

Client Demographics

DESIGNERS AND RETAILERS define their target market in the business plan by researching client demographics: age, gender, income level, etc. Aside from demographics, other issues are important to the client that may impact purchase selections (e.g., environmental and social issues). Getting to know the characteristics and preferences of your clients—their demographics—is essential for long-term business success.



Objective:



Learn your client demographics.

Key Terms:



Art Deco	eco-fashion	price point
Arts and Crafts or Craftsman	ergonomic design	repertoire
avant-garde	ethnic or cultural	sample board
Boho-chic	fads	shabby chic
classic	grunge	style
client	haute couture	swatches
demographics	Mid-Century Modern	target customers
eclectic	Old Hollywood	vintage
eco-chic	organic fashion	
	OSHA	

Understanding Client Demographics

Demographics are the statistical characteristics of a group used for the purpose of marketing. The demographic profile of a group may be based on age, income, education, and other factors. A **client** is a person or group that uses the professional advice of another. Interior and fashion designers as well as department and specialty stores are in business to make money

selling services and products to clients. It is crucial to understand client demographics and, in working with the clients, to understand their product, service, and/or financial requests.

Designers and associates survey and/or question their clients to gather information about their wants and needs as well as any issues surrounding a project or a purchase. Stores often focus their product line stock to meet the needs of a specific demographic. Clients want the same things:



FIGURE 1. Fashion designers create clothing lines and one-of-a-kind pieces for individual clients and for retail outlets.

- ◆ Clients want an accurate cost estimate or a comfortable price point. A **price point** is the suggested or regular price of a product or service determined as a way to compete with the prices of other products and services. Price points are altered based on competition and current demand. For example, swimsuits generally have two “regular price” seasons: summer and January to February, which is resort season.
- ◆ Clients want a project, a delivery, a shipment, and/or an alteration completed/delivered on time and on budget or the agreed upon cost.
- ◆ Clients want a designer or associate who listens and documents their wants, needs, and specifications. In addition, they want the designer to detail the pros and cons of each element expressed.
- ◆ Clients want a designer or associate who lets personal likes and dislikes focus (lead) the design or the purchase.

TARGET CUSTOMERS

The **target customers** are the audience for which the designer or the store wants to send the most appealing messages. This segment of the total customer pool is most likely to buy from the designer or the store. Marketing efforts are directed to the wants, needs, and desires of target customers. Small targets rather than “shotgun” marketing is more likely to succeed.

- ◆ The target customers for Forever 21 are young people who like fashion and fads but want inexpensive clothes.
- ◆ The target customers for Athleta (a division of The Gap) are people who want exercise or yoga fashion that can be worn anywhere. Athleta produces fashionable, functional, and built-to-perform clothing at mid-range price.

Characteristics

Traditional target marketing is based on common characteristics of the target customer, such as gender, age range, education level, income level, geography, lifestyle (e.g., homeowners, apartment dwellers, and college students), and hobbies and interests.

Function and Options

Determine the function or the purpose of the design or purchase. For instance, how will the design project or the purchase be used? Document the wants and needs for the design, service, or product.

Determine the budget for the design or the purchase. Use the good, better, best strategy. For example, a client wants a skirt made for her daughter to wear at her birthday party.

- ◆ **Good**—Begin by giving the client an option to satisfy basic needs at the bottom of the budget. For instance, show the client a fun, inexpensive cotton print with an elastic waistband.
- ◆ **Better**—Next, provide the client with an option that uses higher priced materials as well as some higher priced design elements. This option is at or near the top of the budget (e.g., a satin skirt fabric with a zipper closure and bottom ruffle).
- ◆ **Best**—Finally, provide the client with an option of more luxurious materials and more design elements. This option surpasses the stated budget, such as a silk dupioni skirt with button closures and hand-sewn beading.

STYLE

Determine the style. **Style** is a category of clothing or accessories or furniture distinguished by some common characteristics or qualities. Style dominates the look (appearance) or construction of a design or a design project. Clients may need some coaching as to the envisioned style. They can be educated about the elements of various designs by viewing current fads and sample boards.

Fads

Fads are current trends, crazes, colors, and looks that change every season or every year. Fads should be incorporated as requested. Customers should be asked to point out items they



FIGURE 2. Interior designers work with architects, landscape architects, electricians, decorators, and other professionals to create a living or working space in the requested style.

like. Often, people like elements of more than one style. The associate should clearly document the likes of the client for the service and product, including pictures if available.

Sample Board

A **sample board** is a presentation piece, such as a binder or portfolio (hard copy and/or electronic), electronic poster (hard copy and/or electronic), showcase, or window display that displays a specific design or designer's colors, material swatches, design elements, and looks (including pairings and optional pieces). Designers and retail associates use sample boards to show clients an apparel line for a new season (e.g., pieces, pairings, and accessories). In addition, sample boards are used to show clients the plans for a store, hotel, or home remodeling and/or new construction.

Fashion Design Styles

Styles vary based on personalities and preferences. Yet some choices can be characterized based on certain qualities.

Avant-Garde

Avant-garde (progressive) is an experimental style that pushes the limits of art and combines it with fashion. In French, avant-garde is literally the “advance guard,” which is a reference to pioneers or innovators in fashion, music, art, etc. Hair, makeup, jewelry, hats, handbags, and shoes are “over the top” and exaggerated. Lady Gaga’s apparel is an example of the avant-garde experimental style. Alexander McQueen is a designer who features avant-garde fashion, but it is a bit toned down for sale in retail stores. His fashion is sold by Neiman Marcus.



FIGURE 3. Lady Gaga wears avant-garde clothing with artistic expression and a message.

Boho-Chic

Boho-chic is a hip, funky style with a casual 1970s look and an ethnic feel. The look has an earthy color palette and uses layering and accessories sparingly. A typical Boho-chic look would include a basic top layered with an oversize cardigan and a paisley shawl. The look is finished with a large bag, jewelry, and boots or sandals. Actress Nicole Richie is a person who wears Boho-chic apparel.

Chic

Classic is a conservative style depicted by timeless looks, graceful lines, and tasteful accessories. Classic wardrobe essentials are renewed with current colors and simple touches (e.g.,

pearls, large sunglasses, and a studded clutch purse). Coco Chanel, Jackie Kennedy, Angelina Jolie, and Kate Middleton are examples of people who wear the classic style.

Eco-Chic

Eco-chic is a style that seeks to inflict little or no harm to the environment (e.g., water, animals, and plants). Clients requesting eco-chic fashion are ecologically conscious, probably recycle clothing, and think of themselves as “green.” For example, these shoppers probably bring reusable shopping bags, wear plastic shoes, and wear repurposed jewelry.

Ethnic or Cultural

Ethnic or cultural is traditional dress, print, and accessories that represent a culture—often with an element of fantasy. Ethnic designs are typically given a twist to appear contemporary and are different than national dress. In the 1990s, ethnic and cultural elements became a strong influence on fashion. For instance, Kenzo, Tam, and Yeohlee created a variety of Asian-, African-, Native-American-, and East Indian-inspired garment lines.

Grunge

Grunge is a youthful, unkempt, and unstructured style with few rules. However, the layering of ripped denim, T-shirts with punk band images, little jewelry and finishing, and combat boots are common. Grunge style is based on grunge music bands. The clothing is comfortable, sometimes dirty, and messy. Flannel is worn frequently with this style.

Haute Couture

Haute couture is a French term for “high fashion.” Haute means high, and couture means dressmaking or sewing. This style is characterized by artistic fashioning of a garment. The garment is typically costly and becomes a one-of-a-kind item by customization to an individual’s body measurements coupled with hand-crafting techniques and attention to excellent fit.

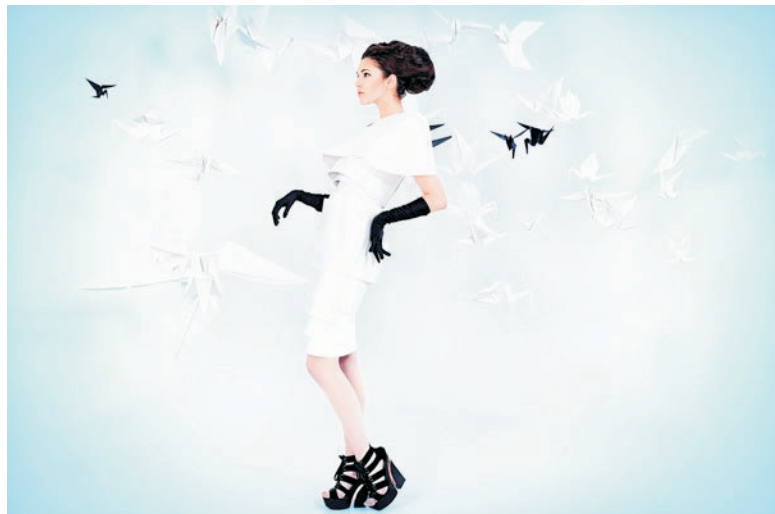


FIGURE 4. Fashion houses, such as Dior, St. Laurent, and Chanel, create these one-of-a-kind, high-fashion looks. What makes these fashions haute couture?

Old Hollywood

Old Hollywood is a glamorous, opulent, and luxurious style with classic body-hugging cuts, medium-length dresses, and soft, smooth fabrics (e.g., silk, jersey, and cashmere). Hygiene is important to the glamour style. For instance, clean hair, teeth, and skin as well as short to medium-length, wavy hair (often platinum blonde or black), red lipstick, and black

mascara are common. Accessories include diamond earrings and fur coats. Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn are examples of Old Hollywood style.

Vintage

Vintage is new or secondhand garments from another era, often with detailing that makes it recognizable. Typically fashion is influenced by youth culture—music and movies—and reflects some fads of the time. Some fads are 1950s glamour; 1960s mod clothing; and 1980s over-the-top shoulder pads, big hair, and parachute pants. Vintage is a green option for the eco-chic individual and never goes out of style.

Interior Design Styles

Interior design, like fashion, has many different styles. Yet some are timeless. The following are popular interior design styles.

Art Deco

Art Deco is a design style with geometric and angular décor and linear decoration. Materials include stainless steel, mirrors, chrome, glass, lacquer, ebony, marble, rare woods, and shark and zebra skins or prints. Themes include leaves, branches, feathers, nudes, stylized animals, chevrons and zigzags, as well as jagged, pointed edges (e.g., the Chrysler Building in New York City).

Arts and Crafts or Craftsman

Arts and Crafts or Craftsman is a design style with handcrafted works of art and workmanship evident in built-in cabinets, bookshelves, and hardwood floors. Gustav Stickley coined the term “Craftsman house,” and Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Prairie Style version of Arts and Crafts homes that featured art glass windows. Craftsman homes and bungalows typically have dark wood, stucco, stone, trim details, hard-to-find kitchens, and an expansive porch with thick, sturdy columns.

Coastal

Coastal style interiors are fun and relaxed with elements of ocean colors, sun-bleached whites, and natural fabrics. In the United States, a popular style is cottage coastal, which uses blues, peaches, and nude colors. Other coastal styles are tropical and Mediterranean.

Contemporary

Contemporary designs are current, modern, sleek, and appealing today. Contemporary design changes with the years. Typically, the interiors are clean and spare with straight lines, sculpture or artistic elements, and bold colors. Currently, pops of color with metal accents are common.

Eclectic

Eclectic is a style that meshes or mixes one or more styles to create a new and unique interior. Most styles grew out of another style. For example, today's traditional style grew out of country style. A couple tricks to assemble an eclectic look are a limited color palette, a unifying pattern or shape, a focal point (furniture or a piece of art), woods that match, and a theme (e.g., garden, lodge, or coastal).



FIGURE 5. Eclectic style is a meshing or mixing of one or more styles to create a new and unique interior. Which rules of eclectic design were used in this room?

Mediterranean

Mediterranean style is a type of coastal style that includes light, bright colors, a terra cotta roof, heavy wood, black iron or other metals, some carved detailing, and a whitewashed interior. Mediterranean interiors have archways, sea and sky colors, heavy hardware, ornately carved furniture, and a variety of vases and urns.

Mid-Century Modern

Mid-Century Modern is an organic style reflected by clean lines, functionality, and affordability. The furniture stacks, bends, folds, and may be rearranged. Saarinen, Noguchi, Nelson, Jacobsen, and the Eames' are popular designers. Ikea and other Scandinavian manufacturers produce reproductions of these designs.

Modern

Modern style is simple, uncluttered, and unadorned. It uses natural materials and neutral and earthy colors. "Form follows function" is the mantra of modern style interiors. Furnishings and art objects must have a practical purpose. Modern styling was popular during the first half of the 20th century and spawned Mid-Century Modern and post-modern designs.

Shabby Chic

Shabby chic is a comfortable and casual style with elements of coastal, cottage, and country. Collectibles and antiques are used in the interior decoration along with weathered and worn or tattered but interesting pieces.



FIGURE 6. Shabby chic is a comfortable and casual style with elements of coastal, cottage, and country. What makes this dining table and chairs "shabby chic?"

Slipcovers; creamy pastel colors and white; mixtures of plaid and floral prints; and painted or distressed furniture are characteristics of shabby chic.

CLIENT LIFESTYLE REQUIREMENTS

Knowing the lifestyle requirements of a client will assist in being successful.

Designers

Designers (e.g., fashion, interiors, and architects) need a repertoire to appeal to a variety of clients. A **repertoire** is a range of inventory, including samples and material options. A design must match how the item would be used, how long it must last, and the look and style requested. Lifestyle requirements for fashion and interior projects and purchases are theater, work/professional, recreation/sports, special events, geographic requirements, family home, condominium, apartment, and second home.

Customer surveys assist a designer to clarify client needs, wants, and specifications: lifestyle requirements. A survey is a list of questions that help a designer and an associate narrow the repertoire possibilities for the customer to choose from. Sample questions are:

- ◆ What products and/services are of interest to you?
- ◆ What are your preferred fabrics, patterns, and textures?
- ◆ What is your preferred design style or vision?
- ◆ What do you wish to invest in the project?

Fashion houses and manufacturers offer samples for review by the designer and client.

Swatches are small sample-size pieces (e.g., fabric, wallpaper, upholstery, carpet, window covering, and paint chips) for the designer and clients to view and touch. Designers and retail stores request updated samples and swatches well ahead of the next seasonal line. Designers may use a portable computer or iPad to show clients samples not available in-house.

Designer networks help create business relationships with other professionals. Networking accomplished through the Internet requires sending follow-up emails to those in the network. Professional organizations link designers with other people who have expertise in a particular area. For example, if a home designer does not sew but needs custom pillows made, he or she could develop a working relationship with an individual to complete this task. Professional networks include LinkedIn, ASID, IDEC, IIDA, and CFDA.

Retailers

Retail associates must know their inventory and in-house stock as well as stock that may be ordered. The target market of the retail establishment influences the store inventory. A purchase must match how the item would be used, how long it must last, and the look and style request. Lifestyle requirements for fashion and interior purchases are theater, work/profes-

sional, recreation/sports, special events, geographic requirements, family home, condominium, apartment, second home, etc.

Sales associates ask clients open-ended questions to determine their wants and needs and to narrow the inventory options. Customer may approach associates with specific statements, such as: “I am looking for an outfit to wear to work on casual days as well as versatile enough to wear with my children on Saturday activities.” The associate may suggest items with a little stretch for movement. The outfit may include pants, top, and jacket with matching accessories. The jacket may dress the outfit “up” as well as provide layering for warmth if needed.

Shoppers visit stores for multiple reasons. Common reasons are to:

- ◆ Shop for a gift, new season apparel, new clothing size, new activity, or vacation
- ◆ Respond to a window display or advertising
- ◆ Find an outfit for a special occasion (e.g., wedding)
- ◆ Relax and browse

Fashion companies and manufacturers send look books, samples, and swatches for viewing and touching by clients. Retailers contact companies prior to every calendar season to receive the swatches and samples. Personal shoppers keep a list of clients and their preferences.

ISSUES IMPORTANT TO THE CLIENT

Clients may begin a conversation telling about the issues important to them. However, some clients are more interested in geographic, climatic, and/or environmental issues after a little education from the designer. Minimizing the impact on the environment during the life cycle of a product is an important consideration for many clients. For example, herbicides and pesticides used to grow cotton and the petrochemicals used to create synthetic fibers are examples that cause environmental damage.

Environmental issues are outcomes caused by harmful human activities that result in changes in natural systems (e.g., air, water, and soil). Environmental problems include global warming, deforestation, animal products, littering, child labor, greenhouse gases, the destruction of natural resources, fossil fuels, soil contamination, and water pollution. Urban, suburban, and rural customers may have different definitions of the importance of environmental issues.

Environmental Issues

Eco-fashion (sustainable fashion) is a broad term for textiles, garments, and accessories manufactured in an environmentally conscious way. Some eco-fashion is produced from recycled materials. The majority of clothing in U.S. stores is manufactured outside of the country, in part, because of lower labor costs. Along with lower labor costs, manufacturing regulations imposed by the local governments may be far below American standards. Lax manufacturing

regulations may result in environmental degradation that threatens all life. Eco-fashion brands include:

- ◆ Stella McCartney—high-fashion vegan designer
- ◆ H&M—H&Ms eco-friendly Conscious Collection
- ◆ Coclico—eco-friendly shoes
- ◆ Melissa Joy Manning—eco-friendly jewelry

Organic Fashion

Organic fashion is textiles, garments, and accessories produced with a minimal use of chemicals and with limited impact on the environment. For example, a substantial decrease in the use of herbicides and pesticides on living plant materials may qualify for the distinction label “organic” fashion. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) requires garments and textiles to be labeled with fiber content, country of origin, and manufacture identification. Customers vote with their dollars by purchasing products that embody their values.

Social Issues: Labor Standards

OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, is the division of the U.S. Department of Labor that sets and enforces occupational safety and health rules. However, OSHA does not regulate the garment industry outside of the United States. The safety and health of the workers is still a major concern of the garment industry.

Ergonomic Design

Ergonomic design (human engineering or human factors) is an applied science that creates solutions for people who interact with products, systems, or processes. The focus of ergonomic design is to “ensure that designs complement the strengths and abilities of people and



FURTHER EXPLORATION...

ONLINE CONNECTION: The Hazards of Working in the Garment Industry

The Fibre 2 Fashion Web site, <http://www.fibre2fashion.com>, cites the major issues for people working in the garment industry (mainly outside the United States).

- Exposure to cotton dust leads to lung health problems. Child labor is common in India and other garment-producing countries. The adult workers and children are exposed at dangerous levels.
- Exposure to chemicals, such as formaldehyde, occurs regularly. Formaldehyde is an agent used to produce wrinkle-free clothing and is a known carcinogen.
- Exposure to noise inside the factory can result in hearing loss.

minimize the effects of their limitations rather than forcing them to adapt” (Source: <http://www.ergonomics.org.uk/learning/what-ergonomics/>). For example, some common ergonomic designs address age, size, strength, cognitive ability, prior experience, cultural expectations, and goals. Ergonomists arrange equipment and tools for people to prevent injuries and accidents (e.g., eyestrain; neck, back, and shoulder pain; and carpal tunnel syndrome) while increasing comfort and reducing stress.

Geographic, Travel, and Recreational Issues

Designers and retail stores whose target customers are travelers would consider producing or stocking resort wear pieces, including swimsuits and cover-ups, sunglasses, foot gloves and sandals, silk and linen shirts, blouses, shorts, sun hats, and UV-resistant fabrics.

Designers and retail stores whose target customers are avid outdoors people would consider producing or stocking outdoor gear, including cargo vests and cargo pants, insect-resistant or repellant garments, tear-free denim, stretch fabrics, SPF- and UV-resistant garments, and more.

Summary:



Learn the demographics of your target customers. Be prepared to discuss style choices through a question-and-answer process with the client. Portfolios (sample boards) aid the customer in making fashion and interior design decisions.

Customers have many motivations for a purchase. Some are interested in more than the product. They care about the impact made on the environment or on the individuals who manufacture the product. Fashion styles include avant-garde, Boho-chic, classic, eco-chic, ethnic or cultural, grunge, haute couture, Old Hollywood, and vintage. Interior design styles include Art Deco, Arts and Crafts or Craftsman, eclectic, Mediterranean, Mid-Century Modern, and shabby chic.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Describe four demographic characteristics of a target customer.
2. Describe six fashion design styles.
3. Describe six interior design styles.
4. Which environmental issues are important to clients?
5. Which social issues are important to clients?

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Create a portfolio of three of your favorite fashions and three of your favorite interior design styles. Find pictures in magazines as evidence of each style. Walk through the malls and boutiques to take pictures of pieces to include in your portfolio. Expand your portfolio further by including swatches and material samples.

Web Links:



American Society of Interior Designers

<http://www.asid.org/>

HGTV

<http://www.hgtv.com/decorating/design-styles-defined/pictures/index.html>

Fabric Images

<http://www.fabricimages.com/>

ELLE

<http://www.elle.com/fashion/trend-reports/>