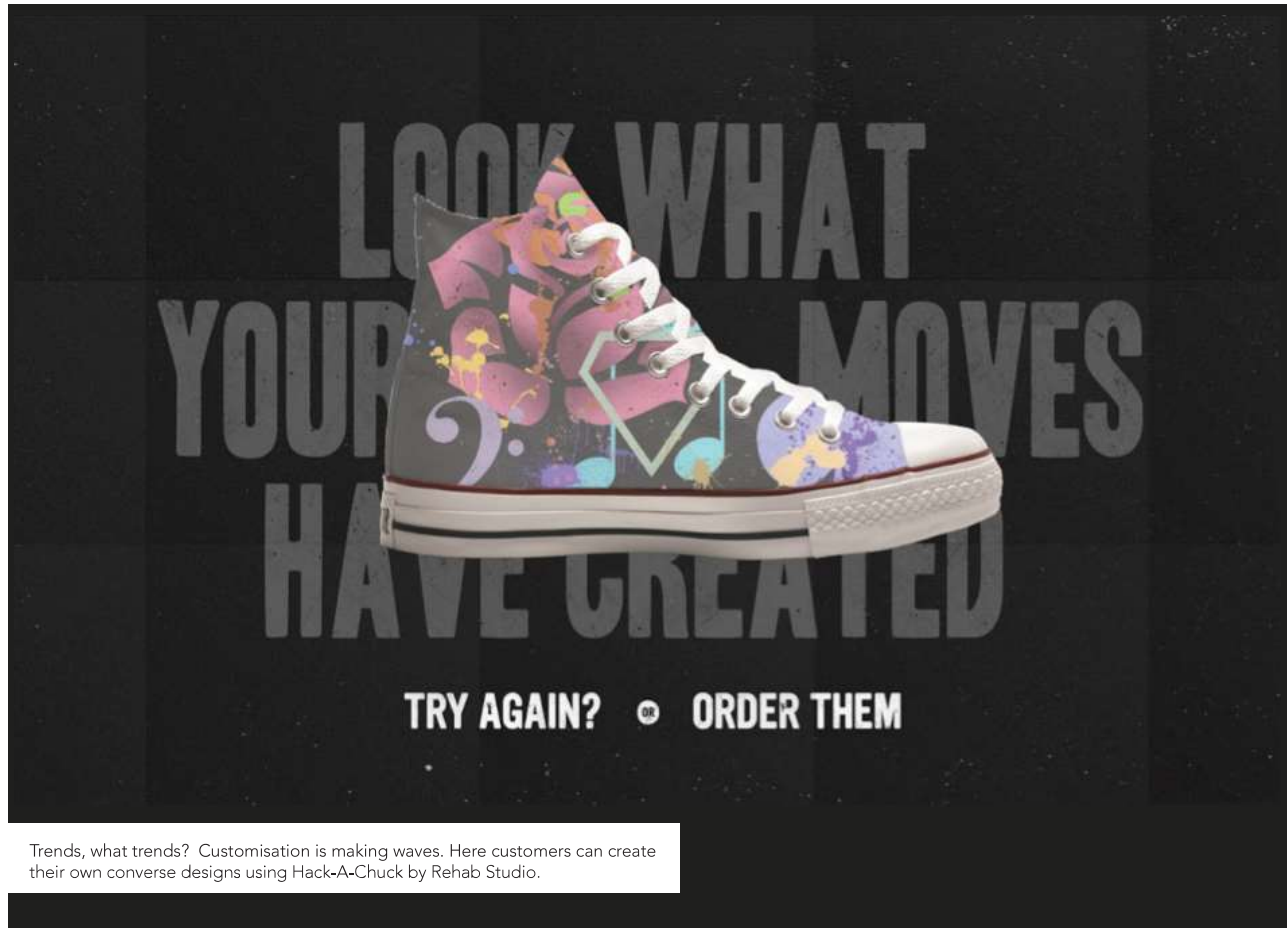


## ADHERENCE TO COLOUR TRENDS NO PANACEA FOR BUSINESSES IN THE MIDDLE GROUND



Trends, what trends? Customisation is making waves. Here customers can create their own converse designs using Hack-A-Chuck by Rehab Studio.

**Colour trends and style trends may be the main focus for those visiting the Heimtextil Trend Theme Park, however adhering to the latest colour palettes is just one part of maintaining a successful business, writes James Boston.**

In an interview with WFA, Anne Marie Commandeur, from the Stijlinstituut Amsterdam says that there is an alarming trend for companies in the middle ground abandoning their product development and research in favour of down-specing their product or simply relying on trend forecasters to come up with a magic bullet. She says she fears for the future of such companies and those wishing to abandon the middle ground should be investing in products and product development that really add value to consumers.

Commandeur, whose clients include Swarovski, Invista (makers of Lycra) and VF Corporation (owners of North Face, Lee, Timberland and Vans), said that many companies have pulled back on product development and process improvement. "These companies think it's not necessary anymore because they think that if they change colour cards each season it will be new enough to sell more product," Commandeur said. "Yes, companies need to update their colours but they also have to develop more sustainable products to serve the consumer in a more practical way and keep it very simple." "Sustainable design can combine very well with aesthetics, to the desirability [of products] and to finally to make sure there will be less waste."

"We think it's extremely important to be desirable and up to date, and it fits in the contemporary context, but also it's very important for us how it is made and it improves the lives of people."

Commandeur pointed to a new retail trend of retailers becoming curators, such as Formerly Yes in Los Angeles, which only offers one product per function.

"It can combine very well to the aesthetics, to the desirability and to finally always make sure there may be less waste, maybe it's too high a risk in that case."

"The whole middle is now cut out, all the big names of 30, 40, 50 years who were very good companies, some of them were family driven, who went through this whole stream of going for the big money; and then perhaps their collection is changing, even entire collections a couple of times a year and [they're] just



Formerly Yes in Los Angeles, is a retail store that only offers one product per function.

changing things without asking themselves: is anybody waiting for this?"

"I think the companies who are in the middle of the field, there's a lot of high end companies as well, they are very much aware of the strengths of their company when it comes to real quality, high quality products; and they are not going to change fast and they need to offer quality."

Commandeur says these types of businesses have been wiped by big players like Ikea who have the advantage of a brand.

"Ikea have product development there, a brand, and they have such a big advantage, they have a holistic approach and I think that is what's needed to come up with a product that has a good story.

"A story behind the products, it's very hard to sell them than just selling a piece of curtain fabric because it's the lost lose-it story and its contents as soon as it goes over to a company who puts their own brand on it."

"So all the people who are bringing their own story over and really know what they put in the fabric and how they can translate that message to the consumer have a big advantage."

## Local flavour and collaboration drive commercial market

That sense of Deja vu one gets when arriving in a chain hotel room may be a thing of the past as hospitality providers look to add local flavour, writes James Boston.

Anne Marie Commandeur, from the Stijlinstituut Amsterdam says that the emergence of Airbnb and a backlash against the anonymous fittings, fixtures and decorations of global hotel chains are seeing designers being commissioned to give hotels a local makeover.

"These chains are hiring designers and people and companies who all collaborate with an architect or really themselves take charge of everything in the manufacturing of

the source products."

"It's not just because they want to change the system, it's also because it has to be totally in line with the look and story which the hotels want to bring. They want to make people comfortable and people have to feel sheltered and well in a hotel so it all should be made well, including the foods."

"The cultural trend is the strongest with hospitality in mind, so the local flavour that's a big thing, not necessarily like a melting pot and then just transporting it. Now it can be really very much based on the cultural heritage of a certain area."