

Anatomy of a Trend

A WGSN Mindset white paper

Anatomy of a Trend

Trends are all around us. We see them in what we eat, where we live and how we connect with each other. And whether we're aware of it or not, they dictate the products we want and the services we crave.

Smart phones. Co-working spaces. Green juice. We know the trends that define our daily lives. Yet what we often fail to notice is the interconnections. Co-working spaces emerged to fill the new needs of a "creative class", while holding a green juice became a status item in a world where wellness carries more social cachet than wealth.

Mega trends last for years, or decades. By identifying trends before they reach critical mass, companies can tap into unlimited potential growth. To do so, they must connect the dots between influences to identify macro trends, filter them into their own brand DNA, and innovate at the right time for their customer.

Succeeding at forecasting can quite simply make or break the largest companies of our time. Look at the classic example of Amazon. In less than two decades, Amazon grew from a small start-up trying to convince consumers to trust the internet, to one of the world's largest companies. From their roots in e-commerce to the launch of the Kindle, and their current investment in artificial intelligence, they have boldly invested in trends, even when a short-term view suggested they were putting their company at risk.

So how do you forecast a trend? It's part art, part science, part math and part magic. Over the past 18 years, we at WGSN have honed a process to discern macro trends and adapt them for our clients. In this white paper, we will explore how WGSN forecasts trends and look at two of the largest movements of our time – Artisan and Wellness – to illustrate what signals businesses should be looking towards to stay on the right side of movements.

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Building the Anatomy



How do we predict trends? At WGSN, we combine intuition, experience and hard data to separate micro trends from macro trends and make concrete recommendations for our clients.

“A micro trend starts with your early influencers and moves to mass adoption within one to two years,” says Kim Mannino, a senior trend consultant for WGSN. “These trends are important for fashion companies, but tend to be smaller scale realisations of the desires underlying macro trends,” she adds.

A macro trend, by contrast, spans at least five years and impacts a variety of industries from technology to finance. Examples of macro trends include the maker movement and the wellness boom, explored later in this paper.

Macro trends operate on a continuum and evolve from season to season, year to year. Each year, WGSN publishes two forecasts that explore these macro trends, which we call “The Vision”.

As Lisa White, Head of The Vision, explains: “We don’t create trends. They are all around us. I always say that the past and future are present – you just need to pick up the signals and analyse them. One of the things we do is separate isolated patterns from underlying cultural movements.

“Each season, we look at these cultural movements and press pause. We see how they’ve evolved in the past six months and how they’re likely to move in the years ahead. In doing so, we equip our clients with the entire context of consumer behaviour, allowing them to proactively change before their consumer knows what they want, rather than react to their demands,” she adds.

We look at diverse sources of inspiration to identify trends. From geopolitics to local subcultures, avant-garde artists to Instagram influencers, bio-technology to demographic shifts.

We also have eyes and ears to the ground everywhere. Each year, our team of 250 forecasters visit over 137 trade shows covering topics from material innovations to beauty packaging and pet wellness. We shoot the most avant-garde styles and stores in 95 countries, and connect the styles to major themes discussed in conferences from Dubai to Sao Paulo. We also read over 800 blogs daily and visit festivals all around the world each year.

From there, we discern the macro trends from local patterns. Our global team works across 14 offices, including London, New York, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sao Paulo, Melbourne and Cape Town. Twice a year, our team of experts comes together and shares its local observations: what’s happening in their geographical region as well as in their industry of expertise. “When we see the same topics being explored by a subculture in Nigeria as an artist in Sante Fe, we have a pretty good signal that we’re looking at a macro trend, rather than a fad,” says Lisa White.

To be sure, however, we validate our instincts using quantitative data. We dive into WGSN’s archive of retail data, brand perception metrics, and historical archive. Once confirmed, we combine our research and data into a story, a macro trend, to inform our clients.

We’ll now look at two of the macro trends we’ve explored in our Vision trends over the past five years – the artisan and the wellness movements.

The Anatomy in Practice: Artisan

From embroidered denim jackets to hand-woven baskets, slow food to modern allotments – artisan looks, products and experiences dominate today's marketplace. The trend is epitomised by a revived interest in craftsmanship, the elevation of everyday objects and the importance of gathering communities "IRL" (in real life).



Context

Of the many forces behind the transition, three key influences in the early 2010s helped shape the artisan movement:

- **Mass manufacturing backlash.** As the general public gained greater visibility into the working conditions and environmental consequences of fast fashion, triggered by events such as the Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh, individuals searched for ways to reduce the ecological and human impact of their consumption.
- **The Great Financial Crisis.** In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, companies like Etsy helped millennial crafters looking for alternative work turn their hobbies into businesses. From its launch in 2005, Etsy had grown into a billion-dollar business by 2013, enabling young millennials the opportunity to become professional crafters on a global scale¹.
- **Dying out of craft.** As consumers began to value craftsmanship as an antidote to the digital world, artisans were quite literally disappearing. As one of hundreds of examples, by 2010, Nottingham's once bustling lace making industry (which at its peak employed over 40,000 people) had been reduced to a single factory². Suddenly, there was a renewed interest in young millennials to preserve the knowledge and objects of the past and connect with other like-minded individuals.



¹“Artisanal Capitalism: The Art and Craft of Business” January 4, 2014, *The Economist*

²“Life in the Last Lace Factory” by *This is Nottingham*, January 11, 2010, *Nottingham Post*

Products

While we first started to talk about artisan-related micro trends in 2007, by 2014 the movement had reached critical mass. In that same year, we coalesced the various fractions of the movement into an “artisan” macro trend. Today, we see it in products from apparel to technology, and even food and beverage.

In the fashion world, two micro trends epitomise the artisan movement: the brogue and embroidery. In 2014, WGSN predicted that well-made and functional classics would become popular with the mainstream consumer, of which the brogue played a starring role. In 2014, we predicted embroidery, which references the culture of custom repair, would emerge. Over the next two years, embroidered items arriving at online retail increased in both the UK and the US by 69% and 78% respectively, according to data on WGSN Instock.

The move towards artisan can further be seen in the craft beer movement and the shift towards more authentic experiences like artisan gin and third wave coffee. Today, craft ale has become a mainstay. According to the Brewers Association, the \$22 billion craft sector represents 22% of the \$106 billion US beer market, up from \$8.8 billion just six years ago³.

At this year’s CES (Consumer Electronics Show), it was clear that the artisan movement had infiltrated the tech space. Slick and minimalist tech accessories gave way to a new, craft-inspired style reminiscent of high-quality, handmade leather goods, offering nostalgic comfort in the fast-paced forward-striving tech world.



³“Brewing: Craft beer comes of age” by Scheherazade Daneshkhu and Lindsay Whipp, October 26, 2016, *The Financial Times*

Experiences

Against this backdrop, individual artisans worked hard to make sure craft wasn't entirely replaced by code. From Stitch 'n Bitch, which offers free knitting classes, to Makerversity, which offers affordable classes and workshops, consumers took it upon themselves to ensure that arts and crafts education continued to thrive around the world. While we first reported on maker spaces in 2011, by 2015, 26% of cities in the US boasted a maker space⁴.

This trend also impacted the restaurant industry, giving rise to restaurants that emphasise sharing, communal eating and social gatherings. Today, humbly styled restaurants with friendly service, local produce and in-house events serve home-cooked, wholesome, natural and uncomplicated food, with the likes of Concord Hill and Flinders Lane in New York, Paté Paté in Copenhagen and Intro in Kuopio, Finland, providing inspiration.



What's next

As we look ahead to 2019, “making” is predicted to eventually be adopted to solve critical problems on a global scale. Early indications of this advancement include Bolivian cardiologist Dr Franz Freudenthal, who developed the Nit-Occlud – a handmade medical device that can repair heart defects in children without the need for invasive surgery. The device was crafted in collaboration with knitters from the country’s indigenous Aymara community.



Artisan: At a Glance

Food and drink

“Eat local”

Slow food

Craft beer, artisanal gin
and third wave coffee

Pop-up restaurants

Artisan cakes and cupcakes

Vegetarianism and veganism

Apparel and footwear

Functional denim

Raw indigo fabric

Embroidery

Brogues

Raffia and woven leather

Interiors

House plants

Natural materials

Flax, linen, wood and leather

DIY

Packaging

Monochrome and
sepia-toned printing

Craft paper, card,
canvas and waxed paper

Calligraphy, hand-written
and off-kilter text

Woven ribbons

Engraving and
burnished branding

Artisan in Action

The Influence Phase

2005-6

Etsy established

Emergence of upcycling

2008

The Great Financial Crisis

2010s

Demise of craft as a profession

DIY and craft maker 'fad' builds momentum

2013-14

Mass manufacturing backlash

Rana Plaza disaster

WGSN

2014

WGSN predicts Artisan trend to reach mass adoption by 2016

Trend in Action

**2016-
2017**

Brogues and embroidery dominate fashion

Craft beer, artisan gin and third wave coffee become mainstream

Artisan enters the tech scene with craft-inspired takes on gadgets and smart-tech

Craft experiences such as Stitch 'n Bitch and Makeversity gain popularity

Slow food movement and artisan dining

What's Next

**2018 &
Beyond**

Nit-Occlud: craft meets technology to solve the world's most pressing problems

The Anatomy in Practice: Wellness

With green juice on every street corner and #fitspo mnemonics dominating our feeds, it's hard to believe that the wellness movement is in its relative infancy. Yet, in the last few years, the global wellness market has exploded to produce what is today a \$3.7tn industry⁵.



⁵The Global Wellness Institute, Press Room, Statistics & Facts, www.globalwellnessinstitute.org/press-room/statistics-and-facts

Context

A number of underlying causes and influences precipitated the market's exponential growth:

— **Crisis in global health systems.** From concerns over the obesity epidemic to urban gardens, governments have become proactive in promoting healthy lifestyles. With global interest in wellness changing the way we live, work and play, we anticipated that brands had an opportunity to be part of the dialogue, taking on a wellness initiative and showing the fashionable and sexy side to being well.

— **Millennial anti-hedonists.** Long mocked for self-indulgence and carefree lifestyles, in reality, when entering the workforce, millennials rejected alcohol and drugs in favour of healthy living, rewriting the rules about what makes a fulfilling social life. According to a 2015 survey of millennials, around half had changed their eating habits towards healthier foods, compared to just 23% of those over age 55⁶.

— **Unrealistic ideals.** Throughout the 2000s, women began to reject marketing that perpetuated unrealistic body ideals. Skeleton-thin role models fell out of fashion, eclipsed by healthy bodies and lifestyles, while women began to respond to portrayals that represented their ideal selves – not unrealistic, unattainable Photoshopped images.



⁶“Health Eating is Increasingly on Consumers’ agendas, with Millennials Leading the Way” Pricewaterhouse Coopers, August 26, 2016, http://pwc.blogs.com/press_room/2016/08/healthy-eating-is-increasingly-on-consumers-agendas-with-millennials-leading-the-way.html

Products

It's not hard to look for evidence of wellness. But what's interesting to look at is the manifold ways wellness has entered every industry.

From a fashion perspective, athletic looks began appearing on the runway in collections including Céline's A/W 2012 collection and Stella McCartney's S/S 2013 line which referenced her designs for Team GB. Quickly, the idea of "athleisure" morphed into #alldayactive, with activewear becoming an acceptable, even fashionable, way to dress. Athletic-inspired looks, in fact, have registered record growth despite the overall slowed growth of the apparel market – sports-inspired apparel and footwear registered 10% and 6% growth in 2016 respectively, compared to an overall 4% market growth⁷.

Wellness quickly became synonymous with wearables, with smart tech helping complement a newly active lifestyle. The next wave in wearables is set to take more of a holistic view of health and lifestyle, going beyond step-tracking to help consumers feel happy, stimulated and at their best.

Perhaps the most extreme incarnation of wellness products is oriented towards animals. The "natural" pet trend includes fitness plans and products that replicate an animal's natural environment, such as perches, climbing towers and real cat trees. The trend also includes the rise of non-synthetic and non-toxic materials for bedding, bowls and toys, which are better for pet and planet.



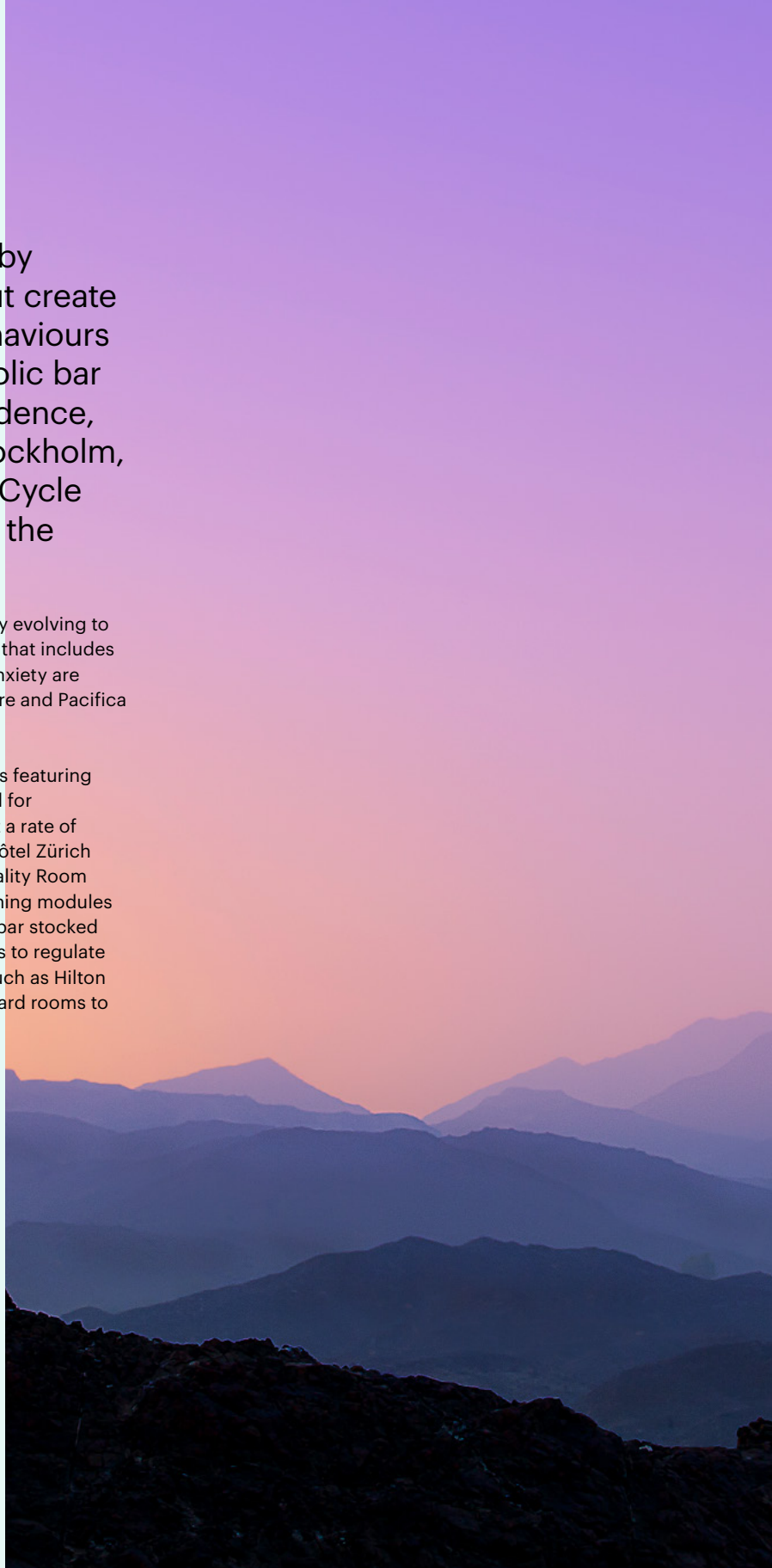
⁷"Sportswear Maintains Momentum" *Sportswear International*,
January 20, 2017, blog.euromonitor.com/2017/01/new-apparel-and-footwear-research-category-overview-sportswear-maintains-momentum.html

Experiences

Wellness experiences are typified by those that not only feel healthy, but create environments to enjoy healthy behaviours socially. Redemption, a non-alcoholic bar in London, offers booze-free decadence, as does Sober – a club night in Stockholm, while yoga raves, meditation, SoulCycle sessions and surfing are replacing the conventional pub and club.

Still in its infancy, the wellness industry itself is consistently evolving to include a more comprehensive understanding of wellness that includes mental health. Products and services that help to lessen anxiety are achieving popularity, with wearables and apps such as Spire and Pacifica tackling stress with tech.

Wellness tourism has also taken off, with the influx of hotels featuring rooms that have been holistically and technically designed for optimum wellbeing and stress relief. Today, it is growing at a rate of 14%, compared to the overall industry's 6% growth⁸. Swissôtel Zürich and Wallpaper* magazine recently collaborated on the Vitality Room concept. The minimalist room design includes built-in training modules for gentle fitness, an air purification system, a mobile minibar stocked with superfoods, and a circadian lighting control that helps to regulate melatonin release from the brain. Meanwhile, big chains such as Hilton have embraced the ideal, creating mini-gyms within standard rooms to make exercise a fuss-free convenience.



⁸“Global wellness tourism continues to grow” by Jeri Clausing, October 19, 2016, Travel Weekly, www.travelweekly.com/Luxury-Travel/Insights/Global-wellness-tourism-continues-to-grow

What's next

In the coming years, the wellness movement will shift in two directions – all out reject, and extreme adaptation.

Social media has made us more body-aware than ever, but as #fitspo and clean-eating images fill our feeds, we're starting to run lean on self-confidence, and a backlash against seemingly unattainable lifestyles is emerging – an ironic full circle considering the roots of the trend. Pinterest pins related to “anti-diet” jumped 42% in 2016 – a significant rise for the social community known for boards related to healthy meal prepping and exercise⁹.

At the other extreme, science offers a way of optimising our wellness. Looking deeper and analysing our bodies on a cellular and microbial level, this intense optimisation is gaining momentum. DNAFit uses saliva swabs to create hyper-personalised diets, while Habit delivers optimal food ingredients based on its customers' blood tests. Early research into microbial communities suggest they may hold the key to combatting depression, reducing anxiety and helping with skin problems, while architects have started to look at bioactive design strategies, incorporating bacteria into features to promote mental wellbeing and reduce the risk of illness.



Wellness: At a Glance

Interiors

The Kondo effect
Hygge
Clean living
Circadian lighting
Home spas
Immersive showers

Food

Beauty drinks
Natural energy products
Turmeric benefits
Free-from foods
Dairy alternatives
Juice cleanses
Raw food
Boxed food delivery

Lifestyles

Adult colouring books
Pet wellness
Beauty cafes
“Do Good” hotels
Wilderness wellness
Chroma yoga
Goat yoga

⁹“The Anti-Diet is the Healthiest Diet You’ll Ever Be On” by Ashley Cooke, *Pop Sugar Fitness*, March 11, 2017

Wellness in Action

The Influence Phase

2000s

Body image ideals shift from unrealistic to athletic

2008

The Global Financial Crisis triggers global health systems crisis

WGSN starts talking about Athleisure

2010

Millennial Anti-Hedonist goes mainstream

2011

High fashion embraces the athletic look

WGSN

2012

WGSN predicts mass adoption of wellness across industries

Trend in Action

**2012-
2017**

Athleisure becomes a mainstay

Pet lifestyle trend emerges

Wearables and mental health apps boom

Wellness eclipses hedonism with the emergence of sober clubbing, yoga raves and SoulCycle

Wellness-tourism emerges

What's Next

**2018 &
Beyond**

Anti-Wellness: consumers reject the wellness movement with #anti-diet activities like beer and pizza yoga

Optimisation: DNA customisation of wellness regimes will go mainstream

Conclusion

As seen through this white paper, regardless of what industry you work in, leaders need to be closely observing the changing behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of consumers. These changes are revealed through trends. Trends are not fads. Fads come and go fast and often don't involve cultural shifts. Trends are slow-moving shifts in cultural values. They reveal how we choose to live our lives. They affect, but are not just about, the products we buy and the experiences we seek. They are about how we choose to bring meaning to our lives.

The examples of artisan and wellness reveal that leaders need to look outside their core market to identify and capitalise on growth opportunities. Macro trends like those outlined didn't just change their endemic markets, but created new categories and affected everything from apparel to employment.

But identifying a trend is only the first step. The most important question we ask at WGSN is: "Is this trend right for your brand, given your DNA and target consumer?"

Timing is also an important factor to consider. Adopting a trend in the right way at the right time is, in the best case scenario, an avenue for growth. In the worst case scenario, it can cause the downfall of your brand. Being first isn't always necessarily being best, it largely depends on your target market. If you're targeting the early adopter, being first is key. If mass market adoption is your goal, then riding the crest of a trend could be right.

When embedding trend forecasting into business, innovation and marketing, strategic planning is essential to not miss out on growth and profit opportunities – and to avoid wasted investments in research and development. Ultimately, it is the key to staying relevant and shows how an entire industry can be transformed.

About WGSN Mindset

WGSN Mindset is the custom advisory service from the world's leading trend authority. At WGSN Mindset, we work with you to identify your next growth opportunity by leveraging the combined expertise of our trend team, our unrivalled insight on future trends and our data warehouse.

Find out more about WGSN Mindset

