

FASHION TRENDS: HOW POLITICAL HAPPENINGS INFLUENCE CONSUMERS'
MINDSETS

By

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FASHION TRENDS: HOW POLITICAL HAPPENINGS INFLUENCE CONSUMERS' MINDSETS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on how fashion products have the capacity of translating social, political and cultural happenings, influencing preferences in dress style and precipitating trends. Based on four case studies, this research explores how cultural and societal developments influence the consumption of dress styles. This includes understanding how garments and accessories associated with social causes are received by consumers. Such knowledge is useful in accurately predicting the likelihood of a trend's adoption. The data collected from the case studies was sifted via a content analysis methodology. Study findings support that consumers' identification with the social cause linked to a fashion product significantly increases their adoption as a trend. Furthermore, the study also demonstrates that the presence of a number of actors is needed in order for trends to achieve inception and their subsequent dissemination.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A fashion trend is a tendency of the next fashion. The trends are influenced by a number of factors (e.g. social, political, economical and cultural), as well as the consumer's point of view or emotions (Cho & Lee, 2005). As to the term "trending", it is usually used when we see something being bought by several individuals. When this happens, it is common knowledge that a large amount of people has agreed on liking the said artefact, making it important for others to acquire one as well. This process happens with a range of objects, but the term trend is usually used the most when referring to fashion items. In fashion, every season brings with it new trending items, which are seen in runways, worn by celebrities as well as by regular people. Trends come and go, with people adhering to them or not. A trend may stay current for one or more seasons and being discussed by in the fashion industry and on the streets.

As described by Vejlgaard (2007), the word trend refers to an abrupt change in taste, such as the shift experienced when consumers become very interested in a specific item of clothing. In this sense, it seems important to fashion practitioners to understand why some dress choices are simply forgotten, while others are embraced by people, developing into a popular fashion trend.

In the present research, the wearing of clothes is understood as dress, which can then become fashion if those items of dress are embraced by society at large for a set period of time (Navarro Delgado, 2018, par. 11). This is significant because social groups and brands have been using dress as a platform to bring attention to specific social issues or political agendas. Some of these social or political causes can also be categorized as cultural trends if they resonate with society at large. In addition, the way cultural, political and societal happenings influence dress can also be connected to fashion trend changes and consumer's engagement with them.

Since I am a psychologist with a previous master's degree in strategic design, focused on consumer behaviour through a cognitive approach, I believe that studying how social happenings shape dress change provides an opportunity to apply my knowledge and training to the fashion field. Thus, my study answers questions related to the way cultural and societal developments influence dress style, how the resulting fashion products are received by consumers and what factors may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption.

With these questions in mind, the present research contributes to the understanding of fashion's consumers' behaviour, especially with the purpose of gaining knowledge on how consumers perceive dress items and the cultural or aesthetic movement to which they correspond. By understanding the development of preferences in consumers' minds, fashion practitioners would be better positioned to identify fashion products that would be embraced or rejected by consumers. In addition, fashion scholars can draw from this research to gain a better understanding of how larger cultural and societal changes affect the fashion field. Since fashion studies is a fairly new discipline, the use of dress to address political, cultural and societal trends is something that has not been researched extensively. Thus, this study explores not only how fashion communicates and translates what is happening in the world through dress styles, but also how the general population engages with the resulting dress items.

The next chapter will present Vejlgaard's trend theory as the basis for the Theoretical Framework of this study, followed by a Literature Review containing a subchapter where studies on how consumers interact with advertising in fashion are shown. Afterwards, the Methodology is described, followed by Research Findings, Discussion, Research Limitations and Conclusions.

Chapter Two: Vejlggaard's Trend Theory Framework

Trend theory is used in this study to anchor the relationship between socio-political changes and the adoption of dress styles. For those involved in the study of fashion design and style, the word trend is used when referring to a sudden change in taste - such as an interest by the consumers in a particular item of clothing (Vejlggaard, 2007). According to Vejlggaard (2007), from the perspective of trend theory, a trend can be understood as a story where one person or a group of people “create something new, in one way or another” (p. 05). The main plot of the story, according to Vejlggaard (2007), revolves around the trendsetters. As proposed by Kim, Fiore, and Kim (2013), trendsetters are individuals who disseminate the original storyline and affect the interest of others, influencing the “creation and diffusion of new styles” (p. 08). Trends are observable in all human spheres, with agents from different professions using the term in a variety of contexts (Vejlggaard, 2007). Fashion is one of these fields, with the fashion industry using the word trend more consistently since the last third of the 20th century (Vejlggaard, 2007).

Trendsetters are so important because they initiate the stylistic change that then becomes mainstream. During the diffusion phase of the process, the trend may take hold or not. It is during the diffusion stage that it is possible to map people's response to innovation over time (Brannon, 2010). A trend then is understood as the very first stages of the process of stylistic change (Vejlggaard, 2007). Furthermore, it is important to be aware of the processes that lead to trend changes, since it takes time for a portion of the population to be affected by a trend. In other words, a trend will not start out of a sudden; it takes some time for that to happen (Vejlggaard, 2007). This is because even if trendsetters adopt a piece of clothing and begin to wear it, it does not necessarily mean that it will be widely adopted and become a trend. More often than not, what is adopted by trendsetters dies out shortly (Vejlggaard, 2007).

To know how it is that a trend breakout occurs, Vejlggaard (2007) describes that it is important to understand “the communicable possibilities of what the trendsetters have adopted” (p.149). Furthermore, according to Kim et al. (2013), fashion designers and labels need to know what their customers will want a year in advance. This way they can start conceptualizing designs and sourcing products’ manufacturing ahead of the fashion cycle. If they can recognize a trend and use this information when creating their products, they increase the chances of consumer adoption.

When a trend changes simultaneously in the cultural, economic, political or technological fields, the term *megatrend* is used by Vejlggaard (2007). Megatrends cross industry lines, leading to shifts in lifestyles and usually last for over a decade, influencing the purchase decisions of a big portion of society (Brannon, 2010). Through this, it is possible for us to understand that changes in other fields may influence fashion changes, leading to yet new trends in fashion and cultural spheres. In addition, it is important to notice that from the trend theory perspective, “fashions are temporal by nature” (Kim et al., 2013, p. 02), with some styles becoming popular for being accepted in a certain social situation. This is crucial in understanding that fashion plays an important part “in the evolving cultural environment” (Brannon, 2010, p. 15).

Chapter Three: Literature Review

To investigate the current state of the literature on dress diffusion and consumer behaviour, it was necessary to conduct a preliminary literature review. With this purpose, a google scholar search for peer-reviewed papers with the words *fashion AND consumer AND advertising* was conducted. From the 550.000 results found, I chose to use in my research the first six papers available and relevant to my study (written in English, from the year 2000 onward, that focused on consumer's engagement with fashion products through advertising, studying how this interaction happened and topics related to purchasing decisions). These six papers that are used in this literature review and touched on below. In addition, another four studies on how culture, social norms and politics may impact preferences in dress style were added to this literature review.

From the numbers found on the search for studies for the literature review, it is possible to observe that several authors have been studying the way dress diffusion occurs. As seen in the work of Atik and Firat (2013), Moeran (2006), O'Cass (2000), Lerman and Callow (2004), Phillips et al (2010) and Mackinney-Valentin (2013), several players are needed to bring items of clothing to people's attention. Thus, the fashion system is constituted by a number of agents who interact in a social and cultural context through different communicative means. Next, a subchapter focused on how consumers interact with advertising in fashion is presented, containing the major findings from these studies. In addition, another subchapter with studies on how cultural, social and political aspects may influence preferences in dress style is presented.

How Consumers Interact with Advertisings in Fashion

From the papers selected, five of them serve to illustrate how consumers interact with fashion items through the use of advertising. For example, the research developed by O'Cass

(2000) focused on understanding consumer behaviour and how to improve market strategies. In “An assessment of consumers product, purchase decision, advertising and consumption involvement in fashion clothing”, the author studied purchasing and consumer behaviour in relation to specific fashion market segments, testing four types of involvements (product, purchase decision, advertising and consumption). In addition, the author proposes a term called “consumer involvement” (p. 549), explaining that a set of diverse involvements occur and operate within consumers. O’Cass method of study was divided into three steps: first, three expert judges reviewed the items that would become part of the questionnaire; afterwards, a pilot survey was tested with a sample of 80 students; finally, a sample of 900 students responded to the questionnaire, with 450 of the responses considered usable by the author.

From conducting a quantitative analysis of the answers provided by the students, O’Cass (2000) results suggest that many consumers perceive fashion as being something important or relevant, but they may not have significant interest or attachment to a product, not paying much attention to it. Therefore, these group of fashion consumers would be considered as ‘low involvement consumers’. Since I also want to study consumer’s engagement with fashion, O’Cass’ results make me wonder about consumer’s involvement with fashion choices that result from clear societal and cultural developments. Do ‘low involvement consumers’ show more involved with items resulting from social and cultural development than with others? The results from the author may help me understand more about the relationship between dress statements influenced by social and cultural trends and consumers’ involvement.

In another paper, entitled “Content analysis in cross-cultural advertising research: insightful or superficial?”, Lerman and Callow (2004) studied the limitations of using content analysis in cross-cultural advertisement (ads) research. The researchers believe that there is a lack

of studies focused on how consumers interpret ads. Therefore, they argue that there should be more focus on consumer interpretations of cross-cultural advertising since this would lead to more interesting and relevant data for both academics and fashion practitioners. In their study, Lerman and Callow compared ten ads for hard liquor and other ten for cars released in Spain and the United States. They collected consumer's narratives derived from the ads, with a sample of 10 ads per country; with two countries and five consumers interpreting each ad, leading to 95 completed narratives (one person did not complete the task). Afterwards, four judges constructed a coding scheme and then used it to code the narratives via a quantitative analysis. Lerman and Callow's findings suggest that using narrative coding, instead of ad coding, could help overcome the limitations inherent to a content analysis of ads. This is because what would be analyzed is the consumers' interpretation of the ad, not the message assumed by those who created it. This approach is more effective since consumers may not perceive the same meaning as the one expected by the researchers. Since my study focuses in fashion narratives based on societal and cultural development, the use of narrative coding is more effective in uncovering how fashion brands are communicating their concepts to consumers and how these are being understood by consumers.

Another study helped with my research is the one conducted by Atik and Firat (2013) entitled "Fashion creation and diffusion: The institution of marketing.". This study focused on fashion marketing. Marketing is usually understood as a practice of business organizations, involving strategies aimed to uncover consumers desires and provide for those desires in a two-way communication process. The authors studied marketing in the contexts of the creation and diffusion of fashion. They concluded that marketing is a practice related to the modern fashion industry, involving consumers, fashion business organizations and fashion designers. Through a

qualitative inquiry with consumers and marketing companies, they performed in-depth interviews with fifteen consumers and eight fashion practitioners to gain insights on their decisions and choices. With this method, the researchers were able to also provide a perspective on how trickle-up, trickle-across and trickle-down trend diffusions occur in fashion simultaneously. Atik and Firat's findings relate to how different agents have diverse marketing roles and responsibilities within an institution.

One of Atik and Firat's (2013) most relevant findings are regarding fashion magazines, which are "where the most knowledgeable about fashion congregate" (p. 849). The researchers' conclusion is that fashion magazines are the most trustworthy medium to know what is fashionable and what isn't at any given time. The authors concluded that all parts of the fashion system, including the consumers and marketing departments, interact with each other to establish what is coming into fashion. The results Atik and Firat's research shed light into one of the core questions of my own research: how fashion is disseminated through players (brands, consumers, magazines, catwalks, red carpets) and within a specific socio-cultural context. In this sense, understanding how the diffusion of fashion trends happens (trickle-up, trickle across or trickle down) helps me to comprehend the relationship between fashion narratives and their corresponding *zeitgeist* (spirit of the times).

Also focusing on the different players involved in the fashion system, Moeran (2006), in the article entitled as "More than just a fashion magazine", analyzed the relationships between fashion magazine's staff, readers, advertisers and the fashion content represented in fashion magazines. Moeran (2006) used in his research the content from more than 40 open-ended interviews with the fashion magazine publishers, editors and art directors from five top fashion cities around the world (Paris, London, New York, Tokyo and Hong Kong). The research covered

four international fashion magazines (*Vogue*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Marie Claire*), published between 1995 and 2005. To analyze the content, Moeran (2006) used Becker's analysis of art worlds theory, under the principle that fashion magazines are simultaneously cultural products and commodities. Furthermore, Moeran (2006) concluded that fashion magazine production has 'multiple audience' properties, which enables magazines to link cultural production to the reception of fashion trends.

Consumers and scholars need fashion magazines since those publications provide them with an understanding of what is in fashion at a specific time in history. Magazines help construct a collective understanding of what is in fashion by translating fashion trends from an abstract idea of aesthetic discourse into everyday dress style. Since this aesthetical view is not unified, Moeran proposes that a more nuanced analysis of cultural production should be taking place, one that takes in consideration the different values (technical, appreciative, social and useful/utilitarian) that consumers bring "as they convert symbolic into commodity exchange" (p. 725). In addition, Moeran (2006) focuses on how sensibility, public taste and aesthetic or stylistic judgment in fashion, may be influenced by several agents (e.g. designers, editors, stylists, models, etc.). Those agents operate together in constructing the taste standards and criteria of aesthetic value used to judge fashion artefacts and products. This research touches on points that relate to my own study, such as the cultural production and reception of fashion. In this sense, the Moeran's (2006) take on how consumer brings different values when trying to convert the fashion magazine's symbols into commodities helps me to understand how consumers engage with the political/cultural discourses carried by fashion products.

Concerning fashion magazines, Phillips et al. (2010) studied narratives transported in advertising in their paper "Narrative and persuasion in fashion advertising". The authors point out

that narrative transportation has not been incorporated into theories of advertising response, with other authors denying that rhetorical documents like advertising can lead to narrative transportation. Because of this, Phillips et al. would like to integrate narrative transportation into consumer behaviour theory. Using the lens of aesthetic theory, the authors identified and analyzed advertising images labelled as grotesque. They employed a pilot questionnaire, which was completed by 130 female college students. Afterwards, 18 participants took part in in-depth interviews, that were then analyzed using grounded theory.

Phillips et al. found that consumers engage with ads to act, identify, feel, transport, or immerse themselves on their content. The researchers specifically focused on the last two types of engagement, since the consumers that were interviewed associated the grotesque images with themselves. Transportation happens when close attention is paid to the story cues in the ad's images, with consumers being drawn to the complexity of the images. Immersion, on the other hand, is when "women are looking for creative, innovative, and evocative pictures" (p. 387), approaching the ads as if they were on display in an art gallery. The authors introduced routes to persuasion, an intensification of brand experience, with viewers taking up the occasion that is being offered by the brand, developing their own story and making the brand part of it. They concluded that each of the five modes of engaging with fashion advertising is a distinct route to persuasion. Since the authors conducted interviews when trying to understand consumer's reaction to fashion ads, it illuminates for me how consumers engage with fashion discourses. The terms transportation and immersion help me study consumer's involvement with what is being presented to them through fashion narratives.

Another relevant paper was the theoretical article "Trend mechanisms in contemporary fashion", where Mackinney-Valentin (2013) studied trends in fashion, proposing to conceptualize

"natural law of trend mechanisms in fashion" (p. 67). 'Natural', for Mackinney-Valentin (2013), is understood as the inherent mechanism that acts not under human actions. Fashion, on the other hand, is seen as a system of innovation, with changes happening around the industry and its consumers in the context of social and cultural agendas. Therefore, from the author's view, fashion trends can be understood as spatial, comparable to a rhizome, which displays an uncertain or open system. In this spatial structure, trends grow horizontally through mutation, variation, and connection. By their spatial understanding, fashion trends tend to develop slowly and gradually and not as chaotic, relative, and radically changing with high frequency, as proposed by the temporal understanding of contemporary fashion. Mackinney-Valentin's research touches on how fashion is inserted in a social and cultural context that needs to be taken into consideration. This is the first concept that I address in my research since my starting point is how social and cultural aspects may influence dress trends.

In summary, the aforementioned authors studied the creation and diffusion of fashion, focusing on how the fashion system is constituted by a set of players, interacting through several means. More specifically, they focused on consumer behaviour and how people engage with the narratives credited to the items of clothing, which may lead to a kind of involvement with it. Consumers, then, will attribute meaning to what they are perceiving. Furthermore, the cultural and societal context surrounding both the producer and the recipient of an item of dress plays a significant role in the creation and diffusion of it. A gap then is found in understanding how the interaction between consumers and dress may happen, focusing on how cultural, social and political aspects may influence preferences in dress style. Additionally, there is also a lack of clarity as to how will this interaction lead to a trend's adoption or not.

How Cultural, Social and Political Aspects Influence Dress Style

Fashion has the power to influence a range of aspects of people's lives, having both economic and social value and providing tools for individuals to express themselves, creating an identity (Blumenstein, 2014). In addition, fashion is not only connected to people, but also to what is happening around the world.

As proposed by Kunz (1996), one of the factors that may influence fashion is social change, with the speed of the change in fashion being compatible to how great the social change is. As an example, the author points out the casual floral attire from the 1960s, perceived as a symbol of the social movement that was happening, due to how different it was from the formal and conservative style of the decade before that. Thus, "fashion evolves as society modifies its norms from one era to another" (p. 319). Kunz (1996) also explains that fashion mechanisms includes three aspects: a sense of transition, a sense of modernity and the ability to show one's self-identity. More importantly, "the style should represent the social interaction at the time" (p. 319), with clothing not only having a utilitarian purpose, but also corresponding to the prevalent social norms.

According to Molloy (2004), relations between fashion and political-economic frameworks, local cultures and aesthetic regimes may lead to the understanding of a specific culture and the capturing of its *zeitgeist*. Therefore, there is a political nature to fashion, with what is current at the time, in other words the reigning "cultural concept" (p. 485), influencing creations. Some designers even attempt to translate serious political messages through their clothes, as seen in the collection created by John Galliano, inspired by the homeless of Paris (see Figure 1), which was not well received by the public, causing outrage. As proposed by Molloy (2004), the shaping of aesthetic content through politics does not only happen in a conscious way, with designers, who

are “creators of cultural artifacts” (p. 484), being inserted in their own culture and having it influence their collections.



Figure 1. John Galliano collection inspired by the homeless in Paris. Foley, Bridget. WWD. Retrieved from <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/moment-87-homeless-by-dior-3346959/>.

Not only social, political and cultural aspects influence fashion. As proposed by Wiedmann, Hennings, and Langner (2010), some consumers are perceived as “chief initiators and propagators of what will become fashionable” (p. 144), being perceived as leaders of opinion. These are considered social influencers, who are in charge of transmitting information to others and have influence in a social system. According to the authors, this need for key people in the dissemination of fashion is due to the “relaxed social norms governing socially appropriate dress, massive competition at all levels of industry, and the individuality that modern consumers demand” (p. 144).

Blumenstein (2014) points out that fashion consumers' decision-making process is influenced by the information "available in the society from many different sources like advertising, magazines, celebrities, online, friends, family and bloggers" (p. 06). In addition, corroborating with Wiedmann et al (2010), Blumenstein (2014) also suggest that celebrities have the power to influence people and raise awareness, making others more interested in products and trends.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to think about the ways cultural, social and political developments influence preferences in dress style, answering the following questions:

- How do cultural and societal developments influence dress style?
- How are the resulting fashion products received by consumers?
- What factors may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption?

Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyze dress trends as a way of understanding how dress items/fashion products are translating cultural and societal issues and looking at how brands and consumers are perceiving dress/fashion products in relation to the *zeitgeist* corresponding those trends. Keeping in mind that the first research question of this study looks at how cultural and societal developments influence dress style, a mixed qualitative-quantitative research model integrated into a multiple-case design that includes four explanatory case studies was utilized. As defined by Zainal (2007), this method investigates real-life situations via a thorough analysis of a limited amount of “events or conditions, and their relationships” (p. 01).

There are three advantages for the use of several case studies: firstly, one can analyze the phenomenon in a context in which it has already happened (Yin, 1984). Secondly, the case study method allows for the use of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Thirdly, case studies may also help understand the complexities of real-life happenings that could not have been captured through other types of research (Zaina, 2007). On the other hand, Yin (1984) describes that there are also three methodological disadvantages to the use of case studies. First, this method does not have a rigid research design, leaving space for discoveries during the process. Second, if the number of subjects used is small, and may not provide enough data for generalization. Lastly,

case study research may often be considered too extensive, presenting difficulties in its conduction and leading to too much data over a certain period of time (Yin, 1984).

The use of case studies in this specific research made possible for me to analyze how current societal and cultural changes influence the adoption of dress items or accessories. The same method was used to gather data surrounding the repercussion and acceptance of the resulting dress items by the consumer and to understand if the resulted items evolved into fashion (e.g. were widely adopted, continued production after their insertion season, continued having style currency by the general population, etc.).

To analyze the data collected from the case studies, a content analysis methodology was deployed. Content analysis, as outlined by Moraes (1999), is used to describe and interpret what is written in documents and texts. Through systematic, qualitative or quantitative analysis, this allows comprehending what is written in a deeper way. Furthermore, Krippendorff (2004) defines this as a method that allows the researcher to generalize through interpretations of texts (or other matter) considering the context in which it is produced. As proposed by Hanington and Martin (2012), the researcher can use this method when analyzing existing documents or new materials generated through interviews, questionnaires or creative methods. In addition, the authors describe two approaches to content analysis: inductive (the categories or codes will be resultant of systematic reading of the materials) and deductive (the categories or codes are chosen before the analysis is made, usually based on the theoretical framework being used). In the case of this study, a deductive approach to content analysis was employed.

The method of content analysis has many advantages, such as providing new insights, helping the researcher to understand a specific event, or informing practical actions (Krippendorff, 2004). Corroborating with this definition, Downe-Wamboldt (1992) describes that the content

analysis method can help the researcher to find “interesting and theoretically useful generalizations with minimal loss of information from the original data” (p. 320). On the other hand, as pointed out by Downe-Wamboldt (1992), this method also presents its disadvantages, such as it “being limited to recorded communications (verbal, visual, or written), the amount of time required to code data, and the type of statistical procedures that can be applied to data” (p. 320). As demonstrated in Kohlbacher’s (2006) research, the use of qualitative content analysis can be very useful when analyzing the data gathered in a case study research. Figure 1 illustrates the content analysis method, with the steps described by Neuendorf (2002).

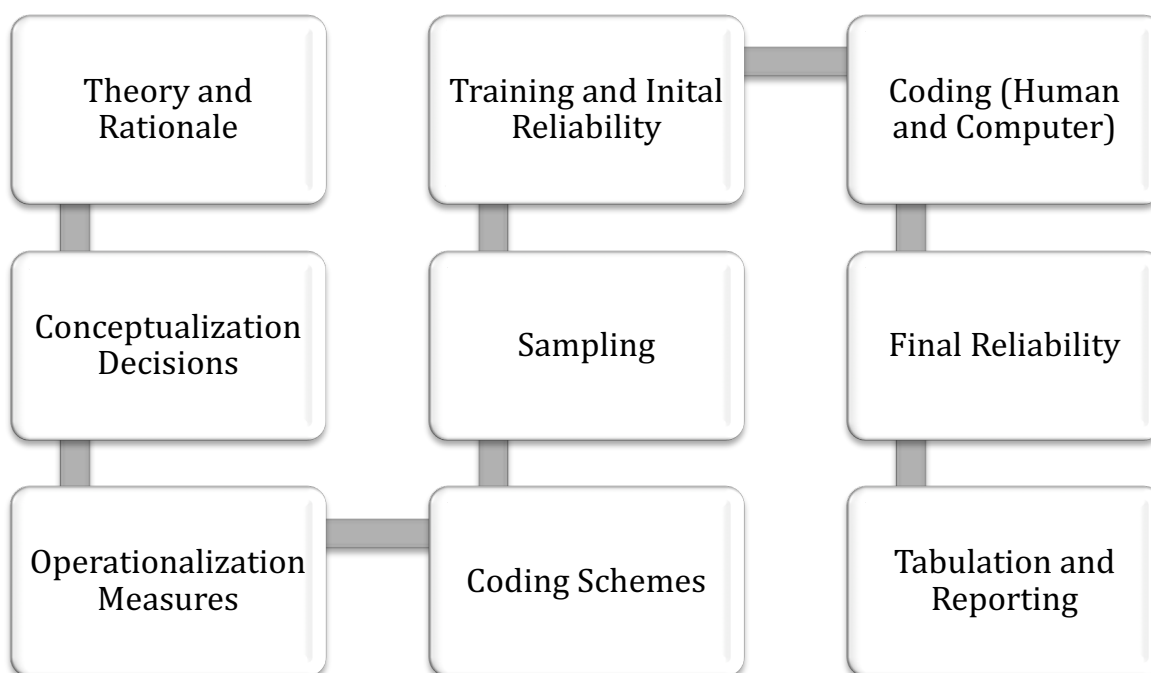


Figure 2. A flowchart for the typical process of content analysis, as described in *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (pp. 50-51), by K. A. Neuendorf, 2002, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2002 by K. A. Neuendorf.

Research Setting and Sample

It is important to note that political dressing, or dress that represents a social or political cause, may be used for a variety of agendas, not always be aligned with progressive social

movements. Thus, inclusion criteria used to select the cases for the study integrated social causes translated into dress style that were mentioned extensively in the press. In addition, the compilation of cases would need to represent a wide variety of topics and agendas. After having conversations with my supervisor, I initiated a Google search to find suitable case studies with these inclusion criteria. By searching with the phrase “political movements in fashion”, two results that included a reference to dress came up in the context of North America: White Supremacists wearing polos and khakis and women sporting bandanas as part of the Tied Together movement (#Tiedtogether). Pictures that represent each movement are shown in Figure 2 and in Figure 3, respectively.



Figure 3. Men wearing polo shirts and khakis when attending the white supremacist movement in Charlottesville, Va, on Aug 2017. Newell-Hanson, Alice. I-D Vice. Retrieved from https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/paaqwn/why-white-supremacists-are-co-opting-khaki-pants.



Figure 4. White Bandana being Worn in Support. Hyland, Véronique. “Expect to see bandannas on Fashion Week attendees.” *The Cut*, New York Mag, 8 Feb 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.thecut.com/2017/02/business-of-fashion-tied-together-campaign.html>.

In addition to these two happenings, my supervisor suggested that I add two more movements, preferably reflective of environmental causes translated into dress styles. This topic was chosen due to the large presence of talk around this problem in our society. Environmental causes are relatively new and are becoming more important every year due to the complications we are facing concerning animal and nature preservation. After searching on Google for movements related to this cause, using the search term “*fashion and environmental awareness movement*” I decided, together with my supervisor, to add the Lacoste X Save our Species and the H&M Conscious Collection to my study. These two movements did not show up in my first research, but they were chosen because they touch on environmental causes by brands that are available to end users in everyday shopping. Thus, by adding these clothes by H&M and Lacoste to my study, I would be able to understand not only how the fashion industry perceived the movements, but also how the consumers engaged with it through sales and social media. Therefore,

they would both help me answer my research question on the way people engage with clothes and why they are embraced or rejected. Pictures to exemplify both campaigns can be seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5, respectively.



Figure 5. Polo Shirts with the Endangered Species. Silbert, Jake. Hypebeast, photo supplied by Lacoste, 1 Mar 2018. Retrieved from <https://hypebeast.com/2018/3/lacoste-save-our-species-polo-shirts>.



Figure 6. H&M Conscious Collection. Press Release. H&M. 13 Feb 2018. Retrieved from <https://about.hm.com/en/media/news/general-news-2018/h-m-conscious-exclusive-continues-to-show-proof-of-sustainable-f.html>.

A Google search for each movement was then executed. Results from January 2019 indicate these movements were discussed extensively in society: “American white supremacists in polos and khakis” (39.200 results); “#tiedtogether AND bandana” (9.500 results); “Lacoste X Save our Species” (203.000 results) and “H&M Conscious Collection 2018” (8.600.000 results).

Data Collection and Analysis

Content analysis of the first 10 publicly available most relevant results found in the Google searches of each case was performed to examine each case study and to answer the second question, concerning how these items and movements were received by society. In total, there were 40 reviewed documents from multiple sources available on the internet. The topics that were analyzed from each source are:

- The purpose behind the movement;
- The way dress is being used to convey meaning;

- Positive comments being made about it;
- Negative comments, being made about it;
- Comments regarding how the public and the fashion industry engaged with the movement and/or the items;

The compilation of documents helps answer the third proposed question by shedding light on factors that the cases may have in common, leading to a deeper understanding of which factors lead to trend adoption. To accomplish the qualitative analysis proposed, the steps presented in Figure 6 were followed, based on Creswell (2009):

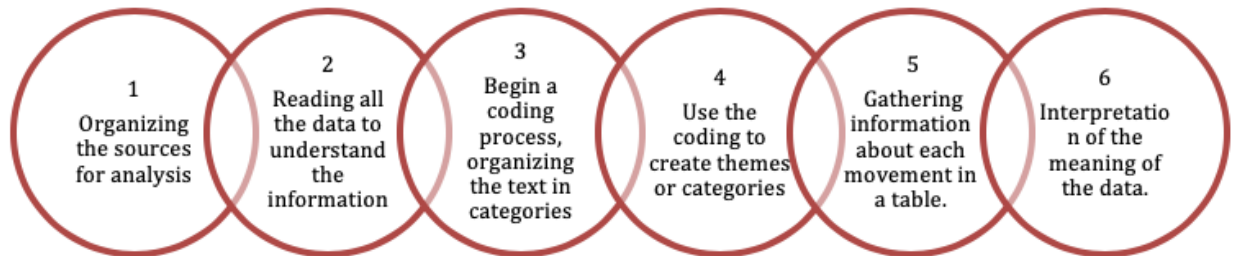


Figure 7. Diagram of the steps followed

After finding the first ten available and relevant websites for each movement, organizing these sources and reading all the data, a table was created, containing in the first column five rows corresponding to each topic that was analyzed. By its side, it was created one column for each case study, with these items being analyzed for each one of them. Phrases from each website that would help answer the topics were copied and pasted to the table. An example of the table is shown below in Figure 7.

	#Tiedtogether		
Website	https://tiedtogether.businessoffashion.com	https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/editors-letter/what-is-the-white-bandana-tiedtogether	https://www.refinery29.com/2017/02/139831/business-of-fashion-tied-together-movement
The purpose behind the movement;	make a clear statement in support of solidarity, human unity and inclusiveness amidst growing uncertainty and a dangerous narrative peddling division.		
The use way dress is being used to convey meaning;	none	a simple and singular visual statement: wear a white bandana as a sign to the world that you believe in the common bonds of humankind — regardless of race, sexuality, gender or religion.	Wear a white bandana as a sign to the world that you believe in the common bonds of humankind — regardless of race, sexuality, gender or religion."
Positive comments being made about it;	none	none	the seriously fraught political moment we're living in might seem a bit subtle to some. But any sort of activity within fashion community that somehow takes aim at the tumultuous current cultural climate is great, and certainly necessary.
Negative comments, if there are any, being made about it;	none	none	none
Comments regarding how the public and the fashion industry engaged with the movement and/or the items;	raising more than \$50,000 for the American Civil Liberties Union and UN Refugee Agency, with the support of our donors and benefactors ----*** incorporated into runway shows or worn personally by designers and creative directors ----** Beyond the runway, celebrities and influencers joined the movement.	the white bandana will be adopted by designers and creative directors and integrated into their fashion shows; worn by press, celebrity guests and digital influencers attending the shows; and embraced by fans and followers of fashion around the world, as the next cycle of fashion weeks weaves its way from New York to London to Milan and Paris.	those bandanas will be sported by models on the runway as well as by showgoers. Other designers that have committed to being part of #TiedTogether include Diane von Furstenberg, Prabal Gurung, Phillip Lim, and Thakoon Panichgul.

Figure 8. Example of the tables that were created.

After copying the information from each website to answer these topics, a coding process began. The most essential information provided by each website was highlighted in red so that it would be easy to perceive a pattern, as seen in Figure 8.

	#Tiedtogether		
Website	https://tiedtogether.businessoffashion.com	https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/editors-letter/what-is-the-white-bandana-tiedtogether	https://www.refinery29.com/2017/02/139831/business-of-fashion-tied-together-movement
The purpose behind the movement;	make a clear statement in support of solidarity, human unity and inclusiveness amidst growing uncertainty and a dangerous narrative peddling division.		
The use way dress is being used to convey meaning;	none	a simple and singular visual statement: wear a white bandana as a sign to the world that you believe in the common bonds of humankind — regardless of race, sexuality, gender or religion.	Wear a white bandana as a sign to the world that you believe in the common bonds of humankind — regardless of race, sexuality, gender or religion.
Positive comments being made about it;	none	none	the seriously fraught political moment we're living in might seem a bit subtle to some. But any sort of activity within fashion community that somehow takes aim at the tumultuous current cultural climate is great, and certainly necessary.
Negative comments, if there are any, being made about it;	none	none	none
Comments regarding how the public and the fashion industry engaged with the movement and/or the items;	raising more than \$50,000 for the American Civil Liberties Union and UN Refugee Agency, with the support of our donors and benefactors ----*** incorporated into runway shows or worn personally by designers and creative directors ----** Beyond the runway, celebrities and influencers joined the movement.	the white bandana will be adopted by designers and creative directors and integrated into their fashion shows; worn by press, celebrity guests and digital influencers attending the shows; and embraced by fans and followers of fashion around the world, as the next cycle of fashion weeks weaves its way from New York to London to Milan and Paris.	those bandanas will be sported by models on the runway as well as by showgoers. Other designers that have committed to being part of #TiedTogether include Diane von Furstenberg, Prabal Gurung, Phillip Lim, and Thakoon Panichgul.

Figure 9. Example of the highlighting of the information

Lastly, a final table with the recurrent words and themes about each movement on all 10 websites was created, being shown in the next chapter, together with the research findings. In addition, to gather more information that would help answer the second and third questions (How are the resulting items being received by the consumers; and what factors may lead to accurate prediction of trend adoption?), a quantitative analysis was performed. A table for each movement was created, with the following rows in the first column:

- Description of the dress style or look;
- Press coverage;
- Social media engagement;
- Scholarly mentions;

To answer these topics for each movement, the number of results that appeared when searching for each political movement on Google was used as data for press coverage; along with the information regarding the presence of each movement on social media platforms (Instagram,

Twitter and Facebook); and the number of scholarly mentions citing the movements. The objective of this table is comparing and understanding the way consumers have been engaging with the movements and the items being sold by some of them. In addition, the use of different sources of information helped with triangulating the data. Full tables with the results found from each case study can be seen in the next section, with the research findings, followed by the discussion and the conclusion of the study.

Chapter Five: Research Findings

This research focuses on how cultural, social and political developments influence preferences in dress style. Thus, it is studied how the resulting fashion products are received by consumers and what factors may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption.

By comparing the socio-political and cultural happenings that lead to trend changes in the fashion sphere with the repercussion they received, I researched to understand whether a fashion movement must be connected to a change in the world that is important to a greater portion of the society for it to take hold as a trend. My hypothesis was that the more people are engaged with the social, cultural or political happening that leads to the insertion of a trend in dress, the greater the chance that said the trend will be adopted and become mainstream fashion since it resonates with the consumers' own mindset. In this sense, this would explain why dress-based initiatives such as the Tied Together, Lacoste's Save our Species and H&M's Conscious Collection had been widely embraced by the general population and covered more in the media than other dress-based initiatives. My hypothesis is that the aforementioned dress-based political initiatives were widely adopted because they connect with issues that people felt inclined to embrace already.

The findings from this research contribute to the understanding of consumer's behaviour, which can help the industry align their creations with the consumer's desires, connecting the two in a deeper level of comprehension of needs. In addition, this study helps fashion scholars, since it will add to the knowledge of how cultural and societal happenings may affect dress. Lastly, the use of trend theory as the lenses through which I will study the case studies sheds light on why some items of dress develop into a full-fledged trend, expanding our understanding of what factors may help predict if the trend will last or not. Next, four subchapters will describe the major findings

for each case study: White Polos and Khaki Pants: American White Supremacists, White Bandanas: #Tiedtogether, Lacoste X Save our Species and H&M Conscious Collection.

White Polos and Khaki Pants: American White Supremacists

This research led to interesting findings from each case study. Regarding the White Supremacists movement in the US, it became clear that the purpose behind this cause was to protest against Charlottesville council's decision to remove a statue of a Confederate general and rename the park. The way these men were trying to blend in and appear mainstream by dressing in polo shirts and khakis helps answer the first research question of this study, on how cultural and societal developments influence dress style. This group had similar views to other white supremacists and decided that by dressing in a similar way to the young Republicans, they would appear organized and well-to-do, legitimizing their project and transmitting a sense of normalcy. Furthermore, by wearing these clothes, they conveyed a non-threatening visual image, seemingly decent and resembling everyday people. They wanted to present a normalized, mainstream image of white supremacists in North America.

To answer the second question, on how this use of fashion was received by consumers, it was possible to notice that the movement in Charlottesville was not well perceived according to public opinion, the mainstream press did not make any positive comments, in fact a number of negative comments were made in social media, the group was compared to Adolph Hitler, their actions were described as disturbing and making people nervous. Since the group used clothing as a way of transmitting a message that was not in accordance with the ideas of the majority of the population, they created a problem for the brands they wore. Brands, such as Tiki Brand and The Ralph Lauren Corp., didn't want to be associated with the movement. These companies released

statements that rejected the actions of these groups and didn't support their messages about White Supremacist, in order to distance themselves from the publicity related to the supremacist movement/cause. Therefore, the third research question can be answered, regarding what factors may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption. It is possible to say that people were not adopting this trend due to the mindset that it is connected to.

The White Supremacist movement sparked the interest of the media because it is something that goes against the notions of what is progressive and expected as ideals by the majority of the population. This is supported by the evidence on Google, as there were over 30,000 search results related to the White Supremacist movement. However, my qualitative analysis reveals that most comments were negative. On the other hand, when searching for hashtag references related to White Supremacists new dress code on Instagram and Twitter, no results were found. Regarding scholarly mentions, the terms "*white supremacists*" *AND polos AND khakis AND "Charlottesville"* yielded twelve results, three books and nine journal articles.

White Bandanas: #Tiedtogether

About the Tied Together movement, the first research question, on how cultural and societal developments influence dress style is answered by understanding the reason why the *Business of Fashion (BOF)* asked people to wear the white bandana. The item was a statement of support for solidarity, human unity and inclusiveness, regardless of race, sexuality, gender or religion. Thus, this was a simple way of using dress to convey meaning, by wearing a common fashion accessory to create a simple visual statement.

As to the second research question, on how the product was received by consumers, no negative reactions were found, with only positive comments being made about it, describing this

initiative of the fashion community as a powerful movement that was trying to overcome the cultural climate at the time by talking about inclusivity, diversity and unity. The fashion industry as a whole supported the movement, in fact white bandanas were incorporated into runway shows or being worn by fashion designers and creative directors such as Tommy Hilfiger, with its models on the runway being shown in Figure 9, Raf Simons for Calvin Klein, Maria Grazia Chiuri for Dior, Pierpaolo Piccioli for Valentino and Donatella Versace (seen in Figure 10).



Figure 10. Tommy Hilfiger runway models wearing the white bandana. Thomas, Jasmine. Medium. 19 Feb 2017.

Retrieved from <https://medium.com/la-nature/business-of-fashion-launches-tiedtogether-as-political-unrest-sweeps-the-globe-54e7e91e105a>.



Figure 11. Donatella Versace wearing a white bandana. Business of Fashion. Retrieved from <https://tiedtogether.businessoffashion.com>.

The adoption of this trend went far beyond the runway, with celebrities, press, guests, fans, photographers and thousands of other people also wearing the white bandana. A picture of a guest wearing the bandana can be seen in Figure 11 and a photo of Zayn Malik wearing a white bandana on his wrist is shown in Figure 12.



Figure 12. White bandana being worn by a guest at a fashion show. Ledbetter, Carly. Huffpost. 10 Feb 2017. Retrieved from https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/entry/white-bandana-fashion-trump_n_589de642e4b094a129ea7ecf.



Figure 13. Zayn Malik wearing a white bandana on his wrist. BOF Team. 23 Feb 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/tiedtogether-fashion-month-update>.

This wide use of the item by people in the industry and in the general population helps answer the third research question, on what factors may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption. Since the item was related to a progressive movement, important to a lot of people, the item was very well received, showing that it was aligned with the *zeitgeist* and people's mindsets.

When analyzing press coverage, the terms "*#tiedtogether AND bandana*" yielded 9.500 results on Google, while the *#tiedtogether* was mentioned over 11.000 times on Instagram and used by many people on Twitter. The exact number of times it was commented on Twitter is not possible to know due to the fact that no software was used in the quantitative analysis. On the other hand, scholars did not explore this movement, only 3 results were found when searching for scholarly mentions.

Lacoste X Save our Species

In 2017 the sportswear brand Lacoste created 10 limited edition polo shirts, substituting their famous crocodile embroidered patch for images of threatened species: The Vaquita, Burmese Roofed Turtle, Northern Sportive Lemur, Javan Rhino, Cao-vit Gibbon, Kakapo, California Condor, Saola, Sumatran Tiger and the Anegada Ground Iguana, as seen in Figure 13.

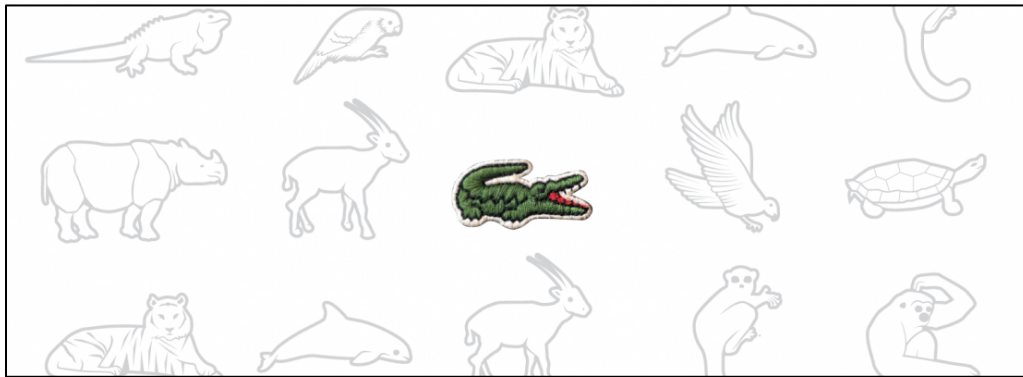


Figure 14. The 10 threatened species and the Lacoste logo. 28 Sep 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.saveourspecies.org/news/awareness-action-lacoste-support-species-conservation-gets-real>.

The first research question, about how cultural and societal developments influence dress style, is answered by understanding why the embroidered crocodile patch was substituted by other animals. The goal of the campaign was to create awareness about the long-term survival of species at risk of extinction, their habitats and the people who depend on them. As well, the campaign also highlighted the need for raised awareness about the dire state of biodiversity on our planet. The number of shirts manufactured in each category corresponded to the number of animals in the wild for each endangered species as estimated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Thus, each shirt purchased allowed consumers to participate in helping the cause for wildlife conservation. Half of the profits went directly to IUCN, to help fund tangible nature protection actions, while the other half was invested in communication that would give visibility

to the cause and the Save Our Species program. This was a non-profit collaboration with Lacoste, signed for three years (Save Our Species, 2018).

About the second research question, on how the resulting fashion products were received by consumers, there were no positive or negative comments being made about Lacoste's collection on the articles that were found. However, the public's approval for the campaign is evident when examining the number of sales generated by the campaign. The *Lacoste X Save our Species* shirts sold out immediately in Europe and in the United States. Therefore, this shows that the trend was adopted by the population, answering the third research question, regarding the factors that may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption. The shirts were sold out because they were aligned with what people think is important, touching on subjects that are relevant to them and therefore being bought.

A Google search of press coverage located around 400.000 results, with only positive comments being made. On social media, the #Lacostesaveourspecies hashtag was posted 600 times, also being mentioned many other times on Twitter; with the IUCN tweet about it being shared 2.000 times and liked 4.500 times. On the other hand, only one result came up when searching for mentions in scholarly articles using the terms "*Lacoste*" AND "*save our species*".

H&M Conscious Collection

Since 2011, the global fast fashion brand H&M has been releasing their Conscious Collection, which focuses on sustainable, ethical fashion by using recycled materials and new fabrics that were engineered by them. The purpose behind the movement helps answer the first research question, regarding how cultural and societal developments influence dress style. This strategic collection seems intent on mitigating the negative impact that fast fashion has on the

environment, looking to build a more sustainable future through fabric innovation and development with recycled fibres, thus creating a better image for their brand.

As for the second research question, on how the resulting fashion products are received by consumers, there were a number of positive comments regarding H&M's 2018 Conscious Collection. People were saying that the brand managed to deliver feminine, elegant, beautifully crafted, affordable, stylish and sustainable pieces. This collection, with an example being presented in Figure 14, was well received by the public, increasing the interest in sustainability and worn by celebrities and consumers concerned with the ethics behind fashion. This connection to an important theme in our society helps answer the third research question, about what factors may lead to accurate prediction of a fashion trend's adoption. H & M pleased their existing customers and won new ones. Furthermore, this initiative was a way of educating people about sustainable practices. In addition, there were no negative comments being made about the collection.



Figure 15. One of the clothes available in the collection, 10 Sep 2018. Scarlett, Emily. Cision PR NewsWire.

Retrieved from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/hm-announces-first-ever-conscious-exclusive-collection-for-the-fw-2018-season-introducing-recycled-polyester-300709814.html>

H&M's 2018 Conscious Collection was well covered by the press; searching for it on Google resulted yielded around 8 million results. On social media, the #hmconsciouscollection hashtag had over 1.000 mentions on Instagram and was used on Twitter several times. Regarding scholarly mentions, there were 10 results on Google Scholar when searching for "*H&M conscious collection*".

Charts with the Major Findings for Each Movement

In summary, this section of this study analyzed the results of three movements: American White Supremacists, Tied Together, Lacoste X Save Our Species and H&M Conscious Collection. Through the use of content analysis and a quantitative search, tables were created for each movement, in order to understand how cultural, social and political developments influence preferences in dress style. The most important information gathered from each website was categorized and put in a table, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Information from the Categories Found in the Content Analysis

	American white supremacists	Lacoste X Save our Species	H&M Conscious Collection	#Tiedtogether
The purpose behind the movement;	Protesting the city council's decision to remove a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee and rename Lee Park.	Raise awareness about the state of biodiversity/support the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Fight against the negative impact fast fashion has on our environment/sustainable fabric innovation	Statement in support of solidarity, human unity and inclusiveness
The use way dress is being used to convey meaning;	Trying to blend in/appear mainstream, organized and well-to-do/Look like young Republicans in nice clothes/Non-threatening visual/Decent/Look more like everyday people	Fight for wildlife conservation worldwide/To raise societal awareness, they swapped the crocodile logo for 10 threatened animal species on a series of limited-edition polo shirts	Renewable fashion industry/increasing possibilities of sustainable fashion with a focus on development and innovation	A simple and singular visual statement. Common bonds of humankind — regardless of race, sexuality, gender or religion. inclusivity, diversity and unity.
Positive comments;	None	None	really feminine and elegant/H&M in the right direction/more than many high-street brands have on their corporate conscience. /affordable, stylish fashion and sustainability/make a statement	activity within fashion community that somehow takes aim at the tumultuous current cultural climate / powerful movement
Negative comments;	It is haunting/Adolph Hitler/ Chilling/Nervous/ Disturbingly/ Jarring	None	None	None
How the public and the fashion industry engaged with it;	Anything but gentlemanly/Losers / Scary stuff/Fresh problem for brands/	Sold out in Europe/ Sold out immediately	Interest in sustainability is increasing/favourite among ethically minded shoppers/please existing fans and win over others	incorporated into runway shows or worn personally by designers and creative directors/ worn by press, celebrity guests and digital influencers

As to the presence of the happenings in the press, in social media outlets and in scholarly mentions, a table was created for each movement. The information can be seen below, in Table 2.

Table 2

Presence of the Movements in The Press, in Social Media Outlets and in Scholarly Mentions

	American white supremacists	#Tiedtogether	Lacoste X Save our Species	H&M Conscious Collection 2018
Description of the Dress Style or Look	White men dressed in polo shirts and khakis in Charlottesville, USA.	Wear a white bandana as a sign to the world that you believe in the common bonds of humankind	Lacoste created 10 limited edition polo shirts, with threaten species as the logo. The money raised was used in the fight for wildlife conservation worldwide.	Focus on the need for sustainable, ethical fashion by promoting the use of recycled materials or fabric engineered from recycled material.
Press Coverage	More than 50k results on Google, with mainly negative comments being made about it.	"#tiedtogether AND bandana" Around 9.5 results on Google, with positive comments.	Around 360k results on Google, with positive comments.	Around 8 million results on Google, with positive comments.
Social Media Engagement	Looked for # related to it on Instagram and Twitter but couldn't find anything.	#tiedtogether on Instagram: over 11k mentions. The # was used many times on Twitter.	#Lacostesaveourspecies on Instagram: 603 results; the same # on Twitter showed over 50 mentions; IUCN tweet was shared 2k times and liked 4.5k times.	#hmconsciouscollection on Instagram: over 1k mentions. A large amount of Twitter mentions.
Scholarly Mentions	"white supremacists" AND polos AND khakis "Charlottesville" 12 Results (3 Books and 9 papers).	"#tiedtogether" AND "bandana" 3 Results.	"Lacoste" AND "save our species" 1 Result	"H&M conscious collection" 2018 10 Results.

The next section of this study will present the discussion regarding these findings, followed by the conclusion.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The cases studied conducted as part of this research exemplify different ways that fashion products may be linked to what is happening in the world and how the fashion industry and consumers engage with the resulting trends. The results found through the case studies corroborate with what is proposed by Mackinney-Valentin (2013), on how fashion is inserted in a social and cultural context, which needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about trends in dress style. These four case studies corroborate what Vejlgaard (2007) posited when stating “the start of a trend is a unique and complex social process” (p. 120). As explained by Vejlgaard (2007), something (such as a trend) that will be adopted by many people is part of a larger undertaking, not happening in a short time. As also explained by Mackinney-Valentin (2013), these trends develop gradually, not in a chaotic, relative manner and it does not change with high frequency.

As seen in the *Tied Together* movement, it was important to have not only fashion designers implementing the bandanas on the runway, but also see the public, the photographers and most importantly, celebrities, wearing them in support. If the important people, seating on the front row of the fashion shows, were not wearing the bandanas, it would not have generated as much talk and press. Therefore, the fact that these people were seen by others wearing the bandanas and supporting the movement helped to make it known and followed by the general public. This corroborates with Kim's et al (2013), on how specific individuals will help circulate a trend's storyline and make others become interested in it, denominated by Wiedmann et al (2010) as social influencers. Corroborating to this finding, the study by Atik and Firat (2013) points that a variety of people have marketing roles and responsibilities, involving consumers, fashion business organizations and fashion designers. In addition, it goes along with what Moeran (2006) explains about these agents constructing together taste standards and the criteria of aesthetic value.

About storylines, two of the case studies focused on themes related to being conscious of the world. While Lacoste focused on endangered animals and H & M on the environmental impact of fast fashion, both companies highlighted the importance of being mindful of the world's problems and the capacity of consumers to contribute to positive change. It is interesting to note that while some member of society does not seem worried about these and other social causes, some are committed to social change. Some people are engaging with sustainability and issues of animal cruelty, trying to make a difference through changes in the way they consume fashion, such as only buying fast fashion items when they come from an environmentally conscious line. This relates to what Vejlgaard (2007) proposes how trendsetters are more than just open to new styles and tastes, they are searching for individualism, trying to be different from others. Thus, it is possible to infer that maybe the conscious lines are trendy not only because they translate important themes but also because by adhering to them, the trendsetters are going against what the larger part of the population is doing. Eventually, everybody wants to emulate them.

When thinking about the need for individualization, as described by Vejlgaard (2007), it is possible to make connections to the *Lacoste X Save our Species* case study as well. To highlight the number of animals from each species that are still alive, the brand produced only a small number of shirts with each animal on it. For example, the image of the vaquita (an animal from the dolphin family) was embroidered on only 30 shirts (the exact number of vaquitas that are still alive). It was almost impossible to buy one of the vaquita shirts. In other words, only 30 individuals in the world own a Lacoste shirt with a vaquita on it, making them unique standing out in a sea of polo shirts with crocodiles on them. Furthermore, just the fact of being able to buy one of the 1775 shirts produced by Lacoste would make people feel unique, due to the small number of available items. This finding corroborates with Kunz's (1996) idea of how fashion brings the

sense of individuality to the person, but only when aligned with the social norms at the specific time.

Another point to note as to why H&M's Conscious Collection and Lacoste X Save our Species collections were well accepted by the public is that the initiatives were tied to the current *zeitgeist*. This finding corroborates with Molloy's (2004) theory on how the designers are inserted in a specific culture, being influenced by its politics and cultural concept, translating it to the public through their creations. By looking at the media results, it seems that the messages underpinning the movements resonated with consumers and the fashion industry alike in their concerns for the environment. In these two case studies, the brands are both known for their fashionable products and therefore are connecting with people not only through the cause they are espousing but also through the aesthetic values of their designed artefacts. Therefore, it can be inferred that the fashion narratives articulated by both brands in relation to their environmental initiatives were strongly aligned with people's mindsets. In other words, the brands touched on subjects that were currently important to the public, and people purchased their products. In connection to the study by Lerman and Callow (2004), it is possible to say that the narratives communicated by the brands were validated by the consumers through their interpretations of it. In other words, the message was analyzed by them and the meaning was aligned with their expectations.

In contrast to H&M's and Lacoste's collection, the way that white polo shirts and khakis were worn by the White Supremacists Movement did not resonate with the larger public or the fashion industry. In fact, their movement generated only negative feedback from the general public and distancing from the fashion industry. Therefore, fashion is not only linked to progressive causes. As an example, the way the Ku Klux Klan wore masks or hoods in the 1860s and 1870s as a hate symbol, as seen in Figure 15.



Figure 16. Men from the Ku Klux Klan dressed in masks and hoods, 30 Dec 2014. NBC Boston. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/KKK-Robe-to-Be-Auctioned-287123251.html>.

Also connecting fashion to regressive movements, the example of how Hugo Boss, who is today an important fashion designer, was responsible for manufacturing the Nazi uniforms during World Word II, as seen in Figure 16. In 2011, the brand apologized for its connection to the movement and its use of slave labour during the time.



Figure 17. Nazi uniforms manufactured by Hugo Boss,6 May 2015. European Post. Retrieved from <http://europeanpost.co/did-you-know-hugo-boss-designed-nazis-uniforms>.

Together, society and the fashion field have the capacity to help turn something from a regular dress item into something larger, a fashion trend. As for who in the industry is part of the

process of making a trend, this analysis research shows (by looking at the number of results from each Google search) that mention by journalists and bloggers of fashion items can make those items known to the general public. As the process goes, the artefacts are seen on the streets, then commented on by fashion agents online, with the writers having the power of making it more popular or disliked by the general population. As proposed by Jennings (2019) on “How a coat on Amazon took over a neighbourhood — and then the internet”, when many publications start telling the readers that an item is going viral, it does indeed go viral, independently of whether that was even true, to begin with. When fashion journalists’ articles make fashion items appear more important than they actually are, there is a chance that they will become as large as previously reported. This view corroborates with what is proposed by Atik and Firat (2013) and Bluemenstein (2014) regarding how fashion magazines (in this case blogs) are perceived as trustworthy by the readers, who learn through them what is in fashion at the time.

When a trend does go viral due to press coverage, Jennings (2019) explains that everybody wins: the makers (for having a bestseller), the publication that is making the item known by the public (getting a cut from the sales), and the consumers (because now they feel trendy) (par. 20). This corroborates with Vejlgaard's (2007) point on how even if trendsetters put their stamp of approval on a piece of clothing, it does not necessarily mean that it will become a trend.

In summary, trends creation and dissemination are indeed very complex; for a trend to become popular, it needs to be perceived as worthy by important people in the industry and seem relevant to trendsetters. Furthermore, journalists also play an important role in making something more popular with the public through their articles. Thus, in relation to the findings of O’Cass (2000), the consumers were highly involved with these items (as seen by the numbers in the press and social media and by some products selling out) what may lead to the conclusion that even low

involvement consumers would become interested in fashion trends resulting from social and cultural developments, because of its alignment with important matters.

Therefore, this research shows that a number of players are needed in order for something to truly become a trend. Thus, if everyone involved in the process is not aligned, there is the possibility that the artefact won't become a trend. In addition, the use of two environmentally conscious causes (Lacoste x Save Our Species and H&M Conscious Collection) points to the importance of being in line with consumer's mindset, touching on subjects that are relevant to them personally and to the moment's *zeitgeist*. On the other hand, this is not the only reason why trendsetters will buy these items, with a need for individualism also playing a role in their purchasing decision. In the opposite way, if the movement goes against people's beliefs, it will be rejected and talked negatively about by consumers and industry alike, as it happened with the White Supremacists movement.

In the next chapter, the Conclusions of the study are presented, accompanied by the Research Limitations.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This research brings to light some important points. The content analysis of the 10 first publicly available and relevant websites citing each of the movements (H&M Conscious Collection, Tied Together and Lacoste X Save our Species and the American White Supremacists), made it possible to understand the way these happenings used fashion to convey meaning and how it was received by the public.

This research contributes to the fashion studies field by providing knowledge surrounding the relevance of understanding the way in which happenings and developments in the world at large affect fashion and how people interact with fashion products. As an example, the way inclusiveness and the concern for the environment are being talked about in the media and by the population at large has influenced fashion, with brands taking these matters into consideration when producing new collections. In other words, what is happening in the world is seen and heard by designers, with them trying to align their creations to what is current and relevant in the society.

An important contribution of this study is the fact that three of the four case studies (H&M Conscious Collection, Tied Together and Lacoste X Save our Species) were worldwide, global campaigns, not being exclusively linked to a North American setting. This supports the research goal of shading light on the way fashion items translate cultural, social and political causes and made them visible into a wider context. Thus, the research made possible to observe that consumers' mindsets on specific social causes are aligned around the world. The implications being that fashion products have the capacity of translating the need for change concerning the preservation of nature and animals, as well as generating solidarity, unity and inclusiveness amongst people on this planet.

The four case studies presented used fashion as a way of conveying a social meaning that resonated with the consumer's mindset related to sustainability, endangered species..... Three of the case studies are aligned with progressive social movements, trying to make the world better through fashion, while the remaining case (the American White Supremacists) used pieces of clothing as a way of deceiving people. In other words, White Supremacist in Charlottesville used dress to hide their reactionary motives and personalities. They attempted to blend in by using what they considered to be shirts and pants representative of the mainstream style. The decision to include a case study where fashion was used in relation to a reactionary social cause, was to show that dress items can be used and talked about in relation to a variety of issues, not being restricted to progressive initiatives.

The other three case studies (H&M Conscious Collection, Tied Together and Lacoste X Save our Species) included in the research corresponded with progressive social causes that were turned into trends due to their acceptance by the fashion industry and the general public alike. It is not possible to say with absolute certainty why people bought/wore the items that were discussed in this research, but the trend theory framework demonstrated that trends are precipitated by a need for individualism and for being aligned with positive social and political matters. The research corroborated this theoretical structure, which played a big part on why some of these dress items studied here were favourably received by trendsetters, the press and the general public alike; such as the polos embroidered with endangered species by Lacoste and H&M's collection out of recycled textiles.

There are some methodological limitations with the present study that should be mentioned. The research included a small sample of only four case studies, which may not be enough to make generalizations about the connections between social, political and cultural

matters and fashion trends. Therefore, for future research, a bigger sample size might help in obtaining more accurate, generalizable results.

The second limitation is regarding the short duration of the research. Due to it, it was not possible to spend more time with a larger amount of data from each of the case studies, with the same being true to the number of sources used for the content analysis. Only 10 publicly available sources were used to study each case, with this number being only a small part of what was written about each of them. Future research with a longer deadline might allow the researcher the ability to explore more sources and gather and analyze more data in order to answer the research questions in much more detail.

Thirdly, the lack of use of software in the quantitative analysis, such as one focused on statistical measurement of data from the case studies, might have helped deepen the research and get to richer answers to the research questions. On future research, a statistical measurement might help get more data. To do so, big data tools that capture the presence of a topic on Twitter or Instagram over a period of time and includes multiple geographical regions might be helpful. This would allow the researcher to get a bigger picture of what consumers are saying about fashion products underpinned by social causes in social media networks, how often these comments were happening, and the demographic composition of the commenters.

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