Digital Fashion Media
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Reporting the trends
Trends are the equivalent of the journalistic angle, they are useful to organize and make sense of the hundreds of new collections shown during the fashion weeks.

An editor can demonstrate his or her credentials by picking up on micro-trends on the street before anyone else - the equivalent of the journalistic exclusive.
“The industry has created trends that we receive into our lives as the need to be regularly refreshed and updated, and be new and improved at all times. That’s where the connection we have with the joy of clothes and the joy of dressing up has been corrupted. I question a system that is so wasteful we don’t invest enough meaning in products we choose now”.

Caryn Franklin, fashion editor All Walks Beyond the Catwalks
Is there still a place for mainstream trends dictated by fashion editors in the digitalized world of fashion communication?

More people seek inspirations from blogs and street style and brands can connect much more directly with consumers.
The answer of fashion editors is:

YES, MORE THAN EVER

PEOPLE NEED THE ‘EDITORIAL EYE’

do provide guidance through the maze of endless products and information now available to the public.
The problem now is not more how to find information, but how to select.
Trend bureaux like Nelly Rodi in France or With Global Style Network in London, monitor street style around the world, trade shows, graduate shows, cultural events and consumer patterns to produce trend reports 18 months in advance for fashion houses and retailers.
The editorial eye is the spin that a journalist or editor will put on a trend or a story to make it relevant to their reader, it’s the experts, integrity and taste they deploy to sift out the good products or looks from the indifferent; it’s the context and stories that they weave around products to turn them into fashion, and it’s the imagination and point of view they bring to bear on photos and shoots.
“Realistically, who wants to go out on a limb? There’s strength in numbers”
( Mick Dixon, designer, 2013)

This is on the industry side.
On the journalistic side, trends are the equivalent of an angle or a peg. They give the journalists a reason for writing about certain items and provide a handy theme to group them into. It’s like putting each piece into context.
On the consumer side fashion academics developed theories about the diffusion of fashion and trends. One theory is that social class is the driver of fashion.

Economist Thorstein Veblen came up with the phrase ‘conspicuous consumption’ in his book *Theory of the Leisure Class (1899)* to describe how the upper class used fashion to display their wealth and continually changed styles as a sign of conspicuous waste.
The Veblen’s theory was developed into the trickle-down theory, most often associated with the sociologist Georg Simmel. When the new styles adopted by the social elite are copied by the lower classes, and become mass fashion, the elite are forced to move on to another style to maintain their distinctiveness.
'As fashion spreads, it gradually goes to its doom'

(George Simmel, Fashion, 1904)
The talk of social class might seem antiquated, but it is easily translated into the wealthy or influential style leaders of today.

What is a LV logo if not a sign of conspicuous consumption and status?
Other theorists have pointed out that not all new trends come down from designers and their wealthy clients, but rather start on the street and rise up to the catwalk.

This is the **bubble-up theory, of Ted Polhemus (the book is Streetstyle, 1994)** and explains the rise of garments like denim jeans and the T-shirt, and styles like Mod in the 1960s and Punk in the 1970s.
Fashion is a symbolic system, a way we communicate our identity, ideas and taste to others. It explains why branding is so important in fashion, the so called ‘intangible value’.

It’s the idea of ‘looking-glass self’ from the sociologist Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*, 1902): when you’re trying to construct a fashion identity, it’s not how you look, but the image that you think you’re putting out to other people that counts.
Defining a trend. Every style has to have a name. Some have gone down in history, as Dior’s New Look (1947) or A-line (1955).
“Certainly a name easy to remember, is a desired feature of any new product fighting for attention in mass media reporting”.

(Yuniwa Kawamura, 2005)
Some trends are perennial, others are more of-the-moment, coined by fashion editors trying to put a fresh twist on established styles or to find a cohesive movement within the new season’s collections. It’s also a chance for a publication to put its own spin on a trend by coming up with a catchy title that would appeal to its particular readers.
Trends can be defined by the following:

- Type of fabric
- colors and patterns
- cuts, shapes and silhouettes
- parts of the body
- trophy items or hero items
- historical era
- a particular aesthetic
- ways of wearing clothes
As well as referring back to the collections, journalists will also be on the lookout for micro-trends that emerge during a season. This may be sparked by what a celebrity is wearing, a particular event, or a look or range that has taken off on the high street.

As always, editors and journalists bear in mind their target audience when picking out trends to focus on.
Target audience also dictates the ways trends are covered.

In fashion magazines and websites, it’s a give that readers are interested in trends, so they will be presented straightforwardly in online galleries and print spreads.

Newspapers and supplements have a more general reader, so are much more likely to deal with trends in terms of how to wear them, and why not to be scared of them.
A large part of a fashion writer or editor's job is monitoring and identifying trends.

**where trends emerge:**

- catwalk
- celebrities and public figures
- press days
- popular and high culture
- street style
- social media
- trade and graduate shows
Trend-spotting is a science in that you take in as much information as possible and stories will emerge, but it can also feel like a fairly subjective and instinctive thing. The clues are there but almost intangible, and perhaps not everyone sees what you’re seeing.
Trend reports

- pin down the trend

- explain why it’s big now

- stress why the reader should try it

- pinpoint where it’s been seen on that season’s catwalk, 2/3 references

- detail how it’s been translated to the high street

- add in celebrity references if possible and relevant to the audience

- give instructions on how to wear/ do the trend
Trend reports should be written in a relaxed, lively and inclusive style. Like features they should begin with something to hook the reader and pull them in - an anecdote or a provocative question.
Recommendation pieces

A recommendation piece is structured like a feature, pulling us into the story, whether we are initially interested in the brand or not. It often begins with an anecdote and writes about the product in the context of an era or a lifestyle, with lots of research and facts about its history and where it’s made.

Practical details like a price and where the product is available are included but not highlighted - anything promotional would jar with the tone of the piece - and often appear in a bullet-pointed paragraph at the end.

Interestingly, recommendation pieces seem to be more a feature of men’s fashion journalism rather than women’s.