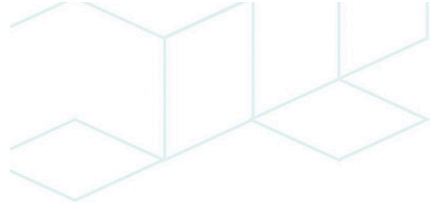
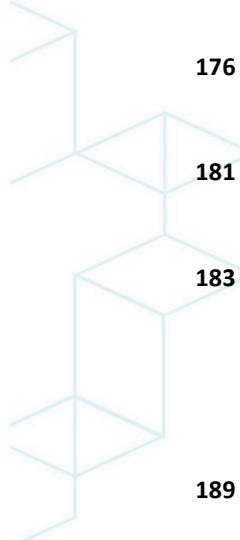
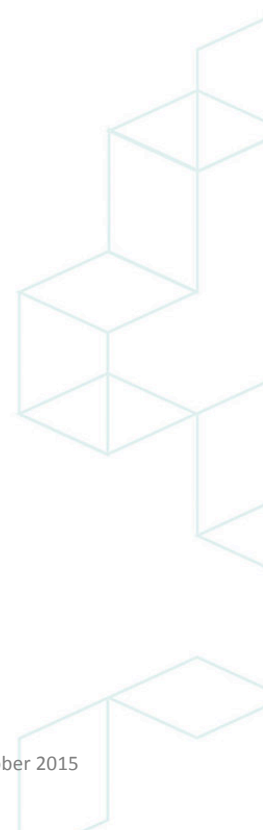


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- 
- 176 Globalization of International Property Rights Applicable to Creators: Law and practice.**
Cristina Caldeira
- 181 The meaning of design.**
Rodrigo Cunha
- 183 Ephemeral Constructions in the Context of the Baroque Period Festivities: an Aesthetic of Enchantment.**
Anabela Couto
- 189 PARALLEL SESSION 5 »»»» DESIGN FOR SOCIAL IMPACT**
Panel chair: Lucy Niemeyer
- 191 Conceptual and Methodological Aspects in the Technological Innovation Process: Design as a Strategic Tool.**
Pablo Bezerra, Amilton Arruda, Isabela Moroni, Celso Hartkopf and Aurileide Alves
- 198 Designing Ideas: a project in social design within an educational framework.**
Ana Nolasco
- 204 Placing toilets in sustainable design – the need for social and technological innovation.**
Laura Korčulanin, Carlos Barbosa and Ana Margarida Ferreira
- 212 Affordance, Semantic Object and Intuitiveness: A review focusing on Design.**
Jamille Noretza de Lima Lanutti, Sérgio Tosi Rodrigues, Luis Carlos Paschoarelli and Gabriel Henrique Cruz Bonfin
- 220 What difference does a designer make in Brazilian craftsmanship?**
Carla Paoliello and Márcia Enrige Nobre
- 228 Innovation, Design and Cultural Changes: the Contributions of Cultural Triangulation as a Trend Forecasting Methodology.**
Douglas Menegazzi, Laryssa Tarachucky, and Luiz Salomão Ribas Gomez
- 235 PARALLEL SESSION 6 »»»» DIGITAL DESIGN**
Panel chair: Hande Ayanağlu
- 237 Experience Design and Wine List Innovation.**
Ana Filomena Curralo
- 245 Digital interaction and tangible experiences: a theoretical investigation.**
Chiara Lecce
- 253 The challenge of designing for modern healthcare digital systems.**
Claudia Pernencar

Innovation, Design and Cultural Changes: The Contributions of Cultural Triangulation as a Trend Forecasting Methodology

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ABSTRACT

Cultural triangulation is a methodology developed in social sciences field in order to examine and verify the incoming changes of a society by research methods and tools. The objective of this paper is to study the procedures adopted by the cultural triangulation and explore the ways how it can contribute for the seeking of trends in emerging market movements, helping designers in the comprehension of future needs and desires. As a result, it discusses some possibilities of trend research use in the design process and reinforces the understanding that the better comprehension of future trends is a competitive advantage of which designers can not overlook.

Keywords: Trend; Cultural Triangulation; Innovation; Design; Trendforecasting.

INTRODUCTION

Innovation is pointed by many authors as a major responsible for ensuring the survival of organizations. Strategically, innovation enables the expansion or creation of new markets, contributing to the enhancement of brand image and enhancing the survival and growth of a company. The innovation process requires improvements along the value chain and it may include not only new products but also improvements in manufacturing, logistics, after-sales service, and brand image. Back (2008) asserts that to remain competitive, one must hold the knowledge in relation to the environment, competitors, and about technologies that are previously developed. To Rozenfeld et al (2006), it is not possible to devise a strategy and set a line of products without deeply knowing the market, including competitors, habits and consumer preferences. In addition to this, some authors include the knowledge of the future trends to the innovation process (PRAHALAD & HAMEL, 2005; RAYMOND, 2010; McCracken, 2011).

Specifically, within companies, the research process is seen as the factor with the greatest capacity to absorb and use new knowledge to generate innovation (OECD, 1997), leading design to a central factor for innovative humanization of Technologies. Therefore, the designer plays a crucial role in this context as the professional who practices intellectual and creative processes, establishing the multifaceted qualities of objects, processes, services and their systems in whole life cycles (MOZOTA, 2011). Understanding a culture's evolution process can lead the work of the designer to more assertive propositions to future needs. I.e., by understanding cultural processes, the designer can guide companies and institutions in the monitoring of market trends, not only in

meeting the future needs, but also in finding the ways for its constant development and its continuity as economic and social agent.

Future is not a compilation of the past. New industrial structures will succeed the old. The inability to predict and participate in opportunities ahead impoverishes nations and companies. This article aims to analyze the trends research methodology proposed by Raymond (2010), which describes the use of cultural triangulation as a way of catchment and analysis of future demands. This methodology was chosen for standing out in a universe of methodologies aimed at this purpose due to joining tools to capture trends with quantitative analysis techniques, which provides results more easily assimilable by the corporate world.

In order to achieve the goals of this research we carried out a bibliographic research, besides secondary and primary data collection. In this paper, we bring some results obtained so far, especially on the concepts of design and trend forecasting as a practice of research that contributes to the discovering of new innovation possibilities.

TREND

From Latin *futūrus*, future is an undefined time period after the present. In a hypothetical time line, the past (what has happened) is behind (before) the present, while the future (what has not happened yet) appears ahead (after). The future, therefore, is a conjecture which can be forecast by trained and qualified professionals who can perceive, analyze and interpret the signals "stated" from culture in order to determinate new trends. The trend, according to Caldas (2004), is a notion that is present in every part of contemporary culture. This term indicates something that is attracted to or leaning to some other thing, showing that one influences or drives the other. In everyday relationships it can be observed these phenomena in fashion, styles, behaviors, economics, politics, technology. Something does influence others and makes them act according to its influence.

The term "trend" derives from the latin *tendentia*, which meanings are "tend to", "lean to" or "be attracted to" (CALDAS, 2004). This word has taken on other meanings over time, and only from the eighteenth century the definition has to be what is known today: the general direction in which something tends to move, to veer in an specified direction. Its concept is related to a manifestation, which can be related to behavior, consumption or the "spirit of the time" (also called *zeitgeist*). Caldas (2004) writes that the concept of trend that is widespread in the contemporary society was built on the ideas of movement, change, representation of future developments, and on quantitative criteria. It could also be described as a sensitivity announced by signs and, for market interests, it acquires meaning of risk reducing (CALDAS, 2004).

Raymond (2010) says that trends are compulsive, addictive, or in some cases, viral, as they affect us without being expected and sometimes either being required or not. They are spread through what Dawkins (2003) calls "memes", which are a cultural version of a gene, that it reproduces itself in response to social, ethical, environmental or biological changes. Trends are transmitted from a brain to another through a process called imitation, in which a person imitates the behavior of another particularity, observing the advantages that can be obtained by making such imitation, and they are diffused by a group diffusion pattern, studied by M. Everett Rogers.

The whole concept of trend has been built over time and it responds to a specific type of sensitivity, pioneered by modernity, with its cult of the new, the changes and the future, and which post-modernity consecrated. This term has been gaining importance and increasing relevance for the understanding of the consumer behavior. It can also be "an idea, as well as a set of similar ideas or interrelated objects" (Raymond, 2010, p.13). These ideas may open new directions for innovation and provide valuable tips for the development of products and services. Trends allow us to trace routes and scenarios for long-term planning by anticipating the strategic information.

To Back (2008), the act of researching trends means to realize influences exerted on a context and read their evolution seeking to understand their consequences. Considering that its meaning encompasses "tend to", so trends are nothing but possible directions for a given posthumously time. In this sense, they act as a mirror of the future of contemporaneity, mirror in which current and emerging signs of lifestyles reflect projections pointed to a specific future (QUEIROZ et al., 2012). Considering a scenario in which the changes happen ever more rapidly and in all directions, the trends become a privileged tool to provide an effective and current vision, foresight and strategic view in search for innovation. A trend cannot be seen as something that moves in one direction, but as changes within complex systems, which should be considered as a whole context (CALDAS,

2004). Unlike a style, that is a way, an aesthetic expression, a method or a different way of expressing something new, a trend is the direction that something new or different takes. Thus, the importance of understanding the opportunities, i.e., the "trends", paved the way for the emergence of new agencies and professionals in this segment of market research: the trend hunters, professionals dedicated to detect patterns or changes in attitudes, mentality or lifestyles that contrast with the predominant features.

According to Raymond (2010), the trend hunting is made in all aspects of society that may be important for the understanding of the recent changes or new seeds in the culture around us. This forecast can be made through studies of collective behavior that can identify changes of great importance which reach the realm of science, technology, fashion, architecture or art, or even more subtle changes and harder to identify in the way of living: changes in the food we eat or the way to listen to music or access the media. The collective behavior studies try to reveal how behavioral phenomena that affect the masses are created, disseminated and how they act. These phenomena can be explained through phases or stages: propensity, stress, general belief, precipitating factors and transformation factors of general belief in specific belief, crystallization and spread of a specific belief. It is necessary to understand every step of the main features contained therein in order to identify trends that are present in these behaviors.

Culture provides people a knowledge that people don't realize they have and that operates invisibly to shape their understanding of the world (McCRACKEN, 2011). It is one of the crucial elements of the changes in everyday life. McCracken (2011) also says that culture is overactive: it blends with other factors so furiously that no event is free of culture. However, when it comes to capturing trends, one should know in what type of culture he is looking for signs of cultural change. There are, according to McCracken, two kinds of culture, the slow one and the fast one. While fast culture is always the center of attention, being more visible, vivid, and obvious, slow culture is much less mapped, much less likely to be perceived. Both are important to the designer's job, but it is in the slow culture that are present patterns that may indicate significant and lasting changes that will affect people's lives and that can direct the work of the designer for correctly anticipating future needs. The long-term trends provide a more focused look into the future, being more predisposed to see opportunities for radical innovation, realizing hitherto latent needs and paving the way for new business.

IN THE SEARCH FOR TRENDS – THE CULTURAL TRIANGULATION METHODOLOGY

According to Vianna (2012), industries search on trends for information for the innovation process, aiming to recreate business models, build new markets, meet human needs and select new ideas in a small period of time. In the case of the "trendhunting", the idea of a methodology is to build a clear and objective way to identify and understand trends consistent with the observed reality. But the quest for understanding the future is already an arduous task itself, and taking control of that future through a search tool for trends proves to be an even more challenging activity. Thus, aiming to clarify the process of capturing trends, we analyzed cultural triangulation methodology as a way to identify and understand the future through the trend analysis.

Cultural triangulation is a methodology to capture trends developed by The Future Laboratory. The term, according to Raymond (2010), was first used by Christopher Sanderson in 2001 in order to describe a system for identifying trends based on three pillars: consultation, observation and intuition. Raymond (2010) says that this method provides more quantitative ways to justify the trend hunters' work within the business scenario - which often do not show up to be used to the qualitative aspects of uptake – for being more solid and precise in its results.

Triangulation is a term from the social science field that refers to a process by which two methods are used in three ways to reach the same conclusion in order to confirm that its answers are correct. Raymond (2010) describes that it is believed that by combining several methods and procedures the trend hunters can eliminate the habitual bias when using only one. Raymond says that it can also be described as a way to examine and verify the changes that happen in societies through a method that puts in evidence, verifies or validates another scenario. By merging the quantitative with the qualitative data, the visual with the factual, and the intuitive with the expert, cultural triangulation aims to help on the development of a future-ready strategy and innovation pipeline underpinned with relevant trends and core consumer insights. The three triangulating factors are: (1) interrogation: quantitative and qualitative snapshots of key consumers and consumer insight panels built in order to capture new and emerging consumer thinking; (2) observation: ethnographic and interrogative studies of target groups that reveal the new and emerging needs of these groups; (3) intuition: insight and orientation panels, underpinned with expert interviews within global networks, aiming to identify future developments in new and emerging tastes.

Interrogation Phase

The first phase of the process is the time to thoroughly examine all issues related to the initial question. It is the use of quantitative techniques of survey, included field research and interviews with experts to question people and groups regarding their attitudes and activities in order to calculate the distribution of these attitudes or activities in relation to general population or majority group. Consisting of three distinct processes: informative amnesty, the delimitation of the topic and quantitative research.

As reported by Raymond (2010), trend hunters must use a process of informative amnesty in order to begin the process of cultural triangulation. Informative amnesty is a term used to refer to the early stages of triangulation process in which the trend hunters interrogate their customers in order to gather all the information they consider significant about the subject or object of inquiry or research so they can approach more precisely to the issues that truly require response. And to form a proper base, first of all one must understand clearly and comprehensively the customer instructions, besides all material and documentation provided and any research that has been done on the issue that the researcher was given to study.

In order to have an idea of the quantitative target audience, information may be collected in various sources: the client's marketing department, his research team, among others. And in order to get a complete information, since the very beginning of the project the researcher needs to know exactly what are its general goals and objectives, if what is sought is a new product idea, a new impetus to an existing product, or if the focus will be on new behaviors that can be observed in the audience; if there is any matter that might limit the work from the beginning - as resistance by the target audience or any inconvenience to conduct research.

The following stage is the delimitation of the subject. This is the stage of identifying all the issues that may influence the subject and determine a clear line of investigation of the topic. It consists in making use of the internet, the basic search tools, available facilities and organizations engaged in the research, including focus groups, with the intention to form a broader concept of the market which is being studied. This must be done after interviewing the client and after determining what he knows about the subject or not. At this stage the main point are the trends, as well as the information that the research will be reporting in order to track any trends that may affect the market or consumer group in question. At the end of this phase a summary must be prepared and it must detail all the incipient trends related to the original question as well as it must indicate the areas that need further investigation, and the names of the experts who will possibly form the list of people to be interviewed. Once identified all relevant themes and selected the experts panel, an e-mail to all members should be written, as well as an abstract and an initial compendium of questions that require answers. Then the members are interviewed separately in order to verify if they believe to be included all the topics that should be considered or if something has been left out and what they believe to be the best and the worst things that can happen so that the researcher can have access to the experts' thoughts about the outcome future of the object under study.

Investigating and quantifying the significant data for the processes makes part of the quantitative research, as well as the scaling of the affected group compared to the rest of the population, the percentage by gender, income and age, region / nation / city they live in, ethnicity and sexual orientation group, and the social / political / ethical criteria that may focus on one or all of the aspects. Here the researchers can work with consumers opinion research companies, and the number of participants will be determined according to the size of the niche searched. The questionnaire should require the participants their social, ethical, cultural and moral influences regarding the subject, their level of knowledge and ignorance of the topic, their doubts and prejudices that may have on the subject, and their previous ideas. It should also allow the trend hunter to tell the difference between the consumer and experts ways of thinking, the typology which they belong, and the words and sentences they use to describe themselves. These questions can determine, for example, what percentage of people who are part of a certain group of innovators.

This phase should reveal, among other information, the gap between consumers and market experts and the percentage of innovative, primary adopters, most primary, late majority and laggards on the subject (which will show when a trend is no longer specific from a group and is passing to another). An abstract of these results must be sent to the expert panel a week before re-interviewing them so they have time to rethink about all topics. The main results should be classified as incipient trends that began to emerge. After presenting the main results to the expert panel, it should be asked about the impact of the search results to the original question and their opinion about the irregularities. These comments will be added to a larger document that will provide

a deeper understanding of the trend by presenting an analysis and projection of the future, the results of quantitative research and quotes from experts.

Observation Phase

In the observation phase, cultural triangulation methodology proposes the trend hunter to use the ethnographic map in order to go beyond percentages and feel, touch and scrutinize the trend without intermediaries. At this stage the trend hunter should join the innovative person being studied so he can assimilate more details and measure the impact of the trend in other groups. Visual profiles are made at this moment in order to monitor and observe consumers or individuals who perform a particular task or activity.

There are three other steps that must be observed before the final report: the ethnographic maps and the photographic case study technique, which provide elements for the intuitive phase. According to Raymond (2010), ethnography is a method used to unravel the attitudes behind the innovators' or primary adopters' behavior in order to make a map that describes how other groups tend to behave in the future. This stage can be justified by assuming that people express trends better than talk about them. The ethnographic study can be done in several ways. The trend hunter can ask the group studied to write a diary or make a record of their activities so that he can relate their day-by-day with the trend which is being observed. With the same purpose, it can be request from the people studied to take pictures or record details of the activities that are supposed to be observed. Another option is to provide images, texts, journals, or videos on social networking sites related to the topic.

Through the photographic case study technique the trend hunter should include on the research visually illustrative and fundamental elements about the public studied: domestic spaces, intimate spaces, personal technology or equipment they use, objects that carry in their pockets and their backpack, personal objects of desire, places and spaces that they attend to, among other information they deem relevant. All material should be followed by explanatory small texts or brief statements.

Intuition Phase

The final phase is dedicated to the use of the experience that the trend hunter has in order to contribute to a deeper analysis based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the interrogation and observation phases. After careful analysis of all data collected, making use of his experience and prior knowledge, the trend hunter must question the relationship between what is known now to the original question or study area, think about how this knowledge can be used now in order to better inform the customer about what he needs to understand about it, how all these changes reverberate in the client's expectations for the future, find out if there are aspects of his findings that the client has not realized yet and, if so, what are these aspects and how to integrate them into the client's current strategy. The trend hunter should also examine whether the research was able to find new sources of income and which, if it was able to detect new threats, if the client has all the tools, all the resources and services which are necessary to work forward to everything that will come across and, if not, if he can be warned about it.

Raymond (2010) tells that as the researcher examine all the material he needs to use his wider knowledge about the society to better interpret the deeds, statistics, comments and opinions he has collected (his awareness of the past), but he must do it with awareness of present thought, which involves assessing quantitatively and qualitatively what is new and imminent. The researcher will have to leave aside the usual sense of logic to identify and treat the underlying forces that drive people to do what they do and to adhere to trends that initially may seem illogical, dangerous, foolish or paradoxical. The ability to do this has an important role at the time of writing the final report and generate the tendency showcases.

The final phase of the cultural triangulation process is writing the report. As Raymond (2010) recommends, the final report should be formed of numerous steps, comments, quotes and opinions, arranged in a logical, sequential and reflective way. It should contain the overall goals and objectives of the research and the initial question, the methodology used in the research and the experts consulted and cited sources if not listed below. It should also be followed by the presentation of the initial question, cultural, social, economic and environmental factors that possibly will influence in the answer to the question. The text should substantiate and confirm the arguments made by experts and highlight the disparity between their ways of thinking with the consumers in general. It should also identify and explain the types of target consumers possibly related to these trends and to the changes to which they are taking place, offering the client a detailed portrait of the emotional state and attitudes existing in the group, as well as details about their tastes, the environment in which they live, and how they behave, what they eat, how they dress and the main technological products they own. Finally, the final response to the client must be given: what the research means, in which way it will affect on his

current strategy and future possibilities that it offers, and in what direction he can and should move forward.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Anticipating the future is an old desire of the human being. No matter how risky planning for the future is, without long-term vision companies may be shocked by the unexpected. Anticipating trends within a context of changes and large supply of goods and services is no longer a simple competitive advantage: it is essential to the success in the corporate world. After all, innovation is associated with growth and the progress resulting from this innovative process is a basic factor in the formation of patterns of economic transformation, as well as its long-term development. Being able to identify these trends in time to use them strategically, getting a position in the market by launching a new product, realizing a latent need and opening a new market is what guides the innovation process of organizations.

Although we have no ability to accurately state the facts that are going to occur in the future, we already have mechanisms for a quite precise projection of possible situations. In addition to favoring the discovery of new market niches, the trend research contributes to the understanding of the economic, technological and cultural change, facilitating and speeding up the process of decision making. This scenario shows a demand for professionals who can guide companies and institutions in the search for innovations. These professionals, however, must be able to perform a proper reading of the so-called signs of low and high frequency present both in fast and, specially, slow culture.

Briefly, the cultural triangulation process must complete the following steps: (1) the office research, which covers the statistics and situational data that contextualize the original question or initial inquiry's investigation; (2) the interviews to the panel of experts, which complete the office research and give a further step in the analysis, orientation and contextualization of the original question; (3) the quantitative research that helps to contextualize the experts' reflections and determine how the potential bias can influence consumer behavior; (4) identifying the basic typology that helps to identify the main characteristics of the different types of consumers, essential to understand the trend and encourage its dissemination; (5) the interviews with the selected people, which help to go beyond the numbers and know the environment that surrounds those who are ahead of the trend that we try to identify; (6) the photographic case study technique applied within the key types, with which the client can see and understand the general characteristics of the trend and the people affected by it; (7) adding the experience and intuition of the trend hunter through observations made through the material collected; and (8) the writing of the final report which should lead the factors and conclusions to the client.

It was observed that despite the specificities of cultural triangulation, this methodology offers tools and methods that can be adapted to the context of the creation process in which the designer is involved. Analyzing the cultural triangulation methodology as a tool for identifying trends brings the understanding of the process and the understanding of the trends forecasting techniques. However, it is necessary to examine the practical application of this methodology for its validation. For further researches, we understand that the proposed methodology should be repeated in order to verify its efficiency and, in addition to this, clarify possible ways to embed or combine the exploration of trends to the design process.

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