

Trend Forecasting – colour in design and the textile supply chain

A practical look at how to apply trends to your colour journey by layering fluid non-scientific approaches with more defined methods to add relevance and enhance your design journey.

1. Concept and Development Journey

Welcome to our online colour trend forecasting module.

Through interfacing with our VLE, you will learn how to apply practical methods to your product development journey, we will change your way of seeing and solving colour design problems both in the textile supply chain and when working for retailers or brands direct.

Through a mix of scientific understanding gained in previous modules, practical forecasting and colour mapping decisions can be used to develop an understanding of full cycle colour application and ways to add depth to a product journey.

What is Trend forecasting? It's not fortune-telling, it's not purely editorial decision-making, nor is it clearly the identification or creation of a trend.

Essentially, it's the grey space between all the wider elements.

It is the invisible hand that refines our choices before we even know we are making a choice.

The forecasts we see today, are underpinned by global research and data, brought together by a wide resource of teams & in the best scenario, these come together to provide future insights that inspire and inform decision makers. End result: Helping retailers and brands to make the right choices for their markets and increase sales. It sounds simple, but there are an increasing amount of variables to consider and no scientific answer.

In order to build strong commercial and directional colour palettes that will add to the flow and gravitas of your collection, we need to look at some common principles of design thinking. These will be underpinned by creative ideas and solutions that can be applied to all textile design disciplines. We will show you ways of completing practical activities in order to interact with colour in a new and more accessible way.

The first place we will start is with the concept and development journey, followed by examples of types of colour data, a look at how the internet has changed the way we develop trend and then a deep dive into trended colour and its composite groups.

Let's firstly look at the importance of colour decision making and why this should be a concern.

It is proven that 70% of the final decision whether or not to buy a garment is based on colour. Intentional or not, style, comfort and other considerations come further down the list. 70% is a huge number, so it's important to take steps in the right direction to get as close to the best colour balance in store as possible.

Each individual product is aiming to have the most alluring hues or levels of saturation.

But how do we do this, it's not a science, but what are the variables and how can we inform them?

Let's start by looking at the concept and development journey.

How do we inspire our colour decisions? Let's first look at functional colour resources and the relationships these have with trend forecasting.

Starting with some B2B colour influencers and ways that they document colour.

Who are the leaders and what do they do? & an important look at how they've moved with the times in the digital era.

Colour management systems are a key link between continuity and quality from supply chain through to store. They offer a way to document colour, each has a unique viewpoint and way of communicating colour, they are each selected for their unique capabilities as important industry tools that can be used daily.

There are a few key global players who lead the field, here you can see Pantone, NCS (the natural colour system), Colour solutions international by Dystar, Archroma colour Atlas and Coloro.

Each has its own storyline and way of interfacing with industry professionals. Each continue to find ways to adapt to our digital landscape in the most user friendly way.

The companies noted play a part in our research and they also make annual statements about colour that are hard to ignore. Let's start by taking a deeper dive into the content provided by the colour systems mentioned in my previous slides.

You will see a selection of businesses, some of whom have taken the decision to partner with trend intelligence companies to add flair to their storyline and lure in new clients by interfacing content with the same colour codes.

The new comer and disruptor to the market is Coloro. Claiming to be a revolutionary system that aims to change the way decision makers, creative users, suppliers and manufacturers work with color. They partner with WGSN to publish annual key colours and use industry marketing mail outs..., featuring visuals presented on Social Media channels & B2B consumer channels to broadcast their message.

Pantone are a global authority. The company is best known in the fashion industry for its cotton matching system, a proprietary colour space provider that is used in a variety of industries. Again, a seasonal announcement underpins their colour trend position in the market, creating recognisable product placement and a printed / web editorial inspiration resource to spread a powerful message.

Archroma is a global colour and specialty chemicals company committed to innovation, quality, service, cost-efficiency and sustainability. Archroma launched the '[Color Atlas](#)' in 2016 and in July 2018, they worked with Carlin creative trend bureau on a new collaboration. Shown here at an international Tradeshow.

NCS The Natural Colour System is a proprietary perceptual colour model. They aim to help customers to define their communication of colour and provide quality assurance for all of their products. Here you can see a seminar event held at the London Design show.

Color Solutions International (or CSI) is a member of the DyStar group (the leading solutions provider in the textile industry), providing retailers and

brands with a variety of flexible colour options and services. Part of the interfacing journey involves elements of trend information.

With the call outs from these businesses being spread across SM channels and layered into our psyche through other commercial and marketing avenues, most retailers or brands will in some way take note of these suggestions.

In short, when it comes to annual call outs, colour management companies choose a colour that reflects the current cultural climate. In the following year, or indeed immediately within the faster sectors, the colour can influence trends in interior décor, fashion, food, and other facets of design. However, the colour of the year doesn't always apply well to every brand or product. For example, the colour may or may not be appropriate for towels, tennis shoes, or SUVs.

Media buzz can reinforce the "it" colour. It's worth noting that consumers buy products in the new colours because that's what's for sale. However, there are no statistics that show that the IT colour has boosted sales of any specific consumer goods.

In conclusion, the "Colour of the Year" is a significant philosophical cultural event that generates a lot of media buzz and makes us look at a colour in a new way. However, it can also be seen as a short-term fad that encourages consumers to buy. There are plenty more variables to consider before making decisions for your collection or drop.

More companies than ever before are leaning on analytics to support their decision making. Whether it's using ready edited analytics from trend companies or more in house solutions, we are no longer driven by the intuitive process alone in trend forecasting. Digital data has become a key driver in the decision making process. It's a very important new currency and it's looking unlikely that it will leave us anytime soon. Next we will take a look at some examples.

Shown in the example here, Tagwalk is a relatively new free fashion search engine. They offer daily catwalk insights and end of season round ups using analytics from the latest shows. Launched in 2016, reports say that they aim to be the go to google analytics for the fashion industry. Used widely by trend researchers and garment designers / developers alike.

Seen here, a pic of WGSN's New York office, seen as the market leader in trend forecasting. The way in which this information they collate information and present back to their audience has had to change dramatically in the last decade. Alongside their competitors, they aim to provide long, mid and short lead time trend information. There are many varied services available and the market is moving fast, so it's important that they keep reinventing themselves. Let's move on to look at other sources of influence.

Taking a look at Street style.

The mark of a real lasting shift in taste is when you see a trend immediately becoming the dominant street style look of the following season. Trends come and go, editors are heard talking about the Celine effect or the complete other end of the spectrum where looks captured by a new wave of designers become big and add definition to a following decade. Street style will always be a key influence and the areas of the globe who impact on these looks sway with authority from year to year.

Let's take a look at street level trends, how they make an impact on colour decisions and how this information that we view is also evolving.

Documenting street style is not a new thing, however, the internet has changed the way we can view other people's style around the globe and the way in which this is fed to us as an industry and consumer is in constant flux.

Documented on all platforms, in general, there are two ways of looking at how these sartorial images are displayed. Firstly, there are the street style photographers who travel to destinations in order to document looks from the street – to name a few, the early adopters will be discussed in my next slide.

Then there's the self-styled accounts, of whom Susie Style Bubble led the field back in the day. This area in particular saw huge uplift when Instagram launched in 2010 & quickly became the main go to channel for self-styling. It changed trend forecasting indefinitely and is one of the reasons why we are in the data driven world that we know today.

Street style wasn't born in the 2010s, but you could say it was the decade that really mattered. Nothing about the medium is the same as it was back in 2011, when [Phil Oh](#) shot his first fashion week for Vogue. And it certainly doesn't look like street style in 2007, when Oh launched his blog, Mr. Street Peeper, alongside other OG photographers like Tommy Ton and Scott Schuman. I don't

think any of them knew it was going to become a thing, a marketing platform, and a source of massive global interest.

All of these elements have an influence on the way that we forecast colour today. Before the video plays: Let's take a quick look at some marketing material from Deloitte to help explain the shifts that will impact the next part of the module.

2. Colour Influences

Taking a look at cultural shifts, Consumer driven trends & the impact of marketing, there's a huge shift in the way that shoppers buy due to the constant evolution of e-commerce, this forces brands and retailers to constantly adapt their strategies. Thus effecting buying behaviour as well as innovation with more traffic than ever, the mobile is becoming a dominant shopping channel – changing the way we perceive colour and colour trends. Every year it becomes increasingly important for brands and retailers to keep pace with innovation, adapt, discover strategies and stay in tune with the ever-evolving expectations of consumers.

But, how can we adapt to this with a colour trend forecasting viewpoint and how will this effect colour control.

There are 3 pillars of decision making that support buying behaviours – shown here in slide; personal, social and economic.

Not only are people scrolling daily across a multitude of brand environments and via influencer profiles, but it has become the third buying channel alongside in-store and online. If a key influencer in your product area of fashion is shouting out a certain colour shade, then this will ultimately effect short lead time product. If a wave of this trend rises up further and dominates other SM key players, then you could be looking at a longer term colour influence.

Big cultural shifts affect consumer attitudes and can also effect innovation. This will impact business in the long term, and colour decisions will be made taking this into consideration.

Political events have taken place where orange has become a protest colour. It has been mentioned in many trend companies' reports as an influence and in recent years the influence of this has become apparent at retail.

With global warming and the lean toward a sustainable future becoming greater, solutions to this can also effect colour. If a brand mission statement is to take a truly sustainable approach, then this will affect their colour decisions. I'll talk more about this later at the end of the module.

Even though this thought is more abstract, scientific breakthrough's, events, developments, or expeditions may also play a part. If there's an important space mission or scientific breakthrough, these may inspire creatives and influence on palette making decisions.

Sitting in the space between digital data, analytics and the intuitive process we have tradeshows and similar B2B events or physical retail environments.

The slide display shows a ready edited colour palette for the AW20/21 season, backed by trend authorities & local / international colour boards.

Tradeshows will work with influential colour authorities to build their palette for each show. Shown here at Premiere Vision Paris, the individual sub straights are available to buy and form an important role in the colour journey of many fashion brands, retailers and suppliers alike.

This information will be taken and melded together with other resources to support each individual journey.

Teams of creative industry professionals scour the high streets and other shopping areas to gather the latest trends at store level. Bricks and mortar have been having a tough time since the uplift of D2C but the need to have a tactile interaction with product is still relevant. Good news for the real colour explorers! Often garments are purchased and snipped and swatches or whole garments sent out to suppliers in order to get as closer match as possible to recreate the colour that has inspired.

Direct to consumer trends can be highlighted by the brand or retailer's platforms, by the SM channels discussed earlier or equally by platforms who specialise in areas of fashion such as street wear and in particular featuring the buzz around drops and collaborations. They might be delivered via mail outs or methods of SEO and digital marketing.

We naturally edit and make choices or preference as we go through our daily lives, even when we're not aware that this is going on. It comes back to the unconscious, the science of how our brains & the human eye responds or interacts. Elements of emotional response come into play, psychological processing happens and personal taste is formed. This process within colour trend forecasting forms the basis of intuitive decision making. Each person in a team will see this differently and often the way in which we display or communicate this level of taste can be a commercial deal breaker in a team environment. We need to sell our ideas.

Now we will look at some layers and areas of research that make up the more 'fluffy' part of the journey.

We gather inspiration every day from a wide range of influences.

This may be as simple as a visit to a hugely inspiring garden, architecturally stunning landmark, location or event. Colour journeys with us everywhere we go and our experiences inform our decision making.

Global insights gained from a wide range of creative industries inspire us all and our findings can be grouped together by colour to emphasise the storyline. Shown in here in my next 4 slides.....

There are more obvious forecasts such as how a beautifully colourful forthcoming movie may have influence –...several film directors and makers who are especially well known for their colour editing and considerations. Examples of these have in the last decade played a huge part in how some restaurants and hotels have played with pastel shades. Stylists take note & the knock on effect goes down the chain through to retail and often clothing. As we become more exposed to moving image, we can expect the area of video to continue with momentum in terms of its influence on how we perceive our surroundings.

Here you can see a still from *Volver* by Pedro Almodovar – a great influencer of colour through moving image and cinematography.

Followed by *Pierrot le fou* 1966 by Jean-Luc Godard

In The Mood For Love by Wong Kar-wai has also been highlighted by trend companies as a key influencer during colour research.

and the *Drive* movie by Nicolas Winding Refn

Finally, I'd like to highlight the king of all colour inspiration and a huge influencer of the fashion industry, Wes Anderson.

This short clip by Fandor shows colour palettes throughout Wes Andersons Budapest Hotel – called colour by numbers.

A great example of how inspiration for colour palettes can be taken from film. Let's take a quick look at how this filtered through to our daily lives.

Links can be seen in a wide cross section of design industries.

Seen in the top left hand corner, Bar Luce is the Milanese bar / café owned by Wes Anderson.

Either intentionally or not, these examples are all synonymous with his films. The style industries are obsessed with his pastel hued perfectionism. In 2015 the looks were all over the catwalks, showing the perfect example of a colour trend, influence by film.

Once editorial magazines, new book launches and printed material were a huge influence on trend creation and the process in which creatives sold their ideas into wider teams and boards of directors alike. Physical printed colour could be matched to (although, to be fair lots of teams would photocopy on un-calibrated machines) however, printed editorial 'tears' and newly published material were an important part of the trend journey in many fashion offices globally, and to a point, they still are.

In the last 2 decades this area has seen a huge decline. However the tables might be turning, perhaps seen as a retro revival or maybe a return to substance, but some of the old favourites are going back into print.

Seen here, The Face magazine had a place in the pantheon of Eighties and Nineties [fashion](#) and culture, where male androgyny was embraced early on and where a 16-year-old Kate Moss broke out as a hippie beach child. The re-launch of the Face website in 2019, is to be followed by print, seen here in the slides.

Managing Director Dan Flower said that he and his team share the view that print is not dead. The re-launch of The Face magazine has been reinvested in significantly and backed by major fashion houses to go back into print.

But how does this effect colour? As a bigger picture trigger, it doesn't affect anything, but it helps to bring us to the point of screen colour vs printed colour.

It's important for us to remember throughout our colour journey that 'real' colour is physical, matching to a screen gives a varied result and the outcome is not considered to be valid in many parts of the colour decision journey. We use screens daily and they are an essential part of our research and development process, but we must always remember the variants involved when printing for ourselves or communicating colour by using a screen.

Let's take a quick look at music, the expression of music culture and its impact on colour trends.

Trend forecasters look to music festivals for real time trends.

Street shots at music events are key areas of research for cool hunters where trends are pulled together from real time analysis of what people are wearing and how they may be styling it.

Why is it important?

Festival clothing and associated 'drops' are big money and getting the colour right here is key.

Forecasters and design teams can look at events across a wide section of style tribes and music genres to gather insights for their analysis.

In the same way that a film may have influence, a music artist and their personal style or equally their music visual material, can steer our conscious or subconscious colour decisions – this will affect the intuitive process. Some artists will be selected as key influencers from one season to the next.

In the next set of slides we will reign it in and take it back to the more structured physical decision making side of the process. We will remind you of the processes that we can go through in order to make sound colour decisions and how these need to be practically applicable to store or e-commerce environments.

So we've looked at the 3 main steps – How to hunt & gather, including places to look. Now let's look at ways to display all this information. Ways in which we can filter the noise and apply all our findings to our specific brand or retail environment.



3. Colour Break down

One of the first considerations in colour break down is staple colour, it's the conversation about whether the business or brand will offer a 'true black' or perhaps 'optic white'. We can look at achromatic colour, or a colour that is without a hue such as black, white or grey. Brands often select a continuity level to add balance across their product offering. But what if the brand is mainly focussed on achromatic levels? In this instance, they may have fun by interchanging or layering these season on season.

To be truly achromatic the selection will lack hue, it's true to say that this may not work for some businesses because they require a warmer or more defined look. In this case we could talk about tinted staple colours to add balance, some are seen here in the slide.

This will differ across product categories and can also be season dependant. But to wrap it up in simple terms, a perennial colour is one that will appear season to season across a product category. It's the reoccurring shade that is always relevant in some way, it's the staple hue that customers would expect to see. For example, pink may feature heavily in a very feminine offering or khaki may be important for a utility line.

These may be tweaked season upon season, or run across a few drops and then evolve to sit alongside newly introduced trend colours.

Let's look at 2 very obvious examples here, how we react to trends such as pastel & sorbet shades or fluo.

How a collection looks at fashion or emerging colour will differ season to season, brand to brand. In short, the output of a fashion or emerging colour as seen by the customer will depend upon the final selection made by the buyer, this will decipher the dominance that these levels will have on a collection. Sometimes if the colour is new territory for a brand, they may trial a fashion colour in store to gauge a reaction. It's equally important to say that some brands stay true to their DNA and completely ignore a fashion or emerging colour as it doesn't have relevance to the product offering or brand identity. Often large high street retailers will be expected in some way to react to the emergence of a new colour trend, but it can look very bland if it is taken literally or overused. It's all about balance.

The novelty of a colour creates a desire for the colour. Typically, an emerging colour is quite different from what preceded it. Following a trend is an opportunity to experience something fresh and exciting. Variety is the spice of

life. Perhaps this explains why we welcome a new colour and why this generates consumer activity.

But how do we balance this in store? It can be a huge task.

Let's take a look at highlight colours and how they wrap into the balance. Often a term used in print design, a highlight colour is the least used but can have a strong impact on the final display depending on the way in which it is used. For example, we can use highlight colours to add a 'pop' to a print or colour blocking as seen here – a detail that might otherwise blend into the background is made a feature and pushed out to the fore.

In colour theory, colour harmony refers to the property that certain aesthetically pleasing colour combinations have. These combinations create pleasing contrasts and consonances that are said to be harmonious. They are positioned opposite to each other on the colour wheel.

It's important to have this knowledge when building a collection, it can help guide the process of colour selection in a few ways. Firstly, it can help you to decide colour groups that sit gently together, but equally it can help trigger new combinations, ones that jar or bounce off each other if you are looking to create a more dramatic or impactful look.

Our interpretation of colour can be changed if certain levels are juxtaposed against one another.

Looking at creating a prints and styling combinations can help to explain this part of colour application.

White backgrounds can be used to enhance the fore, soft effects are seen here through use of pastel and blended colour florals onto a light ground.

A darker contrasting background can also be used in this way, creating a completely different effect where the eye reacts and adds to the depth of field.

More colourful combinations, again change the way we see a print and can have a different emotive outcome.

We can anchor colours or blend them creating altering moods

Very similar looks can have a completely different outcome when treated with a varied colour approach.

Among all of the many options for colour play, the layering of colour can be a fluid and minimal way of making a statement, seen here where tonal colours are used.

I'll now move onto talk about managing the breakdown of colour. In order to communicate layers and use of colour across a season or within a meeting, we can show colour palettes internally in various layouts. We may show the source of inspiration and add a palette within the mood board to help back the trend as seen here in an example from WGSN. The palette can be organised to explain without need for words, the balance of colour – the highlights are shown in smaller portions vs the main staple or fashion colours as previously explained.

Colour analysis can be laid out in many ways, shown here you'll see some fun historic examples. But the end result is the same, it allows us to quickly identify the balance of colour used in a finished item.

We can display colour in a very matter of fact way to help communicate the important levels across a business. But why do we do this and how does it help?

Well, in simple terms, in order to move forward, we need to know where we've come from.

Essentially we use infographics to display our story.

A simple matrix layout is a method used within many fashion businesses to show balance of colour for a season across many departments. It helps senior members of staff understand which are the biggest backed colours and how these relate across product categories.

Colour evolution as seen here in an example from WGSN, is another great way to simply explain how a particular hue is playing out and evolving from one season to the next.

What effect do these important decisions have on the move toward a sustainable strategy? How can we work with colour trends within a market aiming towards a circular economy?

This in itself is a standalone module – however to tackle the subject in short I can explain this.

Managing colour efficiently is the start point and adds weight to the conversation. It enables control, which can help to limit over sampling and

control tolerances. Documenting colour as detailed in my previous slides, also has a significant impact on this.

The influence of trend is it still important to drive newness in a balanced way. But there is a growing need for a better understanding between supplier and retailer / brand. Submissions and approvals are key. Management of waste is hugely important.

Measurements must be given under a correct light source. It's essential to work with a consistent colour library, ensuring both parties, supplier and end user have access and are agreed on which light sources in which colour will be assessed.

Natural pigments have never been so important and more labels than ever are exploring ways in which to embed this into part, or all of their journey.

Each supplier, brand or retailer will have a stand point and their 'story' ultimately effects their colour decision making process. This evolves and changes from one season to the next.

At each step, we can create the most beautiful harmonies, the most emotive palette or pair the most interesting combinations of colour, but we must always anchor our journey with REAL colour and communicate using relevant and accessible standards through the supply chain.

We must match colour appropriately.