

SUBSCRIPTION-BASED ONLINE TREND FORECASTING TOOL
FOR GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Jim and Floyce McBath, who have always encouraged furthering education, playing outside, and using my imagination to the fullest. Also, to my husband Patrick Shelton for encouraging creativity in every aspect of our lives, and to our son, Milo, for racing this thesis to the finish line.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	2
II. RESEARCH	4
Comparative Audit.....	4
Surveys.....	8
Trend Forecasting as Used by Fashion Designers	8
Comparative History of Fashion and Graphic Design.....	11
III. HYPOTHESIS AND DESIGN PROCESS	20
Hypothesis.....	20
Design Process	20
Determining the Best Tool.....	20
Wireframing and User Testing.....	21
Website Layout	22
Brand Identity	23
Typography	24
Color	25
IV. RESULTS AND FURTHER RESEARCH	26
Prototyping.....	26
Further Research	26
V. CONCLUSION	28
APPENDIX SECTION.....	29

REFERENCES CITED.....	52
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LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparative Audit of WGSN.com and FashionSnoops.com.....	6
2. Comparative history of fashion and graphic design from 1920s to present	12
3. Word list describing a trend forecasting tool.....	23

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Poster for Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits, 1975, by Milton Glaser	2
2. Fashionsnoops.com website home page	7
3. WGSN.com website home page	7
4. Diffusion of Innovation Curve	10

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the profession of graphic design has grown and flourished, the age-old argument of style over function continues to be a dominating debate among experts and amateurs alike. In the documentary film *Helvetica*, renowned designer Massimo Vignelli says of design, “The life of a designer is a life of fight. Fight against the ugliness. Just like doctor fights against disease. For us, the visual disease is what we have around, and what we try to do is cure it somehow with design” (*Helvetica*, 2007).

These sentiments resonate from Modernists to Post Modern designers, many claiming to be experts in problem solving, communication, organizing information and branding, while style and taste are subjective to each designer’s theories. American designer Jeffery Keedy addresses the subject in his article *Style is not a Four Letter Word*, by questioning twenty-first century designers, “Isn’t style too important to be left in the hands of amateurs?” (Beirut, Drenttel, & Heller, 2006, p 102)

Style may be defined as the combination of distinctive features that makeup a design’s visual appearance (Graphic Design, n.d.). The value of design, its functionality, meaning and pleasure can exist independently of each other. However, in an ever-evolving design field, experience is needed to establish criteria and evaluation in the area of style. According to Virginia Postrel, economics columnist for the *New York Times*, one of the best ways to correct style, and subsequently taste and pleasure, is to rationalize the expertise of ‘this is good design’ not the personal pleasure ‘I like this’ (Beirut, Drenttel, & Heller, 2006). Postrel’s point of view supports that expertise in graphic design is useful in developing style through practice, science, and history. A good example of developing

expertise in style can be seen in the practice of designer Milton Glaser (see Figure 1). As an art student in the 1950s, Glaser began experimenting with flat illustration in commercial art. He then went on to continue studying etching in Italy. As he returned to New York and worked in advertising and editorial design, Glaser spent decades at Push Pin design studio developing his personal vision and style by combining the use of graphic history of Renaissance paintings to comic books as a data bank of forms, images and visual ideas (Meggs & Purvis, 2006).



Figure 1: Poster for Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits, 1975, by Milton Glaser

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In graphic design, style has been overlooked as a vital human need. It aids designers in finding their voice in the world of design. There has been little attempt to offer expertise in defining and presenting forthcoming styles, which inevitably develop into trends and become scattered across the design collective (Beirut, Drenttel, & Heller, 2006). No defined company or model works solely to present future-trending styles, concepts and ideas in one easy-to-find place.

Due to this lack, many graphic designers rely on their intuition and cast a wide net

of self-guided research, rather than relying on one source to go for expertise, such as a website. Massimo Vignelli also understood the need to expand our resources, and especially the use of the Internet, when he commented, “Technology gives us the opportunity to do better what we do. It gives us the control between the tool and the mind” (Heller & Prewitt, 1998).

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH

Assessing the needs for presenting trend forecasting as a valuable tool in graphic design is the foundation for the conducted research. Because technology plays such an important role in design and research today, it is also advantageous to acknowledge the Internet as a key tool for comparative analyses across different areas of design. Online tools for designers are just as important as traditional tools such as sketchbooks, literature, software, and historical expertise.

In order to assess such needs, traditional research methods alongside Internet-based research laid the groundwork for four main research components:

1. Comparative audit of successful trend forecasting tools found in fashion design.
2. Surveys across fashion and graphic design to assess the value of trend forecasting and areas of unaddressed needs that may be helpful in designing web-based tools for graphic designers.
3. Research into the theories, methods and analytics of trend forecasting to determine importance of research-based knowledge in comparison to user-led results and self-guided research.
4. A comparative history of fashion design and graphic design to explore any possible trend influences one may have had over the other.

COMPARATIVE AUDIT

Comparative auditing as a form of research provides an approach to analyzing what is working and what is not in a given model. A designer will find that models offer the most

value when considered as an indication of thinking at a moment in time, not as a finished artifact, and thus become useful in further improving and innovating subsequent models. Comparative audits can also offer insight into thought processes and rationale into various design decisions (Kolko, 2011, pp. 16–17).

Looking for any comparable projects in graphic design that attempt to address the lack of trend forecasting tools for designers found that currently there are only blogs and one-off articles about present trends in graphic design, with little to no mention of forecasting. However, fashion design, which is known for continually creating and following trends, was found to have successful tools in place for its designers to use for research and inspiration.

According to surveyed fashion designers, two of the more commonly used trend forecasting service tools are Worth Global Service Network (WGSN) and Fashion Snoops. These are trusted trend forecasting services with web-based tools that rely on professional forecasters to accurately predict which styles are going to become trends. As stated on the website, WGSN is a comprehensive research and analysis service for every stage of the product development life cycle. Trends are tracked and analyzed from their earliest emergence right through to the products driving retail and e-tail today. Both WGSN and Fashion Snoops are subscription based services that offer the ease of a website as well as a personal face-to-face representative (WGSN.com & Fashionsoops.com).

The following is a comparative audit table of the WGSN.com and Fashionsnoops.com based on user experience and focused translation as a possible graphic design model (see Figure 2 and 3).

Table 1: Comparative Audit of WGSN.com and FashionSnoops.com

	Negatives	Positives
Fashion Snoops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visually, the home page is very busy and hard for user to find information quickly. • The website has too many click-throughs to get to the needed information. • When viewing the website, it is hard to focus and find what user is looking for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once off the home page, each section separates out nicely once • The first thing users see is 'Who We Are' section. • Search can be done by images or reports • The following are extra sections that improve ease of research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ City guides ○ "What's Hot Now?" ○ Materials/Prints/Patterns ○ "On our Radar" ○ Visionary profile ○ Scrapbook area ○ Bloggers profile/Tumblr section ○ Emerging designers highlight
WGSN		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website is visually clean. • It is easier to navigate than Fashion Snoops. • Drop down menus make navigation easy. • WGSN offers an option to subscribe to monthly newsletters. • WGSN successfully uses social media. • The subscribe/ login area is easy to locate. • The following are extra sections that improve ease of research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approach section (Analysis / output) ○ Color of the Week ○ Reports & Webinars

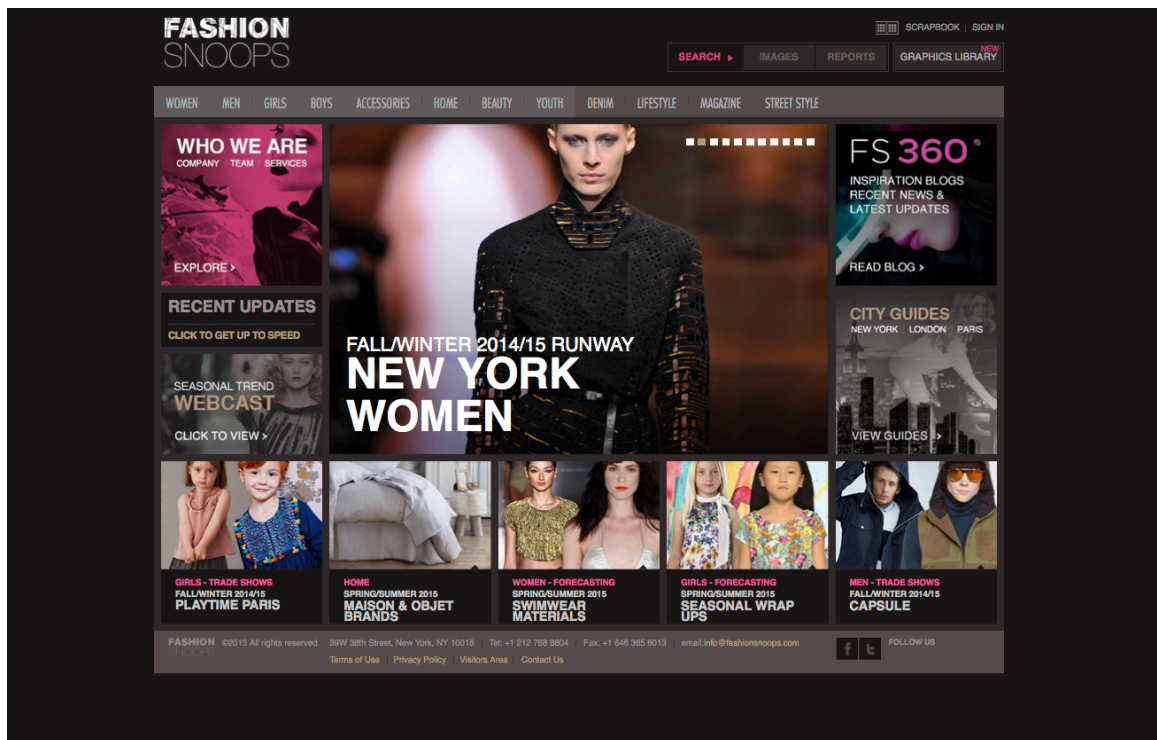


Figure 2: Fashionsnoops.com website home page

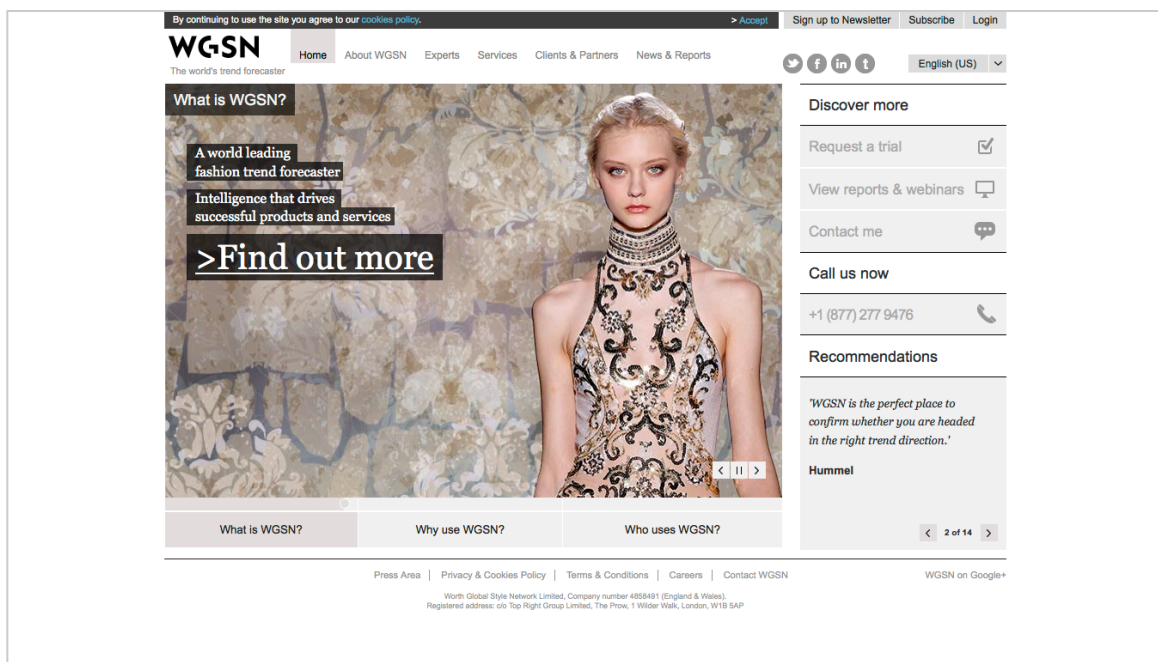


Figure 3: WGSN.com website home page

SURVEYS

For this thesis, surveys of fashion and graphic design professionals were conducted across both industries. These surveys were intended to get a feel for the range of what type of research designers' use in each industry.

The outcome showed that research is vastly important across both areas. In graphic design, 22% of designers spent 10+ hours on research per project, 44% spent 5-10 hours and 34% spent up to 5 hours. 100% of surveyed fashion designers also relied on at least one trend forecasting services, such as WGSN.com and FashionSnoops.com, as a resource of research alongside their own personal research of current trends, as design seasons change. One value in using trend forecasting resources noted in the survey of fashion designers is the ease of quick access no matter where the designer may be.

Among surveyed graphic designers, most of the self-guided research consisted of searching current styles that have been seen as consistent and successful across blogs and user-fed websites such as Pinterest.com and tumblr.com, rather than any new forthcoming trends. In addition to the aforementioned sites, blogs, communication annuals and Google image searches were among the most widely used platforms for research – most of which are user generated, or were originally meant to be social networks, rather than professionally curated.

TREND FORECASTING AS USED BY FASHION DESIGNERS

By definition and activity, the Trend Forecaster's Handbook describes professional trend forecasters as lifestyle detectives. They are men and women who spend their time detecting patterns, shifts in mindsets and lifestyle options that run against current thinking (Raymond, 2013). This observational-style of research is

qualitative and often performed at the beginning of the design research process. It involves observing real people in their environments having experiences and is often a strong research method for fashion designers. It is different from market research, widely used in graphic design, because the goal is to find inspiration for design rather than predict behavior of a larger group (Kolko, 2011).

This important part of research is the basis for the science and expertise found in trend forecasting; it is often used as a first step in trend forecasting. It is not merely ‘having a good time, ‘watching people’ or ‘thinking really hard’, although these are potentially generative. They lack the tangible output that points to what is next in trends. Expert designers often consider themselves intuitive and rely heavily on that which may come from their own ideas mixed with ‘what feels right’. However, as we see the successes of trend forecasting found in fashion design, experienced fashion designers working closely with professionally trained trend forecasters heavily influence fashion designs season by season.

Professional trend forecasters have many theories and strategies for doing their jobs. One of the most widely used theories across the profession that is still used today is “Diffusion of Innovation” identified by Everett M. Rogers. Rogers determined that regardless of innovation, the pattern of diffusion through society was the same. It starts with an “Innovator” who has the idea who in turn passes the idea on to a group called “Early Adopters”. The Early Adopters then slightly adjust the idea and pass it on to a group called the “Early Majority”, who then turn the transmitted idea to the “Late Majority”. The last group to receive the communicated idea is called the “Laggards” because they were most resistant to new ideas and the changes that came with these ideas

(Raymond, 2013, pp.17-18). These types of people and groups are then plotted on a “Diffusion of Innovation Curve” and mapped through a pathway of progression to determine it’s potential as a trend (see Figure 4).

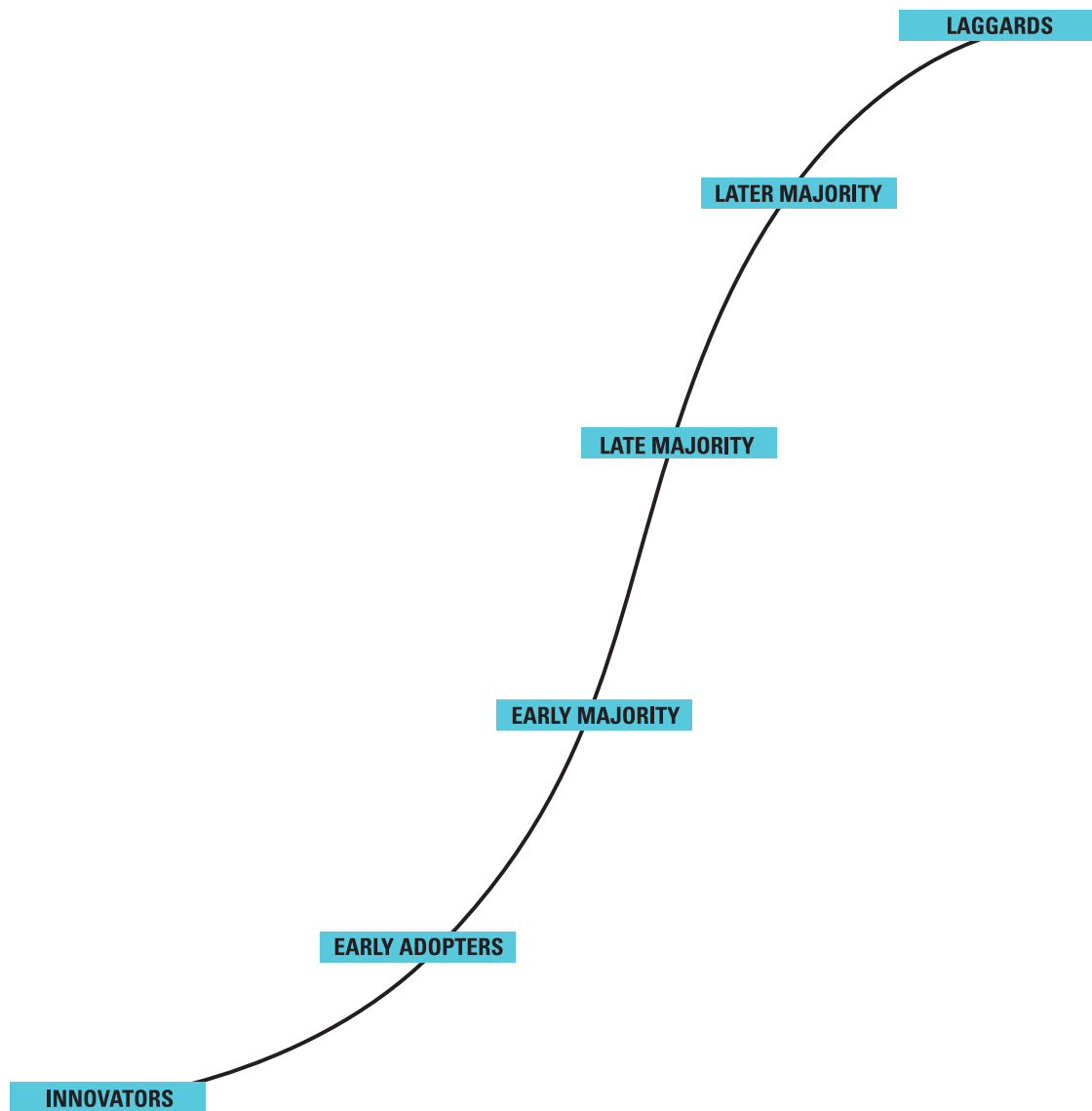


Figure 4: Diffusion of Innovation Curve. Reprinted from The Trend Forecaster's Handbook by Raymond Martin, 2010, London: Laurence King Laurence King.

Much of a trend forecaster's time is spent identifying new patterns, determined by observing the Innovators and Early Adopters where many of tomorrow's ideas are happening today: cities, neighborhoods, and streets where these people are found. In order to find up-and-coming trends, very distinct sets of skills and practical techniques are required to identify the potential successfulness thereof, such as cultural cross-analysis or cultural brailing. These are examples of practical techniques that enable trend forecasters to examine all aspects of society with an open, untainted and enquiring mind (Raymond, 2013, p. 34).

Using creativity to defeat habitual design solutions, Graphic designers spread widely across the curve, depending on experience, education and amount of creativity. The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) published a resource entitled *Designer of 2015 Trends* where they noted that among designers and educators, there has been an enthusiastic response to taking on trends, although there is also anxiety about whether designers are adequately prepared to take on the broader context of the roles trends imply for them (aiga.org). Relying on professional trend forecasters to present their findings according to the Diffusion of Innovation and forecasting techniques may alleviate some of these inhibitions while lessening a designers' self-guided, intuition-based research.

COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF FASHION AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

The following table is a comparative history of fashion and graphic design from the 1920s to present day. This table researched eras where fashion and graphic style may have overlapped and/or influenced each other, whether intentionally or not, using color coding in each column where similarities exist (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparative history of fashion and graphic design from 1920s to present

	Fashion Design	Graphic Design
1920s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Anti-fashion: more practical, timeless * Bobbed hair * Knee-length hem lines * Straight silhouettes to represent geometric decoration * Flesh, pastel colors * Thinner figures * Minimal colors in each design, unless patterned * Men's suits were less formal • Notable designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Coco Chanel - began experimenting with menswear and muted colors * Jean Patou - credited for the low waisted knit sweater, often reflecting ornamented pattern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Dada - anti-war, destructive elements, anti-society * Pictorial Modernism - reductive, flat color, war posters; elements of cubism, geometric design * De Stijl - equilibrium, harmony. bold colors * Constructivism - Mathematical placements • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Aleksandr Rodchenko and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy were designers that tried their hands in graphic design and fashion design * Lucien Bernhard - minimal, geometric typographer * Piet Mondrian - known for using 3 principle colors: blue, yellow, red

Table 2, continued.

1930s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Dropped hemlines * Raised waistlines * Utilitarian, slim fitting for day shifting to wide shoulder pads and deep cuffs by night * Women's hair was worn close to the head * For the fashionable, shiny, fluid fabrics were cut on the bias * Exposed backs * Classicism influenced by Greek art * Men's suits became lighter weight with crests as accents * Polo shirts and golf/sportswear became popular • Notable designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Madame Gres - used silk drapings to create Neoclassical designs * Elsa Schiaparelli - influenced by artists such as Salvador Dali and Jean Cocteau; created surreal fabrics and was one of the first designers to use zippers creatively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bauhaus - (1919–33) fine art & applied art work together; function and mass production * New Typography - reductive, flat color, war posters; elements of cubism, geometric design * Modernism - strict, structured grid system with emphasis on negative space, clean sans-serif type. • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Jan Tschichold - modernist, used only sans serif * Piet Zwart - functionalism and clarity of form * Alexey Brodovitch - used open space and contrast as a dynamic tool
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Table 2, continued.

1940s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Surreal ruffled dresses * Motifs taken out of their natural environments * Military uniforms as WWII progressed * Menswear came with fancier cuffs, buckles, and wide legs, often with stripes and plaids * American ready-to-wear: easy-care fabrics, adaptable styles, long skirts, slim figures * European Couture: the custom dress with fuller hips and thighs, V-necks, wide shoulders • Notable designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Christian Dior - presented his first collection dubbed “The New Look” in 1947; accounted for half of Paris’ haute-couture sales * Norman Hartnell - designed Princess Elizabeth’s wedding dress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * War Posters - Intense graphics showing political and economic injustice using diagonal lines in counterpoint to compositional lines. * Informational/Scientific graphics - synthesis of flow, form and function; basic unit is not a page but a visual unit, or double spread. Used elements to direct eyes. • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Herbert Matter - purely photographic solutions * Herbert Bayer - simplifies realism; poster designer
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Table 2, continued.

<div data-bbox="321 275 370 428" data-label="Text"> <p>1950s</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Hyper feminine * The Shirdress: rounded shoulders, nipped in waists * Tailored * Florals, simple patterns by day, luxury fabrics by night * The Cocktail dress: Formal mid calf length dresses made of luxurious fabrics, often adorned with a veiled cocktail hat and gloves * Defined as a romantic style, return to glamor * Experimental sheath style; the bouffant skirt, boned bodice, most often A-line * Couture gowns returned with spiral draping, fits and flare; bold and dramatic * Geometric hemlines, stripes were popular * The house dress: abstract, cheerful prints and florals * Menswear: Hipsters and Teddy boys wore ostentatious suits to rebel against the social order * Draped suiting with baggy legs * Teenagers independence evident in fashion * Jeans, leather jacket and boots for boys * Cotton dance dress and sweater for girls * Poodle skirts • Notable designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Balenciaga - dubbed the “Picasso of Fashion” for his artistic innovation with shape and form * Charles James - American couturier known for dressing socialites in constructed, dramatic gowns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * International Typographic Style - Swiss/German. Asymmetrical organization, grids, clear and factual * New Swiss sans serif typefaces - mathematically constructed * The New York School - pragmatic, intuitive, less formal in organizing space * Corporate Ideas and visual system • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Max Huber - photomontage using bright pure hues and intense organization * Adrian Frutiger - sans serif type designer * Alvin Lustig - used symbols to capture the essence of content and form * Paul Rand - known for taking risks in corporate symbols; sensual, visual contrast. * Saul Bass - pictorial images using glyphs and elements of constructivism. Known for one of the first moving title sequences in film
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Table 2, continued.

<div data-bbox="321 289 370 613" data-label="Text"> <p>1960s & 70s</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Anything goes; Counter Culture, Bright New Future * Space age, modern geometry in shapes * Metallic, shiny fabrics * Bright colors, futuristic ensembles * Mini Skirts and thigh highs * Monochromatic * Unisex * Tuxedo Suits * Tapered bell bottoms * Large floral prints * Leisure wear influenced by science fiction * Peace, love, freedom exhibited in ethnic styles * Long, A-line printed dresses reminiscent of Victorian times * Tie-dye, florals, and beading * Sharp stripes, patchwork fabrics * Fantasy, escapism through exuberant colors and print - experimentation in style * Sequins, feathers on stage suits • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Mary Quant - launched the “London Look” for youth culture, introducing the micromini that soon became mass-produced worldwide. * Yves Saint Laurent - known for popularizing women’s pants. He was slightly rebellious and mixed street style with traditional tailoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Postmodernism - challenged order and clarity * American typographic expressionism - figurative typography; letter forms become objects * Corporate Identity and Visual Systems (1950–70s) - design becomes an integral part of corporate and federal image * Conceptual Image - images conveyed ideas and concepts; movements, scale, juxtaposition * Poster Mania - fostered by social activism; intense in color vibration * Corporate Identity and Visual Systems (1950–70s) - design becomes an integral part of corporate and federal image; • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Massimo Vignelli - known for designing New York subway maps * Milton Glaser - known for distinctive style using flow, bright colors, and movement * Peter Max - experimented in printing techniques to create psychedelic art combined with accessible images
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Table 2, continued.

<div data-bbox="321 289 370 436" data-label="Text"> <p>1980s</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * High fashion returns * Jewel colors, flamboyance * Puffball skirts * Rose prints, metallics * Antibourgeois, gender crossing * White and gold * Asymmetric * The power suit * Shoulder emphasis * Large accessories * Streetstyle: Punk denim and studs * Mod revival * Rockabilly revival • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Vivienne Westwood - one of the most admired British designers whose signature plaid look became the uniform of the punk scene * Jean Paul Gaultier - created unconventional, often humorous avant-garde couture with no formal training. Known for gender bending looks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Digital graphic design - new computer technologies allowed for more creativity * The Digital Type Foundry - an explosion of typefaces due to accessibility and lower cost * New Conceptual Posters/Book Designs - collective of materials, digital art, and hand rendered elements to create illustrative designs • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * April Greiman - considered one of the first digital graphic designers * Edward Fella - used typography direction and typesetting to challenge * Katherine and Michael McCoy - known for pushing boundaries in experimental design while teaching at Cranbrook Academy of Art
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Table 2, continued.

<div data-bbox="321 283 370 724" data-label="Text"> <p>1990s to present</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Minimal and conceptual * Anti-fashion * Experimental reduction * Softly tailored, but showing body form * Boho chic and vintage: plaid grunge, baggy pants, combat boots * High-end secondhand * Occasionwear - experimental dresses for the red carpet * Twenty-first century styles are separating out even further: * The sophisticate, the minimalist, chic technocrat, young cosmopolitan, print master * Runway is more experimental * Corporate fashion reflects the masses * The present-day hipster - thin lines, copies styles that span across all past generations • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Alexander McQueen - reinvented the fashion show to be more of an extravaganza. Frock coats, suits, and jumpsuits were his signature. * Martin Margiela - Belgian designer that pushes the boundaries by distorting tailored shapes into almost unwearable garments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Revitalization of Magazine Design - unconventional treatments of images and page layout to comment on the subject * New Typographic Expression - stretch the limits of type using digital layouts; unbounded words on pages * Vintage throwback - hand lettering, influence by earlier era in color and layout • Notable Designers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * David Carson - (art director) skewed grid formats; explored expressive possibilities of subjects; liked readers to decipher meaning * Matthew Carter - typeface designer; created early digital typefaces known for outstanding legibility * Jessica Hitsch - young designer known for successful hand lettering
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Note. Information for Fashion Design from Brown, 2012 and information for Graphic Design from Meggs & Purvis, 2011.

The most notable findings occurred in graphic design where more designers, such as Lazlo Moholy-Nagy in the 1920s, experimented in bringing their eye and style for

graphic design into the area of fashion. However, fashion designers rarely crossed over into graphic design. Often times, the artistic styles did overlap, such as during times of geometric influence found in, or in postmodern, carefree design of the 1980s.

CHAPTER III

HYPOTHESIS AND DESIGN PROCESS

HYPOTHESIS

Fashion designers improve style and taste continually season-by-season and create successful designs with the aid of professional trend forecasting resources and years of design experience. Through research, the assessment has been made that trend forecasting websites such as WGSN.com and FashionSnoops.com serve as a useful tool when beginning the design research process. This type of service resource will serve as a skeleton for modeling a useful web-based tool for graphic designers as well.

The ability to offer face-to-face and/or online subscription-based service will also aid in keeping graphic designers competitive and innovative. A subscription-based service is one that charges a monthly fee to procure the needed information. This type of model ensures quality, industry-leading results creating a competitive market. It will aid in research and cut down on wasted time by having graphic design trends showcased and defined in one website.

DESIGN PROCESS

Determining the Best Tool. The Internet is the most accessible place to procure information. It can be updated and accessed as quickly as trends change. Based on this accessibility and the fact that the Internet is the most widely used research resource for designers, a website is the best tool for trend forecasting for graphic designers.

Websites start out using the process of wireframing as the basis for renderings that show the hierarchical importance and defines user experience, free of any potentially distracting design treatments (oneextrapixel.com). The goal is to make the site as user-

friendly as possible so that a person of average ability or experience feels as though they can get to the intended information without getting frustrated (Krug, 2006). Based on ever changing curated information contained in the website, the site build-out will be flexible in order to promote a positive user experience in the long-term.

Even as usability and usefulness are important factors in website experience and design, they do not recognize the subjective and rich experience of the human condition, thus the most important aspect of this website will be that expert trend forecasters will be the main sources of subject information (Kolko, 2011). This will not be a user-fed site, such as Wikipedia or Pinterest; it will be subscription based and rely heavily on the professional expertise that lies therein.

Wireframing and User Testing. The very basis to designing a successful website explores the wireframing, a two-dimensional illustration of a page's interface. Wireframes specifically focus on layout and prioritization of content, ease of use, and intended behaviors. It is an important step in connecting the sites architecture to the user experience by showing the path between pages and intended functionality.

For this project, nine individual wireframe pages were designed and put together for user experience testing before initial prototype design began. Testers were chosen from several industries within design: graphic designers, a motion designer, a brand specialist, and website designers. The purpose was to answer questions such as, "What is this site about?", "What would you like to see differently?", "Where would you find [x]?", and to get an overall perspective on how the user viewed the functionality of the wireframes.

The testing response revealed that the click-throughs were easily understood and

information hierarchy made sense. Users felt that in the initial testing, the vertical and horizontal layout of sub pages could be more consistent across the site, something that was addressed in final application. All in all, usability was found to be practical and ease of finding information quickly was deemed valuable (Illustrations, pp 29–37).

Website Layout. The layout of the FTR website is a response to the successes and needs as assessed in the comparative audits of the fashion trend forecasting sites (see Table 1). The focus is on the ever-changing content and ease of finding what the user is searching for. A visually clean aesthetic makes the content more visible and creates a feeling of trust for the visitor, which as a first impression, benefits by retaining that visitor a little longer to navigate the site (Rosales, n.d.).

The pages are designed centered, with the intentions of the site to be responsive. Smashingmagazine.com describes responsive web designs as the approach that suggests that design and development should respond to the user's behavior and environment based on screen size, platform and orientation. This type of design consists of flexible grids and layouts. As the user switches from their laptop to tablet to smartphone, the website should automatically *respond* by accommodating for resolution, image size and scripting abilities, according to whatever technology being used (Knight, n.d.).

As FTR is a subscription-based resource, it is important that the area designated for subscribing and logging in be highly visible on the home page. Thus the main navigation does not appear until login, at which time it is found at the top of the page with drop-down menus for sub pages. Also upon login, a search bar replaces the login bar for an easy way to find what the user may be looking for.

Once the basic layout was determined, the brand identity, colors, web font and

other design elements were considered through an exploratory process of digital sketching, revealing the final outcome (Illustration, pp. 42–49).

Brand Identity. A key component to any new venture is its brand, or the understanding of a product, service, or company. Marty Neumeier, author of *The Brand Gap*, believes that, “branding is a gut feeling because people are emotional, intuitive beings, despite our best efforts to be rational. When enough people arrive at the same gut feeling, a company is said to have a brand” (Neumeier, 2003, p.2). The importance of this take on branding is that for a trend forecasting service, the identity must be seen as continually relevant. As a designer building such a brand, one must ask three questions:

- 1) Who are you?
- 2) What do you do?
- 3) Why does it matter?

These are important in the creative approach to the name and visual symbols associated with brands (Neumeier, 2003). To address the questions of “Who are you?” and “What do you do?”, for this graphic design trend forecasting tool, a word list was created containing initial descriptors (see Table 3).

Table 3: Word list describing a trend forecasting tool

Trend Forecasting Descriptors	
Trend	Above
Up-and-coming	First
Masses	Adaptors
Innovator	World-wide/Global
Curve	Front-runner
Ahead	Evolving
Beyond	Forefront
Design evolution	Foresight

For “Why does it matter?”, the ultimate goal of this tool must be considered: earning the trust of graphic designers to recognize this tool as an asset for trend forecasting research. The right name can be a brand’s most valuable asset, driving differentiation and speeding acceptance (Neumeier, 2003). From the above list, the word *Foresight*, defined by Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary as *an act of looking forward* (merriam-webster.com), most represented the goal, impression and job desired by this tool.

For the name and logotype of the tool, Foresight Trend Resources (FTR) was decided upon as a trustworthy and recognizable identifier. Visually, the logo, short for logotype, is the graphic representation of the brand experience that forms a perception of an organization (Budermann, Kim & Wozniak, 2010). A word mark is a typographic logo that has a clear and straightforward goal and does not require the viewer to interpret much. Often times it opens up more possibilities than an illustrative symbol, as English becomes the language established for international business (Budermann, Kim & Wozniak, 2010). For this reason, and after initial sketching, the design decision was made to use a wordmark over a graphic symbol for Foresight Trend Resources (Illustration, pp. 38–39).

Typography. It is imperative for a website of this nature to be easily legible and authoritative because of its ever-changing content. The typeface chosen for Foresight Trend Resources is the Vectora[®] webfont family. Designed in 1990 by Adrian Frutiger for Linotype, Vectora is a sans serif font that addresses the need for readability in small sizes. It is light and balanced with a taller x-height, which altogether creates a harmonious appearance (linotype.com & myfonts.com).

Color. The comparative audit of fashion design trend forecasting websites WGSN.com and FashionSnoops.com revealed two different color choices: black and white representing the simple and timeless (WGSN) and black, grey, and hot pink representing edgy and forceful (FashionSnoops.com). While neither of these choices are necessarily wrong in-and-of themselves, the design aesthetic of Foresight Trend Resources brand calls for a marriage of edginess and sensibility, based on the nature of graphic design.

For this reason, the foundation color palette of white, black and grey are used as core neutrality, initially being accented with gold and raspberry. The idea behind this type of color palette usage is to create an authoritative skeleton for pages while using secondary colors that can easily be changed out as trends evolve over the years. The secondary color palette is not the foundation of colors for the brand; it is flexible so that as color trends progress and change, the secondary palette will follow suite (Illustration, p. 40–41).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Through exploring both fashion and graphic design processes, a need for professional trend forecasting resources in the area of graphic design was discovered. This has been addressed by the design of a subscription-based company and website Foresight Trend Resources (FTR) found online at ForesightTrendResources.com based on the success of fashion design trend forecasting service models (Illustrations pp. 42–49).

PROTOTYPING

A prototype is a representative model that allows you to experience the design before the final interpretation (Warfel, 2009). Combined with initial wireframing user testing, prototyping allows a designer the confidence to create an outcome of good design.

FTR's prototype takes the form of a designed, but not-yet-coded website put into a clickable presentation. Using a web-based prototyping tool called InvisionApp, fully designed mock-ups were added to simulate the end product of a coded website. Users can click through and determine if the experience and design are successful (Invisionapp, 2014).

FURTHER RESEARCH

Being a professionally curated website, FTR will require further research and exploration to determine the best way to maintain the back-end and content of the website. It is imperative to the success of this endeavor to maintain the expertise and accountability of information provided by this site, thus professional trend forecasters

will need to be hired as the main source for all forecasting and curated information.

Operational funding is an additional area of further research to be addressed. This will be a for-profit company, and without user-fed information, start-up capital will be needed to pay for professional services upfront until subscription fees have been collected and financial obligations addressed. As the form of a website that will be contently evolving as trends evolve, FTR will have ongoing updates requiring full-time web development staff, as well as the trend forecasters that will be requiring research and travel budgeting.

With professional experience and funding in place, in the long term FTR may potentially become an internationally used service for designers of all ranges in experience, from students to principal designers. After successful launch and continual growth, this service model and website, may later branch into other areas of design such as architecture, interior design, etc., all based on the initial success found in the original format used by fashion designers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Research plays a major role in the process of design synthesis, and especially in developing and evaluating style therein. It is the link between the potential for the future state and the creation of something new, yet many designers rely only on their own limited experiences, as well as self-guided research, in approaching design synthesis (Kolko, 2011). This is due to a lack of resources in the area of style, more specifically, trend forecasting in graphic design.

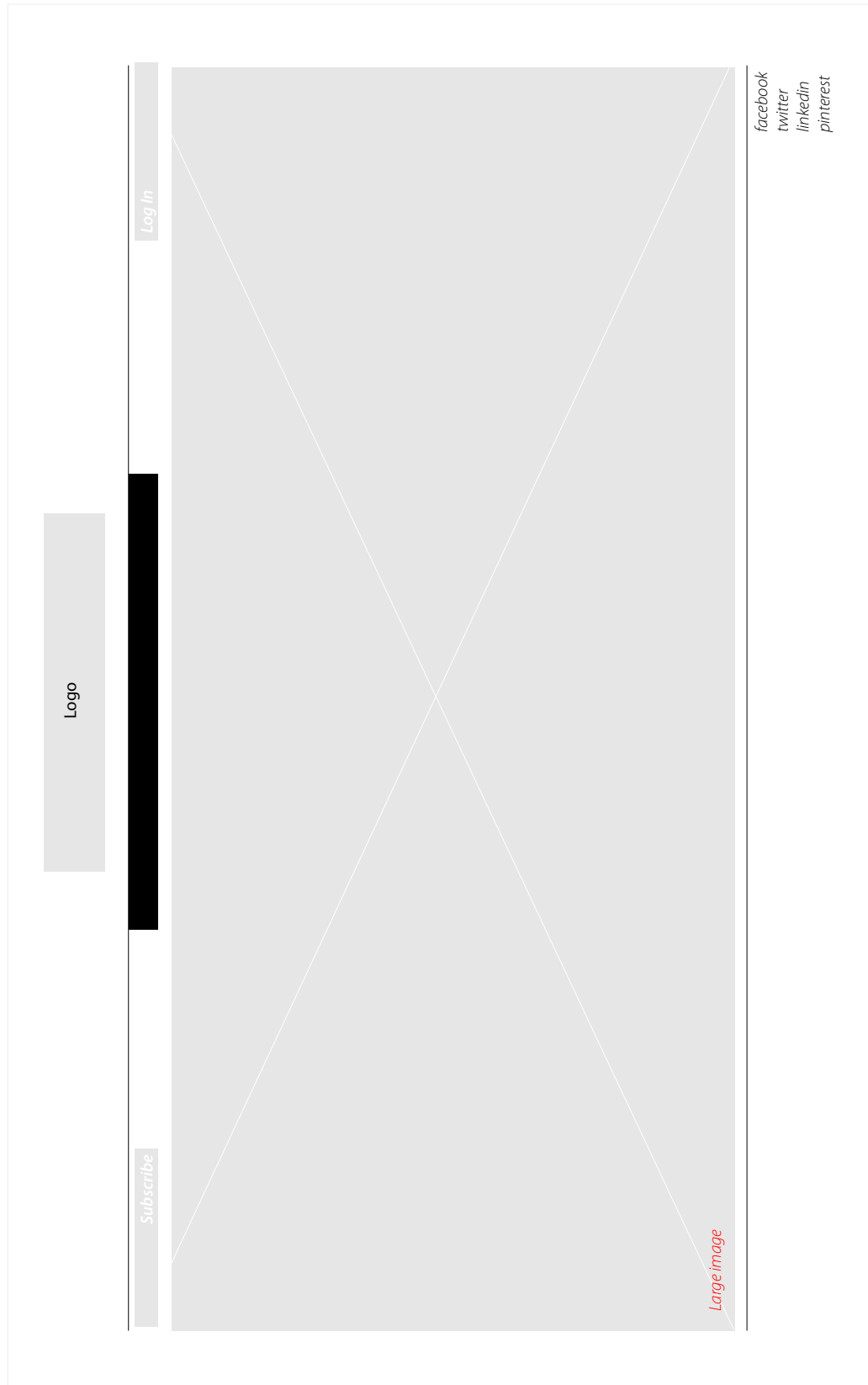
This project-based thesis explores the possibility of introducing a focused trend forecasting service for graphic designers in the form of a subscription based website. In an effort to aid in researching and evolving style, and based on up-and-coming trends, the website enables designers to search in one location for inspiration and trend watching. The resource model was based on the success found in fashion design and the value of such resources to those designers.

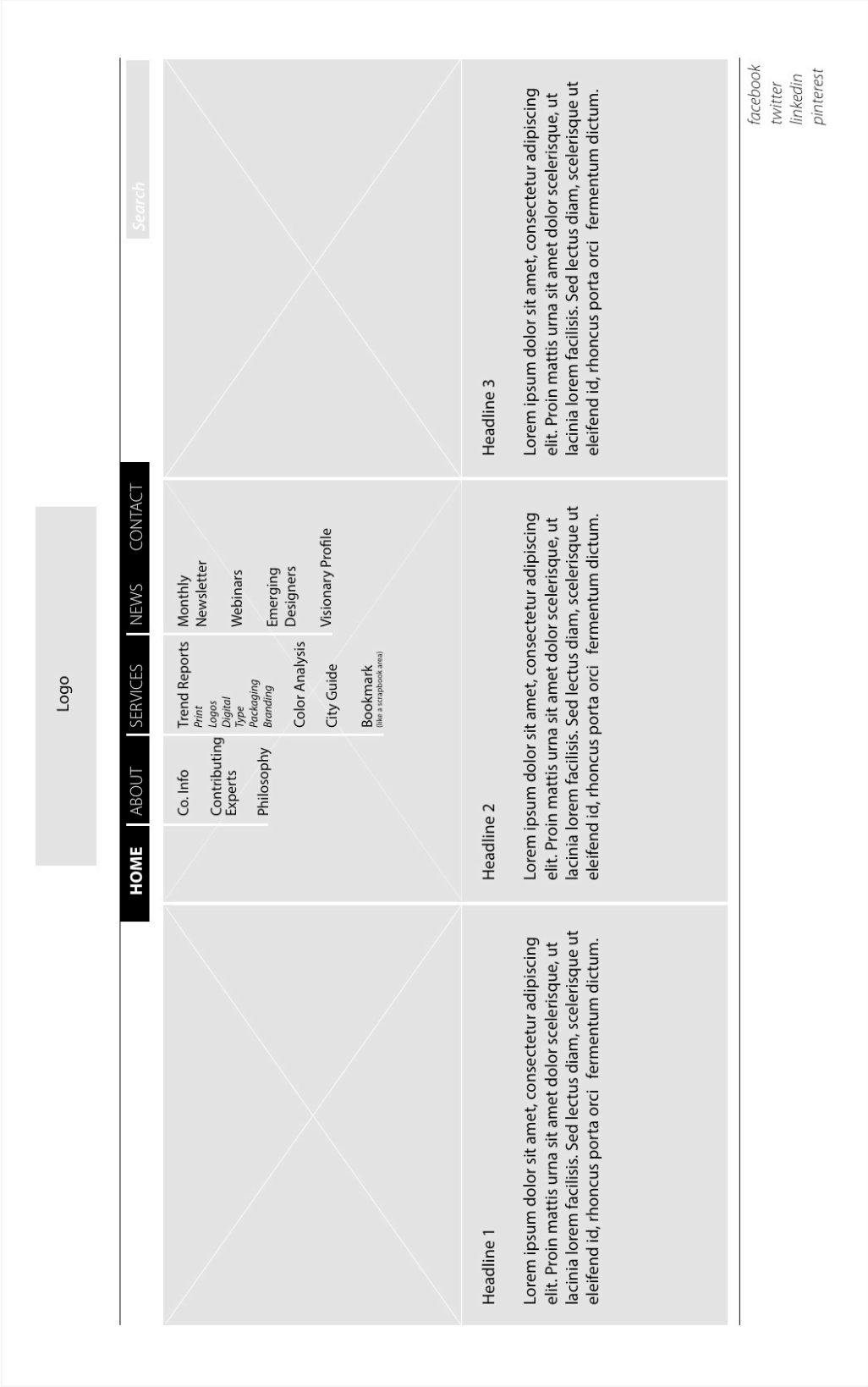
The goal of this project is to begin the process of developing a trend forecasting website that will evolve into a professional service resource used throughout the graphic design industry. Suleiman Leadbitter, lead designer at United Kingdom's design studio Sljam, jokingly stated, "Design trends online change more often than the wind, and slightly less often than my socks" (Konacakli, 2014). This demonstrates that the ongoing success of such a project relies on the hard work of professional trend forecasters and experienced designers curating innovative designs worldwide into one location, and updating as style and trends continually evolve.

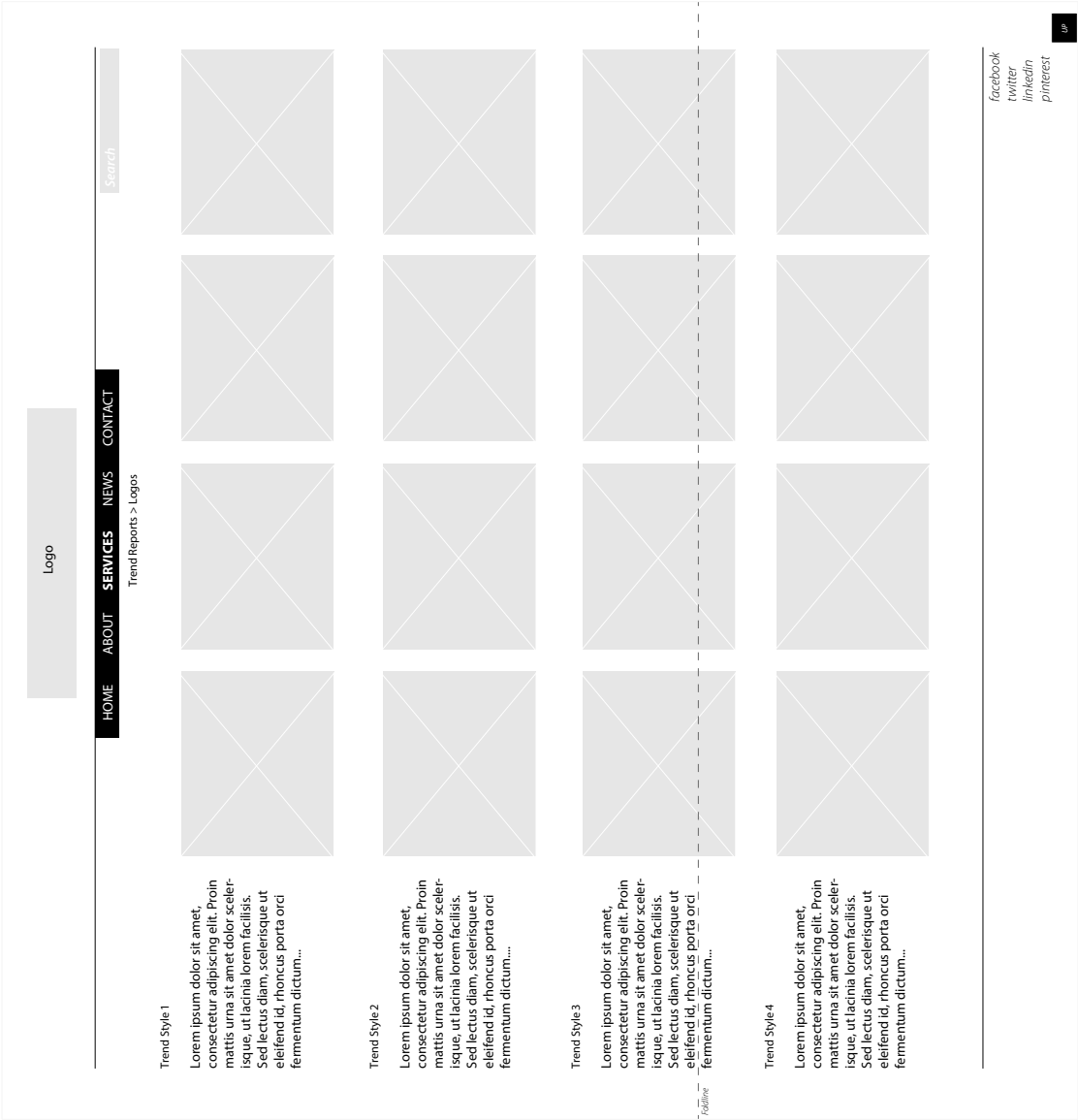
APPENDIX SECTION

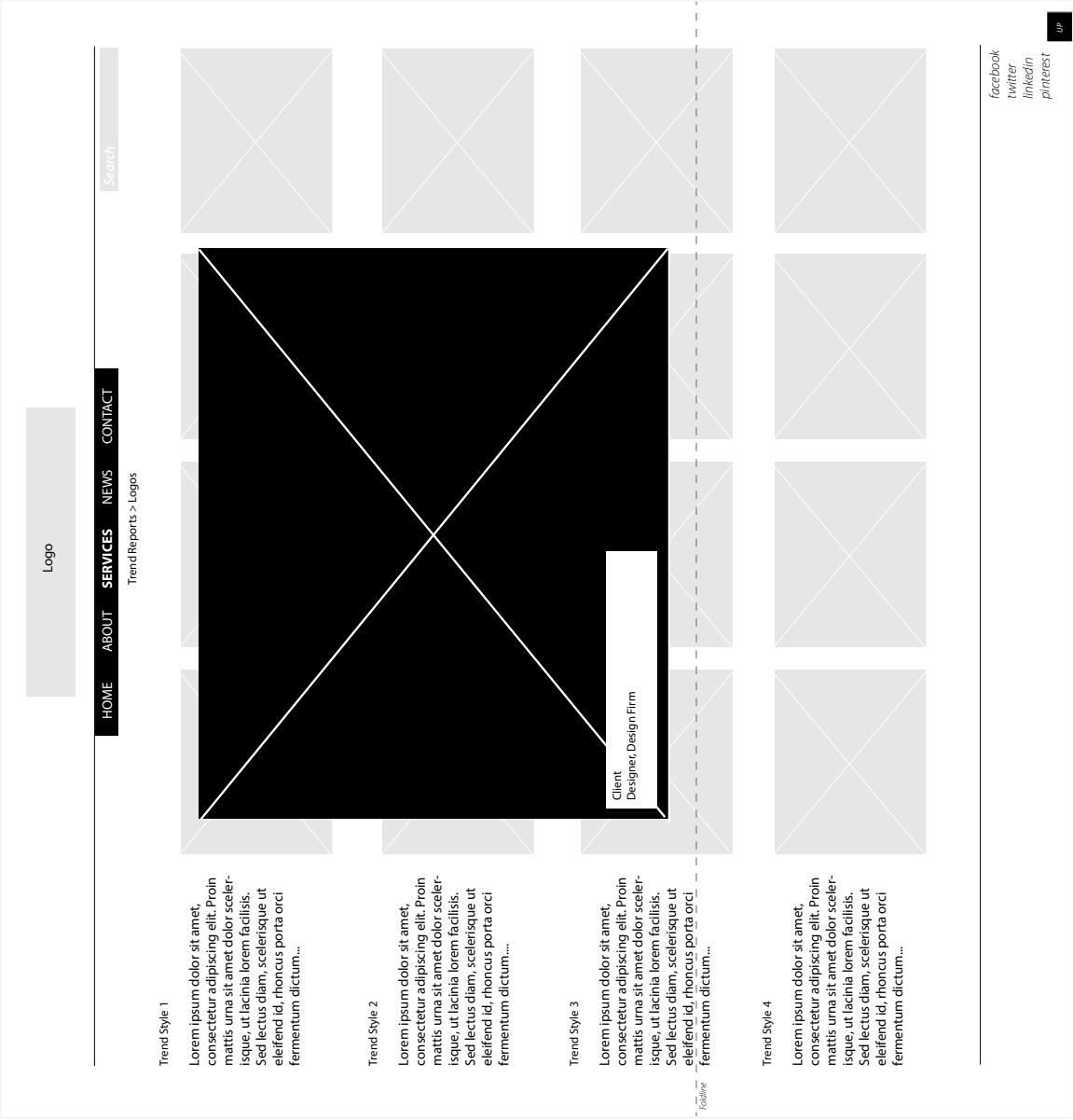
Design Outcome

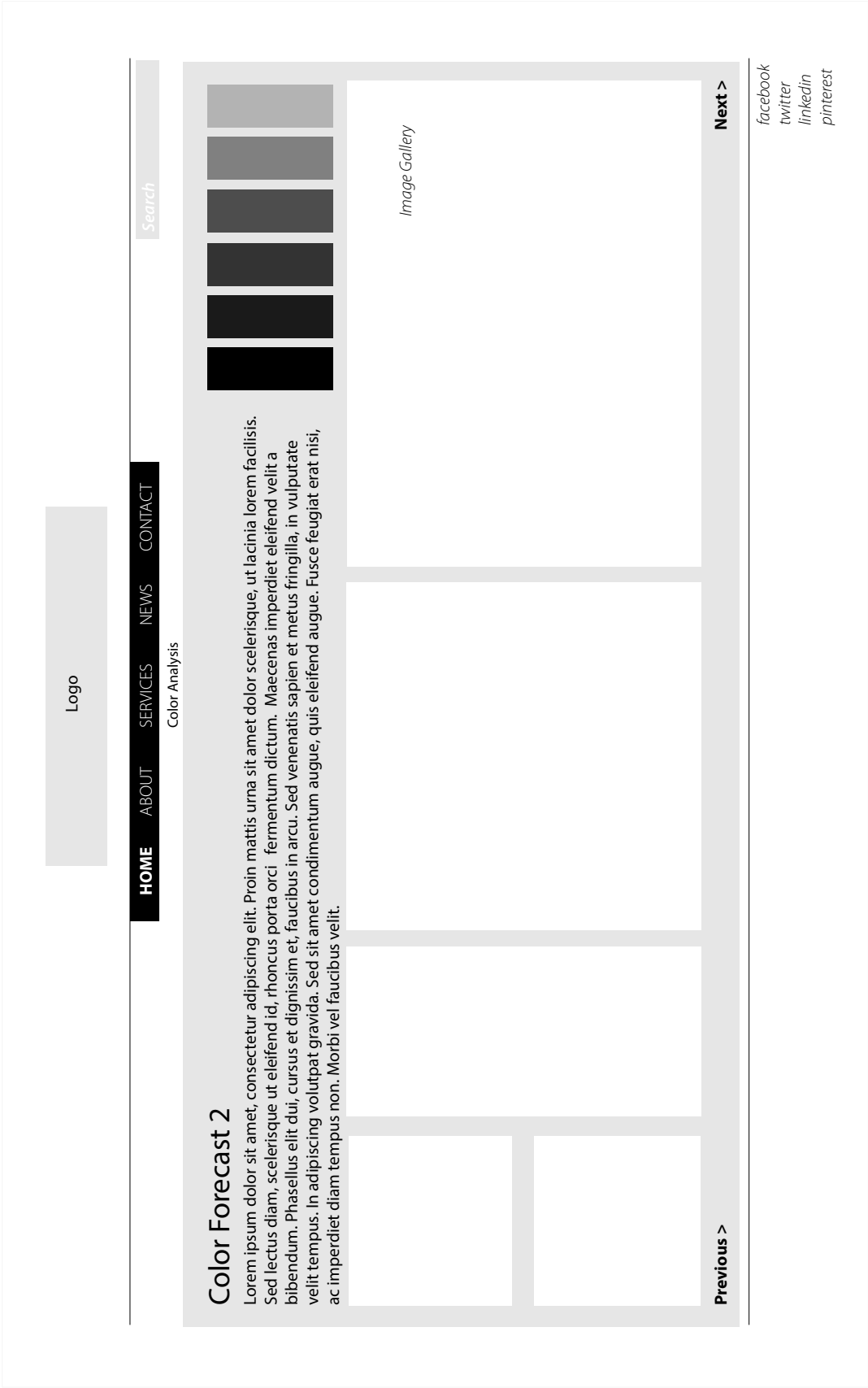
Wireframes
Wordmark Sketches
Final Wordmark Design
Color Exploration
Final Color
Prototype

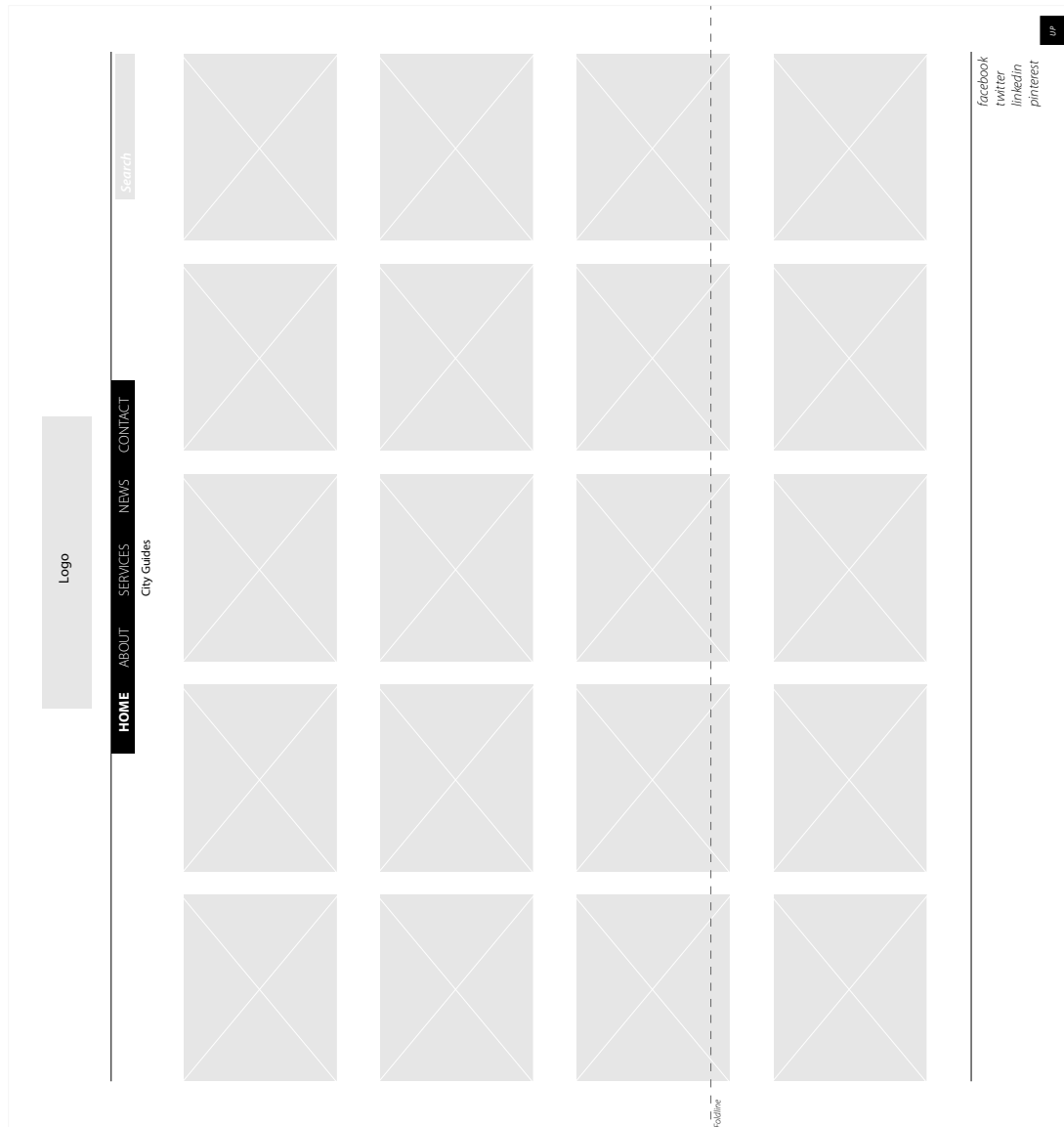


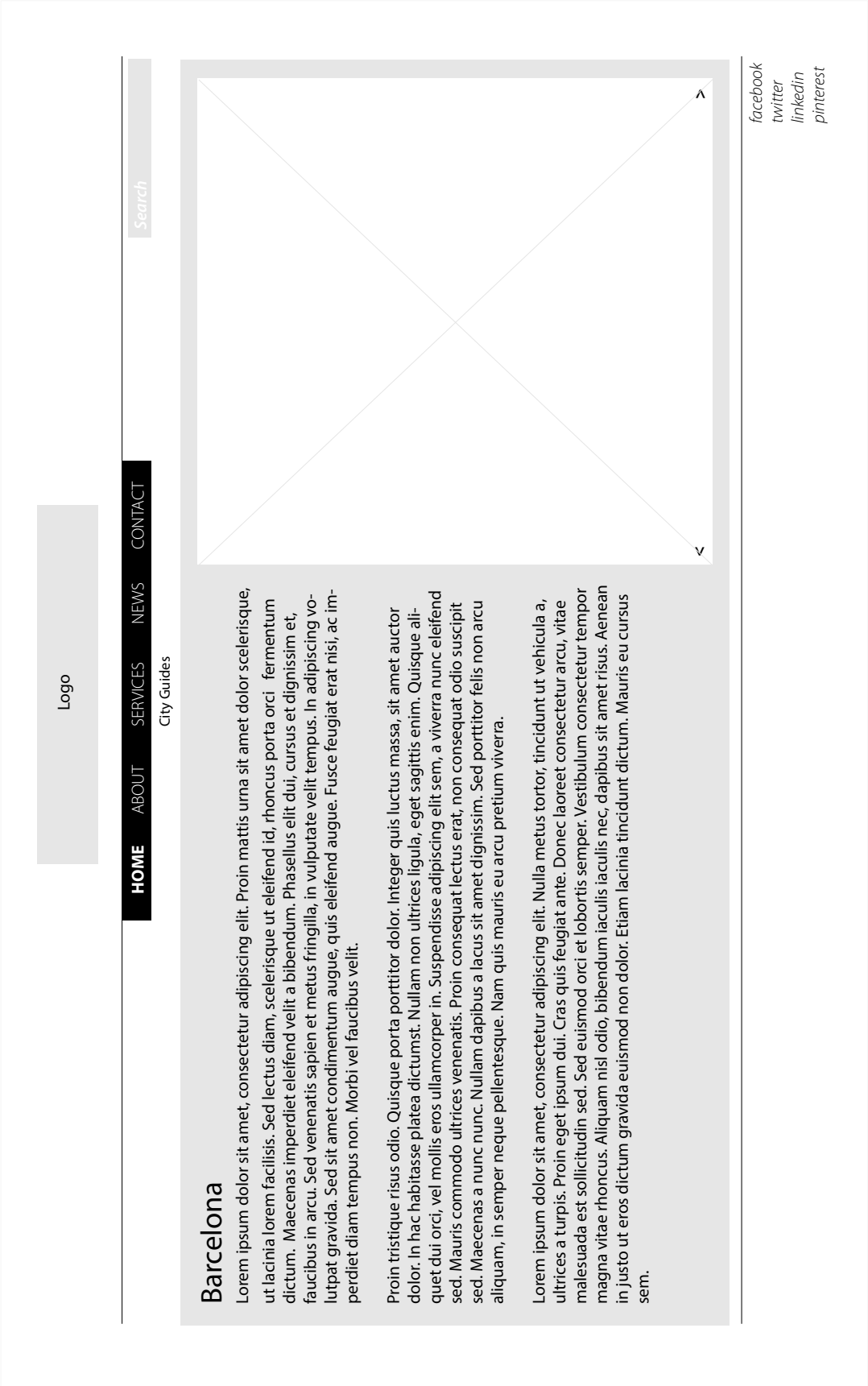


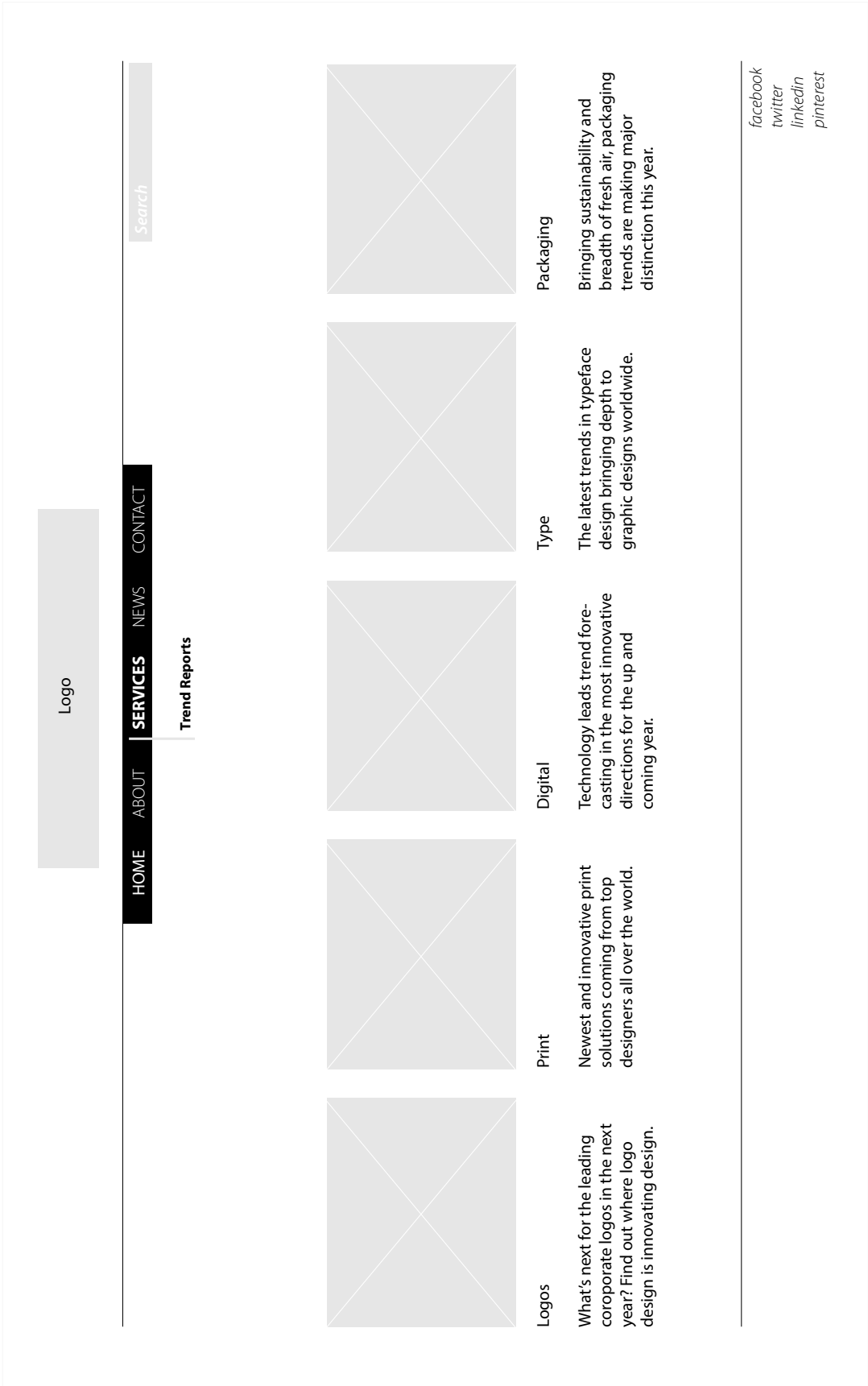


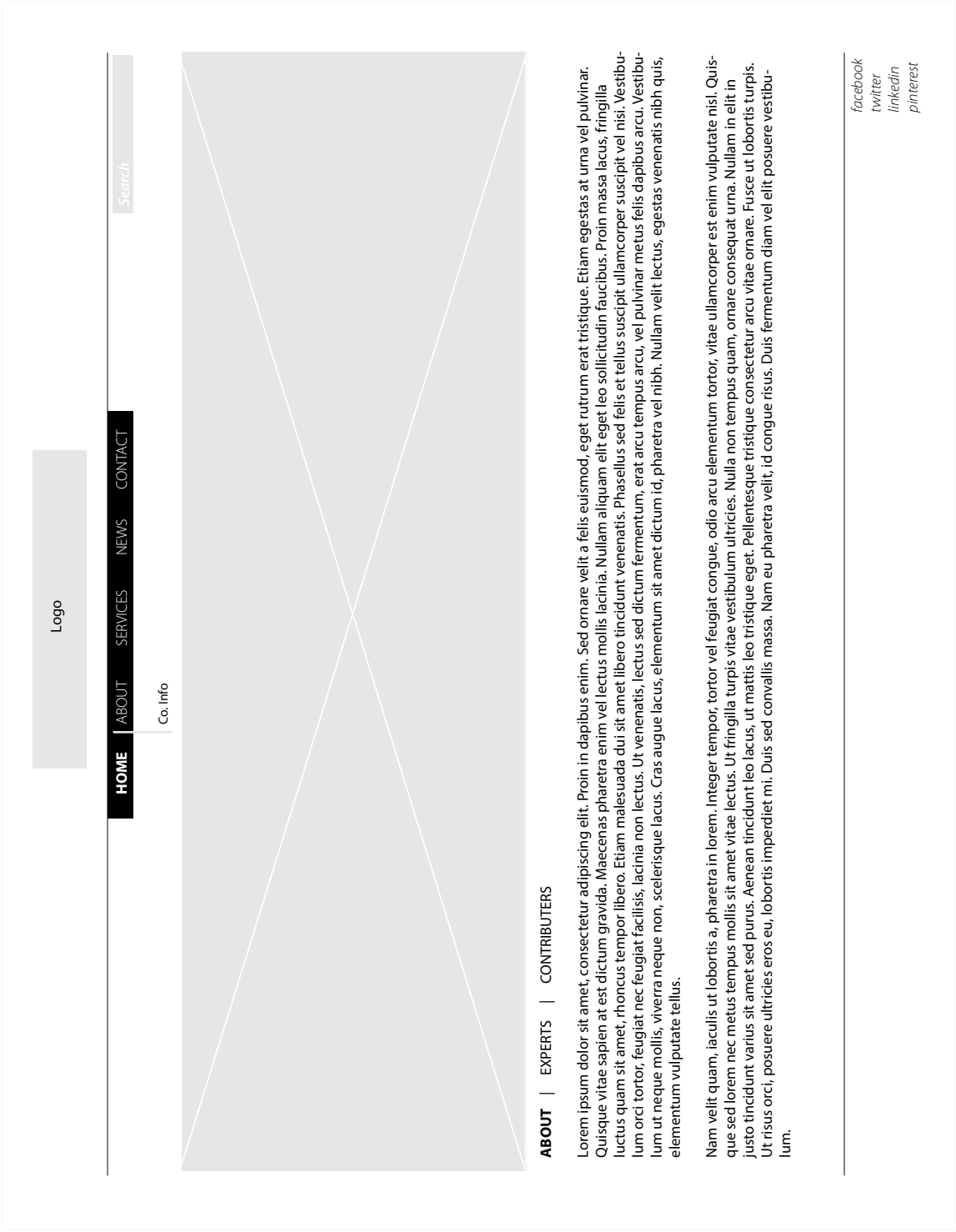












Round 1

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TREND RESOURCES

Round 2

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Color Exploration



White



Black



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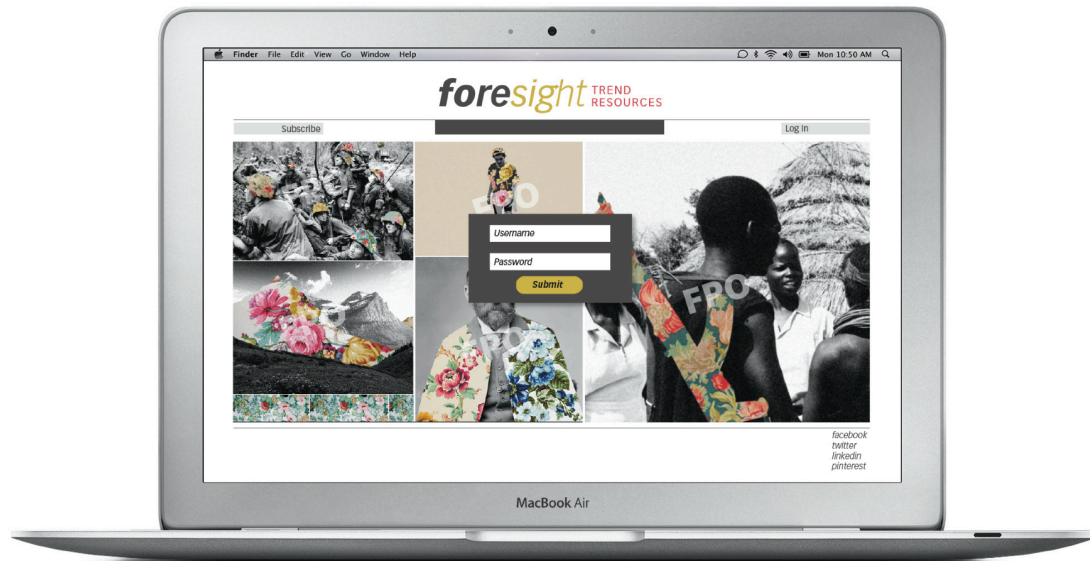
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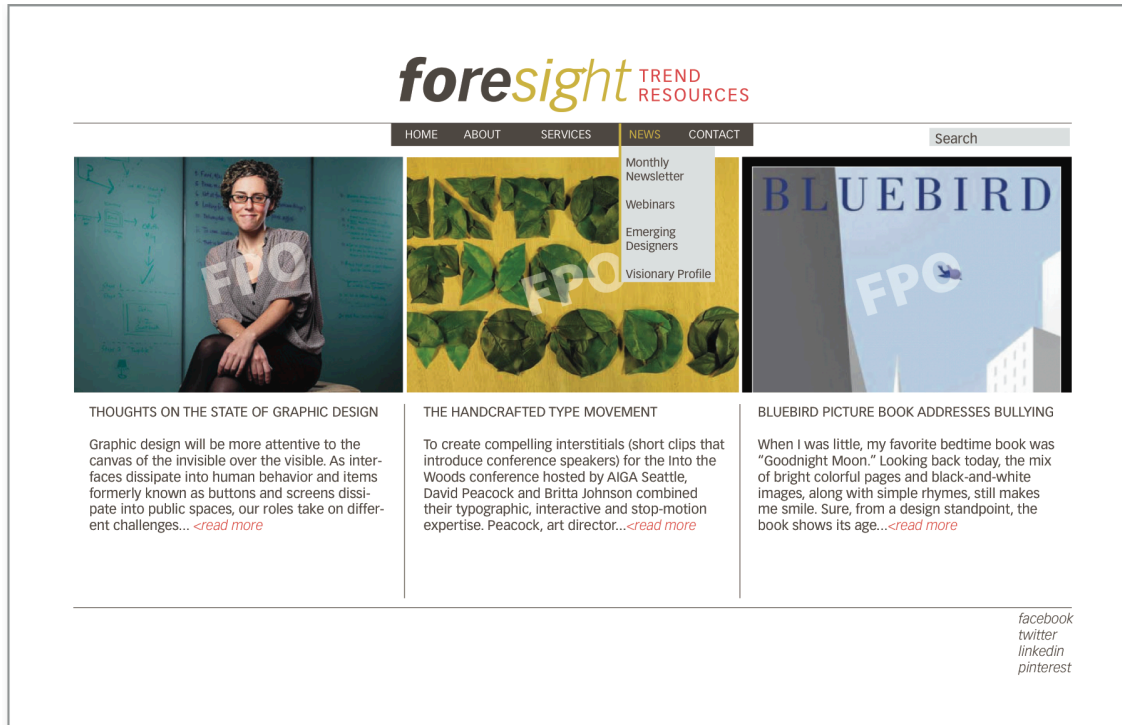
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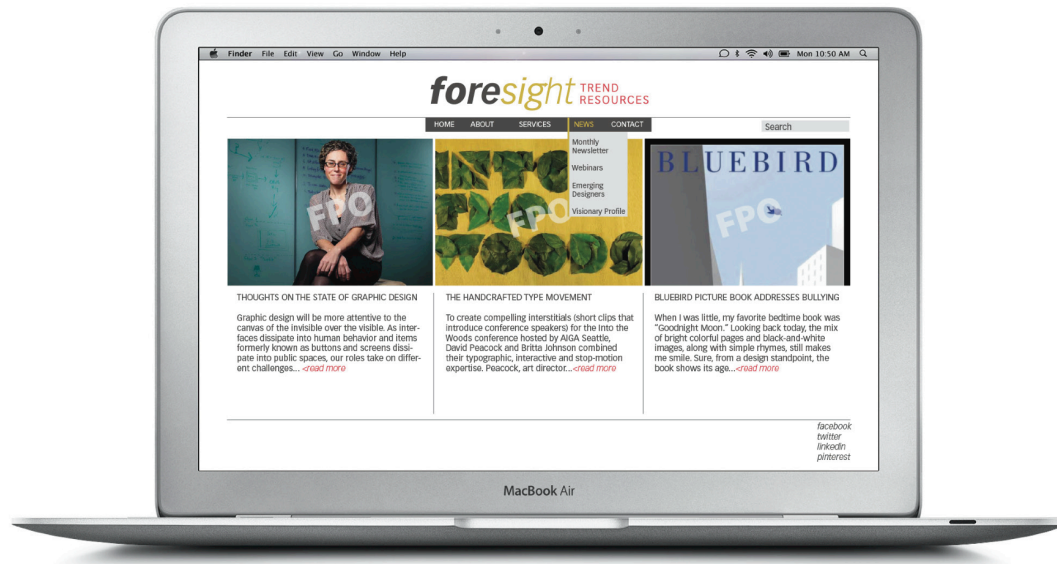
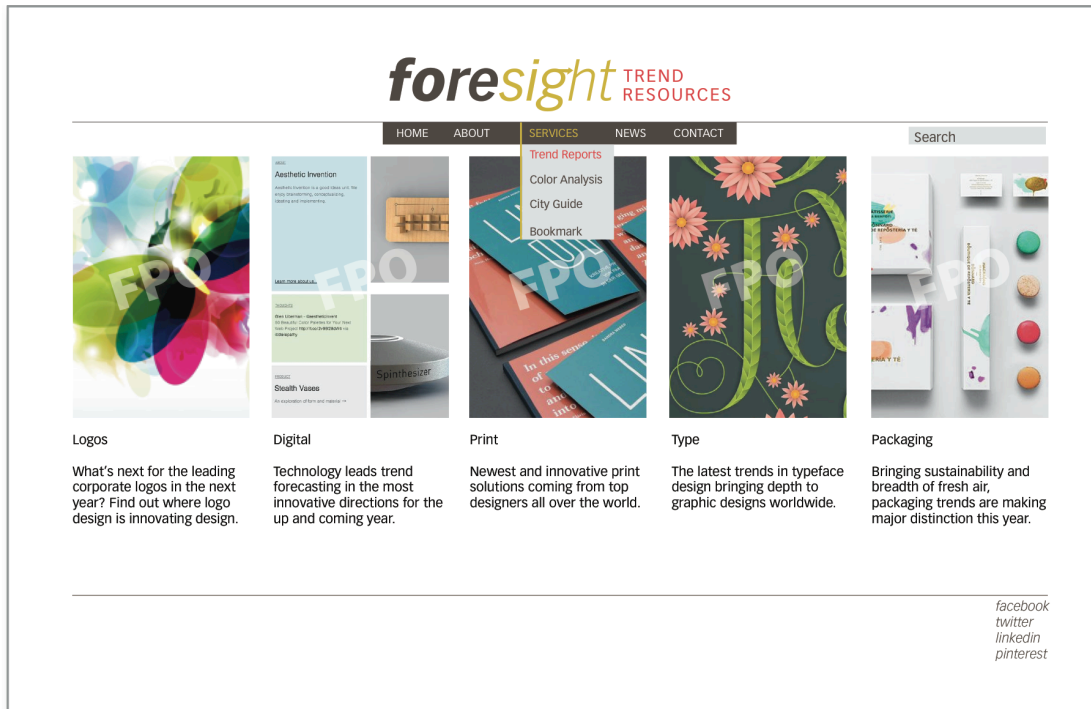
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RESOURCES

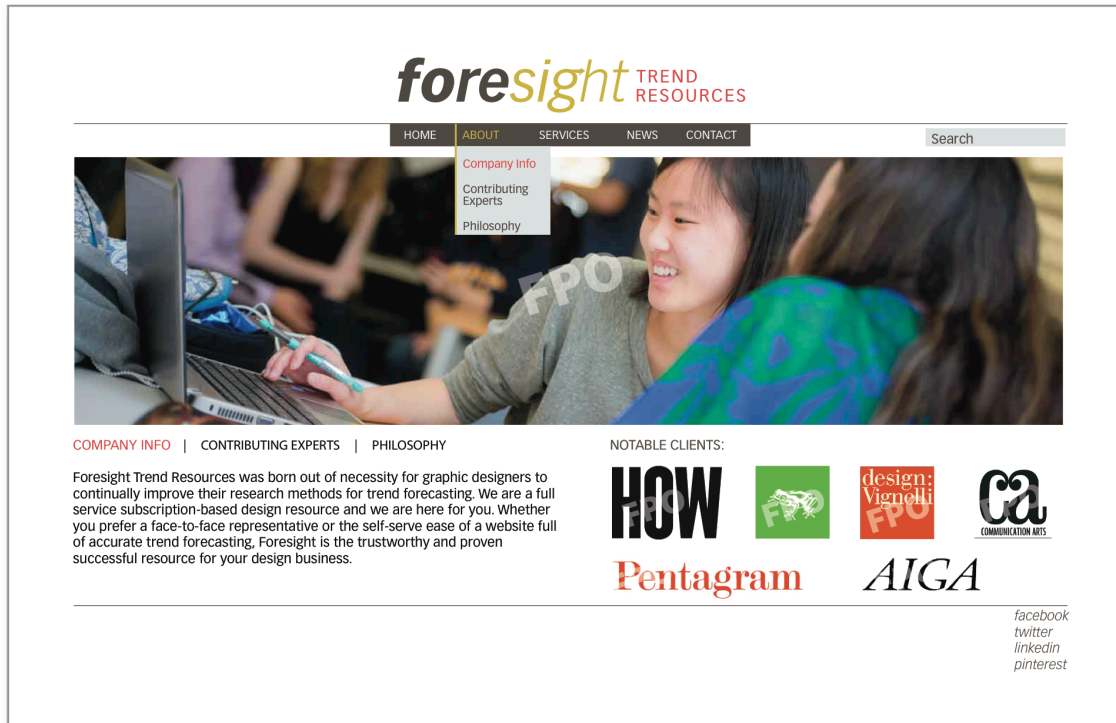
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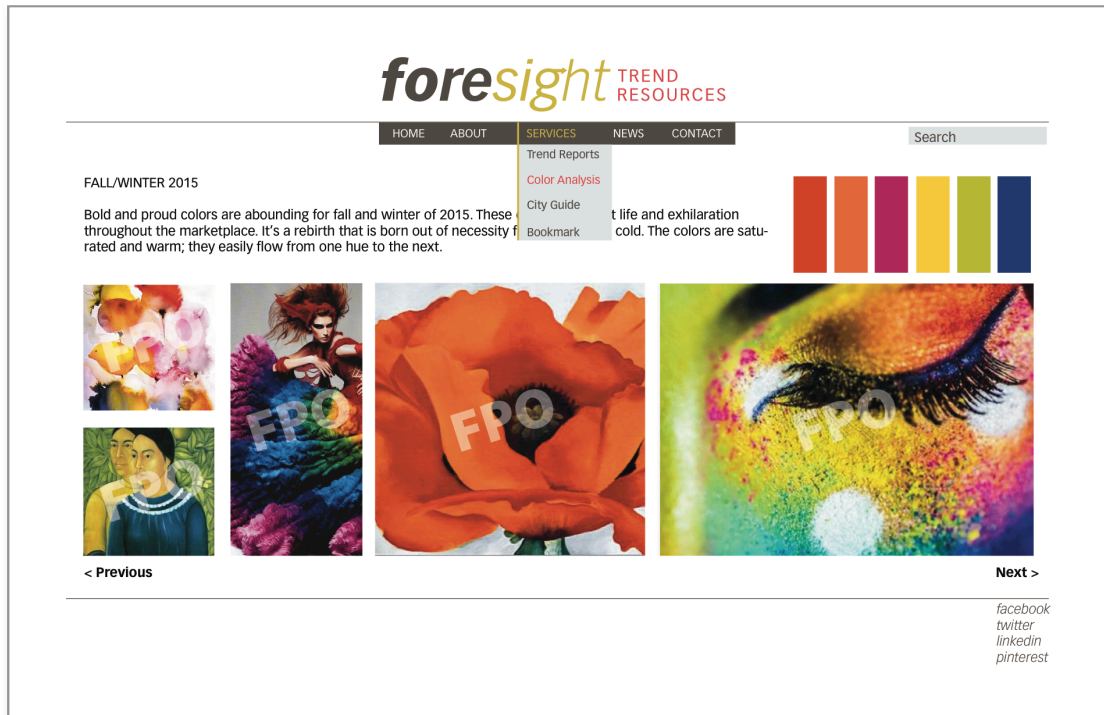
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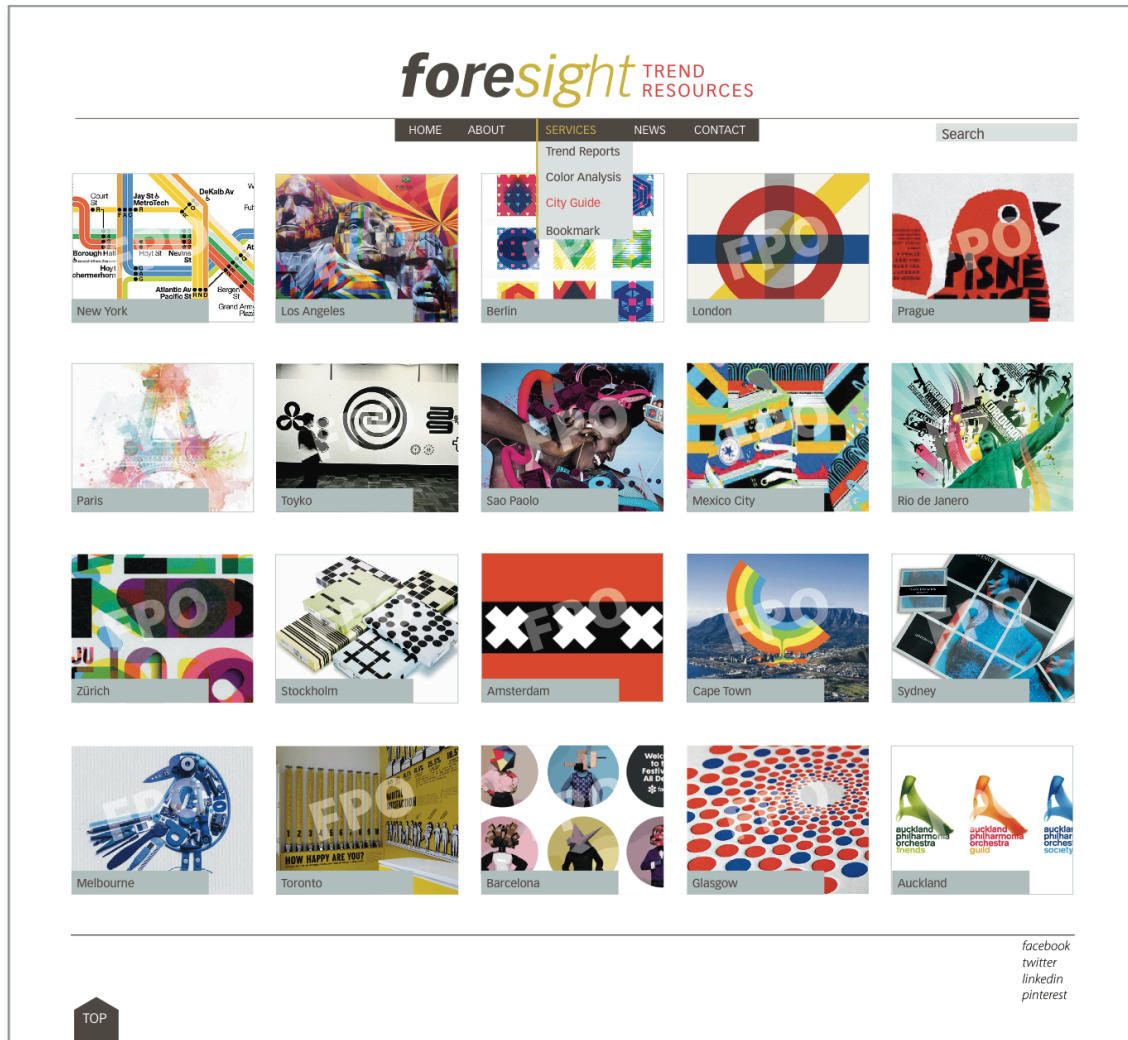
















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