

Quadrant II – Notes

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Unit 2: Adoption of Fashion

Module Name: Consumer Groups & Adoption Process

Module No: 2

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Notes :

Fashion Cycle

The fashion cycle is a natural cycle by which a fashion trend is introduced, rises to mainstream popularity, declines, and finally gets rejected in the obsolescence stage.

The five stages in a standard fashion cycle:

1. **Introduction:** The introduction stage is when the new style first enters the fashion world. This introduction can be part of a new haute couture design during fashion week, an outfit worn by a well-known figure, or a calculated effort from a marketing agency or manufacturer. The style is usually only available in small quantities from a handful of different designers or retailers, often at a high price.
2. **Increase:** The increase stage (also known as the “fashion acceptance” stage) is when the new fashion style begins gaining momentum and traction in the fashion industry, officially receiving the coveted “trend” label. During the rise stage, more fashion leaders and trendsetters wear outfits that incorporate the idea, from social media influencers to celebrities, increasing consumer demand. In response to this acceptance by fashion influencers, more retail stores will begin carrying the trend.
3. **Peak:** In the peak stage, the trend has reached full saturation in the general public, and many everyday consumers begin wearing the trend. Most retailers will have identified

and replicated the trend, and it will be available through mass production at a wide variety of price levels, especially at lower prices.

4. **Decline:** In the decline stage, the trend will have become oversaturated in the market. During this period of time, the trend's intense popularity will begin to turn off consumers who want their outfits to feel fashion-forward and unique rather than mainstream.
5. **Obsolescence:** Once the trend has reached the end of the fashion cycle, it is considered outdated and out-of-fashion by mainstream fashion wearers, who have moved on to newer trends in the introduction or increase stages. Reaching obsolescence doesn't mean a rejected trend will never re-enter the cycle. The cycle is in a constant state of repetition, bringing back "old fashions" to send them through the movement of fashion. For example, the life cycle of jean waistlines: high-waisted jeans saw peaks in popularity during the 1940s, the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the 2010s, while low-waisted jeans saw peaks in between these years, in the 1960s and late 1990s through the early 2000s.

Consumer Groups

Fashion consumer groups include fashion change agents (i.e., innovators, opinion leaders, innovative communicators) and fashion followers.

- **Fashion change agents:** The fashion change agent is a higher order fashion influential or fashion stimulator with a combination of unique skills and personal fashion attributes. The fashion change agent has a combination of fashion innovative-ness, information transmission, knowledge, and social legitimization traits.
- **Fashion follower:** People who wear a certain style only after it becomes a popular trend. Everyday people are examples of fashion followers. Fashion followers include largest numbers of group of fashion consumers who accept and wear the merchandise that has been visually communicated to them.

Types of consumers in fashion sector

- **The pioneer:** This consumer lives and breathes fashion. They know all about the latest proposals or trends. These are blog followers and magazine readers. They are awaiting new proposals from firms and designers. They are daring and buy any type of design. Sometimes edgy. Not only that, but they pay high prices for

exclusive garments. They are the first to have launch garments. These are also often called: Avant-garde, Exhibitionists, Smart chic – Pro Blogger.

- **The innovative:** This consumer also knows fashion. They have their own peculiar style, they are those who “make” fashion. Besides, they also look for exclusive garments in the stores they visit. Thus, they are considered avant-garde.
- **The follower:** This consumer is a copycat pioneer or innovator. This one acquires the trends or garments shortly after, in the middle of its success. They can pay high prices, but not exorbitant prices like in the launch phase.
- **The fashion-dependent:** This consumer adapts to the most marked trends and everything fashionable.
- **The liabilities:** This consumer acquires garments with prices suitable for the public. When the product has become known and is popular with many consumers, he purchases it too.
- **The laggy back:** This consumer doesn’t have enough financial resources to purchase a fashionable product. As a result, they often buy it on sale or long after the demand lowers, and thus, the price drops. They are also known under the name of price controller or mobile innovation.
- **Traditional:** This person bets on the classic follows rules and dress codes. It doesn’t get involved with the fast-paced world of fashion. They look for status with what they use. It’s also called a conventional brand. It is faithful to its brands and its lifelong stores, innovation is not among its plans.
- **Neo-traditional:** This consumer uses a mix of classic and innovative. They are more connected with the latest trends and technology. As a result, they are more up-to-date.
- **Contemporary:** They perform different daily activities and are multicultural as well as up-to-date. Besides, they also look for what’s practical and what works for them.
- **Conscious technology:** This is someone concerned about nature. Because of this, they are involved in global situations and the environment. This is a type of consumer that is connected to the virtual world.

Theories of Fashion Adoption

Theories of fashion adoption or distribution are concerned with how fashion moves through the various socioeconomic levels of society. There are three primary theories of fashion adoption: trickle-down, trickle-across and trickle-up. However, no one theory is adequate to discuss fashion theory or explain how fashion moves through society. In addition to these theories, there is an alternate populist model of fashion adoption, which applies to some situations that identify fashion distribution as moving through social groups rather than socioeconomic classes.

- 1. Trickle-Down Theory:** Coined by economist Thorstein Veblen in 1889, the trickle-down theory of fashion adoption assumes that fashion begins in the upper echelon of society. Styles worn by the wealthy change, and those changes are gradually adopted by the middle and lower classes. When those styles have been assimilated by the lower classes, the wealthy, in turn, change their style and attire. This theory assumes that the lower classes want to emulate the upper classes and is the oldest theory of fashion adoption. It is applicable historically, particularly prior to World War II. Styles from the white blouses of the Gibson Girl era to the shorter hemlines of the 1920's began in the upper classes.

2. **Trickle-Across Theory:** First developed in the late 1950's, the trickle-across theory assumes that fashion moves across socioeconomic levels relatively rapidly. Clothing styles do not trickle down but appear at all price points at approximately the same time. Mass communications and popular media support the existence of this theory, providing pictures and details about new styles, as does the modern retail world. Many designers show similar styles in a variety of lines, ranging from high-end designer clothing to lower-end affordable pieces. Once a design appears on the runway, a variety of companies produce similar garments, allowing widespread access to fashion. From the 1960's shift dress to the shoulder pads of the 1980's, these garments were available in discount, department and designer stores at approximately the same time.
3. **Trickle-Up Theory:** The trickle-up theory of fashion adoption reflects changing styles and practices in fashion. According to the theory, styles may begin with youth or street fashion and move progressively up the fashion ladder until they are favoured and worn by older and wealthier consumers. Coco Chanel was the first to adopt this theory when she integrated military fabrics and attire into fashion following World War II. The classic T-shirt began as an undergarment in the working classes and is now a fundamental piece of the everyday wardrobe. Once the styles have been adopted by more traditional consumers, the street or youth culture may adopt a new style.

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