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Master thesis

Trend diffusion mechanism in the modern fashion industry

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Hereby I declare that I wrote this thesis myself with the help of no more than the mentioned literature and auxiliary means.

Berlin, 22.08.2018

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(Signature Tatiana Levchuk)

*Sketch from Spring Summer 2018 Collection (brand: Roberta Scarpa)

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1. Introduction

Fashion is a very complex and dynamic phenomenon, which is not clearly defined today. This is because the phenomenon itself has changed over the time together with the meaning of the word. In the fifteenth century, fashion was the status indicator, whereas today it goes along with the democratization of the society (Kawamura, 2005). Wilson (2003) stresses the complexity of the fashion explanation by noting that "fashion is explained in terms of often over-simplified social history; sometimes it is explained in psychological terms, sometimes in terms of economy", so there is no common understanding and interpretation of the term available. In this research, there is a clear difference between *'fashion'* and *'trend'*. Fashion is "a style of consumer product or way of behaving that is temporarily adopted by a discernible proportion of members of a social group, because that chosen style or behavior is perceived to be socially appropriate for the time and situation" (Sproles, 1994). Another meaning of fashion in this work is a general meaning of belonging to the fashion industry or industry as a whole, whereas trend is "a general direction of movement". Example for trend could be a democratization in terms of style, where social attributes cannot be easily differentiated among classes, whereas such attribute like ripped jeans is fashion. Fashion is a part of a trend and therefore the diffusion of the trend causes diffusion of fashions.

The early works on fashion consider individual and group clothing behavior from the psychological and sociological points of view. Clothing behavior can be considered as the part of the own 'self', where cloth is perceived as a part of our body (Hurlock, 1929). Sociologists, however, examine clothing behavior using the social class concept, where differentiation between classes is essential for understanding fashion trend mechanisms (Veblen, 1899, Simmel, 1904, Bell, 1949). Nevertheless, Blumer (1969) argues, that class differentiation concept is not valid, because social status is not the most important message the cloth communicates to others in the modern society, and instead offers collective selection concept explained by wearer's desire to be in trend and to express new tastes.

Theorists seek to explain diffusion process of the trend by taking into account psychological and sociological aspects or mix of those. Studies have become more complicated over the time, migrating to other academic disciplines, excluding by that the generalization of the modern fashion. Nevertheless, there are three main theories of fashion trend diffusion

among classes: trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle across; but all of them are not applicable in a pure form to the modern social structure, because they do not consider the global democratization trend in the modern world. Besides these three, there is additionally examined the most recent rhizome model coming from biology. These theories aim to explain the direction of the fashion trend diffusion among the classes, however, they do not cover modern change of the society and fashion segmentation aspect. Therefore, this research aims to fill these gaps and connect fashion and social structures together, taking into account modern behavioral shifts and globalization of the fashion business. The fashion trend diffusion pattern is assumed to have been experiencing modifications along with the social classes transformation. This way, motives to follow the trend have changed, that has affected the fashion trend diffusion direction throughout the social classes and *fashion pyramid's segments*. Fashion pyramid is the metaphorical representation of the strategic segmentation in fashion going from the high-end/high-margin/low-volume tip to the low-end/low-margin/high-volume base (Cillo, P., & Verona, G., 2008), which is divided into haute couture, ready-to-wear, diffusion, bridge and mass market segments. Basing on that, the main research question is: 'How does the diffusion process proceed in the modern fashion industry?'. To answer it, there are considered three types of fashion business stakeholders, actively involved in the trend diffusion process: customers, professional buyers and designers. Basing on that, the model with a number of steps from different perspectives is developed.

 Important to note, that in this research, the division of classes differs from those presented in the work of Veblen (1899), where, for example, the description of leisure class as a whole "comprises the noble and the priestly classes, together with much of their retinue". Moreover, modern class division differs a lot from that presented in the Marxist theory preliminary about differences in the ownership of "the means of social production". Pakulski and Waters (1996) report a reduction in class differences based on the property and state that "consumption becomes the main form of self-expression and the chief source of identity. The status of an individual is mainly determined in this problematic by its capacity to consume rather than by its social contribution in production, its class".

To reflect the social structure transformation, the class division from the latest BBC UK research, based on the estimation of the three capital types (cultural, economic and social) is

used as a pattern for the Europe's social classes classification (Savage et al.,2013). By that, not only elite, middle and lower classes are considered, but instead the more complex classification is applied, which distinguishes among 7 types: elite, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional working class, emergent service workers and precariat. Very rich and very poor are still with us in the 21st century, but middle class endured significant changes. According to the BBC survey 2012, twentieth-century middle-class and working-class stereotypes are out of date. Only 39% of participants fit into the 'Established Middle Class' and 'Traditional Working Class' categories (BBC Lab UK, 2012).

The research attempts to combine fashion theories together with the modern social classes and fashion segments division. With the expected findings, the literature on innovation in the fashion industry will be extended by adding the explanation to the modern diffusion process. From a practical perspective, the findings are expected to provide valuable model of the trend diffusion, which will help in allocation of marketing channels and indication of the trend emergence.

2. Theoretical background

In this section, the main fashion trend diffusion theories are introduced. These theories serve as the base for the developing the alternative trend diffusion model. The main concepts included in the model are explained, providing the theoretical background, important for understanding the whole paradigm. In the last part of this section, the model itself is introduced, connecting theories and concept together and presenting them as one generic paradigm.

2.1. Diffusion theories

Veblen (1899) described in his work 'The Theory of the Leisure Class' the split between upper (leisure) and lower (industrial) class in the US. Women of the upper class displayed their husband's wealth, often through fashion and conspicuous consumption. "Dress must not only be conspicuously expensive and inconvenient; it must at the same time be up to

date" (Veblen, 1899). For example, corsets displayed conspicuous leisure and unfit for work bringing the "offset by the gain in reputability which comes of her visibly increased expensiveness and infirmity." The theory is built on the highlight of the class differences and fashion as a tool to differentiate themselves from the industrial class. Veblen assumed, that leisure classes present new style, which later comes in vogue and then the lower classes, for example, nouveau riche, copy it or trickle-down and by that challenge upper classes to find new styles and create space again.

The other supporter of the trickle-down theory, Simmel (1904), also based his work on the class differentiation, defining fashion as "a product of class distinction, operating like a number of other forms, honour especially, the double function of which consists in revolving within a given circle and at the same time emphasizing it as separate from others". Similar to Veblen, he states that "as soon as the lower classes begin to copy their style, the upper classes turn away from it and adopt a new one, which in its turn differentiates them from the masses" (Simmel, 1904).

King (1963) in his work 'Trend adoption: A Rebuttal to the Trickle-Down Theory' conceded the trickle-down theory is an obsolete model in the twentieth century, because of the media exposure making the new alternative communication channels available. The television by that time was already significantly established and played an important role in the trend adoption among different social classes. Alterations in the social classes structures, marketing and manufacturing technologies' enhancements made trickle-down theory inapplicable for the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, at that time, industry already was divided into different pricing segments offering similar goods of a higher quality to a range of classes and not only 'leisure' one. King (1963) conducted own research and identified, that fashion leaders or early buyers existed in all economic classes that rebutted the preceding diffusion theory. He identified influential customers in every class who played the role of opinion leaders and executed their influence along the social classes. The new fashion trend diffusion, trickle-across, theory comes in scope replacing previously dominating theoretical from-top-to-down model.

Blumer (1969) also criticized trickle-down theory stating that "the efforts of an elite class to set itself apart in appearance takes place inside of the movement of fashion instead of being its cause", and came up with an alternative notion of *collective selection*, that is a result of

fundamental changes in society that cause shift of "fashion from the fields of class differentiation to the area of collective selection and center its mechanism in the process of such selection". Collective taste served as a selector of ideas and styles. In the twentieth century, the mass production together with the mass communication makes fashion available to all of the socioeconomic classes.

The third theory considered is the trickle-up theory, first introduced by Field in 1970 implying "an upward flow of innovative influence from lower to higher status levels, a process which he calls the Status Float phenomenon". This theory emerged in times of civil rights movement 'Black Power' in 1970-ies. Field uses example of Afro-American culture spreading in the American society through the music (jazz, pop-music), fashions (Afro print fabrics and hair stylings) and dance. Fashions, music, dance, and speech patterns are only a few examples of the status float phenomenon. Field (1970) states, that the dominant majority has always borrowed cultural artefacts from the minorities, no matter the status. Many examples confirm this theory: acceptance of pizza, moccasins for casual wear, adoption of a number of customs from prostitutes like high heel, firstly introduced by a Queen Elizabeth I as a corrective measure for her dumpy figure.

The critical point of this theory is that trend is not adopted through all the classes from up to top, but instead the trend was picked first by the upper class' opinion leader from the lower one and after that the trend was further diffused down to the middle class, like in the example with the Queen Elizabeth I, who is the first documented high heels wearer. Another example is Chanel, the fashion entrepreneur at the early twenties, who played a key role in the modern fashion transformation. One of the most famous quotes of Coco Chanel is: "Fashion has become a joke. The designers have forgotten that there are women inside the dresses… They must also be able to move, to get into a car without bursting their seams! Clothes must have a natural shape" (VOGUE, 2017). Born in poverty, she was receptive to the attributes of lower classes and was able to transfer it to the upper, but, presumably, because she already had weight in the leisure class and legions of followers by that time who spread the style through the classes further.

The most recent rhizome trend theory by Mackinney-Valentin (2013), originally coming from biology, stresses influence of the globalization, digital communication and other technical attributes of the modern world, that brought decentralization to the fashion industry. "Not

only do design, production, and consumption happen in different places; fashion trends also are no longer governed by designers, brands, or innovators alone, but instead operate on a more democratic premise, where anyone is potentially a designer or innovator and anything is potentially a trend." The model briefly can be explained as an uncertain or open system, where "trends grow horizontally through mutation, variation, and connection rather than through radical shifts organized by dichotomy, points of origin, and hierarchies". Author challenges the temporal outline, which include dichotomy, point of origin, hierarchy and line of development. Dichotomy represents opposition between high and low, expensive and poor, unique and mass-produced, etc. As the point of origin are usually taken brands, opinion leaders, designers, technology. Vertical trend setting is usually represented through the social, creative, and economic hierarchies. The last one issue considered by the authors is the line of development, which represents complication of traceable trajectories of the trend settings.

As it was discussed earlier, the main theories are based on the dichotomies, for example, in Veblen's trickle down - social differences between leisure class and bottom or middle classes; in King's trickle-across - opinion leaders and followers in the different social classes, whereas in Field's the focus is on dominant majorities and minorities. Dichotomy is replaced by the 'logic of wrong' that serves as an alternative tool in status representation. The 'logic of wrong' represents the fashion error, social paradox, that serves as an ambiguous tool in the status representation. "The key lies in the social paradox of celebrating the old, imperfect, out-dated, and even ugly in an age obsessed with youth, perfection, beauty, and the new" (Mackinney-Valentin, 2013), making dichotomies vague and hindering the process of imitation. Example of the 'logic of wrong' could be grandmothers' attributes in a culture obsessed with the youth (e.g., the use of grey wigs in designer Jean Paul Gaultier's autumn/winter) collection, 2011 (Mackinney-Valentin, 2013).

According to the Mackinney-Valentin (2013), trend-setting is less cyclical and determined then it was presented in the previous theories. Authors arise several questions: How can the old be new? How is it possible to be in and out of fashion at the same time?

The rhizome model explains it through subterranean network; meaning that "each surface manifestation is related, rather than in opposition, because each one is rooted in the same,

open system" (Mackinney-Valentin, 2013), rejecting dichotomy as a core idea behind the trend setting mechanism.

Point of origin of trends is explained by decentralized way of both fashion-production and consumer-adoption. "Trends are not necessarily rooted in one place, one person, one brand, one look, one meaning, or one seductive ideal or erogenous zone" (Mackinney-Valentin, 2013). Instead, trends constitute a multiple, shifting point of origin but remain within the same trend alliance.

Hierarchy is the central point in the trickle-down theory, however democratization and decentralization imply a more horizontal structure, that contradicts the very idea behind the hierarchy. The rhizome model suggests an open system instead, that operates through the difference, which according to the model, is fundamental to the trends and not through hierarchies. Authors consider example of collaborations between luxury brands and mass-market, that vanish boundaries and hierarchies. Not only the structural hierarchy, but also the hierarchy of time is getting unclear, where "the past is altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past".

The rhizome theory is much more relevant to the modern world, however, the model does not offer any generalized model and is based on the 'natural' process of expansion, but with prevalence of the digitalization and targeted marketing campaigns, 'natural' process becomes guided and controllable in the modern world.

2.2. Opinion leaders

Another concept considered in this research is the social phenomenon of 'opinion leader'. It is governed by the ever-changing social structure and technologies, which are integral part of a modern person's life. Modern opinion leaders have more channels today for sharing any kind of information and are freer in terms of judging product's quality or criticizing/approving emerging styles on Instagram/Facebook/etc. In fact, people with several millions of subscribers in the social networks are the independent media and, hence, have more power than ever before. This way, they have significantly more influence on any innovation diffusion process. According to van Eck et al. (2011), "if opinion leaders are active in a social network, information spreads faster, the product diffuses faster over the network,

and the adoption percentage is significantly higher than in a network without opinion leaders".

Weimann et al. (2007) briefly summed in his research main opinion leaders' characteristics, which are: they are found at every social level and tend to influence people from the same social level; they occupy central positions in their personal networks and are considered as experts; they are more updated in the field of influence and are likely to be more involved in the formal and informal personal communication than non-leaders. Opinion leaders are executing role of an expert, shaping preferences from a large scale of existing trends and facilitating diffusion of the new trend in own socio-economic class via sharing the information.

2.3. Fashion pyramid

In the modern world, the shift from the class-differentiation motives of fashion conscious consumer to the self-expression also affected the distribution of variety of styles through the fashion segments. Fashion is a very complex-structured business which can be divided into segments varying from the high price/margin to the low and from the low volume to the high: haute couture (literally high fashion), prêt-à-porter (ready-to-wear), diffusion, bridge and mass-market (Cillo, & Verona, 2008) (See Figure 1).

Haute couture refers to the one-off, tailor-made designs, like the hand-made clothes worn by Hollywood stars at the Oscar Awards (Cillo, & Verona, 2008). "Couture, beholden to principles of 'pure design', pays scant attention to questions of comfort, fit, and convenience, much less to those of price and social suitability" (Davis, 1994).

Prêt-à-porter represents the democratisation of haute couture and its extension to a larger target audience, transforming 'pure design' into a more wearable clothes. Examples: first lines of Escada, Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Gianfranco Ferré and Prada (Cillo, & Verona, 2008).

Diffusion/Better refers to the second lines of high-end companies, which represent more affordable fashion items intended for a wider group of customers. Examples: Armani Collezioni, Miu Miu, Prada's second line, and DieselStyleLab (Cillo, & Verona, 2008).

Bridge is the more affordable and functional segment compared with the previous layers. Bridge products have the brand recognition and a look of designer products, but are produced with the lower costs. Examples: Diesel, MaxMara and Calvin Klein (Cillo, & Verona, 2008).

Mass market companies are typically retailers, specialised in making fashion affordable for larger public. Often, these companies represent fast-fashion business models like Zara and H&M. Fast fashion can be defined as "the retail strategy of adapting merchandise assortments to the current and emerging trends as quickly and effectively as possible" (Sull & Turconi, 2008).
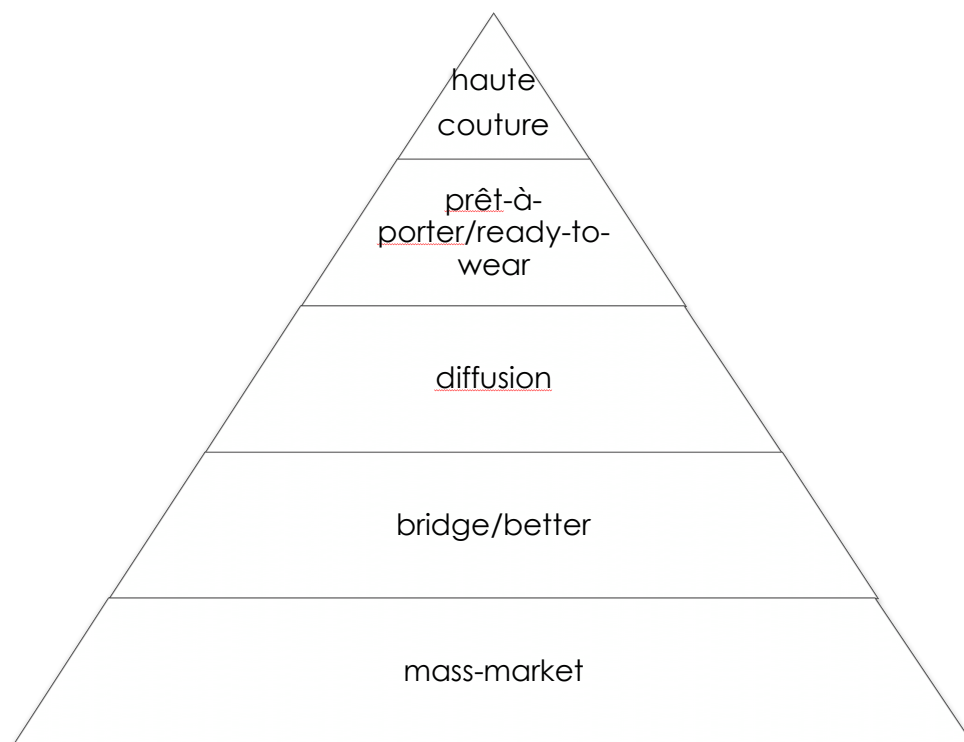
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Figure 1. Fashion pyramid. Source: Cillo, P., & Verona, G. (2008). Search styles in style searching: Exploring innovation strategies in fashion firms. Long Range Planning, 41(6), p.665.

Fashion pyramid (Figure 1) is important for examining the diffusion theory, because diffusion of the trend goes through it as well as though the social pyramid. It is assumed, that expansion of the trend goes from the top-brands to the mass-brands, who adopt their business models to the fast changing fashion and offer the customers more variety of styles

than any premium brand. However, there are many exceptions of this rule as well, when luxury brands copy affordable ones like it was with UGGs, Timberlands, sneakers, etc.

2.4. Modern social pyramid

As it was previously mentioned, the more complex social pyramid is applied in the alternative trend diffusion model.

The social structure (Figure 2) offered by the BBC research in 2013 is considered to reflect the modern society more accurately, taking into account cultural, economic and social capitals. In the economic capital are included income, savings and house value. In the social capital - the number and status of people someone knows is examined. The study also measured cultural capital, defined as the extent and nature of cultural interests and activities.
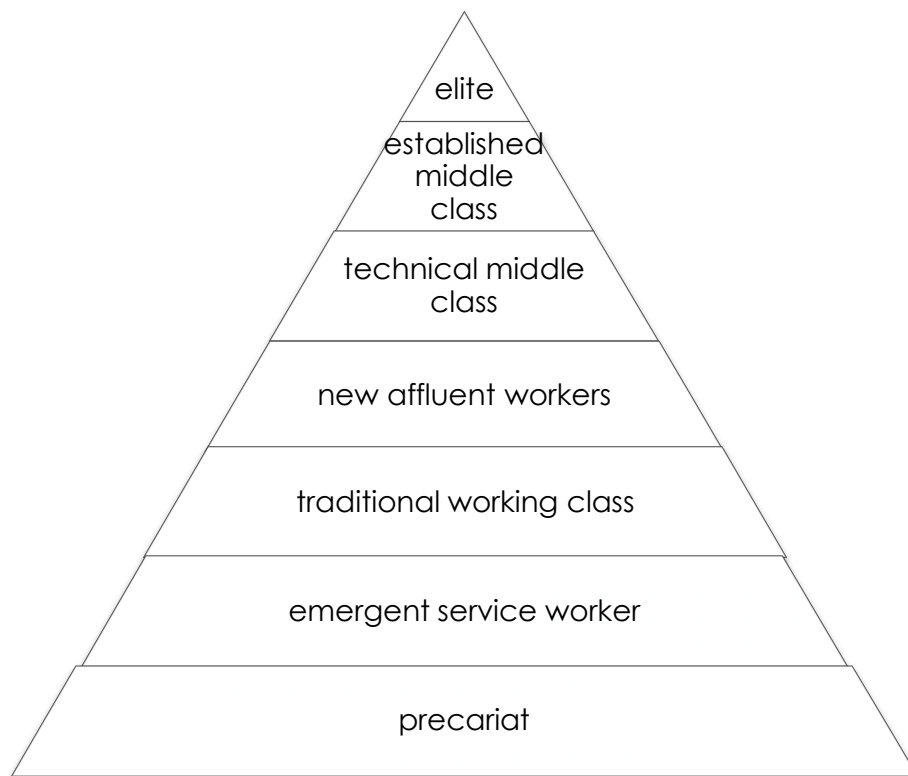
elite
established middle class
technical middle class
new affluent workers
traditional working class
emergent service worker
precariat

Figure 2. Social pyramid from the BBC research, 2013. Source:
https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-22007058

Basing on the results, the following classes were distinguished (BBC, 2013):

Elite - the most privileged group, distinct from the other six classes through its wealth. This group possesses the highest levels of all the three capitals

Established middle class - the second wealthiest, highly scored on all three capitals, second highest for the cultural capital

Technical middle class - a small, distinctive new class group which is well-off, but scores low for social and cultural capital. Distinguished by its social isolation and cultural apathy

New affluent workers - a young class group which is socially and culturally active, with average levels of economic capital

Traditional working class - scores low on all forms of capital, but is not completely forlorn. Its members have high house values, explained by the accumulation of wealth during the lifetime, as this group having the oldest average age at 66

Emergent service workers - a new, young, urban group which is relatively poor but has high social and cultural capital

Precariat, or precarious proletariat - the poorest, most deprived class, scoring low in all three capitals

The pyramid presented gived the fuller picture of the modern social structure, which reflects cultural, social and economic peculiarities of different layers of the pyramid.

2.5. Theoretical model

The first three theories (trickle -up, -down, -across) are debatable nowadays, because they reflect the societal structure and organization of the past century. Since then, conditions changed dramatically, which could not have passed unheeded. The most recent rhizome model is much more relevant to the modern world structure, because it reflects effects of the democratisation and globalization of the society, however, it provides quite a vague explanation of the diffusion process in the network.

In the current research, the model, which incorporates parts of all the theories and concepts considered in the previous chapters, is presented. Because of the complexity of the modern global society, diffusion is assumed to flow in the different directions on the different stages

of the process. The 'logic of wrong' and common democratization, for example, is assumed to shift the trend origin from the top to the bottom. Openness of the society under conditions of the open information exchange makes the diffusion possible in top-down and across modes. In the more hierarchical structure - fashion industry - top of the pyramid is expected to settle trends, but dependence on the market forces the industry to follow common social changes.

The logic behind the trend origin in the model includes streets/ethnic/cultural/or any other minorities which visually differ from the majority of the society and usually represent the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid - as one of the alternative sources of inspiration in the fashion industry. The need of the alternative source of inspiration can be explained by the increase of plagiarism by the leading luxury brands (Chanel vs. Mati Ventrillon designs, Gucci vs. Stuart Smythe and Milan Chagoury, Emporio Armani vs. Dolce Gabbana, Vivienne Westwood vs. Louise Gray and Rottingdean Bazaar and many more), that may signal the depletion of ideas. People from the lower classes, who do not accept the established fashion canons and are not fashion conscious in terms of being 'in-trend', serve as an alternative source of ideas (step 1 of the model in Figure 3). Therefore, the fashion trend is assumed to emerge from the bottom, as it was suggested by Field (1970), being transferred to the very top of the fashion-conscious streaks represented by step 2. After that, the diffusion from the upper to the middle and across the classes through opinion leaders and influencers takes place, showed by steps 3 and 4 in the Figure 3, where firstly brands on the top of the fashion pyramid generate a 'style-to-follow' basing on the ideas from the bottom. After that, the lower segments adopt the style in accordance with each fashion segment's attributes like price, preferable materials, etc. Simultaneously, the diffusion in the social pyramid takes place, where the 'style-to-follow' is promoted via marketing and is getting adopted by the 'early users' or followers. On this stage, both Veblen's trickle down and King's trickle-across models are combined. This way, for example, styles, being unveiled by fashion influencers, pervaded all the layers of society and diluted wardrobes with heels, men unisex styles, subcultural and sport elements, etc. This way, the direction of the trend diffusion in the modern fashion industry may be considered as a cyclical process from the bottom of society directly to the up of the fashion pyramid, where the style is adopted to the fashion standards, passing classes and segments in-between, and after that, modification through all

the pyramid from-up-to-down takes place. Customers, divided into socio-economic classes, choose the trend interpretation in accordance with the own class characteristics (Figure 3).

Important to note, that the trends in the global world are very often mixed, interlaced into one bigger trend (like combination of several trends may be seen as fashionable and form another one). In this research, trends are considered as a dynamic phenomenon that changes over time, instead of static and limited notion in terms of a lifetime. Instead, every trend is seen as a 'living' one and develops together with society, adopts to the world changes and experiences fashion 'natural selection', where the strongest trend becomes the 'classic'.
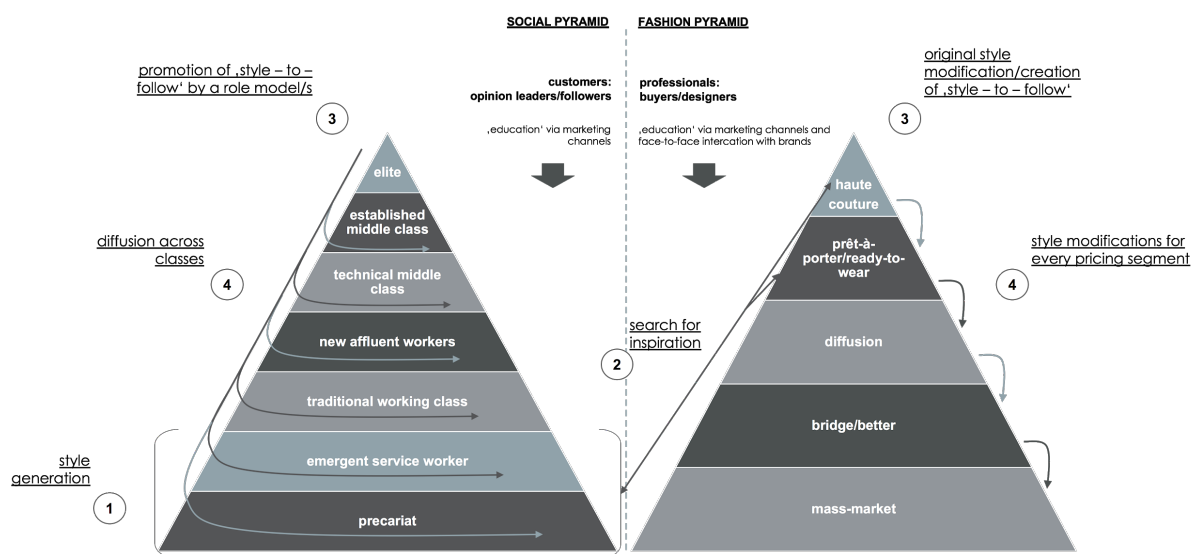

Figure 3. Trend diffusion model. Source: developed by the author

The research of Atik and Firat (2016), based on the interviews with the fashion professionals and customers, shows some common tendencies, which intersect with the model presented above. For instance, marginal (creative) consumers inspire creative experts, inspire designers and present diversity of possibilities, supporting the assumption that designers gather ideas from the minority groups, usually from the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. After that, designers interpret, transform to commercial potential, that fit to the designers' role of the creation 'style-to-follow', and adjust it for every segment of the fashion pyramid. Fashion lovers (or opinion experts/leaders) facilitate diffusion, mix and match to increase acceptable alternatives for mass consumers, which correspond to the across-and up-down diffusion within and among the classes and concept of the trend evolution (by mixing several trends). These conclusions support the trend diffusion model presented by the author in

this research, nevertheless, the common pattern of the diffusion mechanism is still missing, that the current study is aiming to provide.

3. Methodology

In the methodology section, two types of the model validation are used: qualitative and quantitative. First stages of the model, where the trends are selected and ennobled, are to be tested using the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach allows to explore the way designers detect and translate styles for the different customer groups. It is used to capture the data about designer's motivations and attitudes that underlie behaviors, initial trend diffusion direction and peculiarities of the creative part of the fashion business. The limited sample and the expected richness of the information exclude application of the quantitative research on the initial model stages.

The quantitative part is used to test, how the adoption of the trend diffusion flows in the social and commercial fashion parts, where marketers and retailers step in. Therefore, professionals, who adopt the styles, and consumers of these styles are examined. By that, the deeper insight from the multiple perspectives is presented.

3.1. Qualitative research: interviews with designers

To test the model presented in the previous section, two types of research are run: qualitative and quantitative. For the qualitative research, one-to-one interviews with the designers in ready-to-wear, diffusion, bridge and mass-market segments are performed (no access to haute couture), to get a deeper academic insight into such social phenomenon like fashion and factors influencing modern trends diffusion, about the main sources of inspiration that designers use in the industry, to understand where they take their ideas (see questionnaire for designers in Appendix 1).

There are conducted in total 5 phone interviews with one CEO, three creative directors and one consultant representing various fashion brands belonging to the different fashion segments from mass-market to ready-to-wear. All of the interviewees have minimum experience of 10 up to 40 years in the fashion industry and 4 out of five were working for several brands in the past. Respondents represent or had experience in the past with the following brands: TOD's, Rene Caovilla, Baldinini, Roa Hiking, Stizzoli, Fabiana Filippi, Florence, S.Oliver, Zlabels brands: Zalando essentials, Anna FIeld, Kiomi, Brooklyn's own,

even&odd, yourturn, twintip, mint&berry, pier one, ZIGN, and other brands of the Zlabels family. Quality of conducted interviews is varying by the deepness, and therefore one interview is not included in the analysis, because of the response being received in the writing form, excluding the necessary detail for the further analysis. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

Interviews are coded in Atlas.ti, where the network is developed basing on the detected codes (see simplified version below in the Figure 6 and extended version in Appendix 4).

Basing on the trickle-up theory, it is expected, that designers collect ideas on the bottom of the social pyramid (step 2 of the model in the Figure 3). The analysis of the interviews starts at the interview stage, being conducted in English, which is not the mother language for most of the interviewees. Yet, the qualitative research is expected to be valid, as the distance between the meanings experienced by the participants and interpreted in the findings, are handled as close as possible (Polkinghorne 2007). The data is analysed using the grounded theory approach, being coded and grouped to reveal the key points relevant to the topic (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The Atlas.it tool is used for coding the data and building a model. The aim of using this approach is to generate a descriptive and explanatory theory of the initial steps of fashion trend diffusion on the level of ideas gathering by designers and trend adoption to the fashion segment of the brand. Grounded theory is extremely useful in this case, dealing with qualitative data gathered via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Five representatives with design-related positions of European fashion brands in the different segment are selected. The extensive interviews with the key participants (product developers, creative directors, CEOs) are conducted.

3.2. Quantitative research: buyer survey

For the quantitative part of the study, behavior of professional and non-professional buyers is examined. Creation of the 'style to follow' includes marketing activities, which involve education of professional buyers and ordinary customers about the upcoming trends. The main tool for the customer education is creation of the role models like celebrities and famous people. To understand the trend diffusion among the buyers, two questionnaires are developed for the professional buyers (B2B - customers) and ordinary buyers (B2C - customers). The professional buyers, who have taken part in the survey, are from Zalando SE

different fashion units, each divided into gender/brand and assortment type categories. Zalando SE is the multinational company, operating in 17 European countries with 15000+ employees, which offers thousands of brands and serves as a fashion platform with a multi-categorical assortment any other retailer can hardly provide (excluding Amazon). Although, the sample of the professional buyers is mainly from Zalando SE, all of them work in the different fashion business units that operate as small separated businesses. That gives a necessary effect of sample heterogeneity in terms of fashion segmenting, i.e. different pricing strategies. There are received 22 replies from a range of buyers of different professional levels from buying assistants till senior buyers from the men category and also specialties, which mostly include premium segment and deal with men and women brands. Buyers representing the sample are working with a range of the most well-known fashion brands on the market from all the fashion segments (excluding haute-couture), such as Emporio Armani, Hugo Boss, Michael Kors, Calvin Klein, Pretty Ballerinas, Tory Burch, Coach, Versace Jeans, DVF, 7fm, MMK, Furla, Ralph Lauren, Love Moschino, DKNY, Lacoste, Tommy Hilfiger, Diesel, The North Face, Ellesse, Converse, Timberland, Valentino by Mario Valentino, Superdry, Abercrombie, Esprit, Jack & Jones, EDC by Esprit, Tom Tailor Denim, S. Oliver Alpha Industries, Esprit, adidas Originals, Nike Sportswear, Levi's, G-Star, Diesel, Carhartt WIP, New balance, Puma, Converse, Nike, Boss, Polo Ralph Lauren, Quiksilver, MOSCHINO, Versace, Vilebrequin, Bugatti. The goal is to figure out how buyers form their orders and why they make certain decisions about inclusion of the new styles.

To test the direction of diffusion in the fashion pyramid, which is assumed to be from the top segment to the mass-market, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: Estimation of the trend success by buyers depends on the prior trend appearance in the higher fashion segments.

Beside the direction of the trend diffusion, it is important to understand how brands and buyers interact with each other and how brand representatives facilitate the trend and fashions diffusion via 'educating' professional B2B customers. Therefore, it is assumed that brand representatives play a key role in the buying decision process by the professional buyer. To test this assumption, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: *Buyers' decision to buy a new style depends on the brand representatives' suggestions.*

To test these hypotheses, questionnaire is designed with inclusion of the 'would you' questions (see Appendix 3). This approach is used only with buyers, as they work with analytics on a daily basis and are expected to consider many factors for the final decision making. Professional buyers are less impulsive than ordinary customers and should be able to argue their decisions. In this particular professional group, where different financial, economical, and social factors in bunch with personal relations with suppliers are important, situational questions are expected to show, how different variables will change the outcome of the buyers' decision.

3.3. Quantitative interview: customer survey

The last part includes testing of the last step of the model: diffusion across the socio-economic classes, channel proliferation and change of the customer behavior. In this part, the questionnaire for the B2C customers is developed (see Appendix 2), which aims to figure out why people buy what they buy in terms of following certain trends or not, what are the sources customers rely on to follow the trends, and how trend adoption patterns differ between followers and opinion leaders. For these purposes, the sample includes customers mainly within the age group of 18-44, because according to the Statista global survey 2018 the most 'active users' in the industry are those belonging to the three age groups in the Figure 4.

Figure 4. Fashion industry users by age for the countries listed in the digital country outlook. Source: Statista Survey 2018 www.statista.com/outlook/224/100/fashion/worldwide#market-age

Also, customers with all the income levels are included, as distribution of the fashion industry's revenues fall in three main income groups: low, medium and high (see Figure 5).
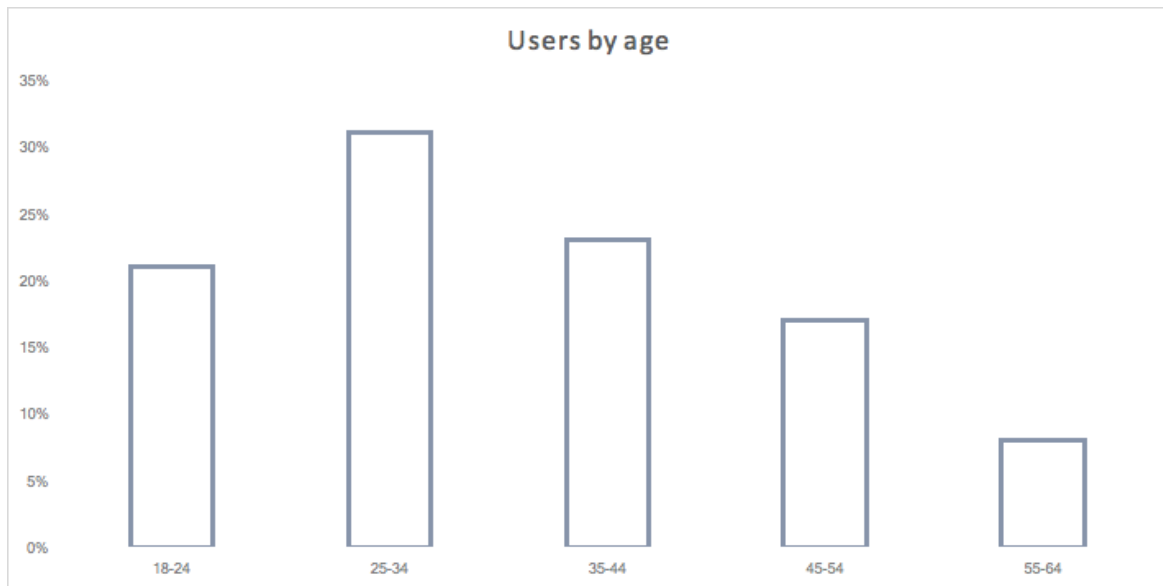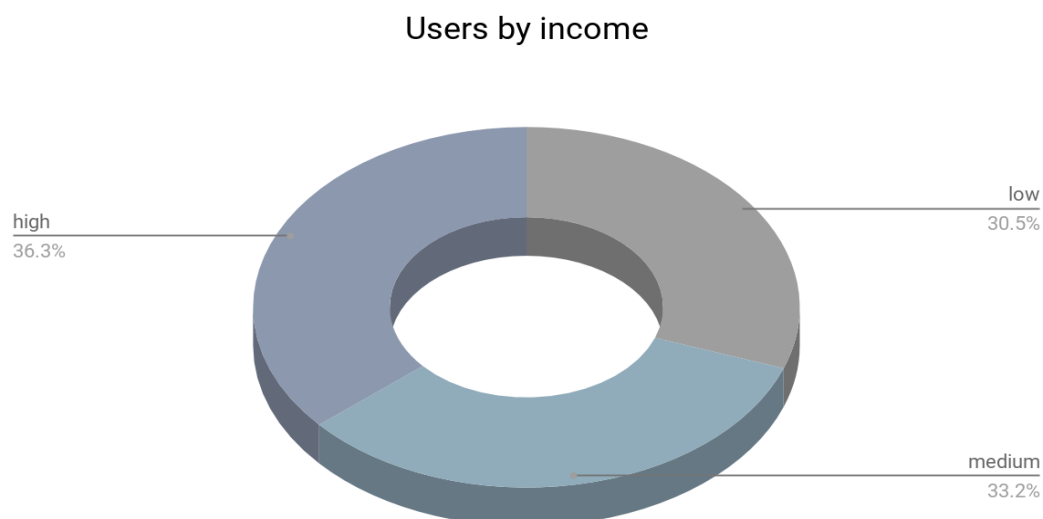

Figure 5. Fashion industry users by income for the countries listed in the digital country outlook. Source: Statista Survey 2018 www.statista.com/outlook/224/100/fashion/worldwide#market-income

The customer sample of the total of 50 participants is analysed, representing the age groups from 18 to 54 years, dispersed among 7 social classes and more than 20 countries of origin, with the permanent residence on the territory of the European union.

It is presumed, that in the social part of the model, marketing plays an important role in the style diffusion. Therefore, the influence of the trend appearance in the marketing channels on the buying decision is examined. It is expected, that marketing for opinion leaders and followers is different, therefore the sample is divided into two clusters.

Modern globalization trend made it much easier to share information with the potential customers and 'educate' them about the trends in the fashion industry. It is expected, that frequent information supply about a trend and presentation of the role model is connected to the increase of the trend popularity, which is represented by the feedback from the group of customers in form of sales increase, which is measured by appearance frequency in the surrounding. Basing on that, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: The level of the trend popularity in the society depends on the frequency of the trend appearance in the marketing channels.

Another important aspect to consider is the influence of marketing channels (which is the main tool to influence people's preferences) on the individual decision of the customer. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Buying decision of the customer is related to the trend appearance frequency in the marketing channels.

After test of the marketing channel influence, another factor should be considered, such as own surrounding. It is presumed, that individual's decision to buy is strongly related to the trend's appearance frequency in the own surrounding, which forces them to emulate the style. Emulation plays an important role in the trend diffusion process. It is assumed, that emulation process by opinion leaders and followers are distinct in terms of main role models. Important to note, that opinion leaders are not necessarily active bloggers, but those who are percepted as fashionable by others. It is also supposed, that opinion leaders of different social classes are serving as the alternative or additional role models for the followers, whereas celebrities are the main role models for the opinion leaders of the social

classes. The following hypotheses to test the diffusion in the social pyramid from the top and across the classes are formulated:

H5: Buying decision of the customer is related to the trend appearance in the own social circle.

H6: Opinion leaders tend to imitate styles demonstrated by celebrities more often than followers.

For the non-professional customers, questions are designed as simple as possible, without usage of special terms, with application of the visual comparisons and 7-point Likert scale (1 is for the lowest score and 7 is for the highest). Miller (1956) argued that the human mind has a diapason of absolute judgment that can distinguish about seven distinct categories. Lewis (1993) states that mean differences for 7-point scales correlate more strongly with observed significance levels than those for 5-point scales. Therefore, 7 - point scale is used in the questionnaire design for the non-professional customers.

16 out of 48 questions are designed using Likert scale to get a deeper insight into the adoption potential by customers: if they are active users of fashion products or not, if they tend to adopt on the early stages or to follow the common trend which is already moderately or highly adopted. Also, it allows to test how reachable the customers are via marketing channels and how receptive they are to the information received.

After that, the case study is performed. The main current trend of the SS18 highlighted by the customers in the quantitative part of the research is analysed across the fashion pyramid. The following characteristics of the similar product are considered: brand, price and design deviations, that will show modifications of the trend in every segment of the fashion pyramid. The result of the empirical research is expected to be an illustration of the trend adoption throughout the fashion pyramid for the different pricing segments and to confirm the model suggested by this research.

4. Results

In this chapter, the outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis are presented. In the qualitative part, the elements of the modern fashion industry, which contribute to the explanation of the modern trend diffusion, and the assumed origin of the trends in the social pyramid are discussed. The results help to understand the ideas generation process in the fashion business as well as conversion of the creative ideas into commercial outcome.

In the quantitative part, the results for the further steps of the model are showed. Buyer survey aims to discover which aspects facilitate further adoption of the trend, via which channels they get the information, how professionals make the final decision about the style inclusion and how they percept the fashion business hierarchy (in which segments brands are the trend-setters and in which are followers).

The last steps of the model are to be explained by the outcomes from the customer survey. The main focus of this part is to test the diffusion process in the social pyramid. Results are expected to explain how customers facilitate diffusion, which channels are the most efficient for communicating the new trends to them and how diffusion process is progressing in the modern social structure.

4.1. Interviews with designers

4.1.1. Modern Fashion Industry

Basing on the conducted interviews, there is indicated network of codes (using Atlas.ti), that shows the change of the fashion industry from the different perspectives. There are defined three main elements of the modern fashion industry, which are: democratization trend, basement on the past and close customer interaction. These characteristics are important factors to be considered, because they are expected to influence the diffusion process directly. So, democratization trend and closer customer interaction make the process faster and easier, define the diffusion process direction, whereas basement on the past indicates the source of idea and determines repetitive nature of the industry, where the possible set of trends is already 'predefined'. All of the characteristics are discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.1.1.1. Democratization trend

Democratization trend is a modern phenomenon, born from the fashion commercialization, generation trends from the bottom, fashion dominance shift and absence of the clear social separation (see Figure 6 below, extended version in Appendix 4): "We don't see anymore, who is poor and who is not" (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past).
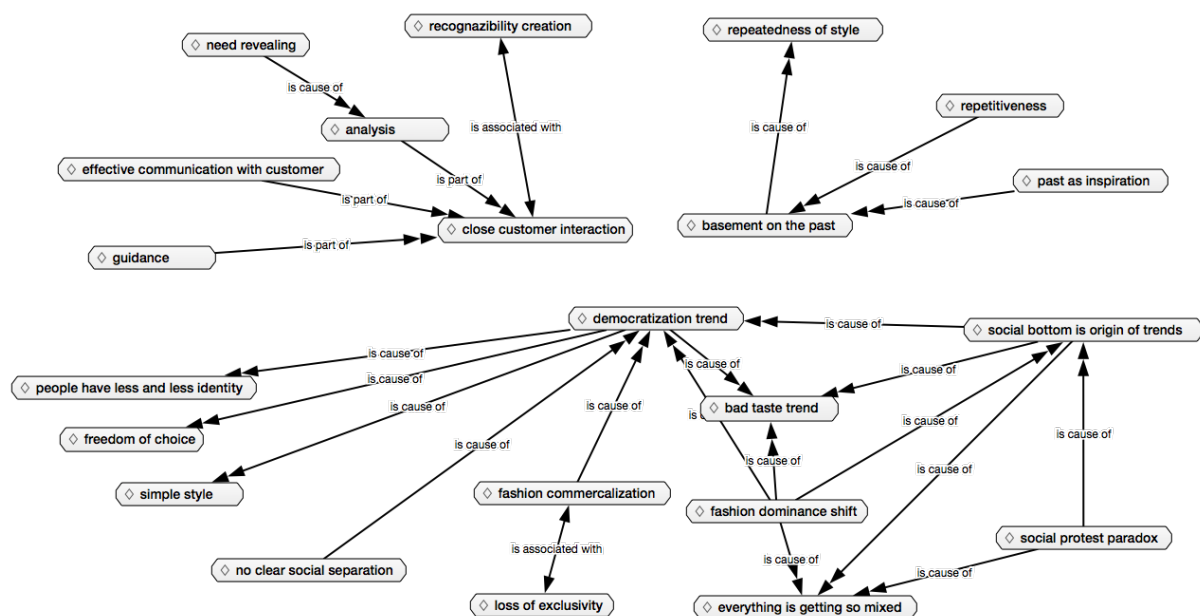
Figure 6. Network of codes in Atlas.it (developed by the author)

Democratization trend is closely related to the globalization, which has led to the fashion commercialization. Brands are working in the multiple markets, getting adopted to the local needs, optimizing production and increasing investors' share in the business. It forces brands to think commercially, even those working in haute couture, that contradicts the very idea of the pure art, incarnated by haute couture in the fashion world. "They (haute couture) want to have business, they want to get money, but they are limited. As a couturié, you cannot deliver a lot, because of capacity. But you can do so via accessories for example, like Louis Vuitton". Recently, this is a common trend in the higher fashion segments to go mass-market via "adapting to shifts in mass media, globalisation and a turbulent post-recessionary

economy, embracing social media, fast-fashion collaborations, public exhibitions, stores in airports and casinos and off-price outlets offering last season's luxury products" (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past).

In the model, described in the theoretical part, it is assumed, that designers are taking ideas from the bottom of the society. All of the designers interviewed agreed, that bottom is more creative, surprising in combinations, etc.: "People can pay too much money, but don't have imagination. I prefer bottom - I search there" (from the interview with Maurizio Quaglia, brand: ROA Hiking), "Always from the bottom, 100%. They are more creative, hungrier, luxury is always the same" (from the interview with Stefano Cioccoloni, brands: Fabiana Filippi, Aldo Brue, Florence), "I think the bottom of the social pyramid, where people are less built and where more ideas are born" (from the interview with Enrico Stizzoli, brand: Stizzoli), "There are young people who are trying to express themselves, find new technology, new music, more experiment. They invent something that is surprising, rich people are not so surprising" (from the interview with Luisa Cavallotto, brands: Baldinini, TOD's in the past).

Bottom is recognized to bringing new and fresh ideas, however, it also has brought a 'bad taste' into runway. The one of the most known brands for popularizing idea of 'bad taste' is Vetements, French brand, created by Mr. Demna Gvasalia, Georgian designer. But what is the 'bad taste'? There is no clear definition of what the 'bad taste' is, but there are some statements of fashion-engaged people that shed the light on the idea and popularity of this phenomenon: "You could perhaps describe it as having qualities we know we're not supposed to like" (Bain, 2017), "The investigation of ugliness is, to me, more interesting than the bourgeois idea of beauty," Miuccia Prada, probably fashion's most vocal proponent of the ugly, said in a 2013 interview

Picture 1. Vetements x DHL Capsule Spring/Summer 2018 Collection. Source: http://vogue.de/mode/artikel/vetements-dhl

(Duffin, 2013). Odd fits, cheap-looking fabrics, and outright trashiness, for example, are the elements of the 'bad taste' trend. Vetements, with its DHL T-shirts for 245 euros (Picture 1) or sweatshirts imitating Russian criminal tattoos for SS19 (Picture 2) are the bright examples

Picture 2. Paris, Fashion show SS19, Vetements. Sweatshirts imitating Russian criminal tattoos. Source:

of this trend on the world's runways. As Mrs. Prada said, "ugliness is more interesting", therefore, to bring freshness into styles, haute couture houses invite advocates of 'bad taste' on the front roles, like in case with Balenciaga brand which invited Demna Gvasalia on the position of creative director in 2016 (The Guardian, 2015). Bringing streetwear in the front position is another example of the fashion dominating role shift.

In the interview, Markus Breitsameter opined concerning this example: "a guy from Vetements, now is a head of design of Balenciaga, which means that he brings these ideas, which are really a bad taste, from the lowest level". Bad taste influences not only style itself, but also quality of the craftsmanship in haute-couture level, which is the key in this segment: "the quality is getting worse, in some areas. The problem is that we have this trend of bad taste and you create this bad taste products. The professionals are sitting there, very high level, they can do everything, and then they have a new design like sweatshirts, of course they can do this, but the workmanship is not challenging" (from interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past). Simplification of the style contradicts the nature of the haute couture, where craftsmanship should be on the highest and the most complex level possible.

The last aspect of the democratization trend is the 'obliteration' of the apparent social differences described in the Veblen's trickle-down theory. Rich people are changing their buying habits and are not obsessed with the luxury flashy brands. "We clearly can see, that this is something where people are not wanting to show their wealth quite so conspicuously," - said Sarah Quinlan, who studies consumer spending patterns as the head of market insights for MasterCard Advisors (Washington Post, 2015). This can be explained by the shift in the customer behaviour: "It's the idea of not wanting to seem as if you're trying to brag about the products that you own," - said Charles Lawry, an assistant professor at Pace University, who studies luxury marketing (Washington Post, 2015). To conclude, the shift in the society has also caused the democratization trend in fashion, which comes out in mixing high fashion with mass-market and brings the 'bad taste' in the haute couture.

4.1.1.2. Basement on the past

Another element of the modern fashion industry is the basement on the past. Most of the interviewees assured, that they take ideas from the past. Although, this assumption was not included in the initial model, strong conviction of the respondents brings in the new factor into consideration.

Designers do not acknowledge innovation in the fashion, stating that everything is already invented, several citations from the interview confirm that: "I don't believe in invention. Not in the shoes. Another sphere, maybe, but in fashion everything exist already" (from the interview with Maurizio Quaglia, brand: ROA Hiking), "At the moment for me everything is very open and there is nothing new" (from the interview with Luisa Cavallotto, brands: Baldinini, TOD's in the past), "There is no more innovation, because innovation is a risk, you never know where you end" (from the interview with Stefano Cioccoloni, brands:Fabiana Filippi, Aldo Brue, Florence), and "The story repeats every 20-25 years" (from the interview with Maurizio Quaglia, brand: ROA Hiking). Total basement on the past is not only consisting in the absence of innovation in the industry, but also includes the approach of making new styles, which is remaking, making small modifications, 'refreshing' styles: "there are many kinds, the old shoes, vintage, made 40-50 years ago, I usually take this product and try to develop with a new concept, new material and new line" (from the interview with Maurizio Quaglia, brand: ROA Hiking), "I learned very well how to keep old items, the soul, and keeping, repeating, repeating, until people know that this is you" (from the interview with Luisa Cavallotto, brands: Baldinini, TOD's in the past), " It all is remakes, remakes, remakes" (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past). The common nostalgy in the industry finds response in the past trends getting popular again, like 80's with its comeback in SS18 (Allure, 2018).

The past is an important source of ideas for designers. So, interviewees noted, that they take ideas from the vintage shops around the world: "Tokyo, Los-Angeles, Milan, Paris, around this kind of cities, vintage-shops, particularly in Tokyo. In vintage stores you can find unusual constructions. Very interesting," - (from the interview with Stefano Cioccoloni, brands:

Fabiana Filippi, Aldo Brue, Florence), "There are many kinds, the old shoes, vintage, I usually take this product", - (from the interview with Maurizio Quaglia, brand: ROA Hiking).

To sum up, the results indicate, that the past and the bottom of the society as the main idea generation sources. Basement on the past implies, that there is already a set of potential trends, which will become popular again, and bottom of the society confirms the direction of the trend diffusion in the first steps of the model. However, it cannot be asserted, that these two possible sources are the only used in the fashion industry. Interviewees emphasized, that they do not follow any laws: "we are not a bank, we don't have laws" (from the interview with Luisa Cavallotto, brands: Baldinini, TOD's in the past). The lack of consistent patterns can be explained by the particularity of the industry, where aesthetics and creativity play the major role.

4.1.1.3. Close customer interaction

Close customer interaction is another new phenomenon on the modern fashion market, involving direct communication with the customers via social networks, more open fashion business for everyone, because, for example, "everyone can see now haute couture shows" (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past). Communication is a key in the industry nowadays and "those who are able to communicate better with society, through the new tools that we all know, are more successful" (from the interview with Enrico Stizzoli, brand: Stizzoli). Communication helps to get a quick feedback, which is extremely important for the fast fashion, where up to "12 collections are produced annually" (from interview with Mark Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past).

Most of the interviewees noted, as well as majority of buyers and customers, that they use social networks for informing themselves about the trends and running analysis: "we mostly focus on the creative part, so that we really do analysis in social media", and "this is our job, to filter where is the real need, because we get all the general information, social media, forecast, etc." (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S. Oliver in the past); "Internet and social networks certainly, you can also have too many inputs and ideas via the web" (from the interview with Enrico Stizzoli, brand: Stizzoli). Social media is a source, where all kinds of information from all social and fashion segments are available for a broad range

of people. Professionals and customers use social media as a main source for fashion purposes, analysis and forecast.

As fashion business has partly immigrated in the online space, bloggers and influencers replaced accustomed assistants and consultants in the shops, ready to support the look formation or to promote new collections. Now, customers are alone in the online and tend to rely on opinions of 'experts': "customers don't know why they make a decision, because they reflect some influencers, bloggers, this is their style assistant, their guidance" (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past).

Translation of the ideas into more understandable version for the target customer is one of the most important functions of brands in the different segments - from haute couture to daily wearable clothes, "but to translate it in a way, people can deal with that, like stripes, sportswear, lengths of trousers" (from the interview with Markus Breitsameter, zLabels, S.Oliver in the past).

Another aspect is the recognisability creation, which is the way brand communicates own value and own peculiarity, like most of the iconic brands do: "TOD's is always using orange. Orange is his colour. That's the way to create recognisability. Gucci is using Tiger, using some accessories that is keeping every season the same. That will bring the customer to recognize the brand. Channel has the flower, the double C, Gucci-stripe with green and red" (from the interview with Luisa Cavallotto, brands: Baldinini, TOD's in the past).

To conclude, there is a much closer communication between brands and customers nowadays executed via the social platforms. On the one hand, brands get fast direct feedback from the customers by attention increase, 'likes', 'sharings', activity in online shops, and on the other hand, they also have a possibility to share their styles and collections in Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, etc. However, different social networks are used for different purposes: according to the McKinsey (2014) "they (customers) use Twitter primarily as a way to learn about or comment on live events in real time, whereas they look to Facebook mostly for information on promotions or discount coupons. On blogs and forums on media websites, most user comments are about in-store experiences or specific products". Taking this into consideration, brands can build an effective e-commerce strategy to communicate with consumers".

Fashion openness in terms of information exchange, common shift in buying behavior, fuzziness of the social structure attributes and the common democratization of society are favourable for diffusion of the ideas from the bottom. This is the necessary 'freshness' designers seek for on the background of fashion repetitiveness and prepotency of the past in the styles. Translation of the trends to the customers in the more understandable manner than the original 'prototype' facilitates diffusion to the broader range of customers throughout all levels.

As the overall conclusion, the factors identified above are important for consideration of the modern trend diffusion, as they influence speed, identify trend sources and direction of the diffusion. According to the interview results, the first and the second steps of the model are confirmed, stating that origin of the trends takes place on the bottom of the society and that designers transfer these trends from the bottom to the top of the fashion pyramid.

4.2. Buyers survey results

In this section, the analysis of trends adoption by buyers is presented. It is important to examine, how they are getting informed about the upcoming trends, which fashion pyramid segment they consider as a trend-setting one and what influences their decision to buy.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics. The fashion segment generating new trends (sgmt_lead) from 1 (mass market) to 5 (haute couture)- buyers' perception

sgmt_lead

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
	2	1	4.5	4.5	13.6
	4	7	31.8	31.8	45.5
	5	12	54.5	54.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

According to the descriptive statistics (see Table 1), 54% of buyers percept haute couture, coded as 5 in *sgmt_lead* (fashion segment creating trend to-follow), as a segment, which generates the new trends. Ready-to-wear is seen as the trend origin by almost 32% (coded as 4). Moreover, most of the buyers named as the brands-trendsetters such companies as Balenciaga, Gucci, Prada, Vetements, Chloe and Celine, which all are presenting haute-couture collections twice a year. Balenciaga (9 buyers have chosen) and Vetements (3 buyers have chosen) are the two brand-advocates of the

'bad taste' trend discussed in the results from the interviews with designers, mentioned by buyers as brands-trendsetters, whereas Prada and Gucci are picked 4 times. This result indicates the strong influence of the 'bad taste' in the modern fashion and confirms democratization trend in the fashion pyramid.

Important to note, that majority of the respondents are working in the bridge segment, therefore, before deciding for a new style, they need to secure themselves with the precedents from the fashion world. According to the descriptive statistic in the Table 2, buyers consider success of a new style offered by the brand as a more likely one (*trnd_securt*), if the similar style is presented by other brands in the higher (prêt-à-porter or haute couture) price segments. It can be concluded, that more successful styles are percept as a more secured from the commercial point of view. Therefore, these results confirm the direction of the trend diffusion in the fashion pyramid from top to mass-market. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics. Consideration of success of a new style offered by the brand as a more likely one, if the similar style was presented by the brand from the higher pricing

trnd_securt

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	2	9.1	9.1	9.1
	4	6	27.3	27.3	36.4
	5	11	50.0	50.0	86.4
	6	2	9.1	9.1	95.5
	7	1	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Descriptive statistics. Style inclusion, if it is strongly recommended by a brand representative (stl_incl)

stl_incl

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	17	77.3	77.3	77.3
	2	2	9.1	9.1	86.4
	3	3	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	22	100.0	100.0	

Nevertheless, appearance in the higher segment is not the only tool of the style promotion. Another important aspect is 'education' of professional buyers, executed by the representatives of the brands in the swingeing majority of cases via face-to-face communication. It is assumed, that designers are playing the key role in the diffusion, translating trends and adopting it within the segment via communication with other professionals (step 4 of the model in the fashion pyramid part). According to the

results (see Table 3), their influence is quite palpable: 77% of respondents are ready to include a style in the ordersheet, if it is strongly recommended by a brand representative.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics. Base for the decision of style inclusion (multiple response): inner trade analysis (base_anls), brand representative's recommendation (rprr), competitor analysis (comp_anls) and own vision of the buyer (own_v)

$base Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$base[a]	base_anls	22	29.7%	100.0%
	own_v	20	27.0%	90.9%
	rprr	15	20.3%	68.2%
	comp_anls	17	23.0%	77.3%
Total		74	100.0%	336.4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Moreover, in the Table 4, in 68% of cases, brand representative's recommendation (*rprr*) is one of the base components for the order decision in line with the competitor analysis and own vision of the buyer, which indicates strong role in the trend diffusion process.

Beside the direct contact with the brand representatives, buyers are using a set of sources to get an information about the upcoming trends. According to the statistics in the Table 5, the most important source are the social networks in 86,4% of cases, fashion shows in 81,8% of cases, and the third one is competitor analysis in 77,3% of cases. Basically, professionals conduct trend research in the different directions: to the top - by visiting fashion shows/events, across - by competitor analysis, and via social networks in the three possible directions, because the information placed there is taken from all the fashion and social segments. Basing on these results, it can be concluded, that buyers are very perceptive to the opinions and recommendations of the brand representatives. Buyers require 'education' about the upcoming trends and 'precedents' from the higher fashion segments.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics. Source of information about the upcoming trends (inf_trnd) (multiple response): the social network (scnt), fashion shows (inf_fshshw), competitor analysis (cmpanls), fashion magazines (inf_mgzn), store check (strchk)

$inf_trend Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$inf_trend[a]	inf_mgzn	13	16.5%	59.1%
	inf_fshshw	18	22.8%	81.8%
	scnt	19	24.1%	86.4%
	cmpanls	17	21.5%	77.3%
	strchk	9	11.4%	40.9%
	plt	3	3.8%	13.6%
Total		79	100.0%	359.1%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

4.3. Customer survey results

4.3.1. Analysis of the sample's social class distribution

Table 6. Correlation result between social class belonging (soc_class_own) and favourite brand segment (RankIndicator)

Correlations

		RankIndicator	social class of respondent
Pearson Correlation	RankIndicator	1.000	.034
	social class of respondent	.034	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	RankIndicator	.	.413
	social class of respondent	.413	.
N	RankIndicator	44	44
	social class of respondent	44	44

In the customer part, there is analysed, whether social belonging and favourite brand segment *'RankIndicator'* (from mass market coded as 1 to 5 code for haute-couture) are correlated. In the classic fashion theories, it is assumed, that social and fashion price segments are intercorrelated, meaning that poor people buy cheap clothes and rich people tend to demonstrate the wealth via expensive pieces.

The linear regression showed, that correlation between social class belonging (to one of the 7 classes) and favourite brand (from mass-market and haute-couture) is 0.34 with 0.413 significance (see Table 6). The adjusted R square is negative (see Table 7). This result does not indicate a correlation between wealth of people and their preferable segment pricing, which is opposite to the trickle-down theory, where rich people intended to wear expensive and flashy items to show their social status. However, it clearly indicates the democratization trend, which also consist in mixing up social belonging and pricing segment preference.

Table 7. Linear Regression results for social class belonging (soc_class_own) and favourite brand segment (RankIndicator)

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.034[a]	.001	−.023	.70516

a. Predictors: (Constant), social class of respondent
b. Dependent Variable: RankIndicator

The further analysis of the social class of the respondents' surrounding gives the deeper insight into the modern customers' emulation behavior. By understanding with whom people mainly interact in the social hierarchy - the direction of the diffusion process in the

social pyramid can be designated. Analysis indicated, that own social class *'soc_class_own'* level predetermines the social level of the people in the surrounding *'soc_calss_p'*. So, increase in 1 unit of the own social level is associated with an increase of the social level in the surrounding by .413** (see Table 8 below).

Table 8. Linear Regression results for own social class level (soc_class_own) and the social level of people in the surrounding (soc_class_p)

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	2.747	.502		5.470	.000	1.737	3.757
	Soc_class_own	.413	.113	.468	3.668	.001	.187	.639

a. Dependent Variable: Soc_class_p

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.468[a]	.219	.203	1.399	.219	13.457	1	48	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Soc_class_own

b. Dependent Variable: Soc_class_p

The adjusted R Squared is .203, indicating moderate effect of the independent variable *'soc_class_own'* on the dependent variable *'soc_class_p'*. This result suggests that people tend to interact with the social classes close to their own one, and provides with presumption for the further test of H5 and H6.

4.2.2. Diffusion adoption by customer

4.2.2.1. Diffusion and marketing channels

Table 9. The correlation result for the frequency in marketing channels of the respondents' favourite trend (fav_trnd_mc) and the popularity of this trend among cohorts (fav_trnd_s)

Correlations

		fav_trnd_s	fav_trnd_mc
Pearson Correlation	fav_trnd_s	1.000	.525
	fav_trnd_mc	.525	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	fav_trnd_s	.	.000
	fav_trnd_mc	.000	.
N	fav_trnd_s	50	50
	fav_trnd_mc	50	50

It is suggested by the model, that popularity of the innovation, or, in this case, fashion trend, is strongly connected with the 'education' of the potential users, that is usually executed via advertising and demonstration of the

'innovation usage' by the role models. Nowadays, there is a huge variety of marketing channels to inform potential customers about the product, such as social networks, TV and magazines, taken in this research as the apparent main sources.

The overall appearance frequency of the respondents' favourite trends in the marketing channels *'fav_trnd_mc'* is analysed together with the popularity of the trend among cohorts *'fav_trnd_s'*, using linear regression. The Table 9 shows the strong and statistically significant correlation of .525** with the coefficient of .446** in the Table 10, meaning that increase by 1 unit in the appearance frequency in the marketing channels increases the popularity of a trend by .446, which can be considered as a strong effect. Therefore, the H3 is confirmed.

Table 10. Linear Regression results for frequency in marketing channels of the respondents' favourite trends (fav_trnd_mc) and popularity of this trend among cohorts (fav_trnd_s)

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	2.349	.491		4.782	.000	1.361	3.337
	fav_trnd_mc	.446	.104	.525	4.275	.000	.236	.656

a. Dependent Variable: fav_trnd_s

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.525[a]	.276	.261	1.107	.276	18.278	1	48	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), fav_trnd_mc

b. Dependent Variable: fav_trnd_s

To understand, which marketing channels are the most important for the different age groups, the descriptive statistics is conducted in the Table 11. Two variables are examined *'tr_total'* for the source of information about the new trends and *'id_total'* for the source of ideas for the own look. The highest score among the trend sources has *'tr_inf1'*, which is the social network. Magazines is the second popular source and has been chosen in 18% cases.

Table 11. The descriptive statistics for marketing channels usage distribution as a source of information about the new trends (tr_total) and source of ideas for the own look (id_total)

$id_total Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$id_total[a]	id_lk1	29	27.9%	58.0%
	id_lk2	10	9.6%	20.0%
	id_lk3	29	27.9%	58.0%
	id_lk4	24	23.1%	48.0%
	id_lk5	10	9.6%	20.0%
	id_lk6	2	1.9%	4.0%
Total		104	100.0%	208.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

$tr_total Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
$tr_total[a]	tr_inf1	32	45.1%	64.0%
	tr_inf2	9	12.7%	18.0%
	tr_inf3	2	2.8%	4.0%
	tr_inf4	5	7.0%	10.0%
	tr_inf5	21	29.6%	42.0%
	tr_inf6	2	2.8%	4.0%
Total		71	100.0%	142.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

For the source of 'look' ideas ('*id_total*'), data is more evenly distributed with the high result of >23% in '*id_lk1*' (social network), '*id_lk3*' (styles of people on the street) and '*id_lk4*' (style of people in my surrounding). In 10% of the cases magazines are considered as the source for the look ideas. The '*tr_inf5*' and '*id_inf5*' are showing the percentage of the non-interested in fashion respondents, 30% are not caring about trends and 10% are not caring about the own look. This is an interesting result, which show, that even though people who are not following the trends on the early stages, are still perceptive to the information providing pattern for the look formation.

As it is showed in the Figure 7, patterns of the sources used by the age groups have some intersections. The two youngest age groups of 18-24 and 25-34 are very similar. Respondents chose the social media '*trend_info1*' and '*ideas_look1*' as the main source for the look ideas and the trend information. Also, these groups have a high amount of people who are not caring about the trend (*trend_info5*). The only age group which considers magazines as a source of information is the group 25-34 (*trend_info2*); whereas the group 18-24 has the biggest percentage of people relying on the fashion shows (*trend_info3*). Moreover, surrounding plays an important role in the own look formation (style of the people on the street '*ideas_look3*' and style of the people in my surrounding '*ideas_look4*'). For the elder age groups, it is hard to define any pattern, because of the limited sample size.
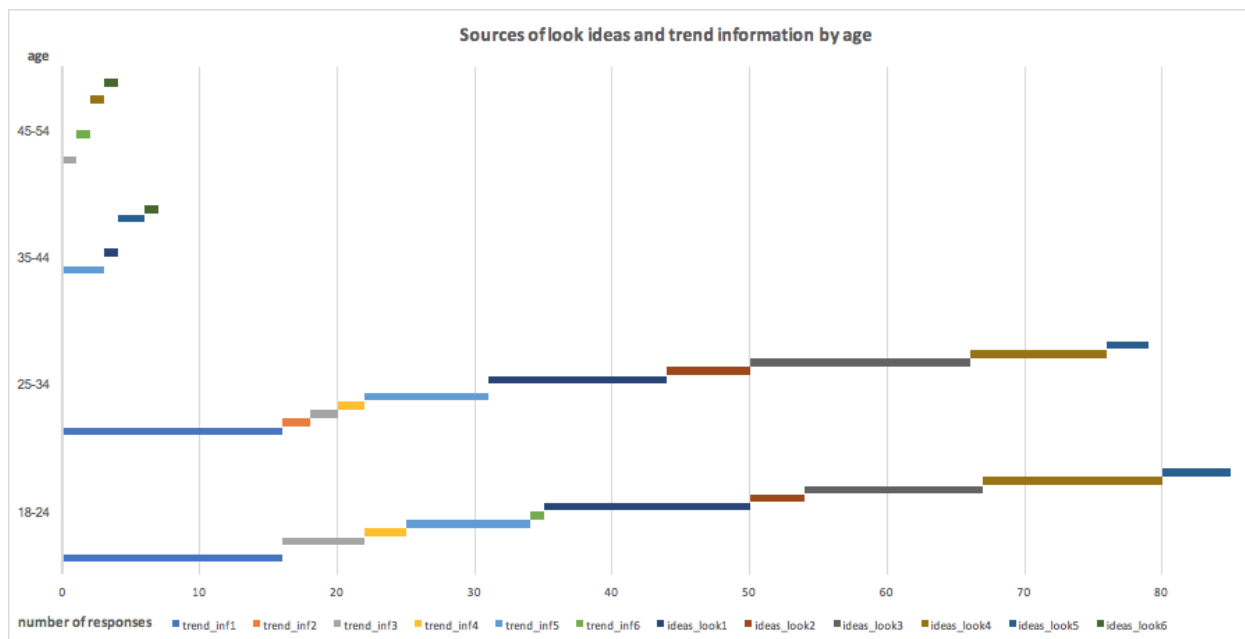
Figure 7. Patterns of the marketing channels sources usage distribution as a source of information about the new trends and source of ideas for the own look by different age groups

The further analysis of the marketing channels' influence on the individual's buying decision included testing correlation between the dependent variable 'owning an item of the favourite trend - *fav_trnd_bt'* and the independent variable 'appearance of the favourite trend in the marketing channels - *fav_trnd_mc'*, which shows a positive and statistically significant correlation (see Table 12).

In both Kendall's tau and Spearman's rho with the same strength of correlation and significance with .258* and .288* respectively (See Table 12). Higher score of the appearance in the marketing channels is associated with the higher score of buying decision that confirms H4, which states that buying decision is correlated to the trend appearance frequency in the marketing channels.

Table 12. Correlation result for owning an item of the favourite (trend fav_trnd_bt) and appearance of the favourite trend in the marketing channels and (fav_trnd_mc)

Correlations[b]

			fav_trnd_mc	fav_trnd_bt
Kendall's tau_b	fav_trnd_mc	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.258[*]
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.	.044
	fav_trnd_bt	Correlation Coefficient	.258[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.044	.
Spearman's rho	fav_trnd_mc	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.288[*]
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.	.043
	fav_trnd_bt	Correlation Coefficient	.288[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.043	.

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2–tailed).

b. Listwise N = 50

4.2.2.2. Diffusion and surrounding

Surrounding plays an important role in the fashion trend diffusion, therefore analysis of the decision to buy (adoption of the style) and appearance of the style in the surrounding is performed. The *fav_trnd_bt* and *fav_trnd_s,* which are 'favourite trend bought' and 'favourite trend popularity in the surrounding', are analysed together with the tests 1,2 and 4 for the questions 'If I see a style I like on my fashionable fellow, I am likely to buy it' , 'If I see a style, which I like, on my fashionable fellow, I am likely to adopt it, but with modifications', 'Would you avoid adopting a style demonstrated by your fellows, even if you like it?' (see Appendix 2). The cases are filtered by the full adoption from the own circle, when for the 1st and 4th test question respondents are likely to adopt styles without any modifications (adoption level 3), by partial adoption from the own circle when in the 2d and the 4th test questions people are likely to adopt a style but with some modifications (adoption level 2), and non-adoption case with the low scores in the 1st, 2d and the 4th test questions (adoption level 1). 15 replies are contradicting in one of the three questions and therefore are excluded from the analysis. The new case variable *adpt_lvl* (trend adoption propensity from the surrounding) is analysed with the trend appearance in the own surrounding and probability of decision to buy a style. The results are presented in the Table 13. The only strong and statistically significant correlation is found between adoption propensity level and decision to buy, which is .379*. For the further analysis of the adoption propensity level, linear regression is run (see Table 14).

Table 13. Correlation result for trend level adoption from surrounding (adpt_lvl), trend appearance in own surrounding (fav_trnd_s) and decision to buy a style

Correlations

		fav_trnd_bt	fav_trnd_s	adpt_lvl
Pearson Correlation	fav_trnd_bt	1.000	−.049	.379
	fav_trnd_s	−.049	1.000	−.085
	adpt_lvl	.379	−.085	1.000
Sig. (1–tailed)	fav_trnd_bt	.	.390	.012
	fav_trnd_s	.390	.	.314
	adpt_lvl	.012	.314	.
N	fav_trnd_bt	35	35	35
	fav_trnd_s	35	35	35
	adpt_lvl	35	35	35

It shows that 1 unit of adoption propensity level from surrounding is resulted in .317 increase in the probability of decision to buy. Adjusted R Square is 118. This way, it can be concluded, that the trend adoption depends on the type of the adoption propensity of the customer. If the trend is popular in the surrounding of the potential customer, it is not necessarily leads to the buying decision of the person, but the style, which the person likes, appeared in the surrounding, may be adopted in degree pro rata with the adoption level propensity of the customer.

Table 14. *Linear Regression results for trend adoption propensity level (adpt_lvl) and probability the trend to be adopted (fav_trnd_b)*

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.072	.294		.245	.808	−.526	.669
	adpt_lvl	.317	.135	.379	2.354	.025	.043	.592

a. Dependent Variable: fav_trnd_bt

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.379[a]	.144	.118	.416	.144	5.541	1	33	.025

a. Predictors: (Constant), adpt_lvl
b. Dependent Variable: fav_trnd_bt

Therefore, H5, stating that buying decision is correlated to the trend appearance in the own social circle is partially confirmed, as no significant correlation is indicated between the popularity in the own circle and probability to buy, but there is found correlation between the level of adoption and the probability of decision to buy. This way, trickle-across part of the model stating that trend is adopted across the social class is supported.

Further hypotheses formulated in the methodology part take into consideration distinction between followers and opinion leaders. Therefore, the Two-Step cluster analysis is conducted, which resulted in determination of the two clusters in Figure 8. They are indicated basing on the fashion consciousness (Q: "You can describe yourself as fashion-conscious" - 7 point Likert scale), level of emulation by others (Q: "How often do you notice that people are "copying" your style?" - 7 point Likert scale) and fashion expertise, meaning how often people around ask for a fashion advice or opinion (Q: "How often do people ask you for a fashion advice or your opinion about their look ?" - 7 point Likert scale). The size of the smallest cluster is 15 (fashion opinion leaders) and the biggest 35 (followers). Analysis demonstrates, that emulation level by opinion leaders is average with 4,47 whereas the mean for followers is 1,49; for the fashion expertise, the mean is 5,53 versus 3,20; and for the fashion consciousness opinion leaders have much stronger mean with 5,73 versus 3,94 by followers. Results strongly indicate difference in self-perception and perception by others in terms of fashion adherence between these two groups (see Figure 8), confirming social split meaningfulness in the model in Figure 3.
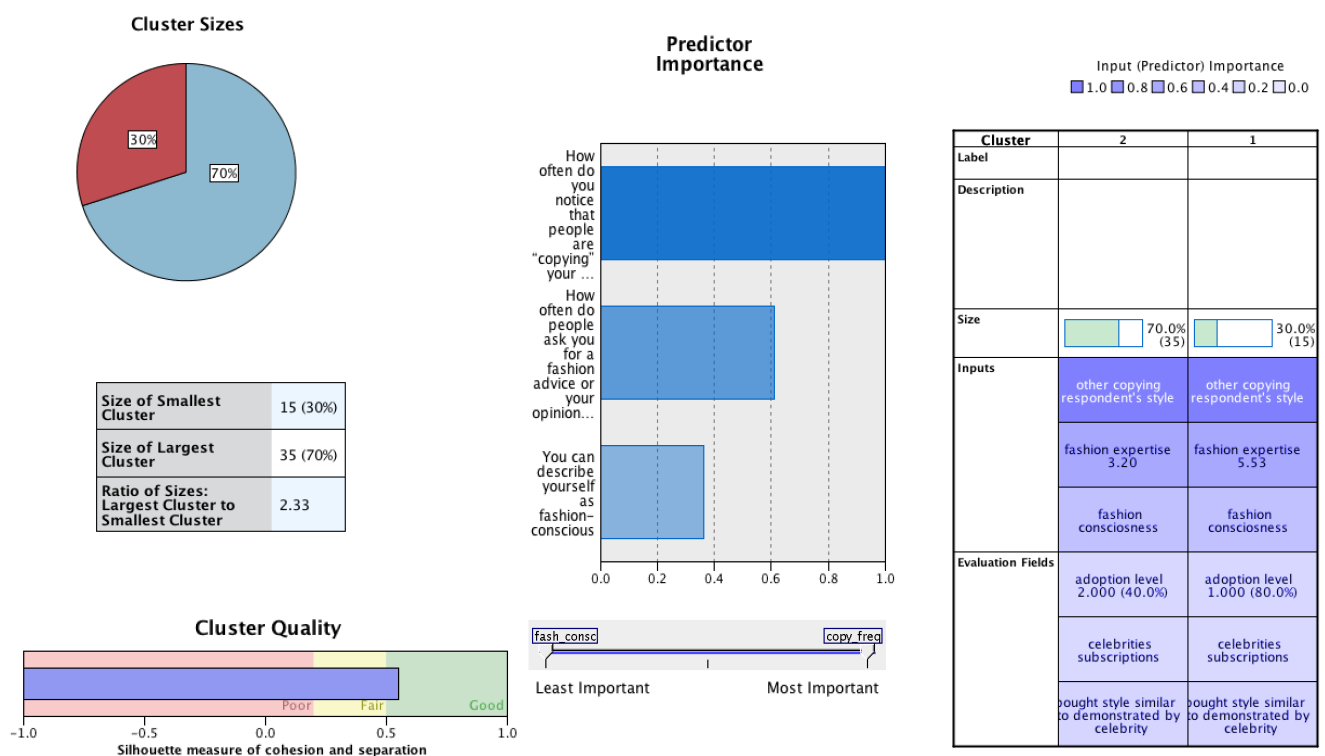

Figure 8. Two-Step cluster analysis results

The evaluation field shows, that opinion leaders are not likely to emulate people from the surrounding (adoption level 1), whereas followers, the majority representing the sample, are likely to adopt the style appeared in the surrounding but with modifications (adoption level 2). Also, opinion leaders are more likely to adopt a style promoted by a celebrity with 66,7% versus 21,4% style adoption by the followers.

It is assumed, that opinion leaders percept celebrities as the main role models. For testing it, first, the correlation between cluster type belonging '*TSC_4119*' (1 - followers and 2 - opinion leaders), following celebrity on Instagram '*Inst_subscr_celeb*' (the social network most appropriate for sharing visual information), and bought similar style demonstrated by the celebrity '*buy*' are defined. The results are presented in the Table 15 below. There is a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between all the variables, hence opinion leaders, which are ranked higher than followers (2) are more likely to be subscribed on a celebrity Instagram account; and subscription on the Instagram account is positively related to the likelihood of owning similar style demonstrated by the celebrity.

Table 15. The correlation results for cluster type belonging (TSC_4119), 'following celebrity on instagram' (Inst_subscr_celeb), and 'bought similar style demonstrated by celebrity' (buy)

Correlations

			TSC_4119	Inst_subscr_celeb	buy
Kendall's tau_b	TSC_4119	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.283*	.327*
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.	.044	.022
		N	50	50	50
	Inst_subscr_celeb	Correlation Coefficient	.283*	1.000	.541**
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.044	.	.000
		N	50	50	50
	buy	Correlation Coefficient	.327*	.541**	1.000
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.022	.000	.
		N	50	50	50
Spearman's rho	TSC_4119	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.288*	.327*
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.	.042	.020
		N	50	50	50
	Inst_subscr_celeb	Correlation Coefficient	.288*	1.000	.550**
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.042	.	.000
		N	50	50	50
	buy	Correlation Coefficient	.327*	.550**	1.000
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.020	.000	.
		N	50	50	50

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2–tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2–tailed).

To have a clearer picture about the difference between patterns of the two groups, the descriptive statistic is run, split by the two clusters (see Table 16). 57,1% (including answers 'maybe') of the group 1 (followers) versus 86,7% (including answers 'maybe') of the opinion leaders are subscribed on the celebrities' Instagram and only 31,4% of followers are having similar style bought versus 66,7% bought by opinion leaders.

Table 16. Descriptive statistics. Two clusters comparison: subscribed on celebrities' instagram (Ins_subsc_celeb) and having similar to demonstrated by celebrity style bought (buy)

Inst_subscr_celeb

TSC_4119			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Valid	No	15	42.9	42.9	42.9
		Yes	19	54.3	54.3	97.1
		2	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
		Total	35	100.0	100.0	
2	Valid	No	2	13.3	13.3	13.3
		Yes	12	80.0	80.0	93.3
		2	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
		Total	15	100.0	100.0	

buy

TSC_4119			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Valid	No	24	68.6	68.6	68.6
		Yes	11	31.4	31.4	100.0
		Total	35	100.0	100.0	
2	Valid	No	5	33.3	33.3	33.3
		Yes	10	66.7	66.7	100.0
		Total	15	100.0	100.0	

This shows, that opinion leaders are more likely to inherit style of the role model (celebrity) than the followers. H6, stating that opinion leaders tend to imitate styles demonstrated by the celebrities, is confirmed.

To conclude this section, the social part of the model is confirmed: opinion leaders emulate styles of the role models, communicated via marketing channels from the top, and adopt the style in the own social class, where followers diffuse it further across the social class, mostly with some modifications instead of blind emulation.

4.4. Case study: pastel color trend

The aim of this case study is to show the style modification for every fashion segment on the demonstrative example. The following characteristics of the similar product are considered: brand, price and design deviations. As the example-trend, pastel color is examined, designated as a 'favourite brand' by 26% of respondents.

Starting with a prehistory, the comeback of the pastel color was facilitated by the executive director of the Pantone Color Institute, Leatrice Eiseman (FastCompany, 2016). She first noticed the re-emergence of pastels in the art world–particularly with the renewed popularity of Agnes Martin, the mid-century artist best known for her paintings of pencil-drawn grids laid over bleached-out, pastel backgrounds (Fast Company, 2016), born in 1912 to Scottish Presbyterian farmers family (National Gallery of Art). "The 2008 recession muted things", the same way it was in the earthy tones of the "'70s, another era of economic recession" (Fast Company, 2016). This color is apparently is connected to the economical downs, which usually hit the bottom of the society the most. After a trend emerges in the art world, (as it happened with growing popularity of Agnes Martin works), fashion and consumer brands typically follow (Fast Company, 2016).

In the Table 17, the analysis of the pastel trend is presented. Starting with the haute couture, there are only 14 official houses that bear this status (VOGUE, 2017). There are
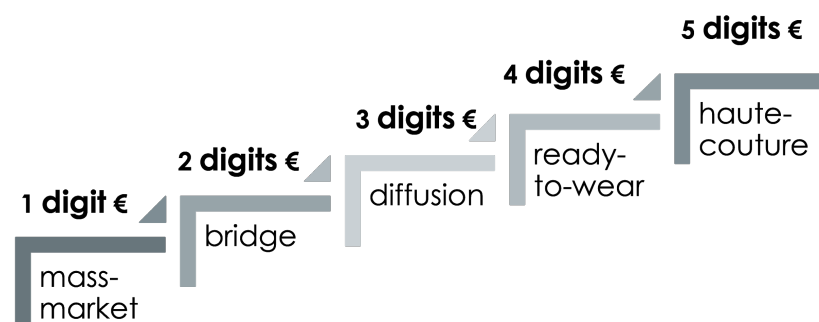

Figure 9. Segmentation of the fashion industry according to the price variance. Adopted from Schrauwen, J., Schramme, A., (2014). Unraveling the Fashion Industry in Flanders, University of Antwerp/Antwerp Management School. p.2

examined the Spring-Summer 2018 haute couture collections of the most well-known brands presented on the Paris Fashion week. The price among segments is distributed by number of digits (adopted from the Schrauwen, 2014), shown in the Figure 9.

The very top of the fashion pyramid, haute couture, starts with the highest price possible among all the fashion segments. The reason behind it is very high production costs. So, production of one item might take over 800 hours of hand-made craftsmanship (STYLECASTER, 2015) and involves usage of the most expensive materials. Such pieces are unique, inappropriate for the daily life, usually very complex in execution. By descending to the next segment, price diminishes, design becomes simpler and the manufacturing changes from hand-made to the fully or partially fabric-made. Next segment is diffusion, with prices usually up to 1000 euro, with more sporty styles and increase in the fabric-made production. Materials used in diffusion are usually of the high quality, but exclusivity of such pieces is much lower than in the higher segments.

Bridge segment is still offering good-quality goods, usually with usage of the cheaper raw material and simpler designs. The segment is targeting much wider customer group, offering a range of styles for every occasion.

Mass market is the lowest segment, with the lowest price and quality. Items of such brands are very day-to-day, cheap, involve both basic and very 'trendy' styles for every occasion. This segment targets the biggest customer group, offering 12 collections a year (see Table 17).

Table 17. Pastel trend diffusion example. Source: created by the author

haute couture	brand	Chanel, Armani Prive, Givenchy , Valentino, Gucci	
	price	five digits €	
		$50,000 – $300,000 – The range of cost for the average evening garment, per the BBC;	
	material	finest fabrics and materials,	
		Chanel tweeds, chiffon (for Channel)	
	style	"pure art", often inappropriate for a daily wearing.	
			Gucci

pret-a-porter (ready-to-wear)	brand	CELINE, Carolina Herrera, Fendi, TOM FORD, Gucci, Giorgio Armani	
	price	four digits €	
	style deviation	More minimalistic design, wearable, more appropriate for a daily life factory made	

TOM FORD

diffusion	brand	Armani Exchange, DKNY, Sportmax	
	price	three digits €	
	style deviation	for more younger target group, sportier styles, more casual	

Sportmax

better/bridge	*brand*	Michael Kors, Calvin Klein, Massimo Dutti, & other stories, Marks & Spencer	
	price	two-three digits €	
	style deviation	basic styles, minimalistic, younger target audience	

Massimo Dutti

mass-market	*brand*	ZARA, H&M, Stradivarius, New Yorker, Gap, Esprit	
	price	two digits €	
	style deviation	very basic styles with low cost of production, younger target group	

Zara

The case demonstrates the partial application of the model. First, the origin of the pastel trend is coming from the lower social classes (Agnes Martin, artist, was born in the poor family of farmers) and after, the trend was picked up by galeries and creative industries. The trend has been translated and applied in the collections by brands in the different fashion segments, showed in the Table 17. The segmentation not only by price, but also by style can be traced. The visual difference consists in simplification of the visual complexity and craftsmanship from the top to down, reflecting prices.

The social diffusion part of the case study can be only supported by the fact, that this trend was picked by the participants in the customer survey as the favourite one, indicating high diffusion of the pastel colors across the classes.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

In this section, the theoretical implication of this research is discussed. Fashion nowadays is not deeply investigated topic with the prevalence of the theories from 19th century, that do not consider the social and economic changes of the modern world. This research attempts to fill the knowledge gap by introducing the alternative model of the fashion innovation diffusion. The trend diffusion model developed in this research aims to capture the deeper picture of the fashion trend diffusion by inclusion of the social pyramid, which plays a key role in the process.

The results from the customer survey, buyer survey and interviews with designers supported the suggested model, which combines both social and fashion pyramids. The social pyramid suggested by the BBC research in 2015, covers modern society structure, according to which the traditional categories of working, middle and upper class are outdated, fitting only 39% of people (BBC, 2013). Therefore, the new classes division in combination with fashion segments are considered.

The case study demonstrated the partial model application in the modern fashion industry, which can indicate consistency of the alternative trend diffusion model suggested by this research.

5.1. Conclusion

In the qualitative part, according to the results, the main source of ideas for designers are picked from the bottom (step 2) (see Figure 3), where people are considered to be more creative and unpredictable in terms of style generated (step 1). After that, designers transform the idea into fashion industry and develop the 'style-to-follow' in the higher fashion classes (step 3). Styles adopted by the leading brands in the high-end fashion segments are emulated by the lower priced brands, enduring new modifications for the more efficient cost structure execution (outsourced manufacturing in China, for example) (step 4)). On this step, designers make the trend more understandable for the target customer, furnishing it with the typical attributes of the fashion class belonging, like quality and price (step 4). The 'bad taste' example is showing well the influence of haute couture on the whole industry (see Balenciaga and Vetements case in the previous sections). Firstly, being picked from the very bottom of the society, 'bad taste' confidently pervades haute couture and ready-to-wear. This step is flowing together with the step 4 in social pyramid, where opinion leaders facilitate trend diffusion in the own social class via style demonstration. In this step, brands spread the trend via marketing channels using promotion by role models (celebrities, for example). Styles, noticed by opinion leaders are diffused further, being modified by followers, creating variation of style 'usage', reflected in the rhizome theory.

5.2. Implementation

This research is relevant for the fashion business world, as it explains the mechanism of the trend diffusion. The ability to recognize emerging trends by early signs allows to arrange the more efficient collection composition reflecting current social interests. The earlier trends are noticed by designers, buyers and customers, the faster new trends are getting adopted. Faster trends adoption will result in the shorten 'transitional period' from the old to the new trend, in the more riskier buyers' decisions facilitating more frequent twinkling of trend on the market and faster decision-to buy by customer. The overall influence of the trend change is affecting not only fashion industry but the range of other spheres like automotive industry, FMCG, Broadcasting and many others on the micro and macro levels.

5.3. Limitations

The first limitation of this research is consideration of social aspects only, excluding economic and politic factors from the model. This may affect the model incompleteness that lacks explanation of the diffusion mechanisms in the current fashion industry.

Furthermore, there is a missing analysis of the role of social media in the fashion industry and diffusion process. It would be also interesting to have a cluster analysis in the social media, to trace the diffusion process via visual analysis, similar to the one conducted by Vittayakorn et al, (2015).

One of the most important limitations in this research, is that the diffusion process is considered from the point of view of brands' creative representatives like designers and buyers. Nevertheless, it gives a deep insight into the fashion business, the inclusion of strategists, sales people, marketers, etc. in the sample would enrich the research. People, running all the inner processes of the business may reveal another perspective and bring a valuable input into the fashion trend diffusion process research. Therefore, the deeper investigation of the fashion trend diffusion topic is suggested.

Moreover, in this study, the main focus is on diffusion process investigation, lacking profound research of the idea generation phase. Although, the origins of the idea generations are discovered, the more profound research is still required.

The current research included two types of data gathering with three different samples. The first sample group of 6 people is designers. The main limitation is a number of participants and absence of representative of haute-couture fashion segment, which could give a more deeper insight into the model test. One of the participants provided only written answers, which affected the quality of the data received.

The second sample of customer included 50 respondents from all over the world. The heterogeneity of sample in terms of origin countries of respondents makes it impossible to define the behavioral pattern of the European/Asian/American societies. Another limitation is the number of respondents taken part in the research, which might have caused biases in the research data.

For the buyers, sample of 22 professionals from only one company and only men category by Zalando SE are involved in the research. This could have caused bias of not representing the normally distributed sample. The number of respondents is also low, which requires some additional research with the more comprehensive data set.

The limitation of the case study consists in the partial application, because of the missing diffusion in the social pyramid. The diffusion of the trend in the marketing channels is lacking, indicating need for an additional research.

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7. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

(interview questions for designers)

1. In which company/brand are you working? Partner with?

2. What is your occupation/position?

3. To which segment does your brand relate to? (haute couture, prêt-à-porter , diffusion,

bridge or mass-market)

4. For which category do you develop collections? man/woman

5. What is your vision of modern man/woman?

6. What can you define as your 'recognizable' style in collections?

7. What is the root of this idea?

8. What is the idea behind your collections?

9. Which channels do you use to inform yourself about emerging and current trends?

10. To what extent do you rely on emerging and current trends?

11. How do you forecast trends for the next seasons?

12. Do you prefer to include 'secure' proved trends into collection or to try out new

emerging trends?

13. Can you give an example of a new style you offered in your collection? Which season?

14. Where do you think the most of the unique styles that designers can adopt, come from?

From the elite of the society or from the bottom of the social pyramid?

APPENDIX 2

(questionnaire for customers)

Fashion trends diffusion survey

Thank you so much for your contribution to my research on "Fashion trends diffusion model"!
This questionnaire is around 5-7 minutes only, almost no open questions, so I promise, it will not take much of your time, but you will contribute a lot! If you are interested in findings, please let me know and drop me a line on t.levchuk@student.utwente.nl.

When you completed and submitted the survey, your data will be anonymously processed and remain confidential. By submitting the survey, you give your consent that your data will be included in this researches analysis.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Thank you for taking part!

Tanya Levchuk

*Required

Questions Part 1

1. **Your gender** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Male

   ◯ Female

   ◯ Other

2. **Your age?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ >18

   ◯ 18-24

   ◯ 25-34

   ◯ 35-44

   ◯ 45-54

   ◯ 55<

3. **Country of origin** *

   _____

4. **Your occupation?**

   _____

5. **How often do you buy a new garment?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Once a week
- ( ) Once a month
- ( ) Only/mostly on season sales
- ( ) Once a year
- ( ) Other: _____

6. **Which is your favourite brand?** *

_____

7. **You enjoy shopping** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Strongly agree

8. **Where do you usually buy clothes?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Online platforms (i.e. Zalando)
- ( ) Boutiques
- ( ) Shopping malls
- ( ) Other: _____

9. **You can describe yourself as fashion-conscious** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Strongly agree

10. **How often do people ask you for a fashion advice or your opinion about their look ?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Frequently

11. **Is there a person in your surrounding you consider as a very fashionable one?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

12. **How do you inform yourself about the current trends?** *

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Social networks
- [ ] Magazines
- [ ] Fashion shows
- [ ] TV
- [ ] I don't care much about trends
- [ ] Other: _____

13. **Where do you take ideas for your looks?** *

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Social networks
- [ ] Magazines
- [ ] Styles of people on the street
- [ ] Style of people in my surrounding
- [ ] I don't think much about my 'look'
- [ ] Other: _____

Questions Part 2

14. **Do you have an Instagram account?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

15. **How often do you use Instagram ?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Frequently

16. **How much time do you spend on social media in common?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Frequently

17. **Do you have subscriptions to other people's Instagram accounts you think are fashionable?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Maybe

18. **Are there any celebrities among them?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) Maybe
- ( ) Other: _____

19. **This celebrity/these celebrities are professionally related to the fashion world (have own brand/are top-models/designers/etc)** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) I don't follow any celebrity on social media

20. **Have you ever bought anything similar to what you have seen on the Instagram of this personality/these personalities?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) I don't follow any celebrity on social media
- ( ) Other: _____

21. **Take a look at the pictures below - which jeans would you rather buy? (for you or friend)** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Optic
- ( ) Othe

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22. **Take a look at the pictures below - which jeans would you rather buy? (for you or friend)** *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Option 1   ◯ Option 2
◯ Other: _____

23. **How often do you post own looks on instagram?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Frequently

24. **How often do you notice that people are "copying" your style?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Frequently

25. **How often do you watch TV?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Frequently

26. **How often do you read fashion-magazines?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Frequently

Questions Part 3

27. What is your favourite trend? *

Mark only one oval.

( ) Pastel colours

( ) Checks

( ) Bold colours

( ) Ruffles

( ) Puff-ball sleeves

( ) Over-size

( ) White sneakers   ( ) 80's
( ) Other:

28. Do you have a garment representing your favourite trend? *
Mark only one oval.

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) Other: _____

29. How would you estimate appearance frequency of your favourite trend in the marketing channels? *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very low	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Very high

30. How would you estimate the popularity of your favourite trend among your associates? *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very unpopular	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Very popular

31. If I see a style I like on my fashionable fellow, I am likely to buy it *
Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Strongly agree

32. If I see a style, which I like, on my fashionable fellow, I am likely to adopt it, but with modifications *
Mark only one oval.

     1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33. **If I have never seen a style around but only in magazines - I'm not likely to adopt it** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

34. **Would you avoid adopting a style demonstrated by your fellows, even if you like it?** *

Mark only one oval.

◯ I don't see any problem here, so I would definitely buy similar or same items

◯ I probably will combine things in a different way

◯ I don't want to look similar to anyone, so I would likely not adopt or buy it

◯ Other: _____

35. **How would you estimate popularity of plastic transparent shoes?** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very unpopular	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very popular

36. **How do you estimate trend appearance frequency in the marketing channel?**

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very low	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very high

37. **Which of the below answers best describe your cohorts/people you interact with on a daily basis?** *

Mark only one oval.

○ Wealth people, enjoy high cultural activities (museums, classical music, etc.) went/go to elite universities, socialise with people who do a wide variety of jobs

○ Enjoy a diverse range of cultural activities, went/go to university, work in management or the traditional professions, are comfortably off, secure and established

○ Mix socially with people similar to themselves, work in research, science and technical fields, enjoy emerging culture (gym, using social media, etc)

○ Sociable, have lots of cultural interests, middle - wealth, do not tend to participate in high culture, such as classical music and theatre, young, come from a working class background, own their own home

○ Have some financial security, own their own home, are older, tend to mix socially with people similar to themselves, tend not to enjoy emerging culture (gym or using social media)

○ Financially insecure, socialise with a broad range of people, but enjoy a cultured social life and rent their home

○ Financially insecure, mix socially with people like themselves, have a broad range of cultural interests, come from a working class background, rent their home, live in old industrial areas away from urban centres

38. **Which of the below answers describe you the best?** *

Mark only one oval.

○ Wealth, enjoy high cultural activities (museums, classical music, etc.) went/go to elite university, socialise with people who do a wide variety of jobs

○ Enjoy a diverse range of cultural activities, went/go to university, work in management or the traditional professions, comfortably off, secure and established

○ Mix socially with people similar to themselves, work in research, science and technical fields, enjoy emerging culture (gym, using social media, etc)

○ Sociable, have lots of cultural interests, middle - wealth, do not tend to participate in high culture, such as classical music and theatre, young, come from a working class background, own my own home

○ Have some financial security, own my own home, average-aged, mix socially with people similar to myself, tend not to enjoy emerging culture (gym or using social media)

○ Have some financial security, own my own home, average-aged, mix socially with people similar to myself, tend not to enjoy emerging culture (gym or using social media)

○ Financially insecure, mix socially with people like myself, have a broad range of cultural interests, come from a working class background, rent home, live in old industrial areas away from urban centres

APPENDIX 3

Survey on fashion trends diffusion

Dear colleague,
Thank you a lot for finding a time and contributing to this research for my master thesis, which I am about to defend this August. The research is devoted to the topic of fashion trends diffusion and your professional expertise is a key to get the insight into this process. The survey will take not more then 3-4 minutes of your time!
If you are interested in the results, drop me a line on tatiana.levchuk@zalando.de!

Best,
Tatiana Levchuk
Merchandise Planning Assistant

*Required

Skip to question 1.

Questions Part 1

1. **What is your position?** *

2. **In which company/brand are you working?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Zalando SE

   ◯ Zalando Lounge

   ◯ zLabels

   ◯ Other: _____

3. **In which category cluster are you working?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Women

   ◯ Men

   ◯ Sports

   ◯ Speciality

   ◯ Other: _____

(questionnaire for buyers)

4. **In which budget category are you working?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Women Textile
- ( ) Women Footwear
- ( ) Women Accessories
- ( ) Women Underwear & Beachwear
- ( ) Men Textile
- ( ) Men Footwear
- ( ) Men Accessories
- ( ) Men Underwear & Beachwear
- ( ) Sports
- ( ) Premium

5. **In which price segment are you working?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Haute-couture (Examples: Dior, Valentino, Celine)
- ( ) Prêt-à-porter (Examples: first lines of Escada, Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Gianfranco Ferré and Prada)
- ( ) Diffusion/ better (Examples: Armani Collezioni, Miu Miu, Prada's second line, and DieselStyleLab)
- ( ) Bridge/better (Examples: Diesel, MaxMara and Calvin Klein)
- ( ) Mass-market (Examples: Gap, H&M, Zara, Bershka)

6. **What are the main brands you are working with? (name at least 2)** *

Questions Part 2

7. **On what do you base your order decision?** *

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Analysis
- [ ] Own vision
- [ ] Brand representative's recommendation
- [ ] Competitor analysis
- [ ] All from above
- [ ] Other:

8. **To what extent does your own vision of the modern man/woman influence your decision to include a new style in the order?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Always follow my own notion of modern man/woman
- ( ) Follow my own notion of modern man/woman in questionable situations only
- ( ) Prefer to get a recommendation from more experienced colleagues
- ( ) Prefer to get a recommendation from brand representative

9. **How do you inform yourself about upcoming/emerging trends?** *

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Fashion shows
- [ ] Magazines
- [ ] Social networks
- [ ] TV
- [ ] Competitors analysis
- [ ] Other: _____

10. **Which fashion price segment do you think creates a style 'to-follow' (style that everyone tends to emulate)?** *

Tick all that apply.

- [ ] Haute couture (Examples: Dior, Valentino, Celine)
- [ ] Prêt-à-porter (Examples: first lines of Escada, Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Gianfranco Ferré and Prada)
- [ ] Diffusion (Examples: Armani Collezioni, Miu Miu, Prada's second line, and DieselStyleLab)
- [ ] Bridge/better (Examples: Diesel, MaxMara and Calvin Klein)
- [ ] Mass-market (Examples: Gap, H&M, Zara, Bershka)

11. **Would you include a new style, which you haven't planned to include into your order before, if it is strongly recommended by a brand representative?** *

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) I will include a trial amount in the PO
- ( ) I will not risk even if I have a budget left (will use it for reorders later)
- ( ) I would better take more of another SKUs which perform well
- ( ) Other: _____

12. **You consider success of a new style offered by a brand as a more likely one, if the similar style was presented by (other) brands in the higher (prêt-à-porter or haute couture) price segments** *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Strongly agree

13. **Which brand do you consider being worth to follow in terms of styles and designer's solutions (brand trend-setter)?** *

_____

APPENDIX 4

Extended network of codes in Atlas.it (developed by the author)
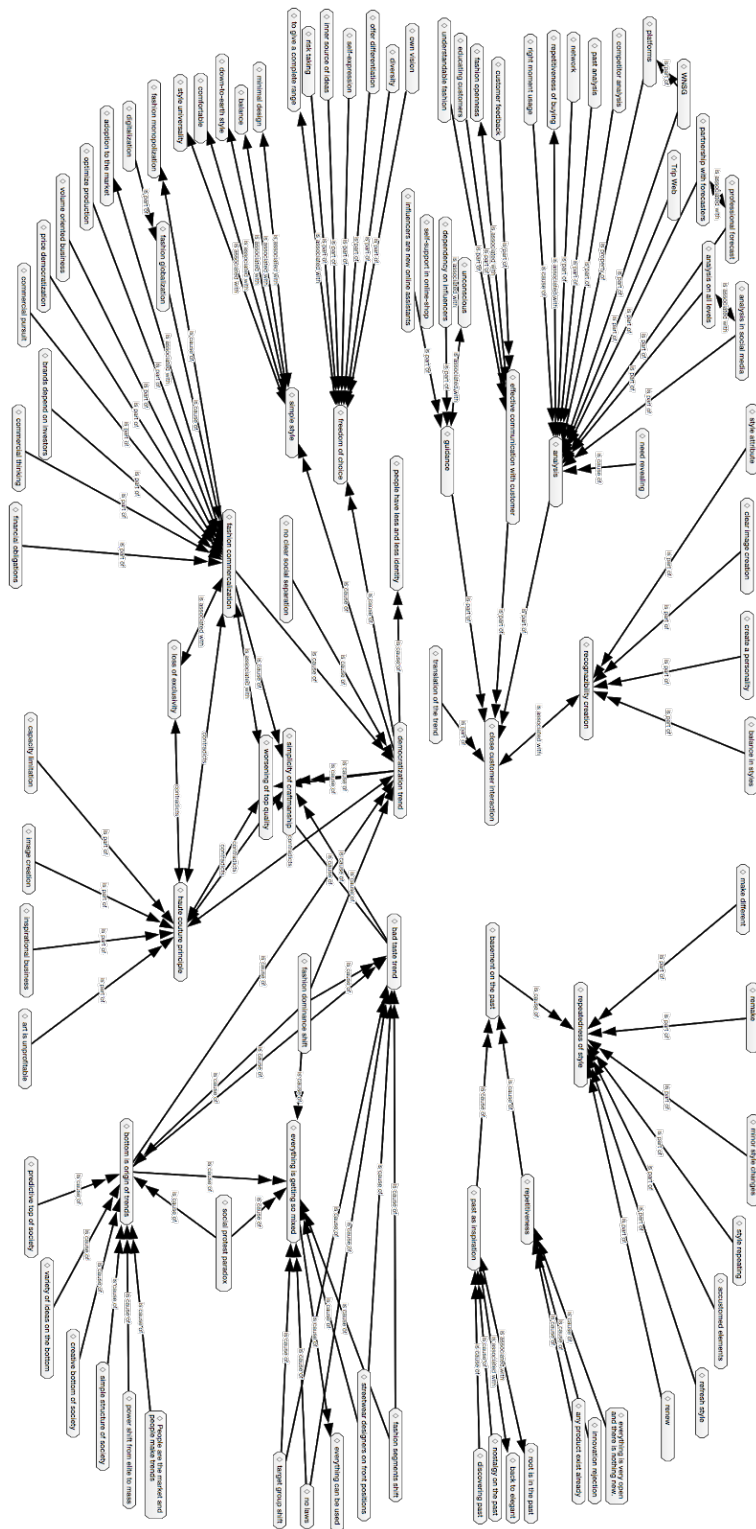
APPENDIX 5

Variables meaning from customer survey

variable	label	question/explanation
gndr	gender	Your gender
age	age	Your age?
cntr	country	Country of origin
occp	occupation	Your occupation?
bfreq	buying new garment frequency	How often do you buy a new garment?
fb	favourite trend	Which is your favourite brand?
sh_enj	shopping enjoying	You enjoy shopping
buy_loc	buying clothes locations	Where do you usually buy clothes?
fash_consc	fashion consciosness	You can describe yourself as fashion-conscious
fash_expert	fashion expertise	How often do people ask you for a fashion advice or your opinion about their look ?
sur_fash	fashionable person in surrounding	Is there a person in your surrounding you consider as a very fashionable one?
tr_total	info sources about trends	How do you inform yourself about the current trends? (multiple response)
tr_inf1	info source about trends (social network)	
tr_inf2	info source about trends (magazines)	
tr_inf3	info source about trends (fashion shows)	
tr_inf4	info source about trends (TV)	
tr_inf5	info source about trends (I don't care much about trends)	
tr_inf6	info source about trends (network)	
Id_total		Where do you take ideas for your looks? (multiple response)
id_lk1	ideas source for the look (social network)	
id_lk2	ideas source for the look (magazines)	
id_lk3	ideas source for the look (styles of people on the street)	
id_lk4	ideas source for the look (style of people in my surrounding)	
id_lk5	ideas source for the look (I don't think much about my 'look')	
id_lk6	ideas source for the look (other)	
Instgr	Instagram account	Do you have an Instagram account?
Inst_freq	Instagram usage	How often do you use Instagram ?
scl_m	time spending in social media	How much time do you spend on social media in common?
Inst_subscr	subscriptions to fashionable people	Do you have subscriptions to other people's Instagram accounts you think are fashionable?
Inst_subscr_celeb	celebrities subscriptions	Are there any celebrities among them?
prof_fash	celebrity fashion career	This celebrity/these celebrities are professionally related to the fashion world (have own brand/are top-models/designers/etc)
buy	bought style similar to demonstrated by celebrity	Have you ever bought anything similar to what you have seen on the Instagram of this personality/these personalities?
j_test1	Jeans test women	Take a look at the pictures below - which jeans would you rather buy? (for you or friend)
j_test2	Jeans test men	Take a look at the pictures below - which jeans would you rather buy? (for you or friend)
post_lk	Instagram looks posting	How often do you post own looks on instagram?
copy_freq	other copying respondent's style	How often do you notice that people are "copying" your style?
TV_freq	TV usage	How often do you watch TV?

mgzns	fashion-magazines usage	How often do you read fashion-magazines?
fav_trnd	favourite trend	What is your favourite trend?
fav_trnd_bt	garment representing the favourite trend owning	Do you have a garment representing your favourite trend?
fav_trnd_mc	appearance frequency of favourite trend in the marketir	How would you estimate appearance frequency of your favourite trend in the marketing channels?
fav_trnd_s	popularity of favourite trend among associates	How would you estimate the popularity of your favourite trend among your associates?
t1adpt	If I see a style I like on my fashionable fellow, I am likely t	If I see a style I like on my fashionable fellow, I am likely to buy it
t2prtadpt	If I see a style, which I like, on my fashionable fellow, I ar	If I see a style, which I like, on my fashionable fellow, I am likely to adopt it, but with modifications
t3	If I have never seen a style around but only in magazines	If I have never seen a style around but only in magazines - I'm not likely to adopt it
t4	Would you avoid adopting a style demonstrated by your	Would you avoid adopting a style demonstrated by your fellows, even if you like it?
t5	popularity of plastic transparent shoes	How would you estimate popularity of plastic transparent shoes?
t6	plastic transparent shoes appearance frequency in the m	How do you estimate trend appearance frequency in the marketing channel?
Soc_class_p	social class of cohorts	Which of the below answers best describe your cohorts/people you interact with on a daily basis?
Soc_class_own	social class of respondent	Which of the below answers describe you the best?
TSC_4119	TwoStep Cluster Number	Two clusters split: opinion leaders and followers
celeb_ef	absolute celebrity effect on buying decision	Celebrity effect on buying decision (if two pictures with celebrities/one or non have been chosen)
celeb_ef1	celebrity effect on buying decision	Celebrity effect on buying decision (if at least one picture or no have been chosen)
RankIndicator	favourite brand segment indicator	The segment of the favourite brand
adpt_lvl	adoption level	Adoption level by respondent (full adoption/partial (with some modification)/no adoption)

APPENDIX 6

Variables meaning from buyers survey

variable	label	question/explanation
pstn	position	What is your position?
cmpny	company	In which company/brand are you working?
cat	category	In which category / cluster are you working?
bdgt	budget category	In which budget category are you working?
prc_sgmnt	price segment	In which price segment are you working?
brnd_names	brands	What are the main brands you are working with? (name at least 2)
base_total	decision base	On what do you base your order decision? (multiple response)
base_anls	decision base (internal analysis)	
own_v	decision base (own vision)	
rprr	decision base (competitiors analysis)	
comp_anls	decision base (recommendation of brand representative)	
vision_ordr	own vision influence	To what extent does your own vision of the modern man/woman influence your decision to include a new style in the order?
inf_total	information sources about trends	How do you inform yourself about upcoming/emerging trends? (multiple response)
inf_mgzn	information about trends (magazines)	
inf_fshshw	information about trends (fashion shows)	
scnt	information about trends (social network)	
cmpanls	information about trends (competitior analysis)	
strchk	information about trends (stores check)	
plt	information about trends (platforms)	
sgmt_lead	origin segment of 'style-to-follow'	Which fashion price segment do you think creates a style 'to-follow' (style that everyone tends to emulate)?
stl_incl	style inclusion	Would you include a new style, which you haven't planned to include into your order before, if it is strongly recommended by a brand representative?
trnd_securt	trend security	You consider success of a new style offered by your brand as a more likely one, if the similar style was presented by (other) brands in the higher (prêt-à-porter or haute couture) price segments
brnd_trndsttr	brand-trendsetter	Brand trend setter