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LAURA ELIZABETH GREENWOOD

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research

September 2015
Abstract

Trend-forecasting is a growing resource utilised throughout a diverse range of businesses in the creative industry. Not only is it important to understand the significance of trend research, but also to recognise the latest mechanisms applied to support emerging innovations in Small to Medium Enterprises (SME). This research takes position in the broad context of creative business and corporate strategies and is designed to inform and share valuable information relating to the implementation of design trends.

This research aims to explore the value of trend-forecasting as well as the implications and risk factors involved in this process. Can the value of forecasting be measured and proven to help support and contribute to the enrichment of SMEs? The particular area in which this research focuses on is the surface design sector for interiors; including wallpaper, flooring, tiles, textiles, homeware products, furnishings and decorative interior surfaces.

Qualitative research will be explored and critically analysed in the form of 6 mini-case studies, workshops, exhibitions and a series of 12 short interviews. This allows a general insight into multiple business sectors with an overview from many different perspectives within the creative industry.

The selected sample suggests SMEs are reluctant to engage with forecasters due to limited knowledge of trend influence, organisational culture or profit driven businesses. The research highlights although forecasters cannot guarantee profit, they do support creative design, market orientation, retailing, merchandising and social media. This may have a positive impact on increased levels of customer, brand awareness and industry leadership. Eventually this could improve revenue; ultimately benefitting the UK economy in supporting future SMEs. Not only do trends inspire creativity but they also have the potential to support the connection between brand and consumer. Engaging with trends consequently initiates innovation and reinforces multiple ways of facilitating a more sustainable business through design strategies.

Key Words; Trend-Forecasting, Business, Enterprise, Innovation, Creative Industry
# Table of Contents

**Abstract** ................................................................................................................................................. 1

**List of Tables** ........................................................................................................................................ 5

**List of Figures** ...................................................................................................................................... 6

**Chapter 1 Introduction** ......................................................................................................................... 7

1.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 8
1.2 Background ..................................................................................................................................  8
1.3 Aims and Objectives ..................................................................................................................... 9
1.4 Research Approach .................................................................................................................... 9

**Chapter 2 Literature Review** .............................................................................................................. 11

2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 12
2.2 Creative Industries in Business .................................................................................................... 12
   2.21 Definition of Creative Industry .................................................................................................. 12
   2.22 Importance of Creative Industry ................................................................................................. 12
2.3 Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) ............................................................................................ 14
   2.31 Role and Importance of SMEs ................................................................................................. 14
   2.32 Definition of SME .................................................................................................................. 14
   2.33 The Bolton Report 1971 ........................................................................................................ 15
   2.34 European Commission 1997 .................................................................................................. 15
   2.35 European Commission 2005 .................................................................................................. 16
2.4 Phenomenon of Trend-Forecasting ............................................................................................... 17
   2.41 Definition of a Trend ............................................................................................................... 17
   2.42 How Trend Disperse ............................................................................................................... 18
   2.43 Identifying Trends .................................................................................................................. 19
   2.44 The Role of the Futurist and Forecaster .................................................................................. 21
   2.45 History of Forecasting Trends ................................................................................................. 21
   2.46 Evolution of the Industry ........................................................................................................ 22
2.5 Trend-Forecasting: An unrecognised Power ............................................................................. 23
   2.51 Intuitive Vision ....................................................................................................................... 23
   2.52 The Leading Force ................................................................................................................ 24
   Designers on Trend ......................................................................................................................... 24
   Craft-Makers on Trend .................................................................................................................. 26
   2.53 Design Piracy ....................................................................................................................... 26
2.6 Social Media ............................................................................................................................... 27
   2.61 Definition of Social Media ...................................................................................................... 27
   2.62 Social Media in Relation to Trend-Forecasting ...................................................................... 27
   2.63 A Millennial Future ................................................................................................................. 28
2.7 Summary .................................................................................................................................... 29
Chapter 3 Methodology ..................................................................................................................... 31
  3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 32
  3.2 Objective 1; Defining the role of SME in the Creative Industry .................................................. 32
    3.21 Objective 1a Creative Industries .............................................................................................. 32
    3.22 Objective 1b Trend-Forecasting ............................................................................................... 32
  3.3 Objective 2; Analysing the Impact of Trend Research in the Creative Industry ......................... 33
    3.31 Workshops & Exhibitions ....................................................................................................... 33
    3.32 Interviews ............................................................................................................................... 35
  3.4 Mini-Case Studies ....................................................................................................................... 37
    3.41 Mini-Case Study Categories .................................................................................................. 38
  3.5 Triangulation & Visual Trend Book ............................................................................................... 39
  3.6 Ethics and Research Bias ............................................................................................................ 40
  3.7 Limitations .................................................................................................................................. 41
  3.8 Summary .................................................................................................................................... 41

Chapter 4 Workshops & Exhibitions ................................................................................................ 42
  4.1 The Flooring Show 2014 ............................................................................................................ 44
  4.2 TISE East Miami ........................................................................................................................ 47
  4.3 Knit & Stitch Show UK ............................................................................................................... 49
  4.4 Transitions; Rethinking Textiles & Surface International Conference ....................................... 51
  4.5 TISE West Vegas ....................................................................................................................... 52
  4.6 Surface Design Show 2015 UK .................................................................................................. 56
  4.7 Craft Industrialism ...................................................................................................................... 59
  4.8 Discussion Summary ................................................................................................................. 61

Chapter 5 Mini-Case Studies............................................................................................................... 63
  5.1 Lakeland ..................................................................................................................................... 65
  5.2 Daedalian Glass Studio .............................................................................................................. 67
  5.3 British Ceramic Tile .................................................................................................................... 70
  5.4 Le Creuset .................................................................................................................................. 72
  5.5 Westex Carpets .......................................................................................................................... 74
  5.6 J.Rotherham ................................................................................................................................ 77
  5.7 Discussion Summary ................................................................................................................. 89

Chapter 6 Discussion ........................................................................................................................ 81
  6.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 82
  6.2 Objective 1 – Defining the Role of SMEs in the Creative Industry ............................................. 82
    6.21 Objective 1a Creative Industry .............................................................................................. 82
    6.22 Objective 1b Trend-Forecasting .............................................................................................. 83
  6.3 Objective 2 – Analysing the Impact of Trend Research in the Creative Industry ..................... 85
    6.31 Workshops & Exhibitions ...................................................................................................... 85
    6.32 Mini-Case Studies .................................................................................................................. 86
  6.4 Summary .................................................................................................................................... 86
List of Tables

Table 2.1 European Commission Definition of SME ............................................................................. 16
Table 3.1 Workshop and Exhibition Sampling ...................................................................................... 34
Table 3.2 Interview Sampling Criteria .................................................................................................. 35
Table 3.3 Interview Categories ............................................................................................................. 36
Table 3.4 Mini-Case Study Sampling .................................................................................................... 37
Table 4.1 Workshop & Exhibition Sampling .......................................................................................... 43
Table 4.2 Synthesis of Research .......................................................................................................... 61
Table 5.1 Mini-Case Study Sampling .................................................................................................... 64
Table 5.2 Mini-Case Study Themes ...................................................................................................... 79
Table 5.3 Element of Risk ..................................................................................................................... 80
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Diffusion of Innovation Curve</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Synthesis of the Forecasting Process</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Triangulation Diagram</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1(A/B/C)</td>
<td>Trend Hub Design Board</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Plantation Trend Book</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Plantation Booth</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4(A/B)</td>
<td>Adams Carpet Trend Board</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Trends Hub by Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Trend Influence by Barbie Kennedy</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Patrick &amp; Team with Trend Forecaster Victoria Redshaw</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Concrete Textiles by Olly Mason</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Embroidery by Bridget O'Donoghue</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>TISE West Trends Hub</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Boen Trend Marketing</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Proverco Trend Marketing</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13(A/B)</td>
<td>Feedback of Trends Hub</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14(A/B)</td>
<td>Stephanie Tudor for Materials Council at Surface Design show 2015</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1(A/B/C/D/)</td>
<td>Trend Information for Lakeland</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2(A/B/C)</td>
<td>Daedalian Glass Studios</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3(A/B/C/D/E/F)</td>
<td>Daedalian Social Media</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>British Ceramic Tile Website</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Le Creuset Trend Report by Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Westex Carpets Colour Collection</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7(A/B/C/D)</td>
<td>J. Rotherham Trend-Forecast Brochure 2014</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 All figures are the author’s own images, diagrams or photographs unless referenced otherwise in the text.
INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

1.1 Introduction
1.2 Background
1.3 Aims and Objectives
1.4 Research Approach
1.1 Introduction

Trend-forecasting is a growing resource utilised throughout a diverse range of businesses in the creative industry (Hart, 2015). The general perception that design trends are linked specifically to fashion is obsolete, where today a wide range of industries actively seek to engage with forecasters (Sheppard, 2015). In particular this research will focus on the Interiors sector; investigating companies associated with both hard and soft interior surfaces, materials and homeware products. Not only is it important to understand the significance of trend research, but also to recognise the latest mechanisms applied to support emerging innovations in Small to Medium Enterprises (SME). The somewhat undisclosed occupation of a forecaster will be examined in order to ascertain the different ways in which they reinforce future drives. The development of their role and the trend industry underpins this research through exploring the future of forecasting; ultimately considering various approaches to applying design trends in business strategies.

The Design Council state; “Design is what links creativity and innovation. It shapes ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users or customers” (Cox, 2005, P.1). This research aspires to support this perspective, encouraging SMEs to seek collaborative endeavours to enhance inspirational connections with consumers; suggesting a trend lead approach to an innovative future. Not only will this research increase fundamental knowledge of the occupation of a trend-forecaster, but also disclose their insightful methods into how they forecast the trends. It will contribute to the enrichment of SMEs by facilitating the strategic implementation of incorporating design trends and lifestyle shifts into business organisations and corporate strategies. This research takes its position in the broad context of creative business and enterprise and is designed to inform and share valuable information with SMEs contemplating sourcing a trend practice. This may support improving effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability; encouraging growth, market orientation and profit. Subsequently, this impacts on the national economy by increasing revenue and influencing policy for governments to support future SMEs in the creative industry. Furthermore this research could also be relevant to trend-forecasters as they can review the issues that may deter new clients.

1.2 Background

An interest and passion towards trend-forecasting as an industry evolved from completing a BA Honours degree in Surface Design for Fashion and Interiors from 2009 – 2013. The outcome not only established the practicalities to trend direction as an individual designer, but also how it influences productivity in corporations. This study aims to build on this knowledge; applying a deeper investigation into the specific fields most likely to benefit from buying into trend research. A year’s internship at global flooring company Interface; reinforced an awareness of the significant role trends play in pioneering innovative design. It also highlighted how business professionals challenged the importance of buying into seasonal trends ultimately questioning their worth. Since April 2014, empirical experience has been acquired through working as a trend researcher; more recently
progressing to trend-forecaster; at UK based forecasting agency Scarlet Opus. Being actively involved in the process strengthened a yearning to understand different attitudes and outlooks from client perspectives and contemporary designers. This will encourage a confident belief in the value of the job role and the future of the forecasting industry as a chosen career path.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

This research project aims to examine the value of trend-forecasting in the creative disciplines; with particular focus on SMEs.

Objective 1 a) Investigate how SMEs operate in the creative industry
Objective 1 b) Explore how design trend-forecasting supports these creative disciplines
Objective 2 Analyse the impact of trend research within the creative industry
Objective 3\(^2\) Synthesis the research findings in a visual graphic trend book (separate to the thesis)

1.4 Research Approach

This research has been designed using a 3 phase approach (Figure 3.1). It has been grounded in research obtained from publications and online articles in the literature review (Chapter 2) where gaps of knowledge have been identified. Although the trend industry has grown significantly over the past 10 years, there is still limited academic literature on the process and impact of trends in the interiors sector. A number of workshops and exhibitions (Chapter 4) have been attended; where the primary form of acquiring knowledge has been through interviews and observations. This chapter satisfies the research objectives through conducting a series of mini-case studies to investigate the surfaces sector of the interiors industry.

Working as a trend-forecaster as well as a researcher during some of these events assisted in obtaining opportunities to travel world-wide in order to seek valuable information. Occupying a role at Scarlet Opus facilitated attendance to the UK Flooring Show and The International Surface Event in both Miami and Las Vegas, USA. Further exhibitions and conferences were attended as a researcher to explore alternative sectors. These included Knit & Stitch Show UK, Transition: Re-thinking Textile and Surfaces International Conference at The University of Huddersfield, Surface Design Show UK and Craft Industrialism UK.

The mini-case studies were vital to analysing the impact of trends in business supporting a further objective. Many of these were clients of Scarlet Opus (permission to use Appendix 4). This was beneficial to investigate the different interpretation and presentation of trends for multiple clients. It also permitted visits to the company, interviews, and reviews of on-going work. The clients of Scarlet Opus include Lakeland, Le Creuset, J. Rotherham and Daedalian Glass Studios.

\(^2\) Refer to supportive document page 4
Where there were gaps in the sampling, other mini-case studies were identified; these were sourced from exhibitions and include British Ceramic Tile and Westex carpets (Table 3.4).

Data from the literature review, workshops & exhibitions and mini-case studies (outlined in the triangulation) enabled a valuable understanding of the industry, SMEs, and methods of promoting trend research to gain a competitive edge. These will be critically analysed and synthesised to formulate questions, develop theories and devise conclusions centred around the future of forecasting (Chapter 6).

A final outcome objective will be met through the creation of a visual trend book. This aims to champion the inspirational power of colour direction, material innovation and pioneering visual impact. It will provide a platform for practitioners and business professionals to recognise and understand a trend lead approach to initiate an inspired future. The book will act as a supporting visual to the thesis but not dependent on it. It will also provide the ongoing research link to furthering study at PhD level. Yet the fundamental objective is to create a publication that is clear, concise and incorporates all relevant information to understanding the role trends can potentially play in the Interior Surfaces industry.

Events and mini-case studies help to shape where this piece of research fits within a wider context of both research and practical applications to utilising trends. It introduces the reader to the growing interest in the industry which is slowly revolutionising to adapt future demands. Although it is clear some sectors of the interiors market have taken trends on board; others are still misunderstanding their use and questioning their relevance. In summary this research goes beyond the misconception of associating trends to fashion and aims to assist SMEs as opposed to large companies already actively engaged. The creative process, investment and appropriate methods to effective use of trends will be explored to gain insight into its value. The outcome will encourage the sharing of information to underpin the fundamental aims of this research.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Table of Contents

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Creative Industries in Business
2.3 Small to Medium Enterprise (SME)
2.4 Phenomenon of Trend-Forecasting
2.5 Trend-Forecasting: An Unrecognised Power
2.6 Social Media
2.7 Summary
2.1 Introduction

This literature review is divided into three separate parts. The first section will focus on defining Small to Medium Enterprises including the reason they are important within the creative discipline. The second part will communicate ideas that encompass the phenomenon of trend-forecasting including the definition of a trend, how they are dispersed and identified. This section will also incorporate a definition outlining the role of a forecaster, the history of the forecasting business, and the evolutionary path in which the industry has progressed to become. The final part critically reviews the impact and influencing factors of trend-forecasting including intuition, design piracy, social media and technology.

2.2 Creative Industries in Business

2.21 Definition of Creative Industry

The definition of ‘creative industries’ is a very broad concept which covers a wide variety of fields. It is important to establish the current, conceptual and theoretical boundaries to the working definition of the creative industries as a whole; including how research is conducted and applied to this area of study. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2007 illustrated the specific areas when defining the creative disciplines; these included; advertising, architecture, arts, crafts, design, fashion, film, video, software and computer games, photography, music, publishing, television and radio (DCMS, 2007). Defined in the Government’s UK Creative Industries Mapping Document (2001) as being “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (p.05). Research within the creative discipline tends to use theory as well as practice yet both offer practical applications and solutions. In order for it to be relevant, they have to demonstrate an awareness of the cultural, intellectual and social principles which guide it, including knowledge from disciplines operating outside the creative industry (Collins, 2010). The nature of researching in the creative disciplines requires understanding of how quickly it evolves; the constant change of trend direction indicates that research has to be at the forefront of the industry, inspiring the innovation of tomorrow. For that reason; this study aims to provide valuable information in order to allow the growth of businesses through creative trend-forecasting; particularly in the design, marketing, manufacturing and retailing processes.

2.22 Importance of Creative Industry

The £71 billion creative sector is one of the UK’s most important industries, driving economic growth and supporting jobs across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (UKTI, 2015). It is knowledge and labour intensive which promotes innovation therefore has the potential to generate employment and expand the industry both geographically and economically. Many of the businesses
within the creative industry are small to medium sized enterprises and many are ‘life-style’ businesses (Collins, 2010). The continuation of growth in the industry can be equated to the ever rising role in the influence of technology, creating the opportunity for fresh, unique advancements.

Both the Cox Review (2005) and Collins, (2010) recognise the creative industry as a national strength and signalled a strong interest in investing more capital in this discipline. The role of entrepreneurship and enterprise should be significantly enhanced in order to sustain the success of small to medium businesses. Ultimately increasing their ability to innovate and exploit new ideas and opportunities ahead of the competition. However, it is argued that not all SMEs incorporate the role of design in their field of work; for example 50% of businesses say that design has no relevance (Henry, 2007). It was also perceived by Henry, (2007), Deloitte, (2015) and Miles & Green, (2008) that most SMEs show disappointing levels of engagement with Universities. They distrust external expertise sharing creative input. Creativity tends to involve the ideas of charismatic, long standing professionals as opposed to the influence of new starters promoting ‘change’. They do not appreciate or value the potential opportunities surrounding them regarding creative collaboration and advice on business improvements. What has worked in the past becomes the established way of doing things, through traditions, history or structures. Furthermore family-owned businesses in particular, tend to be ‘set in their ways’. Mainstream enterprises reveal conformity, formal structures and control systems which have impaired the creative spontaneity, independence and informality that once existed in the characteristics of a creative brand identity. This is recognised as ‘organisational culture’ (Tharp, 2009).

More recently however, the Enterprise for All report by Lord Young (2014) stresses the importance of creating a closer link between education, work and businesses. A review of Business-University Collaboration by Wilson (2012) further supports this theory, establishing it as a significant recurring theme. Young people are more likely than ever before to run their own enterprise or work for a small firm. This is partly due to the transformative nature of the internet and technological advancements which facilitates new business opportunities (Young, 2014). With this in mind, it drives considerations to how this will impact, adapt and transform the role trend-forecasting plays in relation to SMEs. It also indicates some of the challenges that might be faced throughout this research. By encouraging SMEs to invest in innovation; especially in design; could result in questioning the mechanisms of the social and structural dynamics of the business. In particular the enthusiasm in acceptance of a new millennial generation (Chapter 2.63) which could have an impact on their willingness to move forward. With on-going plans to strengthen the link between education and enterprise, these issues could gradually diminish over time, supporting SMEs in employing graduates or creating start-up businesses (Wilson, 2012). Furthermore the Creative Industry Strategy 2013-2016 report by the Technology Strategy Board expect to invest £30 million in support of creative industries (TSB, 2013, P.3). It addresses issues regarding convergence, transaction and data technologies, supporting partnerships and collaborative, knowledge-sharing schemes.
2.3 Small to Medium Enterprise (SME)

2.31 Role and Importance of SMEs

According to the UK Government there were 5.2 million SMEs in the UK in 2014, which was over 99% of all business. There were 5.0 million micro-businesses (0-9 employees) in the UK in 2014, accounting for 96% of all businesses. Not only do they account for more than half of the UK business economy but they also play a central role in the European Economy (Telegraph, 2014). The European Commission report on the new SME definition (2005) stated that they are a major source of entrepreneurial skills, innovation and employment and provide around 75 million jobs. Günter Verheugen, Member of the European Commission Responsible for Enterprise and Industry states; “Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the engine of the European economy. They are an essential source of jobs, create entrepreneurial spirit and innovation in the EU and are thus crucial for fostering competitiveness and employment.” (EC, 2005, P.3) SMEs have a proven ability to adapt to an ever changing economic environment and are vital to the future development and success of the UK business and financial industry (Telegraph, 2014). With the UK government pushing for further funding and backing schemes such as the Business Growth Fund that are designed to benefit SMEs and support them on a financial level, it has been predicted that in 2016 SMEs will contribute to the vast improvement and acceleration of the UK Economy (Livingston, 2014). While the majority of all University students gain their first graduate job in the SME sector (Wilson, 2012). These statistics support the motivation behind this research; indicating the importance of sustaining SMEs. It is a current topic of interest that is growing in many areas. This study will build on information to enhance and increase succession in order to support the UK business economy.

2.32 Definition of SME

There is no single, uniformly acceptable definition of a small firm, mainly because of the wide diversity of businesses (Storey, 1994). SMEs have been defined and redefined a number of times, some of which will be criticised in this study. SMEs are a very heterogeneous group (OECD, 2004) that could vary from a single artisan practicing in textile weave, a small design shop selling handcrafted wallpaper, to a more sophisticated small business selling flooring to overseas markets. Medium enterprises however, tend to work with more complex marketing in retail or manufacturing. Each firm may specialise in different markets, have different skill sets, sophistication and growth orientation yet they are still categorised under the same definition. In addition the variation between countries can provide huge difficulties when a single definition is implemented. The use of any single definition for multiple countries in diverse stages of economic development leads to additional distortions (Gibson, 2008). Due to the focus of case studies throughout this research being UK based, the definition exploration will concentrate particularly in the UK sector. Yet with each SME being unique; can we generalise to specify the value of support individual businesses will gain from suggested developments?
2.33 The Bolton Report 1971

The Bolton Report ‘The Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms in Britain’ was published in November 1971 and is one of the most widely quoted definitions today (Tonge, 2001). It was a problem-oriented analysis of this sector, focusing on the role of small firms in economic development, and providing international comparisons, as a basis for policy recommendations (Stanwoth, 2009). It adopted a number of different statistical definitions which addressed three main issues, firstly that size was relevant to sector and that this could vary between different market areas, similarly, as it may be appropriate to define some companies by number of employees it could also be more fitting to define some by turnover.

Storey, (1994) criticised this report in many ways; firstly that there is no single definition to ‘smallness’, instead there are four different groups being used to define it including; number of employees, turnover, ownership and assets. Furthermore Storey believes that; as the statistical definitions are based on financial units it makes it difficult and complex to make the comparisons over time, similarly it will be difficult to manage international comparisons due to currency fluctuations.

2.34 European Commission (EC) 1997

Due to these criticisms it became apparent that there needed to be clarity of the definition. In 1997 the European Commission adopted a single communication to outline of a single definition of SME. The commission applied this across all community programs and proposals (Tonge, 2001). This definition was devised by four distinguishing factors, number of people in the company, annual turnover, annual balance sheet total and percentage owned by one, or jointly by several, enterprise(s) not satisfying the same criteria.

Keter, (2004) and Gibson, (2008) dispute the negative criticisms of this, including the relevance of the EC definition in other countries. Furthermore the regulations are still seen as being too complex, unnecessarily costly and overzealous in the pursuit of their regulatory objectives. However there are positive advantages to the revised and standardised definition argued by Storey, (1994) and Tonge, (2001). They both claim that; unlike Bolton, it does not use any criteria other than employment to define SME as opposed to there being a multiplicity of criteria’s. It also recognises that there are certain distinctions between micro, small and medium enterprises, and that they are not homogenous. This therefore suggests each company within the creative discipline has individual needs and may obtain different amounts of funding or support due to the nature of how they are defined; which ultimately could have an effect on their ability to invest or source external creative inspiration such as trend-forecasting.
**2.35 European Commission 2005**

Due to developments in prices and productivity it became necessary to adjust the financial thresholds and re-evaluate the SME definition. This was revised and implemented by the European Commission in 2005, which to date is the latest report and definition of SME.

The changes reflect general economic developments since 1996, and a growing awareness of the specific hurdles confronting SMEs. The new definition promotes Micro Enterprises more, and will help improve innovation and access to research and development. It will also take into account the different relationships between enterprises while ensuring that only those which genuinely require support are targeted by public schemes (EC, 2005).

**Table 2.1 - European Commission Definition of SME (Enterprise and Industry Publication 2005)**


Having researched the history of SME definitions, and reviewing the multiple classifications of different fields that distinguish their identity, it is recognised that the agreed definition is illustrated in Table 2.1. Throughout this research the case studies used will be defined in accordance to this table. Equally it is important to understand the threshold for such characterisation can change and adapt over time.
2.4 Phenomenon of Trend-Forecasting

The phrase ‘trend-forecasting’ inevitable veers thoughts straight to fashion and the latest style on the catwalk (Sheppard, 2015) however, forecasting is far more complex and stems to all areas of design and development, particularly it is used as a tool to create invaluable business success. Both Kjaer, (2014) and Higham, (2010) believe the definition of a trend must be adapted in a way that allows the SME marketers to understand its meaning. For example, a trend is only of use to a company if it provides a return therefore a trend would be best described as a long-term change in consumer attitudes and behaviors that offers marketing opportunities. As opposed to business professionals assuming the word ‘trend’ is purely associated with fashion, fads or short lived styles. Yet is it right to assume SMEs should trust a resource that has no guarantee of increasing profit (Chapter 2.5)?

Furthermore; the accessibility to finding such information is difficult, a company cannot easily ascertain figures or evidence that promotes trend-forecasting as anything but related to fashion. Although the industry today has a major impact on all market sectors in society, it appears challenging to find academic literature concerning methods or success rates. This is no doubt due to the intuitive approach evoking an element of mystery (Chapter 2.51). Are forecasting companies effectively promoting their work through use of language, in order to attract attention of SMEs? Is ‘forecasting’ an appropriate word to describe the service attributable to the connotations and suggestiveness? This implies the magnitude of language impact throughout this research, including the contribution to knowledge in which it aims to provide.

Contrary to the majority opinion of crystal ball gazing, forecasting takes in-depth research, observation and analysis in order to construct such vital intelligence (Sheppard, 2015). The exploration of the history and development of the industry gives an idea of how fast and complicated the world of trends has become; where the marvel of forecasting has in fact become a trend in itself (Sanderson, 2011). But for how long will SMEs and consumers want to follow trends? An insight into the somewhat undisclosed role of the trend-forecaster is examined, (Chapter 2.44) as well as a view to how this research is conducted (Chapter 2.43), to consequently how it is then implemented in businesses throughout the creative industry. Furthering this; an examination of the future of forecasting will be discussed in particular how it will adapt to the potential revolutions of consumer behaviour (Chapter 2.46).

2.41 Definition of a Trend

Higham (2010) conceives the word ‘trend’ to mean different things to different people in different concepts. Where it was initially used in the 16th century as a verb meaning ‘to run in the direction of’, it was then conversed as a noun in the 18th century meaning ‘the way something bends’. In the 19th

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3 Supportive document page 6, 7
century it became referred to as the way something ‘changed’, yet the word retained its application in the science and commercial world until the 1960’s (Chapter 2.45).

Today many professionals like Hughes (2011) define a trend as the colour, materials, texture, style and patterns that relate to a particular season and has long term effects on the market. It is depicted from world events, current economic, political and social science attributes happening at the time (Freshome, 2011). A trend is also defined by Raymond, (2010) as a movement or a shift in aesthetical changes in our culture. It can be emotional, intellectual and even spiritual; that tends to have a consequential impact on the business sector; therefore suggesting trends coexist as being both scientific and creative. From a direction, to a vision, to an inspiration, the definition appears characterised by uncertainty which in itself offers little support to enterprise’s who practice in control. This issue of uncertainty may become apparent when SMEs are advised to broaden and sharpen views of the future by having faith in prediction (Chapter 2.51).

2.42 How Trends Disperse

According to the Oxford dictionary (2015) an innovation is defined as any idea, product or service that is perceived to be new, and is crucial to the success of any organisation. Figure 2.1 illustrates the diffusion of innovation curve which refers to the process by which an idea spreads through a population (Solomon, Cornell, Nizan, 2015). First noted by Jean-Gabriel de Tarde; a French nineteenth century judge who used this method to analyse case studies. The diffusion of innovation curve shows forecasters a pathway when they are noting a new trends passage through a culture. Other issues have to be considered when reviewing this method such as how a trend is communicated, the time it takes to communicate it and the social norms that might influence the level of intensity at which the trend is adopted (Raymond, 2010).

![Figure 2.1 Diffusion of innovation curve - Investaur (2015)](http://www.business-planning-for-managers.com/main-courses/forecasting/the-diffusion-of-innovation/)

While advocates of trends perceive them as meaningful or fashionable others criticise them as being superficial and meaningless. There are many behavioural psychologists that will argue the human herding behaviour suggesting the human race are instinctively prone to following trends. Dawkins believes humans instinctively mimic others as an evolutionary tactic of social and intellectual survival (Raymond, 2010). It is evident that humans follow the market trends, whether they are conscious they are doing it or not. There are many unseen forces from the social environment, the media and pressures from people present in day to day lives that lead to a subconscious adoption of new ideas. More recently the trends devised on social media create a huge impact in terms of social acceptance; (Chapter 2.6).

2.43 Identifying Trends

Each forecasting company has individual methods of identifying the future projections, it is very diverse and likewise dependant on the particular futurist in conjunction with the methodology devised by their corporation. The success rates of the different strategies vary which consequently makes it difficult to decide which forecasting approach would best suit individual business challenges (Kjaer, 2014). Raymond, (2010), McKelvey and Munslow, (2008), and Kjaer, (2014) describe some of the methods involved. These include; scientific forecasting; basing predictions on statistical information from research groups such as NASA. Social forecasting; analysing social groups of human behaviour in different communities or cultures and emotional forecasting; which has emerged from the creative and design disciplines, it looks into predicting the developments within fast paced fields to depict colour, texture and surface finishes.

In order to successfully envisage a design trend by emotional forecasting in terms of colour, materials, and texture, it is vital that research from a wide spectrum of subject areas is gathered and organised efficiently Feely, (2015). These areas include architecture, museum and art gallery exhibitions, transport, TV and film, science, technology and fashion. Political, social and economic factors are obtained from media sources including online journals and news articles amongst keeping up to date with current world issues. Cassidy & Cassidy, (2005) and Scully & Cobb, (2012) describe how this is combined with observational research from exhibitions and tradeshows, street fashions and latest designer work. This is examined, contextualised and analysed including interviews and case studies with a splash of intuition to productively construct the main body of the forecast. Some agencies collectively use trend networks. This organic arrangement consists of a group of individual from a variety of backgrounds who share information relevant to their sector (McKelvey and Munslow, 2008). These methods are not restricted to forecasting agencies but are applied throughout creative businesses in-house. King (2011) found many companies prefer to use in-house teams to develop colour palettes. Forecasts are adapted to accommodate tastes, signature colours and brand identity.

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4 Supportive document page 10, 11, 12, 13
All the literature reviewed; outlining different methods of forecasting; has been synthesised in Figure 2.2 to clarify and refine the process.

Forecasting companies may also present the trends to their clients in a variety of ways such as presentations, macro trend book packages, material swatches, online, seminars or events and exhibitions (McKelvey and Munslow, 2008), (Feely, 2014) (Scully & Cobb, 2012). The company can then use this information to direct their product development specifically to fit with their consumer market and the shift in current buying/spending patterns, attitudes, lifestyles and economic factors (Freshome, 2011). The general trend report will then be interpreted to suit individual client needs.

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5 More information on the Process of Trend Forecasting can be found in the supportive document page 14, 15, 16, 17
2.44 The Role of the Futurist and Forecaster

Not dissimilar from the definition of a trend; forecasting as a job is ambiguous in its specific functions and exact worth of operation. Skills include not only identifying lifestyle movements with expert intuition but also translating this into market specific product and brand strategies. Creative tools are required to visualise research in terms of future seasonal reports, harnessing specific colours, textures, materials and patterns. Ultimately captivating a seasonal micro snapshot from the bigger macro global picture. Many services fall into the category of 'trend-forecasting' but different names are given to classify them (Petermann, 2014). Both Kjaer (2014) and Raymond, (2010) even state futurists can accurately propose an idea of what lies ahead. Yet is this statement enough to constitute business investments? Trends may accurately come into fruition but still futurists cannot guarantee rewards. This suggests the role is slowly evolving and as trend experts specialise in a variety of subject areas, a shift towards a more social representation of the job role within society is becoming more evident, or perhaps it could even have a science status. Furthermore the need for this job role in the future could be questioned due to the new attitudes of the millennial generation (Chapter 2.63).

2.45 History of Forecasting Trends

Although this research is predominantly focused on forecasting within the surface design discipline, it is important to understand where, how and why trend-forecasting began. The following section will explore where the existence of trends began including the driving forces that developed trends in the fashion industry; and subsequently how forecasting evolved to the interiors market.

Since the beginning of humans forming communities and social groups, the following of trends occurred to aid social and intellectual survival (Raymond, 2010). The power of leadership throughout the 16th and 17th century promoted the positioning in society. Wealth and power initiated fast developments and the emergence of style trendsetters that are characteristic of modern fashion. The importance of fashion governing leadership in society throughout this period demonstrates the influence and magnitude of the following of a certain movement or style (Fashion Encyclopaedia, 2015). The survival of this evolvement is still seen today in the form of a service and an industry, therefore time has merely grown the prominence of trends as a business. This evokes the impression that trends are a part of human existence and therefore something that cannot simply disappear from society, this theory is also questioned in Chapter 2.63 which explores the future of trends.

Over the past 300 years fashion and textile industries have considerably developed in terms of new inventions, capacity and importance. It appears that the first indication of a need for fashion forecasting happened in 1825 as women were looking for more practical styles of clothing that reflected their moods, differing social behaviour and leisure pursuits. It wasn’t until 1915 that the first forecasting business was established, The Color Association of the United States (Cassidy and

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6 Supportive document page 8
Cassidy, 2005). Britain introduced The British Colour Council in 1931, the declared aims and objectives included the placing of colour determination for the British Empire and provisions of standard names for colours for the sake of clarity (Batty, 2012).

Colour and fabric had become more seasonal during the 1960’s and similar forecasting companies had become established between this decade and the 1980’s including Peclers Paris, Design Intelligence and The British Textile Colour Group (BTCG) (Cassidy and Cassidy, 2005). The globalisation of the textile and apparel industries happened between the 1970’s to the 1990’s where production moved east. Colour forecasting became a 2 year cycle, textile trade shows expanded globally providing trend information worldwide. This initiated a desire for trend-forecasts in the interior sector as well as fashion.

2.46 Evolution of the Industry

In 2011 The Telegraph estimated that the trend-forecasting business was worth a staggering £36billion and that it is growing increasingly more important for the creative industries to adapt and respond to investing in valuable trend research (Barnett, 2011). Before 1997 trend-forecasting was presented as printed copies which were major book business, until British brothers Julian and Marc Worth started WGSN. This was the first key forecasting business to be taken online and updated daily making it easily accessible (FashionUnited, 2011). With the increasing development of technology and faster access to online facilities through a range of multiple devices, it has been argued by Barnett (2011) & Adams, (2011) that it was enviable that creative companies stopped buying the printed copies of trend-forecasts and turned to searching for a more convenient method such as looking at online sites. Although McKelvey and Munslow, (2008) suggest the traditional forecasting books; often containing fabric swatches; still retains its market share and is essential for designers.

In 2010 WGSN launched ‘HomeBuildLife’ which is dedicated trend-forecasting and product development services for the global home and interiors industries. More recently in August 2014 the ‘New WGSN’ was launched as they decided to bring together the former WGSN and Stylesight products onto an enhanced, single technology platform, (WGSN, 2014) with their aim to set the highest bar for customer service in order to enable future innovation with customers’ needs in mind. This demonstrates that the industry is still adapting to what consumers want, the need for forecasting is changing and progressing in ways which are still unknown, this research ultimately will question what the future world of forecasting might entail.

Since the first realisation for the need for trend-forecasting, the industry has snowballed into the billion pound business that it is today, many companies offering free online information such as Trend Pulse, Trend Bible, and Scarlet Opus all of which forecast solely for the interiors market. The price of a

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7 Supportive document page 9
8 Supportive document page 8, list of forecasting services-Supportive document page 28
seasonal forecast varies between companies and difficult to uncover as a researcher rather than customer. An example of the average price of one general printed seasonal trend report is between £300-£1000 (Trendbible, 2015) depending on how far out the report. Subscriptions to sites such as WGSN is approximately £10,000 per year (PSFK, 2007) whereas more tailored trend report is dependent on client needs therefore varies immensely in price.

But has the influence of the media and online accessibility become too much? The more information companies have, the harder it is to interpret and translate to specific market areas and consumers. With WGSN forecasting for all creative disciplines it becomes harder to depict what’s necessarily right for a brand. This theory could suggest SMEs might want forecasters to ultimately limit the research and direct the trends that focus exclusively to individual client; providing them with a more boutique approach.

2.5 Trend-Forecasting: An Unrecognized Power

Future forecasting is a relatively new and emerging tool used to assess societal influence and economic drivers; aimed to increase sales and boost revenue and reputation (Kjaer, 2014). This is an increasingly widely accepted decision making tool used across a variety of SMEs where it has become clear that future forecasting is more than prophesying what ‘might’ happen but also enables the influence of it.

However, understandably, it is seemingly apparent that today SMEs are still reluctant to engage in collaboration. Redshaw, (2014) believes it requires taking quite a leap of faith to engage with someone who tells you that they can ‘see your future’ in detail with certainty. Similarly it is possible that SMEs might see trend-forecasting agencies as an external design source; instead of an external design resource. However the benefits of working with forecasters are still unknown to most, and the potential to increase sale growth and help anticipate future developments for the business are not being utilised efficiently in some companies. But can we measure the impact forecasting has in assisting the success of a business? Can the costly investment of trend reports be justified in order to prove their worth to the company?

2.51 Intuitive Vision

The pressure of investing in external forecasting companies is becoming more apparent in order to keep up with industry evolvement and to stay ahead of the competition. Although the forecasting process has already been outlined, it does not account for the intuitive vision involved in the development. But without a demonstrable ‘rational procedure’ for this; how can SMEs be convinced to invest in potential developments that are somewhat guided by instinct? In the past, trend-forecasting has been criticised for its lack of scientific explanation, with the uncertainty of the definition and to

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9 Supportive document page 16
some extent even the job role (Chapter 2.44). Fawkes, (2008) questions the validity of trends and suggests companies should not rely on personal envisions of the future to create innovation and sellable products. Yet many futurists speak confidently in their intuition, advising SMEs to take the leap of faith. Li Edelkoort, founder of Trend Union intuitively selects colours as a source of inspiration; she promotes the idea that forecasting methodology is artistic in nature and is not possible to apply any objective investigation (Cassidy and Cassidy, 2005). This view is supported by Sardouk, (2014); Chief Creative Officer at StyleSight in New York; who considers the idea that data is only a portion of the information and that the power of intuition is underrated. On the other hand, Raymond (2011) suggests a more logical, scientific, step by step way of predicting a trend; providing the tools, techniques and methodologies to be a professional. As Raymond believes a trend must be “transparent, measurable, robust and above all provable” (Raymond, 2011, P.68). This uncertainty between forecasters creates undefined and ambiguous ideas on forecasting predominately being in between science and intuition. Yet it is the combination of these elements that governs the process.

Although the managing Director of WGSN trends stated; “We're a real, trusted resource for validation” (Fashionista, 2014, P.1) along with other forecasting agencies such as TrendStop, Trend Bible and TrendPulse, who all share the view that they 'accurately' predict the future; which suggests confidence and belief in the certainty of the intuition involved with the process. Yet the pressure from some clients is leading traditional forecasters to make certain changes to the way they present the research. They are beginning to invest in a more analytical approach as clients are increasingly searching for the systematic robust data to underpin their hunch (New York Times, 2013).

It is important to recognise that business itself is unpredictable and although it may be hard to trust in the process of pragmatic or intuition in terms of trend-forecasting, it also applies to the nature of corporate culture (Kjaer, 2014). Organisations need multiple approaches to developing a business direction for the future; incorporating strategic methods that combine instinct with analysis of trends. Furthermore Raymond (2010) realises expert intuition is a byproduct of working in the industry throughout a long period of time. It's a skill that can only gain the confidence and trust of SMEs through implementation and scheduled measures. This subject area may discourage SMEs to take the leap of faith. Or does the value of forecasting remain in the intuitive vision of the expert?

2.52 The Leading Force

Design and craft today, involves predicting and gauging the impact on society, recognition of emerging technologies, fresh directions of sustainability and a creative outlook on societal essentials (Quinn, 2010, Abrams, 2002). As time changes, design changes along with attitudes, ways of thinking and feelings in society; this shapes the impressions of the future; which eventually direct what people want to surround themselves with in terms of colour and materials.
Designers on Trend

Designers have to recognise market trends, have an understanding of the process of manufacture and retail and above all identify what the consumer will want. Materials are one of the first and most defining elements of a product, impacting on the design, sourcing and manufacture as well functionality and aesthetic. Therefore trends in lifestyle and materials have become intrinsic to the way designers explore concepts of colour and materiality in their creations (Lee, 2015). It's because of this that designers have to research current trends to create a product. They may use trend research to gain knowledge in what materials, textures or colour to use. In conjunction to this; forecasters use designers work as part of their prediction to what will be ‘on trend’ in the future. They visit many exhibitions and tradeshows that showcase the latest work from designers in many creative disciplines. They observe and scout across numerous destinations globally to track existing and emerging trends in product, surface, pattern, shape, colour and materials (Trend Bible, 2015). Therefore if designers follow the trends, yet forecasters use designers to predict the trends; who is the leading force in the creative change?

This evokes the question of whether designers should be following trends and if they do; what are their reasons for wanting to follow them? There are many articles that describe forecasting as being a self-fulfilling prophecy because if designers choose to follow the forecasts, then they’ll be part of what ultimately becomes the trend (NPR, 2011). However if designers disregard the trend, they risk irrelevance. Will the trend cycle come to an end? (Chapter 2.63)

From the book Designers on Design (Conran & Fraser, 2004, p.41-87) the question ‘how important are trends?’ was asked to a range of designers from multidisciplinary backgrounds in the creative industry. Some of their responses indicate the wide variety of differing opinions and questions whether designers who follow trends are purely based on individual preference.

1. “Not all interested or motivated by trends” Phillippe Stark Porche Design
2. “No designer is immune to trend, but we have always been careful to make a responsible evaluation of their worth for people in society and the environment” Christopher Pillet
3. “I watch trends carefully, but only to avoid following them” Olojoj Chorcjoj
4. “We are not influenced by trends, we are creating them” Jonas Lindvall
5. “I try not to be influence” Arik Levy
6. “Trends influence brief and opportunities, the commissioning process is extremely susceptible to trends: achieving social and economic regeneration through architecture” Thomas Heatherwick

However relating back to the Chapter 2.42 looking at how trends are dispersed; it is argued that the human brain is instinctively prone to following trends; therefore although these designers are reluctant

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10 Supportive document page 19
to follow seasonal trends; they may subconsciously be already following the macro trends. Furthermore a discussion in Chapter 2.45 of how trends are intrinsic to the human community has been established in exploring the history of how trends have developed through time. Kjear, (2014) believes a reluctance to do so would result in little or even no consumer attention directed at the product. Yet Lee, (2014) argues that not all creative companies should use trend-forecasting, for example those practicing in craftsmanship or design. He believes it depends on the client and their interests as opposed to personal attractions. Some clients look for projects that ride current design trends whereas others might want a more traditional or bespoke look.

**Craft-Makers on Trend**

Both Lee, (2014) and Kjear (2014) agree that taking the lead isn’t the right choice for everyone and that following trends can dilute creativity, especially in craft-maker SMEs. Should those practicing in handmade or traditional craft be following trends?

Tanner, (2010) suggests that today craft plays a crucial role in the design industry and bridges the gap between fashion, lifestyle and media. This is supported in the Cox Review (2005) outlined in Chapter 2.22. The recognition for innovation is illustrated to develop UK creative industries, including firms established to help the transition of craft students to industry. Since consumers moved away from desiring cloned manufactured products, a craft revolution was inevitable, where consumers crave the unique and handmade. Nowadays manufacturers work with craft-makers to supply one off batch products, combining traditional skills with new technologies and new materials, thus placing the crafts-person into the market place of trend-forecasters and interior stylists. Craft-makers are open to collaboration, sharing knowledge and blurring the boundaries between tradition and contemporary design shaping the need and importance of this area in the creative industry (Tanner, 2010). Craft students are now open to following trend information yet much like designers, craft-makers are sourced to build the trend directions (Chapter 2.43) in order for them to be recognised and in keeping with consumer desires should the conformity of following trends become apparent within the evolving craft industry?

**2.53 Design Piracy**

Another issue concerning the debate on whether designers should follow trends involves looking at design piracy, and how the development of a single or multiple trends per season could lead to all designs being the same. Latigo (2012) Williams (2014) and Abnett (2015) retain the view that agencies such as WGSN are killing creativity. This relates back to the trend cycle discussed in Chapter 2.52.

WGSN provides trend information to over 75,000 users (Fashionista, 2014). Most of these use the resource to help guide design, yet it’s founder Marc Worth condemned the service as being “monster”
that has created “an industry of idiots” (Telegraph, 2014, P.1). He implies that designers following the same body of knowledge become lazy in their creativity, thus leading to an industry of copycats. With Computer Aided Design tools available to all members it has made life too easy for those practicing in the creative space and the influence from forecasters controls the originality and uniqueness of an individual designer. It crafts a process where all designers produce the same or similar styles. Comparably, the element of design piracy could simply be to validate the trends further, Sprigman (2014) argues that imitation sparks innovation and that every time a new design is widely copied, the most powerful market force kicks in; the trend. The absurdity of having a wealth of inspirational material from around the world could make you less creative is illogical (Telegraph, 2014). Designers, architects and people working in the creative industry need inspiration and stimulation to motivate vision and spur creative intuition; this is where trend information comes in to play as it provides this inspiration. Similarly this connects back to the previous Chapter 2.52 which raises the dispute on whether design influences trends of vice versa. As a design is copied, it spreads through the market, ultimately creating the trend.

Contrasting this viewpoint Grant & Grant, (2012) and Latigo (2012) state that trends create complacency and the human brain does not work effectively when dealing with different sources of input. By allowing designers to rely on them too much consequently means they never try anything new which creates a ‘safe zone’ in which designers will then create less effective work. This suggests that too much trend influence has a negative effect. Today, however, we adopt a more market-based approach, people have easier access to ‘high trend lead products’ in books, magazines and online blogs, it is more apparent that designers and forecasters are no longer the leading influence on the trends but this role is open to many creative and individual people.

2.6 Social Media

2.61 Definition of Social Media

Social media is defined in the Oxford Dictionary (2015) as being the websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media is a widely accepted platform of technology used by millions and accessible to every fingertip on various devises. Marsden, (2014) explains social Media is not just used for personal communication but has transformed the way SMEs develop marketing strategies.

2.62 Social Media in Relation to Trend-Forecasting

Since the invention of the internet and the evolutionary path is has taken it is hard to imagine life without it. It has become part of everyday existence, it influences the way people see things and how they communicate with each other. In particular it is has influenced how they portray and converse trends today. Head of Content at Stylus Fashion Ruth Chapple (2015) believes that social media has
absolutely changed the trends landscape, yet on the other hand; digital media can quickly over expose a trend, and kill its ‘edge’. Similarly Worth (2015) states social media dictates trends today. The impact of social media on the forecasting industry has both positive and negative effects.

With instant access to websites, influential blogs and online sources including direct contact to many people worldwide, it has become easier to track trends than ever before. Designers, architects and to some extent the average person can follow what’s trending on twitter, see what’s on the latest catwalk runway and keep up to date with exhibitions and tradeshows from online reviews and live social media updates (Kjaer, 2014). Therefore is the need for trend-forecasting diminishing due to the increase usage and growing market of social media?

Bell, (2014) and Fisher, (2014) believe that the industry is far from shrinking but the role of the forecaster will change and adapt to the increase of global online activity. Social media will increase the need for trend-forecasting companies; whether souring from external firms of hiring in-house professionals. While the internet of everything provides an immense resource pool, it does not provide insightful, informative and valuable research, filtered to precise manageable content for the end user. (Boutique approach to forecasting discussed in Chapter 2.46). Can an assumption be made that suggests there will still be a client need for collective in-depth research that can be presented and interpreted for specific SMEs? Where Fashionista, (2014) and Grant & Grant, (2012) suggested the evolution of the industry could result in too much information. The vast amount of trend material can become overwhelming and thus deter people from the responsibility of processing and organising the knowledge effectively.

In association with this, if many trend savvy individuals are able to glean the information successfully online, they could use it effectively to comprehend the general design trends and utilise it within their field of practice. Therefore some SMEs use forecasting agencies simply as a way of reconfirming their product design or buying decisions, yet the expense to this confirmation proves to be extremely high. This indicates that perhaps some SMEs are paying out thousands of pounds to merely verify what they already know, in which case implies that trend-forecasting is only relevant to certain types of enterprises; thus suggesting clarity needs to be recognised before purchasing such information.

2.63 A Millennial Future

One of the fundamental motives for initiating this research is to assess the permanence of trend-forecasting as a job role; it is important to gauge how the industry will adapt to the millennial generation and future generations to come. The millennial generation are those born between 1980-2000, they are one of the largest generations in history poised to reshape businesses and the economy (Goldman Sachs, 2015).
With the ever increasing fast paced advancements in technology such as 3D printing machines, consumers will soon be free to design and manufacture their own products. Not only this; but studies show millennial attitudes and behaviours characterised as being optimistic, challenging and rejecting traditional ways of living, working and socialising (Deloitte study, 2015). This suggests the likeliness to defy and challenge trends is relatively high, this evokes the questions; will there be a need for trend forecasting in the future. Li Edelkoort recently published her 2015 manifesto where she voiced her views on why she deems that fashion is obsolete. Edelkoort believes that “consumers of today and tomorrow will want to choose products for themselves, creating and designing their own where possible” (Dezeen, 2015, P.1). Where ownership doesn’t mean anything anymore, new generations are less likely to buy into brands, making ‘fashionable’ items a thing of the past. However, the situation is far more complex than that. Lee (2014), on the other hand, believes that people will always follow a trend, it is in our human nature to follow what is popular, even if it means ‘not’ following a trend results in everyone ‘not’ following trends, which ironically becomes the trend (Chapter 2.52). This insinuates trend-forecasting will always be present in the future yet the adaption of trends and how they are utilised to progress creative innovation may be consumed differently, rather than becoming “obsolete”. Comparably the millennial generation are the most entrepreneurial generation of all time and a study of 1000 young professionals by Financial Service firm EY found that 70% of young professionals would much rather start up their own business than work for a company (Telegraph, 2015). Digital platforms are granting the tools to do this whilst networking and crowdsourcing resources help entrepreneurship succeed (Mintel, 2014).

Collaborations between forecasting services and Universities could help bridge the gap between the implementation of trend research into business (Chapter 2.22). Students are educated to review global design trends in practice with their creative work. There are even specific courses now designed to teach students the science of colour, identify and predict trends and analyse the social process of acceptance and diffusion. As new graduates filter through into industry, making changes to SMEs, it may become apparent that trend-forecasting companies obtain more business and so the need for trends increases. Alternatively it could see many SMEs conducting their own trend research in house rather than use external resources.

**2.7 Summary**

In conclusion this chapter has investigated the importance of how SMEs contribute to the creative industry and explored how trend-forecasting supports creative disciplines. This satisfies the objectives outlined in Chapter 1.3 which reinforces the validation of this study. The definition of SMEs has been clarified; (Chapter 2.36) and will be used to recognise companies throughout this research. Fundamental gaps of knowledge were identified including ideas suggesting whether designers and crafters should be following trends and ultimately what type of SMEs would benefit most from trend research (Chapter 2.52).
The negative enigmas attached to the portrayal of trend-forecasting have been questioned; including the leading force and design piracy (Chapter 2.53). The process of forecasting and the intuitive elements involved could cause concern and deter businesses to engage (Chapter 2.51). Yet does the value of forecasting remain in the intuitive vision of the expert and is the collaboration between two companies based on trust rather than expertise? Similarly the perplexity of these concerns needs embracing before SMEs can establish a relationship with a forecasting company. It was apparent that access to information advising SMEs on trend-forecasting was scarce both online and academic publications. Businesses need informing of the risk factors involved; does investing in trends reduce the risk or is the investment itself unnecessary ultimately posing more risk to the business?

From the literature review a set of challenges were identified which could be faced throughout the practical applications of the research. These include firstly; whether or not the SME is willing to move forward and invest in innovation; this was a problematic issue that surfaced in The Design Council review by Martin Temple (2010) (Chapter 2.22). This could result in questioning the mechanisms of the social and structural dynamics of the business. In particular the enthusiasm to the acceptance of a new millennial generation of workers as this could have an impact on the willingness to move forward (Chapter 2.63).

The longevity of trend-forecasting has been queried where the job role and its relevance in the creative industry could gradually diminish due to the new attitudes of the millennial generation (Chapter 2.63). Contemporary designers challenge the practice and its application in the industry. Is the overwhelming amount of information detrimental to the future of forecasting or is it enhancing its value and moving it in a new direction? The study will clarify whether implementing trends operates as a prime ingredient for power and leadership for SMEs in the creative industry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Objective 1 Defining the role of Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) in the Creative Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Objective 2 Analysing the Impact of Trend Research in the Creative Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Mini-Case Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Triangulation &amp; Visual Trend Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Ethics and Research Bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodologies chosen in the investigation of this study. The theoretical perspective will involve an inductive approach to the research as data will be collected and analysed in order to develop theories. Ethnographic research will be used in the form of mini-case studies and interviews to gather the essential data. This type of social research; conducted ‘in the field’ will allow for observation, participation and the interviewing using purposive sampling in order to devise appropriate theories and synthesis findings (O’Grady, 2009).

An outline of the triangulation process will be demonstrated (Figure 3.1) to allow a deeper understanding of how the different methodologies will be formulated to inform conclusions from the research. In addition ethical considerations and the limitations of these methods have been explored to reduce research bias.

3.2 Objective 1 Defining the role of Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) in the Creative Industry

A literature review provides the secondary data to ground research questions and define the boundaries in the chosen area; this will enable a critically deeper understanding of the subject (Gaimster, J, 2011). Furthermore it provides the foundations to discussing the contribution to knowledge in which it aims to provide and enables the intellectual context throughout this study to be positioned in line with previous related work (Collins, 2010). However, objective reasoning should be considered to avoid basing theories on opinions or interpretations (Noble & Bestley, 2011). This structure is outlined in the triangulation (Figure 3.1). The literature review is divided into two sections; Creative Industries and Trend-Forecasting which are linked to objectives 1, 2 and 3.

3.21 Objective 1a Creative Industries

The first section will review publications on the importance of SMEs within the creative disciplines. Government papers, journal articles and books will be sourced to define the creative industry and how SMEs are vital to the future innovation and development. This multi-source exploration of secondary data is used to form research questions that will support and guide this study; including how SMEs are accurately defined and the arguments concerning the uncertainty of this definition. Furthermore social structures of SMEs were questioned which evoked issues regarding their willingness to move forward in a millennial generation.

3.22 Objective 1b Trend-Forecasting

The second section of the literature review critically analyses secondary data which discusses how trend research is conducted in the field. An investigation of how trends are defined, how they are predicted and how they evolve will be established including; the role of the forecaster, the
development of the industry and the future of forecasting. By analysing existing data, gaps in the knowledge can be realised and thus implemented within the research. The queries devised from the literature review include whether or not designers and craft-makers should be following trends, who leads the trends and how can they be validated. More importantly a review of the knowledge of trends is questioned; do SMEs comprehend the trend-forecasting business, are they aware of the service and the advantages or disadvantages to the implementation of it throughout creative enterprises. Consequently, can this relevant information be accessed by SMEs easily to allow a clear and recognisable research in order to clarify whether or not the company would benefit from the service?

3.3 Objective 2 Analysing the Impact of Trend Research in the Creative Industries

The role of primary research will play a vital part in answering the questions formulated in the literature review (Noble & Bestley, 2011). The use of qualitative research methods will contribute to the analysis of the impact of trend-forecasting. This will be divided into two separate parts; Workshops and Exhibitions, and Interviews. Many observations will be formed from first-hand empirical experience of researching as an employee within the trend sector. Working as a trend-forecaster for Scarlet Opus provides an in-depth understanding of the process and the industry as well as the opportunity to observe direct working relationships between SMEs and external forecasting resources. Objective 2 has been split into two parts to allow the synthesis and critical analysis of information to be more structured; this is illustrated in the triangulation (Figure 3.1).

3.31 Workshops & Exhibitions

Observational research will be carried out at exhibitions, conferences and workshops globally. Some of which will be attended working as a trend-forecaster; where there are gaps in opportunities attended with the company; alternative events will be sourced to gather the appropriate information. This will be fashioned from unstructured observations where the field visit findings will be recorded via an academic journal and online blog (Appendix 1) supported by photographic evidence. The intention is for the study to be longitudinal with evidence gathered over a period of 6 months (from September 2014 – March 2015) where a visual representation of the event will be captured to allow an understanding of communicative intentions. Short, informal, opportunistic interviews will be carried out to gain insightful information from people willing to participate; Table 3.1 outlines the sample criteria. Oral data will provide an understanding of direct experience happening at that certain time which stimulates real thoughts and opinions considered throughout the workshops or exhibitions (Gaimster, 2011).

As part of the Flooring Show 2014 Trends Hub, students were asked to participate in a competition to design future flooring. They were purposefully selected through a process in place by the University of Huddersfield. The featured student competition is not directly relevant to this research but rather enhances the discussion of trend influence from a new designer’s perspectives in the industry.
Many UK Textile conferences were explored to identify which would have greater relevance to this research. Due to the time frame of the project and location of the conference, the Transitions International Conference at The University of Huddersfield was purposefully selected because of its global perspective on the trend forecasting industry. The key note speakers were leaders in this field and experts on global textile research.

Table 3.1 Workshop and Exhibition Sampling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Purposefully selected interview participants</th>
<th>Observational/opportunistic participants</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Willingness to participate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 The Flooring Show 2014</strong></td>
<td>Sept 2014</td>
<td>Harrogate; UK</td>
<td>Retailers, Manufacturers, Designers, Students</td>
<td>British Ceramic Tile Plantation Rugs Adams Carpets</td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; attendees of presentation as part of Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 TISE East</strong></td>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
<td>Miami; US</td>
<td>Retailers and Manufacturers</td>
<td>Patrick Horrigan, Barbie Kennedy</td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; Participant of the Scarlet Opus Workshop</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Knit &amp; Stitch Show 2014</strong></td>
<td>Nov 2014</td>
<td>Harrogate; UK</td>
<td>Designers and Craft Makers</td>
<td>Olly, Bridget</td>
<td>Exhibitors at the Show</td>
<td>Written confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Transitions: International Conference</strong></td>
<td>Nov 2014</td>
<td>Huddersfield; UK</td>
<td>Trend Forecasting &amp; creative Professionals</td>
<td>Philip Fimmano, David Shah</td>
<td>Speakers at the Conference</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 TISE West</strong></td>
<td>Jan 2015</td>
<td>Vegas; US</td>
<td>Retailers, Manufacturers and designers</td>
<td>Victoria, Boen, Proverco</td>
<td>Approached the Scarlet Opus Trends Hub Stand at Exhibition</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Surface Design Show 2015</strong></td>
<td>Feb 2015</td>
<td>London: UK</td>
<td>Manufacturers, Students &amp; Designers</td>
<td>Stephanie, Jessica, Sally</td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; attendees of the show</td>
<td>Written confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7 Craft Industrialism Event</strong></td>
<td>Mar 2015</td>
<td>Leeds: UK</td>
<td>Designers and Craft Makers</td>
<td>Ruth Pullan, Laura Daza, Linda Smith</td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; attendees of the Event</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.32 Interviews

Short, semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gain an overview of knowledge from industry professionals in relation to trend-forecasting; portraying trends within society. It was purposefully selected to perform short, snappy interviews to reduce the loss of valuable time for participants working within the industry. Inevitably this required a large sample size to be sourced to gather enough information to critically analyse. The sample will be both opportunistically and purposefully selected to interviewing those thought to generate useful data for the project including those conveniently selected. In order to minimise sample bias, a structured approach was conducted to synthesis findings. A sample from a number of different disciplines in the creative industry will be used. These will be categorised in the form of, Trend Forecasters, SME professionals and Designers as displayed in Table 3.2. Some of the interviews will form part of the workshop and exhibition chapter in addition to the case studies. Table 3.1 outlines the company profile and the criteria's in which they were chosen; these include; UK based, SME and job role. The table also indicates how initial contact was made and in what chapter the interview is used throughout the research.

Table 3.2 Interview Sampling Criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>UK Based</th>
<th>SME</th>
<th>Job Role</th>
<th>Prior Contact</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Referred to in Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Lead Futurist</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Victoria Redshaw</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freelance</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Fashion Trend-Forecaster</td>
<td>Approached online via linkedin</td>
<td>Dani Greenwald</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Colour Research</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Colour &amp; Trend Consultant</td>
<td>Contact through University and Surface Design</td>
<td>Sally Angharad-Booth</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Ceramic Tile</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Trend-Forecaster</td>
<td>Contact through Flooring Show 2014</td>
<td>Claire O'Brien</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westex Carpets</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Contact via email</td>
<td>Carl Burton</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Rotherham</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Commercial Director</td>
<td>Client of Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>Matt Rotherham</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Buying Director</td>
<td>Client of Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>Matthew Canwell</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Phil Pond</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olly Mason</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Surface Designer</td>
<td>Contact through Knit and Stitch</td>
<td>Olly Mason</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Tudor Designs</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Designer</td>
<td>Contact through Surface Design</td>
<td>Stephanie Tudor</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaw Studios</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Interior Designer</td>
<td>Contact through Surface Design</td>
<td>Jessica England</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Craft</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Craft-Maker</td>
<td>Contact through Knit and Stitch</td>
<td>Bridget O'Donoghue</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each interview will have common categories throughout the questions which relate to the literature review. The categories for each question are divided into Literature Review, SME/ Creative Industry, The Phenomenon of Trend-Forecasting, Trend-Forecasting; An Unrecognised Power and Social Media. These are explained further in Table 3.3 which illustrates the relationship between each sample criteria. This table also clarifies some of the categories originated in the literature review which ultimately supports the aims and objectives 1, 2 and 3 of this research.

Table 3.3 Interview Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>Futurist/Forecaster</th>
<th>SME Professional</th>
<th>Designer/Craft Maker</th>
<th>Literature Review Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explain your background and your role within the creative industry</td>
<td>Explain your background and your role within the creative industry</td>
<td>Explain your background and your role within the creative industry</td>
<td>Definition of SME and importance of innovation in the creative industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Industry &amp; SME</td>
<td>Why do SME companies use Trend Forecasting?</td>
<td>Is the company a Small to Medium Enterprise?</td>
<td>Is the company a Small to Medium Enterprise?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What particular information do they find most valuable?</td>
<td>Do you consider the company to be part of the creative industry?</td>
<td>Do you consider the company to be part of the creative industry?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenon of Trend Forecasting</td>
<td>Why should design lead SME’s invest in TF and to what extent?</td>
<td>What is your understanding of Trend Forecasting?</td>
<td>Do you follow design trends?</td>
<td>SME’s understanding TF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Knowledge of Trends</td>
<td>If more SME’s were aware of the role of TF, would they be more likely to invest in it?</td>
<td>Do you use TF &amp; why?</td>
<td>Do you source from other Forecasting services?</td>
<td>The willingness to adapt to a millennial generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Role of the Forecaster</td>
<td>What is the most valuable information you gain?</td>
<td>Is TF something you feel will still be implemented in the future?</td>
<td>What is the most valuable information you gain from Trend Forecasting?</td>
<td>The future of Forecasting and the role of trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Evolution of the Industry</td>
<td>What is the future of TF?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you see TF becoming more vital in the future to help progress the company?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend Forecasting: An unrecognised Power</td>
<td>What impact does TF have on business?</td>
<td>How has Trend Forecasting impacted on the business since you began working with forecasters?</td>
<td>How important is TF to you or your design team?</td>
<td>The leader of the trend cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Intuitive Vision</td>
<td>How can we expect businesses to invest in something based on intuition?</td>
<td>How valuable is Trend Forecasting in the success of the business?</td>
<td>Do Trends Influence Designers too much?</td>
<td>The effect of design piracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The Leading Force</td>
<td>Can trends control or influence the originality and creativity of designs?</td>
<td>Is there anything more you feel forecasters could do for your business?</td>
<td>What is your opinion on trend information being available at tradeshows?</td>
<td>The validation of trends based on intuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>How does Social Media influence trends?</td>
<td>As a company are you active on social media?</td>
<td>How does Social Media help communicate trends for designers?</td>
<td>Social Media diminishing the role of forecasters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does this benefit the business?</td>
<td></td>
<td>The use of TF implemented into Social Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Mini-case studies

The mini-case studies will be managed as an exploratory method utilised to test theoretical models and hypotheses by using them in real life situations (O’Grady, 2009). This method generates qualitative data which although it may not answer specific questions, it provides some indication of further elaboration of the research topic (Shuttleworth, 2008). Coding has been considered to outline distinct concepts in categorising the data, by identifying the themes allows a systematic way to condense the information which ultimately produces less complicated categories to synthesis (Collins, 2010). This will enable a critical analysis to meet objective 2 as illustrated in the triangulation (Figure 3.1). Multiple data sources will be used throughout the case study to obtain detailed research and infiltrate specific findings. These will include a literature review, interviews and direct observations where qualitative data will facilitate a holistic understanding to the phenomenon of the research and ultimately support a greater appreciation within real life situations.

There will be 6 mini-case studies to gain a more detailed representation of the market, aligning with the research outcomes. The sample of mini-case studies will be chosen theoretically, the core focus includes those useful cases that test and extend the research theory. The cases will range from those SMEs having sourced trend research over a long period of time to those who have only recently applied it to business infrastructures and comparably to those not currently immersed in the forecasting industry. This will give a distinct range of findings that will generate responses to the suggested hypothesis and thus produce solutions to innovation and advancement; this criterion is illustrated in Table 3.4. The sample was both opportunistically and purposefully chosen to represent a variety of design industries relating to the research topic. Some of the case studies were conveniently used because of their client relationship with forecasting agency Scarlet Opus. To reduce gaps in the sample, alternative case studies were sourced in order to gather variety of information from a number of different SMEs; this is outlined in the Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Mini-Case Study Sampling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>SME</th>
<th>Creative Industry</th>
<th>Currently Using Trends</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Prior Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Homeware Retailer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>7 YEARS</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daedalian Glass</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Glass Manufacturer</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Ceramic Tile</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Ceramic Tile Design &amp; Manufacturer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2 YEARS</td>
<td>Contact made through UK Flooring Show 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Creuset</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Tableware Design &amp; Manufacturer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5 YEARS</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westex Carpets</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Carpet Manufacturer</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Contact made through UK Flooring Show 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Rotherham</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Specialist Stonemasons</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1 YEAR</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.41 Mini-case study Categories

A literature review will be carried out on the company case study; this involves an overview of the background of the company profile and their relevance to the participation of this research.

Interviews will form part of the case studies, some of which will be the same interviews outlined in Chapter 3.2. The sample criteria of each participant can be seen in Table 3.2 which also outlines additional chapters in which they relate to. Opportunistic conversations will take place to gather a general perception of the study. A visit to each company allows understanding of their position in the creative industry and to gain knowledge of the business mechanisms and job activity. The data collection sources will vary from each case study, some of which include archival company material, articles, press releases or trend magazines. This information will be extracted in computerised form as well as images from personal visits and observations. The information will be documented at the time of the visit in the form of an academic journal, online blog (Appendix 1) and visually photographed where possible.

The critical analysis of the research found will be synthesised in a discussion chapter at the end of each case study. Connections will be made and themes will be distinguished which will ultimately enhance the validity of the study. Conclusions will be drawn from the case studies in relation to the literature review and queries discussed to devise conclusions.
3.5 Triangulation & Visual Trend Book

The triangulation method validates and strengthens the research by the use of comprehensive data sources and in depth investigations. It will confirm the research findings in a process of combining several methods to highlight the same questions (O’Grady 2009). The overlapping of common results will form an area of convergence to allow the comparison and analysis to take place (Gaimster, 2011).

**Figure 3.1 Triangulation Diagram**

11 Refer to Supportive document (Objective 3)
The division of the aims and objectives supports a viable, more constructive way of formulating the research from different sources. Objective 1 is split into two parts (a & b). Objective 1 part (a) named ‘Creative Industries’ intends to investigate how SME operate in the creative disciplines. Objective 1 part (b) named ‘Trend-Forecasting’ aims to explore the role trend-forecasters’ play within the same industry; this objective will be met by the two parts in the literature review (Chapter 3.2). Objective 2 is to analyse the impact of trend research within the creative industry; it aims to compare and contrast views from different sectors of the creative industry regarding trend research. This information will be gathered in the form of empirical methodologies and split into two separate parts. The first one will be through Workshops, Exhibitions and Interviews (Chapter 3.3) and the second through Mini-case studies (Chapter 3.4).

The third and final objective is to synthesis all this information in the form of a visual trend book. This will be the output of all the gathered research and formulates a critical analysis of Objectives 1 and 2. This book will be in a printed format with the intension of it becoming an online download. It aims to present a diluted version of the research to inform SMEs of why they should or shouldn’t be involved in acquiring design trend-forecasting. It will be designed to encourage SMEs to understand the fundamental process and enlighten them of the existence of trend-forecasting as well as the benefits it may have; reporting on both positive and negative intelligence. Above all it is intended to be easily accessible to companies within the creative disciplines, offering advice, support, inspiration, subject intelligence and first-hand knowledge.

3.6 Ethics and Research Bias

Moral and ethical considerations will be taken into account throughout this study (Appendix 2); the major ethical concern is based around consent (Appendix 4). Where visual images are used they are usually taken at exhibitions or with in public spaces where photography is an essential element to the marketing of the event therefore people should expect to be unintentionally photographed, (Gaimster, 2011). In this research the focus is on the surroundings rather than human subjects therefore consent was not necessary to obtain. Any images sourced from online will be duly referenced throughout the report. Images taken of design work or of participants, written consent will be obtained as explained in the information sheet (Appendix 3).

As lots of data sourced for case studies and workshops is via forecasting agency Scarlet Opus; written consent will be obtained to provide evidence of their permission and complete agreement to the use of all company images, data and observations made at events or client meetings (Appendix 4). Where conversational, opportunistic interviews take place; for example at exhibitions; verbal agreement will be satisfactory as written consent would be inappropriate to obtain when in the field of work, however the information sheet (Appendix 3) will be sent afterwards via email. Similarly in the interviews, all participants will receive the information sheet. Where possible written consent will be obtained, or if more appropriate; email consent will confirm their willingness to participate (Appendix
An email is a suitable way of contact between the researcher and the participant; it is most effective as it does not take up precious time of the contributor (Collins, 2010). Furthermore due to locations of participants; geographically it is a simple way of gaining appropriate consent.

It is important to consider the confidentiality of the participants and to understand the protection of privacy trade secrets. Many forecasters are wary of sharing methods and business systems due to the nature of the subject. When dealing with information such as trend-forecasts, care has to be taken when distributing the knowledge due to the commercial value of the material. Similarly many SMEs do not want to publicly admit they use trend-forecasters, some prefer their consumers to believe it is all done in house and that they don’t need ‘help’ with the trends therefore all case studies have to be aware of the role they play in the research (Appendix 4).

3.7 Limitations

Trend-forecasting is considered to be an under-researched topic of investigation which could be due to the limited access to information. They form part of highly confidential organisations where subjects are reluctant to share methods or divulge client lists therefore gaining insight into this industry could prove to be difficult. One way of achieving first hand exploration of the industry is to work with a forecasting service i.e. Scarlet Opus. Although this will give a better understanding of client relationships and the management of trend research, it may cause bias due to the limitation of working with just one company in comparison to methods used by other forecasters. In order to reduce this bias a variety of forecasting companies should be examined to understand multiple practices in the field.

The limitations to sample selection should also be deliberated as many of the mini-case studies, although all may be SMEs, differ in the nature of their business. Theories may be generated from each case but can these be then generalised to other businesses? Furthermore the process of using the multiple methods suggested throughout this chapter, will generate an overwhelming amount of information to consider, therefore the complexity of data in the research could prove difficult to represent in a single format.

3.8 Summary

In conclusion the methodologies have been divided into sections and an explanation given to indicate the role they play throughout this study. These methods will generate the fundamental research to answering the questions which evolved from the literature review; furthermore it will create the theoretical perceptions and theories used to analyse and ultimately provide detailed investigations to the aims and objectives of the study. The interviews with participants will be significant to both the workshops and exhibitions chapter as well as several mini-case studies; the intersection of each interview is outlined in Table 3.2 Interview Sample Criteria.
### Workshops & Exhibitions

#### Table of Contents

4.1 The UK Flooring Show 2014  
4.2 TISE East Miami  
4.3 Knit & Stitch Show UK 2014  
4.4 Transition: Rethinking Textiles and Surface International Conference  
4.5 TISE West Vegas  
4.6 Surface Design Show 2015 UK  
4.7 Craft Industrialism 2015  
4.8 Discussion Summary
Introduction

The following chapter discusses the primary analysis of the data collated through the attended workshops and exhibitions. The sample criteria and data collection approach has been critically explored in the methodology (Chapter 3.31). Table 4.1 below demonstrates the events attended, this allows for a clear understanding of where each event fits within the research context. Furthermore it provides a comprehensible table of information to refer back to when reviewing this chapter. The interviews will be presented and analysed throughout each event section as discussed in the Methodology (Chapter 3.32).

Table 4.1 Workshops & Exhibition Sampling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Job Type</th>
<th>Purposefully selected interview participants</th>
<th>Observational / opportunistic participants</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Willingness to participate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Sept 2014</td>
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<td>Retailers, Manufacturers, Designers, Students</td>
<td>British Ceramic Tile</td>
<td>Plantation Rugs Adams Carpets</td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; attendees of presentation as part of Scarlet Opus</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 TISE East</td>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
<td>Miami; US</td>
<td>Retailers and Manufacturers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick Horrigan Barbie Kennedy</td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; Participant of the Scarlet Opus Workshop</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Knit &amp; Stitch Show 2014</td>
<td>Nov 2014</td>
<td>Harrogate; UK</td>
<td>Designers and Craft Makers</td>
<td>Olly Mason Bridget O’Donoghue</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exhibitors at the Show</td>
<td>Written confirmation</td>
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<td>4 Transitions: International Conference</td>
<td>Nov 2014</td>
<td>Huddersfield; UK</td>
<td>Trend Forecasting &amp; creative Professionals</td>
<td>Philip Fimmano David Shah</td>
<td></td>
<td>Speakers at the Conference</td>
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<td>5 TISE West</td>
<td>Jan 2015</td>
<td>Vegas; US</td>
<td>Retailers, Manufacturers and designers</td>
<td>Victoria Redshaw</td>
<td>Boen Proverco</td>
<td>Approached the Scarlet Opus Trends Hub Stand at the Exhibition</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
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<td>6 Surface Design Show 2015</td>
<td>Feb 2015</td>
<td>London; UK</td>
<td>Manufacturers, Students &amp; Designers</td>
<td>Stephanie Jessica Sally</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; attendees of the show</td>
<td>Written confirmation</td>
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<td>7 Craft Industrialism Event</td>
<td>Mar 2015</td>
<td>Leeds; UK</td>
<td>Designers and Craft Makers</td>
<td>Ruth Pullan Laura Daza Linda Smith</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exhibitors &amp; attendees of the Event</td>
<td>Verbal confirmation</td>
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</table>
4.1 The Flooring Show 2014; Harrogate

The UK Flooring Show is where retail, contract and commercial sectors get together for business activity and networking. They have collaborated with Scarlet Opus for 7 Years giving attendees and exhibitors a glimpse of future design trends. This exhibition will establish a sample of SMEs currently engaging with trend-forecasting by recognising product display and market placement; utilised to promote seasonal trends. Furthermore it will allow the opportunity to observe booths and speak to students working on a live trend project (Figure 4.1B). This will better evaluate the millennial perspective of trends in the creative industry.

As part of the Scarlet Opus team, a contribution to the design of the trend hub was made (Figure 4.1A) including a presentation given to promote the role of forecasting in the surfaces industry; encouraging conversation centred around the research topic.

4.11 Observations

It was evident that the flooring exhibitors at the show were somewhat dated in their presentation style, design and vision. After speaking to a sample of exhibitors, many had limited understanding of the existence of trends and little knowledge of how the service could assist design thinking. This relates to the literature review (Chapter 2.4) questioning whether forecasters effectively market their work to enable direct understanding between companies. Those displaying elements of trend outshined most and attracted attention from the media and attendees. The students who “aim to launch their own design business” are aware of the importance of trends in an industry where companies work 2-3
years in advance. The trend hub showcased the next generation of designers, who are poised to make a big impact on the industry. This suggests the infiltration of millennial designers could increase awareness of trends in SMEs. Although the students stated they were “mindful of commercial design trends”, they used forecasts to “inspire work” but interpreted in their own way. The following companies illustrate how SMEs can utilise this research in terms of marketing and presentation.

**Plantation Rug Company** (Design and Retail)

The Plantation Rug Company (Figure 4.3) has been designing and weaving rugs since the 1930’s; however it's only since 2011 that they implemented trend research. As they state on their website and in their trend book (Figure 4.2) “Fashion evolves. Our rugs evolve.” (Plantation Rug Company, 2015).

![Figure 4.2 Plantation Trend Book](Author's own images, 2014)

![Figure 4.3 Plantation Booth](Author's own images, 2014)

**Adam Carpet** (Retail)

This company had purposely set out to find an alternative method of displaying their range to the usual lecterns, carousels and waterfalls that dominate most flooring exhibition stands. By bringing product together on the boards (Figure 4.4 A & B), the colours and patterns from their collection can be easily compared and the product feels more connected to current interior design trends.

![Figure 4.4 (A) Adam Carpet Trend Board](Author's own images, 2014)

![Figure 4.4 (B)](Author's own images, 2014)

**British Ceramic Tile Company** (Design, Manufacture & Retail)

Chapter 5.3 (P.70) of the mini-case study section provides a detailed critical analysis into how BCT utilise trend research for market orientation.

45
Trend Presentation

The trend talk presented (Figure 4.5) included two key directions for A/W 2015/2016, these incorporate a trend report and an interpretation tailored specifically for flooring.

![Future Surfaces](image)

*Figure 4.5 Trends Hub by Scarlet Opus (Author’s own images, 2014)*

There were many positive responses from the seminar; many attendees were designers working for flooring companies or students interested to know about commercial design. Scarlet Opus also received many enquiries into the industry and how it can benefit business (Appendix 6).

4.13 Summary

Overall a keen interest into the knowledge of trends and their existence was perceived; many people expressed curiosity of the trends hub with a profound fascination with the presentation and how forecasting agencies can benefit the industry. The trends hub stood out because of its uniqueness, interest and visually stimulating aesthetics; it allowed attendees to engage with trends. This improved recognition that trends facilitate more than product development and is utilised to create attractive exhibition displays.

Furthermore the millennial generation are becoming more influential in established companies; changing the way they conduct design thinking and strategic marketing. Inspiration and experimentation fuel innovation, this industry needs an injection of new skills to bridge the gap between creativity and profitable business structures.
4.2 The International Surface Event (TISE East) Miami

The International Surface Event is the leading floor covering, stone and tile industry event in North America. They bring together thousands of retailers, architects, distributors, manufacturers and designers for networking, education and product sourcing. This visit facilitated research from a surface exhibition outside of the UK to examine how informed they are of the industry, including how many SMEs are incorporating and promoting design trends. This chapter will reflect on a workshop designed to increase retailer awareness of using trends to assist merchandising product. Furthermore it will increase attendee recognition of the role they play in the creative industry.

4.21 Observations

When speaking to SME exhibitors, only one business displayed trend influence. Barbie Kennedy (Figure 4.6 A) creates hand-designed collection of extraordinary surfaces. She uses trend research to understand how to market her products and at what time would be best releasing each collection in relation to future design trends. She also uses trends to “help attract the attention of consumers”; she can effectively style photography for marketing and update blogs or social media accordingly. Being aware of current trends keeps her ahead of the competition and more likely to be picked up by prospective consumers through online searches. At exhibitions she presents her colour palette and the inspirations behind her designs including textures, materials and fashion (Figure 4.6 B).

Figure 4.6 (A) Trend Influence by Barbie Kennedy (Kennedy, 2015)
Merchandising Workshop

The workshop aims to enlighten retailers on how trends can influence merchandising ideas; generate interest, motivate consumers and increase sales. Divided into small groups, participants created live window displays on the show floor based on interior design trends (Figure 4.7). The participants explained they were “inspired and more informed on the importance and relevance to trend-forecasting” within their field of work. Patrick Horrigan; a participant on the workshop, attended to understand more about retailer merchandising in preparation of opening his own flooring retail shop. As a new start up SME he wanted to understand the involvement of making the business a success amongst competitors. He states the workshop made him “appreciate the importance of merchandising for consumers”. He understood how fashioning an interesting, creative and interior design-led window display, can help lead to increased sales. He explains it was “An enlightening experience”, it was the first time he had heard of using trends in this way and the services available. “I will be using this information wisely in my own business”.

4.22 Summary

There is a huge opportunity to enhance the TISE show as well as individual SME booths by encouraging a display of trend influences much like Barbie Kennedys. This simply attracts the interest of consumers, inspires attendees and increases the brand marketing of manufacturers and retailers; ultimately enhancing sales, recognition and profits. It is also important for SMEs to understand that trends may not be for everyone and that innovative design defying trends ultimately inspires the trend cycle as discussed in Chapter 2.5. Yet for commercial businesses it offers a systematic infrastructure to marketing and storytelling. Conclusively the aim of this event was to increase awareness of trend forecasting as a service, if the SME has knowledge of its existence, it is then up to the individual to decide whether forecasting has relevance in their creative field. This therefore suggests there are numerous ways of incorporating trends into exhibitions, merchandising and presentations to develop a positive impact on businesses. The lack of knowledge however, suggests more trade shows and exhibition organisations have to invest more in the exposure of trends being shown at these events.
4.3 Knit and Stitch Show 2014; Harrogate

The Knit and Stitch Show is the largest and most highly regarded textiles and craft event in the UK. This enabled research into the importance of trends through the eyes of the craft-maker. This visit examines whether craft practices incorporate trend information into design work. The focus subjects were millennial craft-makers establishing themselves as a developing enterprise within the creative industry.

4.31 Interviews

**Interview with Olly Mason (Appendix 8, P.131) Consent form (Appendix 4, P.110)**

**Location:** Harrogate: UK  
**Date:** November 2014

Olly Mason; surface craft designer, combines textile with concrete (Figure 4.8). It was recognised that “very rarely design trends are used to influence work in terms of colour, pattern or texture” however it does “inspire material innovations and environmental implications”. WGSN was the only trend platform used briefly to inform direction however if access to such information was costly to the individual it would not hinder the business in terms of design tendencies.

**Interview with Bridget O’Donoghue (Appendix 8, P.135) Consent form (Appendix 4, P.114)**

**Location:** Harrogate: UK  
**Date:** November 2014

Bridget O’Donoghue is a craft-maker of textile surface design specialising in embroidery (Figure 4.9). Bridget works in her own practice freelancing for clients, her views were in line with most craft-makers spoken to throughout the study where the value in trend forecasts appeal “more to commercial designers” rather than craft-makers; who generally lead rather than follow. Bridget does not follow trends to influence her work but likes to utilise the colour forecasts to base her pieces on. WGSN was her only source while at University but realised that by looking at the trends, it directly “pushed” her work towards a certain style.
4.32 Summary

From the sample explored; craft-makers appear to distance themselves from design trends however; the uniqueness of their product is often noticed by trend-forecasters who ultimately work it into a seasonal design forecast. A handcrafted aesthetic is appealing in its exclusivity; a global trend in itself; where the intense labour and thought process behind it fuels consumer interest. This results in the mass manufacturer of similar merchandise to meet consumer popularity demands. Once this becomes the trend it contradicts the initial ideology. This oxymoronic cycle relates to the problems discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.5) where the design piracy and the leading force of trends were questioned. With knowledge and accessibility of trends easier than ever before, are craft makers gradually adapting trends as the industry becomes more mainstream? Could this be a new area of business in which forecasting can embark to progress?

The millennial generation of craft-makers seemed aware of the industry in particularly WGSN, yet chose not to follow it. Conforming to seasonal trends would lose the interest of consumers because it no longer becomes a unique design piece. Instead they look at material or technology trends that influence bigger lifestyle shifts relevant to consumer habits. Therefore should the creative craft industry exist beyond trends and execution? Are future generations challenging the influence, ultimately rebelling against trend direction? The endless amount of information available can cause people to repel the excess supply, crafting their own business strategies could ultimately diminish the need for trends.
4.4 Transition: Re thinking Textile and Surfaces International Conference; Huddersfield

This conference aims to examine current and future developments of textiles and surfaces in the creative field. Key note speakers included Philip Fimmano and David Shah both of whom are experienced futurists and key pioneers in the trend industry. The aim of the conference in relation to the research was to experience the presentation of two different futurists. An evaluation of the collaboration between forecasters, business professionals and higher education; in the development of innovation throughout the creative disciplines; will be established. The presentation of a visual poster explaining the content of this research (Appendix 7) will enable discussions involving forecaster, educator and SME professional.

4.41 Observations

Phillip Fimmano describes trend-forecasting as a “pre-existing phenomenon” where “mapping consumer behaviour over time is essential context for clients”. He explains that businesses need to know the “challenges they face with the growing interest in ‘essential buying’. The new question for designers and retailers is, “Will this change my client’s life?” Therefore suggesting future visions are a fundamental tool to harnessing an innovative platform in which to build a successful enterprise.

David Shah promotes “multidisciplinary education, overlapping designers and social specialists”. He explained the macro trends driving societal changes rather than seasonal colour/material/surface trends. Are leading pioneers advocating lifestyle changes rather than translating to future aesthetics?

4.42 Summary

A significant theme was outlined; the power of collaboration and the cross disciplinary partnerships between different fields. This sparks innovation and the engagement of communicating new ideas ultimately shaping the future. It relates to how the trend-forecasting industry should be perceived rather than how it is currently portrayed. For example, it should be signified as an external design resource that collaborates with SMEs. This helps inspire, innovate and build new relationships towards innovation to revolutionise businesses.

As creative SMEs begin to evolve and push innovative boundaries towards a forward-thinking future they start to merge with similar enterprises thus allowing new, creative discoveries. Therefore SMEs can develop on-going relationships with trend-forecasters to harness new tools towards future growth. Trend-forecasters can ultimately empower people and businesses to make change happen by fostering collaborations around redesigning structures to promote an informed pioneered future.
4.5 The International Surface Event (TISE West) Vegas

This exhibition is one of the biggest interior coverings trade show in the US, from walls to flooring, exterior and interior surface solutions. The aim was to examine whether SMEs currently engage with trends in the US to draw conclusions on the influence of trends in the surface industry. The outcome will be to promote the trend-forecasting service and provide information on fundamental approaches though presentations and trend tours.

4.51 Interview

Interview with Victoria Redshaw (Appendix 8, P.119) Consent form (Appendix 4, P.102)

Location: Vegas, USA Date: January 2015

Victoria has worked in the forecasting industry for over 10 years; she believes the most valuable resource trends can give to SMEs is ‘time’. Trend-forecasting provides the information early in the product development cycle; increasing efficiency thus increasing sales. Most companies engage in low level simplified forecasting where they base their ideas on what they see, rather than take the risk of investment in a professional. The intuitive element “makes it difficult to sell the idea”. It comes down to “trust”, “confidence” and reassurance that the process with come to fruition. Although social media has given a “democracy to design, which means we can all be creative”. Therefore are external forecasting companies becoming unnecessary?

Victoria predicts the future will see a move towards a “less consumerist society” where the following of trends, and purchasing in line with trends, could end. “We won’t talk about colour and pattern anymore”. This suggests the millennial generation are slowly changing how trends are perceived. Yet as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.42) trends have been developing since humans formed communities, it is an instinctual predisposition. Therefore could ‘not following trends’ ultimately become the ‘trend’? Trends change and evolve over time; it is not that trends will become “redundant” more that new generations are changing how they transpire to construct profitable enterprises. A new relationship between Trend-Forecasting and digital media forms will develop due to the every-increasing speed of trends that pervade the design world and creative industries. Social Media and connected digital progressions could create the need for clarity and refinement out of the high-speed ‘information suffocation’ seen today. Perhaps this is one theory of how the role of a forecaster will adapt.
4.52 Observations

The trend hub (Figure 4.10 A) was designed as a space to be inspired and gather information on colour, texture and materials (B). An interactive element enabled attendees to create their own wool colour palette (D) and recreate individual surface mood boards.

![TISE West Trend Hub](image)

A number of trend presentations (C) took place over three days. These were designed to give the audience an overview of seasonal trends in terms of interior aesthetics.

![TISE West Trend Hub](image)

The trend tour highlighted key concepts for retailers, manufacturers and designers, reviewing how merchandising and marketing product in line with trends can improve profits. The focus aim was to develop an ability to design a showroom consumers will be inspired by. Understand the power of collaborating with local independent retailers, edit product selection and merchandise appropriate to consumer. From walking the exhibition and researching every exhibitor; two appropriate examples indicated Manufacturing SMEs incorporating design trends with product; both on display and social media.
Boen (Flooring Manufacturer)

Boen’s online style (Figure 4.11) matches their real world style, it’s contemporary and fresh; something often over looked. They work with a trend expert to achieve this, she identifies which of Boen’s products match current trends and then groups them together into stories along with colour, material, product and styling suggestions.

![Figure 4.11 Trend Marketing (Boen, 2015)](image)

Preverco (Flooring Manufacturer)

They have a clear and concise website and a blog that prove they follow trends. They keep up-to-date with emerging styles and colours, as well as working closely with experts to translate this information into achieving the right colour tones and finishes for their product.

![Figure 4.12 Trend Marketing (Preverco, 2015)](image)
4.53 Summary

The presentation and trend hub feedback was positive. The exhibitors, designers, sales and marketing teams were encouraged to engage; above all it promoted inspiration which attracted the attention of attendees. It further advocates the hypotheses that inspiration is key to innovation; ultimately characterising what trend-forecasting aspires to be. It was however, surprising how many people were uninformed of forecasting services, but appeared interested to recognise how it could effectively improve business sales. Visitors of the trend hub were asked to leave comments of their thoughts and opinion (Figure 4.13).

In general the knowledge and appearance of design trends at exhibitions is still emerging, it is a relatively new area of development that more flooring companies especially are occupying. The examples above showcase an interesting way to develop trend information in the flooring industry where the future of forecasting is more likely to increase its presence rather than diminish as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.63). Even if they do not intentionally buy in future forecasts they are essential being exposed to them through exhibition. Social media is growing thus allowing SMEs to engage more for brand recognition and marketing development, eventually increasing their responsiveness to trends.

It was apparent that many manufacturers were interested in gaining expert consultancy advice to improve product line. Should trend-forecasting be an essential business investment for manufacturers to assist retail marketing strategies or should it be the retailers job to shoehorn product to trend? How can retailers determine consumer wants regarding future product, if they can only buy in what the manufacturers offer? This study highlights the importance of working in alignment with each other. Collaboration and communication between trend-forecaster, manufacturer and retailer working towards one goal will ultimately improve consumer vision.

Figure 4.13 Feedback of Trend Hub

(A) I love the color inspiration and the rich leather skin
(NY, NY)

(B) What a great inspiration trends are. Val James

(Visual becomes experience becomes inspiration)

Thank you

(Author’s own images, 2015)
4.6 Surface Design Show 2015; London

The Surface Design show features the latest innovative materials and surface solutions from over 130 exhibitors. The objective is to evaluate whether companies exhibiting work are engaging with design trends.

4.61 Interviews

Interview with Stephanie Tudor (Appendix 8, P.132) Consent Form (Appendix 4, P.112)
Location: London UK Date: 10th February 2015

Stephanie exhibited surfaces as part of the Material Council Exhibition (Figure 4.14), she is a contemporary designer who produced surface panel and bespoke interior collections. Stephanie clarifies her interest in the idea of trends but prefers “not to follow them closely” for her own work. She only follows “2 or more blogs as guidance for inspiration”. Stephanie uses her surroundings and genuine “interests, passions and instincts to power the creativity” of her designs. Yet she acknowledges the advantages of the positive effects trend-forecasting can have on other SME but believes it is not something that interests her individual design business. Stephanie believes it is “good to display trends at the exhibition as everyone will interpret it in their own way however considers it makes everything a little ‘samey’ as designers can stick too close to guidelines”. This links to the disputes established in the literature review (Chapter 2.52) questioning whether too much trend information can be detrimental to the creativity and originality of designs.

Figure 4.14 Stephanie Tudor for Materials Council at Surface Design Show 2015

(A)  (B) (Author’s own images, 2015)
Jessica is an Interior Designer for a SME based in London. She visits the show to gain information on material trends, although she does not use external forecasting services. The most valuable trend information she gains is “recognising culture shifts to inform space planning including finishes and furniture”. Jessica believes outsourcing trend consultants could have a strong impact on various areas of the creative industry; “it has potential to boost innovation in materials through emerging market knowledge, craft and technology”. Yet “colleagues are ignorant of its potential”. Successful designers are aware of keeping their own style as much as incorporating new trends; however forecasters provide deeper knowledge on new technologies, social and economic impacts which designers need to be aware of. Jessica also believes “there can never be too much influence”; therefore does interpretation of individual style outweigh the directorial impact of a trend? Does the vast amount of information amalgamate every aspect of a trend vision; ultimately influencing new societal directions?

Sally Angharad is a freelance trend and colour consultant previously working for Global Colour Research. Her role is not about giving clients new colour palettes for product development, but rather guiding and advising them on areas of improvement. Sally believes SMEs use forecasters to “inspire consumers” keeping them ahead of the competition. It also “reassures and strengthens business ideas” as well as filters the vast amount of information relevant to specific brands. Although trend-forecasting is better known now, some companies even investing in their own in-house teams but Sally still gets “amazed how some people have no idea what is involved and what services a trend agency can offer”. Businesses need to understand that trends are a way of generating excitement where “it’s far more than choosing nice designs but about increasing sales”. The future of forecasting is about a ‘boutique service’, where consultants can “extract key information that is fairly risk free”. A need for strategic business planning and understanding in terms of trend services needs to be addressed.

For designers on the other hand, Sally believes they are the ones who inspire new ideas, the beauty of design is that they have an open mind and experiment rather than ‘follow trends’. They should absorb market trends but shouldn’t feel they must conform as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.52).
4.62 Observations

Many SMEs explored in the selective sample offer a more bespoke service therefore trend-forecasting was not something they incorporated into their inspiration or designs. Instead they relied on material innovations to fuel interest, often scouted by interior designers.

Many students exhibiting work have “instant access to WGSN” and are clued up when it comes to colour, surface, texture and pattern trends. They express their awareness of trend implications and intelligence of emerging consumer trends directs the focus of their work. Although some choose “not to follow seasonal trends” they still engage in long term macro changes transforming the creative industry. Others were able to shoehorn a trend to fit their fundamental style; essentially manufacturing more commercial designs. Therefore suggesting the millennial generation filtering through the industry are very attentive to considering trends; this could demonstrate a lead in how SMEs operate in the future. Perhaps this influence will be translated into the work place of existing businesses currently not working with forecasters.

4.63 Summary

This exploration identified key professionals concerned with gaining trend information; in particular the value of forecasting to interior designers, marketing and retail. But many Surface Design SMEs exhibiting at the show did not utilise forecasting to influence designs. Are design trends merely roadblocks set up by western society that force us to think a specific way? Interior designer Jessica says you can “never have too much creativity” however surface designer Stephanie believes too much influence makes everything “samey”. Trend expert Sally believes “not every person needs to use or be aware of trends”. If all designers followed trends and craft similar products, the exhibition would no longer be innovative; this relates to the literature review (Chapter 2.52) where the leading influence of a trend was questioned.

Chapter 2.51 of the literature review examines why SMEs should ‘trust’ a service based partly on intuition. Sally believes “the forecasting industry is so big now; it is hard not to believe in it’s worth, all businesses should take that chance”. Similarly Stephanie also says she uses her “instincts to power creativity”. If “intuition directs creativity” then all businesses; whether designers, manufacturers or retailers; should be using this intuition in their own practice. This suggests they are already taking appropriate risks where intensity of knowledge varies, ultimately supporting the implement of tailored services.

In addition this research reiterated that there is limited knowledge on the service trend-forecasters can provide. There needs to be a fundamental relationship of shared information between forecasters and SME integrated more in a learning process, where a tactile approach encourages experiment to innovate and inspires progression.
4. 7 Craft Industrialism; Leeds

Craft Industrialism is a new initiative that aims to bridge the gap between craft-maker and the public; allowing an understanding and appreciation of the processes in craft practice. The fundamental aim was to establish if trends are used by contemporary craft-makers and to recognise the influence of material forecasting on future developments in SMEs.

4.71 Observations

This event enabled conversations with designers exhibiting work contributing to researching the questions formed in the literature review (Chapter 2.54). This ultimately provides support in identifying the importance of forecasting and its value in the creative industry.

Textile Designer

Linda Smith, an attendee of the event; works as an independent designer for a SME specialising in textile design. Linda works with interior designers who often insist on incorporating trend-forecasts in current projects. Linda however, feels they “pose no relevance” and often “best-selling colours are missed out because of proposed new trends”. She feels that some trends are simply for inspiration and taken too literally by designers. Linda does not look to trends for inspiration but focuses on expertise and knowledge of consumer desires and best-selling colours “trends are a load of rubbish”. After establishing Linda’s thoughts on trends she did however feel that if a forecasting agency was to tailor trends more to specific client needs, taking into account current business tactics, it would become more applicable. Forecasters need to spend time getting to know a company’s product including their best sellers; if a trend story is developed with these products in mind it will have more importance to the SME.

Craft-makers

The general consensus from exhibitors was that they do not follow design trends and instead think more practically about design. Ruth Pullan believes the “future is craft where people are reaching out for the simpler things in life”; a macro trend in itself, therefore although Ruth may not follow design trends she does instinctively follow life style directions. Ultimately as a designer it is important to adapt and realise these changes in order to underpin design direction. Laura Daza explains that “research is at the forefront of her creations and a fundamental process to the material investigation alongside her instinct for design and innovation”. She believes that craft is constantly reinventing itself therefore becoming the trend. “Craftsmanship will be linked to a new definition of material innovation”.
4.72 Summary

This initiative suggests designers and craft-makers should not follow design trends as they essentially lead the trend. Their originality and instinct for design will ultimately drive innovation and influence future SMEs. They do however need to be informed on social lifestyle movements including technological or material innovations in order to advocate modernism and encourage inventions. In order for designers to ‘craft modernism’ they begin to explore combining traditional techniques with new materials, new technology and new ways of thinking. For example in Chapter 4.3 Olly Mason unites old style embroidery techniques with the latest developments in concrete to create unique surface textures for wall and floor. Laura Daza also explores ancient rituals and alchemy technique of the origin of colour pigment. She encourages an appreciation and genuine consideration of colour identity and materials sourcing. As in today’s world colour is a commodity industrially produced for mass consumption. Through combining the old and new, designers lead innovative ideals where the outcomes ultimately directs seasonal trend aesthetics.

Craft Industrialism evokes questioning what consumers buy; it drives a desire to understand more about the story behind a certain product. This could be the story of the trend it aspires to create or the story of its history. For retailers and manufacturers this concept supports marketing product; allow conscientious consumers to understand the process, design and development that leads to the end creation.
4.7 Discussion Summary

Overall the workshops and exhibitions highlight how current SMEs utilise trend-forecasting services for business impact. This chapter satisfies Objective 2 (Figure 3.1) in analysing this aspect through different exhibitions in the creative discipline.

Table 4.2 demonstrates a synthesis of the research. The type of industry creative was identified, the information they find most valuable and how forecasters can assist in supporting this for business initiatives. This provides an exploration of variable processes and fundamental influences to implementing trends in preparation for the future.

Table 4.2 Synthesis of Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Creative</th>
<th>Most Valuable Information (Key Themes)</th>
<th>What information can Trend-Forecasting (TF) services provide?</th>
<th>How to implement in business strategies?</th>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Discussion Questions</th>
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<td>-Reduce colour range in line with macro trends.</td>
<td>TISE West</td>
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<td>-Edit product selection to good better best</td>
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<td>-Are TF’s effectively marketing their role to enable direct understanding?</td>
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<td>-Use social media to increase brand awareness and attract consumers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Increase Efficiency Time</td>
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<td>Colour</td>
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<td>The Flooring Show 2014</td>
<td>How can retailers determine consumer wants regarding future product, if they can only buy in what the manufacturers offer?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exhibition Display</td>
<td>-Material samples, colour chips inspire interior design</td>
<td>TISE East</td>
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<td>Knowledge on future design aesthetics and lifestyle shifts</td>
<td>-Make the window display the show stopping piece</td>
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<td>-Use trend info to entice the interest of consumers at exhibitions</td>
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<td>Source external forecasting agency to collaborate with</td>
<td>Surface Design Show 2015</td>
<td>Are design trends merely roadblocks set up by western society that force us to think a specific way?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Visit exhibitions displaying trends or attend presentations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft-maker</td>
<td>Material innovation</td>
<td>In-depth information on appropriate area</td>
<td>Collaborate to gain insightful in-depth knowledge on future developments.</td>
<td>Knit &amp; Stitch Show 2014</td>
<td>Are crafters gradually adapting trends as the industry becomes more mainstream?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Focused commercial trends (if applicable)</td>
<td>Advocates modernism with new ways of working.</td>
<td>Craft Industrialism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifestyle shifts</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Material &amp; technique developments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Understand the process and how it is beneficial to the industry</td>
<td>Be aware rather than follow. In house designers interpret trend for specific market and product</td>
<td>The Flooring Show 2014</td>
<td>Are future generations challenging the influence, ultimately rebelling against trend direction?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 collates appropriate ways of collaborating with forecasters where the development of key questions links back to explorations sourced in the literature review. This chapter also challenged the general perception of trends. It supports sharing accessible, comprehensible information to gain wide acceptance of their use, ultimately encouraging collaboration to develop innovation in creative businesses.
MINI-CASE STUDIES

Table of Contents

5.1 Lakeland
5.2 Daedalian Glass Studio
5.3 British Ceramic Tile
5.4 Le Creuset
5.5 Westex Carpets
5.6 J. Rotherham
5.7 Discussion Summary
**Introduction**

The following chapter discusses the primary analysis of the data collated through a selected sample of mini-case studies. The sample criteria and data collection approach has been critically explored in the methodology (Chapter 3.4). Table 5.1 below outlines each company, their specialism in the creative industry; whether they currently engage with trends and the length of time they have been involved with trend research. It also clarifies how contact with the company was made, this allows for a clear understanding of where each case study fits within the research context. Furthermore it provides a comprehensible table of information to refer back to when reviewing this chapter (also discussed in the methodology Chapter 3.41). The interviews will be presented and analysed throughout each case study section as discussed in the methodology (Chapter 3.32).

**Table 5.1 Mini-Case Study Sampling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>SME</th>
<th>Creative Industry</th>
<th>Currently Using Trends</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
<th>Prior Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Homeware Retailer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>7 YEARS</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daedalian Glass</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Glass Manufacturer</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Ceramic Tile</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Ceramic Tile Design &amp; Manufacturer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2 YEARS</td>
<td>Contact made through UK Flooring Show 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Creuset</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Tableware Design &amp; Manufacturer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5 YEARS</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westex Carpets</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Carpet Manufacturer Wool</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Contact made through UK Flooring Show 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Rotherham</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Specialist Stonemasons</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1 YEAR</td>
<td>Scarlet Opus Client</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 Lakeland

Lakeland have been established for nearly 50 years, they offer an unrivalled collection of creative kitchenware, practical ideas for the home and garden. It is essential to examine a company incorporating trends over a long period of time to evaluate the impact it has on the business. A meeting takes place twice a year where buyers, marketers and design team attend a trend-forecast presentation. There are three aims to this mini-case study. Firstly a critical analysis of the value of trend impact on the business (objective 2). Secondly an evaluation of how trend informs the vision for future growth. Finally observations will be conducted to assess how the team works together to interpret the trend specifically for product purchase.

5.11 Interview

Mr Canwell describes the relevance of trend; “customers are attracted by good design both functionally and aesthetically therefore there is a huge importance for this research”. He goes on to explain “the most valuable information directionally is the colour including what’s hot, what’s trending and what’s declining”, this research benefits the design, marketing and buying departments most. Mr Canwell portrays a positive attitude towards sourcing a forecasting service; he “trusts the process” and has ultimately seen a positive effect on the company sales. Lakeland has worked with forecasters Scarlet Opus for 7 years, in that time they have seen significant growth from a “£50 million a year turnover company to £200 million” (Phil Pond Interview Appendix 8).

5.12 Observations

The buyers, marketers and designers are influenced and guided in their choices of colour over the coming seasons. The way trends are explained, revenues implementation of an easy buy in process, it’s rational, but provides inspiration and excitement in the manner it's delivered. Figure 5.1 displays how the trend report is presented, they receive information on the general look, pattern, colour, texture, styling, marketing and relevant product areas such as baking. This is tailored specifically for Lakeland; they receive 4 seasonal trends twice a year at a discounted price of approximately £8000 according to Phil Pond Director of Scarlet Opus (Appendix 8). After 7 years of using forecasters it has become a meeting of “maximum importance”, and one they look forward to most. The accuracy of information was never questioned and the team felt “satisfied” and “more informed”. Mr Canwell says “it makes us think, pause for a second to consider what we are doing. It’s definitely meant we are more colourful as a business”. The team explained that; “the inspiration is the most vital element to the trend talk; it gives us direction as well as motivation”, suggesting it encourages and gives an enthusiastic perspective to their personal job role.

13 Supportive document page 24
This mini-case study provides insight into how design, market and product development teams perceive trend information meeting objective 2 (Figure 3.1 Triangulation). It is clear that for the buying team especially; it is extremely important to help direct and influence decisions. The commercial value for them is significant which ultimately has a huge impact on the success of the business. Although it is important to note there are other influencing factors that may have contributed; not solely the decision to introduce trends. This suggests there was a significant impact during the period in which trends were provided. Therefore it can be concluded that for retail based SMEs trend research has a positive effect on improving profits for the business. The only query raised by the directors was the guarantee from forecasters to “get it right every time” ultimately improving sales. This theme was questioned in the literature review (Chapter 2.51) where the validation and accuracy of forecasts were disputed. This is something SMEs have to base on trust and take a leap of faith to make strategic business decisions. Is it the trust between two companies that allows the confidence to makes this collaboration work or the skills presented by the forecaster to help SMEs value their knowledge an advice? There is value to this creative process implemented in business plans that needs a willingness to invest to reflect on the risk factor involved.
5.2 Daedalian Glass Studio

Daedalian Glass Studios are an innovative, family owned glass design company. They specialise in the manufacture, design and installation of architectural, decorative and artistic glass. Founded in 1986, they have grown as the industry has changed in order to stay at the forefront of architecture, design and glass manufacturing. In late 2014 Daedalian began to use trend-forecasting services to promote the brand via social media.

This case study aims to meet objective 2 demonstrating how a growing artisan SME can utilise trends to increase brand awareness through social media. A tour of the factory allowed insight into how the artisans work (Figure 5.2) including a discussion with the Business Development Manager Joe Walmsley on how social media can increase consumer awareness of trends and the impact this will have on the future of the business.

5.21 Observations

This SME is a very traditional, hand crafted business that strives on its ability to produce one off and bespoke products. They invested in Scarlet Opus to launch twitter and Pinterest (Figure 5.3) showcasing trend information incorporating Daedalian product. For example to promote Daedalian with colour, texture and material trends relevant to current styles (Figure 5.3 C-F). The idea was to increase the number of followers which expands brand awareness ultimately built in line with exhibiting at the Surface Design Show (Figure 5.2 C).

(A)  
(B)  
(C)  

Figure 5.2 Daedalian Glass Studio  

(Author’s own images, 2015)
Daedalian Glass Studios

We specialize in the design, manufacture, installation of architectural decorative glass, inc. laminated, etched, fusing, acid-etched glass.

The Daedalian Team
Daedalian Glass Studios
Daedalian Glass
Debourn-Glass
Our Best 'Glass Art'

(Daedalian Glass Studios, 2015)
5.22 Summary

This case study associates with discussions in the literature review (Chapter 2.54) evaluating whether craft lead SMEs should be following design trends. It portrays an example of how interior trends can be utilised in social media; assisting in developing brand awareness and promoting leadership in the glass industry. It exposes their following of interior and architectural design trends to their consumers with knowledge on modernistic advancements in the creative world. It identifies a different relationship between forecaster and SME. Implementation of the service is for growth; as opposed to generating profit seen in Lakeland (Chapter 5.1). Where the craft industry as a whole is a movement newly revolutionised within contemporary practice and frequently selected to feature in forecasts. Perhaps this shift towards a consumer need for craft has been recognised by artisan SMEs? This drives a desire to connect product to forecasts, appropriately altering the preconception of trends towards a craft related establishment. It’s not particularly the design of the product that needs advising in terms of trend but using the nature of the industry to enhance awareness to establish growth.

Daedalian however, decided this was not relevant to their long term business plan. As a relatively new implication it was probably too soon to make assumptions on industry impact. Now they are aware of how it works they could continue to progress this in-house; suggesting forecasters can be used initially as a start-up service helping SMEs develop ways to operate full potential. A positive attribute is they have gained knowledge on the role trends can play through social media; if they decide to foster product lines for commercial use they need to recognise long term design trends that alter our lifestyle rather than introducing seasonal forecasts.
5.3 British Ceramic Tile (BCT)

British Ceramic Tile design and manufacture ceramic, porcelain, glass and natural stone tiles. Their team of creative designers and technicians translate current trends and technological advances into commercial and production efficient tile ranges. An awareness of BCT originated at the UK Flooring Show 2014 (Chapter 4.1). They have an emerging interest in trends employed to develop ranges to follow consumer lifestyle shifts; ultimately assisting marketing material. This case study aims to demonstrate the impact trend-forecasting has on the business questioning whether forecasts are seen as an investment (objective 2). Current trend publications will be reviewed with the intention of contributing to research outcomes.

5.31 Interview

Interview with Claire O’Brien; Head of Design and Trend-Forecasting (Appendix 8, P.125)

BCT forecast their entire trends in house rather than source from external agencies; they do this by “understanding general market awareness, experience, industry knowledge, and then filter trends from fashion and interiors down into ceramics”. This results in a targeted approach to product development including positive engagement with internal and external customers. It is a “highly valuable part of the business in determining and forecasting the popularity of design translating into sales”.

Through the Trend Look Book, BCT try to inspire customers with the use of enthralling room-set photography and a vision towards the latest style in fashion and interiors. This has been a “huge success and had positive feedback from clients”; it positions the company as a leader in the field. Since the end of 2014 marketing have focused mainly on the digital development. With a newly launched website, they have plans to continue to move their digital and social media presence forward throughout 2015. This relates to the literature review (Chapter 2.6). It became apparent that trends are beginning to initiate online and with almost everyone actively involved with social media, the online presence of trends incorporated into the brand is more important than ever before.

5.32 Observations

The ceramic and porcelain tile product is not new or unique, but how they associate it with design trends makes it more interesting to the consumer. This strategic change of initiative attempts to affiliate the brand with lifestyle trends as opposed to merely selling more products. This relationship with forecasting marries macro styles with product through associating a considered approach to market orientation. In 2012 they launched a brand new website that showcases their trend direction. It is cleverly designed with the customer in mind, a magazine layout and graphic feel attracts people to
envision their home and relate it to what they see in fashion magazines and online blogs (Figure 5.4). The Tile Trend Edit Look Book is a unique crafted brochure that indicates what trends they are following and which product fits perfectly with each look. The marketing material examples (Figure 5.4) demonstrate how trends can be utilised to portray market leadership for printed publications.

5.33 Summary

This case study illustrates the positive effects that trend research has on product marketing both online and printed. Consumers like to know and understand the story behind a product; considering how it will look in their home and connections with other interior products seen in magazines. This company is relatively new (2012) to incorporating trends into the business and the overall successions will be monitored over a period of time with “plans to continue to move forward their online presence” in alignment with future forecasts. The case study suggests trend-forecasting offers a new mechanism to entice consumers. The product moves away from being a purely functional purchase to a design-led fashion statement in the home; ultimately producing a campaign that enables retailers to enter into a dialogue with consumers around lifestyle movements.
5.4 Le Creuset UK 14

Le Creuset is recognised world-wide for market-leading, premium quality cast iron cookware dishes. They established in 1925 and have been making cookware for almost 100 years. They state that ‘innovation remains at the forefront of their success and strive to promote their product’s performance time after time’. This is a client of Scarlet Opus; a meeting took place to present 8 seasonal trends looking at colour, texture, pattern, styling and lifestyle. It included 22 staff member of the Le Creuset team at their UK Head Office in Hampshire; involving their buying, design, development and marketing departments. The aim of this case study is to examine the client preference of forecasting process to align with objective 2 of the research. An evaluation of what information they find most valuables and how they perceive trends will be assessed. To truly recognise what businesses want from a forecast report; the build, interpretation and presentation of the trend was carried out personally.

5.41 Interview

Interview with Phil Pond; Director of Scarlet Opus (Appendix 8, P.129)
Consent form (Appendix 4, P.109) Location: Hampshire; UK Date: 11th March 2015

Le Creuset UK has worked with Scarlet Opus for 3 years they invested in trend-forecasts in 2011 for the future season Autumn/Winter 2013/2014. They decided to discontinue any future due to the product longevity; seasonal trends did not work with their brand style. Le Creuset questionably decided to review a seasonal report from global service WGSN in addition to a report from Scarlet Opus for the season of S/S 2016 and A/W 2016/2017. Perhaps this was to compare which service they preferred or to confirm the information received is correct from each forecaster. When speaking to members of the Le Creuset team afterwards they felt “very happy with the content of the report” and particularly praised attention to detail regarding their current products; “Thank you for tailoring the trends so much to Le Creuset” (Appendix 5). This was a service they hadn’t received from other agencies .They believed the knowledge of colour names and ranges was essential to enable uniform understanding around the table, furthermore it was useful for them to visually see ideas come to life instead of just a verbally discussion.

5.42 Observations

Performing in depth product research allowed the client to trust the forecaster’s knowledge in their field of work; adding confidence in their skills. This review aided current products to be selected to fit each trend, suggesting redesign is not essential but remarketing or rebranding existing products enhance consumer connections. To indicate understanding of the suggested colour palette or pattern, a digital simulation will realistically present the suggestions (Figure 5.5). This was altered in Photoshop to accurately colour match to the pantone references tailoring product to the forecast.

14 Supportive document page 21
Le Creuset products have longevity to them where it is not necessarily appropriate to develop new every season. Although they only require a yearly or even 2 yearly trend report they need to show leadership in the market sector by utilising trends in a different way. Keeping up-to-date with seasonal reports enables them to understand the trend transition and gives fresh ideas towards developing lifestyle shifts. One way to achieve this is through the photography and styling of product. Le Creuset products can be designed to fit a marketing story relevant to specific seasonal trends. By using contemporary settings with new photography for the online, social media and printed publications; they instantly create new looks which have a seasonal longevity.

5.43 Summary

In conclusion this case generated three essential themes; market orientation, lifestyle trends and tailored approach to forecasting. It also gave an insight into the diversity of forecasting services assisting businesses by the incorporation of trends. This case in particular demonstrates how product placement links consumer lifestyle trends with a focus on marketing. Therefore suggesting not only is the colour and aesthetic knowledge important but also the changes to consumer lifestyles; this is being explored more through marketing with a view to purchase future reports. The individual process has to fit in with client business plans, therefore purchasing a variety of trend reports from multiple agencies could be fundamental to making a strategic decision in order to find a trust between two companies. Finally another key outcome of this particular case study advocates the importance of a tailored approach to trends, encouraging forecasters to adopt a more ‘boutique’ service for their clients; as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.46).
5.5 Westex Carpets

Westex Carpets is a private owned company that offer a wide range of colour and quality within carpet manufacture. They sell to over 300 retailers and provide a special wool dye system to match specific colours. This case study demonstrates a manufacturing SME that does not currently engage with trend-forecasting. The aims of this case study are to examine; how the SME operates its colour and pattern management, how they market their product online including brand development and whether they have an interest in working with trends to improve business for future growth.

5.51 Interview

Interview with Carl Burton; Marketing Manager (Appendix 8, P.126)
Consent form (Appendix 4, P.106)  Location: Cleckheaton: UK  Date: 14th February 2015

Westex do not currently use any form of external design resource to help manage colour or pattern decisions. They appear to have very little knowledge of what forecasters do; “If I were to guess it would be that you travel the world looking at fashion shows and deciding what is going to be the next big thing. I seems like you are claiming to know the future yet I don’t know how?”

As a designer and manufacturer of carpets part of their role is to review colour and patterns; something that consumers will purchase specifically for their home to match interior styles therefore should there be design direction influencing product selection? At present it is the director who will choose the colour range. Mr Burton explains they “don’t use any source of inspiration, they have no design influence and they have no female influence as all of their marketing or product developers are male”. With over 100 cream shades in one range, Westex have a standard colour bank that is too much choice for any customer to comprehend yet continue to develop more and more additionally marketing their product towards the retailer rather than the customer. Figure 5.6 displays a sample of some of the ranges available. Is this method of marketing making it easy for the customer to choose a colour?

Mr Burton reiterated the fact that their business is “out to make money” and that if the forecasting service could “guarantee a profit” they would consider investing. Yet the whole nature of business is about taking these risks, if they are not willing to do that how can the business ever move forward?
5.52 Observations

An explanation of how trend-forecasting could be used as a tool to help develop collections and push brand recognition was put forward to consider. By reducing the colour range and having a standard bank of best-selling, on trend colours will give a clear and precise approach to marketing the product. Creating a website and brochures that look more like magazines rather than product specification focused. Look towards envisioning what the consumer wants to see and how they can be inspired rather than directed towards the retailers. Use trends to influence merchandising; include Room set and other ‘on trend’ interior product to give the customer interior design directions that match the Westex Carpet range, include other interior design products; wall papers, fabrics and colours to create a look and theme. Use the trends to tell a story of the interior theme, giving a focus point of sale and trend advice to the consumer.

5.53 Summary

Mr Burton agreed it would improve the brand recognition and the marketing of products. A smaller range would be desirable however it would depend on how much they had to pay for advice. He also agreed that “some design direction on colour would benefit their knowledge on what consumers want however, implementing it would be difficult due to the directors currently running the business. It is hard to convince them that change is good when what they are doing currently is making profit”. Yet is this a contradiction in itself? Westex make profit because they produce every shade of cream, with “no competitors” in their field and “the only manufacturer of luxury carpets”. Nevertheless with a more informed choice of colour do they reduce that risk of investment, make production more economical and entice consumers with trend lead marketing? Ultimately it is about taking that risk to increase profits in an evolving creative industry.
Furthermore a view to addressing the communication of this service is necessary, moving it away from an association with fashion and allowing more SMEs to see how this external resource can help enhance product manufacturing and retailing efficiency. This service needs to be more easily accessible for business plan implementation; this was questioned in the literature review (Chapter 2.5). Mr Burton said it would be “hard to convince Directors that change is good” however it is more about improving efficiency and being more informed on consumer desires rather than change. Consequently how can trend-forecasting be described in a way that does not imply ‘change’? The reluctance to engage with trends is often associated to its profitable guarantee; something that cannot be ensured; this was discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.51) questioning the validity of intuitive vision. If there was a guarantee to increase profits significantly more SMEs would consider investing however this is the risk they need to consider. By providing more solid information on how trends work and engage with practical businesses, a clear insight into the benefits with both the positive and negative implications will allow a better understanding of the process ultimately reducing the risk factor.

SMEs especially within the textile industry are notoriously very traditional and rely on trusted, long-standing methods of production and retailing of carpet. Employees of Westex are seemingly ‘set in their ways’ which would take hard work to convince them to invest in “future forecasting” and to establish if the risk is of significant value. New, forward thinking and emerging approaches such as trend-forecasting requires taking that leap of faith to advance in creative fields. This is an issue that was questioned in the literature review (Chapter 2.22) where exploring the social dynamics and organisational culture of a company including adoptions of new methods and their willingness to move forward in a millennial future have to be questioned in order to progress without hesitation.
5.6 J. Rotherham

J Rotherham is one of the oldest and most highly respected stone masons in the U.K. From their 17 acre manufacturing facility in Yorkshire, they create a range of hand-carved architectural masonry throughout the UK and around the globe. This is a client of Scarlet Opus, a meeting was set up with the SME to discuss how trend-forecasting could help improve business and increase brand awareness in the creative field. As a company specialising in handcrafted fireplaces and kitchen top surfaces it is difficult to comprehend how or why seasonal interior colour and material trends could find a place within this business. This case study demonstrates how such SMEs; as commercial or craft related as they might be; can incorporate design trends for consumer value. This case will examine how valuable the initial influence of trends has impacted on the business and how they envisage this direction for the future.

5.61 Interview

Interview with Matt Rotherham; Commercial Director (Appendix 8, P.127) Consent form (Appendix 4, P.107) Location East Yorkshire; UK Date: 18th February 2015

The Commercial Director Matt has recently taken over the family business. He was keen to understand more about trend-forecasting and how it could help him in the long term. Mr Rotherham acknowledged that trends “support a plan to be accomplished” enabling them to “react in advance to materials (worktops) they should be stocking”. Furthermore it allows the creation of new designs (fireplaces) to be developed that meet modern architectural/interior design trends. It facilitates a company ‘image’ to how they market product, both physically in showrooms/exhibitions and in literature both online and offline; thereby “building a reputation as industry leaders and loyalty in the brand”.

5.62 Observations

The first trend related brochure includes 4 commercial interior trends (Figure 5.7 B) that relate to kitchen and surface products. They include fashion and colour palettes (Figure 5.7 D) and material forecasts (Figure 5.7 C) with a range of their existing products. The first publication has “helped establish a modern image for the marketing literature” yet at present it is too early to measure its capital impact. They haven’t marketed it sufficiently to make a judgement call on this as of yet. The brochure does help tie in existing and new products with a unique marketing approach. For future applications they wish to differentiate the brand and product range from the standard competition; this could become more important to increasing trend related marketing.

15 Supportive document page 23
How different SMEs incorporate trends can be completely unique, it does not have to be simply associated to directing design or craft decision but could be used as marketing material or product focused promotion. It is important to connect to the consumer in a way that they understand and recognise. In summary this case illustrates the beginnings of a trend influence and how SME operating hand crafted products can still incorporate design trends to show leadership and consumer connections. The company feels trends are the best way to move the business forward in terms of design and marketing directions, they have since been working with forecasting agencies again to design their next brochure, perhaps the influence of a younger generation is pushing innovation ideas as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.22).
5.7 Discussion Summary

Overall each mini-case study provides an insight into the impact trend-forecasting has on different SMEs ultimately underpinning the research context. This chapter satisfies Objective 2 of the Triangulation (Figure 3.1) in analysing this impact through several enterprises in the creative discipline. Each case study identified multiple ways where trend-forecasting can benefit a business as well as the different variables that govern the risk factors involved.

Three themes were identified where forecasting was implemented in business plans; for profit, for growth and for market orientation (Table 5.2). This resulted in a development of key questions discussed throughout the following chapter.

Table 5.2 Mini Case Study Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profit</td>
<td><strong>Lakeland</strong></td>
<td>Are design forecasts purchased purely for driving profits?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Retail)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Westex Carpets</strong></td>
<td>Is the word ‘forecast’ a misconception of the contribution of knowledge to strategic business plans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Manufacture)</td>
<td>Do Trend Forecasts lessen the element of risk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td><strong>Daedalian Glass</strong></td>
<td>Is the preconception of trends being transformed to identify growing craft industries?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Design &amp; Manufacture)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Orientation</td>
<td><strong>British Ceramic Tile</strong></td>
<td>Are businesses using trends to coordinate Lifestyle choices to the consumer through product design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(online/printed/</td>
<td>(Design &amp; Manufacture)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>styling/photography)</td>
<td><strong>Le Creuset</strong></td>
<td>Does the risk factor come down to the trust between two companies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Design &amp; Manufacture &amp; Retail)</td>
<td>Should SMEs invest more in services that offer a boutique approach for forecasting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>J.Rotherham</strong></td>
<td>Is knowledge in lifestyle trends becoming more important than product aesthetic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Design &amp; Manufacture)</td>
<td>Can design trends be used to increase brand awareness rather than profit driven?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lakeland and Westex utilised trends to drive profits. Lakeland demonstrated a positive outcome to forecasting where they praised the inspiration and proved it contributed to the increase of retail profits “£50mil to £200mil”. Westex on the other hand, who are profit lead do not implement trends. They feel they already make profit and are not willing to invest in efficiency if there is no guarantee. By placing trust in forecasters, SMEs reduce the risk of creating a product that is unsuccessful ultimately confirming business decision through collaboration. Or does placing trust in a forecasting agency increase the risk factor, do their expertise and skills reflect on specialist areas? Table 5.3 outlines the advantages and disadvantages to the element of risk.
Table 5.3 Element of Risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element of Risk</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could increase profit</td>
<td></td>
<td>No guarantee of profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforces business decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Based on trust between two companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows leadership in the field</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expensive Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forecasters can take responsibility for inaccuracies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Intuition is involved to some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directs a business future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspires design &amp; market direction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides ‘time’ for focus on individual job roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Daedalian Glass doesn’t implement trends for profit but use them to grow brand recognition. They apply trends through social media however decided it wasn’t necessary for the business currently. Perhaps the risk factor for them was too great which proved impractical to observe positive results. It did however provide them with constructive, practical encouragement to applying trends, operating social media and knowledge of the need for future forecasting if expanding to a commercial sector. British Ceramic Tile, Le Creuset and J. Rotherham all demonstrate how trends can be used in online and printed marketing material, giving the consumers a story behind the product. Styling and photography can be used to show market leadership seasonally rather than the development of new product. Le Creuset also supports the idea of a more boutique approach to forecasting for specific companies conclusively building on the literature review’s focus categories. To summarise individual SMEs require a tailored approach to how they apply trend research. An indication towards SMEs requiring research on lifestyle trends became apparent, this suggests the future of trends could move away from aesthetic advice such as colour and materials and more towards the bigger global shifts.
DISCUSSION

Table of Contents

6.1 Introduction
6.2 Objective 1 - Exploring the role of SMEs in the Creative Industry
6.3 Objective 2 - Analysing the Impact of Trend Research in the Creative Industry
6.4 Summary
6.1 Introduction

The following chapter critically analyses research gathered from each element of the triangulation (Figure 3.1). This includes the literature review, workshops & exhibitions and mini-case studies. This discussion will be divided separately in order to concisely meet each objective incorporating primary research from interviews and observations. Ultimately, this will satisfy the overall aim of the research; to examine the value of trend-forecasting in the creative discipline; previously explained in the methodology (Chapter 3).

6.2 Objective 1 – Defining the Role of SMEs in the Creative Industry

This objective has been divided into two sections; Creative Industry and Trend-Forecasting. The literature review (Chapter 2) provided the essential secondary data to allow a deep exploration of how each element is relevant to the study. This underpins the primary research sourced from workshops & exhibitions (Chapter 4) mini-case studies (Chapter 5) and interviews.

6.2.1 Objective 1a Creative Industry

The literature review provided the grounding to exploring the significance of SMEs within this industry, described as being one of the UK’s most important industries in providing economic growth. Many government papers recognise this industry as a national strength and provide papers such as the Lord Young Review 2014 that supports increasing ability to further develop innovative initiatives. This support assists in many areas of business however; it does not focus on individual enterprises. It is clear from the literature review (Chapter 2.32) that although SMEs are defined under the same bracket, they differ in their needs relevant to specific industries. For example in (Chapter 4.1) the selected sample suggested few businesses in the flooring industry actively engage with trends compared to other industries. Furthermore if they do source trends, they do not visually demonstrate this to their consumer. This advocates an up-to-date report is needed to support SMEs practicing in the surfaces industry. With the rapid expansion and ever evolving role of trend-forecasting (Chapter 2.46), perhaps research associated with trends will be encouraged in government papers as an external resource to advance SMEs.

Through observations; the selected sample also suggested SMEs in the flooring industry do not use trends to inspire creativity and inspiration to their consumers. This is apparent in Chapter 5.1 and 5.5 of the mini-case studies, where SMEs appear to be more profit driven, they are business focused and motivated by market abilities. In contrast to this SMEs with a design focus use trends to promote creativity and forward-thinking innovations rather than profit. For example Barbie Kennedy (Chapter 4.2) uses trends to inspire design and foster leadership in the industry. Trend-forecasting may not be able to guarantee profit but it can assist in the marketing, brand presence and creative vision (further demonstrated in Chapter 5).
The literature also suggested that SMEs ‘distrust external expertise’ and that many ‘do not appreciate or are aware of the potential opportunities around them for collaboration’. This view was reinforced in Westex Carpets mini-case study (Chapter 5.5) where the Marketing Manager states he has “never heard of trend-forecasting” before and currently controls everything in-house. Further supported by an interview with forecasting expert Sally Angharad who explains “it amazes me how some people had no idea what is involved in trend-forecasting and what services they can offer clients”. Drawing from observations at exhibitions (Chapter 4) in particular; TISE Vegas and The Flooring Show UK; it was evident how the trends hub inspired and attracted attention. Many visitors interested in understanding more about the role trends can play in the surfaces industry. Overall if more SMEs in this sector were aware of trend-forecasting perhaps they will consider their position as leaders in the industry. Should the government consider including an explanation of this service in future reports for creative SMEs?

Perhaps one of the reasons for poor progress in business is due to organisational culture as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2.22). Established members of a team may be reluctant to inject new and innovative ideas into a business that may well have succeeded perfectly well in the past (Chapter 5.5). As times change and consumer desires alter it is more important than ever to adjust and respond accordingly. For example over time there might become more competition, markets might alter which will ultimately have an effect on consumer habits. This in turn forces businesses to change. Forecasting these changes in advance will give SMEs a head start in making adjustments. For example in the mini-case studies (Chapter 5.5) Westex Carpets suggest their need for forecasting is irrelevant due to being the only producers of luxury carpets in a niche market. Although they still product over 100 shades of cream which indicates forecasting could be used in alternative areas of the business. Trend-forecasting aspires to provide the creative drive behind a business as well as the potential to increase profit. It can deliver efficiency in production, marketing, merchandising and retailing as well as inspiring advertising and design direction. Directors and Managers have to start thinking outside the box and pushing the business forward to succeed as market leaders to drive innovation.

The literature also embraced the power of collaboration; it was clear from papers presented at Transitions: International Conference (Chapter 4.4), that it is a fundamental element to enhancing business direction and creative innovation. This research supports the collaborative concept but explores it in new ways, making advice accessible and refined into practical and suitable solutions that are easy to understand.

6.22 Objective 1b Trend-Forecasting

Through investigating the role of trend-forecasting in the literature review, it was evident that the industry as a whole has undertaken vast changes in the growing influence it has on society; in particular the surfaces sector (Chapter 2.46). Although the literature questions the self-fulfilling prophesy aspect of the job role it was understood by forecasters that there is a delicate balance
between reporting in an objective manner and what to advise clients. Both Victoria Redshaw and Sally Angharad echo the realism of their job role in that they don’t “tell” clients to make new product/colours but rather advise them on areas of development. Furthermore they focus on large macro trends being discussed by a wide group of experts and industry insiders as opposed to simply seasonal trends.

This element to the role of a forecaster is often overlooked by business professionals, usually misunderstanding how the service can benefit them as evident in (Chapter 5.5). Forecaster Dani Greenwald backs this perception stating “this skill is often overlooked by those whose main responsibility is corporate management”. This leads to questioning the description of the word ‘forecasting’. Perhaps this indicates ‘change’ rather than ‘development’ which may unnerve clients. A more appropriate term could be ‘Trend Reporting’ reiterating the consultancy basis advising clients rather than ‘telling’ them to spend money on designing/making/buying new products. From empirical knowledge of forecasting trends and understanding how multiple agencies practice the process, there is a distinct direction in which all trends are aligned. With more businesses incorporating trends, it validates its place in the industry. This makes it challenging for SME professionals to distrust the worth of the research and question its accuracy. Similarly this relates to Chapter 5 where the multiple ways trends can influence business growth, profit and market orientation are discussed.

The role of forecasting however is constantly evolving which directs us to question the future of the industry. Trend expert Victoria Redshaw recently changed her job title to ‘Lead Futurist’ as she believes the “current role of a forecaster (predicting colours, textures and materials) will become redundant”. The rebellious attitude of the millennial generation seen in (Chapter 4.1) could see Victoria’s prediction come into fruition. However, the literature review also illustrates how following trends are instinctual, which suggests people will always drift to a majority style. Trends in surfaces and materials have an almost humanistic element; we need the textures, colour and surface to satisfy our human senses, in addition to our instinct to follow a certain aesthetic. This therefore implies companies will still need advising on product visuals. Furthermore the sample in Chapter 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5 suggest the flooring and surfaces industry are newly engaging with trend-forecasting services. Therefore they have a long way to go before they are parallel with other creative sectors.

The literature review explores the overwhelming amount of trend information available online. This could lead SMEs to interact with forecasters more to provide management of filtered versions specific to their industry. The vast volume of trends may not be detrimental to the future of forecasting but rather enhance its value and progress the industry in a new direction. Interviews and observations indicate a more boutique approach is necessary for specific industries; as opposed to selling a trend report that is too general for SMEs to comprehend. Combining theory and practice to validate this speculation; a tailored service was offered to Le Creuset (Chapter 5.4) which was very positively received. A more personal, tailor-made service will establish a trust between two companies, allowing them to appreciate and justify the cost.
6.3 Objective 2 - Analysing the Impact of Trend Research in the Creative Industry

Objective 2 is achieved by two methods; workshops & exhibitions and mini-case studies. These incorporate observations and interviews to examine the theories devised in the literature review; including the leading force, intuitive vision and social media. This chapter will also discuss the positive and negative attributes to investing in trends ultimately analysing its worth.

6.3.1 Workshops & Exhibitions

This chapter provided evidence on how current SMEs incorporate trend research including how individual professions can best implement this into business strategies (Table 4.2). One of these professions includes the craft-maker. The literature review conjured questioning whether individuals in this industry should be following trends. The Knit and Stitch Show (Chapter 4.3) and Craft Industrialism (Chapter 4.7) both indicate the growing consumer interest in this industry. Although the selected sample of craft-makers distance themselves from design trends, they do tend to research material or technology trends that influence bigger lifestyle shifts relevant to consumer habits. This suggests that as the craft industry becomes more recognised, trend-forecasts may be adapted to facilitate the transition to a more commercial style. Furthering this, by assisting information in future macro movements and advancements including marketing and social media could provide essential encouragement for new SMEs. Could this be a new area of evolvement for trend-forecasters?

A further aspect questioned in the literature review was whether designers should follow trends. Are trends merely road blocks set up by the forecasting industry that force designers to think a certain way thus destroying creativity? The Surface Design Show (Chapter 4.6) highlights the view of designers and forecasters. There was a distinct opinion that designers shouldn’t follow trends but perhaps should engage in macro lifestyle trend much like the craft-maker. The methods conducted in forecasting depict whether they initiate the trend and therefore do not force a direction but rather inspire a potential future focus. Designers should be true to themselves and their own inspirations; innovating rather than following however, it is inappropriate to assume not all trends have an influence. Designers might not follow aesthetical trends but are likely to subconsciously be following macro trends that inform life style changes in society. Forecaster Dani Greenwald suggests “everyone is being influenced by trends in some way, even if they aren’t aware of it”. Yet although the colour, material, pattern or texture might not be dependent on future trend research, it could be argued; that for commercial designers especially; it ultimately contributes to the marketing and sales of their product seasonally.

Businesses are now adopting the designer’s attitude and exploring more information surrounding long term consumer trends, relating to socio-cultural influences, rather than aesthetics. SMEs need to feel they are gaining insightful knowledge for the price of a trend report therefore going beyond colour, surface and materials.
This chapter aimed to analyse the issues exposed in the literature review, investigating the concerns encompassing trends for example the element of intuition. The mini-case studies also put into practice the forecasting methods synthesised in Figure 2.2. The interpretation of trends to individual businesses can clearly be seen in Chapter 5; Lakeland, Le Creuset and J. Rotherham.

Moving away from trends merely utilised to lead design decisions from a commercial perspective, trend-forecasting is also used to enhance profit, growth and marketing orientation. This is outlined in Table 5.2. This table is designed to showcase how each of the mini-case studies adapted the use of forecasting agencies in line with individual business plans. From increasing brand awareness to creating an online social media presence as well as constructing printed visuals to stir interest. Although there is evidence to support trend-forecasts it is also crucial to understand that there is an element of intuition involved as discussed in the literature review. This intuition is linked with the experience of individual forecasters therefore SMEs need to establish a trust between the professionals as well as have confidence in the work of the agency. It is a factor is all business decisions and intrinsic to how we work as humans. Furthermore SMEs need to be aware of all aspects immersed in the process therefore Table 5.3 outlines the risk factors involved. SMEs need to decide if it reduces the risk by passing the decisions or increases the risk from investing in intuition. It was clear from observations during the mini-case studies that the service trend-forecasters provide, allows for time to be spent in other areas of the business. Furthermore it adds a different dynamic to the social professionalism, for example employees trust an expert forecaster rather than conducting own in-house research.

The literature review challenged that access to too much information is detrimental to the creative industry (Chapter 2.53) however interviews and observations oppose this viewpoint. Interior designer Jessica England expresses; “you can never have too much inspiration”. Lakeland Buying Director states “trend-forecasting made our business more colourful” (Chapter 5.1 Appendix 8). The importance of inspiring design, manufacturing, buying and merchandising teams was evident throughout this research. This collaboration pushes innovation and promotes creative ideas essential to progressing the business; ultimately assisting the survival and leadership in their sector.

6.4 Summary

It is evident from the selected sample that more SMEs are integrating trends into business development. There is an untapped potential of businesses that could be transformed by trend ingenuity. If more companies demonstrate the scale at what can be achieved; the organisational culture will be broken. For example trends can influence many different areas which may ultimately impact on profit in the long term. Therefore by encouraging more SMEs to amalgamate design trends into their business, motivates them to become inspired. This discussion fosters a recommendation
that trend-forecasting services should be seen as an external collaborative design resource to enhance strategic developments. In order to lay the foundations of a business; perhaps trend-forecasting services would be used as a one-time collaboration that offers advice and services to contribute to the start-up of SMEs. Chapter 2.5 of the literature review questions whether SMEs can confidently validate their investment in trend-forecasts\textsuperscript{16}. Although forecasters cannot guarantee profit, they do support design, manufacturing, marketing, retailing and social media. This may have a positive impact on increased levels of customer, retaining customers, online presence, brand awareness and industry leadership. In conclusion this discussion chapter has investigated the multiple themes associated with trend-forecasting and their influence in the creative industry. Not only understanding the process, and implementation but also the outcome and element of risk involved. From this research a strong theme of collaboration, trust and inspiration motivates the power of the forecaster with an ever evolving future.

\textsuperscript{16} Supportive document page 27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.1 Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Future of Forecasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Further Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.1 Conclusion

In conclusion the aim of this research was to explore the value of trend-forecasting in the creative disciplines. The research has facilitated new ways and possibilities of tailoring trends to meet individual client needs. A strong and confident belief in a partnership between forecaster and SME drives positive and successful outcomes. A relationship which is enhanced through trust and assurance in the process achieves innovation and consumer desires through collaboration. As evidence ascertained in the sample mini-case studies suggests, trend research in the creative industry goes far beyond assisting aesthetic design direction for product development. Trend-forecasting promotes brand awareness, market orientation, merchandising, exhibition design and social media; potentially bringing growth and profit to SMEs. The study intended to focus on SMEs, inspiring an active engagement and an understanding of the multiple areas of development. One of the outcomes to this study suggested forecasting services could be used as a one-time collaboration to assist start-up enterprises or those newly aware of the service. Specialised workshops can be developed to share information on how to practice trends in all areas of business including; merchandising, marketing and social media. Thus allow fundamental introductions to the effective use of creative inspiration. Furthermore it provides actionable, insightful and interactive approaches to make meaningful connections in order to work together to solve business challenges. Although the word ‘forecasting’ has been questioned; it evokes thoughts towards assumptions rather than in-depth research and conjures views of uncertainty leading to hesitation. The phrase ‘Trend Reporting’ however, reiterates more of a consultancy basis and encourages confidence in its strategic role.

Throughout the sample case studies it was understood that those not operating trends within design, manufacture or retailing of product, were perhaps unaware of the service forecasting agencies provide. Furthermore the culture of organisation; including the injection of a new generation; had an effect on the decision to invest in future research. One of the strengths of this project allowed communication with a variety of different SMEs, enabling the sharing and conversing with professionals regarding the relevance of this study. Ultimately, contributing to how design trends could assist strategic decisions. Having essential trend-forecasting experience, demonstrated an awareness of the research topic. Business professionals recognised expert knowledge in the field, facilitating a confident belief in the information required to enhance further research.

7.1 Future of Forecasting

An additional outcome to this study highlighted a view that future seasonal trends including colour, material and texture reports will no longer be required. The forecasting sector will adapt to support a millennial future. As the industry changes, so does the job role, thus influencing and transforming the power of a forecaster. Adaptability is a vital characteristic of the position as well a major element in business strategies. With trend-forecasting being intrinsically linked with business tactics, it is critical to revise and implement supportive change to assist survival in the industry (Chapter 7.2 potential for
further study). Each mini-case study sample outlined that businesses want information on lifestyle and macro trend direction rather than seasonal aesthetics. An evaluation of consumer interests with informed and accurate projections of changing tastes in the future has to be implemented alongside seasonal directions. Similarly, this approach has been applied by designers and craft-makers who consider the global macro trends to direct inspiration more than seasonal developments. Therefore, could we see the consumer become the designer? By no means does this research imply the forecaster job position will become redundant, but rather highlights the direction in which it will adapt and transform to assist in other areas of creative inspiration. With the ever-increasing speed of trend direction driven by social media and connected technological advancement, a new relationship between trend forecasting and the market will form. The true intuitive talents of trend forecasters cannot be replaced, but could be channelled into a role which provides clarity and order to a world of continuous ‘data suffocation’. An overload of information deters SMEs from selecting the essential elements for creative inspiration and trend-led design. Furthermore the study does not anticipate driving designers of craft-makers to engage with trends but rather aspires to demonstrate the influence they have when incorporating them into a commercial domain. It is important for SMEs to weigh up the risk factors involved and decidedly adapt for survival in the industry. Not all businesses need to buy into trends for design purposes but could use the research to support other areas such as marketing direction, brand recognition and business growth on social media (as evident in Chapter 5).

7.2 Further Research

This research is an exploratory study into the effects trend-forecasting can have with the potential to implement extensive research into specific areas. It promotes an engagement with trend-forecasting, to enhance SMEs awareness of its existence, relevance and potential impact in the surfaces industry. The study is in no way conclusive but rather acts as a springboard to help support in-depth research into reinforcing trends as a method of sustaining business and initiating innovation. Many arising questions established throughout this research could lead to PhD level study. The following points are project ideas for further contribution to knowledge in the creative field.

1. **The future of trends through the eyes of emerging professionals.** Exploring in-depth how the millennial and future generations will adapt the use of trends in the interiors industry. By reviewing the current undergraduate curriculum, relating specifically to the understanding of trend research in connection to SMEs, will provide insight into how young professionals perceive trends. Furthermore, considering how it may infiltrate into creative SMEs ultimately questions the impact of forecasting further. The link between education and SMEs will also be reviewed.

2. **Facilitate the implementation of Design Thinking models in SMEs to support strategies for change.** While suggesting SMEs should execute trend-forecasting into their business, it is important to devise a way of effectively incorporating this into appropriate strategies. Applying
business models such as Design Thinking will add value to the investigation into the impact of trend-forecasting. Enabling an unproblematic method of trend implementation; will inspire and enhance change with focus on trend services. Businesses will explore trend-forecasting as part of their own strategy, utilising agencies as a design resource rather than considering it to be an external service. This will stimulate relationships and communication within industry. Furthermore it will support government targets to drive the economy, improving sustainable approaches to business success.

3. **Reviewing the organisational culture in businesses to understand how this impacts on the implementation of trend-forecasting.** Through exploring working relationships in businesses will enable a supportive link to initiate change. Understanding social enterprise, empathy, humanity, and ethical connections within a business, will contribute to identifying how it impacts on the initiation of trend-forecasting. It is also essential to appreciate the value in tradition and recognise that the launch of new applications has to work in conjunction with other aspects of the business. In particular, reinforcing knowledge of trend-forecasting, the risk factors involved and suitability of the service to particular enterprises.

Overall this research has aided a deeper appreciation for the job role and the work that is responsible for delivering business success to SMEs. Above all the admiration for supplying motivation and inspiration to professionals supports the decision to make this a chosen career path.
Reference List


