Trends Archaeology: methodological contributes to analyse brand meanings in artistic shows of style

Arqueologia de Tendências: contributos metodológicos para a análise de significados em marcas através de espetáculos artísticos de estilo

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explore trends archaeology as a method of Trend Studies and its articulation with branding. This research analyzes a case study composed of six unified fashion shows from Gucci attempting to understand the flow of sociocultural trends associated with the brand, and its developments. The trend analysis was carried out through a critical analysis of the trends identified by the Trends Observer research network during the period that encompasses the case study (2017-2019). After the individual analysis of the narratives of each fashion show and its correlation with the trend map, we could see that the trend flow did not have a significant variation since the time interval under analysis was short. It was also possible to observe a minor change in the DNA of the Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trend.
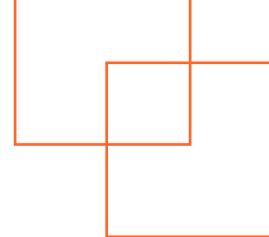
KEYWORDS

Trend Studies; Trends archaeology; Fashion branding

RESUMO

Este artigo procura explorar a arqueologia de tendências enquanto método dos Estudos de Tendências, bem como a sua articulação com o branding. Esta pesquisa analisa um estudo de caso composto por seis desfiles unificados da marca Gucci e procura entender o fluxo de tendências socioculturais associadas à marca, bem como o seu desenvolvimento. A análise de tendências foi efetuada através da análise crítica das tendências identificadas pela rede de pesquisa Trends Observer durante o período de tempo que engloba o caso de estudo (2017-2019). Após a análise individual das narrativas dos desfiles e correlação com o mapa de tendências, pudemos perceber que o fluxo de tendências não teve uma variação expressiva dado o intervalo de tempo em análise ser curto. Foi também possível observar uma mudança pouco significativa no ADN da macrotendência Experienced Narratives and Identities.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Estudos de Tendências; arqueologia de tendências; branding de moda.

INTRODUCTION

The present work explores the archaeology of trends as a method for understanding the development of trends, taking as a case study Gucci's unified fashion shows (2017 - 2019). Here we study the symbolic development of trends through their representation in the Gucci brand and the flows that are associated with these socio-cultural patterns through their meanings.

The analysis of the fashion shows developed in this article stems from the fact that, in the view of Barry (2017), these representative elements of brands are poorly studied due to their complexity. In the case of Gucci, it is particularly relevant to understand the meanings of this typology of communication object given the impact they have on a specific moment of the brand: the entry of creative director Alessandro Michele. We also see contributions from this study in the context of creating new communication/management strategies through the understanding derived from Trend Studies in the segment in question.

This work intends to contribute to an approach to the archaeology of trends as a methodological proposal, articulating the research of cultural patterns with brands and aiming for future management based on trends. This is important given the need to contribute to the field of inquiry of Trend Studies (GOMES ET AL., 2018), for its direct articulation with culture management and the creation of better strategies in the context of brands (GOMES, 2016). The perspectives that guide brands are addressed in this article through the case study, its critical analysis, as well as identified trends. This knowledge allows extracting strategic information to think about the creation or development of products. Thus, this article seeks to contribute to the methodological thinking on trend archaeology, proposing an analysis of a case study and contributing to an approach to the theme.

In this article, we approach several theoretical concepts to build a conceptual map to guide the themes addressed here. The approach to Trend Studies is emphasized as a proposal for the analysis of cultural patterns (GOMES, COHEN AND FLORES, 2018), which allows us to make analytical contributions that support the methodological script. This type of analysis (correlation) is relevant for the effective management of
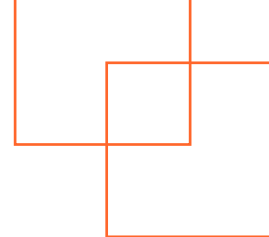
projects (KJAER, 2014; POWERS, 2019) and when performed diachronically, it allows understanding the development of the trends DNA. Thus, the archaeology of trends becomes a relevant tool for understanding the world and the environment based on the analysis of contextualized information. This article concludes that changes in trends need a long period, confirming the approach proposed by the literature. We sought to strengthen the pertinence of diachronic trend research by understanding the case study, as well as understanding the trends in the brand's fashion shows that contribute to the characterization of its identity.
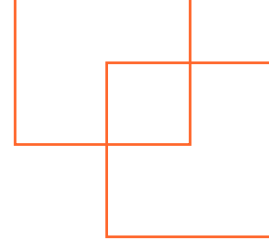
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2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Trends as cultural structures

Trend research, from an interpretive and analytical perspective, takes shape in the research of patterns present in culture (DRAGT, 2017; GOMES ET AL., 2018; POWERS, 2019). These patterns are visible in society and can be interpreted through behaviours, cultural productions, social attitudes, and represent society and its habits. For Gomes, Cohen and Flores, Trend Studies are defined as follows:

> Trend Studies presents itself as a transdisciplinary area, integrating concepts, perspectives and methodologies from the Studies of Culture, Anthropology, Marketing, Design, among others. Its objectives are varied, according to each approach, but at its base, it seeks to identify changes in mentalities that, in turn, become visible in the social environment. (GOMES ET AL., 2018, p. 53)

The study and observation of human behaviour are described by Rech as essential so that it is possible to understand the elements that can give rise to clues and bring empirical information about trend manifestations (the focus of Trend Studies), as is the case of new products, services, behaviours, styles, and representations (RECH, 2020, p. 290).

This research contributes to strategic decision making through understanding the collective mind. As Vejlgaard puts it, individuals who crave results through trend research know perfectly well what they want: "What is the latest thing? What is hot or cool? What is the new style? What is the new trend in, for instance, home furnishings? Is the new style glamorous or

minimalist?"). Louise Kongsholm and Catherine Frederiksen mention that the trends we observe across behaviours and material culture reflect changing values ??in society and characterize attitudes and actions. We see impacts on the society that are the result of a set of behaviours, determined and continuously influenced by the set of events, objects, people and social and symbolic interactions, which we call 'culture' (KONGSHOLM AND FREDERIKSEN, 2018). Searching for invisible patterns in this field is the objective of researching trends and the recognition of their existence will allow starting the process of identifying and validating this information.

2.2 Managing trends

Lopes (2019) refers to the ability to positively influence design creation through sociocultural trends. This approach brings with it a broad and deep idea that sectors influence and are influenced by trends. The relevance of management through trends is described by Vejlgaard as follows:

> By working systematically and strategically with trend sociology, companies can have a major influence on their brand's status and life cycle. If management doesn't pay close attention to changes in style and taste, an originally innovative lifestyle brand will inevitably lose its original customers—the trendsetters. They will look for more innovative products from other brands—often new and/or smaller brands. (Vejlgaard, 2008, p. 183)

The concern with managing brands thinking about future scenarios took two different paths. At the macro level, attention to 'social, cultural, political and economic drivers' indicate societal changes to be considered (POWERS, 2018). At the micro-level, studies of attitudes, consumers, decision-making, among others, allow for more immediate strategies. Monitoring this information encourages the creation of methods to manage and, in a certain way, adapt to emerging changes (POWERS, 2018). Trend's knowledge facilitates this strategic management and decision-making based on society's movements, thus maintaining the relevance of brands (KJAER, 2014). However, the area of ??trend management appears to be unstructured, and this is visible in the multiple approaches that stakeholders give to the topic. We must bear in mind that not having a specific method or a delineated path for this management, aims a process that involves the identification of

patterns in society that allow explaining the culturally constituted world (RECH, 2020, p. 284).

Managing products or services based on trends facilitates the development of new goods and the creation of strategies for better positioning in the market; maintain the strategic positioning of a brand in a world of constant changes; develop relevant products that satisfy current contexts; understand the habits of consumers and adapt the communication of brands (VEJLGAARD, 2008, pp. 190-191). In the specific scope of fashion, Rech (2020, pp. 283-284) states that the management of trends is particularly relevant to inform the product development department. In this sense, monitoring trends makes it possible to filter information that can serve as an instrument for innovation and the branding process. This becomes pertinent in the context of the cultural system, which, in addition to being dynamic, seeks to respond to a constant flow of social forces and counterforces. Although there are several types of documents that provide the information needed for this process, we highlight trend reports as being one of the most pertinent (GOMES ET AL., 2021, p. 262). Trend reports are a typology of document that presents research carried out by researchers/bureaus/agencies in a text format and that stages analysis of society, translating the DNA of a trend. Trend reports seek to tell stories, that is, create narratives based on the analysis of cultural patterns to communicate trends for various purposes, including the management of brands and creative projects.

## 2.3 Cultural patterns for branding strategies

The understanding of culture is an essential point for the development of coherent and assertive strategies that contribute for brands and projects becoming relevant, so that they can be inserted in society more effectively, transposing meanings and creating relationships with audiences. Regarding their development and positioning in cultural environments, McCracken (2008) emphasizes the need for the existence of a Chief Culture Officer (CCO) as a cultural interpreter who assimilates, in a global way, cultural aspects relevant to companies and, consequently, for brands. At the same time, Douglas Holt's (2004) perception about the relevance of culture to brands demonstrates that interpretating culture allows the creation of brands that function as cultural icons and that endure in time. Some characteristics of these brands are exemplified by strong communication, fast and effective associations, and the ability to develop deep emotional connections with the consumer. For Douglas Holt "Iconic brands function like cultural activists

encouraging people to think differently about themselves. The most powerful iconic brands are prescient addressing the leading edges of cultural change" (HOLT, 2004, p. 9). It is worth mentioning that George Simmel was already reflecting on the impact of fashion on societies (as a cyclical social system; imitation) and mentioned that 'brand' issues should be considered when referring to fashion (SIMMEL, 1904, p. 136). In this context, brands, here with an eye on fashion brands, create emotions and awaken the need to belong to groups. There are also relationships between subjects and the culture in which they operate (KO AND LEE, 2015).

There seems to be a difficulty in finding a disciplinary specificity in Fashion Branding. This requires articulation between other areas that range from Design, Marketing, Management, Fashion, Culture, among others. Several works can be found on the themes of branding and fashion and that aims to articulate these concepts (RECH AND FARIAS, 2009; GOMEZ, OLHATS AND PÓLO, 2011; GOMES, 2014; CECCATO AND GOMEZ, 2018; CANTÚ, 2019; CANTÚ AND OLIVEIRA, 2020). What we can see is that Fashion Branding is still taking shape and consolidating itself, emphasizing the articulation of methods from several areas. We also observe that the attention to issues related to brand heritage is notorious (AAKER, 2004, p. 2; CANTISTA AND SÁBADA, 2020, p. 107), brand equity (AAKER, 2004, p. 10-13; KELLER, 2013, p. 21) as well as to brand values ??(AAKER, 2004, p. 8-10; KELLER, 2013, p. 98). These concepts are expressive when we are dealing with fashion sector and muse be considered to allow understanding the identity and highlighting relevant aspects of the brands in contemporary culture.

The need to pay attention to fashion branding stems from the understanding that brands are not just "things" that consumers acquire, but immaterial objects that add value to the lives of individuals (OSWALD, 2012, p. 44). We see in Smelik (2006) a relationship between the production of fashion artefacts and the complex communication that is intrinsic to them. For the author, culture and fashion seem to intertwine, composing one of the main axes of communication. At the same time, Bruzze and Gibson state that fashion is one of the vehicles that most influences contemporary culture, relating products, images, and texts within a complex system (BRUZI AND GIBSON, 2000, p. 372). On a practical level, we are facing an intersection that has much to contribute to the strategic, research and commercial context. In this research, we trace lights that allow us to understand the relevance of the intersection of these themes and the object of study. Likewise, the analysis of sociocultural trends contributes to a strategic analysis by understanding the latent meanings in sociocultural patterns and reading the meanings of brands

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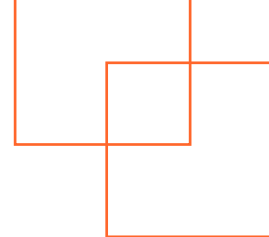
through their cultural production in a diachronic perspective.
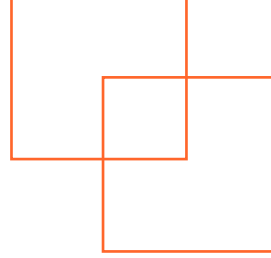
2.4 A show of style in brands

There have been profound changes in the Fashion System, as a system that prescribes attitudes and behaviours. The relationship between fashion and individuals happens through the functionality of clothing as protection and the need for individual representation through style. From this point of view, studying fashion and its relationship with the human being enables a perception of culture and ways of life (ENTWISTLE, 2016).

The concept of "fashion" has different understandings for both academics and the public that operates it. Reinforcing Simmel's (1904) idea, Crane and Bovone state that "the concept [fashion] is often used to refer to the manner in which specific forms of disseminated culture" (CRANE AND BOVONE, 2006, p. 320). The fashion system and everything that is inherent to it is related to multiple objects that hold narratives and, in this way, are texts with meanings, as Barker and Jane (2016) and Baptista (2009) indicate when they mention the concept of text to refer to varied cultural objects. Fashion is an intangible manifestation of a period and represents society, both through the historical objects that describe it and through the individual practices that are related to it. The mention of symbolisms printed in the context of fashion is recurrent. Its interpretation as a social system and cultural phenomenon is frequent in several authors (SIMMEL, 1904; BARTHES, 1983; LIPOVETSKY, 1987; CRANE, 2000; BARNARD, 2007; TUNGATE, 2005; MIRANDA ET AL., 1999; ENTWISTLE, 2016, 2019; KAISER, 2019; VARLEY ET AL., 2019).

For Roland Barthes (1957, 1983, 2006), semiology is a channel to understand the constant changes in communication and the social environment. Taking the fashion system as a case study, Barthes construct three systems that explain human communication through clothing: 'writing'; the 'photographed' and the 'used' (or 'real'). In the same way, Caroline Evans quotes Lipovetsky and says that 'fashion changes mass appearances to the order of theatricality, seduction and enchanted spectacle' (EVANS, 2001, p. 271). The author approaches fashion as a social system that resides in the public demonstration of style and, at the same time, describes a historical evolution of the fashion show as an element of mediation in fashion, explaining its relevance as a form of evidence and representation of the style, which is communicated throughout Barthes system.

Spectacle and consumption become central in this type of representation [fashion shows]. The notions of representation and spectacle that are
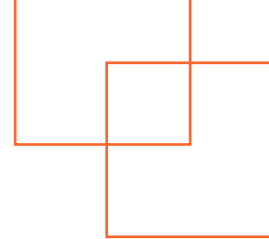
presented appear as elements of clarification regarding the fashion show as an object of communication (EVANS, 2001, pp. 293-295). The characteristics that the fashion shows present as identity elements of the brands must be reinforced. They are the type of model that represents the brands (physical characteristics); their way of walking (posture); the show locations (space of the event); the decoration or the choice of who sat in the front rows (EVANS, 2001, pp. 293-295).

The runway show has always assumed the role of a social spectacle that moves the fashion brands system and that stimulates society in the face of new cultural productions, in this case clothing (HESSELBLEIN, 2019; EVANS, 2001; SUDJIC, 2010). The fashion show is a moment of expression and affirmation of creation within the cultural and strategic scope of the brands, while at the same time becoming a place for the glorification of art and personal choices. Consequently, the identities and representations that fashion shows can bring are relevant in the context of fashion studies and as a representation of culture and society. Thus, we understand that it is important to observe these events in a plural scope, as they are current reflections and are often associated with disruption, being clues for the research of culture and cultural patterns (EVANS, 2001; SUDJIC, 2010; HESSELBLIEN, 2019; BARRY, 2019 and ENTWISTLE, 2009).

3 METHODOLOGY

Although Lopes (2019, p. 344) refers to the little attention given to the use of knowledge related to trends, namely through trend reports, we believe that the study of this theme is relevant in the process of managing brands and projects, as trends reflect sociocultural patterns and movements, that strategically inform new projects. To understand how trends relate to fashion shows as cultural productions, it is pertinent to correlate them. It should be noted that the purpose of this research work is not the identification of sociocultural patterns, but the analysis of patterns that have already been identified. The main objective is to understand the flow of trends in Gucci branded fashion shows.

The case study of this investigation was composed by a set of six unified fashion shows (male and female) (FW2017, SS2018, FW2018, SS2019, FW2019, SS2020) that represent a moment of rupture in the identity construction of the brand, coinciding with an impact by Alessandro Michele as Gucci's creative director (CANTÚ, 2021). To develop this analysis, we believe that it is pertinent to carry out a longitudinal approach[1] to the trends already identified by the

2 The trends were defined in 2018 by the Trends Observer and are available on:
www.trendsobserver.com

Trends Observer (through a critical identification and comparison of trends in the respective period) to instruct an effective analysis. This makes it possible to deconstruct the patterns of meaning to understand the development of trends.

Trend archaeology also facilitates understanding of social change and instructs understanding of evolution to speculate changes in the DNA of identified trends. Through this analytical proposal, we understand the development of meanings in branding and how it potentialize strategies that fit in with its attitude towards sociocultural phenomena. This analysis also facilitates an understanding of the narratives created by Gucci, seeking to decode the brand's culture and its identity and cultural characteristics.

To carry out this analysis, the trends identified by the trend research platform Trends Observer will be addressed, and the access to the trends that have been identified by the platform since 2016 will take place using the Wayback Machine online-software. The Trends Observer "is an independent and international non-profit platform, dedicated to the scientific development and dissemination of Trends Studies, working within an academic vision and purpose" (www.trendsobserver.com). The work carried out by this platform is related to the analysis of large structures of mindsets that are latent in the cultural system and materialize through objects and associated behavioural patterns. This network proposes a disciplinary consolidation of Trend Studies and brings a Portuguese-speaking perspective to the research and dissemination of content related to the identification of mindset and behaviour patterns within the approach of ethnographic inspiration. Trends Observer also reinforces its role as a content diffusion network that allows an introduction to the discipline of Trend Studies, working as a project active within an active and international scientific community, promoting the communication of science and the development of research processes that seem to dialogue with the signified practice that arises from the market. This is the network, among several others, that deserves to be highlighted given its scientific nature and the development proposal it assumes in the academic sphere.
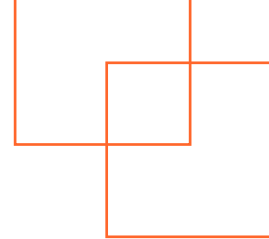
3.1 Gucci Spring/Summer 2020

In 2019 (the year the show happened), the trends mapped by Trends Observer[2], and which conceptually anchor the latent mindsets in this object of study were the following ones: **Experienced Narratives and Identities**
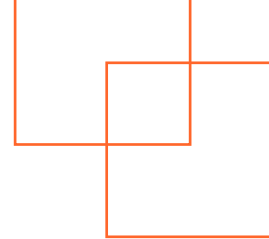
(macro trend), with respective derivation in the form of the **Nostalgia** micro trend. About this macro trend, the platform highlights cultural movements that indicate the existence of 'codes' that exert friction on the continuous narratives that inhabit the culturally constituted world. Identities also take shape through the conceptual articulations of this trend, as they reflect a world where identity symbols, memories and stories continually contribute to the development of the tangle of meanings that make up the various latent representations in society. Regarding Gucci's SS2020 fashion show, symbols such as the straitjacket, the suitcase with the wooden flap and the carpet are clear reflections of a surreal narrative, which exalts Gucci's creative and characteristic character. These signs symbolize the various complex narratives guided by the experience that is brought by the brand. Regarding the Nostalgia micro trend, it takes shape through identity anchors and representations of the past that are present in the brand's contemporary discourses, creating symbolic identifications at the level of emotions. Its reflection on Gucci is visible through signs that represent a brand culture and that relate to the narratives created by it in the past (diachrony), such as the concept of "riding". Thus, signs such as horse-bit shaped buckles, horseshoes, Gucci's monogram, the diamond-shaped pattern, or the Gucci stripes characterize a narrative that is still present in the brand's representations.

In parallel, representations of the **Unrestricted Human** macro trend that extols the liberation of social identities predetermined by society are also visible. This trend reflects the change in the individuality's construction, exalting extreme rationalization and continuous changes in the role of the "I" as a cultural element. Although this trend does not emphasize gender issues, it should be noted that this theme is essential to understand the social constructions that surround cultural elements and human beings. Regarding this object of study, this trend works as a link between three other micro trends, namely: **Divergence, Irreverence and Identities Revisited**. About the first one [Divergence], this takes shape and represents individuals in society and the possibility of these being framed in subgroups or cultures; these individuals have their identities defragmented and the plurality of skills that are inherent to them demands an open society ready to receive the constant frictions of taste and style. As far as Gucci is concerned, this trend is represented in signs related to the concept of "bondage" such as whips, the pillow-backpack, cuts in garments and gloves and latex chokers. These signs serve as a representation of a subculture and the materialization of elements that bring with them specifically and identity representations that reflect the duality of life and associated cultural practices. On the second [Irreverence],
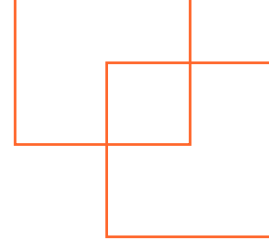
the acceleration and plural increase of everything around us exalts a craving for constant excess. In this case study, this trend is materialized through signs that are stitched together through a hyperbolic positioning to reinforce ideas present in cultural production, respectively, femininity and identity plasticity (through bracelets or anklets with lipsticks), the season of the year and the temporal positioning of cultural production (with the silver butterflies) and, finally, the accentuated speed and dynamism (through the crosswalk). Finally, the Identities Revisited micro trend reinforces the identity positioning of the pieces and the neutrality of some signs that infer the brand's heritage and facilitate an immediate identification of the brand, such as the "horse-bits", "horse-shaped buckles" -bit" and in "monogram format" and the "Gucci stripes". Likewise, some elements such as the "whip of straps" or the "backpack-cushion" allow us to reflect on components that identify the brand and position it within a surrealistic and differentiating environment that instigates a strong identity within the sector.

3.2 Gucci Fall/Winter 2019

Following the same procedure as in the previous analysis, the mapped trends[3] that conceptually anchor the latent mentalities in this object of study can be seen in depth below. Concerning the **Experienced Narratives** macro trend, it holds a privileged position in this cultural production. There are several objects whose narratives are entangled, and which play a relevant role in the surreal narrative that is created (see the signs "transparent bag" and "tears"). At the same time, we see complexity in the meanings of this production and the idea of 'liquidity' associated with the trend in question. This idea is reflected through a set of signs that express the malleability of identities and human representation (see signs "masks with thorns" or "white and red masks of varnish"). Furthermore, it should be noted that surreal narratives such as "goat embroidery" or "hat with transparent brim" compose a symbolic framework of irreverent expression in the brand. Even the irreverent expression of individual identity plays an important role in creating plural communication, but at the same time, it does not lose its place in a complex and volatile society. This idea of solidity of concepts can be observed through the **Nostalgia** micro trend (associated with the macro trend mentioned above). Some elements take on the role of representing the brand's history and identity (5th Element), such as "horse-bits", "monogram buckles" or "Gucci stripes". These build narratives and symbology about the brand and allow a direct and tangible association with its visual memory.

In this production, we can also observe the presence of signs that illustrate the characteristics of the **Unrestricted Human** macro trend and the related **Cool Irreverence** micro trend. About the first, this takes the main theme of this show. Issues of 'identity' and 'liberation' from culturally imposed canons (as in the case of female versus male) are reflected in the various signs that relate to this trend. Consider the case of the various types of masks ("white varnish/plastic masks"; "masks with thorns"; "hat with transparent brim" and "metal masks in the shape of animals"), which allow you to hide or re-signify the identity. Regarding the second trend [Cool Irreverence], the 'special sense' and the 'need to be different' are evidenced through signs that represent exuberant narratives, such as the case of "golden ears" or "gold ornaments". This type of expression seems to be what stimulates the irreverent creation of fashion. However, in this type of staging, we have the construction of meanings that consolidate the barriers of meaning between the real and the imaginary.

3.3 Gucci Spring Summer 2019

The trends which conceptually anchor the latent mentalities in this object of study were the Experienced Narratives macro trend is materialized through signs that refer to "surrealism", an idea that guides the narrative of this cultural production. These signs ("white bird"; "Mickey suitcase"; "pig-shaped pin" and the "strawberry pattern") break the symbolic construction of the parade and the concept of "narrative" that make up the symbolic framework of this production, expanding the symbolic and experiential communication that is transposed by the brand. In the context of this macro trend, we can observe the existence of a ramification of the idea of nostalgia. Like the other productions already analysed, we can find signs such as the "diamond pattern" or the "Gucci stripes", which are part of the identity and symbolic anchors of the past. These signs create symbolic identifications at the level of imagery and refer to historical constructions of Gucci (brand culture related to "riding" and "authenticity", narratives that are still present in the brand's representations and consolidate its DNA).

From another point of view, we observe the manifestation of the Unrestricted Human macro trend, also observed in the previous case study. This trend does not change compared to analysis and, in this case, takes shape through signs such as "sales", "androgyny" or "jockstraps". These objects are clear representations of identity under construction (of the Gucci brand) and at the same time represent a liquid society, freed from
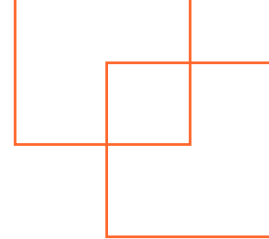
rationalizations, and flooded with individual expressions. It is also possible to glimpse the manifestation of the Cool Irreverence micro trend, also based on other analyses. The mindset that builds the pattern of meanings inherent to this trend reinforces the search for freedom, individuality, and boldness. We can see their representations through signs such as "jewellery", "feather ornaments", "oxen" or the scenic space that organizes the performance (the "La Palace"). These signs suggest the idea of freedom and, visually, are a representation of what guides the Cool Irreverence trend.

3.4 Gucci Fall Winter 2018

The following trends that correlate with the Gucci Spring/Summer 2018 show were identified: Experienced Narratives and Unrestricted Human macro trends and From Augmented to Distorted Reality and Cool Irreverence micro trends. Also, for this analysis, it is worth noting that in 2018, the Trends Observer platform separated the 'macro' and 'micro' trends, not associating them and, as such, their present is presented independently, although it is possible to see that their ideas are articulated in a more recent moment.

In this cultural production, the **Experienced Narratives** macro trend must be observed, mainly following two central ideas identified in the trend's body in 2018: the issues of "narratives and experiences" and "nostalgia". Regarding the first, the various meanings that are part of the sign set refer to a complex history that represents the social reality (identity liquidity and the control of individual personalities). Concerning nostalgia, this idea, although subtly, appears in visible sensory cleavages through the representation of the brand as the sign "Paramount" or through the continued use of identity elements from Gucci (5th. Element), such as this is the case of the "horse-bits", the "Gucci pattern" or the "Gucci stripes", which value a brand's heritage and, in some way, its relative cultural heritage.

About micro trends, we see the presence of two in this production. The **From Augmented to Distorted Reality** trends emphasizes this show, and its impact is expressive given the number of signs associated with it. These trends reinforce the dystopian realities expressed by Gucci and are following the mindset described by the trend, see the signs "dragon", "hat in the shape of a Chinese roof", "chameleon", among others. The 'authenticity' described in the trend text reflects a brand that reconstructs meanings through material culture. As for the **Cool Irreverence** micro trend, this is represented by eccentric elements that build the idea of excess that is inherent to it (signs "bead necklaces" or "shiny accessories"). The idea of exaggeration represents
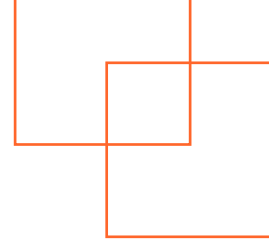
the current culture not only for the abundance of objects but also for its meanings (a fact that it is also reflected in several coordinates of this show).

3.5 Gucci Spring Summer 2018

In this analysis, the following trends[4] that can be observed in the Gucci Spring/Summer 2018 show were selected: Experienced Narratives and Unrestricted Human macro trends and From Augmented to Distorted Reality and Cool Irreverence micro trends. It is worth noting that in 2018, the Trends Observer platform separated the 'macro' and 'micro trends', not correlating them and, as such, their analyses are presented independently.

About the **Experienced Narratives** macro trend, the symbols that describe it reflect an imaginative and predominant narrative in this cultural production. This occurs through symbolic anchors such as the fantasy imagery (symbols "snow white" and "Bugs Bunny"). Likewise, the 'symbolic economy' that describes the trend can be seen using signs such as the "heart-shaped glasses", a vintage revival, and the "masculine bust", symbolic support that goes back to history and the memory of the brand. Another macro trend that is present in this cultural production is the **Unrestricted Human**, which is visible through signs that carry messages related to "seduction" and "bondage", concepts that have been guiding the brand's imagery, as mentioned above. These concepts allow expressing an approach to the multifaceted identities of the human being and underline the freedom of choices and performances that describe individuals.

Concerning micro trends, we can observe that the representations of the **From Augmented to Distorted Reality** trend are relevant in this cultural production (given the large number of signs that can be associated. This trend manifests a pattern of mindsets that enhances 'authenticity'. The liberation from the aesthetic canons, we see both a distorted reality (see, for example, the signs "crying eye", "glasses with a drop of blood" or "snake ornament"), as a brand that communicates through expressiveness and plasticity that becomes increasingly pronounced in the digital environment. As for the **Cool Irreverence** micro trend, the 'excess' and the need to express themselves in an 'irreverent' way was present in the collective mindset associated with this production. of signs such as the "shining ornament" or the "bead necklace", which represent exaggeration and abundance. This complex tangled sign encourages an analysis that must be attentive and careful, as many cultural objects is something intrinsic to Gucci and deserves to be analysed from a macro perspective and transversal to all the elements of the case study.
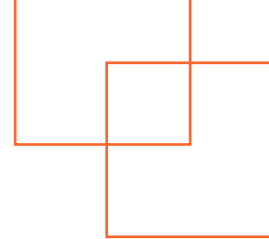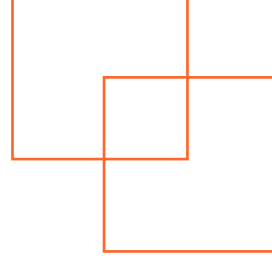
3.6 Gucci Fall Winter 2017

The trends mapped[5] by the Trends Observer and which conceptually represent mindsets in this object of study are the following: the **Experienced Narratives** macro trend, in which we see its representation through objects that portray the main concept of this "Alchemist Garden" show. This correlation is supported by the ideas of "cultural flag", the "narratives" and the "stories" present in the body of this trend. The relevance of symbols, experiences and discourses highlights the narrative and the concept of this production (see the signs "basket with plants", "dress in white roses" and "butterfly ornaments"). Still, in the field of macro trends, we also observe the presence of elements that refer to the **Unrestricted Human** macro trend. This is present through gender issues, the representation of a missing identity and which is represented by the sign "hood with sparkles" and the liberation of the body as an object of experiences (see the sign "choker with pots").

Regarding micro trends, we see the presence of the **Cool Irreverence**. The 'excess' and 'irreverence' are bought through the display of exuberant signs ("snake pattern boots", "shiny glasses"), but also through surrealist narratives that express an eccentricity of signs and narratives, as we see represented in the signs "pyramid", "tunnel with arches", or "tiger suitcase with wings". This micro trend is relevant in this cultural production, especially when we correlate the creations and the identity of the creator (Alessandro Michele), who is guided by the exuberance and complexity of the narratives.
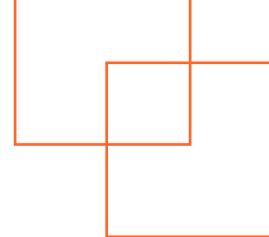
4 DATA ARTICULATION

The analysis performed allowed us to decode and understand the cultural context and the case study through the patterns represented by socio-cultural trends. Within the analytical framework of this work, some of the trends studied are more visible at Gucci in very particular way. It should be noted that, despite this, this should not invalidate the analysis of trends with less impact.

In the SS2020 show, we can see a greater number of trends represented (Figure 1 and Figure 2). This may be related to the existence of a greater plurality of signals in the production, which contributes to an accentuated expression of concepts. The trends that were identified in this case are Irreverence (micro), Nostalgia (micro), Identities Revisited (micro), Experienced Narratives and Identities (macro) and Divergence (micro). In this

set, the trend that has the greatest emphasis is Divergence (seven associated cultural signs). Two other trends that are relevant to the show are Nostalgia (six associated cultural signs) and Identities Revisited (six associated cultural signs). Irreverence and Experienced Narratives trends appear with less intensity. We see an evident emphasis on narratives, stories, constructions of concepts and experiences as mentalities.

It should be noted that some trends have undergone changes in their DNA due to the reconfiguration of the Trends Observer trend map in 2018-2019 and this deserves to be pointed out in the context of trends archaeology. As we have already seen, in 2019 the platform had changes in its trend content. In the case of the Experienced Narratives macro trend (2018), it underwent a change and was renamed Experienced Narratives and Identities (2019). This change is reflected in the new trend name and its text (trend DNA). The change had little impact on the description of the mindset in question. We see a change related to the addition of the concepts of "liquidity" and "fluidity" in the body of the trend, however, this has not profoundly impacted its DNA. It should be noted that in 2019 we see its description expanded regarding the 'change of meanings in the world' and the 'creation of fantasies' in contemporary society. We also see the separation of the idea of 'nostalgia', which is now defined as a homonymous micro trend, Nostalgia (2019), and which is now linked to the Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trend (2019). This micro trend highlights the importance of memory and meanings in material culture, an idea that was present in the Experienced Narratives trend in 2018 and which became isolated in the trend map as an independent mindset (micro trend Nostalgia). We also observed the existence of three micro trends in this production, which derive from the Unrestricted Human (2018) macro trend. These are: Divergence, Irreverence and Identities Revisited. In 2019, we should point out that the Unrestricted Human macro trend kept the same title and the same DNA, however, it started to serve as a hinge for the three micro trends mentioned. About the Divergence micro trend (2019), it kept its DNA and title unchanged between 2018 and 2019. Regarding the Irreverence trend (2019), it was born from the micro trend formerly known as Cool Irreverence (2018). Although the DNA of the trend has remained the same, we see that the change only occurred at the title level. The Identities Revisited (2019) micro trend is presented for the first time, and we see in its description a relationship between the micro trends Neo Male (2018) and Female Up and Rising (2018). We also observe that in the FW2019 show (Figure 1 and Figure 2) the Cool Irreverence (2018) micro trend and the Experienced Narratives (2018) and Unrestricted Human (2018) macro trends

are present. In this production, the trend that is present with more emphasis is Experienced Narratives (with ten associated cultural signs). Both others don't stand out in the same way. The Cool Irreverence micro trend has four associated signals, and the Unrestricted Human macro trend has five signals. We see that in this production and similarly to the previous shows, the narratives, the relationship with symbolisms, the identity discourses take place in an expressive way.

Regarding the SS2019 show, we noticed the presence of the same trends presented above (FW2019), however, with different intensities. In this case, we observe the Cool Irreverence micro trend associated with eight cultural signals, the most prominent being the Experienced Narratives macro trend associated with three cultural signals and the Unrestricted Human macro trend associated with two cultural signals, the latter being the one with the least accentuated presence. In this case, we see that mindsets related to irreverence and excess rule in this show and its production.

In the FW2018 show, we are faced with four trends and their respective cultural signals: the Cool Irreverence and From Augmented to Distorted Reality micro trends, with two and six associated signals, respectively, and the Experienced Narratives and Unrestricted Human macro trends, with five and one associated signals, respectively. In this show, the trend that stands out the most is the micro trend From Augmented to Distorted Reality, which refers to 'authenticity', the distortion of realities and the ergonomics of experiences.

In the SS2018 show, we can see four trends with expression. These are the Unrestricted Human (with one related cultural signal) and Experienced Narratives (with five related cultural signals) macro trends, and the From Augmented to Distorted Reality (with seven associated cultural signals) and Cool Irreverence (with two associated cultural signals) micro trends. In this show, the trend with the greatest impact is the micro trend From Augmented to Distorted Reality, following the same assumptions already described in the previous show (FW2018). We see the prominence of the Experienced Narratives macro trend, which portrays issues of symbolism and identity discourses. With less relevance, we can observe both the Unrestricted Human macro trend and the Cool Irreverence micro trend.

Finally, in the FW2017 show, we see three trends that have an impact on this production. These are the Cool Irreverence micro trend (with eight related cultural signals) and the Experienced Narratives (with three related cultural signals) and Unrestricted Human (with two related cultural signals) macro trends. In this show, the two macro trends do not have a great impact,
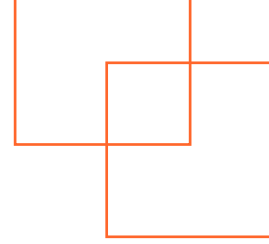
although they coexist with other present meanings. Regarding the mindset represented by the Cool Irreverence trend, it stands out through the concept of irreverence, the excess and liquidity in the representations and ideas present in this show. This trend is most prominent in this production.

From a transversal and global perspective, and looking at Figure 1 and Figure 2, we see that there is an emphasis on issues related to narratives, stories, and experiences. These ideas are represented through the Experienced Narratives macro trend (and respective development: Experienced Narratives and Identities) and have an emphasis on building the brand's DNA. Likewise, the Cool Irreverence trend (and its respective development: Irreverence) should be highlighted as a trend with a strong impact in the period under analysis. The liquidity of volatile, fast, and excessive representations is something to be considered in this analysis and for defining the narrative of the brand's productions. The Unrestricted Human trend also deserves to be analysed. Although in the two most recent shows this trend has not emerged and its impact along the objects of study has not been expressive, it deserves to be highlighted because it appears in most cases in the analytical framework. This trend prioritizes the analysis of issues related to the externalization of identities and the malleability of personalities. This proves to be important for analysing the performances that guide the brand's expressions.

Figure 1 - Map of the Archaeology of Trends at Gucci. The analysed period was between 2016 and 2020.
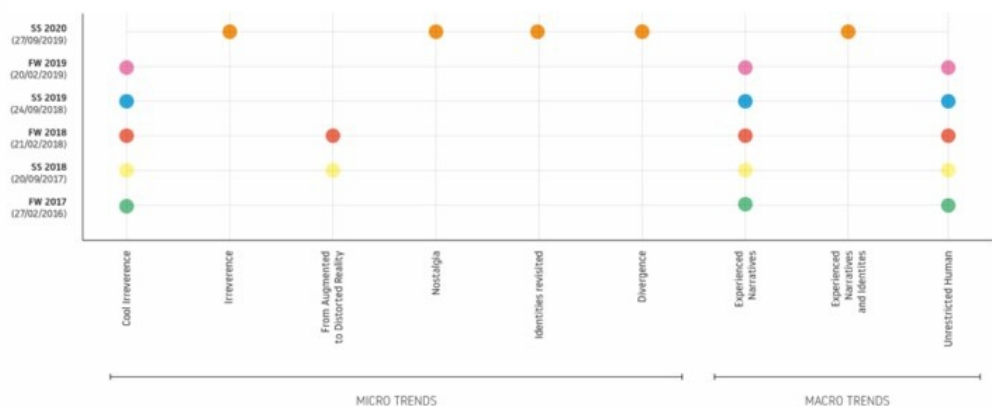
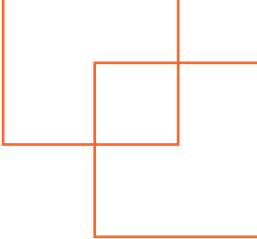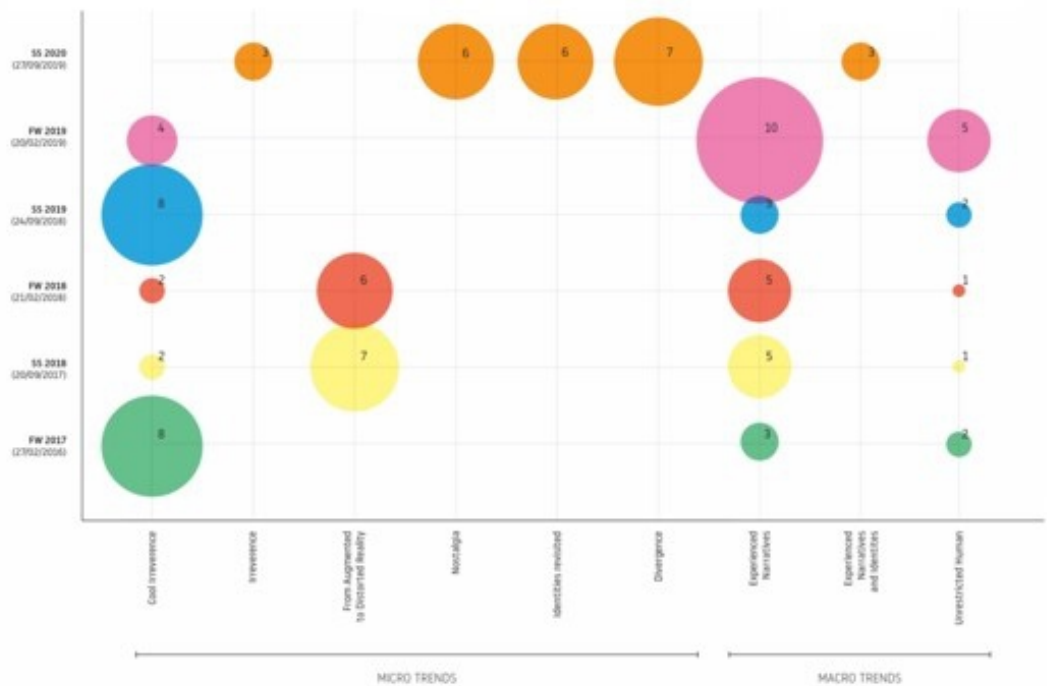Source: Developed by the author.

Figure 2 - Intensity map: Trends Archaeology at Gucci (2016 – 2020). Trend analysis based on the number of related cool signals.

Source: Developed by the author.

Finally, to account for and understand which trend had a greater presence in Gucci's production over the period under analysis, we developed the following table (Table 1). The brand's most expressive trend is the Experienced Narratives/Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trend, with twenty-nine associated cultural signals. We also see the Cool Irreverence/Irreverence micro trend highlighted, with twenty-seven associated cultural signals. The third most prominent trend is the From Augmented to Distorted Reality micro trend. The latter, despite having many related signs (thirteen signs), appears punctually, being verified in only two of the seven shows analysed. In the case of the Unrestricted Human macro trend, we see the opposite (a spread of weak signals over a long period). Although the trend appears with great frequency, it has no expressiveness (strength) in the environments where it is present (Figure 1 and Figure 2).
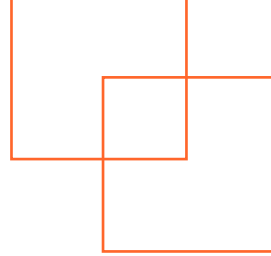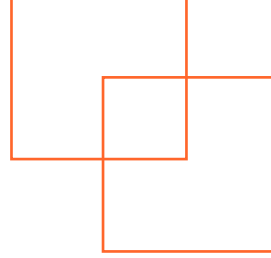
Table 1 - Sum of the number of signs of each trend presented in Gucci's cultural production.

| Trends	Number of signals related
Cool Irreverence + Irreverence	27
From Augmented to Distorted Reality	13
Nostalgia	6
Identities Revisited	6
Divergence	7
Experienced Narratives + Experienced Narratives and Identities	29
Unrestricted Human	11

Source: Developed by the author.

The articulation of data allows understanding the flow of trends in the case study. The analysis of this scenario from the perspective of deconstructing meanings leads to an understanding of the impact of mindset trends on cultural production. Glimpsing the archaeology of trends as a metaphor for the diachronic analysis of meanings in the brand, it is possible to study the development of ideas and the DNA of trends. We observed that three trends appear more often in Gucci shows (Figure 1 and Figure 2), namely: the Cool Irreverence micro trend (appears in all shows); Unrestricted Human (which appears in the first five shows that make up the case study) and the Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trend (which appears in all shows and is initially titled Experienced Narratives). These trends represent the DNA of Gucci, the cultural environment in which it lives and deserves to be highlighted for having an expressive flow in the analysis. It should be stressed that throughout the period under review, mindsets remained unchanged within the period, as we do not see relevant changes in the body of trends. As already mentioned, the only change in the DNA of trends occurred subtly in the Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trend.

We must consider the relevance of the brand as a stimulus for cultural innovation, as this, as a cultural product, is also an active force. The positioning of Alessandro Michele as Gucci's creative director represents a paradigm shift in the brand's cultural production. Regarding the Cool Irreverence micro

trend, and as a mindset with less amplitude (micro trend), but sufficiently stable, we observe that the cultural production under analysis uses icons that connect it with the 'millennials', as the trend itself describes. In communicating with this audience, Gucci uses, for example, narratives with broad meanings, such as 'mythology' (FW2019) and 'social criticism', related to contemporary problems (mental health or gender issues; see the shows FW2018 and SS2020). The ornaments and details in coordinates and accessories are elements that undergo constant changes both in their form and in their meanings, this indicates a malleable nature on the part of Gucci and how it is a brand capable of adapting to cultural moments and stimuli. Still, within the Cool Irreverence micro trend, we see that Gucci is a representation of excess both in terms of the brand's visuality and the plurality of meanings it uses to communicate. The abundance of representations on the brand reflects the power of the Cool Irreverence trend in fashion representations. Look at the issues of excess size and quantity of jewellery pieces (SS2018), the design of various props (FW2017; SS2018), the play of patterns and details in clothing (FW2017) and the excess of narratives worked simultaneously in the various shows. This trend has a relevant presence between 2016 and 2018, however, as of that last year, it starts to lose intensity. This contrasts with the flow of the Experienced Narratives and Identities trend. We can infer those signs change their meanings and start to be guided by ideas related to experience and identity construction, and not just by the irreverence or excess described by the Cool Irreverence trend. This can be seen through the correlation of meanings between Cool Irreverence and Experienced Narratives and Identities trends (see the signs "carpet-shaped stage" in the SS2020 show).
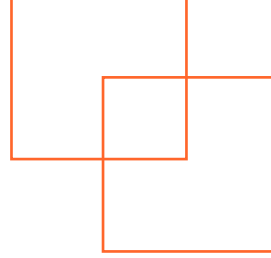
Regarding the Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trend, this is the most relevant to contextualize the brand, its cultural production and to understand the current culture. This trend, although expressive between 2016 and 2018, has a more relevant impact between 2019 and 2020. At this time, the body of the trend has come to frame the idea of 'liquidity and fluidity', concepts that are present in the cultural production by Gucci. As a force with greater impact and duration (macro trend), this trend finds its expression in culture in a more latent and less visible way. It is more based on the collective mindset and structures a web of meanings that are inherent to the cultural field. As the name implies, experiences make up the structure of the brand, even with an identity in constant construction. The creative director contributes to a complex cultural creation at the level of concepts. As an example, this can be seen through the motifs and symbols with personal meanings for Alessandro (SS2019). The brand works its communication between extremes: both adopt
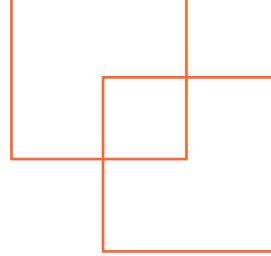
a classic style and maintain coherence between the pieces, as they compose a complex and decontextualized symbolic framework that breaks with the brand's discourse. The idea of 'plurality of concepts' ends up representing Gucci and reflecting the mindset of the Experienced Narratives and Identities macro trends. About the 'liquidity' that the trend seeks to represent, this can be seen both at the level of the plurality of concepts mentioned above, as well as by the vast number of stories and crossings of high culture signs with popular culture signs (SS2019; FW2019; FW2018; SS2018; FW2017). The fifth element serves as a 'symbolic anchor' for everything Gucci stands for and for its memory and cultural heritage. This element also stands out, as it strengthens Gucci's visual identity and consolidates values and meanings that build the brand's imagery, positioning it in a visually saturated market.

Finally, we can see that, despite having a high flow between 2017 and 2019, the Unrestricted Human macro trend was no longer noticeable in Gucci's fashion shows from February 2019 onwards. This observation makes us reflect on the issues of 'gender' and expression 'from the inside out' identity, mentioned by the trend. If these themes are no longer relevant to be analysed considering this trend, at the same time, this may indicate that the trend is, eventually, increasing its penetration in the social layer. Its representation regarding the idea of 'gender' is very present in the brand through androgenic models and several unified fashion shows (FW2018 and SS2018). We can also glimpse the concept of 'post-human'. This is approached flexibly and can be seen through surrealism and the narratives that build several shows, as is the case of the 'Alchemist' (FW2017). Gucci relates to the Unrestricted Human macro trend through performance narratives that reflect the experiences of everyday life (SS2019) and individual choices (see the 'bondage' in the SS2020; SS2019; FW2019 and FW2017) shows. The brand's aesthetic (as an element of representation of its identity) is changeable. This visual malleability is related to the idea of the 'constantly changing avatar' that is referred to in the DNA of this macro trend. Finally, we can also glimpse the portrayal of various cultures and times through signs from various places, such as Paris (SS2019) or Hollywood (SS2019).

We can see that Gucci is a brand that expresses itself in a spontaneous and irreverent way. The various concepts present in the fashion shows are unusual and the brand communicates with a high connotative density. This plastic style is the reflection of a society in a constant flux of transformation and fashion accompanies this phenomenon (LIPOVETSKY, 2004). Mindsets at Gucci fluctuate. This means that we have an unstable brand, which is malleable and responds to culture with relative fluidity. This can be seen through the

existence of a plurality of trends, such as Cool Irreverence, Experienced Narratives and Identities and Unrestricted Human. It is interesting to note that the fashion system is mostly related to short-term trends that have a greater impact (due to fashion seasonality). We can infer that this sector, seen from the perspective of Gucci, presents itself as a plural scenario of ideas and with continuous re-signification. Such inference can also be seen in the light of the paradigm of Hypermodernity mentioned above.

The number of brand-related micro trends is greater than the number of macro trends (five micro trends and three macro trends). If a micro-trend has a smaller impact on the distribution of its force in society, and that, as a rule, micro trends have a shorter duration (HIGHAM, 2009; KONGSHOLM AND FREDERIKSEN, 2018), it is possible to deduce that the brand encourages current cultural creation. Accordingly, and because they are fewer in number, the micro trends that correlate with the brand have a lower capacity for interference concerning the collective imagination (translation process). The other trends (Nostalgia, Identities Revisited, Divergence, Unrestricted Human) that also appear related to the brand had no impact on the analysis. These are not prominent in the construction of Gucci's DNA as they have an unstable presence. Regarding Gucci's participation in the field of collective ideas, the brand has a great capacity to adapt to sociocultural flows, as it manages to maintain a diversified communication and a prior description of its DNA based on the analysed flow of trends. In short, the plurality of micro trends and respective signs, in contrast to the number of signs of macro trends, indicates that Gucci, as a cultural entity, has its sign construction less structured and more susceptible to change considering cultural flows. We see an identity that enhances the characteristics of the environment more clearly, making this brand an excellent object of study to understand the mindsets that make up the changing and actual cultural fabric.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This article analyses the evolution of trends, seeking to speculate on the "archaeology of trends" as a method of Trend Studies. At the same time, we tried to decipher how the trends related to Gucci developed and, therefore, which were the most present forces and dynamics, through the correlation of trends already identified with the brand.

Culture is approached here as the basis for mediation and production in culture and as a plural terrain where symbolic exchanges and the creation of cultural objects take place, giving them meaning and coherence within a
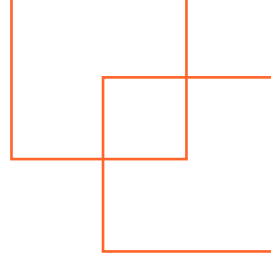
society. In this sense, we used methodological approaches that allowed an in-depth understanding of cultural flows in brands, in this case, Gucci. The approach to fashion shows as communication elements and within the scope of the authors work allows us to understand their role as a plural communication element in fashion brands. At the same time, its sign plurality makes it possible to understand the inherent complexity of semiosis between brands and their cultural production.

On the analysis of trends, in the Gucci perspective, we could understand that there was no profound change in the analysed content. Some changes in the DNA of trends are noticeable given that there are changes in the context of the Trends Observer research platform, but not in the socio-cultural sphere. In this sense, we can infer that trend mindset remain stable during the period under analysis and the brand can react to a consolidated cultural structure. Concerning the specific brand, the Experienced Narratives and Identities and Cool Irreverence trends stood out, which underlines the creative, unusual, and differentiating DNA of the brand, visible over time.

We can see that trend archaeology as a method of approaching trends studies lacks sources and further studies for its consolidation. Although based on the idea of diachrony and analytical transversality, it must be understood in greater depth to understand its real impact and application, as it allows not only analysing meanings but also behaviours and mentalities latent in cultural objects and productions. About the limitations of this research, we notice that the analysis of a reduced number of study objects stimulates more comprehensive research, as well as the extension of the time under analysis. However, we must pay attention to the in-depth analysis that is carried out here, dealing with complex visual objects. To see if there are significant changes in the body of trends, we suggest an analysis over a longer period, as well as an unfolding of this script in other marks/objects of study.

This article contributed to tracing clues about this methodological practice, as well as to rethinking brands at the level of meanings. The results that emerged from this investigation are rich analytical information that allowed us to understand the brand in question, the development of the environment around it and open paths to stimulate strategic thinking through the insights collected in this research. Thus, we see that the research of trends in a diachronic scope promotes cultural analysis applied within brands and cultural strategy, stimulating close relations between (Fashion) Branding and Trend Studies.
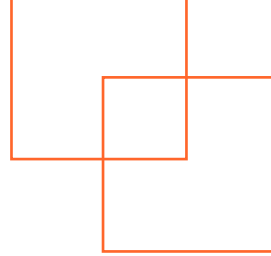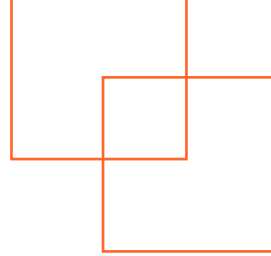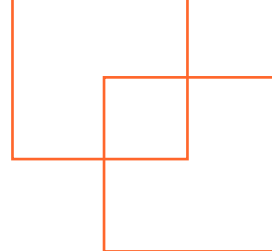
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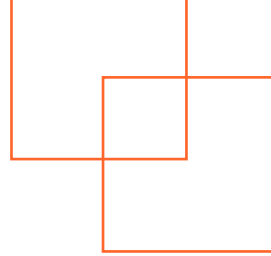
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