

### Introduction

A trend, stripped of its history and context, isn't particularly meaningful. It's merely a reflection of the now. Effective trend watchers find glimpses of the future and use them to design meaningful products and experiences. Unlike clothing, food and other easily altered consumables, it often takes several years to design and manufacture a hard good. If you're designing to capitalize on what is trendy now, you're designing something that's potentially dated by the time it reaches the market.. So how do you get that glimpse into the near future? It starts by knowing the different types of trends and how to spot, analyze and use them effectively.

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<http://www.appliancedesign.com/articles/94812-innovate-by-spotting-and-applying-trends>

### Trend Types

■ **Macro:** These are the "big picture" trends that help place a particular consumer or industry trend into context. Looking at macro trends as social, technological, economic, environmental and/or political (STEEP approach) is a good way to start categorizing what you see.

■ **Consumer:** People often confuse consumer trends with fashion or fads, but that's far too simplistic an approach. To quote trendwatching.com, "trends emerge when external change unlocks new ways to serve age-old human needs and desires." Consider Uber as an example. At a macro trend level, our society is increasingly urbanized and younger generations are less likely to own a car. In addition, the rapidly growing "gig economy" creates a pool of independent contractors available by demand. Through the proliferation of smart phones, Uber is able to serve the age-old need for transportation through the use of contractors. Uber may not exist in 50 years, but the need to provide convenient transportation and flexible employment will..

### Trend Types (cont)

■ **Industry:** Industry trends are important, but remember that they are directly impacted by macro and consumer trends. Focusing on what everyone else in your industry is doing, without looking more broadly, may help you keep up with the pack but it won't bring the insights necessary to innovate.

### What's Trending



### Become a Trend Watcher

■ **Look cross-industry:** Your customers are exposed to many products and experiences. If you see a trend manifested across several industries, try it on for size in your own industry and see how it fits.

■ **Establish a trend trajectory:** Trends are a natural progression, which means looking back can help you see forward. Through online searches, you can follow a trend through its evolution and make an educated guess about where it's going. Understanding the trend trajectory can be fodder for developing disruptive products and services.

■ **Check your bias:** Try to remove your taste from the consideration set. Ask lots of questions and search for answers in places beyond your personal comfort zone. Look at what younger generations are doing, wearing and writing about. Check out technology magazines.

■ **Don't dismiss ideas/products too quickly:** When tablets first came out, many people ridiculed them as useless. Or how about putting a camera in a phone? Nobody will want that! Often, we're telling clients, "It looks crazy now, but trust us it will be everywhere in a year."

■ **Try products out:** You can learn a lot by getting different products in your hands. Reading about a Misfit and wearing one are very different experiences. Physical interaction brings an understanding that secondary research can't replicate.

### Become a Trend Watcher (cont)

■ **Look for the anti-trend:** If everyone is wearing black, someone will wear white. Eventually, people want something new and opposites attract. Marble and gold, once considered dated, are back in fashion. Is this because consumers are tired of granite and stainless? Playing with textures, sheen and finish can give something unfashionable a fresh twist. Because it hasn't been seen in so long, updated "old" can feel new.

■ **Be aware of the world:** The economy, events like the World Cup, and social movements can influence trends. Next year, the bright colors of Rio's Carnival are likely to pop up in lots of places as they host the Summer Olympics.

■ **Layer trends:** Mixing and matching different trends you have identified can lead to some interesting concepts.

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