LORYNN DIVITA

FASHION FORECASTING

5TH EDITION

Fashion Forecasting

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Fifth Edition

LORYNN DIVITA

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

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To all the students who have heard me say in class,
"come on, guys, you know this; dig deeper . . ." keep digging.

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PREFACE

Since the new millennium, the fashion industry has undergone a complete upheaval, the likes of which could not have been predicted even 50 years ago—the advent of the Internet making entire retailers obsolete, the importance of brand names and logos trumping the attractiveness and quality of the clothing they are attached to as motivating factors for consumers, the growth of disposable fast fashion retailers that can replicate a runway look so quickly that people are tired of it before the original makes it to the designer's store, and the rise of celebrities with no discernable talent other than being themselves being held up as fashion inspirations and even designers—that would make the idea of trying to forecast fashion an impossible proposition. Even fashion designers who were on top of their game just 20 years ago are now struggling to catch up and are experimenting with new production schedules and distribution methods, such as the current industry buzzword "see now, buy now," which impact trend diffusion. When even trend sociologists such as Henrik Vejlgaard say that the speed of trends is as fast as it can possibly be, and so many trends exist simultaneously, it would be understandable that one might wonder what the point is in even trying to forecast trends.

The truth is that trends matter now as much as they ever did. Despite rapid technological change that has infiltrated every aspect of modern life, people's wants and needs have not changed. A sizeable portion of consumers still crave novelty in their wardrobes, want to convey a sense of self through their appearance, and are looking for affiliation with other people who share their sense of style and taste. With an overwhelming array of styles to choose from, in many cases the simple act of shopping can be overwhelming for consumers and they are looking for guidance. An understanding of forecasting and the flow of trends allows apparel manufacturers and retailers to continuously anticipate and fulfill their consumers' wants and needs.

Organization of the Fifth Edition

In order to keep pace with the rapidly changing fashion industry, instructors will find several changes to the structure and format of the fifth edition of *Fashion Forecasting* that will positively impact the flow and content of their course. Most noticeable will be the three new chapters found in Part Two: "Fashion Eras," "World Cultures," and "Subcultures," three of the most vital influences on new trends. By expanding the depth of content on these important topics, students will now be able to better understand how current fashion designers locate the ideas they then reinterpret for new audiences. The second major change is the addition of a new chapter in Part Three on the topic of sources of designer inspiration, "Inspiration, Theme, and Mood." This chapter complements the other new chapters by providing specific examples of how designers research

their collections through resources such as archives or vintage booksellers, and how they communicate these inspirations through non-fashion methods such as the names, music, styling, and staging of their runway shows. These new chapters are highly relevant to future fashion industry professionals.

Despite all the exciting new content, the overall length of the text has decreased through a careful editing and reorganization of content so that only the most relevant and current information has been retained, and it is presented in a more logical order. A few chapters from the previous edition have been combined and some information that was not as pertinent to the subject of fashion forecasting has been omitted, and each chapter is now the same approximate length, which makes assigning reading easier for the faculty member. With these improvements, we believe the new text is the most focused, dynamic, and applicable version to date.

A few other changes of note: an appendix entitled "Presenting the Forecast" has been created, which can be assigned at any point in the semester so that students can read and use the information while working on their final projects without first having to read all the way to the end of the textbook, or instructors having to assign chapters out of order for students to learn the content. This greatly improves the course flexibility for the instructor, as the Appendix can be read during the first or the last week of class, and students can use the information in it to be mindful of how to deliver the most effective forecasting presentation possible. Finally, the number of sections of the book has been reduced from four to three and each section now has an equal number of chapters (four). As the chapters in each section have been grouped thematically, this structure provides faculty with natural breakpoints to give students two midterm exams and a final if they so choose.

Part One, "Forecasting Frameworks," provides the student with a firm background regarding what fashion forecasting is and its role in the modern fashion industry (Chapter 1); explains the crucial factor that humans' need for novelty plays in the introduction of new styles and outlines how trends are diffused throughout a population (Chapter 2); gives a historical outline of key theoretical frameworks regarding the drive to differentiate oneself and the craving for status, which can still be observed today in modern consumer behavior (Chapter 3); and contrasts these historical perspectives with modern research methods from current trendwatchers (Chapter 4). This section retains much of the content from the previous edition, in a reorganized flow of information and with updated examples.

Part Two, "Forecasting Influences," does exactly what the title says by providing an in-depth overview of the main cultural sources for fashion inspiration, including significant eras in time (Chapter 5), world cultures (Chapter 6), youth subcultures (Chapter 7), and fine art and popular culture (Chapter 8). In each chapter, the examples are connected with current fashion so that students can understand the importance of being highly familiar with these topics and the ability to translate those sources into looks that resonate with a modern consumer.

Part Three, "Forecasting in Action," takes a highly applied look at the practical and business aspects of forecasting, including a profile of key resources for color forecasts and the most important international textile shows (Chapter 9), and the sources that designers use to determine the themes and looks for future collections, and the importance of creating a highly cohesive, communicable theme that can be effectively transmitted not only through the clothing on the runway, but through the collection name, staging, styling, and music (Chapter 10). The two final chapters look at auxiliary sources for fashion designers and merchandisers that are just as crucial as the ability to create a perfect look: sources for consumer research and demographic information (Chapter 11) and sales forecasting techniques (Chapter 12). These last two chapters could effectively be covered after students have begun working on a final project, as the information is useful, but the most relevant content to a final project is concentrated in the first ten chapters.

The Appendix, "Presenting the Forecast," is, as previously mentioned, a stand-alone chapter that can be assigned by faculty at any point in the semester for students to read and keep in mind with tips and things to avoid in order to deliver an effective forecast presentation.

Taken together, these changes have resulted in a textbook that is both informational and highly entertaining, one that draws heavily on real-life examples that students will be familiar with in order to help them learn to spot such examples independently when they observe them.

Learning Features

The fifth edition of *Fashion Forecasting* retains several learning features that were successfully added to the previous edition, while introducing an engaging new feature. "Trend Creator" profiles add significant depth to the textbook content by focusing on individuals *not* from the fashion industry who were highly influential on the direction of modern fashion but are generally underrecognized for their impact by people outside the fashion community. Each profile makes a clear connection between the signature look and style of the trend creator and directly connects them as an influence in recent fashion collections, so students can recognize the importance of having a deep and broad cultural awareness beyond their own interest and how these trend creators still impact fashion today. Returning educational features include:

- "You Be the Forecaster," a problem-solving exercise that encourages the student to implement the information from the chapter in scenarios that simulate real-world career situations;
- chapter summaries that synthesize the main topics of each chapter;
- activities at the end of each chapter that reinforce student learning through information gathering and creative application;
- discussion questions to engage student participation and an exchange of ideas.

The new "Trend Creator" feature has been added to the existing learning features, including learning objectives that clearly convey the main message and goal of each presented topic; updated images that provide engaging visual examples to support concepts; key terms and concepts at the end of each chapter and a corresponding glossary at the end of the text, which provide concise definitions of relevant terms specific to forecasting; and updated resource pointers, which give students contact information for specific companies and agencies referenced in the text. By retaining these existing learning features that have proven to be successful for educating students and adding one highly engaging and informational new feature, educators will find this to be the strongest edition of *Fashion Forecasting* yet.

Fashion Forecasting STUDiO

Fashion Forecasting STUDIO is an online multimedia resource specially developed to complement this book with rich media ancillaries that students can adapt to their visual learning styles to better master concepts and improve grades. Within the *STUDIO*, students will be able to:

- Study smarter with self-quizzes featuring scored results and personalized study tips
- Review concepts with flashcards of essential vocabulary

STUDIO access cards are offered free with new book purchases and also sold separately through Bloomsbury Fashion Central (www.BloomsburyFashionCentral.com).

Instructor Resources

- Instructor's Guide provides suggestions for planning the course and using the text in the classroom, supplemental assignments, and lecture notes
- Test Bank includes sample test questions for each chapter
- PowerPoint presentations include images from the book and provide a framework for lecture and discussion

Instructor's Resources may be accessed through Bloomsbury Fashion Central (www.BloomsburyFashionCentral.com).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I set out to revise the previous edition, I had a vision in mind and expected to encounter certain challenges, but when reading over my old manuscript, it became clear that I did not anticipate the degree of change that occurred since its publication. I understand the concept of linear time, and that change is a function of that; what I mean is when writing the fourth edition, I missed a few calls. Pop culture examples I thought would stay in students' memories now draw slow shakes of the head when I bring them up in class; entire social media platforms covered in the fourth edition are now defunct or totally irrelevant in the face of the all-powerful Instagram. To my point: the previous edition was 100 percent Jenner-free (both Kylie *and* Kendall) and yet to leave them out of this edition seems unthinkable.

But fashion is change, and I know that. Just like life is change. In the previous edition, I thanked a number of fabulous and impressive women and now two of them, Dr. Rita Purdy and Dr. Kitty Dickerson, are no longer with us. I miss you ladies and often wonder what you would do in certain situations; thanks for giving me a strong enough example that I think I usually guess right when I try. To the other women who helped me get my footing in academia: Dr. Gail Goodyear, Dr. Betty Dillard, Dr. Nancy Cassill, and Dr. Judith Lusk, I still may call or write you with questions in time, so thank you in advance.

Happily, some things do *not* change when you need stability desperately, and that was the lucky situation when the guy I have publicly referred to as "the Bernie Taupin to my Elton John," Corey Kahn, willingly signed up for a second tour of duty even though this time, he knew exactly what he was getting. Thanks and sorry for the missed deadlines, the tangents/rants, the links I made you click on, and all the photos of my kids I made you look at. And to Edie Weinberg, thanks for not just talking the talk when you wrote "with support" but for walking the walk, I appreciate it.

Thanks to my safety network of my best friend Miki Romo and my consistently supportive (for 47 years and counting) Ma and Pop. Without a doubt, the biggest change I've seen has been in my kiddos, Evan and Charlotte, who were 6 and 10 when I started the previous edition and now are the coolest 11- and 14-year-olds that I know. Your mama loves you. And finally, the biggest thank you of all goes to my husband David. Twenty years ago we had a lot more hair and less corrective eyewear between us, but somehow every change we've been through has just made life better. Thanks, everybody.

PART ONE

Forecasting Frameworks

1

Introduction to Forecasting

*As a fashion designer, I think I play a role in reflecting society
rather than in changing society.*

— **GIORGIO ARMANI**

Objectives

- **Establish the multifaceted character of fashion**

- **Analyze the trajectory of fashion change**

- **Comprehend the breadth and depth of the forecasting process**

- **Define the role of forecasting in the textile and apparel industries**

To a casual shopper, it may seem like a coincidence that they see the same fabrics, colors, patterns, and silhouettes referenced in different stores, but in fact, what is happening is the opposite of a coincidence—retailers are responding to new and emerging trends by ensuring that they have what their customers want, maybe even before the customers themselves know that they want these trends.

A **trend** is a transitory increase or decrease over time (Makridakis, 1990), and can also be described as "a shift in the prevailing thought process that eventually manifests itself in a range of popular tastes and, ultimately, consumer goods" (McMurdy, 1998). The idea of what constitutes a trend has evolved in such a way that now the emphasis is not about finding a singular look, but condensing lifestyles and mindsets into marketable concepts (Seto, 2017). Some trends last for decades, such as the continued decline in apparel expenditures as a percentage of household spending. Comparing consumer spending from 1984 to 2014, consumer spending on apparel and services declined from 6 percent to 3.3 percent while expenditures on other categories such as healthcare, housing, and entertainment rose (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). This trend in declining clothing expenditures was fuelled by retailers selling increasingly cheap clothing imported from low-wage countries. In the United States, the world's largest apparel market, 97.5 percent of clothing purchased is now imported but in 1991, it was just 43.8 percent according to the American Apparel & Footwear Association (Bain, 2015). **Forecasting** is the process of anticipating future developments by watching for signals of change in current situations and events and applying forecasting frameworks to predict possible outcomes. Forecasting seeks to identify how past trends will change and project their influence on the future.

Many times, forecasters focus on large-scale shifts in cultural indicators. These **megatrends** are trends that are so fundamental they indicate a critical restructuring of culture. Megatrends cross industry lines because they involve shifts in lifestyles, reflect changes in generational attitudes, or mirror cycles in the economy. Trends of this magnitude are felt over the period of a decade or more, from the first time that they surface to the time that they influence purchasing decisions on a mass scale. An example of a megatrend would be the rise in environmentalism (including branding products, their manufacturing processes, and packaging as sensitive to environmental concerns) as a manifestation of deep cultural changes in society.

At any stage, a trend can meet resistance, merge with another trend, be deflected in a way that changes the course of the trend, or fragment into **microtrends**, which are limited to a small, specialized group of consumers. Microtrends may take the forms of a **countertrend**—trends that contrast with the prevailing set of trends, but still offer an opportunity for a business to capitalize on the movement. Every trend has two sides—the trend and the countertrend (Popcorn, 1991). An example would be the trend of rising obesity levels, as over one-third (36.5 percent) of US adults are now considered to be obese (Ogden, et al., 2015), contrasted with the countertrend of increased popularity of fitness trackers, weight loss apps, specialized fitness classes, and workout apparel. Forecasting requires investigating both since the two sides of the trend can be interpreted for different market segments. A forecaster takes these trend dynamics into consideration and the potential exists for retailers to make a profit on both the trend and the countertrend. Trends can also be met with **backlash**, which is when a negative opinion of a trend leads to consumers refusing to adopt it and it dies out. A backlash occurred when teen and children's wear retailers began selling "micro-shorts" (also described as shortie, shorty, or short-shorts) with inseams of as little as 2.25 inches compared to inseam lengths of 4 to 5 inches for traditional shorts, and parents refused to buy them for their young girls (Chaker, 2017). In response to the backlash, tween retailers such as Justice introduced shorts that run mid-thigh length, with a 4.5-inch inseam, in addition to its Bermuda length and slightly longer short-shorts with a 3-inch inseam, so that parents would have options.

Trends also may not have clearly defined ending and beginnings (Letscher, 1994). Changes in one area have carryover or **overlap** to others. A classic example of overlap came with the adoption of the miniskirt in the mid-1960s, which resulted in an increase in pantyhose sales, from 10 percent of the market to 80 percent of the market in less than two years. With **offset** trends, one set of lifestyle changes may be congruent, another incongruent with an innovation. For example, smaller families and the

desire for a convenient shopping experience would appear to work against warehouse club and wholesale outlets, but the desire for low prices and wide selection offset these negatives. Finally, some events cause **discontinuity** in a trend so that it changes course, merges with another trend, or terminates. The event may be the introduction of a new style, a change in consumer priorities, or an economic upturn or downturn. Recognizing the event is the first step, then forecasters work out these potential interactions as part of the forecast or recalibrates the forecast as events unfold.

Characteristics of Fashion

A **fashion** is a style or a set of trends that is popular in the present and has been accepted by a wide audience. However, the concept of fashion is far more significant than that definition implies, because fashion is both a personal statement and a reflection of contemporary society that is constantly changing with psychological, sociological, cultural, and commercial aspects, each of which contributes to changes in style and taste for large groups of people.

Social and Psychological

The clothing choices people make may or may not be an expression of their personal style and individuality; what people wear frequently depends on the situation and the perceptions of others. Most people wear different clothes to their job than they do when going out on a Friday night, or to a visit with grandparents, or when just hanging around the house, and not all of them are necessarily representative of who they are as a person. Unlike a durable good like a car, people can change their clothing multiple times a day to reflect each of the different roles they play when appropriate. While many diverse motivations for dress exist, such as the need for modesty or protection, two of the main propellants of fashion are the simultaneous goals of *imitation* and *differentiation*, which is a human need to both fit in with a friend group of people who are like them, but at the same time, keep a sense of personal identity and stand out as an individual (Flugel, 1930; Simmel, 1904). Through our dress we can

attract people with whom we have things in common, such as attending the same college, and deter people with whom we disagree, such as by wearing divisive political slogans.

Popular Culture

Fashion is inextricably linked to popular culture such as movies, TV shows, and modern music, all of which influence what we wear. Critics are quick to insult popular culture for being trivial, because unlike high culture such as fine art, classical music, or great literature, popular culture seems extreme and frivolous. For the same reasons, it can be difficult for people to take fashion seriously, especially when ugly or impractical things are in style (Laver, 1937; Simmel, 1904). Although most people think that fashion is supposed to only be beautiful, that is not always the case. Balenciaga designer Christopher Kane has collaborated with the Crocs brand since spring/summer 2017 and his version of the shoes sell for around $623 (Figure 1.1), despite, as he says, the fact that "there is no getting around it, Crocs are ugly. It's a bonus that they are so comfortable, that's the whole point, that's their

Figure 1.1 The Crocs x Christopher Kane collaboration, which sell for over $600 a pair, shows that fashion is not always beautiful.

charm. I like that they're not designed to be feminine or flattering. My sister wears them in her garden" (Cook, 2017). Without debating its cultural merits, the fact is that in today's society, far more people spend their free time and extra money to consume popular culture rather than on high culture activities such as going to the symphony, so even if it seems like popular culture is superficial, it is too powerful of a cultural force to ignore.

Change

People are naturally drawn to new stimulation to hold their interest and keep from getting bored. A writer in *The New Yorker* wrote: "If clothes can not be relied on to wear out fast enough, something must be found that will wear out faster; that something is what we call fashion" (Gopnik, 1994). Wearing clothes until they wear out is socially acceptable and even gives the wearer bragging rights in some environmentalist social circles, but many people enjoy the pleasure they experience from new clothes and the novelty in new looks too much to do this with every piece of clothing they purchase.

Fashion designers respond to humans' need for change through **planned obsolescence**, which is "the production of goods with uneconomically short useful lives so that customers will have to make repeat purchases" (Bulow, 1986). While some people may think that some sort of collusion is involved among designers to somehow make people purchase new clothes before they are worn out, changes in style and taste are driven by the consumer. Most people are not satisfied with wearing the same styles for years, get tired of their clothing of their own choice and go shopping to add new styles to their wardrobes. For this to be successful, new and different products must be available to them, and designers understand this need for change and provide it to them.

One of the easiest ways to make a fashion item seem dated and obsolete is by changing its dimensions—widening or narrowing a lapel or a collar, or raising or lowering a hemline. In its October 2016 catalog, J.Crew made the following statement: "We widened our ties by 1/4" to keep up with today's changing proportions," signaling to their customer that the current style for men's ties, which had been steadily narrowing since the end of the 2000s, was about to change (Patterson, 2016).

In addition to this need for newness, people also are influenced by the spirit of the times, the desire for historical continuity, or the desire for something that has a connection to the past (Blumer, 1969; Simmel, 1904). Festival fashion is a perfect example; when music festivals like Coachella in California and Glastonbury became popular again with young people in the early 2000s, a "new" category of fashion was born. Except this new category directly referenced the original music festival, Woodstock with its Bohemian influences that were reinterpreted for a modern audience.

Universality

Participating in the fashion process is not restricted to any era in history or group or nationality. Fashion is the natural outcome of markets and consumers' need for personal expression, as history shows us repeatedly. By the mid-fifteenth century, the French duchy of Burgundy became the center of fashion for many reasons. It was a crossroads of international trade with exposure to foreign styles. It had the beginnings of a fashion trade in materials, ideas, and artisans, and the members of the court desired to display wealth through elaborate costumes. Finally, Burgundy had a new style made visible by its duke and duchess. The style—a long, lean silhouette in black cloth with fur—was copied by aristocrats from other parts of Europe, establishing fashion as part of the lifestyle of the elite (Rubinstein, 2001). We see this same imitation of the royal family of England today, and many celebrities have a global fashion influence.

Transfer of Meaning

Fashion is a form of communication, and how we dress sends visible signals about who we are. Frequently, there is a meaning behind the message we are sending. Designers, marketers, and the fashion press transfer these meanings to a consumer product and increase its visibility. Researcher Grant McCracken has identified nine different types of meanings that companies may use to attract customers. These include gender, lifestyle, decade, age, class and status, occupation, time and place, value, and fad, fashion, and trend. The consumer collects meaning out of the marketplace in the form of goods and

constructs his or her own personal world (McCracken, 1988b). Some meanings are rejected initially because they may seem too radical at first, but are then embraced later, and some meanings are recycled over and over. Fashion plays a constant role in the evolving cultural environment. As Georg Simmel said at the beginning of the twentieth century, "The very character of fashion demands that it should be exercised at one time only by a portion of the given group, the great majority being merely on the road to adopting it" (Simmel, 1904, p. 138).

Economic Stimulus

Fashion is an economic force. Although it is difficult to chart because of its fragmented nature, the fashion industry is estimated to be worth $2.4 trillion in total value and is one of the largest and most value-creating industries in the world, ranking higher than media, transportation, and even commercial and professional services ("The State of Fashion," 2016). Creating fashion goods requires the ability to combine creativity and marketability in the same product—that is, mass-produced fashion is the product of negotiation within and between the segments of the fashion industry, such as designers and merchandisers (Davis, 1991).

Gender Differences

Where apparel is concerned, men and women have not been playing on the same field. The modern men's suit began its evolution with a move away from decoration in the late 1780s during the post–French Revolution period. A split arose between the design and the manufacturing modes of men's and women's clothing beginning around 1820. By the mid-1800s, the prototype of the modern men's suit—matching pieces, a sack coat, simple and undecorated, designed for ease and action—had evolved. Women's clothes continued as colorful, ornamented, and restrictive (Hollander, 1994).

Men had rejected the social distinctiveness of dress in favor of "occupational" clothing with similarity in cut, proportion, and design (Flugel, 1930). Women, in a relatively weaker social position than men, used fashion as a means by which they could vent their "individual prominence" and "personal conspicuousness" (Simmel, 1904). The difference in functionality between men's and women's dress can be summed up with the rise in the popularity of pockets. Women had long expressed a desire for pockets in their clothing, when Charlotte P. Gilman wrote for the *New York Times* in 1905, "One supremacy there is in men's clothing . . . its adaptation to pockets. Women have from time to time carried bags, sometimes sewn in, sometimes tied on, sometimes brandished in the hand, but a bag is not a pocket." As the women's suffragette movement in the United States gained traction, the *New York Times* in 1910 noted that as they fought for the right to vote, the distinctive white clothing the women wore (Figure 1.2) had an important detail with the headline "Plenty of Pockets in Suffragette Suit" (Summers, 2016).

By the 1930s, fashion commentators were seeing a change—the breakdown of social hierarchies and the "ever-increasing socialization of women" (Flugel, 1930; Laver, 1937). These commentators began asking if the changes in the lifestyle and economic status of women would lead to the same reduction in clothes competition that had occurred among men. Today, pantsuits for women are totally acceptable in the office or at a formal event, clothes competition still exists to a degree, but just as the advent of pockets in women's clothing brought greater utility to women's dress, fashion's future may further narrow the bridge between the sexes. This time it will be through design, with men having more access to color, ornament, and self-expression and women having less reliance on extraneous accessories, painful footwear, and constricting styles.

Figure 1.2 Suffragettes' distinctive white suits worn when protesting for the right to vote had a revolutionary feature: pockets.

Fads and Classics

Fashions are of short duration when compared to long-term social changes, while a **fad** is a trend of even shorter duration that is introduced, gains rapid visibility and acceptance among a relatively small contingent of consumers, and fades quickly because it is not supported by corresponding lifestyle changes. Fads have been defined in different ways:

- as involving fewer people, of shorter duration, and more personal than other fashion changes (Sapir, 1931);
- as outside historical continuity—each springing up independently with no forerunner and no successor (Blumer, 1969);
- as satisfying only one main need, the need for a new experience, and having little value after the newness wears off (Wasson, 1968).

Fashion and fads share many of the same characteristics. Meyersohn and Katz (1957) offer a comprehensive natural history of fads, identifying these distinctive characteristics:

- Fads are typically confined to particular segments in society.
- Unlike new social movements that create a new social structure, fads move swiftly through a subgroup but leave the subgroup itself stable.
- Fads offer a simple substitution for some predecessor item.
- Fads are trivial, not in terms of the emotional or functional significance of the item, but in terms of its life expectancy—a fad is susceptible to being outmoded.

Meyersohn and Katz (1957) assert that fads are not born but rediscovered from a style that existed all along in the lives of some subgroup. Likely beginning points for fads include the upper classes and bohemians because these groups represent a special kind of laboratory where experimentation can take place without threatening society as a whole. Many other observers of fashion recognize the same source for fashion ideas—the elite and the outsiders.

By contrast, a **classic** is an item or style that is introduced, gains visibility, generates multiple purchases or replacement purchases, and reaches a plateau level of widespread acceptance that endures for a long period of time with only minimal changes. Jeans are an example of a classic in that they have been popular for decades, but have had slight design changes through the years such as raising and lowering the height of the waist, widening and narrowing the ankle circumference, and different washes and finishes to inspire multiple purchases. Classics represent midpoint compromises that deliver the core attributes desirable to a consumer within the acceptable range in terms of attributes offered and expenditure in terms of time and money (Wasson, 1968). Additionally, classics appeal to a special kind of personality seeking to avoid extremes in styling. The difference between fads, fashions, and classics can be depicted using variations on the diffusion curve (Figure 1.3).

Brands can make money off both fads and classics, provided they can distinguish between them early on and determine entrance and exit strategies (Letscher, 1994). A trend is supported by multiple lifestyle changes, presents clear long-term benefits to the consumer, and parallels changes in other areas. The more adaptable an innovation is, the more likely it will be a trend, because it can be modified for broader audiences. A trend is a basic theme in society (e.g., the popularity of mindfulness). It can be expressed in many ways (e.g., wearing yoga pants as casualwear instead of denim). If the innovation is more unidimensional, it is more likely a fad.

Cool Versus Mainstream

Spotting trends is not a challenge for people who stay current with popular culture and national and international news. Forecasters identify emerging trends by becoming sensitive to directional signals that others miss, and from an ability to connect seemingly unrelated events as a part of a larger cultural movement. Forecasters may vary in the methods they use, but all are looking for signs that help them predict the mood, behavior, and buying habits of the consumer. Because trends signal the emerging needs, wants, and aspirations of the consumer, astute manufacturers and retailers want to be among the first to meet consumers' needs so that they can gain sales and profits.

As Isham Sardouk, chief creative officer of Stylesight, says, "We are always hunting for what's cool, and that could be anything—a color, a song, a pair of sneakers,
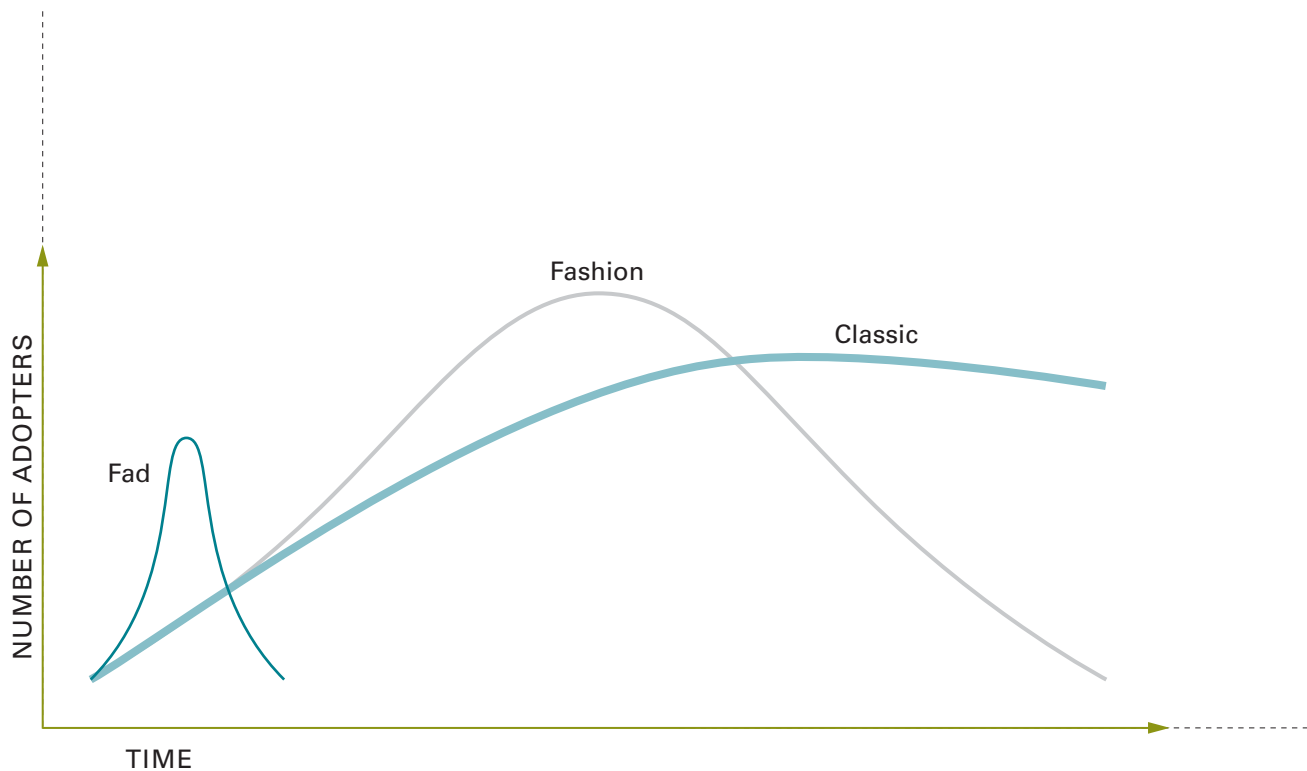
Figure 1.3 Short-lived fads versus classic clothes that stay in style for longer periods can be graphed to observe their popularity and duration.

or a piece of art" (Grimberg, 2013). The whole idea of coolness is central to forecasting, but there are different kinds of cool. One definition of **cool** can be described as a set of common meanings within a peer group that signifies group affiliation (Runyan, Noh, & Mosier, 2013), and what is considered cool varies between groups and changes with time. Being a trendsetter who is always one step ahead of popular fashion is one type of coolness, and the researchers Collier and Fuller (1990) believe that cool style falls approximately 12 to 18 months ahead of **mainstream** (the majority of all consumers) style. Another way to view coolness is that it typically signifies rebellion, and one of the biggest powers to rebel against is consumerism—by being defiantly antifashion.

Fashion leaders are often considered to be rebels, but it is understood that once the fashions they wear that are considered rebellious are duplicated and mass produced by the fashion industry, they cease to be cool. In the late sixties, loose-fitting and ethnic styles were extremely popular among hippies because they were inexpensive and colorful while communicating to the world their spiritualism and rejection of Western consumerism. Soon

after hippies embraced the kaftan (or caftan), a unisex, loosely cut, floor-length garment made of cotton, wool, or silk that was based on African and Arabic tribal wear, young fashion designers with an eye for street style such as Ossie Clark and Thea Porter began creating their own interpretations of kaftans and other articles of clothing popularized by the hippies (Figure 1.4) (Powe-Temperley, 1999). Finally, couture designers such as Yves Saint Laurent showed Eastern-influenced styles on high fashion runways. Yves Saint Laurent was credited with making "the kaftan almost as common a sight in Manhattan as it was in Oran" (Kelso, 2002), at which point it had lost its coolness among young people. Brownie (2014) sums up these two viewpoints by stating that there are two kinds of cool: either keeping up with the latest fashions, or shunning the fashion system altogether. The challenge for apparel designers and retailers is to predict which cool style people will be wearing next, which then forces the cool people to adopt new styles, and the cycle repeats itself.

Forecasting is a creative and analytic process that can be applied by anyone who has been introduced to the core concepts. A forecaster does not operate solely by intuition

Figure 1.4 The kaftan was an example of ethnic dress that was popular with the hippies and went on to be interpreted by high fashion designers.

or trial and error, but by knowledge of consumer behavior theories and practice in the field. As Sarah Owen of WGSN puts it, "To me it's connecting the dots. It's pattern recognition. It's taking those cues and pairing that with that data that will kind of inform the future. Or create it. That's our tagline" (Trufleman, 2016). Forecasting provides a way for designers and merchandisers to expand their thinking about change, anticipate the future, and project the likely outcomes (Levenbach & Cleary, 1981).

Trend Forecasting in Practice

Trend forecasters locate the source of trends, then use their skill and knowledge to make connections between them and identify emerging concepts that they share with product developers, marketers, and the press, inspiring them to create new styles and fashions that are responsive to the needs of contemporary consumers. The result is a continuous flow of products with new styling, novel decoration, and innovative uses. Saks Fifth Avenue fashion director Jaqui Lividini uses the services of forecasters combined with her own staff's predictions to anticipate her shoppers' preferences. "You want to have what she wants before she knows she wants it. If you're behind her, you've lost her. If you're in step, she's not excited. We try to be one step ahead. If you're two steps ahead, she's not interested in it" (Blair, 2003).

Trend forecasters work in many kinds of firms—for designers, advertising agencies, fiber producers, trade organizations, retail chains, and apparel brands. They frequently work in trend analysis firms that consult with companies in apparel, cosmetics, and interior design, with job titles that range from Manager of Trend Merchandising to Creative Director, and their backgrounds are varied ("The Next Files," 2003).

- Roseann Forde, Fordecasting. Forde studied to be a buyer, but found her calling when she became the manager of a fabric library. She was Global Fashion Director for INVISTA (formerly DuPont) for a decade before starting her own trend forecasting agency.
- Andrea Bell, editor of retail and consumer research at WGSN. Andrea started her career in fashion journalism, and has had work featured in *Elle*, *Maxim*, and *The Hollywood Report*. Based in Los Angeles, her position at WGSN involves communicating retail and market intelligence for the United States (Henken, 2014).

One thing all forecasters have in common is frequent travel. Forde makes quarterly trips to London, Paris, and Milan. For Bell,

> My role is part-social anthropologist, part-researcher, and part-forecaster, with lots of travel and airport dinners involved. Despite airplane cuisine, I'm very fortunate to have the opportunity to travel for my work. Whether it's covering fashion weeks in Peru or Brazil, attending conferences in San Francisco, Honolulu, Park City, and Las Vegas (seriously, I'm in Sin City quarterly), or visiting our corporate office in London – I can't complain.
>
> (Wang, 2014)

Today, finding trends requires looking worldwide for leads and then analyzing their market potential (Zimmerman, 2008). Each trend firm has its own distinctive approach (Loyer, 2002). Compare how two Paris firms characterize their mission on their websites:

- Nelly Rodi looks for "new consumer behavior patterns" and applies "creative intuition" to shape insights for clients.
- Peclers Paris analyzes trend evolution from inception to confirmation and serves as "innovation catalysts" for clients.

Trend analysis firms publish books to illustrate their forecasts about 18 months ahead of the fashion season. The books include color chips, textile samples, fashion sketches, and photographs to illustrate trends. Trend books are supplemented with websites offering video, photographs, downloadable sketches, color swatches, print and fabric designs, and software tools. These subscription-only, business-to-business sites provide real-time trend forecasting. Forecasting websites have replaced much of the work formerly done by fashion scouts, although some firms still use internal fashion scouts who travel the world to find fashion inspiration (Miller, 2008).

Not all forecasters live in a fashion capital; many retailers and manufacturers employ forecasters in their own corporate offices, close to buying and product development teams. By traveling to fashion centers, covering trade shows, seeking out emerging retail concepts, and tracking consumer behavior, forecasters bring inspiration and direction back to their employers that have a fashion-based strategy and help them implement it in an appropriate way for their own consumer.

Abstracting, Analysis, and Synthesis

The job responsibilities for an experienced forecaster may include (Schweiss-Hankins, 1998):

- travel to Europe to shop key cities, attend international trade shows, and purchase samples—two to four trips per year;

- travel to trade shows in cities around the United States—six to eight per year;
- travel to attend fabric previews and markets—two to four per year;
- purchase trend predictions and color services—four to ten per year;
- subscribe to fashion magazines and trade journals to stay up to date on trends and industry news;
- attend presentations by fabric mills and other key suppliers;
- attend meetings of professional organizations such as color forecasting groups.

The purpose of all this activity is to organize observations, present findings, and suggest ways to implement these ideas into merchandise targeted toward the customer.

Forecasters sift through information using a process called **abstracting**, which consists of identifying underlying similarities (or differences) across ensembles and design collections (Fiore & Kimle, 1997). The differences and similarities are frequently expressed as:

- the *totality of the look*—minimalist versus extravagant, feminine versus masculine, sexy versus refined;
- the *theme or mood*—survivalist versus gothic romanticism;
- a *swing* in fashion's pendulum—from flared to narrower legs, from functional to frilly;
- the *proportions* of the apparel pieces—hem length or in-seam length for pants, placement of the waistline, width or fullness of the garments;
- the *silhouette*—tubular shift, hourglass, blouson, or wedge;
- the *point of emphasis*—shoulders, bust, waist, derrière, or legs;
- the *fit*—body hugging, body skimming, body conscious, or loose;
- a *specific detail*—collar, pocket, lapel, waistband treatment, sleeve, or cuff;
- *exaggeration in the details*—the size, shape, color, texture, or pattern at the neckline or hem or on the collar, pockets, or belt;
- a *specific trim*—beading, embroidery, appliqué, lace, or cording;
- a *specific finding*—buttons, zipper, or snaps;

- a *fabric type*—woven or knit, napped, or metallic;
- the *fabric finishing*—gradation in color dyeing, slashing, or abrading;
- a *specific fabric*—transparent fabrics, velvet, or jersey;
- a *color story*—the rise of a dominant color scheme, a shift in mood, or a narrative that ties together the color trends.

The trend may be reported within a product category—dresses or suits—or across categories.

The ability to recognize similarities between garments and between collections is useful in many fashion careers (Fiore & Kimle, 1997):

- Designers, product developers, and buyers abstract across the garments in a group and the groups in a collection so that a visual theme or aesthetic connects the items.
- Sales representatives and marketing executives abstract across the product line to recognize points to be emphasized in selling the line.
- Fashion journalists abstract across multiple collections to identify patterns in the seasonal offerings and visual and symbolic core concepts that can be translated into editorial features.
- Forecasters abstract across multiple collections and across time to identify patterns that indicate fashion change and direction.

Analysis and synthesis are the two faces of forecasting. In **analysis**, a phenomenon is dissected to achieve a more complete understanding of its components. **Synthesis** is a creative reintegration of the parts. In fashion forecasting that means:

- an accurate reading of the trend in all its subtle aspects;
- matching the trend with the consumer profiles most likely to adopt it initially;
- matching the trend with the product category, price point, and retail concept most likely to complement it.

Finally, the forecaster hypothesizes about what it will take to energize and accelerate the flow of the trend across consumer segments.

Trend Reporting

Fashion forecasting is a valuable resource used in planning for product development, merchandising, marketing, and retailing. A fashion forecaster identifies, develops, and presents fashion directions in fabrics, colors, and styles and puts them into the context of the culture and lifestyles of the consumer. Forecasters explain what is happening, why the trend is developing, and who is leading the trend. Trend reporting helps fashion industry members interpret fashion change by relating new directions to brand or store strategy. A trend report describes the basic elements of the trend:

- *fabric*—fiber content, functional attributes, texture, pattern;
- *color*—hue, value, intensity, color schemes;
- *silhouette*—shape of the garment, hemline, coordinating elements of the total ensemble;
- *details* and *design features*;
- *variances* in fit, proportion, and coordination.

The description may also include attributes such as the size category (juniors, misses, plus size, petites), price category (designer, bridge, better, moderate), and the season (fall/winter, spring/summer, cruise).

Trend Map

Describing the trend is only the first step in trend reporting. The forecaster must also provide a **trend map** detailing the stage in development and probable importance of each trend. The trend map identifies which trends are just emerging, continuing to build, or declining. Trend maps enable better merchandising decisions, such as how to best adapt trends from a runway to an acceptable level of novelty for a mainstream target market. Trend maps help determine when a trend enters the decline phase so that retailers can stop buying additional styles and start clearing out merchandise associated with declining trends. Identification of emerging trends represents an opportunity to test the potential product and get in on the ground floor of "the next big thing."

KATHLEEN CLEAVER

In the fashion world, celebrities frequently introduce new trends to a global audience and their role is extremely important. But forecasters know that they can't merely watch celebrities to know what is coming next, instead they must look to the original source of the trend. A **trend creator** is someone who is very innovative and inventive and creates the new styles and tastes adopted by the trendsetters, who then bring the trend to the attention of the mainstream and popularize it. Trend creators are not a homogenous group, but they are responsible for creating or doing something that one day may represent a trend even if they do not receive the recognition for it (Vejlgaard, 2008).

When the May 2016 issue of *Marie Claire* magazine hit the stands, readers were advised to seek fashion inspiration for the upcoming season from what was a seemingly unlikely style icon: Kathleen Cleaver. Ms. Cleaver was not a fashion designer, or a movie star or even someone associated with the fashion industry. She was a Black Panther party member and activist in the 1960s and is a current law professor. Although it might not be immediately apparent, Kathleen's role as a modern fashion influencer almost 50 years after her heyday in activism was part of a larger societal trend that was evident to forecasters. Just two months prior, on February 7, 2016, Beyoncé was the featured performer at the halftime of the Super Bowl and the costumes for her background dancers deliberately referenced the signature look of members of the Black Panther party from the 1960s—all black attire, leather, turtlenecks, and berets (Figures 1.5a and b).

Then, on February 16, 2016, PBS' Independent Lens documentary *The Black Panthers: Vanguards of the Revolution* premiered. In it, a young Kathleen talked about the conscious choice of members to

Figure 1.5 The signature Black Panther party uniform of black leather jackets and berets (a) was referenced by Beyoncé in her 2016 Super Bowl halftime show (b) and the Dior fall/winter 2017 collection (c).

wear their hair in an afro style. After the Super Bowl, references to the style of the Black Panther party were continually referenced in the media, including an article in the online publication High Snobbery entitled "How the Black Panthers Influenced Today's Music and Fashion." This and articles like this brought more attention to their signature look, while influential celebrities such as football player Colin Kaepernick adopted elements of Black Panther Party dress in press conferences, introducing it to people who were not familiar with the origins. All of these influences combined inspired designers to incorporate elements of the Black Panther Party in their collections. The fall 2017 Dior collection included all-black ensembles with leather jackets and berets.

Sometimes a trend can even get a boost from events that don't relate to it. The comic book character Black Panther was first introduced in July 1966, five months before the founding of the Black Panther party, but the two entities were not related, although the character and party members held some of same beliefs (Khal,

2018). Even though there was no direct connection, the phenomenal success of the superhero movie *Black Panther* released in February 2018 led to a surge of interest in the party through articles like "6 Movies About the Real Black Panthers to Watch After 'Black Panther,'" which introduced even more people to their distinctive look.

By knowing how to identify a trend creator, forecasters can quickly make cultural connections that others miss, and anticipate a trend's popularity before the mainstream adopts it.

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Interactions with Other Product Categories

It is important for the trend map to establish the cause-and-effect relationship between a trend in one product category and other related product categories. For example:

- skirt length and pants styles influence shoe design and height of heels;
- style and design of ready-to-wear clothing influence hosiery and undergarments;
- outerwear coordinates with the style and fit of dressy and casual looks;
- the structure and fit of apparel relates to the styling of innerwear and vice versa;
- accessory stories closely parallel the fashion story, tapping into the same design inspiration;
- makeup and hairstyles coordinate with apparel styles.

Estimating the Relative Strength of Trends

Based on an understanding of the marketplace and fashion dynamics, the forecaster estimates the **timing** of a trend—how soon the trend will "hit," and how long it will continue. As Li Edelkoort, forecaster for Trend Union in Paris, explains, "Trends are meant to have a sense of timing. If you bring them in too early, people just won't get them" (Horton, 2003). In addition to timing, the forecaster must estimate the **scope** of a trend—how important a trend will be, and how broad an impact it will have on markets. Recommendations indicate the relative strength of various trends and the kind of investment in product development and merchandising that they merit (Perna, 1987).

Environmental Scanning

Forecasting is more than just attending runway shows and picking out potential trends that can be reinterpreted at lower prices, although that is a primary job function. It is a process that tracks shifts in color and style preferences, changes in lifestyles and buying patterns, and different ways of showing and selling merchandise. What may look like random changes in styles is in fact a continual action-and-reaction process between the fashion industry and the consumer, and among the various segments in the supply-side chain.

One challenge that people in the fashion industry are subject to is that as they develop a specialty, their view of information becomes limited based on their knowledge of their product category. By focusing exclusively on their specialty categories such as "women's knit tops" or "junior dresses," fashion industry members tend to restrict themselves to only a narrow scan of information generated within a specialty or within an industry segment. In doing so, they risk developing tunnel vision by focusing on information internal to the company and industry to the exclusion of the broader cultural perspective. Tunnel vision reduces the flexibility that is so essential for decision making under conditions of rapid change.

Even though they become experts in an information domain bounded by their placement on the supply chain, product category, or job description, all designers and merchandisers share the same problem—how to make the right product, introduce it at the right time, distribute it in the right channels, and capture the attention of the right consumers. Collaborative forecasting within a company and among companies in partnership encourages communication and for more cohesive planning.

Strategic decisions in the apparel and retail industry are supported by past experience—fashion history, sales history, and traditional ways of doing business. To keep their balance, fashion industry members need to be aware of what is going on in the world, including new innovations, cultural change, and alternative ways to do business. **Environmental scanning** is a method of systematically tracking and analysing trends using media sources (Figure 1.6). Forecasters are constantly seeking useful external information when they scan a daily newspaper, watch TV news, listen to the radio while commuting to work, chat with people at a dinner party, and log on to the Internet.
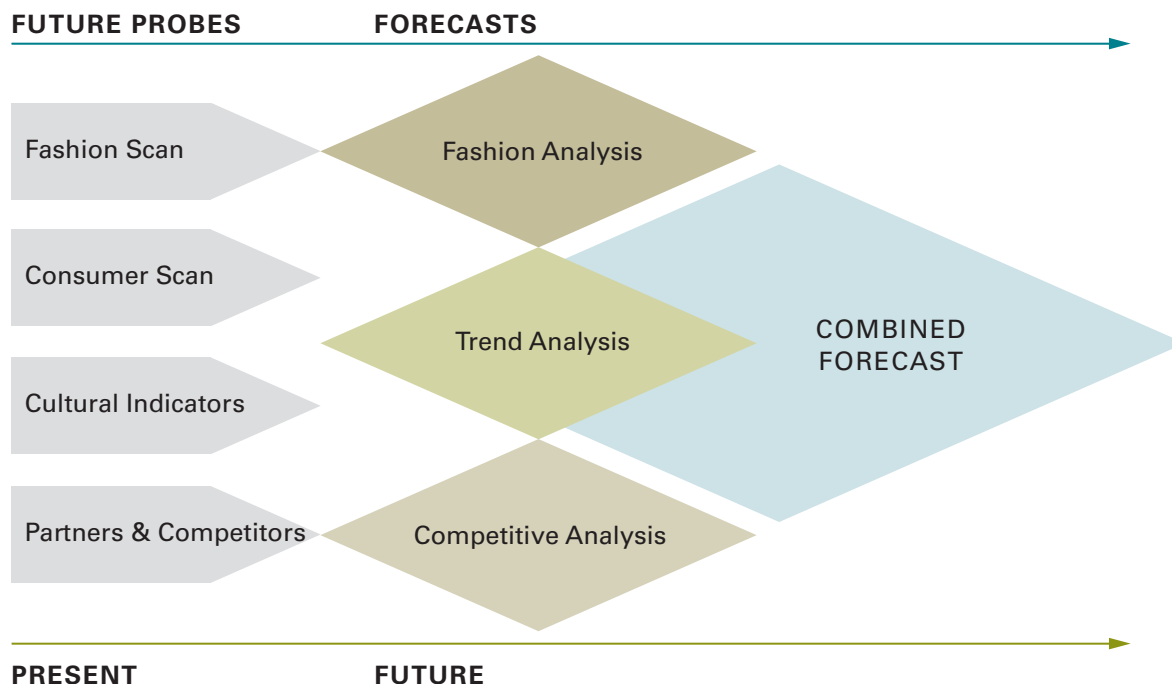
Figure 1.6 Fashion forecasting requires a balanced view that seeks out the newest styles breaking on the cultural edge (fashion scan), shifts in the cultural environment (trend analysis), and marketing climate (competitive analysis).

Fashion Scan

Fashion professionals eagerly follow the latest fashion news to spot emerging fashion and lifestyle trends. Environmental scanning for trends includes:

- traveling to the fashion capitals (New York, Paris, Milan, and London) and to other trendsetting spots including major events like music festivals such as Coachella;
- scanning print, broadcast, and online sources, especially social media;
- networking with people in creative fields such as the arts, architecture, interior design, cosmetics, and entertainment.

Supplementing the individual's effort, forecasters and trend analysis firms gather information and present summaries in trend books, newsletters, and seminars.

Consumer Scan

Consulting firms, market research organizations, advertising agencies, the government, and individual companies are constantly conducting consumer research. Whereas this research usually belongs to the organization that funded it, summaries are often available in trade publications or other print, broadcast, and online sources. Journalists, sociologists, psychologists, and others write about their observations of consumer culture and hypothesize about its underlying structure. Locating these sources using environmental scanning helps the apparel executive to identify shifts in consumer lifestyles, preferences, and behavior that impact store design, merchandise assortments, and fashion promotion.

Fashion Analysis

Combined, the fashion scan and consumer scan provide input for fashion analysis—what is likely to happen next. Fashion is really a dialogue among the creative industries—fashion, interior design, the arts, and entertainment—that propose innovations and consumers who decide what to adopt or reject. As one forecaster put it, "Nothing will succeed in fashion if the public is not ready for it" (O'Neill, 1989). Fashion analysis brings together the expertise of a fashion insider and insights

on consumer behavior to provide support for executive decisions in the supply chain, from fiber to fabric to apparel manufacturing to retailing.

Social and Economic Trends

The fashion story is part of larger shifts in the culture, including the fragmentation of the marketplace. Fashion forecasting requires a wide scan to encompass cultural, economic, and technology issues that have an impact on consumer preferences and spending. Some forecasters and forecasting firms focus on large-scale shifts in cultural indicators. These are the megatrends that cross industry lines because they involve shifts in lifestyles, reflect changes among generations, or mirror cycles in the economy.

The most important economic trend is consumer spending. After the recession began in 2008, consumers modified their spending habits and lifestyles. According to a study by Pew Research, in order to make ends meet, consumers bought less expensive brands, cut back or canceled vacation plans, cut back on alcohol or cigarette consumption, or moved back in with their parents. Forecaster John Zogby took this economic necessity and combined it with his observation that people were expressing a preference for a simpler, yet more meaningful lifestyle. Based on this hard data together with his observation, Zogby named this trend *secular spiritualism*—"a broader wish for a simpler life that includes hobbies, volunteering and, perhaps most important, finding that elusive 'quality time' with family and friends" (Zogby, 2008). For the fashion industry and related categories such as interiors and automobile styling, monitoring these cultural indicators is essential for strategic planning and to provide a backdrop to short-term forecasts. Environmental scanning allows any executive to monitor cultural indicators that alter the business environment and change consumers' purchasing behavior.

Trend Analysis

Drawing on fashion and consumer scans, and on identification of social and economic trends, trend analysis detects short- and long-term trends that affect business prospects. Trends start as experiments, self-expression, and reactions to changing circumstances. Many vanish almost

You Be the Forecaster
STAYING ONE STEP AHEAD OF CHANGE

Taylor is a product developer for a moderately priced junior denim line that is sold at department stores. The styles her brand has been offering for the past few seasons are still selling well with their customers, but they are starting to seem boring to Taylor, and she and the design team feel that a shift in consumer tastes is right around the corner. Before Taylor and the design team take their line in a new direction, they need to be confident that their designs for next season are going to align with what their **target market**—a segment of the population more likely than others to be attracted to the tangible and intangible attributes of a product, company image, or service—will want, or even inspire their customers to make a fashion change they didn't know they wanted. In order to know if their instincts are correct, they are going to need to spend time looking around at what is going on in other fashion categories, in other consumer categories, and in society at large.

Fashion industry members are always looking at the world around them in terms of how any shift in culture and society will impact their target market's future preferences. How would Taylor and her team use the different concepts outlined in this chapter to best appeal to their customers?

Target Markets: Choose three retailers with distinct target markets. Describe the kind of customer you think would be likely to shop at each. What types of social and economic trends would influence their likelihood to shop at each retailer? How could Taylor apply this process to her company's own junior denim line?

Forecasting Specialties: What are some sources Taylor could use to conduct an environmental scan that is relevant to her product category and target market? What social and economic trends might impact her target market's purchase habits?

as soon as they are created but some gain adopters and gain popularity. The popularity of a trend can be assisted if it is embraced by a fashion **gatekeeper,** a person or group that filters the innovative ideas proposed by designers and street fashion and determines which will be disseminated widely and which will be discarded. The gatekeeper role is held today by journalists, manufacturers, retailers, and new media influencers on platforms such as Instagram, and with their promotion, the trends start to appear in media coverage. Trend analysis looks at the interaction of shifts in fashion, consumer lifestyles, and culture.

Competitive Analysis

Space in stores is limited, and apparel competes for consumers' attention and dollars with many other alternatives, including electronics and entertainment. To be competitive in such a business environment, companies must observe competing firms through regular tracking of key information. Over time this effort allows a company to benchmark its activities against competitors and to

develop "what if" scenarios about competitor initiatives. Whether it is called competitive analysis, competitive information, or competitive intelligence, business survival and growth depends on using public sources to monitor the business activities of partners and competitors. New businesses depend on this kind of information in the start-up stage; established businesses use it to help them scout out new markets; and large corporations treat it as input for senior managers coordinating activities across markets and product lines.

Integrated Forecasting

No company should rely too heavily on a single forecasting discipline or on an individual forecaster because no one person can possibly locate and interpret all the signs and signals across multiple time horizons. A team approach to forecasting means continuous information sharing between functional groups with the goal of increasing the quality of the forecast. Romney Jacob, WGSN forecaster, explains:

People think trend forecasting is plucking trends right out of the air, but it's much more objective. The entire team of content editors and freelancers that contribute to the site meet twice a year. Everyone delivers a presentation on their region and focus area. What are the stores that are opening, how are people dressing on the street, what are the new apps everyone's obsessed with? WGSN's whole approach is that we have a broad reach, we're truly a global agency.

(Abrams, 2016)

The best forecasts blend observational and analytical components, the wide view of cultural indicators and the close focus of sales forecasting, and short-range and long-range timescales. Interpretations must be keyed to specific consumer segments and a competitive niche. Strategies that work for teens experimenting with identity and style, those that work for mainstream working people, and those for active retirees are very different. Change produces different effects according to the target consumer and the industry segment.

Every product developer, merchandiser, marketer, and designer is also a forecaster, because they all make decisions about an uncertain future with incomplete information. In companies today, forecasting must be a team effort, with information shared between design, merchandising, marketing, sales, and promotion, so that the right product gets produced and distributed at the right time to a target consumer. In the world of fashion, improving the success rate of new merchandise, line extensions, and retailing concepts by only a few percentage points more than justifies the investment of time and money in forecasting. Fashion forecasters believe that by keeping up with the media, analyzing shifts in the culture, interviewing consumers, and dissecting fashion change they can spot trends before those trends take hold in the marketplace. By anticipating these changes, forecasters allow companies to position their products and fine-tune their marketing to take advantage of new opportunities. Major companies are becoming more and more dependent on this kind of forecasting because traditional forms of purely quantitative forecasting are less applicable to an increasingly volatile and fragmented marketplace.

Forecasting in the Textile and Apparel Industries

Forecasters translate ambiguous and conflicting signals to provide support for business decisions. Although they work with textile fabrications, colors, and styles, their real job is to predict the preferences of consumers in the future. Forecasters work at all stages of the textile/apparel supply chain and on timelines that vary from a few months in advance of the sales season to ten years ahead of it. Each type of forecast and timeline has its place in providing decision support.

Fast Fashion

One of the most significant innovations in retailing has been the rapid rise of **fast fashion**, or practices employed by several large global retailers in which merchandise assortments are adapted to "current and emerging trends as quickly as possible" (Sull & Turconi, 2008). Forever 21, H&M, and Zara are all examples of fast fashion retailers, and even they need a picture of what consumers will see as new and exciting, which fashion forecasting provides. The turnaround for fast fashion has become even faster for regional companies such as British retailer Missguided, a company that makes about half of the clothing it sells in its British-based stores in England.

I like to say we're the quickest. If [the high street] are fast fashion, we're rapid fashion. We update our site once a day with new stock, but in my eyes we should be updating it every hour. If a trend comes, we need to have it on our site in under a week.

(Cocozza, 2015)

Whereas fast fashion may meet the needs and interests of some consumers, it cannot cater to all consumer segments, tastes, or price points. Most companies will continue to operate on a longer product development cycle. Fashion forecasting coordinates the efforts of fiber producers, yarn manufacturers, fabric and print houses, apparel manufacturers, and retailers.

Short-Term Forecasting

Short-term forecasting involves periodic monitoring of the long-term vision and revisions as circumstances dictate; it acts to coordinate the operations of a company within the context of the industry and the marketplace. Forecasting keeps the momentum going because it forces a perspective of the future on the day-to-day business decisions. The short-term forecasting process begins two to three years before the arrival of merchandise in the retail store. This allows the segments of the textile/apparel pipeline to coordinate seasonal goods around looks that can be communicated to the customer through the press and stores. The process includes textile development, color forecasting, and style development as showcased in the international fashion shows and manufacturers' showrooms. These sources provide directional information necessary to the timely and successful introduction of seasonal fashion.

Long-Term Forecasting

The two- to three-year timeline of short-term forecasting allows executives to take advantage of developments and position products in the marketplace. However, this timeline is not sufficient for decisions related to repositioning or extending product lines, initiating new businesses, reviving brand images, or planning new retail concepts. These decisions require other forecasting approaches with longer time horizons. **Long-term forecasting** (five years or more) is a way to explore possible futures and to build a shared vision of an organization's direction and development. A compelling vision draws people toward a preferred future. Long-term forecasting can be more significant for an organization because it looks at social change and demographics. Demographic forecasts are among the most stable types of forecasts. Forecasting social change and technological developments is more difficult (Mahaffie, 1995).

Forecasters working in apparel fields need an early warning system so that trends can be fine-tuned for a specific product category and market segment. Although timing is important, trend information is useful wherever the trend is in its life cycle. Sometimes it is just as important to know when something is on its way out. If a fashion is nearing its termination point, then it is a good time to survey the trendsetters to identify the next big thing. Together, short- and long-term forecasting approaches furnish the textile/apparel executive with access to information and the tools to shape it for decision support.

Forecasting within the Manufacturing Cycle

Short- and long-term forecasting have a more specific time horizon within the **manufacturing cycle** of planning and scheduling for apparel production by the manufacturer (Michaud, 1989), a rolling forecast of 6 to 18 months with an average of 12 months (Figure 1.7). The forecast is developed by the sales and merchandising managers using input from retailers, marketing representatives, sales history analysis (one to three years of data), and market research. This working, long-term forecast mirrors the manufacturer's business expectations in terms of lines and styles to be produced each month. The short-term forecast includes both basic and fashion goods detailed down to weekly production by style, color, and size. Proper forecasting ensures the timely delivery of merchandise to the retailer.

The apparel manufacturer's long-term forecast traces the planning and scheduling process forward to the retailer because it is prepared before orders are received. Orders are shown as input to the short-term forecasts. The quality of the long-term forecast can be measured by comparing expected orders with orders received.

Tracing the planning and scheduling process backward, forecasts and orders feed back to the textile manufacturer. A process very similar to the one in apparel manufacturing occurs at the textile manufacturing level. The time period from initial forecast to delivery of finished piece goods to the apparel manufacturer is between 6 and 16 months. Tracing the process backward one more step leads to the yarn and fiber manufacturers, where a similar forecasting process takes place.

Industry fashion trends enter the model as input for the retailers' decisions and as part of planning at the other stages of apparel, textile, yarn, and fiber manufacturing.
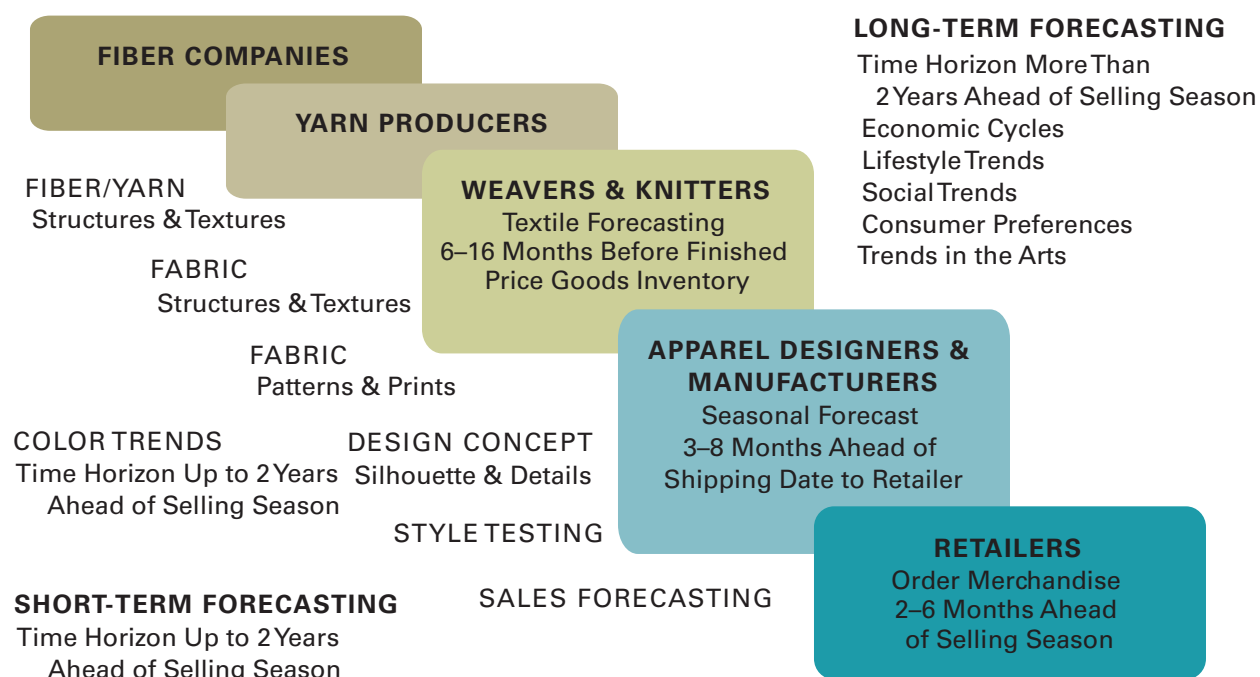
Figure 1.7 Short- and long-term forecasting operate on different timelines within the manufacturing cycle.

Color forecasting is typically done 20 to 24 months ahead of the target selling season. Textile development is typically done 12 to 24 months prior to the target selling season. International fabric fairs show new trends in fabrics one year ahead of the target selling season. All these forecasting activities are aimed at having the right product at the right time to meet customer demand.

Scouting for Fashion Trends

The segments of the fashion industry synthesize information into color and textile forecasts anchored by themes that reflect the spirit of the times. These forecasts serve to coordinate the supply chain for the product development process. Many organizations and services are available to alert executives to industry fashion trends:

- To-the-trade-only shows showcase fabrics and prints for each season.
- Fashion-reporting services deliver news from the runway and street by subscription on websites, through presentations, and in print reports.
- *Color forecasters* present seminars at industry functions and deliver palettes to members or subscribers.

- *Industry trade associations* maintain fabric libraries for fashion research and present updates for designers and merchandisers.
- The *trade press* covers industry events and reports forecasting information.

Members of product development teams, merchandisers, marketers, and retailers participate in events and read the trade press to gather trend information. Some team members are delegated specifically to scout for trend information and locate sources for the latest in fabrics, trims, and findings.

Most apparel companies subscribe to one or more trend services whose job it is to scout the market and report on developments. These services deliver trend information up to two years in advance of the selling season. Sometimes forecasting services are part of a buying office—either an independent organization or a division of a retailing corporation whose role is to scout the market and make merchandise recommendations to stores or chains. Because they serve as coordinating points for trend information, forecasting services exert a considerable influence on the fashion industry (see Resource Pointers for a listing of these firms).

Forecasting as a Career

Forecasting, with its many disciplines and multiple time horizons, focuses on business creativity. Creativity in business is based on expertise, or everything a person knows about his or her work domain. Forecasting professionals are hired by a company for their expertise. Some build on their knowledge of fashion with an insider's view of color, textiles, or styles. Still others are futurists who look at long-term cultural shifts. Some bring the ability to bridge the gap between the corporation and a particular market segment, such as consumers under 30. These professionals work in fashion, but also in related industries such as cosmetics, fragrance, and even cell phones. Lori Smith, a trend forecaster for one of the world's largest makers of perfume, puts it this way: "What I do is bring the outside world in" (Green, 1998). Reports from forecasters—whether working inside the company or as consultants—affect the way a product is designed, the way it is sold, or where it is sold. Salaries are on the low end for entry-level jobs for trend reporters gathering information, but forecasters with seven to ten years of experience can make in the low six figures working for a manufacturing, retailing, or established consultancy (Sahadi, 2005). Highly competitive, the field consists of around 1,000 to 1,500 professionals who combine training in fashion, business insight, and a wide-ranging curiosity (Zimmerman, 2008).

One of the best ways to discover if you are a person with the natural gifts and skills required for business creativity is to do an internship with a forecasting company. Consider trade organizations such as Cotton Incorporated, professional organizations such as the Color Association of the United States, retail corporations, buying offices, fashion reporting services, and forecasting agencies and consultancies. Internships are offered on the basis of a company's staffing needs at a particular time. Even if a company has never offered an internship in forecasting, it might offer one to the right applicant at the right time.

To explore your interest in forecasting, hone your skills by creating a portfolio. Developing a forecast is only the first step; communicating a forecast is an essential skill. In the portfolio you can demonstrate both these facets. Use the activities in the following chapters as a starting point for the portfolio. Use the portfolio to show your skills in an interview for a forecasting position.

Begin your profession by reading the kind of sources that are important to forecasters. By beginning your environmental scanning now, you will build a base for communicating with other forecasters and business executives. A basic media scan would include:

- National newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* and business news such as *The Economist*.
- The key trade papers that cover the fashion and apparel industry, including *WWD* (*Women's Wear Daily*) for womenswear and menswear.
- *Advertising Age* for coverage of marketing trends.
- Fashion and lifestyle magazines such as *Entertainment Weekly* for coverage of popular culture and opinion leaders that influence fashion trends.
- Online resources such as *Business of Fashion* for an overview of global news and topics related to the fashion industry.

Very few forecasters started in their field. Instead, they gained experience in retailing or product development, moving into forecasting as their talents and expertise became valuable enough to support the specialization. By beginning your career with an interest in forecasting, you can choose positions that help deepen and broaden your knowledge of the fashion industry—the kind of background essential to a forecasting professional.

Chapter Summary

Fashion is a multifaceted concept that has social, psychological, popular culture, and economic implications. Fashion forecasting is a dynamic profession that involves finding social, economic, and cultural patterns and interpreting them in a meaningful way for members of the fashion and other consumer industries. Forecasts can be developed through processes such as environmental, fashion, and consumer scans which form the basis for fashion, trend, and competitive analyses. Since all fashion industry members are forecasters to some extent, it is important to start developing forecasting skills early, and anyone can begin the practice of forecasting by becoming highly informed about the world around them through a variety of media sources.

Fashion: What mechanisms in society power fashion behavior? What psychological traits of an individual power fashion behavior? How is meaning transferred in culture?

Forecasting: What is the role of forecasters inside corporations? What special forecasting disciplines apply to the apparel industry? Is there value to be derived from integrating forecasting disciplines within a company? What kinds of information are useful to forecasters and where do they find that information?

FORECASTING ACTIVITIES

Megatrends. Pick a current or emerging megatrend that you see reflected in society and research it. Explain the influence of the megatrend on society, including how long it has been popular, whether it is a national or international megatrend, and some of factors that have contributed to its prominence. Find examples of products or events or activities that reflect the scope of the megatrend.

Fads, Fashions, and Classics. Find examples of fads, fashions, and classics online and make a PowerPoint slide of your examples for each category. Explain why your examples from each category meet the criteria of their definition.

Cool Versus Mainstream. Find examples of people or of fashions that would be considered cool. These can be either ahead of the mainstream, or rebellious or antifashion looks. Then find examples of mainstream looks. Determine how the cool looks differ from the mainstream looks in terms of color, fabric and trim, pattern, silhouette, and style.

Forecasting as a Career Path. Clip articles from trade and popular publications profiling forecasters in all the specialties. Note which work for companies or corporations and which work for consulting firms. Analyze the aspects that are common across all forecasting fields and the differences between the forecaster's focus and responsibilities depending on the product category, price point, and target market. Determine which courses in your degree curriculum encourage the development of specialized knowledge useful in the forecasting process.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Trends: What are the different types of trend and how do they differ? What are some of the different responses to a trend? What are some of the related factors to a trend that influence its chances of success?

Fashion, Fads, and Classics: What is the best strategy for an apparel line—to create fashion, fad, or classic merchandise? What are the advantages or disadvantages to each? Is it possible to have more than one strategy for the same line?

RESOURCE POINTERS

Business-to-Business Trend Forecasting Sites

Fashion Snoops: www.fashionsnoops.com

Trendstop: www.trendstop.com

WGSN (World Global Style Network): www.wgsn.com

Trend Forecasters

Li Edelkoort: www.trendtablet.com

Nelly Rodi: http://nellyrodi.com/en

PeclersParis: www.peclersparis.com

PromoStyl: www.promostyl.com

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Innovation and Novelty

The essence of fashion is changeability. It satisfies the curiosity, the human drive towards what is new.

— **KARL LAGERFELD**

Objectives

• **Describe the characteristics of an innovation and how one becomes a trend**

• **Identify the key individuals who propel an innovation into a trend through their approval and adoption**

• **Analyze current fashion within a theoretical framework**

• **Establish theoretical models as tools for analysis and communication**

• **Summarize the diffusion process—how innovations diffuse within a social system, the kind of consumer who participates in each stage, and the social process involved in transmitting fashion innovation**

• **Identify diffusion of innovation as a framework for understanding and predicting fashion change**

Innovation and Trends

Because clothing is an expression of ourselves, many consumers get bored with their clothing after they have had it for a certain period of time and then begin to crave novelty. Periodically an **innovation**, or something new, is introduced to the public for approval and adoption. Innovations occur in all industries—automobiles, interior design, music, or restaurants—and fashion is no exception. In fashion, an innovation isn't limited to clothing; it can be an accessory, a hairstyle, or cosmetics. It may emerge from the fashion runways, appear in a hit movie, television show, or music video, and ultimately influence the buying decisions of millions. After the innovation arrives on the scene, individuals consider it for adoption. In the book *Mad World* (Majewski & Bernstein, 2014), one English musician perfectly explains how an innovation is spread, with the idea "Now this is interesting. And it's different. I'm inspired! I might be able to do something like this"— that same internal conversation is held by thousands of consumers, who then choose to adapt the trend to their own specific tastes. The cumulative effect of those decisions can be tracked monetarily with sales figures and visually on the street.

An innovative look appears in the street, on the runway, or in the media thanks to a trendsetter's ability to stay ahead of current fashion, ignoring trends and yet anticipating them (Furchgott, 1998). The look has the appeal of "newness" because it has been missing or scarce in the marketplace. A trend is characterized by a building awareness of this new look and an accelerating demand among consumers (Perna, 1987). Innovative ideas are discovered by fashion **scouts** such as journalists, fashion directors, forecasters, and merchants who have the ability and the platform to recognize and transmit fads from the subgroup to the mainstream because they have a unique understanding of both. Tips about innovations may come from the creative director for a fashion-forward retailer, the pages of a magazine, the windows of a store in a fashion center, the reports of a forecasting service, or the articles of a cultural journalist. Ideas are further moved from source to marketplace by **tastemakers** such as celebrities, models, fashion stylists, bloggers, and fashion leaders who increase the visibility of the innovation and make it acceptable to more consumers.

Some items, styles, or looks are designer experiments to gauge the effect and potential of a new idea (Perna, 1987). Runway shows give designers the perfect opportunity to experiment and frequently act as a laboratory for new ideas. Experimental styles are likely to be commented on by fashion insiders and the media, but will not receive support from most retailers. Occasionally, an experimental style has strong, instantaneous appeal because it is the perfect statement mirroring the spirit of the times. In those rare instances, the item or look suddenly sells out quickly. The initial restricted availability and strong reaction (sometimes fueled by media coverage) combine to drive the popularity of that item. In the event that an experimental style in one season is further developed and given more prominence in the line the next season, those items, styles, or looks represent **embryonic trends**—trends in the very first stages of development (Perna, 1987). The trend has not yet developed, but the look is poised to take off; fashion insiders are tracking its development, but the public is largely unaware of its existence.

If fashion innovators and fashion-forward retailers then adopt the look, style, detail, accessory, or other fashion idea and public awareness begins to build, it is called a **directional trend** (Perna, 1987). For more mainstream companies, directional trends offer the opportunity to introduce innovative concepts by featuring the trend in promotions, through visual merchandising, or in fashion shows. Although most customers will end up buying merchandise associated only with major trends, the directional trends bring excitement and a feeling of forward motion to fashion.

Evolution of a Trend

Lawrence Samuel, co-founder of the marketing consulting firm Iconoculture, Inc., spelled out the predictable and unpredictable stages in the evolution of a trend ("Will Cigars," 1997). The three stages are:

1. *Fringe*—a stage when an innovation arises and the trendiest consumers and entrepreneurial firms begin to participate.
2. *Trendy*—a stage when awareness of the trend grows because early adopters join the innovators to increase the visibility of the trend and the most fashion-forward brands and retailers test the concept.

3. *Mainstream*—a stage when more conservative consumers join in, visibility continues to increase, and corporations and brands capitalize on the growing demand.

Forecasters and journalists often spotlight fringe products, services, and looks that tend to be exaggerated, extreme, or impractical—the kind of things avoided by mainstream American consumers. These innovations have the potential to become mainstream trends only if they have a desirable set of tangible and intangible benefits and can be modified and expressed in different ways to appeal to a broader public (Letscher, 1994).

To make the jump from fashion-forward consumers to the mainstream, a trend must be modified to make it more acceptable by a large number of people. In doing so, the process sometimes dilutes the look so much that it loses its stylistic integrity. The novelty disappears, taking with it the original appeal. In 2004, an article in the *New York Times* wrote about lesbian fashion style and described the look as "L.A. Tomboy" and its wearers: "It's probably that they are celebrating that play with gender, that provocative style that pulls from rock 'n' roll, boy icons of the past, the street and the high-end couture type glamour, but that starts with a lesbian sensibility" (Trebay, 2004). At the time, over ten years before gay marriage was legalized, this group of consumers was very small and highly trendy, yet did not have much media attention, making it an example of fringe group. As Tomboy wearer Stephanie Perdomo said in the article, "I have this theory that lesbians start certain fashion things. I used to go around Williamsburg and see guys wearing wifebeaters, wallet chains, gas station shirts and trucker hats, and I would think, 'We used to do that five years ago.'"

To fill the needs of this very fashion-forward market, there were a variety of small brands that catered to customers who identified themselves as "masculine of center," a term from gender studies referring to women who dress and act in ways traditionally associated with men (Huber, 2013). These brands included Wildfang, in Portland, Oregon, who broadened the appeal of Tomboy style beyond solely the LBGT market by describing themselves on their website with their tagline "We are wild feminists," which appealed to a wider target market, although their "About Us" section clearly categorized the brand's style as Tomboy: "From wingtips and blazers to exclusive content and inspiration,

Wildfang aims to bring out the best in you by serving both your tomboy fashion sense and your tomboy spirit, 24/7/365" ("About Us," n.d.).

As Tomboy style became featured more in the fashion press and mainstream retailers capitalized on the trend, the term became diluted to the point where it no longer retained any of its original significance. In 2014, Vogue.com ran an article entitled "Celebrating the Tomboys of Summer from Coco Chanel to Daria Werbowy," and declared "She's the tomboy, and these days this gamine, rather than the va-va-voom vixen or the ladylike uptown girl, is front and center fashionwise," but made no mention whatsoever of any association with the LGBT community and stated that obtaining the look could be as simple as just wearing a leather jacket or a crisp Oxford shirt (Borrelli-Persson, 2014). To further diminish the fringe origins of the Tomboy look, in 2018, J.Crew featured a section on its website entitled "Yes, please: Tomboy Style: Our go-tos—sneaks, lots of denim, tailored camo and off-duty stripes" ("Yes, Please: Tomboy Style," n.d.) and featured a photo of a model wearing a sweater and shorts that did not look distinctive from any other trend J.Crew was promoting, so unless their consumer was very culturally aware, they would have no idea that Tomboy style had any connection at all to the LGBT movement.

Characteristics of Innovation Adoption

For something to be considered an innovation, the consumer must perceive the newness or novelty of the proposed fashion—it must seem different when compared to what already exists in the wardrobe, across the social group, or in the market environment. This degree of difference from existing forms is the first identifying characteristic of an innovation.

Rogers (1983) identified characteristics that would help or hinder the adoption of an innovation:

- **Relative advantage**—the perception that the innovation is more satisfactory than items that already exist in the same class of products.
- **Compatibility**—an estimate of harmony between the innovation and the values and norms of potential adopters.
- **Complexity**—a gauge of the difficulty faced by a consumer in understanding and using the innovation.

- **Trialability**—the relative ease of testing out the innovation before making a decision.
- **Observability**— the degree of visibility afforded the innovation.

An innovation will be more readily accepted if it is conspicuous, clearly better than other alternatives, easy to understand, simple to try, and congruent with the value system of the consumer. Nail art is a perfect example of a highly trendy category because it has all of the characteristics to promote innovation adoption—it's affordable, accessible, temporary, and highly observable both on others and yourself, because unlike clothing, you don't need a mirror to admire your nails. Regarding its universal appeal, Bill Boraczek, senior vice president of Sally Hansen Global Marketing says, "Nail art is very accessible. If you think you're too curvy or too straight, too young or too old, unattractive or not, it doesn't matter because you can still have beautifully groomed nails" (Grinberg, 2012).

Purchase decisions are the result of an approach–avoidance reaction. When the buyer sees potential satisfaction of a need, want, or aspiration in the possession of a good, then the buyer makes the purchase. If the satisfaction sought is thwarted by price, by the effort of searching, or by some compromise in product design, the purchase will not be made. Every purchase is a compromise between the attributes desired and the product that is offered. Marketing and merchandising focus on educating the consumer about an innovation and lowering barriers to its adoption. Spraying consumers with fragrance as they enter a department store increases trialability; an ad showing how to wear an accessory reduces complexity; a visual merchandising display illustrating how to coordinate new items demonstrates compatibility. Many other marketing tactics are aimed at lowering the barriers to the adoption of a fashion innovation.

One other characteristic inhibits or encourages adoption of innovation—**perceived risk**, or a consumer's imagined potential consequences of purchasing something new and novel (Robertson, Zielinski, & Ward, 1984; Venkatraman, 1991). These consequences may involve:

- **Economic risk**—the risk of performance problems after the purchase, that the purchase price may reduce the ability to buy other products, and that the price will fall after purchase.

- **Enjoyment risk**—the risk of becoming bored by the purchase or not liking it as much as expected.
- **Social risk**—the risk that the consumer's social group will not approve.

Lowering the perception of risk is a powerful element in encouraging the adoption of an innovation.

Department stores offer styling services in an attempt to reduce perceived risk by recommending styles to clients that will complement their wardrobe and fit in well with the client's lifestyle. Clothing subscription services such as Stitchfix also attempt to keep perceived risk to a minimum. After creating a style profile of their personal preferences, Stitchfix customers receive a monthly delivery of five garments selected for them based on their profile. Clients are able to try on the garments in their own home and ask their friends' opinions, eliminating both enjoyment and social risks, and then only pay for the items they really like, reducing economic risk.

Sometimes forecasters support a new and novel trend even though it does face perceived risk. Said Sarah Rutson, fashion director of Lane Crawford:

> A lot of the time it is about genuine gut instinct. Maybe a trend didn't work before, but this time you know it is right for now. There might not be data to tell you what to do, but you just instinctively know it will be strong and it's absolutely worth the perceived risk to get behind it.
>
> (Banks, 2013)

Media Influence and Innovation Adoption

Of the many ideas on the runway, only a few are successfully adopted. In the first 100 years of modern fashion, adoption came from clients. Some estimates from that period show that only one-tenth of runway designs were produced for clients (Lipovetsky, 1994). The rest were neglected, forgotten, and replaced by a new crop of proposed fashion ideas in the next season. **Gatekeepers** filter the many ideas proposed by designers and determine which will be disseminated widely and which will be discarded. The gatekeeper role, initially played by clients, was taken over by merchants and by the fashion press. Merchants decide which fashion ideas will be available

to consumers, which will be made in small numbers, and which in volume. The fashion press promotes adoption of new trends by deciding which of the many ideas on the runway will be featured in the pages of trade publications and fashion magazines.

In the past, collections could be categorized as either "editorial" (providing a hook for telling a story or creating a fantasy) or "retail" (wearable, targeted for a consumer segment). The press and the merchants tend to be in sync on the looks that will be tested further in the marketplace (Socha, 1998). Editors know that readers buy merchandise because it is featured in a magazine and that everything shown must be available at retail. Both magazines and stores cover established designers and new talents. More than ever, editors and store executives share information—key fashion stores invite editors to see what they are buying and creating in private label merchandise for a season; store fashion directors carefully analyze the press feedback. Designers have to be realistic about appealing to the needs of both retailers and the press.

Whether or not a trend is adopted by the trendsetters and ultimately the mainstream can depend on some external factors, including an information cascade, a coattail effect, and contagion. By knowing how to follow these, each adds to forecasters' ability to spot and track trends.

Information Cascades

Rarely do consumers make decisions in a situation in which all relevant information is available. Imitating a fashion leader is a strategy frequently used in uncertain situations. Fashion followers presume that the fashion leader has more accurate and precise information (Bikchandani, Hirshleifer, & Welch, 1992).

An **information cascade** occurs when an innovation is introduced and a fashion leader acts to adopt or reject the innovation, and others imitate the action, beginning a cascade of decisions from fashion leaders to followers. Information cascades can be positive, when all individuals adopt the innovation, or negative, when all individuals reject the innovation. If these important leaders do in fact have more accurate and precise information and make a good decision initially, then the information cascade will continue. However, if that initial decision was faulty, the information cascade will be fragile and prone to fall apart. Additional information or a slight value change can shatter a cascade. The idea of cascade reactions reinforces the disproportionate effect a few early individuals may have on the life span of an innovation. These cascade reactions explain fads as well as other short-lived fluctuations that appear to be whimsical and without obvious external stimulus.

Label, Coattail, and Flow

Once they are identified, trends must be given a **label**— a name or slogan that can be used as a popular identifier (Meyersohn & Katz, 1957). If the name is compatible with the spirit of the times, original, and memorable, it will help speed the adaption of the trend. The label may refer to:

- a look—retro, minimalist, Japanese influence;
- the mood or spirit—youthful, sophisticated, playful;
- a lifestyle message;
- a tie-in with a celebrity;
- a target market—urban youth, working women, early retirees;
- a brand image or designer's name;
- a concept—career casual, investment dressing, mix-and-match;
- the source of inspiration, whether historical or ethnic—la Belle Époque, Moroccan;
- a pop-culture influence such as a hit movie or television series.

Labels like "Rosy Outlook" promoting pink colors, "Gold Rush" for gold jewelry, "Garden Party" for floral prints, "Heavy Metal" for grommets, studs, and exposed zipper notions, "Sail Away" for nautical styles, "In the Trenches" for trench coats, and "Check It Out" for plaid prints make trends easy for consumers to comprehend and remember when they are shopping for new clothes. With this label comes a surge in interest in the trend. This surge of interest catches the attention of people in the industry who recognize the trend's potential and rush to produce it in their own lines. This phenomenon is called the **coattail effect** (also known as the *bandwagon effect*) during which the trend builds among the most fashion forward. Popular at first with a relatively small sphere

of fashionistas, the trend will pass from group to group across social boundaries of age, income, and lifestyle—a process called **flow**.

Dior did not call his post–World War II rediscovery of close-fitting bodices, small waists, and full skirts "the New Look." A journalist used that term in a review of the designer's collection. The term stuck because it captured the spirit of that time, the radical change in silhouette that resonated with change in all aspects of life. With labeling comes a surge in interest, then a coattail effect begins when industry people recognize the potential of the fad and produce it and other related products. Flow results when the fad passes from group to group across social boundary lines. If the innovation has broad appeal and staying power, the fad transforms into a fashion. With Christian Dior's post–World War II "New Look," this process took less than one year.

Capitalizing on the coattail effect of a fad is challenging, but there are some guidelines for doing so (Reynold, 1968). Greater staying power is achieved if the innovation meets a genuine need or function, is associated with other long-term trends and concurrent trends in other industries, is compatible with the values of society, and has high visibility. The problem for designers in assessing a fad is that they may see trends where none exist—that is, their point of view tends to exaggerate the importance of fads. The problem for merchandisers is that they may delay to the point where they miss an opportunity to participate.

Contagion

The transmission of trends from person to person has been likened to the spread of a virus such as the flu. Malcolm Gladwell, a writer for *The New Yorker*, used this metaphor when he spoke to the International Design Conference about creating design trends that have the potential for **contagion**—trends which spread quickly through the consumer population to reach "epidemic" proportions. He urged manufacturers to aim for "sticky" looks with flu-like staying power because consumers do not want looks that quickly disappear (Feitelberg, 1998a). Authors Chip and Dan Heath (2007) extend Gladwell's ideas by identifying the key principles for turning ordinary ideas into those with "stickiness": simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotionally involving, and easily communicated through stories.

Gladwell's comments parallel the concept of **memes**—self-replicating ideas or bits of behavior that move through time and space without continuing support from their original source (Gelb, 1997; Kauffman, 1995). Memes can be advertising slogans, catchy bits of dialogue from a television show, or any concept that establishes its own repetition by appearing in many formats. The more copies of the meme, the more likely that it will replicate through time and space. A product, a look, or a brand can become a meme. The characteristics of a meme are very similar to a trend: novelty and vividness. A meme has one additional important characteristic: it must catch on in a way that favors the leaping of the meme from format to format at a rapid speed.

Balenciaga creative director Demna Gvasalia has made a signature of appropriating logos for his Vetements label, and he continued the practice in his fall/winter 2017 Balenciaga show, where he sent models down the runway wearing puffer coats, vests, sweatshirts, T-shirts, hoodies, and scarves with a meme inspired by the famous Bernie Sanders presidential campaign logo. In place of "Bernie Sanders 2016," the logo said "Balenciaga 2017" (Figure 2.1a and 2.1b) but was instantly recognizable to anyone who followed the 2016 presidential race (Christian, 2017). Gvasalia claimed that the use of the meme was merely a corporate statement and not a political statement:

> To be honest, the collection was not inspired by Bernie Sanders, it was inspired by [all things] corporate. One of the things we wanted to create was a logotype that gave a corporate vision very vividly. In my research, Bernie Sanders's was most present at that time; that's why it resembles it so directly and obviously I was very aware of it. I wanted it to be [similar]—that was my message with this collection.
>
> (Klein, 2017)

Trends must be visible to possible adopters in order to spread. Trends spread through word of mouth among personal networks when one person visually or verbally recommends a new fashion to friends and acquaintances. **Buzz**—defined as excitement about something new—is created when trends pass through media networks, moving from one format to another (from news magazines to talk shows, from the morning shows to late-night shows). Receiving information on a trend in this way gives

Figure 2.1 Creative director Demna Gvasalia appropriated Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign logo (a) in the Balenciaga fall/winter 2017 menswear show (b).

the consumer a feeling of being "in the know" because of insider information from the media elite (Marin & Van Boven, 1998). Buzz lifts whatever people in the media are currently talking about to a new level of awareness. The Internet speeds up the transmission of buzz by pre-empting traditional media—that is, by breaking news about celebrities, new products, new shopping venues, upcoming movies, and other such happenings before the items can appear in traditional channels (newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and movies).

As consumers rely more and more on non-traditional channels for information, **hype**—the artificially generated public relations (PR) form of buzz—becomes less influential and buzz more influential for trendsetters and early adopters. PR executives know this and try to create buzz by planting information in "under the radar" kinds of campaigns—that is, campaigns disguised as consumer-to-consumer exchanges, such as those at social networking and blog sites.

Trend Management

Consumers develop relationships with styles, products, and brands based on habit, familiarity, and satisfaction. For a new trend to succeed, it must often replace a current purchase pattern. Designers and merchandisers act on both sides of the process—one set attempting to integrate the established trend with new and improved versions, the other attempting to break the old pattern and start a new one. In both cases, they must be sensitive to consumer and media networks, understand how they work, and recognize when they must be stimulated to gain competitive advantage (Farrell, 1998). The decisions they make are affected by three classes of change:

1. *Short-term variations*, such as the path of trends as they emerge, evolve, and dissipate.
2. *Cyclical variations*, as when style features repeat over time in response to an underlying trend.
3. *Long-term trends*, when there are fundamental and continuous changes in the pattern of culture.

Understanding how trends develop and move through society provides the perspective that designers and merchandisers need to shape the decision-making process. Trend forecasters enable companies to execute a strategy based on determining the right timing to launch an innovation. Called *strategic windows*, this strategy involves timing the firm's product offerings to the customer's readiness and willingness to accept and adopt the products (Abell, 1978). Recognizing barriers to acceptance, assessing possible modifications to extend

the fad, and judging the effect of those modifications on stylistic integrity are part of trend management.

In the case of a fad that has been identified and labeled, demand can become frenzied. If the coattail or bandwagon effect is too successful too fast, overproduction in response to huge demand can result in rapid saturation of the market. The fad runs its course and collapses, leaving inventory but no buyers. When a trend moves into the mainstream and is seen widely, fashion-forward consumers have already moved on. Eventually most consumers have had a chance to see, accept, or reject the trend, and begin looking for something new.

Forecasters can anticipate the life expectancy of fads by looking at a fad's "self-limiting" factors, because those are more predictive than merely visual or aesthetic considerations (Reynold, 1968). Self-limiting factors, excess, loss of stylistic integrity, and saturation signal the end of a fad (or the longer-lived fashion) (Meyersohn & Katz, 1957). To anticipate the end, look at:

- *the function the fad or fashion serves*—activewear builds on the popularity of fitness but easily translates to the lifestyles of all comfort seekers;

- *the fad or fashion as symbolic of the spirit of the times*—love beads symbolized hippie times, wide-shouldered suits identified women entering the workplace, and low-rise jeans signaled an emphasis on exercise and fitness. When times change, so does the symbol.

The Diffusion Process

Fashion innovations may take different forms, such as a new fiber, a new fabric finish, the introduction of an unusual color palette, a modification in a silhouette or detail, a different way to wear an accessory, or a mood expressed in a distinctive style. When introduced, it diffuses through the population as more and more consumers have a chance either to accept or reject it. This pattern of acceptance or rejection determines the innovation's life cycle. The **diffusion process** explains how innovations spread within a social system, including the kind of consumers participating in each stage.

TREND CREATOR

JUDY BLAME

As a strong 1980s influence began appearing on the runways of designers such as Marc Jacobs and Tom Ford, the fashion world was reminded once again of the enduring influence of accessories designer, art director, and stylist Judy Blame, widely regarded by fashion historians as helping define the look of the decade. With a birth name of Chris Barnes, Blame left home at age 17 for London in autumn 1978, where he frequented the weekly Tuesday "Bowie Night" parties along with young fashion designers, musicians, dancers, artists, filmmakers, and other creatives at Billy's nightclub in Soho, London. Around this time, while he was working in the cloakroom of the gay nightclub Heaven, fashion designer Antony Price gave him the name "Judy Blame," which he embraced

(Flynn, 2018). In early 1979, the clubgoers moved to the nightclub The Blitz in Covent Garden for their Tuesday night parties, where they got the label "Blitz Kids." The Blitz Kids were known for their daring and androgynous outfits that they designed themselves, and for their theatrical hair and makeup. The Blitz nightclub was home to the birth of the New Romantic music and fashion movement, which spawned the careers of British bands such as Spandau Ballet and Visage, and Blame was in the center of everything that was happening culturally.

Blame became famous for using found objects in his jewelry, including string, buttons, badges, pearls, bottle tops, cutlery, plastic bags, packing tape, postage stamps, toy soldiers, and skeleton keys, but

he was particularly known for his use of safety pins, saying "I've never got bored with a button or a safety pin" (Stoppard, 2018). Blame attributed his artistic creativity to his lack of funds: "When we [Brits] haven't got the money we have to use our imagination. I used to go and scavenge around the River Thames" (Borrelli-Persson, 2018). Even after he found career success working with such famous fashion designers as John Galliano, Rifat Ozbek, Comme des Garçons' Rei Kawakubo, Moschino's Jeremy Scott, and Marc Jacobs, Blame's material of choice held true to his DIY punk aesthetic: "I don't think that a diamond is better than a safety pin; to me it's just a thing or a shape. Money isn't a thing that holds back creative people. In fact, it can spoil it sometimes" (Tindle, 2018).

The end of the New Romantics in the mid-1980s did not signal the end of Blame's career, as he was later associated with the Buffalo Boys collective, a group whose subversive style was featured in independent but influential fashion magazines such as *i-D* and *The Face*. Blame also found success as a personal stylist for musicians such as Neneh Cherry, whose look he created for her iconic "Buffalo Stance" video. He also is known for his styling work with the artist Björk for the cover of her album "Debut," and for creating the distinctive post-apocalyptic look of Duran Duran's video "The Wild Boys." Blame was also a co-founder of the influential East London boutique Dalston's House of Beauty and Culture, a boutique, studio, and crafts collective where artists could come together to create.

Blame's work was celebrated by fashion's mainstream within his lifetime (Figure 2.2). For its fall 2015 menswear show, Louis Vuitton's Kim Jones included pins designed by Blame on the runway as part of a collaboration between the brand and designer. That same season, British brand Sibling's London menswear show was titled "Judy Is a Punk" and took direct inspiration from Blame (Highland, 2015). Blame has been recognized by fashion historians as well for his influence on the 1980s; he was heavily referenced in the V&A exhibit "From the Club to the Catwalk" in 2013 and had his own exhibition at London's Institute

Figure 2.2 Trend creator Judy Blame worked with several fashion brands, including Adidas, during his lifetime.

of Contemporary Arts entitled "Judy Blame: Never Again" in the summer of 2016. Blame continued to work as an accessories designer and as a contributing editor to *GQ Style* until his death on February 20, 2018, an event that was covered by *Vogue*, *GQ*, *AnOther*, and every prominent fashion magazine. Echoing the sentiments of the fashion world, photographer Nick Knight described Blame as "totally unique. Always a champion of the underdog, always fiercely anti-fascist and anti-establishment, always inspiring, always so immensely talented and always one hundred [per cent] brilliant" (Van den Broeke, 2018).

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The **diffusion curve** illustrates how a trend starts slowly, peaks, and then declines among consumers, in a process that resembles a bell-shaped curve (Rogers, 1962). The curve depicts the diffusion of innovation by showing the progressive participation of consumers, beginning with innovators and early adopters, proceeding to majority adoption, and concluding with laggards. The far-left side of the curve represents early adopters, the center section, majority adoption, and the right side, late adoption or laggards (Figure 2.3). The shape—horizontal time axis and vertical axis for number of adopters—was retained as the component of a theoretical model that came to express many aspects of diffusion.

The Consumer Adoption Process

The diffusion curve is a theoretical model of group dynamics because it captures many individual decisions. In each individual case, a consumer decides to accept or reject a proposed innovation. The **consumer adoption process**—the private decision—is performed with consideration of how the adoption will affect the way the consumer presents himself or herself to others and how others will react to the result. There are several versions of the steps in this mental process (Figure 2.4). The original formulation of the adoption process by Rogers (1962) included the stages of:

- *Awareness*—the stage at which a consumer first realizes that an innovation has been proposed.
- *Interest*—the period when the consumer seeks information about the innovation.
- *Evaluation*—the time required to evaluate the information and form an attitude toward the innovation.
- *Trial*—the testing of the innovation before adoption.
- *Adoption or rejection* of the innovation.

The most recent version of the process as outlined by Rogers (1983) included the following stages:

- *Knowledge*—a stage similar to awareness at which a consumer first learns of an innovation.
- *Persuasion*—the period when a consumer forms a favorable or an unfavorable attitude toward the innovation.
- *Decision*—the process of weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the innovation resulting in adoption or rejection.
- *Implementation*—actually using the innovation.
- *Confirmation*—the stage after adoption when a consumer seeks validation that the decision was correct.

Robertson (1971) proposed another model of the adoption process that recognizes that consumers may skip steps, double back to an earlier stage, or reject the innovation at any point in the process with the following stages:
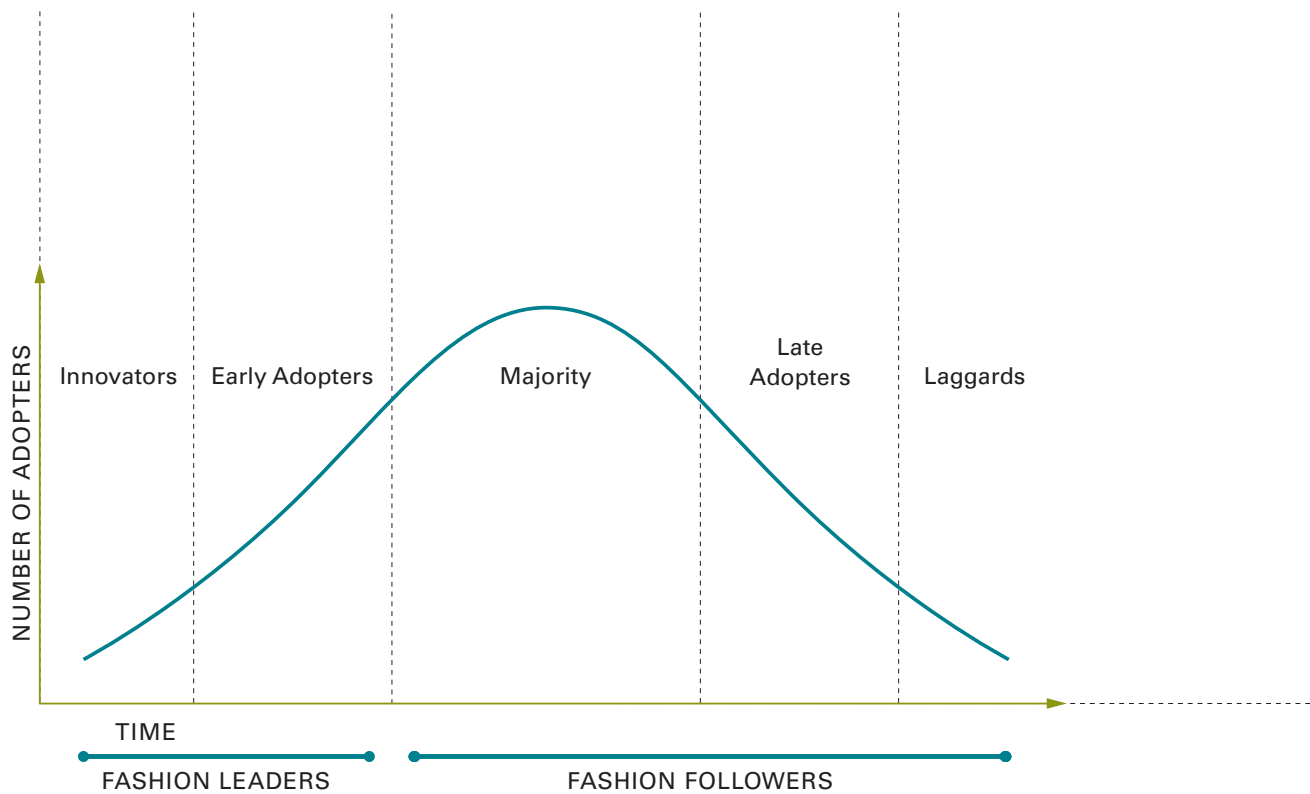
Figure 2.3 The diffusion curve is a depiction of the spread of innovation through a social system.

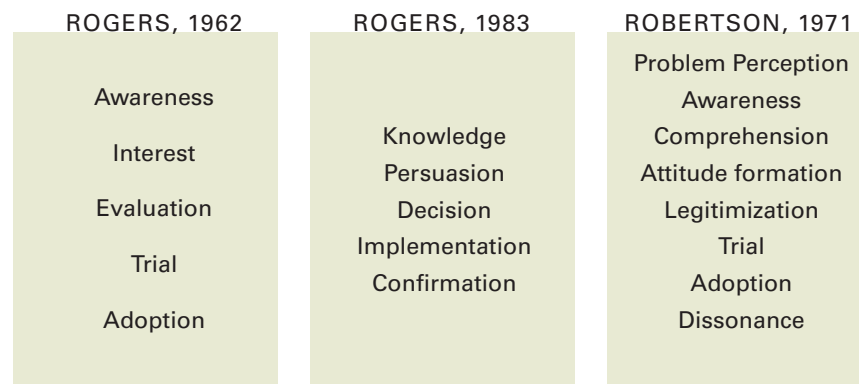| ROGERS, 1962	ROGERS, 1983	ROBERTSON, 1971
		Problem Perception
Awareness		Awareness
	Knowledge	Comprehension
Interest	Persuasion	Attitude formation
	Decision	Legitimization
Evaluation	Implementation	Trial
Trial	Confirmation	Adoption
Adoption		Dissonance

Figure 2.4 A comparison of the steps proposed by different researchers for the consumer adoption process.

- *Problem perception*—the time when a consumer recognizes a need for change.
- *Awareness*—the stage at which the consumer becomes aware of the innovation.
- *Comprehension*—the learning period during which the consumer explores the characteristics and function of the innovation.
- *Attitude formation*—the result of a period of evaluating the innovation.
- *Legitimation*—an optional stage during which the consumer seeks additional information about the innovation.
- *Trial*—the stage of trying on or experimenting with the innovation.

- *Adoption*—the ownership stage.
- *Dissonance*—a stage that occurs only when the consumer questions the adoption decision and seeks reassurance.

The later Rogers version (1983) and the Robertson version both go beyond the adoption stage to what happens afterwards. This post-purchase stage is crucial in determining consumer satisfaction and increasing the potential for repeat purchases. However, marketers and forecasters frequently ignore this crucial post-purchase consumer evaluation.

Combining the models gives a view of the total process from initiation to purchase to post-purchase assessment. A consumer must first recognize a need—for something new or a replacement when a possession reaches the end of its usefulness, or boredom with their current wardrobe. In the awareness and interest stage, the consumer finds a possible solution through traditional advertising, or through generated press such as buzz or hype. By learning about the innovation, trying it, and evaluating it, the consumer forms a positive or negative attitude about the innovation. The consumer decides to buy or not buy the innovation. After purchase the consumer verifies the decision by seeking more information or reassurance from other people. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the decision affects the adoption process on future decisions.

The most critical stage of the diffusion process comes during the initial introduction. Diffusion requires both innovators, or people who wear new fashions and expose others to the look, and **opinion leaders**, who are influential on the attitudes and decision making of people in their social circle and endorse a new style to those who seek their opinion. The diffusion model provides forecasters with a framework for analyzing the movement of an innovation through a social system. The framework helps to answer questions about:

- The innovation—Why do some innovations diffuse more rapidly than others? What characteristics of an innovation help or hinder its adoption?
- The consumer adoption process—What is the mental process used by individual consumers in deciding between adopting or rejecting an innovation?

- The diffusion process—How do innovations diffuse within a social system? What kind of consumer participates in each stage? What is the social process involved in transmitting fashion innovation?

One of the most critical stages in the adoption process is the learning phase (Wasson, 1968). If an innovation requires that an adopter learn a new habit pattern, that will slow down its adoption. If an innovative product merely replaces an old one and uses the same set of procedures, or even a simplified set, it will gain ready acceptance. An innovation may trigger three kinds of learning: learning a new sequence, learning to perceive new benefits, or learning to perceive the consumer's role in the use of the product. The rare "overnight success" comes when the innovation fills a missing link in a system that has already been adopted. All other innovations must negotiate a learning phase.

The model points out several opportunities for forecasters. The process begins when a consumer becomes dissatisfied with the current situation. If a number of consumers feel the same dissatisfaction, forecasters may pick up on that feeling and report it as a void in the market—an opportunity to solve the problem with a new product, process, or service.

Forecasters can trace consumer acceptance through the stages of awareness, exploration, and learning to gauge the eventual acceptance rate for the innovation. By monitoring consumers who discontinue the process or reject the innovation at an early stage, forecasters can suggest ways to package or modify the innovation to overcome barriers to adoption. An early warning about the failure of an innovation to capture consumers can prevent losses by curtailing marketing efforts and by preventing overproduction of the item.

Observing the end of the adoption process—the stages after adoption when the consumer evaluates the decision—often reveals a lack of satisfaction. Products rarely deliver the full set of tangible and intangible attributes sought by the consumer. This reality initiates a new cycle with the identification of a problem. Forecasters' function is to recognize the new problem, identify possible solutions, and report to clients on the new opportunity.