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UDC 391:316.346.2-055.2

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.25313/2520-2057-2026-5-12051

EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S STYLE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: TRENDS, SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE CONTEMPORARY IMAGE

Summary. *Women's style in the twenty-first century has undergone more transformations in two decades than fashion experienced across the entire second half of the twentieth century, yet no systematic framework links these transformations to the economic, technological, and social forces that drive them. This study analyses the evolution of women's style from 2000 to 2025, proposing a five-period chronology anchored to documented shifts in the global economy (the 2008 recession, the 2020 pandemic), digital platforms (Instagram's launch in 2010, TikTok's rise from 2018), and social movements (body positivity, gender fluidity, sustainability advocacy). A trend driver taxonomy classifies the mechanisms through which each force reshapes style, distinguishing between speed of impact and long-term durability. Data from the author's consulting practice (200+ female clients across Kyiv and New York, 2016 to 2025) document a measurable shift in client demand: from proportion-focused requests ("make me look slimmer") toward identity-focused ones ("help me feel like myself"), with capsule wardrobe and quality-over-quantity thinking accelerating sharply after*

2022. A three-force interaction model visualises how economic, technological, and social drivers converge to produce the style phenomena that define each period. Based on the patterns identified, three forecast directions for 2025 to 2030 are proposed: the continued rise of algorithmic personalisation, the mainstreaming of circular wardrobe practices, and the emergence of post-trend personal style as a stable consumer category. Findings carry implications for trend forecasting methodology, stylist education, and fashion industry strategy.

Key words: *women's style evolution, fashion trends, social media influence, body positivity, fashion minimalism, trend forecasting, sociocultural analysis.*

Introduction. Twentieth-century fashion moved in decades. Christian Dior's New Look defined the 1950s; the miniskirt stamped the 1960s; power shoulders owned the 1980s. A style historian could assign a silhouette to a decade and be understood. Twenty-first-century fashion resists this treatment. Since 2000, women's style has cycled through logomania, bohemian revival, normcore, athleisure, cottagecore, quiet luxury, and dozens of smaller aesthetics, some lasting years, others burning through TikTok in a matter of weeks. Kawamura [1] argued that fashion operates as an institutionalised system with its own production, diffusion, and consumption logic; what the twenty-first century has done is compress that system's clock speed while multiplying the number of actors who can set it in motion.

Three categories of force are responsible for this compression. Economic shifts alter what consumers can afford and what they value. Amed et al. [5; 17] have documented, through annual McKinsey State of Fashion reports, how the 2008 financial crisis, the 2020 pandemic, and post-pandemic inflation each left a measurable mark on purchasing behaviour, redirecting demand toward different price points, product categories, and consumption logics with each successive disruption.

Technological platforms altered who decides what is fashionable and how fast that decision travels. Rocamora [8] traced how fashion blogs and Instagram displaced magazine editors as the primary gatekeepers of style between 2005 and 2015. Arriagada and Bishop [9] showed that TikTok's algorithm creates a qualitatively different trend mechanism, one in which trends emerge from user-generated content and reach saturation before the traditional industry can respond. McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips [10] called this the "megaphone effect," where ordinary consumers acquire an audience that rivals professional media. One consequence is that trend cycles have shortened from years to weeks, producing what the industry now calls "microtrends": aesthetic identities like #cottagecore, #darkacademia, and #coastalgrandmother that flare and fade at a speed earlier fashion systems could not have generated.

Social movements reshaped what style is expected to accomplish. Leboeuf [12] traced body positivity from the fat acceptance activism of the 1960s to its contemporary form centred on pride rather than shame. Suradkar and Chanana [13] documented how the fashion industry has absorbed this stance through inclusive sizing and diverse casting, though Gill [14] warned that the absorption can remain superficial. Pompa [15] identified visual activism on social media as a counter-strategy, where users produce images that deliberately challenge conventional beauty norms. For a practitioner working with individual clients, these shifts register concretely: the woman who walked into the author's office in Kyiv in 2016 asking to "look slimmer in photos" and the woman who sat down in the New York studio in 2024 asking to "feel like the most authentic version of myself" are separated by eight years but inhabit different style universes.

Despite the volume of writing on each of these forces individually, no published study integrates them into a single analytical framework that explains how they interact to produce the style environment a practitioner encounters daily. Trend forecasting, as practised by firms like WGSN and Peclers Paris, is commercially oriented and methodologically opaque. Academic fashion studies

tend to focus on the economic dimension [5; 7; 17], the media dimension [8; 10], or the social dimension [12; 14], without constructing a model of their joint effect. Fletcher [16] and Vladimirova [11] have linked sustainability to fashion consumption, and Tulloch [18] has examined dress as a vehicle of cultural identity, but these contributions remain siloed from trend analysis. Filling this gap is the purpose of the present study. It begins by identifying the major style shifts of 2000 to 2025 and anchoring each to its driving forces. It then builds a taxonomy of trend drivers that classifies their mechanisms, speed, and durability. It ends by proposing a forecast for the next five years grounded in the patterns the analysis reveals.

Literature review

1. Fashion as a Cultural System: Theoretical Foundations

Kawamura [1] repositioned fashion studies by arguing that fashion is not clothing but a system of institutions whose interactions produce the cultural phenomenon we call a trend. Designers, media, buyers, and consumers each play a role; clothing becomes fashion only when it passes through this institutional machinery. A garment hanging in a factory is not fashionable until a gatekeeper validates it and a consumer adopts it. Lipovetsky [2] offered a complementary thesis: fashion's acceleration across the centuries reflects the expansion of democratic individualism. In pre-modern societies, dress codes were fixed by law or custom; modernity made it possible for people to express themselves through their clothes, and the rate of change accelerated in direct proportion to how much a culture valued originality and self-expression. Wilson [3] introduced a productive tension into this account. Fashion, she argued, is simultaneously a tool of conformity and a medium of rebellion. Women who dress "in fashion" submit to collective taste; women who dress "against fashion" define themselves through refusal. Neither position is stable, because today's rebellion becomes tomorrow's mainstream. Crane [4] historicised this tension by documenting the shift from class fashion, where elites set trends and lower classes imitated them, to consumer

fashion, where trends emerge from multiple sources including street culture, subcultures, and media. For the twenty-first century, Crane's framework requires extension: the sources have multiplied further, and the direction of diffusion has inverted, with consumer-generated content now flowing upward to influence designers rather than the reverse.

2. Economic Drivers: Recession, Pandemic, and the Value Recalibration

Economic disruptions do more than reduce spending. They reframe what people think clothes ought to accomplish for them. The "democratization of luxury" that preceded the 2008 financial crisis was chronicled by Thomas [7]. During this time, middle-class consumers could purchase designer-adjacent items from companies like Coach, Michael Kors, and Tory Burch, creating a "masstige" category that blurred the line between affordability and aspiration. The industry ultimately dubbed this strategy "investment dressing," as consumers who had strained their budgets for ostentatious luxury turned to purchasing fewer, better-quality items that were anticipated to last several seasons.

Amed et al. [5] tracked the next disruption through annual McKinsey State of Fashion reports. Between 2019 and 2021, formalwear sales dropped by over 50% globally as remote work eliminated the daily dress requirement for millions of women. The displaced demand was absorbed by loungewear, athleisure, and soft tailoring. Numerous customers reported that they liked the outcome. From a different perspective, Pine and Gilmore [6] had anticipated something similar: their "experience economy" thesis contends that consumers are becoming more concerned with how a product makes them feel rather than merely what it offers materially. The pandemic compressed years of this transition into months, and by the time offices reopened, expectations about workwear comfort had permanently shifted. The post-pandemic years of 2022–2024 were described by Amed et al. [17] as a time of bifurcation. While ordinary consumers aggressively shifted toward value, resale, and reasonably priced copies of designer goods, ultra-luxury sales surged among high-net-worth individuals chasing scarcity. There were two

parallel forms of aesthetics. Unbranded, fine, understated clothing became a status symbol that could only be deciphered by those with the cultural literacy to do so under the moniker "quiet luxury." "Dupe culture" on TikTok effectively separated financial investment from aesthetic aspiration by normalizing the wearing of visually comparable products for a fraction of the price.

3. Technology, Platforms, and the Compression of Trend Cycles

Rocamora [8] mapped the first phase of fashion's digital transformation, showing how blogs and Instagram created a new class of gatekeepers between 2005 and 2015. Unlike magazine editors, who curated monthly narratives with lead times of several months, digital creators published daily, responded to events in real time, and built audiences that rivalled or exceeded print circulation. Editorial authority did not disappear, but it was forced to share space with voices it had never credentialled.

Arriagada and Bishop [9] analysed the second phase, triggered by TikTok's global expansion around 2018. Unlike Instagram's follower-based feed, TikTok surfaces content based on engagement patterns: a video from an unknown creator can reach millions if it holds attention long enough. In fashion, this produces trends from the bottom up. Someone films a styling video; the algorithm pushes it outward; viewers replicate the look and post their own versions; within days, a hashtag accumulates millions of views and enters forecaster vocabulary. McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips [10] named this dynamic the "megaphone effect."

Vladimirova [11] identified a counter-current. Clothes that are worn once and then thrown away, wardrobes that cycle more quickly than their owners can use them, the apparent waste of trend acceleration has led to a sustainability backlash on the very platforms that are driving the acceleration. Beginning in 2022, "deinfluencing" videos, in which producers specifically advise viewers not to purchase popular goods, became popular. Ten years prior, Fletcher [16] had postulated this prospect under the moniker "slow fashion," contending that

significant change necessitates both slower production and a fundamentally altered interaction between the consumer and apparel.

4. Social Movements and the Redefinition of What Style Is For

Leboeuf [12] traced the philosophical roots of body positivity from the fat acceptance activism of the 1960s through disability rights and queer visibility movements to its contemporary form, which she characterised as a shift from shame to pride. Twenty-first-century body positivity differs from earlier movements in one structural respect: its visual infrastructure. Social media provides a distribution system for images of non-normative bodies that traditional media gatekeepers had historically filtered out. Pompa [15] called this "visual activism," a practice in which posting a photograph of a body that does not conform to fashion-industry norms constitutes a political statement.

Suradkar and Chanana [13] examined how the fashion industry has responded, finding a mixed picture. Inclusive sizing, diverse casting, and body-positive marketing language have expanded significantly since 2018, particularly among mid-market and fast-fashion brands. Luxury houses, however, have been slower to adapt, and survey data suggest that consumer perception of industry inclusivity remains cautious: respondents acknowledged progress but described it as uneven and sometimes performative. Gill [14] had anticipated this ambiguity in her analysis of "postfeminist media culture," where empowerment discourse coexists with continued surveillance of women's bodies. A brand can celebrate "real bodies" in advertising while continuing to produce garments in a size range that excludes most of them.

Tulloch [18] broadened the discussion beyond size to encompass race, ethnicity, and cultural identity. Dress, in her account, functions as a form of political self-authoring: the choices a Black woman makes about hair, colour, and silhouette are never purely aesthetic but always carry a layer of cultural

negotiation. For twenty-first-century women's style, this means that the forces shaping the contemporary image are economic, technological, and deeply political, and that any analysis of current dress practices that ignores the identity work embedded in clothing will be incomplete.

Table 1

Timeline of Key Style Shifts and Their Drivers (2000–2025)

Period	Dominant style direction	Primary economic driver	Primary technological driver	Primary social driver
2000–2007	Logomania, maximalism, "It bag" culture	Pre-recession credit expansion; masstige luxury (Thomas [7])	Early fashion blogs; limited digital influence	Celebrity culture as primary aspirational model
2008–2013	Investment dressing, quiet sophistication, capsule wardrobe emergence	2008 recession; value-conscious consumption	Fashion blogs mature; Instagram launches (2010)	Early body positivity; Dove "Real Beauty" campaign (2004)
2014–2018	Athleisure, normcore, Instagram aesthetic	Gig economy; experience spending over product spending	Instagram dominance; influencer economy matures	#MeToo (2017); feminist discourse enters mainstream fashion
2019–2021	Comfort-first dressing, WFH aesthetic, cottagecore	Pandemic collapse of formalwear; remote work	TikTok's rise; algorithm-driven microtrends	Body positivity mainstreamed; size-inclusive casting accelerates
2022–2025	Quiet luxury vs. dupe culture; minimalism revival; capsule wardrobe demand	Post-pandemic bifurcation; inflation; resale growth	TikTok as primary trend engine; AI styling tools emerge	Sustainability advocacy; deinfluencing; post-trend identity

Source: compiled by the author based on Kawamura [1], Lipovetsky [2], Crane [4], Thomas [7], Amed et al. [5, 17], Rocamora [8], Arriagada and Bishop [9], Leboeuf [12], Vladimirova [11], Tulloch [18]

Materials and methods. The study rests on three sources: published academic and industry literature, the author's consulting records, and current market signals used for forecasting.

Four industry publications and eighteen scholarly sources were examined for the trend study. The Business of Fashion yearly surveys and the McKinsey State of Fashion editions from 2019, 2023, and 2024 were among the industry reports. A year or time of emergence, a driver category, and a mechanism name were assigned to each recorded style transition between 2000 and 2025. Demand contraction, platform amplification, normative redefinition, and counter-reaction are all distinguished by the mechanism labels. After gathering shifts from the literature, they were cross-referenced with timeframes of social movements, platform launch and adoption statistics, and concomitant economic developments. The author's consulting records from 2016 to 2025, which included over 200 female clients, first in Kyiv through 2022 and then in New York starting in 2023, provided the customer data.

Periodisation followed an event-anchored method rather than fixed temporal intervals. Period boundaries were placed at moments where at least two of the three driver categories (economic, technological, social) underwent a documented structural change within a narrow time window. The 2008 boundary, for instance, coincides with the onset of the global financial crisis (economic) and the maturation of fashion blogging as a gatekeeping force (technological); the 2019 boundary coincides with the pandemic-driven collapse of formalwear demand (economic) and TikTok's emergence as the dominant trend engine (technological), while body positivity reached mainstream industry adoption (social). Where only one driver shifted, the change was treated as an intra-period development rather than a period boundary. Candidate boundaries were first identified from the literature, then tested against the author's consulting records: if client demand patterns showed a directional shift within twelve months of the proposed boundary, the boundary was retained; if client behaviour remained

stable despite the documented macro-level event, the boundary was reconsidered. Two initially proposed boundaries (2005, marking the emergence of fashion blogs, and 2017, marking #MeToo) were ultimately absorbed into adjacent periods because the client data did not register a corresponding shift in demand type within the twelve-month window. The resulting five-period structure (2000–2007, 2008–2013, 2014–2018, 2019–2021, 2022–2025) is presented in Table 1.

All identifying information was removed before analysis. At intake, each client's stated goal was assigned to one of four categories: proportion-focused requests centred on altering perceived body dimensions, occasion-focused requests tied to a specific event, identity-focused requests framed as a search for personal authenticity, or system-focused requests aimed at building a functional, interchangeable wardrobe. These categories emerged inductively during the first five years of practice and held up when applied to the full dataset. A coarser two-category split would have hidden the appearance of system-focused requests as a new phenomenon; a finer grid produced groups too small to analyse. In roughly 8% of consultations the intake statement touched more than one category; the dominant goal was used for coding. The sample skews toward urban, educated, middle-to-upper-income women who chose to pay for professional styling. Rural, lower-income, and non-Western clients are absent. The move from Kyiv to New York could confound temporal trends with geographic ones, though the same directional pattern was already visible in the Kyiv data before the relocation. All coding was done by the author alone, and no inter-rater reliability check was conducted.

With the assumption that social, technological, and economic variables will continue to interact but may change in relative importance, forecasts were constructed by extending the directional patterns observed over the course of the five periods. Every forecast direction is linked to at least one signal that is currently available in data from 2024 to 2025, and the horizon was set at five years to prevent excess.

Results

1. Five Periods of Twenty-First-Century Women's Style

Each of the five periods identified in Table 1 exhibits a distinct configuration of driving forces, and the transitions between them correspond to identifiable ruptures rather than to gradual aesthetic drift. Rather than restating the macro-level causes analysed in the Literature Review, this section focuses on how each period registered in the author's professional environment and in the observable behaviour of clients and industry peers.

From 2000 to 2007, confidence was fueled by credit. Handbags with a lot of logos served as social shorthand for success, and senior colleagues have told the author that brand selection dominated styling discussions during this time. Few customers considered wardrobe systems or used apparel to express their particular identities, while digital effect was almost nonexistent.

That changed abruptly in 2008. The financial crisis made conspicuous branding feel tone-deaf, and a new vocabulary entered practitioner conversations: "investment dressing," capsule wardrobes, quality over quantity. Instagram launched in 2010 but did not reshape fashion at scale until several years later. When the author began consulting in 2016, many clients who had formed their habits during the post-recession years still carried those habits with them. They valued durability, leaned toward neutral palettes, and viewed trend-driven purchases with scepticism.

Instagram brought athleisure out of the gym and developed the influencer economy between 2014 and 2018. Deliberate understatement could be a style statement in and of itself, according to normcore. Then, in 2017, #MeToo emerged and altered the dialogue that clients brought to sessions. "Looking powerful" started to take the place of "looking attractive" as the stated goal in the author's records from that year and the following; this change was unprecedented in previous intake statistics.

The pandemic compressed what might have been a decade of change into weeks. Formalwear demand collapsed. Cottagecore surged on TikTok as a lockdown escape and, as a result, body positivity reached mainstream industry adoption. And for the first time in the author's practice, most new clients named "feeling like myself" as their primary reason for booking a consultation. Several returning clients who had originally come for proportion work now came back with identity questions, suggesting the shift was happening inside individuals and not only across cohorts.

Two currents ran beside each other after 2022. High-quality, tactile, unbranded clothing became well-known as "quiet luxury." Affordable imitations of designer styles have become commonplace on TikTok under the moniker "dupe culture." The demand for capsule wardrobes increased among the author's clientele, and by 2024, system-focused requests surpassed all other categories. Compared to earlier groups, clients in this cohort were more knowledgeable, skeptical of trend cycles, and inclined to frame goals around sustainability and personal coherence.

2. Trend Driver Taxonomy

Moving from chronology to mechanism, Table 2 classifies the drivers of style change by their category, specific mechanism, speed of impact, durability, and a representative example from the five periods.

Table 2

Trend Driver Taxonomy: Mechanisms of Influence on Women's Style

Driver category	**Mechanism**	**Speed of impact**	**Durability**	**Representative example**
Economic: demand contraction	Recession reduces spending; consumers shift to value and durability	Slow (6–18 months after onset)	High (effects persist beyond recovery)	2008 recession → investment dressing persisted into 2014

Economic: luxury repositioning	Brands adjust price architecture and visibility signalling	Moderate (1–2 seasons)	Moderate (reversible when economy shifts)	Post-2022 quiet luxury as response to inflation and logo fatigue
Technological: platform shift	New platform changes who creates trends and how fast they spread	Fast (within 1 year of platform reaching critical mass)	High (platform effects are structural, not cyclical)	Instagram (2010–2015) displaced magazine editors as gatekeepers
Technological: algorithmic amplification	Platform algorithm selects and scales user content into microtrends	Very fast (days to weeks)	Low (microtrends cycle rapidly)	TikTok #coastalgrandmother (2022): viral in weeks, faded in months
Social: normative redefinition	Movement changes what society considers acceptable or aspirational	Slow (years of advocacy before tipping point)	High (normative shifts rarely reverse fully)	Body positivity: 1960s origins, mainstream fashion adoption by 2019
Social: counter-reaction	Backlash against prevailing trend produces opposite aesthetic	Moderate (emerges 1–2 years after saturation)	Moderate (sustains until next cycle)	Deinfluencing (2022) as counter to overconsumption culture

Source: author's original taxonomy based on [1-18]

The taxonomy reveals an inverse relationship between speed and durability. Algorithmically amplified trends arrive fastest but disappear soonest. Normative redefinitions take years to build but rarely reverse once established. Economic demand contraction falls between these poles: the habit changes it produces take months to form but persist long after the recession ends. For a stylist building a long-term wardrobe, durable drivers deserve more weight than fast-cycling microtrends, even though microtrends dominate the visual environment the client sees every day on her phone.

4.3. The Shift in Client Demand: Evidence from Consulting Practice

Coding the initial requests of over 200 clients across the author's practice years produced a distribution that mirrors the macro-level periodisation. Table 3 presents the distribution of request types across three intervals.

Table 3

Distribution of Client Request Types by Period

Request type	**2016–2018, n ≈ 65**	**2019–2021, n ≈ 70**	**2022–2025, n ≈ 75**	**Direction of change**
Proportion-focused	≈55%	≈30%	<20%	Declining steadily
Occasion-focused	≈25%	≈20%	≈15%	Gradual decline
Identity-focused	≈20%	≈40%	≈40%	Sharp rise, then plateau
System-focused	0%	≈10%	≈25%	Absent before 2019, rising fast

Source: author's consulting records (M. Kostogryz, 2016–2025). Percentages are approximate; the dominant stated goal at intake was used for coding

Proportion-focused requests dominated the 2016–2018 cohort. A typical intake note from this period reads: "Client, age 34, wants to visually narrow the hip zone and elongate the legs for professional settings." Colour, personality, and wardrobe structure were not mentioned unless the stylist introduced them. Among the 65 clients in this interval, 12 referenced a specific celebrity image as their aspirational benchmark, and only 3 mentioned sustainability or wardrobe longevity.

Between 2019 and 2021 requests like "I've lost my sense of who I am style-wise after working from home for a year" and "I want my clothes to match the person I've become, not the person I was five years ago" were increasingly noted in intake notes. Proportion concerns did not disappear; rather, they moved from the primary to the secondary position, with clients only acknowledging body-related aspirations after posing an identification question. System-focused requests appeared for the first time in late 2019 when a client, age 41, asked: "Can

you build me a wardrobe where everything works with everything else, so I never stand in front of my closet feeling stuck?" By 2021, variants of this request accounted for roughly 10% of new consultations.

Between 2022 and 2025. Identity-focused inquiries leveled off at about 40%, indicating a ceiling effect: clients seeking identity work through style may constitute a comparatively stable portion of the population seeking expert assistance. However, system-focused requests kept increasing, reaching 25% by the beginning of 2025. Compared to previous cohorts, clients who arrived with system goals were quantifiably more educated. Some brought screenshots of capsule wardrobe content from Instagram or TikTok and two showed up with spreadsheets that listed their current wardrobe by color and category; one had already done a self-directed wardrobe audit and asked for the stylist's opinion instead of consulting from scratch. In contrast to zero in the 2016–2018 cohort, eighteen clients in the 2022–2025 cohort specifically mentioned sustainability as a motivator.

A directional pattern runs through all three intervals: each shift moved client demand one step further from the body and one step closer to the self. Proportion-focused requests treat the body as a problem to solve. Identity-focused requests treat the self as a narrative to articulate. System-focused requests treat the wardrobe as infrastructure to engineer. Between 2016 and 2025, what changed was not the clients' bodies but their understanding of what a stylist is for.

4. Three-Force Interaction Model

Figure 1 visualises the relationship between the three driving forces as overlapping domains, with their pairwise intersections and central convergence.

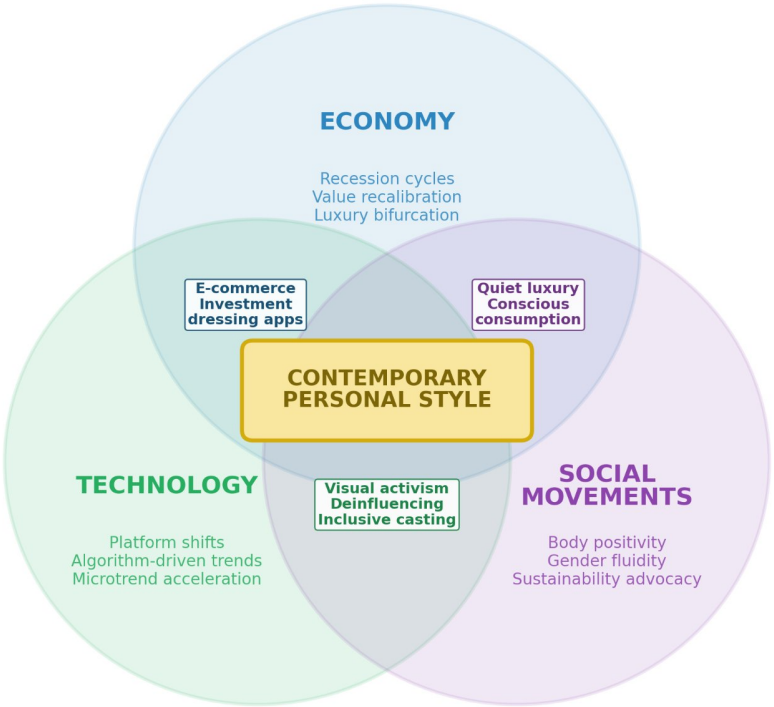


Fig. 1. Three-Force Model of Style Evolution

Source: author's original model (M. Kostogryz)

The pairwise intersections produce recognisable phenomena. AI-powered wardrobe applications and e-commerce-enabled investment dressing are products of economy meeting technology that are offered through digital channels and are based on economic efficiency. Conscious consumption and quiet luxury are produced when the economy and social movements come together, with values influencing purchases just as much as price. When technology and social movements come together, they produce inclusive digital casting, deinfluencing, and visual activism, all of which are enhanced by platform reach beyond what offline organizing might accomplish. At the center, where all three factors come together, is modern personal style, which is simultaneously influenced by shifting social expectations, algorithmic visibility, and financial restrictions.

5. Author's Forecast: Three Directions for 2025–2030

There seem to be three likely paths for the next five years. Both are based on signs that were already apparent in 2024 and 2025.

Algorithmic personalisation will move from product recommendation to style curation. Current AI tools suggest individual garments based on past purchases; emerging systems, several already in beta testing by major e-commerce platforms, will generate complete outfit configurations calibrated to body measurements, colour profiles, and stated lifestyle parameters. The basis for this projection lies in the trend diffusion pattern documented in Table 2: platform-driven shifts reach structural status within one to two years of critical mass adoption, and AI styling tools crossed the early-adopter threshold in 2024 when multiple major retailers (including Stitch Fix, Amazon, and Zalando) deployed or announced generative outfit recommendation features. Consumer behaviour data reinforce the direction: system-focused client requests in the author's practice rose from 0% to 25% between 2019 and 2025, indicating a growing demand for wardrobe-level coherence that algorithmic systems are positioned to approximate at scale. Platform influence accelerates this shift because recommendation algorithms do not merely respond to consumer preferences but actively shape them, as Arriagada and Bishop [9] demonstrated for TikTok's role in trend creation. When the same algorithmic logic is applied to individual wardrobes rather than to trend propagation, the effect shifts from collective trend acceleration to personalised style stabilisation. For stylists, the implication is that the professional role will migrate from garment selection, which algorithms can approximate, toward helping clients define who they want to be and working through the tensions between their identity, their context, and their comfort, which algorithms cannot.

Circular wardrobe practices will enter the mainstream. Resale, rental, and subscription models currently occupy a niche segment; their growth rate, estimated at 15 to 20% annually in McKinsey's 2024 report [17], suggests they will reach a tipping point within the forecast period. The trend diffusion logic supporting this projection is analogous to the pattern observed with athleisure in the 2014–2018 period: a practice that begins as a lifestyle-specific behaviour (in

this case, sustainability-motivated consumption) diffuses into the general population once platform visibility normalises it and economic incentives align. Consumer behaviour research by Vladimirova [11] identified a critical threshold at which sustainable fashion practices transition from virtue signalling to habitual behaviour; that threshold is reached when the friction cost of circular options (finding resale platforms, assessing second-hand quality, managing returns) falls below the friction cost of conventional purchasing, a condition that improving platform infrastructure is steadily approaching. In the author's practice, clients are already arriving at consultations with "wardrobe audits" as a requested service, asking the stylist to evaluate what to keep, what to resell, and what gaps remain. Before 2022, no client had made this request. By 2024, eighteen clients specifically mentioned sustainability as a motivator, and several brought itemised inventories of their existing wardrobes, a behaviour that signals a shift from acquisition-centred to management-centred consumption.

The post-trend personal style market will continue to grow. The trend driver taxonomy in Table 2 classifies this phenomenon as a social counter-reaction: a backlash against the prevailing condition (in this case, algorithmic trend acceleration) that produces an opposing behavioural pattern. Counter-reactions, as documented across the five periods, typically emerge one to two years after the saturating trend reaches peak visibility and sustain until the next cycle displaces them. Deinfluencing content, which began appearing in volume in 2022, marks the visible onset of this counter-reaction; the deeper behavioural shift, consumers opting out of trend-following in favour of a stable, individually defined aesthetic, follows the same diffusion trajectory but operates on a longer timescale because it requires not just rejection of the prevailing pattern but construction of an alternative. Consumer behaviour data from the author's practice support this reading: system-focused requests, which did not exist before 2019, reached 25% of intake volume by early 2025, and clients in this category exhibited measurably different consumption patterns, purchasing fewer items per

year, retaining them longer, and framing wardrobe decisions in engineering terms ("what works with what") rather than aspirational ones ("what looks best"). Platform influence paradoxically accelerates this anti-trend trend: "capsule wardrobe" and "personal uniform" content performs well on the same algorithms that drive microtrend virality, because the format (transformation reveals, before-and-after comparisons, system explanations) generates the engagement metrics that platforms reward. The result is that refusing to follow trends has itself become a visible, socially validated identity position rather than a default or a lack of fashion awareness.

6. Trend Integration Framework: A Practitioner Decision Model

The periodisation, taxonomy, and client demand data presented above converge on a practical question that stylists face daily: a new trend surfaces, and the stylist must decide whether to integrate it into this specific client's wardrobe, adapt it partially, or ignore it. Existing industry practice resolves this question through intuition. Drawing on the taxonomy's speed-durability axis and the client demand typology documented in Table 3, the author developed a decision framework that formalises the assessment into a two-step scoring process.

Step one evaluates the trend itself along three criteria. Durability score, rated 1 to 5, estimates how long the trend is likely to remain visually current based on the driver category identified in Table 2: trends driven by normative redefinition score 4–5, those driven by economic habit shifts score 3–4, those driven by platform shifts score 2–3, and those driven by algorithmic amplification score 1–2. Versatility score, also 1 to 5, estimates how many contexts in the client's life the trend can serve: a trend limited to evening or social media settings scores low; one applicable across professional, social, and casual contexts scores high. Compatibility score, 1 to 5, measures how well the trend aligns with the client's existing wardrobe system, colour coordinates, and silhouette direction as established in earlier consultations.

Step two generates an integration recommendation by summing the three scores, yielding a range of 3 to 15, and applying the threshold logic presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Trend Integration Framework: Scoring Criteria and Recommended Actions

Composite score	Integration level	Recommended action	Example from practice
12–15	Full integration	Invest in quality pieces; incorporate into wardrobe core	Capsule wardrobe thinking, 2022 onward: durability 5, versatility 5, compatibility 4 for system-focused clients = score 14
8–11	Selective adaptation	Adopt the principle but filter through client's existing palette and silhouette; limit to 1–2 pieces	Quiet luxury, 2023: durability 3, versatility 4, compatibility varies by client from 2 to 5
4–7	Peripheral acknowledgment	Reference through accessories, colour accents, or single low-cost items; do not alter wardrobe structure	Cottagecore, 2020: durability 2, versatility 2, compatibility 1–3 depending on lifestyle
3	Do not integrate	Observe and allow to pass; explain to client why the trend does not serve their goals	TikTok microtrends with weekly lifecycles: durability 1, versatility 1, compatibility 1

Source: author's original framework (M. Kostogryz, 2025)

Applied retrospectively to the five periods documented in Section 4.1, the framework produces outcomes consistent with the author's observed results. Due to the decline in economic demand over the 2008–2013 era, investment dressing that scored highly on durability and versatility would have been recommended for full integration for almost all client profiles. According to the author's records, clients who purchased investment items around this time had the longest active-use lifespans; several of them were still wearing important pieces ten years later. In contrast, the algorithmically amplified microtrend #coastalgrandmother in

2022 received a composite score of 4–6 based on the client's lifestyle proximity to the aesthetic, which is commensurate with the peripheral-acknowledgment level. It scored 1 on durability and 2 on versatility. In situations with mild ambiguity, the framework provides benefits beyond intuition. Between 2014 and 2018, athleisure posed a real decision-making challenge for stylists. It was fueled by a structural platform shift as well as an economic shift toward experience spending, which gave it a moderate level of durability, but its compatibility with professional wardrobes varied significantly by industry and corporate culture. For half of the consumers, it would have been incorrect to make a general advice. The framework resolves this by producing different composite scores for different clients: a creative-industry client in a casual-dress office might score athleisure at 12, warranting full integration, while a corporate-law client in a formal-dress firm might score it at 6, warranting peripheral acknowledgment through fabric choices rather than silhouette changes. In the author's records, clients whose athleisure adoption matched the level the framework would have recommended reported higher satisfaction at the six-month follow-up than clients who either over-adopted or under-adopted relative to their context.

Two limitations of the framework should be noted. First, the scoring relies on the stylist's judgment in assigning individual criterion values; inter-rater reliability has not been formally tested, and different practitioners might assign different scores to the same trend. Second, the framework assumes that the client has already undergone a baseline assessment of the kind described in the author's earlier work; without this baseline, the compatibility criterion cannot be evaluated. Future work should test inter-rater reliability across a multi-practitioner sample and explore whether a fourth criterion, psychological alignment capturing the emotional resonance a trend holds for the individual client, could supplement the current three.

Discussion. Kawamura [1] described fashion as an institutional system with a fixed set of actors whose interactions determine what counts as

fashionable. Twenty-first-century data suggest that this system has not been replaced but expanded: the actors have multiplied to include influencers, algorithm designers, and activist communities; the channels have diversified from print to platform to peer-to-peer; and the clock speed has compressed to the point where participants themselves struggle to track it. Lipovetsky [2] predicted that democratic individualism would accelerate fashion. He did not predict that the acceleration would eventually produce its own counter-movement, as consumers begin opting out of trend-following entirely in favour of personal stability. Post-trend personal style emerging as a client demand category suggests that acceleration and deceleration now run in parallel: the system speeds up while a growing number of individuals deliberately slow down.

Crane [4] framed the twentieth century as a transition from class fashion to consumer fashion. The current study builds on this periodization by identifying a third phase: platform fashion, where the consumer concurrently serves as the audience, artist, and data provider. When a person records a style video on TikTok, they are creating content through the video itself, consuming material through the algorithm's feed, and producing behavioral data that the platform may profit from. This tripartite role, which is unprecedented in Crane's theory, explains why trend cycles in the twenty-first century defy the linear diffusion models that previous researchers believed.

Wilson [3] argued that fashion's core tension lies between conformity and rebellion. Extending this binary, the three-force model proposed in Section 4.4 shows that the tension is triangulated rather than two-sided. A woman choosing what to wear navigates economic constraints, technological exposure, and social norms simultaneously. A stylist who grasps this can start to understand why some clients feel paralysed in front of their wardrobes and others feel pulled in contradictory directions.

The speed-durability inverse documented in Table 2 has a concrete implication for forecasting. Firms like WGSN invest heavily in fast-moving

signals: colour palettes, silhouette shifts, fabric innovations. These are, by the taxonomy's logic, the least durable signals available. Slow-moving drivers like normative redefinition lack visual drama but reshape markets more permanently. A forecasting method that gave more weight to slow drivers would produce less exciting seasonal reports but better five-year projections.

In education, the five-period framework could replace the standard "history of costume" chronology with a driver-based analysis that explains why styles changed. In retail, the speed-durability taxonomy could help buyers distinguish between stock they should invest in and stock they should treat as quick-response experiments. In policy, the three-force model could help identify which sustainability interventions target the most durable drivers and therefore have the best chance of lasting.

Several limitations bound these findings. Periodisation inevitably smooths over within-period variation. Client data come from a self-selected population of women who sought professional styling, overrepresenting urban, educated, middle-to-upper-income demographics. Forecasting is inherently uncertain, and the five-year horizon was chosen to limit overconfidence. The trend integration framework proposed in Section 4.6 relies on individual stylist judgment for criterion scoring, and inter-rater reliability has not been formally tested.

Conclusions. This study set out to trace how women's style evolved across the first quarter of the twenty-first century and to connect what women wore to the forces that made them wear it. The result is a structured account of a process that practitioners have long described through anecdote alone.

A list of trends becomes more likely to a causal story when logomania, investment dressing, athleisure, comfort-first wardrobes, and quiet luxury are anchored to recessions, platform debuts, and social movements. Changes between periods begin to appear foreseeable in hindsight once each period can be explained as a reaction to a particular arrangement of forces. That is necessary in order to forecast them in the future.

The trend driver taxonomy gives practitioners a way to separate signal from noise. When a new aesthetic goes viral, the relevant question is whether it runs on algorithmic amplification or on normative redefinition, because the answer determines whether it will last months or decades. The trend integration framework converts that assessment into a client-specific recommendation, scoring each trend by durability, versatility, and compatibility with the individual wardrobe system.

Client data confirm that the profession is in the middle of a structural shift. Early cohorts came to the author asking to change how their bodies looked. Recent cohorts come asking to build wardrobes that express who they are and function as coherent systems. Responding to this kind of request takes more than garment knowledge; it requires the ability to hear what a client means when she says "I want to feel like myself."

Post-trend personal style, cyclical clothing practices, and algorithmic personalization are already in use. The way economics, technology, and social norms continue to interact will determine whether they consolidate or are surpassed by something unexpected. The trend cycle of the twentieth century, which lasted for ten years, does not appear to be returning.

Future research should track client demand across a larger and more diverse sample, test the trend integration framework for scoring consistency across practitioners, and replicate the five-period chronology in non-Western markets to see which drivers operate globally and which belong specifically to the Western fashion system.

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