-se dar uma abordagem explicativa e aprofundada à componente relativa à definição da persona, no trabalho referido, de forma a explicitar a utilidade da mesma para a aproximação das marcas ao seu público.

Palavras-chave: *branding, tendências, persona.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Trend's studies and Fashion Branding have been increasingly discussed themes, despite the fact that they remain, frequently, misunderstood. Considering the complexity of these subjects, this research intends to contribute to a bigger understanding of the mentioned themes, showing how it can be integrated into common processes.

This project's relevance appears together with the need to understand the Fashion, Trends and Branding's global picture, in order to define a fashion brand's target audience.

A fashion brand is a very important asset in the clothing business, influencing the consumer's perception of the product. Understanding the nature of the consumer's relationship with fashion and related social phenomena is the first step in understanding how to integrate them in an appealing way into the brand's imaginary, for only by getting an overview of the universe under study, is it possible to apply knowledge and specify the object of study. That said, Branding and Trend Studies' notions become relevant, turning into part of the same process, that leads to the clear definition of the brand's target.

In this project, there are two distinct components, that contribute to the understanding of the above-mentioned themes. A theoretical segment, related

to research, investigation, and analysis of Fashion, Branding, and Trends concepts, that will permit to show the fashion brand's universe and context, and a practical segment, in which the notions obtained with the theoretical study will allow us to guide the research, in order to select the vital concepts of Trends Studies, that will let us define an archetype of the ideal target for the brand.

The two main components of this project, and all the content they include intend to show the importance of the global theoretical knowledge to articulate a solid practical work, that, besides the fact that ameliorate the understanding of current complex themes, show how these can be integrated into fashion brand's creation systems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Fashion, the consumer and the brands

Fashion is described by Davis (1992, p.14) as a change occurring in the conventions of the visual code, in which we read the meanings present in the clothing worn by our contemporaries. This alteration can be the introduction of new styles or the reinterpretation of older ones, but it can only be considered fashion if there is a change. That is the reason why studying fashion theory is studying social phenomena dynamics.

Fashion combines mimicry and individualism since it imposes a social norm while allowing the expression of the most personal and individual taste (LIPOVETSKY, 1989, p.59).

The notion of fashion as an ambivalent phenomenon was previously addressed by Georg Simmel (1957), on a perspective related to the social status of that time. Simmel (1957) observes the changes in fashion as a showcase of the social structure dynamics. This philosopher declares that Man has a dual nature, which reflects itself in his social behavior. There is a contradiction between the need to adapt and to integrate into his context, and, at the same time, the need to stand out and be different from his pairs, according to Simmel

(1957). The author says that fashion, as a social phenomenon, reflects this duality: if, on the one hand, allows one to belong to a group, through the use of common elements or pieces of clothing, on the other hand, the fashion code is malleable enough to allow one to express creativity and personal aesthetics, which means the differentiation from its pairs.

Simmel (1957, p.541-542) explained, this way, the constant changes in fashion, through the contradictory nature of men of belonging and standing out at the same time, which impacts the variations in fashion through the social classes.

The link between social identity and fashion is also justified by Davis (1992, p.17-18), through the statement that our identity is not airtight, but it remains in constant mutation, being influenced by social currents that cause emotional reactions that need to be expressed. It is through this instability, tried collectively in society, that fashion blooms, accordingly to Davis (1992, p.17-18), thanks to the designers that translate it to clothes.

In fact, on a daily basis, we evaluate each other based on appearance, taking conclusions related to social status and lifestyle. Social differences become visible through clothing, which functions as a social badge. (BARNARD, 2007, p.9).

Products, usually, function as symbols, as a social tool that shows to others who we are, how we live and what we do. For this reason, products have meanings which, especially in the case of fashion, must be developed according to its context and consumer. In this sense, Miranda (2008, p.33) declares that to effectively communicate a fashion brand, it is important to understand the context of the target audience, what affects them and what motivates them, in order to minimize ambiguities in the interpretation of the brand's message.

Cultural products, as is the case of fashion, are used by consumers due to their functionality and meaning. (Meamber et al., 2017, p.435). This means that even suffering from exterior influence, individuals can create their own meanings for the products they acquire,

subverting the ones that were initially defined by the marketplace. By the appropriation of the existing narratives, consumers can create their own identities, even if those are based on existing elements. Meamber et al. (2017, p.435-436) say that this means consumers are co-producers of meaning, whether this is individual or for a group. These meanings come, not only from the products they buy but also from the brands they choose, which contribute to the creation of every consumer's personal connotations.

In this sense, Gobé (2009, p.151) underlines the importance of considering the consumer's emotions and motivations, that we intend to target during the brand's conceptualization process. This author explains that the definition of a hypothetical personality, with individual characteristics and personal emotions, is an effective way of guiding the brand's efforts, by providing a clear understanding of the consumer's motivations and tastes, then resulting on a clear and concrete brand conceptualization. This process is called *SENSE®*, and it's a technique that allows defining a brand, through its personalization, according to the consumer lifestyle, which then leads to a deeper relationship with him. (GOBÉ, 2009, p.151-153).

Identity and personality are key elements to a brand's conceptualization, as shown by Aaker (2007, p.89-93). Aaker (2007) synthesized the brand's identity planning process in a model that includes the four identity perspectives (brand as products; as an organization; as a person and brand as a symbol). All of these components work together in the planning process of brand's identity as well as in the way these are expressed to the public, this being the reason why they should be cohesive and coherent. (AAKER, 2007, p.89-93). These perspectives enable to give structure and depth to the brand, being useful to create contexts that allow demonstrating what it is and represents.

As we can see through the analysis of the previously mentioned work, identity is, in brief, the main focus of a brand, particularly a fashion one, and it is the key element that leads to the correct definition of the characteristics that will differentiate the brand from its

competitors. The characteristics should be appropriately transmitted, in a simplified way, so that they can be well understood by the audience. In fact, customers repeatedly interact with brands as if they were people, mostly when the products are more personal and visible (as is the case of clothing). In this sense, it is effective to create a personality, that will permit to anthropomorphize the brand, in a certain way. Therefore, a brand can be described the same way as a person would be, in terms of age, social class, lifestyle and even character traits (AAKER, 2007, p.142-145).

So, to build a brand personality, appropriated to the target audience, the brand should respond to questions like "If it were a person, who would be?", "What kind of hobbies this person would have?", "What type of clothing he/she would wear?" "If it was a house, which one would be?" (VAID, 2003, p.36). In fact, Aaker (2007, p.167-169) refers that the understanding of a brand's personality can be achieved through the study of its users. The image of them is a vehicle to retain the brand's personality, which allows responding to the target at the same time.

To analyze the types of potential customers and to organize them accordingly to their common attributes is what leads to the definition of *personas*. (KUMAR, 2013, p.211). Keeping in mind the described perspectives, *personas* can, then, be considered as representative of the target audience, because they fit the opportunities landscape so that researchers can concentrate on building concepts (that will meet the needs of the *personas* and their surrounding context).

Mark & Pearson (2011, p.31-35) go even further, in what relates to the relevance of the *persona* for branding, defending that each brand should be planned in a way that its personality fits in a defined archetype, selected accordingly to the product's nature. In this sense, the authors say that the brand should behave as an individual, based on a "classic" history, capable of creating empathy with its consumer. In their study, they explain the usefulness of storytelling for branding, through the elaboration of these archetypes/*personas*, which are based in classic stories (such as the fearless

hero, or the reckless rebel), and divided accordingly to their inner motivation: the creator, the caregiver and the governate (personalities motivated by stability and control), the jester, the common man and the lover (motivated by pleasure and belonging), the hero, the outlaw and the magician (motivated by the courage of taking risks), and, also, the innocent, the explorer and the wise (motivated by the will of independence and satisfaction).

In short, it is considered that by the fact of the consumer being a key-element on a fashion brand's creation, he should be appropriately studied, to better understand his habits and preferences. Despite the relevance of the demographic studies (about age, residence, salary, profession, number of children, and so on), which permit to obtain a mass understanding of the consumer, the psychographic studies (hobbies, motivations, preferences...) give a more concrete image of the target, allowing a higher understanding of it. (CALDERIN, 2009, p.18-19). In this sense, it is believed that Trends Studies can be the most suitable tool to obtain such an image, as we will show next.

2.2 Trends Studies importance for understanding the consumer

A brand is no longer defined exclusively by marketing professionals, it is a mix of its performance and what it represents e, because of that, it is a social construction, in the sense that, ultimately, it is controlled by us, consumers. (OLLINS, 2003, p.18). The daily life and street styles are the things that most affect the preferred products and not the other way around. (RAYMOND, 2007, p.297-300).

The process should begin by thinking on a well-defined target audience: possible buyers of the company's products, current users, influencers; individuals, groups, specific or general public. The target makes a great influence on the communicator's decisions about what, how, when, where and whom to communicate to. (KOTLER, 2000, p.572).

In this respect, to analyze the present time as a way to detect elements with potential mass adoption in the future, can be the key to keep up with the fashion marketplace demands. The most important thing is, not only to understand what it is going to be wanted, but also why, and, for that, it is necessary to be aware, not only of fashion but to all the factors that influence it and turn into consumer demand.

To have a brand's lifestyle as a focus point, which, ideally will function as a social badge, it is crucial to look at the people. This is the greatest change (mediated by the technological, social and communicational developments) that altered the traditional fashion cycle, and the reason why Trends Studies are a key tool in Fashion Branding. The best promotion is the word of mouth and, in that sense, to achieve it, it is crucial to reach the individuals that possess the biggest influence capacity.

Henrik Vejlgard (2008) digs deep into this subject, by explaining the way in which an innovation gets spread, through the people's biggest or lowest openness to innovation. Vejlgard (2008) defined a model called "*The Diamond-Shaped Trend Model*", in which he explains the differences in the acceptance of a new mindset, based on the differences in the people's personality traits towards innovation and change. There are, then, eight groups of individuals in the trend adoption and dissemination process: *Trendcreators*, *Trendsetters*, *Trendfollowers*, *Early mainstreamers*, *Mainstreamers*, *Late mainstreamers*, *Conservatives* and *Anti-innovators* (Vejlgard, 2008,p.65); (GOMES & FRANCISCO, 2013, p.12).

The trend element/object appears through the *Trendcreators*, a very heterogeneous small group of individuals, who create something new. The *Trendsetters*, for its part, are a bigger group, responsible for the trend "creation", due to the fact that they are the first ones to adopt the new element, making it spread through the *Trend Followers* and *Early Mainstreamers*, until it reaches the *Mainstreamers* (the high point of the trend, in which it reached the biggest mass of population). Later, the trend heads to its decline phase, through the groups that are

less willing to accept change, being more supporters of nostalgia and familiarity (*Antiinnovators*)(VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.64).

The crucial role of this process is held by the *Trendsetters*, people with an unusually curious personality, with no fear of standing out in the crowd. These individuals/groups are extremely innovative and typically coexist with others with the same characteristics. This is the type of consumer who, sometimes, might even want to avoid the popular, because they assume that what the mass public loves or does is bad and weak, despite the fact that their perspectives are shared by the other members of the group, who have the same opinions. "For them is cool not be in fashion". (LINDSTROM, 2012, p.153). So, this way, they adopt a new element through observation and interaction. When something new comes up, if it is accepted by some *Trendsetters*, it is most likely to become a trend, because it more easily spreads to other people who imitate them. (VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.143).

The typical *Trendsetter* claims that he doesn't care what other people think when he adopts something new. Usually, even before the designer's products get commercialized, the *Trendsetters* are the ones who start using them, before everyone else. Only when someone starts to use an innovative product or a new style does the opportunity arise to start spreading in the mainstream (...). Someone has to be the first, and the *Trendsetter*, by definition, is the first to adopt an innovative new product, design or style (RASQUILHA, 2011, p.45). There is an overrepresentation of these individuals in the following groups: young people, artists, designers, gay men, rich people, celebrities, and style conscious subcultures. These groups have a natural propensity to the new, allied to the fact that they are "polisocial" (they interact with people from different areas and social extracts, which gives them a diversified vision and a bigger chance to spread the new) (VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.56).

Social groups need, then, to differentiate themselves from each other. That is why, in this form of social organization, there will be more propensity to the

appearance of differentiation. This need of standing out is the factor that will lead to the arrival of new styles and behaviors (RASQUILHA, 2011, p.49). The novelty, observed in the *Trendsetters*, cause desire that leads to imitation. Succeeding imitation processes lead to a trend's generalization, through different groups, until it becomes a massive phenomenon. When this happens, the *Trendsetters* will react and change to something completely different, thus initiating a whole new trend dissemination process (VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.17).

William Higham (2009) makes an effective explanation of trends in a more concrete and corporate context. This author claims that change is something that affects all business sectors. Trends can, then, offer big business opportunities and bring high benefits to a company's sales and profits. Higham (2009, p.33) describes a process to apply trends to the business world: *The Trend Marketing Process*. This process allows the identification of emerging trends, its interpretation and the implementation of appropriate corporate strategies (these being the three described phases of the process).

On the identification phase, it is intended to identify, mainly, changes. These can be detected by studying the consumers, by direct observation or by analyzing reports. The most effective way is to study innovative groups (influencers and *early adopters*), who can lead the following consumers to adopt the same change; the alternative is to study groups that are themselves observers (journalists, academics, researchers, and entrepreneurs), in order to pick up clues about the emerging changes. This study can be done in a more theoretical way (through articles or statistic data) or more practical (by observing directly, through the internet, focus groups or interviews...). The most effective method is always to try to diversify the used approaches and to combine them. (HIGHAM, 2009, p.115-151).

The next phase is concerned with the interpretation of the detected trend. This phase can only be done correctly by achieving the complete understanding of the trend, and also of the way that is it being adopted. The process is over with the implementation of a strategy, defined through the

previously obtained information. As a trend's interpretation is based on a causal analysis, the implementation is based on the impact, in the sense of understanding how much a company can benefit with a trend. After all the data is presented, the best method to initiate the implementation strategy is to discuss the trend's effects with the team, uniting the knowledge of different areas with the knowledge of the trends, in order to achieve a broad and diversified view of the scenario in the business environment. (HIGHAM, 2009, p.115-151). Therefore, in order to detect trends, the most important thing is to find the right people. The individuals are the key to the process, namely, the *Trendsetters*.

3. CONCEPT APPLICATION

To be able to synthesize and to apply the described concepts, it is intended to analyze the information so that it can be utilized in a practical and concrete way, to define the target audience of a fashion brand. So, after the literature review, the key concepts of this subject are chosen, which lead to the selection of the relevant information about current trends, that will result in the definition of a *persona* that (ideally) represents a fashion brand's target audience. In this sense, we propose to define a trendsetter ideal profile, based on the information selected on Trends Studies; at the same time, the more relevant trends will be carefully chosen, keeping in mind the nature of the product and what it represents to its consumer. The obtained profile, together with the selected trends get articulated through the creation of a *persona*, that will be able to guide a further brand creation and conceptualization.

3.1 Definition of the trendsetter's profile

Social influence is a key factor in the acceptance of a fashion brand's personality, declare Kim & Hall (2014, p.40). In this sense, the products and brands that are more susceptible to group influence to achieve success (as it happens in the clothing business), should

look for opinion leaders or influencers to be able to conquer the members of the group in which they are part of. These are the people who, due to their abilities, knowledge or personality make a strong influence over the others, thus impelling trends. (KOTLER & ARMSTRONG, 2007, p.116). For this reason, they constitute an important target to fashion brands, due to the fact they are like an open door to access the masses.

Calderin (2009, p.90) assures that consumer profiles are a valuable tool to limit and define the ideal consumer. For that are relevant data like statistics, stories or mindsets, which translate into relevant indicators. This author refers, also, the types of profiles that can be elaborated: demographic (relative to age, gender, sexual orientation, education, profession...), behavioral (purchasing habits) or psychographic (perception about yourself, mindset, preferences) (CALDERIN, 2009, p.90-92). Following this thought, and also thinking about the previously referred authors, it becomes possible to define the trendsetter's profile, a key element on the trend dissemination process, whose personality will serve as a guide for the construction of a *persona*.

Having said that, it is possible to detect various common points in the trendsetter's personality, described by the above-mentioned authors: polisocial (interact with people from different areas and social classes); innovative; with no fear of standing out; naturally curious; like to try different things; don't like to repeat the same things; have no fear of taking risks; Able to work for something they believe in (even without payment); have the need to differentiate themselves from the others; have a great network of social contacts; are in constant evolution and change; very experimental people with major access to communication channels.

These are the key characteristics of a trendsetter, defined via the work of Vejlggaard (2008, p.56,64-65); Gomes & Francisco (2013, p.12); Lindstrom (2012, p.153); Rasquilha (2011, p.49); e Higham (2009, p.115-151). Note that this is an ideal profile of a trendsetter, reason why it should not be considered strict. The abovementioned characteristics may be used without full

use, that is, a profile where some of the mentioned points, although not all of them, may be related to a trendsetter, with other many different characteristics. This profile is merely indicative. Its usefulness will be demonstrated later, after crossing this information with the current trends data, and also with the consumer's needs related to fashion products. All of this will result in a series of elements, which will constitute the *persona* (representative of the target audience). This profile constitutes, then, an archetypical model of the brand's target, which at the end of the process, will include all the consumers' preferences.

3.2 Definition of the persona based on trends

The development and management of a brand's aspects are part of a strategic decision. For that reason, it is required an equally strategic approach to select marketplaces and develop resources for the future, instead of just focusing on the present. The brand's projection should include a customer analysis, in order to identify functional, emotional and self-expression benefits, which, ultimately, lead the consumers to purchase the brand's products. (AAKER, 2007, p.186-187).

In the present time, it is no longer effective to establish brand communication to a mass audience. (YOUNG, 2010, p.130). To build up a fashion brand that responds to the consumer's desires and needs, it is necessary that it be based on its target audience, as previously referred. In this sense, it is paramount to define and understand exactly that audience, because only through a clear understanding of its habits and preferences, it is possible to outline a specific and reliable profile.

The definition of a persona allows, then, to synthesize the characteristics of the brand's audience, in a way that those can be useful in the brand building processes, as referred by Aaker (2007, p.167-169); Vaid (2003, p.36); Kumar (2013, p.211); Mark & Pearson (2011, p.p.31-35); and Gobé (2009, p.151-153).

In this context, trends become the perfect instrument to make the conceptualization, since they reflect and describe the aspects that influence the consumer, as well as the dynamics of the resulting behaviors.

In fact, trends are an effective way of understanding the target, being able to be equivalent to a qualitative market research and, for that reason, used in the definition of the *persona*.

This kind of market research intends to know the target in its own environment, to understand its motivations and to comprehend the involving context. (MULDER & YAAR, 2007, p.41).

Trends, by the specific nature they have, based on detailed manifestations (*cool examples*), provide qualitative insights related to consumer behavior. As a result, they are a viable alternative to qualitative research, due to the fact that they show equivalent results (related to the understanding of consumer motivations and context), with a solid scientific base and a deeper framework, as explained by Rasquilha (2011, p.6); Higham (2009, p.115-151), Aaker (2007, p.145); Mark & Pearson (2011, p.35); Jarnow & Dickerson (1997, p.12) and Calderin (2009, p.18-19).

So, to define a suitable brand *persona*, there are many different approaches. In a qualitative approach, it is necessary to go through three stages that include research, public segmentation and then define the *persona*. Mulder & Yaar (2007, p.41).

In the present work, trends were used as a form of social research, serving as a background in the *persona's* definition process.

It is proposed, then, to cross the trendsetter's profile (as it is the main character of the trend dissemination process), with the current trend's information, selected according to their relevance to the fashion product, in order to define with precision and relevance the brand's *persona*.

As previously described, it follows now the choice of current trends, according to what is relevant and important to consider due to the product in the study. The use of all the current trends would become confusing

and overwhelming, due to their abundance, diversity, and scope. So, it is proposed the following:

To choose three macro trends, compatible with the fashion product's nature;

To select relevant micro trends, concerning to the consumer's behavior, that derives from the macro trends chosen previously;

Creation and description of the persona's lifestyle, based on the key points of the selected micro trends and also the trendsetter's profile

The final result should result in a *persona* with current characteristics and lifestyle, true to reality, which will be useful to a future definition of a fashion brand's DNA. We proceed now to the elaboration of all the described phases:

1 - In order to obtain a deeper knowledge about current trends, the website *TrendsObserver* will be used as the main source of information on this topic. This is an organization who researches and analyses trends in an accurate and strict way. It defends that these type of study can only be done properly if based on stable and cohesive methodologies, which allows understanding the current society's paradigm. (GOMES & FRANCISCO, 2013, p.4-6). In this sense, TrendsObserver is an organization that, contrary to other companies (who research trends for profit), base their studies on scientific and academic knowledge, the reason why it becomes a rich and viable source.

Therefore, on www.trendsobserver.com is described the "Liquid Hypermodernity", as being the paradigm that defines the present time. Now, mindsets are volatile, being affected by profound social changes. This fact is described under the term "liquid modernity" of Zygmunt Bauman (2000, p.100-106). Bauman (2000) applies this terminology referring to the fluidity of the relationships and dynamics of the contemporary world, a consequence of today's individuality and freedom of choice. There are no more strict social rules, so the paradigm becomes more volatile and, thereby, "liquid". Bauman (2000, p.98-106)

The term "hyper", for its part, is related to the current buying behaviors, described by Gilles Lipovetski

(2006, p.23-36). This author talks about the evolution of human needs, connected to abundance and consumerism, dividing historic time into the "three phases of the consumption capitalism". The first one refers to the "birth of mass markets", and it starts in XIX century's 80s, ending with the Second World War. Fase II, "Mass consumption society" is related to the distribution systems and the emergence of big sale spaces. Finally, Fase III is called "Hyper-consumption Era" and it is a time built according to "individual aims, tastes, and criteria" (LIPOVETSKY, 2006, p.23-36).

So, there is a convergence of all the aspects of our daily life, boosted by technology, which provokes fluidity. In the current paradigm there are key-points that affect different aspects of the mindsets: *empowerment* (enhanced emotions and behaviors, which translate into bigger efforts to improve the life of the individuals or groups); an ignorance culture (with more and more resources that allow accessing information and culture, paradoxically, it increases the lack of effort). The public wants a multisensory experience, which leads to, not only to observe but also to participate in the community's life.

Keeping in mind this paradigm, is it now presented a brief description of today's macrotrends, based on information from *TrendsObserver* (the following summaries do not substitute the complete reading of the descriptions of the website, and it is only intended to synthesize what was written there, in order to demonstrate its usefulness):

Experienced Narratives – Trend related to nostalgia, experiences, roots, and identities; the importance of the past to plan future experiences; Material possessions are devalued by meaningful memories and emotions;

Empowerment – the individual has the possibility to act; power to speak up, connected with the human nature; new developments and knowledge, as a result of today's information-based economy;

Balanced Self – Importance of physical and spiritual wellness, as a way to fight daily stress; the need to move away from the rushed daily routine and to relax and "disconnect";

Beautiful People – Importance of today's reference people, leaders with merit in their fields, as a reflex of the will to grow in the social context, reverence of authority figures in their areas;

Connection and Convergence – The internet has changed the world and the ergonomics of the equipment that supports it is making the frontiers between the real and the digital increasingly tenuous;

Sustainable and shared – More than environmental concerns, it is the conscience that earth resources come to an end and that a sustainable lifestyle is of major importance;

Rooted in Reality – Individuals demand more action to their politicians so that they pay attention to their needs; Expression of dissatisfaction with the current condition;

Unrestricted Human – Identity above gender; personal characteristics go beyond the sexual condition; a new expression of the human being, where a complete identity is above the physical features;

Beyond the referred macrotrends there are microtrends, more specific and relative to style, taste and consumer behavior. It follows now a brief description of some microtrends, considered to be the most relevant for this work:

Crowd Everything – a desire to belong to a group, that transcends demographic norms and established behaviors. This fact is driven by the internet and globalization. Tribes form, online and offline, with common interests and activities, even if they're not in the same geographic area;

Gamification – Gaming dynamics and techniques are applied to create connections, capable of motivating individuals. This fact makes the consumer, and the creator, to have the need to create experiences based on the gaming dynamics;

From augmented to distorted reality – In a visual world, images underline the details of daily life; a celebration of authenticity;

Cool Irreverence – Excess, and irreverence are the best way to communicate with millennials, who are used to share information and content at a quick speed;

Divergent – Before it was possible to categorize people, but now, individuals are divergent, being present in many different groups. People get interested in specific elements, and not in major ideologies, which leads them to belong to very different groups, even those who seem incompatible;

Clothing is related to identity expression. As explained previously, the act of dressing is connected to the need of belonging, being an intermediary in the social interaction processes. In addition, fashion is an important form of expression and communication, which, unlike other means, is not subject to rules of significance.

Fashion is important on a personal and social level, by its subjective and plastic nature, it can balance the need for belonging to a group with the need to express individualism, as referred by Barnard (2007, p.9); Lipovetski (1989, p.59); Simmel (1957, p.541,542); Miranda (2008, p.33); Davis (1992, p.4-18); Jarnow & Dickerson (1997, p.12); Meamber et al. (2017, p.435); Easey (2009, p.31-34).

Considering all these characteristics of the fashion product, the selected macrotrends, chosen according to their relevance for the product's nature and context, are:

Connection, Convergence & Ergonomics - (due to the fact that technology is the big mediator of today's social interactions, satisfying the constant need to socialize and connect);

Empower Me - (clothing can be used as a tool of empowerment in the expression of personal identity);

Unrestricted Human - (trend related to the expression of identity, superior to physical and gender limitations, which is mediated by clothing as a tangible demonstration of this transformation).

2 - The referred macrotrends lead to microtrends, which translate the consumer behavior. These microtrends, due to the fact that they are more specific, become more easily applicable to the persona's definition process. They are useful because they describe concrete behaviors.

So, the more relevant microtrends, selected according to their relationship with the corresponding

macrorends, are the following (described in a simplified way, to ease the analysis):

Gamification- experiences based on gaming dynamics.

Cool Irreverence- irreverence is the best way to reach the millennials;

Divergent – individuals have many diverse interests, belonging to what seemed to be, incompatible groups;

From augmented to distorted reality – images underline the importance of details.

From this selection, the key concepts of each microtrend will now be adapted to real descriptions of everyday aspects of a hypothetical trendsetter individual. This scenario description allows a concrete view of the trends, in a simpler and more realistic perspective, while at the same time allowing an approximation to the daily life of the target audience.

3 - The definition of a persona is extremely important to achieve a clear and concrete vision of the brand's target, particularly their preferences and behaviors. Based on the key points of the macro and micro-trends described above, we now construct and describe the persona/target of the brand, which will serve as an indicator for the subsequent definition of the brand DNA.

The following description also includes elements of the trendsetter's profile. This description must be very specific in order to give a real picture of a consumer with real needs, say Mulder & Yaar (2007, p.21).

Laura Pereira

Laura is 22 years old. She is practical, unfussy, fun, adventurous person but a little distracted and chatty. She works as a **movie journalist** but also has a lifestyle **blog**. Due to her job, Laura had the possibility to **travel a lot**, reason why she has a **taste for the exotic and original**. She frequently **photographs the details** that capture her attention (architecture details, food, cultural objects...), which she **shares on social media**. Laura doesn't consider herself an **online** addict, but the truth is that it becomes inevitable, because it's the best way to



Figure 1: Demonstrative image of the developed person's appearance.
Font: Site Pinterest.

keep up with everything new, in an easy and personalized way. She has **knowledge related to many different fields**. Being a journalist, and a blogger, Laura interacts with **influent** people (actors, directors, journalists...), people in fashion business (designers, fashion producers...), other bloggers (food bloggers, travel bloggers...), etc. In fact, the variety of knowledge she has is due to, not only her work but also the **social ability** she has. Her **kindness and simple manners** allow her to **socialize with anyone**, even the bartender down the street.

In what relates to her tastes, Laura is very **divergent**: loves Chinese food, but can't say no to a traditional Portuguese snack. In music, she listens to a little bit of everything, from Elvis to Green Day (she listens to what matches her humor). Despite being **curious**, she does not like to read books very much, so she prefers to get information digitally, with news or more direct articles. She also loves science fiction series, and horror and humor shows. Laura gets **easily bored**, so she never really watches any show's season until the end. For the same reason she **doesn't get easily impressed**, and what attracts her the most attention are different and irreverent styles and objects. She likes fashion because she can **express her individuality and personality**, even if that means to **wear something no one else wears** (loves to be different, although sometimes not consciously).

The person described above has several personality traits of a trendsetter, as well as tastes and preferences in accordance with the described trends (indicated in bold). This description can, further, be used in brand creation processes, as DNA's definition methodologies like the Brand DNA Process, by Gomez, & Stodieck (2013), which includes, for the DNA definition, the creation of a persona. The created persona can also be used to guide interviews and questionnaires, which will permit to select specific individuals for a targeted research or even for brand co-creation processes.

4. CONCLUSION

After the research presented, which led to the development of this article, it is possible to claim the importance of the understanding the key concepts related to Branding, Fashion, and Trends Studies, for a relevant use of those.

This fact led to the realization of the importance of an appropriate segmentation of the public for the construction of a fashion brand, which resulted in the inclusion of the Trend Studies as a tool for analyzing its audience. Trend's Studies provided a global image of the current consumer's motivations, as well as an understanding of behavioral dynamics, related to the acceptance of novelties.

This information, articulated with other related to the nature of fashion products, lead to a selection of the most important elements to understand the target audience, a fact that enables the future creation of a fashion brand completely adapted to it's public.

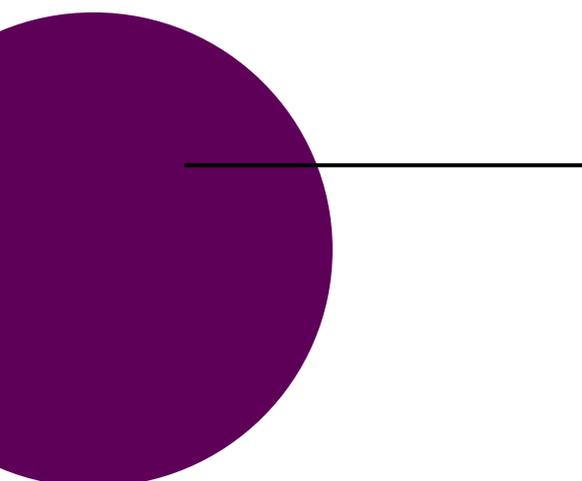
The present research leads to the definition of a *persona* called *Laura Pereira*, that shows all the characteristics and personality traits taken from the previously presented literature review, thus reflecting the ideal target for a fashion brand. The created *persona* can now be used in order to adapt products and content to the target audience, allowing to define them according to the public's image, and not the other way around.

This fact will impact the brand's content acceptance and can make a relative difference to the efficiency of branding strategies.

In short, in this project, the referred themes show the relevance of concepts from fashion and trends, as ways to understand the consumer, in branding processes.

To improve this work, would be pertinent to use the created *persona* to select a sample of individuals to participate in co-creative brand methods, or to represent

the target audience, in order to do a more systematical and in-depth study.



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