

Trends Forecasting as a Tool for Sustainable Education

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Abstract

Within the fashion industry, trends research is used to assess and express the zeitgeist, consider key drivers of change in society and gauge the current mood of people, and create products and strategies which meet society's evolving wants and needs (Dragt, 2017). However, there is a danger that within the fashion industry, trends forecasting becomes yet another tool to be used to sell people more 'stuff'. I propose that trends forecasting methodology can be re-imagined as a research tool, in order to provide a strategy for sustainable thinking and design.

This approach could inspire students of Fashion Business and Fashion to adopt global, ethical perspectives, that consider the needs of other stakeholders in the wider supply chain. By encouraging students to engage with these issues at a deeper level, trends forecasting could help create a future generation of professionals who can focus on promoting the systemic change that is required.

This project drew on an action research methodology, and a workshop and questionnaire were delivered to test this approach with a small group of interdisciplinary design students at a masterclass in India. Trends forecasting research techniques were explored and applied, in order to develop strategies for heritage, for sustainable futures. This proved successful, albeit with a small group, and I propose to further refine and develop this workshop for future projects and for larger cohorts. I will present findings and reflections of this cross-cultural experience, with suggestions for future projects and educational approaches.

Keywords: sustainability, fashion, fashion business, heritage, trends forecasting, future studies, education, India

ISBN: 978-989-54263-0-0