

# ONE SHEET No. 3: Market Dynamics

## Designer ID: Brands, T-shirts, & the Communication of Identity

Stylés Akira, PhD | Casa La Doniccé, LLC | akira@casaladonicce.com | www.projectdesignerid.com

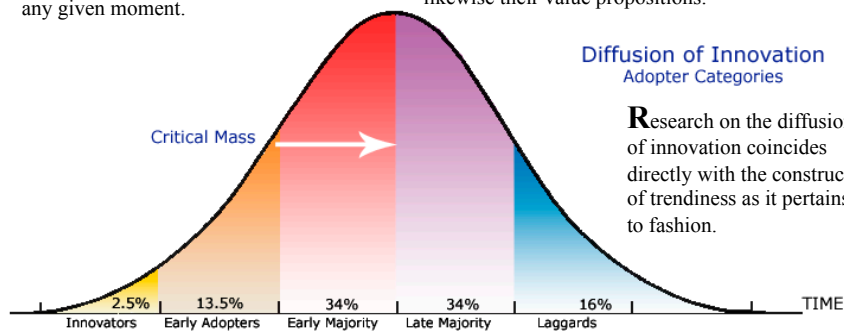


Fashion embodies the “spirit of the times”—a reflection of the current era’s cultural climate and a stylistic record of its time frame. Being in fashion requires dress that includes the prevailing aesthetic and what is generally seen as desirable at any given moment.

Research points to DIY culture and recent technical achievements, which have brought about the opportunity for mass customization as the future fate of the fashion trend and the new face of fashion’s business models. Studies have examined consumer responses to Web-based design involvement using T-shirts and found that there was higher satisfaction with website performance, that there is a profitable space for higher-level consumer-design involvement, and that consumers have a fair degree of overall interest in contributing to the design process. Others have outlined the procedures of the outbound supply chain, finding key “integrated decision points” where consumer involvement might be most practically interjected into the production process. Meanwhile, researchers have coined the “I did it myself” effect as producing economic value for the consumer and significantly increasing Willingness To Pay, in addition to the standard factors of preference fit achieved and design effort, commonly identified in the literature as important to mass customization business models. Innovation is more potent than ever in fashion as leadership and early adopting have in many instances given way to the market trend towards mass customization.

New practices of mass consumer behavior have underscored the abandonment of an emphasis on the preeminence of function for a pretentious preoccupation with form, which has enabled the unfettered incorporation of planned obsolescence to pervade the durable goods sector.

Consumption patterns appear to be more dynamic than ever across consumer demographics complicating the identities of the ideal consumers of different brands and therefore the proposed images of those brands and likewise their value propositions.



Though relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability are suggested as the critical aspects in determining the successful distribution of a given innovation, fashion is unique in that it circumvents many of these requirements by dint of the fact that its innovativeness is largely idealized as the effect of arbitrary shifts in symbolic value rather than progressive adaptations to functional demands.

## Recommendations

Business models offering customized preferences to the consumer should be gradually integrated into models with standardized selection. Fashion brands should be quick to innovate and slow to follow trends if market dominance is a long-term strategy. Mass-market brands would do best to rely on the appeals of the graphic design to the exclusion of any conspicuous designer label branding. Mass luxury lines would benefit most by dominating their competition in the middle tier. The ability to do this is likely dependent on their association with luxury brands and/or upscale consumers in order to secure the greatest number of middle and low status consumers who desire to appear otherwise through their association with these product lines.

With the exception of cost prohibitive luxury fashion houses, and niche apparel lines, it is highly unlikely that a large fashion brand will be able to maintain a loyal or even engaged consumer audience that is exclusively composed of its target population. Transitions in the modern sensibility of fashion consumption have brought about a more democratic structure within the fashion system whereby large firms are forced to compete with independent producers. Expansions in new media technology, especially in printing but also in communication, have reshaped the landscape of production and consumption in fashion.

Corporations might use these communicative structures to sell goods other than T-shirts. Participants in the in-depth-interviews repeated time and again the intuition that the future of the T-shirt industry is pointed towards mass customization. The research literature also supports these first-hand professional observations. This prediction is consistent with the current direction of several other business models from automobiles, to apparel, to music, to television, and fast food.

### Laver's Law

10 years before	Indecent
5 years before	Shameless
1 year before	Daring
In Fashion	Smart
10 years after	Hideous
20 years after	Ridiculous
30 years after	Amusing
50 years after	Quaint
70 years after	Charming
100 years after	Romantic
150 years after	Beautiful

The reactionary tendency of fashion to develop new trends has taken a turn in a different direction as trends have rapidly accelerated in their lifecycle, becoming compressed as result of perpetually increasing demand, largely stimulated by the media and technological advancements in design, production and communication.



T-shirts generally float through a basic range of quality standards that does not necessarily coincide with price or status.