Trend Studies: an approach for analyzing and managing culture

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ABSTRACT

The present paper intends to discuss the development and consolidation process of Trend Studies, as a transversal area with transdisciplinary characteristics that was developed in connection with the concepts and practices of areas such as Cultural Studies. The numerous perspectives of Trend Studies and their different associations promoted a dispersed development that should be considered and deconstructed by means of finding common points and practices, or different perspectives, to generate a greater cohesion of concepts and methodologies. In this sense, it is important to present a model for the purpose of systematic identification and observation of trends. The result can generate a parallel process of cultural analysis capable of contributing to a basis for the generation of strategic solutions for institutional and social problems, in a new approach to culture management.

Keywords: trends, culture, coolhunting, trendwatching, trendspotting*.*

Estudos de Tendências: contributo para uma abordagem de análise e gestão da cultura

RESUMO

O presente artigo pretende problematizar o desenvolvimento e o processo de consolidação dos Estudos de Tendências, enquanto área transversal com características transdisciplinares, que se desenvolveu em articulação com os conceitos e as práticas de áreas como os Estudos de Cultura. As várias perspetivas dos Estudos de Tendências e as suas diversas associações promovem um desenvolvimento disperso que se deve considerar e desconstruir, encontrando pontos em comum e práticas, ou perspetivas, distintas, com vista a uma maior coesão de conceitos e de metodologias. Neste sentido, importa apresentar um modelo de articulação para a identificação e a observação sistemáticas de tendências, no âmbito do estudo das mudanças ao nível da cultura e de mentalidades. Isto permite gerar um processo paralelo de análise cultural capaz de contribuir com as bases para a geração de soluções estratégicas para questões institucionais e sociais, numa nova abordagem ao nível da gestão da cultura.

Palavras-chave*: tendências, cultura, coolhunting, trendwatching, trendspotting.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to systematize and contextualize the research carried out in academic and business environments in the context of the cultural and social study of trends[4]. In this sense, it intends to generate a recognition of the designation "Trend Studies[5]", allowing simultaneously to demystify erroneous concepts and associations that arise, related to the practices of trend analysis. The fast emergence of these studies has highlighted shortcomings in the maturity and consistency that a field of inquiry must possess. It is therefore natural to associate the Trend Studies approach to an area such as Culture Studies (where we will concentrate our attention), itself also transdisciplinary. Trend Studies also have a close connection to concepts and practices of Anthropology, Marketing (with special attention to Consumer Culture Theory), Design and others, not to mention the important influence of Fashion Theory. The contribution of Culture Studies helps to put into context the pertinence of the study of trends (as a practice), as well as many of the dynamics behind the concepts applied

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[4] We differentiate the practice of studying trends - by using the concept of "study of trends" - from the emergent area of Trend Studies.
[5] Following the "Culture Studies" designation, this paper chooses to approach and defend the concept of Trends "Studies", among others that could be explored (like Trendwatching or Trends Research), underlining the perspective of Fred Inglis: "those fields of study which have, in a conscientiously up to date (...) way, repudiated the monolithic and authoritarian implications of a *discipline,* and styled themselves, non-referentially, 'studies'. For the designation 'Studies', implying (...) an ecumenical congeries of inquirers, each on friendly borrowing terms with the intellectual methods in the adjacent fields, refuses the old quest for accurate representations of reality and unitary methods of finding them. 'Studies' are provisional, flexible, mobile; the province of equal students rather than teachers (...). They honor the plurality of perspectives, relish the varieties of intellectual experience, acknowledge the location and uncertainty of old knowledge itself" (INGLIS, 1993, p.227).

in the business environment. In addition to the review and questioning of concepts and methodological contextualization, this article presents a map/model for the practices of trend identification and trend analysis, as basic exercises of Trend Studies. This underlines a relation with approaches from a cultural analysis, from a perspective of observation and interpretation, that generate strategic insights, which can be applied to a culture management perspective.

In this sense, this work emerges as a conceptual research exercise, with essay attributes, capable of supporting consequent and further applied research and fieldwork. This important literary revision - by means of a critical review of the perspectives of authors like Raymond Williams (1961/1975), Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning (2012), as well as others who work on this specific subject in the business scope, as Henrik Vejlgaard (2008), William Higham 2009), Peter Gloor (2007; 2009) and Martin Raymond (2010) - represents a necessary step for the conceptual and applied discussion of the area, giving it a direction for its growth in academia. Nevertheless, we should emphasize that the development of Trend Studies could not take place without the important role of academic institutions such as the Fontys Academy for Creative Industries (Netherlands), ELISAVA in Barcelona (Spain), the Federal and State Universities of Santa Catarina (Brazil) and the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon (Portugal), which contribute to the development and diffusion of knowledge in this emerging area. Networks and enterprises such as Trendwatching, Future Concept Lab, Faith Popcorn's Brainreserve, Science of the Time, Trends Observer, among others, also play an important role to consolidate the relevance of these studies.

In reviewing the context of the study of trends, we propose a convergence of concepts and an even mapping of practices that can generate better professional and research approaches. Our aim is to support the development of more sustainable and innovative strategies and solutions for societal and business challenges.

2. TREND STUDIES: PATHS AND CONCEPTS ——

2.1 Trend studies

Social Sciences provide many of the conceptual and methodological frameworks as a scientific sphere for the study of trends. In turn, the Humanities reinforce a contextualization of cultural dynamics, making it possible to understand the complex socio-cultural landscape. Trend Studies are thus a transdisciplinary area that integrates concepts, perspectives, and methodologies from Culture Studies, Anthropology, Marketing, Design, among others. Its objectives are several, according to each approach, but in its base, it aims to identify the changes in mindsets that, in turn, become visible in social environments. In this sense, Trend Studies' field of activities acts at the level of the various social systems - each with its own dynamics -, in order to deconstruct them, as well as to present solutions and directions at a strategic level. In short, its objects of study relate to the numerous manifestations associated with social behavior. That is, it intends to identify and follow practices, rituals, representations, and discourses - linked to certain artifacts - in order to understand behaviors and emerging mindsets that reflect changes in the spirit of the time. Based on applied methodologies, this area of study also analyses what is behind eventual socio-cultural shifts and their numerous impacts.

Although Trend Studies provide possible visions of the future, they are not to be confused with futurology. Despite the already old link between Trend Studies and the future (DRAGT, 2017; VEJLGAARD, 2008; RAYMOND, 2010), the ability to generate trend prospective scenarios comes from a diachronic analysis of the evolution of the trend and the several mutations it underwent. The focus is on the need to understand trends through the definition of synchronic and diachronic sociocultural contexts. This promotes the development of a historical contextualization of recent reality, just as it reveals potential paths and future events. As Sandra Rech suggests, Trend Studies can generate scenarios on society's evolution,

encompassing activities, attitudes, behaviors and social concerns (RECH, 2016). However, its mission is not to generate predictions about the future, but to recognize the strength of some patterns and their potential stability in the near future.

Concerning the transdisciplinary nature of Trend Studies, Neumann and Nünning (2012), when exploring the idea of traveling concepts, consider that the increasingly mobilized forms of social life - allied to the processes of global exchange and transdisciplinarity -, opens the path to knowledge production that transcends fixed territories and disciplines, reconfiguring and transforming existing boundaries (NEUMANN and NÜNNING, 2012, p.12). Notwithstanding the transdisciplinarity of Trend Studies, its perspective of critical analysis of cultural dynamics and their integration into models of innovation generation, it is important to find a space where these studies can be developed in a solid and recognized way. The analysis and the management of culture allow this association in the scope of Culture Studies. As Raymond Williams (1961/1975) suggested, the analysis of culture is about discovering the nature of the organization behind relations and a keyword for it is "pattern", that is, the discovery of patterns and of the relations between them sometimes allows us to identify unexpected identities and correspondences in activities considered to be separate (WILLIAMS, 1975, p.63). T. S. Eliot, on the other hand, raises the question whether there would be permanent patterns that would serve as a comparative basis between civilizations and Eras. The author, however, suggests the difficulties of analyzing the totality of the values of a civilization in an Era, whether being inserted in it or in a comparative perspective (ELIOT, 1948, p.18). This is one of the challenges of Trend Studies and the associated cultural analysis. The social perspective of cultures (WILLIAMS, 1961/1975) and the practices and representations that compose them - let alone the proximity to the problematic of the analysis of the spirit of time (ARNDT, 1808/2009; CARLYLE, 1829/1858; MILL, 1986; HEGEL, 1840/1914; MORIN, 1962/2007;

and others) -, as well as the term structure of feeling (WILLIAMS, 1961/1975), allow to integrate the study of trends in these disciplinary areas. This takes place in connection to the perspective of applied cultural analysis aimed at improving practices and decision-making processes in business, social and strategic environments, as proposed by the professional terminology of the Chief Culture Officer (CCO), by Grant McCracken (2011). Concerning Culture Studies, we underline the importance of this close association to Culture Management, in association with this author's view regarding the CCO.

Nevertheless, as Guillaume Erner suggests, a sociology of trends would have as its study elements the practices and objects that depend on sudden and convergent collective tastes (ERNER, 2016, p.23). Also discussing the importance of the concept of semiology, the author highlights the reference in the title of a subchapter, "semiology, the science of trends" (ERNER, 2016, p.49). This analysis of practices, representations, and discourses is explored in Trend Studies to reach a deep understanding of the diverse elements and forces that are moving and changing behaviors and mindsets. In this sense, it is important to understand these elements of change, the shifts, and triggers (MASON et al., 2015, p.52). Regarding the latter, Henry Mason and his colleagues suggest:

> […] shifts are the long-term, macro changes (such as urban transition, aging populations, and climate change) that play across years or even decades. […] triggers are more immediate changes that drive the emergence of a trend. These can include specific technologies, political events, economic shocks, environmental incidents, and more (MASON et al., 2015, p.52).

The authors' perspective contextualizes the numerous types of forces in action. From a categorical point of view, it can be added that trends act as forces of change, causing shifts among themselves and in the associated mindsets; disruptive events, often

understood as "black swans"[6] (TALEB, 2007), cause variations with visible effects; and finally, there are the natural conditions that can determine profound social changes.

In short, we conclude that based on these assumptions, Trend Studies intend to analyze a provide a mapping of mindsets based on a plural study of society and its dynamics. The goal is to identify signals capable of generating new approaches, as well as solid and sustainable strategies for the social and economic fabric.

2.2 The concepts and their development

In order to outline the foundation of Trend Studies, it is necessary to consider a brief discussion of terms like (a) trend, (b) cool, (c) trendwatching, coolhunting, and trendspotting. To reach this objective, we carried out a literary review of authors such as Malcolm Gladwell (2000), Peter Gloor and Scott Cooper (2007), Henrik Vejlgaard (2008), William Higham (2009), Victor Alejandro Gil Mártil (2009), Martin Raymond 2010), Francesco Morace (2013) and Els Dragt (2017). This compilation and resulting deconstruction of concepts are important since there isn't always an agreement among authors about terminologies and definitions. The following concepts may be considered - to a certain extent - as traveling concepts (NEUMANN and NÜNING, 2012; BAL, 2002; SAID, 1983). According to Mieke Bal (2002), there are concepts that move between disciplines, historical periods, geographic areas, academics and even different academic communities. As such, these terms - which travel between disciplines - may have different operational meanings and values (BAL, 2002, p.24). Neumann and Nünning reiterate that the meaning of concepts is not fixed, but something that emerges from the way they are repeatedly applied, translated and updated (NEUMANN and NÜNNING, 2012, p.2-3). As

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[6] The "black swan" is something improbable and unpredictable, that has great impact and that one is not aware before it happens (TALEB, 2007).

these authors indicate, this "travel" of concepts promotes interdisciplinarity.

Thus, we underline the objective of this paper at the level of organizing concepts associated with the area.

(a) Trend.

It is necessary to specify the multiple perspectives on the understanding of the term trend. This reflection entails the multiplicity of meanings attributed to the word that emerge from its intense use in certain sectors, such as fashion or economics, and also through its diffusion, especially through the media. Guillaume Erner (2016) discusses the concept of trends, indicating that it can designate the background movements of society, as well as underground phenomena that may remain invisible (ERNER, 2016, p.13). According to the author, the expression not only designates fashions, but also ways of life (ERNER, 2016, p.17). However, one can also understand a consumer trend as something new in terms of behavior, attitudes or expectations that reflect fundamental human needs and desires (MASON et al., 2015, p.46). The authors also suggest that trends are driven according to basic needs, drivers of change and innovations (MASON et al., 2015, p.48) and that they differ from fads, as trends represent what we do (they arise when external changes reveal new ways to serve needs); the way we do it - through specific products and services - can be fads (MASON et al., 2015, p.55). More specifically, Henrik Vejlgaard (2008) presents three perspectives for the term. In popular magazines, for example, the author identifies the use as synonymous of news about new products; he also points out that a designer may refer to trends in major car manufacturers, and in this sense, trend means product development. Finally, he brings the vision of a trend sociologist, who will deal with the movement of a trend, starting from the trendsetters and going towards the mainstream (VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.08-09); with this, Vejlgaard (2008) considers a trend to be a process of change. For the author, the three mentioned

concepts are interconnected, in such a way that "a trend is a *process of change* that (sometimes) comes about because of *product development* that (sometimes) result in *new products"* (VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.08). Els Dragt presents a definition of trend, in accordance with Henrik Vejlgaard's proposal, by suggesting that a trend is a direction of change in values and needs that takes place through forces and manifests itself in various forms in certain social groups (DRAGT, 2017, p.14). The author also suggests that the key elements for the definition of a trend are to understand the direction of change; the values and needs associated with this change; the forces that affect the trend; the manifestations that can be observed; and the identification of the groups where the trend arises and develops (DRAGT, 2017, p.36-37). On this point, the author adds:

> You study change to find patterns that show that people's needs and wants are shifting in certain directions. These patterns of change are called trends. The trends are driven by global forces and already manifest themselves in various ways, like a certain type of style, language, behaviour, a new service or product. These manifestations can be spotted first amongst niche groups in society who are setting the trend or embracing it in an early stage (DRAGT, 2017, p.37).

It is worth mentioning that the idea of the trend itself, as Victor Alejandro Gil Mártil (2009) states, encompasses the collectively shared motivations that condition consumer choices and direct consumption. Francesco Morace (2013) adds that the complexity of the trend concept is difficult to be worked out in detail but suggests that new trends are phenomena in a faster or slower process of development and that represent novelties in the sociocultural system (MORACE, 2013, p.94).

The plurality of meanings is also pointed out by William Higham, who emphasizes that, for scientists, the term means the direction of a curve; for the fashion industry, the latest styles; and for the more conservative, it means a pejorative term of something

ephemeral (HIGHAM, 2009, p.14). The author supports the idea that meanings coexist, at scientific and social levels, being a "general direction or (...) a general movement over time of a statistically detectable change" (HIGHAM, 2009, p.15). It is important to note the macro-analysis referred by the author, who explains:

> [...] trends are changes that typically occur across thousands and even millions of consumers. They are created by changes in political, economic, socio-cultural or technological environments. They occur because of a complex combination of circumstances. They are not just due to the actions of one individual or commercial concern (HIGHAM, 2009, p.48).

As Henry Mason and his colleagues suggest, in addition to consumer trends, there are others to consider: social, political and economic; industry; new product categories; macro trends; fashion; and futurism (MASON et al., 2015, p.83). One should also emphasize the increasingly universal and global nature of trends, as the drivers of change manifest themselves in various contexts (MASON et al., 1985, p.147). It is vital to reflect upon all these authors´ proposals, namely William Higham´s (2009, p.87-89), given that, although there are different types of trends - according to each social system - that manifest themselves in a more micro perspective, the macro-cultural and social trends profoundly affect the numerous social groups and other systems and typologies of micro trends (consumer, style, political-institutional, technological, economic, among others). Thus, it is suggested the existence of a stratified categorization that exerts influences according to each class, from the collective imaginary to the objects that arise associated with certain trends. In this sense, as Morace (2013) suggests, it is important to consider that, originally, new trends are not evident and, therefore, must be identified periodically. A manner to do so would be through 'places of cultural effervescence' that emerge in several places worldwide and that relate to numerous

targets present in different consumption places, such as social networks, streets, among others. (MORACE, 2013, p.95).

(b) The Cool, the manifestations and trend signals.

It is important to discuss the nature of trend manifestations in this paper. Frequently, the trend concept is mistaken with that of its manifestation. This is a common misconception, and therefore deserves attention. As previously explained, a trend is considered as a direction of changes and values, represented by mindsets, that will manifest in society in different ways, from objects to patterns of behavior, among others. These objects - which go beyond the physical product and can present themselves also as rituals, styles, and representations- do not constitute the trend itself, but its manifestation. In fact, as Henry Mason, David Mattin, Maxwell Luthy, and Delis Dumitrescu suggest, innovations are not trends, but rather examples, the trend does not really exist (MASON et al., 2015, p.54). It is up to the professional trend analyst to study these manifestations, to identify patterns and to recognize the context in which they are inserted. On a second stage, these manifestations would then be classified and framed as elements of a larger scope, pointing to a direction, which is the trend itself (this process of decoding and analysis will be explained in section 2 of this article). Along with practices and rituals, objects - artifacts and representations - are understood as signals or as a manifestation of trends. They are, therefore, in the field of the visible. A trend, in turn, falls into the realm of the invisible and requires, for this reason, a deep analysis to be understood and identified.

Trends can be observed and analyzed through their numerous manifestations, that is, through the visible objects that can be interpreted, working as data for analysis. Els Dragt underlines that trend manifestations are signals of change that may have different appearances and assume different forms, from an artistic object to a commercial service or a product

(DRAGT, 2017, p.41). Francesco Morace (2013) also points out that quantitative data will be increasingly collected according to specific readings of reality, as a way of solidifying the several interpretations that emerge from a more qualitative perspective (MORACE, 2013, p.92).

To address coolhunting - as one of the main tools in Trend Studies, to be outlined in the next point - it is important to initially consider the concept of cool. A scholar who devoted attention to this concept is Peter Gloor, in association with several colleagues, who in some of his works discuss cool as something that goes beyond fun and that helps - in some way - to make the world a better place (GLOOR and COOPER, 2007, p.7). According to the author, something cool should also be fresh, allow membership in a community and give meaning to our lives (GLOOR et al., 2009, p.1-2). Nevertheless, one should stress that cool comes from the masses (BIRD and TAPP, 2008, p.20) and it has the power to popularize or to provide strategic insights into a massification process. In fact, innovations can sometimes generate a greater value, since the coolest ideas often arise from a collective mindset (GLOOR and COOPER, 2007, p.03). The signals with characteristics associated with cool have a cultural and creative DNA that can provide richer strategic insights. Carl Rohde (2011), through the Science of the Time network, contributed to the understanding of the nature of cool, suggesting that it reveals an attractive character or attitude, with an inspiring nature that promotes action or inspires individuals, and with growth potential (ROHDE, 2011, p.15). Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that, as Malcolm Gladwell suggests, the "act of discovering what's cool is what causes cool to move on" (GLADWELL, 1997), or travel. In other words, the global awareness that something is cool causes it to be transferred to another object or practice.

Based on this conceptual framework (mainly on the contributions of ROHDE, 2011; GLOOR and COOPER, 2007; GLOOR et al., 2009), this article suggests a definition of the cool object as the manifestation of a trend that takes form as a creative

signal. The latter is composed at a first level by attractive and inspiring characteristics, as well as a potential for social replication; and at a second level of analysis by its potential to facilitate the generation of meanings, belonging (to social groups) and life in society in the many daily activities.

(c) The concepts of Trendwatching, Coolhunting e Trendspotting.

As already discussed, many of the elements that are part of Trend Studies have been developed over decades, in parallel with the development of the disciplines to which they belong. Coolhunting has been and continues to be one of the practices and base-tools of this emerging area. In 1997, Malcolm Gladwell, in the article "The Coolhunt", published in *The New Yorker*, addressed this practice and drew attention to the professionals who were associated with it, at the time still very much related to fashion and style. Mártil emphasizes that the coolhunter's work is related to the ability to identify signs of change and to interpret the factors that favor their emergence, determining the impacts they have on trends and businesses (MÁRTIL, 2009, p.18).

Gloor and Cooper (2007) reinforce the importance of coolhunting as a way of identifying trends and also trendsetters (GLOOR and COOPER, 2007, p.7), that is, the influencers. As the authors indicate, coolhunting enables to observe external markets and unleash internal innovation (GLOOR and COOPER, 2007, p.9). The major issue concerning coolhunting is that it has lost credibility in the midst of Trend Studies, and the term itself has fallen into disuse. As Malcolm Gladwell suggested, coolhunting was more about a collection of spontaneous observations that changed between coolhunters and moments, rather than the articulation of a coherent philosophy of cool (GLADWELL, 1997). Currently, this methodological proposal, still in use by many professionals, is insufficient and calls into question the suitability of the practice. In this sense, it is important to contextualize the practice of coolhunting in a set of

methodologies that cross-confirm results and that help to frame the identified signals and the insights they reveal. It would also be pertinent to relate this practice with perspectives present in the Dadaist visit, the surrealist deambulation and the situationist drifting[7]. With this in mind, it is important to emphasize the integration of a double observation perspective that focuses on "fast culture and slow culture" (MCCRACKEN, 2011), to identify the signals of emergent creativity, as well as its context in a tradition and in narratives with great cultural density.

From the concept of coolhunting, we move on to trendspotting and trendwatching. Often approached as similar concepts, it is important to understand each one within the literal scope of the terms. Therefore, the practice of trendspotting is related to the process of

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[7] The practice of discovering creative and cool signals in physical space may gain insight with the approaches and perspectives of these paths of urban exploration. To this end, we apply the work of Francesco Careri to deconstruct these perspectives as an act of crossing, a line that crosses space and the consequent report (CARERI, 2002; 2013, p.31). In the context of the Dadaist visit - as an excursion to the banal places of the city (CARERI, 2002, p.71) - it is proposed to inhabit the city of the banal (Careri, 2002/2013, p.74), continuously discovering unexpected relations (CARERI, 2013, p.239). According to the author, the chosen site for the visit reveals itself to be a familiar and unknown space, evident and seldom visited, banal and useless. With this practice, the Dadaist visit creates the basis for the research of the unconscious of the city, to be developed by the surrealists (CARERI, 2002/2013, p.77). The Surrealists understood that there was something else in these spaces and defined this emptiness as an unconscious city (CARERI, 2013, p.239). If the Dadaist visit underlined the banal and the ridicule, the Surrealists pondered the possibility of discovering a new world beyond denial, the city may contain a reality that is not visible - hidden (CARERI, 2002/2013, p.82-83). According to the author, the situationists add psychogeography as an instrument of analysis and seek, through the drifting (*dérive*), places outside the dominant culture and the tourist itineraries (CARERI, 2013, p.240). These perspectives and approaches could contribute to the Coolhunting practice insofar as: 1) a visit inspired by the Dadaist action on the banal space helps to contextualize the research and gathering of signals of the coolhunter, confronting in some way what is cool to what is not. That is, the understanding of spaces that do not promote cool objects and narratives enables a better contextualization of those who have these cool features; 2) Deambulation can lead the coolhunter to find what hasn't been discovered yet and to seek out the hidden meanings behind spaces and objects; 3) The question of the psycho-geographical registration of the urban fabric can help in the categorization of the signals identified in each space. Therefore, coolhunting has the potential to enclose an observation and registration approach of cool and creative signals, in a linkage between practices of ethnographic inspiration and the "walking as an aesthetic practice" (an expression used by Careri, 2002/2013) as ways of contextualizing the gathered information.

identifying (spotting) trends, while trendwatching implies the monitoring of the development and mutations of trends, that is, of their changes and their impact on society. In the business environment, both concepts relate to the process of identifying and analyzing trends, usually in the context of consumer culture. Nevertheless, there is also the concept of trends research, which is addressed, for example, by experts from the Netherlands (DRAGT, 2017). The fact that there is no consensus at the level of concepts and practices between the different professionals and authors is an aspect that deserves attention, hence the importance of increasing convergence towards standardization. Yet, there are still differences between the various approaches, even within similar ones, such as the Portuguese and the Dutch. Els Dragt underlines that:

> The domain of trend research is fairly new and some wonder if it is a legitimate profession at all. While many other professions have manifestos, codes of conduct and ethical guidelines, anyone can call themselves a trend researcher. There is not a specific stamp of approval needed from a trend inspector. The field is still very much under construction and in the midst of building a shared body of knowledge (DRAGT, 2017, p.23).

These several Trend Studies tools are mainly based on a qualitative analysis. As Els Dragt proposes that one should look to collect information in a systematic way about situations, events, and individuals, in order to obtain a thorough knowledge about human behavior through observation and inquiry processes (DRAGT, 2017, p.55). The author adds that:

> A trend researcher should be: Curious: you are eager to absorb knowledge and experiences, you have an inquisitive nature and always wonder about the 'why' of things happening around you […]; Non-judgmental: you have an open minded personality and are able to show empathy […]; Interdisciplinary: you have a varied skill set involving many areas of knowledge […]; Holistic: you look at the bigger picture and how this fits with the details […];

Analytic: you use a structured approach to examine signs of change and operate in a careful, critical and objective way to identify causes and key factors behind shifts; […] Creative: you are able to see connections between shreds and snippets of information that seem unrelated at first [...]; Persistent: you are not satisfied easily and want to research beyond the baseline and dive deep into matters […]; Visual: you have a flair for visual language and are able to use visual aids to bring your research findings to life […]; Recognisable: you do research in a way that sets you apart from others and leave a personal fingerprint on your reports and presentations [...]; Storyteller: you are able to get your trend story across and adapt it to different audiences without losing your personal touch (DRAGT, 2017, p.25-26).

The foundation of the Portuguese scientific developments of Trend Studies come from the Dutch concepts developed by experts such as Carl Rohde (2011), among others. However, there are still differences and one of the main ones is based on the relation between the study of trends and the study of future. Els Dragt suggests that the research of trends relates to detecting signs of changes that are occurring at this time and how they indicate directions with possible futures (DRAGT, 2017, p.19). In emphasizing the genealogy of Future Studies, the author suggests a close correlation between them and Trend Studies (DRAGT, 2017, p.16). The Portuguese perspective assumes that the diachronic study of a trend - of its cultural density and stability, or resistance to changes - allows identifying short-term scenarios of its development. However, it also recognizes that the possibility of "black swans", as well as a complex network of actors and influences, makes forecasting of future scenarios too complex.

3. TRENDWATCHING AND TRENDSPOTTING MODEL

3.1 Phase 1 – cultural observation and data collection

The trend analysis process involves the observation of human behavior in its natural environment and distinguishes the several manifestations and objects that result from trends. Thus, the understanding of the weight associated with the visible and invisible characteristics of trends is made possible by the deconstruction of the socio-cultural elements involved. To this end, the trend analyst employs quantitative and qualitative methods to recognize and check the micro and macro trends that guide the spirit of the time. Henrik Vejlgaard provides a set of considerations regarding the beginning of the trendspotting process: 1) Trends are created by people. Therefore, one should observe those who create or are concerned with new and innovative styles; 2) Trendspotting is possible through observation, whether in the real life or in the media; 3) Usually, the trends simmer for some time before they start boiling; 4) If a new and innovative style can be detected in two or more industries simultaneously, it is likely to be a trend; 5) A new trend is often a reaction to what has become mainstream or what has been on the market for many years; 6) Style changes usually range from one end of the style spectrum to the other; 7) The trendspotter must take into account the minimum signs of change and then analyze them (VEJLGAARD, 2008, p.27).

The process of trends analysis and mapping thus begins with observation and data collection and then proceeds to the systematization and analysis. Els Dragt suggests three phases for trends research: scan; analyze; apply (DRAGT, 2017, p.54). The first phase is related to cultural observation - here under study -, underlining the importance of signal selection, as well as its documentation. The author explores the concept of observation and its implications:

> SCAN: the art of looking sideways […] Scanning the world means having your radar on always, anytime, anywhere. […] Trend researchers scan the environment using various sources which can mainly be divided into two categories: Field research sources like street hunting, innovator interviews and attending events; Desk research sources like reading magazines, monitoring online media and watching documentaries (DRAGT, 2017, p.54).

The author emphasizes important elements for this phase, such as the field work, the contact with individuals and attending certain events or activities, as well as collecting information in digital media and periodical publications. These steps are important sources for gathering information and designing the broad context that enables us to identify changes in the socio-cultural fabric. Henry Mason and his colleagues (2015) agree with the author's vision, suggesting:

> How to identify consumer trends: 1) Look for "clusters" of multiple innovations that indicate a number of actors putting similar bets on the future and that are creating new levels of customer expectation. 2) Don't limit your search to product innovation. We look for four types (vision, business model, product/service/experience, marketing). 3) The more diverse the range of innovations you spot, the more reliable your insights about future customer needs and wants. Look for innovation that show how the trend is playing out in different contexts (MASON et al., 2015, p.70).

The authors stress the importance of considering sources such as traditional media, business publications, corporate newsfeed, social networks, conferences and events, a network of spotters (MASON et al., 2015, p.79-81), among others. William Higham also sets important clues about this process, indicating that the primary observation can be done informally by observing or interrogating consumers, which may entail immersion, ethnography, interviews, photography, and others. This suggests that formal observation techniques bring rigor and a process systematization (HIGHAM, 2009, p.50). The proposal of these authors,

within the process of observation and data collection, is also in tune with the perspective of Martin Raymond (2010) regarding cultural triangulation. The latter is an important approach to consider in these processes. As the author suggests, triangulation is a concept that arises from the social sciences as a cross between two possible methods among three possible ones, as a manner to reach a similar conclusion and confirm its validity. This is a way of tracking or confirming changes that occur in culture, through the use of methods that validate one another (RAYMOND, 2010, p.122). Martin Raymond (2010, p.205) further suggests that the term cultural triangulation was first proposed by Christopher Sanderson in 2001 to describe a method for identifying trends and that it would have been later developed by the Future Laboratory. However, the concept has been analyzed in the context of the study of culture. According to Paula Saukko:

> [...] if one wants to combine approaches, one needs a framework that helps to do this. Traditional social and cultural inquiry usually refers to techniques of combining different theories, methods, sources and materials in terms of 'triangulation' (Denzin 1989; Flick, 1998). The classical aim of triangulation is to combine different kinds of material or methods to see whether they corroborate one another. [...] All in all, the classical aim of triangulation is to get a more accurate or truthful picture of the social world. This aim reflects the original meaning of triangulation, which comes from navigation, where it refers to the use of different bearings to give the correct position of an object (Silverman, 1992: 156) (SAUKKO, 2003, p.23).

Nevertheless, Martin Raymond's (2010) approach explores a set of practices for collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, as summarized below:

> Cultural triangulation is a combination of three distinct but mutually beneficial processes [...]. They are: interrogation: the use of quantitative survey techniques, including household surveys and expert interviews, to poll individuals or groups about their attitudes or activities, with a

view to determining the percentage breakdown of these attitudes or activities in relation to the larger population or cultural mainstream; observation: the use of a set of qualitative tools such as ethnography and visual profiling to shadow and observe individuals or consumers involved in a particular task or lifestyle activity, with a view to learning more about that task or activity; intuition: drawing on your experiences as a forecaster to add a further layer of insight to the qualitative and quantitative underpinnings acquired during the interrogation and observation stages (RAYMOND, 2010, p.120).

For this study, we will take into account the first two stages, considering that intuition must guide the whole process and that the analyst is expected to use his experience to guide his work and his analysis. According to Martin Raymond, after the interrogation and observation stages, we will have completed the desk research, which provides data that helps to contextualize the question or the core of the initial research. This data is also associated with panel interviews (capable of adding new insights and directions); quantitative research that adds context and helps identify ways in which a potential trend may be impacting on the consumer; and the identification of key typologies of consumer, which are vital to understanding a trend (RAYMOND, 2010, p.136). At the level of the interrogation stage (RAYMOND, 2010, p.122), it is important to emphasize the practices of information amnesties, subject framing, and quantitative surveys. The first concerns the beginning of the cultural triangulation process and intends to understand the client and obtain all the information relevant to the question at hand (RAYMOND, 2010, p.123). The second practice - subject framing - identifies all the external elements that may have an impact on the question. One should consider that the core matter is on trends and the latest information that may affect the market or the consumer group in question. This is possible by using information from other trend networks and organizations. After identifying trends and insights, one should draw up an outline that spots the early trends related to the

question and the areas that need more research, as well expert names who repeatedly appear in the literature (RAYMOND, 2010, p.124). Regarding the third - quantitative surveys - (RAYMOND, 2010, p.129), we can summarize that it is intended to collect relevant data on the groups of individuals related to the trends under study.

Concerning the observation stage (RAYMOND, 2010, p.135), an ethnographic mapping should be emphasized. This stage underlines the relation between Trend Studies and practices of ethnographic inspiration. As the author suggests:

> You can carry out ethnographic studies in a number of ways: by identifying a typology you are keen to shadow or track; by asking your target group to keep diaries or activity logs that capture a sense of their day in relation to the area or subject under review; by asking your target group to record, photograph or digitally capture key highlights of the activities you which to observe; by uploading diaries, visuals, texts, footage, etc, to a designated social networking site you have been granted access to (RAYMOND, 2010, p.136).

Martin Raymond adds that one should try to better understand who the audiences are, what they do, how they do it, and what it means to the trend or for the question under review. The author also suggests that images and diaries should be studied and analyzed as a path to find insights that may suggest ways in which trends influence the mainstream (RAYMOND, 2010, p.136). However, when analyzing the author's perspective, a methodological distinction is not clear for the identification of a trend, for the development of an applied project or for the resolution of a question. In certain moments, the main purpose of the exercise does not seem to underline the observation, identification, and analysis of emerging trends. In this sense, for the purposes of this paper, it is important to emphasize the distinction between the application of the study of trends in projects or strategic orientations, and the specific process for the identification and

analysis of trends - the latter being the object of our work.

Regarding the practice of coolhunting, it is considered that it plays an important role in this first stage of information gathering. Coolhunting is the activity of field research and fieldwork - online and offline - where one observes the social environment, identifying cool signals and recording them for later analysis. Based on Carl Rohde's method of registering the cool signals for the Science of the Time network (see also ROHDE, 2011), we propose to the following procedure for creative signals registration, capable of generating a better-detailed categorization of its elements:

a. When registering the signal, it is important to indicate the visual elements of the observation. William Higham points out the benefit of having stills or video footage (HIGHAM, 2009, p.202). If it is a digital research - video or image - it is necessary to always indicate the source. If the image or video is of own authorship, it is necessary to identify the place and the date of the registration - as well as the authorship itself. The visual element helps the reader and the analyst to better contextualize the signal.

b. The next step is to give a suggestive title, indicating the signal's content in the best way possible.

c. One should give a description of the signal, including its sociocultural context and the individuals or groups to which it relates to. If possible, internet links should be added for further information.

d. After the description of the signal, one must indicate the cool nature behind it, explaining - as we have already mentioned - the reason why it is attractive, avant-garde, inspiring and with replication potential.

e. This leads to the analysis of the insight(s), or in other words, the signal's creative clues that can help one understand the trend - or even be useful for the generation of innovation or to outline strategies.

f. Finally, it is always important to indicate the relation between the signal and already identified

trends, even if the signal is an indicator of social changes.

Coolhunting - as a practice associated with the identification and analysis of trends - plays a prominent role in this phase. Its results help to illustrate the remaining collected data, which can also be used to better contextualize the recorded signals of the coolhunter.

After having reviewed the many authors and models, and considering the important role of coolhunting (DRAGT, 2017; MORACE, 2013; ROHDE, 2011; GLOOR and COOPER, 2007; GLADWELL, 1997) and of cultural triangulation (RAYMOND, 2010) in a methodological proposal, we suggest a systemized model of practices in this first phase of cultural observation and data collection, that include:

a. A framework of the trend or question under study, crossing data from various sources, including trend networks and expert opinions;

b. Qualitative research with consumers and stakeholders, which includes interviews; surveys and polls about trends or the problem under study;

c. Desk research that results in a set of data and statistics that can help contextualize the information. The media clipping practice can be useful as a tool to gather important data for later analysis;

d. One or more coolhunts to outline emerging elements and their diachronic context in a changing sociocultural space;

e. Mapping - of ethnographic inspiration - that enables understanding the several key elements of consumer groups.

3.2 Phase 2 – information systematization

The practices associated with information systematization - which is sometimes disconsidered - play a fundamental role in the correlation of the data collected during the previous phase. Here, the numerous collected elements are systematically analyzed and associated according to the level of thematic, information and insights affinity that the

analysis leads to. Crossing data that indicate or mirror similar phenomena enables one to create clusters of information that confirm each other, suggesting common answers about trends developments and changes in the sociocultural fabric. In fact, with this exercise of associations, it is possible to have a better perspective on the dynamics that take place:

> Once you have been scanning the business arena for some time, you should find that the vast majority of new innovations you see fit into the existing trends in your trend framework [...] when a new innovation that's exciting customers doesn't fit satisfactorily into any of your existing trends; when multiple examples of a trend start to point toward a new and specific direction. These are all signs that you may be witnessing the emergence of a new trend, or the evolution of an existing trend (MASON et al., 2015, p.112).

Thus, each group of data represents the basis for weaving the trend's DNA or for verifying changes in the nature of an already identified trend. Again, the analyst's experience, knowledge, and intuition play an important role in this exercise, as it is necessary to connect elements that, at first sight, might seem to have no correlation. In summary, after the data collection and registration pointed out in the first phase, in this second phase of data systematization, we propose a model of practices that include:

a. Data grouping according to the affinities and insights that suggest changes in the socio-cultural fabric.

b. Analysis of each data group in order to draw conclusions about the context of socio-cultural changes and new movements that are emerging.

c. Systematically present the numerous conclusions on each data set, in order to enable its application in the next phase.

3.3 Phase 3 – trend DNA design and architecture

This is the final phase of the model. Based on the conclusions of the data systematization, the identification of a new trend or the changes in the nature and impact of an already identified trend takes place in this phase. Els Dragt's (2017) analysis proposal relates to the trend DNA Design and Architecture phase, however, it also meets the practices of information systematization present in the second phase, already described. Regarding the systematization/analysis phase, including the validation and attribution of a nomenclature, the author argues:

> ANALYSE: connecting the dots [...] One manifestation of change is not yet a trend. While scanning you collect a lot of information and making sense of your findings is the next phase of the trend research process. In this phase you will move from trend spots to underlying shifts in values and needs. You will uncover patterns between manifestations and turn these into meaningful clusters of trends and describe and visualise these in an inspiring way for others to understand too (DRAGT, 2017, p.54).

As Els Dragt suggests, the analysis of several signals enables to discover patterns which leads to the third phase proposed, that presents the nature of a trend. This represents the naming and representation of the trend and its narrative (DRAGT, 2017, p.122-127). When the information systematization allows for the identification of new behavioral patterns or changes in existing ones, the trends analyst must interpret these changes and draw the DNA of the trend, writing a text that can accurately reflect the nature of the trend, its impacts and potentials, as well as its framing in the cultural context of the moment. The trend's title and text should be clear and straightforward, as well as capable of being understood by different audiences, that is, by a specialized audience, as well as by the general public.

In this sense, summarizing the third and last phase of the model, the following set of practices is proposed:

a. Based on the systematized data set, the analyst(s) should describe the trend's DNA, considering the nature of the trend and its potential to guide strategies and to generate innovation. The analyst should also name the trend.

b. The trends' description should contain a summary text capable of illustrating clearly the nature of the trend and may have a larger descriptive text associated with it. This text should analyze in greater depth the context, audiences, sectors, impacts and cultural differences where the trend manifests itself.

c. The new descriptive trend texts - whether of a new trend or of the alteration of nature regarding an already identified one -, must go through a round of discussion among specialists, where the descriptive text and the data on which it is based are debated in a critical perspective in order to validate them. Peer approval is important to validate the study, and it is proposed, whenever appropriate, the application of the Delphi model, or similar.

d. After the discussion round, the analyst who is responsible for trend text should review the description and act in accordance with the conclusions of the discussion. This is the last step where the title and descriptive trend text is presented, as well as the data that underlies the study.

It should be emphasized that this trend identification exercise, despite having prospective characteristics and potential, is not intended to predict the future. However, as Els Dragt (2017) suggests, it enables to use the insights arising from trend analysis to explore possible scenarios for the future and the development and impact of a trend, providing a framework for the systematic exploration of changes (DRAGT, 2017, p.23). By comparing the past development of a trend with its current nature, one can recognize stability level of a trend, that is, whether it has undergone many changes on its DNA and its impact on society. This historical study enables us to foresee in the short term the potential development of the trend and how it can be approached at the strategic level.

This specific exercise concerns Trends Archeology and its relation to the strategic application of trend analysis.

In this sense, this methodological proposal - which in a way is linked to an observation and analysis of culture perspective - meets a cultural management[8] an approach, insofar as the analyzed data promotes strategic insights for the generation of solutions to problems in the corporate, social, institutional and even political environments. By understanding the seeds of socio-cultural change, their contexts, and the associated social dynamics, it becomes possible to make conscious decisions and even generate innovation and empower creative processes. These elements can be developed on a second set of models that apply and take advantage of the information generated at the Trendspotting and Trendwatching level.
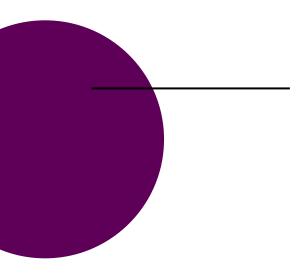
4. DISCUSSION ANS FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ——

The current concentration of the study of trends - the practice of trend analysis, opposed to the academic transdisciplinary area of Trend Studies - in the business environment and its shift to the academic environment poses obstacles that the present literature review suggests. Many of the important authors of the area are not academic researchers, but rather professionals in networks and consulting companies. In this sense, one points out the relevance of scientific research and the contextualization of some of the main thematic works of the area (DRAGT, 2017; MASON et al., 2015; RAYMOND, 2010; HIGHAM, 2009; VEJLGAARD, 2008; GLOOR and COOPER, 2007), in order to identify the state of the art on the subject.

Despite the many divergences of approaches and perspectives on the concepts, most of these authors refer to a set of common definition elements,

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[8] Here, "cultural management" is not understood in its more traditional conception of the application of management concepts and practices in the arts and cultural sector, but in the application of cultural analysis in a strategic scope and in business practices (MCCRACKEN, 2011), which may also be relevant in new approaches such as Cultural Branding (HOLT, 2004).

which enabled the discussion and settings presented in this paper on concepts such as trends and cool. One of the elements that must be emphasized is the idea of "change" and its importance in defining and understanding trends (DRAGT, 2017; MASON *et al*., 2015; HIGHAM, 2009; MÁRTILI, 2009; VEJLGAARD, 2008), as well as in how to identify and analyze this phenomenon. The complexity of the analysis itself entails the transdisciplinary perspective that has been suggested since it demands the trend analyst to have a solid and transversal training, that integrates different scientific and practical knowledge for the observation and understanding of the impact of the spirit of time on the daily lives of individuals and their groups.

The literature review and the consequent discussion of concepts and methods suggests a research map and fieldwork practices contextualized within Culture Studies, specifically at the level of Culture Management, without neglecting a transdisciplinary link with areas such as Marketing and Design. Nevertheless, it is also important to develop and explore these associations, presenting solutions and correlations with these other disciplines, in order to create an even more transversal theoretical prism that enables a travel between concepts and methodologies. In future studies, one can associate perspectives and tools that create models for project management with multiple variants and intervention spaces. The model presented for the process of Trendspotting and Trendwatching coordinates a set of concepts and practices recognized in the area and presents a concrete and systematic path for the identification and analysis of trends, and efforts should, therefore, be made to problematize applied models that integrate the results of trend analysis into the generation of strategies and innovation.

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