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FROM TREND TO FORESIGHT: A PROVOCATION FOR FASHION RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article aims to systematize core concepts of Futures Studies as applied to fashion research, addressing the persistent conflation between *trend*, *forecasting*, *foresight*, and *prospective*. It advances a clear theoretical position that *trend is not a method*, proposing a standardized lexicon and an operational framework to support decision-making oriented toward sustainable transitions.

Method: A concept-centric integrative theoretical review was conducted, combining narrative synthesis with comparative analysis. Seminal and contemporary literature in Futures Studies, design futures, and fashion studies was analyzed using iterative searching and citation chaining. Key concepts were extracted, compared, and organized according to focus, time horizon, methods, and practical roles, resulting in a comparative table and an integrative framework.

Results: The study clarifies *trend* as an analytical category representing observable patterns of change, distinct from methodological families of anticipation. *Forecasting* is characterized as a short-term, predictive practice supporting tactical decisions, while *foresight* and *prospective* are positioned as medium- and long-term processes oriented toward strategic alignment, capability building, and intentional transformation. An operational lexicon and a time-horizon-based framework are proposed to improve conceptual rigor, governance, and learning metrics in fashion-related futures work.

Conclusion: By disentangling terminology and aligning futures methods with appropriate decision horizons, the article contributes a transferable conceptual foundation for fashion research and practice. The proposed lexicon and framework support more responsible, strategic, and sustainable futuring practices and may be applied beyond fashion to other creative and manufacturing sectors.

Keywords: Future Studies. Fashion. Foresight. Trend. Prospective.

FUTURE STUDIES RESEARCH JOURNAL
Scientific Editor: Renata Giovanazzo Spers
Evaluation: Double Blind Review, pelo SEER/OJS
Received: 31/01/2026
Accepted: 25/05/2026

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D A TENDÊNCIA À PREVISÃO: UMA PROVOCAÇÃO PARA A PESQUISA EM MODA

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo visa sistematizar os conceitos centrais dos Estudos de Futuro aplicados à pesquisa em moda, abordando a persistente confusão entre tendência, previsão, prospectiva e visão de futuro. Ele apresenta uma posição teórica clara de que tendência não é um método, propondo um léxico padronizado e uma estrutura operacional para apoiar a tomada de decisões orientada para transições sustentáveis.

Método: Foi realizada uma revisão teórica integrativa centrada em conceitos, combinando síntese narrativa com análise comparativa. A literatura seminal e contemporânea em Estudos de Futuro, futuros do design e estudos de moda foi analisada usando busca iterativa e encadeamento de citações. Os principais conceitos foram extraídos, comparados e organizados de acordo com foco, horizonte temporal, métodos e funções práticas, resultando em uma tabela comparativa e uma estrutura integrativa.

Resultados: O estudo esclarece a tendência como uma categoria analítica que representa padrões observáveis de mudança, distinta das famílias metodológicas de antecipação. A previsão é caracterizada como uma prática preditiva de curto prazo que apoia decisões táticas, enquanto a prospectiva e a visão de futuro são posicionadas como processos de médio e longo prazo orientados para o alinhamento estratégico, o desenvolvimento de capacidades e a transformação intencional. Um léxico operacional e uma estrutura baseada em horizontes temporais são propostos para aprimorar o rigor conceitual, a governança e as métricas de aprendizado em trabalhos de futuros relacionados à moda.

Conclusão: Ao desvendar a terminologia e alinhar os métodos de futuros com horizontes de decisão apropriados, o artigo contribui com uma base conceitual transferível para a pesquisa e a prática da moda. O léxico e a estrutura propostos apoiam práticas de futuros mais responsáveis, estratégicas e sustentáveis, podendo ser aplicados além da moda, a outros setores criativos e de manufatura.

Palavras-Chave: Estudos do Futuro. Moda. Previsão. Tendências. Cenários Prospectivos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fashion is an intensely dynamic field, historically organized by forecasting practices that translate cultural signals into short-term guidelines for product, communication, and purchasing. However, the very concept of "trend" remains under-theorized in many areas, operating sometimes as a synonym for change, sometimes as a marketing label (Powers, 2025). Recently, (Powers, 2025) proposed defining it as a dynamic and temporally limited observable pattern of change, defending its status as an analytical concept, and not merely a label of "what's in vogue," in the study of culture and media.

This conceptual ambivalence adds to practical tensions. While fashion forecasting is useful for reducing risk and guiding short-term decisions, contradictions arise when sustainability and uncertainty come into play: reports tend to focus on techno-solutions and rarely address the cultural speed and imaginaries that underpin accelerated consumption. In this context, forecasting can become an instrument of "defuturing", reinforcing the "newer, better" mentality and neglecting the fact that resources (human and non-human) are finite (Garcia, 2023).

From the perspective of Futures Studies, two recent agendas offer a promising repositioning. The first is fashion futuring, which shifts the focus from short-term prediction to collaborative, speculative, and value-driven practices at the intersection of Futures Studies, Speculative/Design Futures, and Transition Design; instead of merely extrapolating signals, it involves imagining (even "impossible") worlds to reveal values and aspirations and influence systemic change (Garcia, 2023). The second is the lens of reparative futures, which emphasizes that the past is present in all futuring practices and calls for an ethical engagement with past-present relationships, proposing to act in a "thick present" to avoid designing futures that reproduce injustices (Myers et al., 2024).

In the field of fashion and creative industries, terminological overlap remains common, particularly between forecasting, foresight, and prospective. Although several reviews have attempted to clarify these distinctions, the literature does not present a fully consolidated consensus. Different intellectual traditions, especially anglo-saxon foresight approaches and the french school of prospective emphasize distinct epistemological assumptions regarding prediction, participation, and strategic transformation. This plurality of interpretations makes comparative analysis difficult and reinforces the need for clearer conceptual boundaries in sectoral applications.

The relationship between sustainability and the temporalities of the future constitutes one of the central tensions for contemporary fashion studies. Historically, the fashion system has been structured around accelerated cycles of symbolic and material renewal, in which the constant introduction of the "new" sustains dynamics of desire, consumption, and obsolescence. In this context, forecasting practices often operate as market synchronization mechanisms, reducing short-term uncertainties and accelerating commercial responses related to collections, portfolio, and consumer behavior.

However, when sustainability and systemic transitions become part of the organizational agenda, important limitations of this predominantly short-term oriented temporal logic emerge.

The problems associated with traceability, circularity, overconsumption, and environmental impacts cannot be adequately addressed solely through tactical forecasting mechanisms, as they involve structural changes in production chains, organizational capabilities, and cultural imaginaries.

In this sense, foresight and prospective approaches introduce longer and more reflective temporalities, expanding the capacity of organizations and sectors to explore alternative, desirable, and sustainable futures. Unlike the linear logic of demand anticipation, these approaches shift the focus to building adaptive capabilities, collective learning, and systemic transformation. Thus, the tension between accelerating consumption and building sustainable futures is not only operational, but also epistemological and cultural, reflecting different ways of understanding the role of the future in organizational decisions.

A clear position is advanced: trend is not a method. To avoid role confusion and degraded decisions, a non-negotiable lexicon and a minimal operational framework are proposed for immediate adoption.

Finally, by situating “trend” as an analytical category, and not as a marketing device, there is alignment with Powers' proposal (Powers, 2025) which reinforces the link between media/culture studies and the practice of futures in fashion. This conceptual anchoring helps to reposition the role of trends within a more plural, participatory, and responsible ecosystem of futures methods. In this sense, the objective of this article was to propose a methodological systematization of Future Studies applied to fashion. The contribution was to define a comparative theoretical basis, useful for both academics and creative industries. The question that guided this research was: “what are the definitions of forecasting, foresight, and prospective initially systematized for the field of fashion, but which are oriented towards sustainable transitions?”

2. FUNDAMENTALS AND TERMINOLOGY

2.1 The Field of Future Studies and the Role of Design

Futures Studies brings together approaches to broaden the understanding of the future consequences of present choices and to support decision-making under uncertainty. In parallel, the literature on design futures has consolidated a pedagogical-operational repertoire to make futures debatable through methods, artifacts, and situated learning, connecting temporal, social, and ethical dimensions in the design process (Morrison, 2023)

From a humanities perspective, there is a movement towards closer ties between cultural studies and futurism, highlighting the limitations of current conceptions of "the future" and the potential gains of integrating systematic methods of futurism/foresight (Powers, 2020)

Recent researches in Futures Studies have also emphasized the concepts of anticipation and governance. Anticipatory systems research highlights how organizations develop capabilities to detect early signals and prepare for emerging disruptions, while governance perspectives address how futures practices influence collective decision-making and policy direction. These discussions reinforce the idea that futures work is not limited to prediction, but involves institutional learning, coordination, and strategic alignment across multiple actors (Arquilla & Barbieri, 2017; Muiderman et al., 2023; Panizzon & Janissek-Muniz, 2025; Swan et al., 2025; Umbach, 2024).

Some researches in Futures Studies has increasingly emphasized the concept of futures literacy, understood as the ability to imagine, question, and strategically use the future to better understand the present and support decision-making in situations of uncertainty (Fusco, 2025). Instead of reducing work with futures to mere prediction, this perspective highlights anticipation as a collective learning process capable of expanding reflexivity, imagination, and adaptive capacity within organizations and institutions.

From this perspective, futures literacy contributes to the development of anticipatory capabilities, allowing actors to distinguish between short-term signals, probable futures, desirable futures, and long-term systemic transformations. Such capabilities become particularly relevant in creative industries, where accelerated cycles of change often coexist with increasing demands for sustainability, innovation, and cultural adaptation. Recent literature also emphasizes that future literacy is associated with the development of temporal literacy and anticipatory systems capable of integrating multiple temporal horizons in organizational learning and governance processes (Fusco, 2025).

In this sense, future-oriented practices are not limited to forecasting activities, but involve the construction of institutional routines related to monitoring, interpretation, strategic alignment, collective imagination, and adaptive decision-making. The research by (Ioannidou et al., 2025) explores the integration of future literacy in cultural heritage education, proposing a shift in focus from static preservation to a dynamic anticipation system. The article is based on the theory of anticipatory systems, suggesting that traditional knowledge should be seen as a living technology capable of generating innovation and resilience.

2.2 Core terminology adopted

For this article, the terms forecasting, foresight, and prospective were used as methodological families, and trend as an analytical category. This distinction, already defended in reviews in Portuguese, avoids terminological confusion and the indiscriminate use of synonyms (Schenatto et al., 2011).

- Trend: a dynamic and temporally limited observable pattern of change; it functions as a directional indicator and input for research and decision-making, that is, it cannot be confused with a method (Powers, 2020; Press & Celi, 2025);
- Forecasting: a predictive practice focused on probable short-term futures, based on historical data, signals, and scanning; widely used for tactical decisions (portfolio, purchasing, communication) (Schenatto et al., 2011).
- Foresight: an interactive and strategic process to expand possibilities and priorities in the medium to long term, articulating monitoring, analysis, and alignment among stakeholders (Schenatto, 2012; Subin, 2025).
- Prospective: a French tradition of change management (pre-activity and pro-activity), with an emphasis on inducing desired transformations through strategic guidance conceptually close to strategic foresight (Godet, 2010; Monseu, 2002).

This distinction minimizes terminological noise and allows for 'transfer learning' of tools between materials R&D, product development, and portfolio management, especially regarding sustainability and product traceability. According to (Calof, 2025), the effective adoption of this lexicon requires organizational routines (monitoring, early warning, roadmapping) and a clear distribution of roles among areas, a theme that is aligned with the literature on “futures and competitive intelligence” in corporate contexts.

Beyond operational distinctions, these approaches also differ epistemologically. Forecasting is generally grounded in positivist assumptions, relying on the extrapolation of historical data and probabilistic reasoning to estimate likely futures. In contrast, foresight approaches often adopt a more constructivist orientation, emphasizing participatory processes, collective sense-making, and the exploration of multiple possible futures. The french tradition of prospective, influenced by authors such as (Berger, 2024; Godet, 2010), explicitly links future exploration to strategic action and societal transformation, highlighting the role of actors in shaping preferred futures. Recognizing these epistemological differences is important for aligning methods with decision-making contexts and organizational capabilities.

Although this article proposes a structured operational distinction between trend, forecast, foresight, and future vision, the authors recognize that Futures Studies constitute a

plural and interdisciplinary field, marked by different epistemological traditions, methodological interpretations, and regional schools of thought. Therefore, the structure presented here should not be interpreted as a definitive or universal taxonomy, but rather as a conceptual systematization intended to support analytical clarity, organizational application, and methodological alignment in the contexts of fashion and creative industries.

In this sense, the proposed distinctions aim to function as an operational and pedagogical reference capable of facilitating communication between academic research and professional practice, while remaining open to reinterpretation, adaptation, and expansion according to different theoretical traditions and domains of application.

2.3 Sectoral justification in fashion and practical implications

In the fashion sector, according to (Press & Celi, 2025), short-term tactical decisions (seasonality, assortment, purchasing) depend on predictive inputs, including forecasting supported by trends, while some strategic priorities, such as R&D, materials, circularity, traceability, and sustainable transition, require medium- and/or long-term processes aligned with foresight and prospective analysis. Recent literature on designing sustainable futures reinforces the integration of imagination, signals, collaboration, and ethics to transform "visions" into organizational strategies and competencies.

In parallel, other reviews systematize the gains in conceptual rigor, especially for the Brazilian context, by differentiating between forecast, foresight, and prospective, reducing noise and strengthening transferability to practice (Polacinski, 2011; Schenatto et al., 2011).

These epistemological differences also produce distinct organizational decision logics. Forecasting approaches, based predominantly on probabilistic reasoning and historical extrapolation, tend to support efficiency-oriented decisions focused on operational synchronization, market responsiveness, and short-term risk reduction (Schenatto et al., 2011). In fashion organizations, this logic is commonly associated with collection planning, inventory management, assortment definition, and accelerating product cycles.

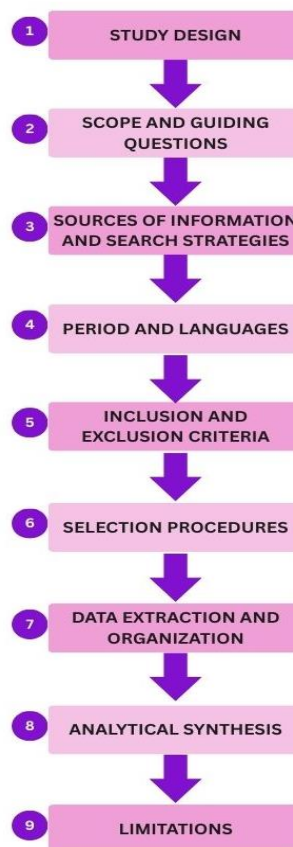
On the other hand, foresight and future-oriented approaches are more closely associated with interpretive, participatory, and transformational decision-making processes. Instead of optimizing existing market dynamics, these approaches seek to expand the organization's capacity to deal with uncertainty, explore alternative futures, and support long-term strategic transitions (Calof, 2025; Muiderman et al., 2023). In sustainability-oriented contexts, these distinctions become particularly relevant because issues such as circularity, traceability,

decarbonization, and cultural transformation require broader governance structures, institutional learning processes, and adaptive capabilities that exceed the scope of short-term predictive practices (Press & Celi, 2025).

3. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Figure 1 summarizes the nine methodological steps of the research, initially the study design, scope and guiding questions, information sources and search strategies, language range, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data selection, extraction and organization procedures, analytical synthesis, and limitations.

Figure 1 – Research steps



- a) **Study design** – the research can be characterized as an integrative theoretical-conceptual review, also known as a narrative review with a conceptual focus, in which the objective is to systematize and clarify terminologies and methodological families of future studies applied to fashion (forecasting, foresight and prospective);

- b) **Scope and guiding questions** – to answer the guiding question, other secondary questions were: Q1) What are the existing definitions of forecasting, foresight, and prospective in the futures literature, and do traditions interfere with them?; Q2) Can these traditions be understood as geographic regions or countries that have historical influence?; Q3) How do such distinctions translate into research and practice in fashion?; Q4) How to position “trend” within this conceptual framework?;
- c) **Information sources and search strategy** – an iterative and non-exhaustive search was conducted in academic databases and repositories (Scopus, Web of Science, publisher portals and target journals), complemented by citation chaining (snowballing) from classic authors in the field of Future Studies (Fonseca et al., 2019; Godet, 2010; Polacinski, 2011) and fashion/design sources (Morrison, 2023; Powers, 2020; Press & Celi, 2025; Wohlin et al., 2022). In addition, the concepts were validated by a specialist who is a professor, researcher and Brazilian reference in Trend Studies and forecasting applied to fashion (data initially omitted for double-blind review). The search process followed an iterative logic commonly adopted in conceptual and theoretical reviews, in which successive searches and citation chaining procedures were refined according to the emergence of conceptual distinctions, recurrent terminologies, and theoretical complementarities identified during the analysis process. Rather than aiming at exhaustive quantitative coverage, the review prioritized conceptual relevance, theoretical consistency, and contribution to the operational clarification of futures-related terminology;
- d) **Period and languages** – seminal literature was considered, which in a theoretical review is fundamental to understanding the theoretical basis of a field and tracing its evolution. Thus, these documents are from the period 1990 to 2000. Contemporary works (2010–2025) in English and Portuguese were also analyzed;
- e) **Inclusion and exclusion criteria** – inclusion criteria included texts with explicit definitions/conceptualizations of futures methods; reviews, state-of-the-art studies, and framework proposals; studies that included applications or discussions of futures methods in fashion and creative industries. Conversely, strictly technical reports and/or those with algorithmic calculations and forecasting without conceptual discussion; opinion pieces without a methodological basis; and duplicate documents were excluded;
- f) **Selection procedures** - the selection of documents took place in two rounds, that is, firstly with the screening of titles/abstracts for conceptual eligibility and then the full reading and theoretical sampling until saturation. Theoretical saturation was considered achieved when newly identified publications no longer introduced substantially different conceptual definitions, epistemological distinctions, or operational classifications regarding forecasting, foresight, prospective, and

trends. At this stage, additional documents tended to reinforce previously identified conceptual patterns rather than expanding the analytical structure of the framework.

- g) **Data extraction and organization** - eligible texts were organized in matrix form, with the following fields: keywords (forecasting, foresight, prospective and trends), objective (probabilistic forecast, possibilities, strategic action, narrative), typical time horizon (long, medium or short term), role in fashion, among others;
- h) **Analytical synthesis** – to compile the concepts, a comparative table (Table 1) was developed with the results of the concepts segmented into focus, horizon, core method, and implications for fashion. An integrating framework (Figure 2) was also proposed that positions the concepts according to the time horizon;
- i) **Limitations** – one of the main limitations may have been the narrative nature of the review. In this sense, not all documents were "covered," but a deliberate selection was made to construct an operational lexicon applicable to fashion. Although the review was not designed as a fully systematic or exhaustive mapping of the literature, methodological transparency was pursued through explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, iterative search refinement, citation chaining, and conceptual saturation procedures. The objective was not statistical representativeness, but the construction of an operational conceptual synthesis capable of supporting analytical clarity and organizational application.

The search was iterative and guided by theoretical saturation; new sources were included only when they added useful distinctions to the lexicon. Definitions were externally reviewed by a domain expert (details omitted to preserve double-blind review), resulting in minor wording refinements without scope changes.

4. FINDINGS

It has been observed that several nomenclatures and conceptual approaches coexist, namely: future studies; anticipation and forecasting; prospecting; foresight; forecast and prospective (Polacinski, 2011; Schenatto, 2012; Schenatto et al., 2011). The coexistence of multiple conceptual traditions has practical implications for decision-making. Misinterpreting these approaches can lead organizations to rely on short-term predictive tools when strategic exploration would be more appropriate. Clarifying these distinctions therefore contributes not only to theoretical rigor but also to improved governance of innovation and sustainability transitions. Furthermore, there are three logical approaches to future prospecting, accepted by

the specialized community. This classification is consolidated in national reviews and technical manuals (Schenatto, 2012).

- a) Inference: a traditional approach in which the future reflects events that occurred in the past, but without identifying ruptures in the development of the objects studied;
- b) Alternative trajectories: result from the methodical approach taken from these same trajectories;
- c) Cognitive and intuitive: the future is determined by consensus through a cognitive and intuitive system of opinion gathering by a group of experts. The construction of representative future scenarios results from an approach supported by the methodical generation of alternative trajectories.

This review organized the main conceptual families employed in future studies applied to fashion, distinguishing trend as an analytical category of change phenomena, on the one hand, and the methodological families of anticipation (forecasting, foresight, and prospective) on the other. Table 1 consolidates definitions/focuses, typical time horizons, instruments, and roles in fashion, offering an operational lexicon for research and practice in the sector.

The indiscriminate use of the term "trend" as a methodological substitute has significant implications for organizations and creative sectors. When trends are treated not as analytical signals of change, but as equivalent to structured processes of anticipation, there is a reduction in the temporal complexity associated with future studies. In this context, strategic decisions become excessively driven by short-term signals, market repertoires, and immediate responses to consumption.

This conceptual confusion can generate different organizational limitations. First, it reduces strategic horizons by prioritizing rapid market synchronizations over long-term reflective processes. Second, it reinforces excessive dependencies on emerging signals and instantaneous indicators, hindering the construction of institutional capacities related to anticipation, learning, and systemic adaptation.

In addition, the operational centrality attributed to trends tends to favor predominantly reactive innovation processes, in which organizations continuously respond to market dynamics without developing structural capacities to imagine, build, or govern alternative futures. As a consequence, future work practices may become limited to incremental adaptation, reducing the transformative potential associated with foresight and prospective analysis.

From the perspective of anticipatory governance, this distinction is particularly relevant, as organizations capable of differentiating signals, trends, and methods of anticipation tend to develop more robust structures for monitoring, strategic coordination, and decision-making in

contexts of uncertainty. Thus, stating that "trend is not a method" represents not only terminological precision but a necessary condition for strengthening anticipatory capabilities and expanding strategic maturity in sustainable transition processes.

Table 1 — Operational lexicon for future studies applied to fashion, with its horizons, instruments, and uses in the sector

Term	Definition/focus	Time horizon	Methods/ Instruments	Fashion Use	Reference
Trend	A dynamic and temporally limited observable pattern of change; it serves as a directional indicator for research and decision-making (it is not a method).	Variable (between the short and medium term, depending on the phenomenon)	Cultural and behavioral observation; market research; monitoring of signals and repertoires; diffusion and digital data analysis.	Guidance on product language, communication, and timing; input for research and reports.	(Morrison, 2023; Powers, 2020, 2025; Raymond, 2020)
Forecasting	Predictive practice focused on probable short-term futures, based on historical series, signals, and scanning, aiming to reduce tactical uncertainty.	Short term	Time series; weak signals; horizon scanning; dashboards, indicators	Synchronizes collections with purchases; reduces risk; supports the industry with trend reports.	(Garcia, 2023; Schenatto et al., 2011)
Foresight	An interactive and strategic process to expand possibilities and priorities in the medium to long term, articulating monitoring, analysis, and alignment among stakeholders.	Between the medium and long term	Structured monitoring; analysis of key variables and stakeholders; roadmapping; qualitative and quantitative methods.	Aligns vision and innovation priorities; guides investments and capabilities in the fashion supply chain.	(Schenatto, 2012)
Prospective	French tradition for change management, oriented towards inducing desired transformations through strategic direction.	Between the medium and long term	Key variable identification; structural analysis; stakeholder analysis; roadmaps.	It supports sectoral, territorial and political strategies for the fashion sector.	(Schenatto, 2012)

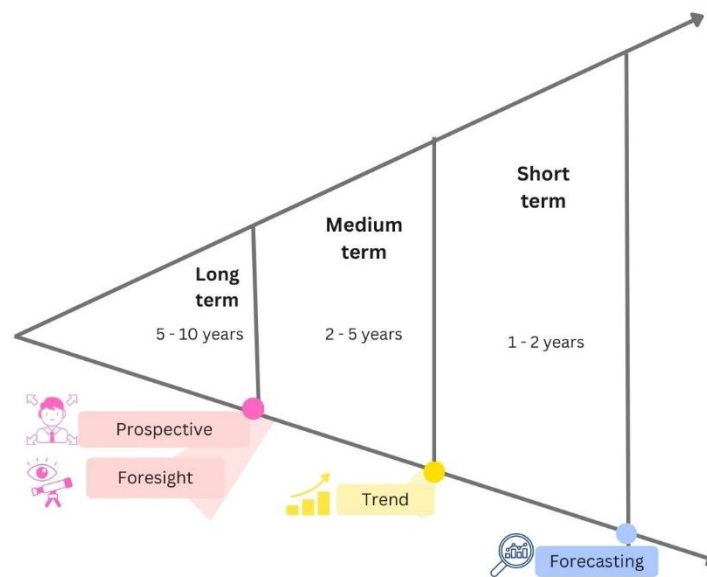
Analyzing Table 1, three elements stand out. Starting with the trend, this appears as a directional indicator (an observable pattern of change) that informs decisions. The second element, forecasting, focuses on probable futures and short-term horizons, generally up to two years from the planning stage, mobilizing historical series, weak signals, and horizon scanning to reduce uncertainty in collection and purchasing. The final elements include foresight and prospective analysis, which broaden the horizon and purpose of not only predicting but also exploring possibilities and guiding strategy, articulating key variables, actors, roadmaps, and future narratives to prepare decisions under uncertainty.

In summary, these are provocations for the future of fashion:

- **Trend is not a method.** Use trend strictly as an analytical category;
- **Forecasting is tactical** (less than two years). Stop badging short-term projections as “strategy”;
- **Foresight/Prospective set priorities.** Capabilities, portfolios, and policies belong here;
- **Mandate governance.** Monthly monitoring, semi-annual strategy reviews, named owners;
- **Enforce metrics.** Learning, anticipation, alignment; tie budgets to lexicon compliance.

In addition to organizing terminology and time horizons, Table 1 and Figure 2 also illustrate how different future approaches are associated with distinct conditions of uncertainty, organizational capabilities, and decision-making logics. Short-term approaches tend to support tactical synchronization under more structured conditions of uncertainty, while foresight and forward-looking vision involve broader participatory, strategic, and transformational processes associated with systemic uncertainty and long-term governance challenges.

Figure 2 – Temporal horizons and organizational decision logics in Futures Studies approaches



Also, to representing different time horizons, Figure 2 illustrates how different approaches to futures are associated with different types of organizational decisions, uncertainty conditions, and anticipation capabilities.

In short-term horizons, forecasting is predominantly associated with tactical and operational decisions, such as mix planning, inventory synchronization, communication schedule, and short-cycle market responses. In this context, uncertainty is comparatively lower and more structured, allowing organizations to rely on historical data, market indicators, weak signals, and predictive models to reduce immediate operational risks.

Trend analysis occupies an intermediate position between short- and medium-term horizons, as it functions as an interpretive mechanism to identify directional changes in cultural, behavioral, and market dynamics. In this case, uncertainty becomes more interpretive and contextual, requiring organizations to develop monitoring, analysis, and signal interpretation capabilities capable of translating emerging patterns into strategic insights.

On the other hand, foresight and future analysis operate on medium- and long-term horizons, characterized by higher levels of systemic uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity. These approaches are less forecast-oriented and more associated with strategic alignment, scenario exploration, organizational learning, and transformation processes. Consequently, organizations must develop broader anticipatory capabilities, including collective meaning-making, governance structures, adaptive learning routines, stakeholder coordination, and long-term strategic imagination.

From this perspective, the structure represented in Figure 2 cannot be interpreted merely as a temporal classification of methods, but as an organizational model that connects time horizons, conditions of uncertainty, decision-making logics, and institutional capabilities. The transition from forecasting to foresight and future vision therefore represents not only an expansion of time horizons, but also a change in how organizations interpret uncertainty, coordinate learning, and build sustainable futures.

In practical organizational contexts, the distinction between forecasting and foresight can influence how fashion companies structure routines, teams, and decision-making processes. Forecasting activities are typically operationalized through short-term market monitoring, sales indicators, social media analysis, trend reports, inventory synchronization, and collection planning cycles geared toward immediate market response.

On the other hand, foresight-oriented practices tend to involve broader and more participatory organizational processes, such as scenario workshops, sustainability roadmaps, stakeholder engagement, discussions on materials innovation, and long-term strategic planning related to circularity, traceability, and technological transitions. While forecasting often supports tactical coordination between design, marketing, and supply chain functions, foresight contributes to building institutional capabilities associated with governance, adaptive learning, and strategic transformation under conditions of uncertainty.

In this sense, the proposed operational lexicon can help organizations differentiate between routines geared toward market synchronization and those designed to support long-term anticipation and sustainable transition processes.

Regarding the proposed framework, it is based on three times horizons (see Figure 2), in which prospective and foresight are situated between the medium and long term, trend analysis is between the short and medium term, and forecasting is widely applied in the short term. Therefore, for implementation, the following is recommended (Calof, 2025):

- a) Monitoring cadence (monthly) and strategic reviews (semi-annual/annual);
- b) Definition of roles: foresight core and domain teams;
- c) Application of metrics: learning (hypotheses tested), anticipation (alerts triggered), and alignment with principles. The alignment between foresight capabilities and competitive intelligence accelerates the institutionalization of futures work and reduces informational asymmetry in portfolio decisions.

The systematization proposed in this study presents the potential for methodological transfer beyond the fashion sector, especially in creative and manufacturing fields, characterized by high uncertainty, accelerated innovation cycles, and strong sociocultural influence. In industrial design, for example, trends can function as directional signals for aesthetic language, materials, and user experience, while foresight and prospective processes contribute to strategic decisions related to sustainability, advanced manufacturing, and technological transitions.

In architecture and urban planning, forecasting can support short-term projections related to consumer behavior, space occupancy, and real estate demands, while foresight approaches allow for the exploration of long-term urban scenarios associated with mobility, climate, and social transformations. Similarly, in the cultural and entertainment industries, emerging signals and cultural repertoires are frequently used to anticipate audience preferences, media formats, and changes in digital ecosystems (Ouf, 2024).

In retail and creative production chains, the distinction between trend, forecasting, foresight, and prospective also contributes to reducing conceptual ambiguities in decision-making processes. While forecasting assists tactical decisions related to inventory, portfolio, and operational synchronization, foresight and prospective enhance the organizational capacity to build long-term strategies driven by innovation, sustainability, and resilience.

Thus, although the framework was initially structured for the fashion field, its conceptual logic can be understood as transversal and adaptable to different contexts in which signs of change, strategic anticipation, and future building are part of organizational governance and decision-making.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article aimed to systematize the concepts of Futures Studies applied to fashion research. Thus, the theoretical-conceptual review classified trend, forecasting, foresight, prospective, and scenarios. These same concepts were classified according to their definition, focus, time horizon, methods, instruments, and the function of each in fashion.

From a theoretical standpoint, the proposed framework contributes to ongoing debates in Futures Studies, reinforcing the importance of distinguishing analytical categories from methodological families of anticipation. In creative industries, where the concept of trend is often used as a broad and often ambiguous substitute for future-oriented practices, the clarification proposed in this article helps to reposition futures work beyond short-term market synchronization and reactive innovation logics.

The framework also contributes to expanding discussions on how different time horizons shape organizational learning, anticipatory governance, and transitions to sustainability in the creative and industrial sectors. By articulating forecasting, foresight, and forward-looking vision according to their epistemological orientations, uncertainty profiles, and decision-making logics, the article promotes a more integrated understanding of how futures approaches influence institutional capabilities, strategic alignment, and long-term transformation processes. Furthermore, the study suggests that future-oriented practices in creative industries should not be limited to predictive exercises, but should be increasingly understood as mechanisms for developing future literacy, collective imagination, and adaptive organizational capabilities in contexts marked by uncertainty, acceleration, and sustainability challenges.

In this sense, the article contributes not only to conceptual clarification in research on futures related to fashion, but also to broader discussions about the role of temporality, anticipation, and governance in building sustainable futures in creative industries.

The results also indicate that different Futures Studies approaches operate from distinct timeframes, producing different impacts on sustainability, innovation, and organizational governance. While forecasting tends to reinforce rapid market response cycles, foresight and prospective analysis enable more reflective and transformative processes, aligned with building long-term capabilities and sustainable transitions.

It was also observed that the absence of clear conceptual distinctions between trends and anticipation methods can compromise long-term organizational capabilities, favoring reactive decisions and reducing strategic maturity in contexts of uncertainty.

In summary, forecasting means prediction based on time series; foresight is applied to the participatory construction of possible futures; prospective is a French emphasis on strategic action. Trend was also included as an analytical category that can be understood as a directional indicator. Beyond clarifying terminology, the article highlights that different futures approaches reflect distinct epistemological assumptions and strategic purposes. Recognizing these differences can help organizations choose appropriate tools for tactical, strategic, and transformative decision contexts.

The observed cross-cutting characteristic broadens the potential application of the framework in creative, industrial, and cultural sectors, contributing to contemporary debates on anticipatory governance, future-oriented innovation, and sustainable transitions.

In addition to conceptual clarification, the proposed framework can support the development of future literacy, temporal literacy, and anticipation capabilities in organizations operating in contexts marked by accelerated change, uncertainty, and transitions to sustainability.

Therefore, the framework needs to be understood as a transferable operational synthesis, and not as a definitive epistemological classification of Future Studies approaches.

As a suggestion, it is proposed that future work carry out empirical testing of the framework in workshops with stakeholders (industry, creators, consumers) and in futuring programs oriented towards sustainable transition, not only in the fashion sector but also in other areas.

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