

# ***Fashion Reincarnation of Design and Clothing Industry under the Concept of Retro-futurism***

**Hang Zeng<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*St.Jude's Academy, 2150 Torquay Mews, Mississauga, Ontario, L5N2M6, Canada*  
*a. hangz24@stjudesacademy.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** In the context of globalization and technological progress, the fashion industry is developing rapidly and cross-cultural exchanges are becoming more frequent. This paper explores the existence of the phenomenon of fashion reincarnation and the reasons behind it. Fashion reincarnation refers to a cyclical trend in which clothes and accessories that are popular at one time will be popular again at another time. This paper provides insight into the phenomenon of fashion reincarnation, including various reasons such as historical background, social and cultural factors, and economic factors. The paper also discusses the influence of fashion reincarnation on the fashion business and the function of mass media in the fashion reincarnation. By comparing fashion trends in different periods, the paper analyzes how mass media influences the perceptions and demands of fashion consumers, thus promoting the development of fashion reincarnation. Finally, the paper discusses the significance of fashion reincarnation, as well as the trends and possibilities of future fashion reincarnation. Exploring the phenomenon of fashion reincarnation helps us to better understand the development rules of the fashion industry, provides designers and brands with inspiration for innovation, and at the same time guides consumers to consume and appreciate the aesthetic values of different periods more rationally in the pursuit of fashion.

**Keywords:** fashion reincarnation, retro fashion, clothing industry

## **1. Introduction**

Fashion, as an ever-evolving social phenomenon, plays a pivotal role in human society at large. Its impact transcends mere aesthetic appeal, as it often encapsulates the values, beliefs, and aspirations characteristic of specific periods. Initial notions of fashion, for example, were intimately linked to social stratification, with individuals exhibiting their affluence and rank through their sartorial selections. In ancient China, the ruling class often used luxurious fabrics and exquisite embroidery to highlight their status, while ordinary people usually wore plain cotton garments. As time goes by, although modern people do not tend to judge a person's status by their clothes, however, fashion trends are not only a way of communication for conveying information but also profoundly reflect the historical and cultural background behind them. In recent years, the resurgence of styles like Year 2 Kilo (Y2K) has brought new meanings that differ from previous fashion styles. This study aims to explore the concept of fashion cycles, delving into the factors that contribute to the resurgence of past styles and analyzing the implications of this recurring phenomenon.

The main objective of this research was to obtain insight into the fashion cycle and to determine the reasons behind the regular return of specific styles. By examining these trends, this study aims to shed light on the underlying social, economic, and cultural factors that drive the constant reinvention of fashion. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand the importance of fashion cycles in the fashion industry, as this provides the fashion industry with a general trend of fashion development in the future. By analyzing the cyclical nature of fashion trends and the factors contributing to their resurgence, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of style revivals in the fashion world. Ultimately, it is hoped that these insights will help to better understand the role of fashion cycles in the fashion industry.

To achieve these objectives, this study will use text analysis methods, and study various historical and current resources to trace the evolution of fashion trends, the factors influencing their resurgence, and the new meanings brought by the revival of old fashions. This study will first introduce the concept of the fashion cycle and its definition. The expression of the fashion cycle will be explicitly explained through the interpretation of the Y2K style, Cleanfit, and the return of vintage clothing. Next, this study will analyze the trends of the fashion cycle, explain the differences between current fashion repetition and original fashion, and analyze the meaning and social perception of fashion reincarnation. In the third part, the causes of fashion cycles and the factors that influence their development will be focused on. At the end of this study, the impact of the fashion cycle on the fashion industry and society will be discussed.

## **2. The Concept of Fashion Reincarnation**

The fashion cycle is a natural cycle by which a fashion trend is introduced, rises to mainstream popularity, declines, and finally gets rejected in the obsolescence stage [1]. However, this process is essentially cyclical, so fashion that is rejected by the public will return and be reintroduced after a while. Reaching obsolescence does not mean a rejected trend will never reenter the cycle. The cycle is in a constant state of repetition, bringing back “old fashions” to send them through the movement of fashion [1]. This study emphasizes the phenomenon of fashion trends and trends re-emerging after a while. In this process, past fashion styles and items will be reintroduced and accepted by the public, once again becoming the focus of fashion trends. This phenomenon can be observed in many fields, such as clothing, accessories, music, and art. A typical example of a fashion cycle is “Skinny Jeans”. Skinny jeans first became popular in the 1950s and 1960s and were loved by rock musicians and teenagers. Subsequently, this trend was gradually replaced by other styles, such as wide-leg pants and straight pants. However, in the early 21st century, skinny jeans returned to the fashion industry and became one of the hottest fashion items at the time.

Observed over decades and centuries, new fashions are thought to evolve in a historical continuity of styling changes [2]. Over the long run, the occurrence of each major style is proposed to be secular or to occur only once in an age or once per century [3]. Most of the styles that have returned in recent years are mainly retro, and it is clear that the design elements are advancing toward simplicity. For example, the recent return style Y2K and Clean fit.

## **3. Y2K Style**

The Y2K is a fashion style from the early 2000s that was influenced by the desire for technological advancement and the desire for a better utopia in the future, resulting in metallic, sequined, and futuristic designs. It has returned to the fashion world and has become a sought-after element for many designers and hipsters. The new Y2K has a simpler design and simple color scheme, minus the metallic texture, and at the same time, the Y2K trend has been given more of a spiritual core than before.

Over the past few decades, the original Y2K style has been through a chain of changes in both the fashion and Internet worlds. Especially in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Y2K style was born as a symbol of the new millennium era. This style was a response to the social panic that emerged at the end of the 1900s. At the time, the concern was widespread that millennium problems (For example, the Y2K problem) could lead to a global computer failure, triggering serious social and economic disruptions. Thus, the Y2K style was in part, a rebellion against this panic, expressing an indomitable spirit against the millennial problem by expressing optimism and confidence in the future. But at the same time, Y2K has a clear expression of patriarchal social repression. Patriarchy, in its wider definition, means the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or masculine, roles and women always have the subordinate or feminine ones. This ideology is so powerful that “men are usually able to secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress”. They do this “through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men” [4]. In the movie *The Matrix*, a clear patriarchal shadow can be found.

“*The Matrix*” is one of the most typical Y2K-style movies. By observing the Y2K style clothing of the two main characters, it was found that the male lead (Neo) is dressed in a masculine way that is suitable for fighting, portraying him as a powerful savior. The female lead (Trinity) is dressed in a sexy way that is not suitable for fighting. It seems like the traditional cliché where a great male savior must have a beautiful wife to satisfy the male desire for conquest.

Patriarchal oppression is also evident in the new wave of the Y2K style. For example, the members of NCTdream’s beatbox album cover are dressed in loose, brightly colored Y2K outfits, maintaining the usual perception of masculinity; only the colors of the clothes are chosen in high saturation colors. The traditional perception is that too-tight Y2K style clothes will make men look feminine and effeminate. Therefore, under the oppression of a patriarchal society, if they choose overly feminine clothing, this will cause them to look less manly to the point of creating a perceived bias among their fans. This is the gender stereotype brought about by the oppression of a patriarchal society. The direct consequences of gender stereotypes are: limiting the exploration of knowledge, mistakenly believing that a certain gender is a certain way, and limiting behavior with independent goals [5].

However, the Y2K style, as a visual art form, challenges traditional concepts from a design and aesthetic perspective. Designers of the Y2K style seek to express optimism and vision for the future through their work while challenging traditional aesthetic concepts. Under the premise of the indomitable spirit of defiance represented by the old Y2K, the new Y2K of the comeback breathes a more rebellious spirit of beauty. The tight and sexy elements of women’s Y2K style are a powerful counterpoint to the traditional society’s view that it is harmful to women to wear too much sex. For women, it is a freedom to show their bodies with confidence and generosity. Professor Ai Xiaoming, a scholar of women and public issues at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, believes that revealing women’s bodies and sexuality in public space is a process toward freedom, based on the autonomy of women’s bodies and desires [6]. In the new Y2K style, young people are expressing themselves more boldly. One Y2K wear blogger from China, Icy Barbie, says that “Rebellion is the color of my life”. Her confidence in her body breaks the traditional Chinese aesthetic that women must be petite and slim, while also alleviating the “body anxiety” of contemporary young women. Another male fashion blogger, D-Samuel, says, “Wear what you want to wear”. His fashion style breaks the notion that “men must be masculine” in a patriarchal society. Even though they are men, they can wear tight, short tops that reveal their body lines.

#### 4. Clean Fit Style

The Clean Fit style represents a minimalist, clean, and well-fitting design concept. This style focuses on functionality and comfort, pursuing simple lines and colors. Fashion trends change rapidly. However, minimalism has continued to this day. From Coco Chanel in the 1920s, to Roy Halston in the 1970s, to Helmut Lang in the 1990s, designers over the past few decades have left their mark on fashion trends. While the elements have changed, the basic idea of minimalism has always remained the same. Essentially, minimalism is about a style that removes fussiness and ornate embellishments. It is marked by ease and elegance, and tends to use neutral tones. Cleanfit style is a return to minimalism. In recent years, the Clean Fit style has made a comeback in the fashion world and is loved by many brands and consumers. At the same time, in the context of this style, it is not difficult to find that the current fashion is more focused on commuting and comfort. With the accelerated pace of modern society, the fashion industry has gradually changed its concept, shifting its focus from purely aesthetic pursuit to practical and humane design. In terms of clothing design, more and more designers are paying attention to the comfort and functionality of materials. For example, the characteristics of fabrics, such as breathability, moisture absorption, and warmth, have become important design considerations. In addition, sports style and casual style are gradually integrated into daily wear, making commuting and comfort the new keywords of fashion. Nowadays, sweatshirts, sweatpants, and other lightweight and comfortable clothing are popular, which makes Clean Fit a must-have style for urban commuters.

Comfort and practicality are also gaining more and more attention in footwear design. Many brands have introduced sports shoes with good support and cushioning performance to meet people's increasing demand for walking and running. At the same time, comfortable casual shoes such as flats and loafers have also gradually become the new fashion trend, bringing more convenience to people's commuting life. For example, the Nike Zoom Vomero 5 (2010), a classic running shoe launched in 2010, has received widespread attention for its excellent cushioning performance and unique design. Recently, the shoe has once again sparked a craze in the wearer's market and has become a popular item for hipsters and fashion bloggers to showcase. This phenomenon fully reflects the charm of fashion reincarnation and shows how classic items can take on new vitality in the context of the new era.

#### 5. Reasons for Fashion Reincarnation

Fashion reincarnation is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by multiple factors. This paper will analyze the factors that influence fashion reincarnation from economic, social, and cultural perspectives, and explore how fashion designers, retailers, consumers, and social media give new meaning to the reincarnated trend. Trend forecaster and designer Geraldine Wharry described it best "There's something familiar and comforting about looking back [7]. A rule is known as the '20-year rule', and what it means is that fashion follows cycles that repeat every 20 years. People go from 'love it' to 'ate it' to 'meh', only to end right back at 'love it'. An essential element of this rule is the feeling of nostalgia that these trends stir.

First, economic, social, and cultural factors have a significant impact on fashion reincarnation. At the economic level, the level of economic development directly influences the direction of fashion. For example, in times of economic prosperity, people are more willing to buy luxury and high-end fashion items, while in times of economic recession, people may be more inclined to buy affordable clothing. "It takes so much more to get a consumer's attention because they're more careful about how they spend their money" [8]. In tough economic times, customers tend to buy less because they are worried about their future. Social factors such as people's values and lifestyles can also influence

the fashion wheel. On a cultural level, aesthetic concepts and traditions from different cultures shape unique fashion styles.

Secondly, fashion designers, retailers, and consumers play a key role in fashion reincarnation. The avant-garde Japanese designers inspired radical thinking, and their philosophy about designing persuaded their followers to challenge traditions, to re-think old ideas and to re-configure old forms [9]. Designers give new life to old trends by reinterpreting and innovating classic elements. Retailers, on the other hand, are keening to capture market dynamics and provide consumers with fashion products that are relevant to the times. Consumers' needs and preferences are also driving the fashion wheel, and they drive the continuous development of fashion by buying and showcasing new trends.

Finally, social media has had a significant impact on fashion in modern society. The usage of social media technology by luxury brands surged in 2009. Technology encourages customers to interact with brands. These customer interactions build the brand by increasing awareness, involvement, and engagement, thus, adding to brand recall and stimulating purchases [10]. From mass media coverage of magazines to social platforms, information is spreading faster and faster, allowing people to keep up with global fashion developments quickly. Today, everyone has the potential to be a part of the media, sharing their ideas of what to wear and what to look like through social media. There is evidence that reviews posted online are considered a more powerful tool than expert reviews [11]. This phenomenon makes fashion change faster and also increases the competitive pressure on designers and brands. In summary, fashion reincarnation is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple economic, social, and cultural factors. Fashion designers, retailers, and consumers work together to drive fashion reincarnation and give new meaning to trends. Social media as a key factor accelerates the speed of fashion turnover, making fashion reincarnation more diversified and fast in modern society. In such a context, the fashion industry needs to continuously innovate and adjust to the changes in the market and the needs of consumers.

## 6. The Significance of Fashion Cycle

The significance of fashion reincarnation is that it shows the circular nature of human aesthetics and culture. It demonstrates that the fashions of the past will not be forever obsolete but will be accepted and appreciated again over time. This cyclical nature also demonstrates that people's aesthetic and cultural values change with the times. Understanding the significance of fashion reincarnation helps people to better grasp the pulse of fashion development and to adjust their own dressing style and aesthetic interests promptly. On the consumer side, motivationally, fashion cycle may come out of the needs for class signaling, wealth signaling, cultural capital signaling, taste signaling, or personality [12].

First of all, fashion reincarnation means the transmission of history. Each generation has its unique aesthetic orientation, and fashion is a collection of these aesthetics. In the process of fashion reincarnation, classic elements from different eras are passed down and fused with new fashion elements to form a rich and diverse fashion landscape. This inheritance reflects the continuity and development of human culture and enables people to better understand and respect the aesthetic values of different historical periods. Secondly, fashion reincarnation reflects the changes in society. Fashion is a barometer of society and is closely related to the ethos and values of the times. The fashion styles of different historical periods often reflect the social environment and people's mentality at that time. For example, the minimalist style of the early 20th century reflected the war background and material scarcity at that time, while the hippie style of the 1960s represented the spirit of anti-mainstream and the pursuit of freedom. By observing the changes in fashion reincarnation, people can gain a better insight into the pulse of society and the development of history. In addition, fashion reincarnation has the function of inspiring innovation. Designers of each era have reinterpreted and innovated classic elements based on their predecessors. This innovation is not only

reflected in the design style but also involves materials, processes, and functions. Through fashion reincarnation, designers can discover inspiration from history and bring new vitality to modern fashion. At the same time, this constant innovation and experimentation have kept the fashion industry vibrant and alive.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper, fashion reincarnation is explored in depth, analyzing the economic, social, and cultural factors behind it and how fashion designers, retailers, and consumers give new meaning to the reincarnated trend. The implications of social media on fashion reincarnation and the fashion reincarnation's influence on the fashion industries and society are also discussed. By analyzing fashion trends such as the Y2K style and Cleanfit style, the following conclusions are drawn: Fashion reincarnation is not only historically and culturally significant but also has a broad impact on the fashion industry and society. It has stimulated the creativity of fashion designers, promoted the innovation and development of the fashion industry, and enriched people's aesthetic experiences and lifestyles.

However, the sustainability aspect of fashion reincarnation has not been studied in much depth. By reusing, recycling, and reinterpreting existing fashion styles and materials, it has the potential to reduce waste and promote greener practices within the industry. It is also valuable to study the impact of technology on fashion reincarnation. Advances in technology, such as virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, have the potential to revolutionize the way people design, produce, and consume fashion.

Future research can be conducted in the following areas: first, to explore ways to strengthen the sustainability of fashion reincarnation and minimize the pressure on the environment and natural resources. Second, to study the phenomenon of fashion reincarnation in different cultural contexts to better understand the relationship between fashion and culture. Finally, it focuses on the impact of emerging technologies and social media on fashion reincarnation to better address the challenges and opportunities of the fashion industry.

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