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# Importance of Trendsetters in Terms of Clothing Style and Fashion Preferences of Young People - Preliminary Research

**Keywords:** trendsetter, trends, fashion, Generation Z, lifestyle

**Słowa kluczowe:** trendsetter, trendy, moda, pokolenie Z, styl życia

## Introduction

Currently, broadly understood media and the content published therein are becoming increasingly important in shaping the opinions and attitudes of young people in all areas of their lives. Young people, especially Generation Z and Generation G, focus mainly on the Internet, where they draw their observations, opinions and strategies of action (Kulka and Nowacka, 2019, p. 123). The purpose of this article is to answer the question: Who are the trendsetters for young people (high school students) in terms of their fashion preferences and dressing style? The article was prepared on the basis of an analysis of the literature and the author's own qualitative pilot research. It therefore has a quite precisely defined addressee – representatives of Generation Z, the generation of change also called the “snowflake” generation (Suchecką, 2023). Fashion and the clothing style of contemporary students are topics that are discussed in public discourse as well as private conversations, but there is a noticeable lack of social analyses in this area. Fashion and in its context the importance of trends are considered on many levels. Given the nature of the article and the group of respondents, the approach of social sciences, mainly sociology, was taken into account.

## Concept of the research

The research concept was built on the basis of the analysis of the concept of trend, fashion, and trendsetters. To systematise the course of reasoning, concepts that are sometimes treated interchangeably and not fully understood in public discourse were systematised.

The Dictionary of Sociology and Social Sciences (2005, p. 487) defines a social trend as “a noticeable regularity of changes over time, illustrated by a social indicator or index. This term is used in reference to national social reports, presenting both constant distributions over time and time series illustrating changes”. Henrik Vejlggaard indicated that trends should be understood as processes of changes observed most often in areas related to human preferences, especially consumer preferences, which mean changes in styles and tastes and related behaviors. In this approach, trends are processes and influence what is fashionable at a given moment (Sierocki, 2018). According to Sławomir Dybka, a trend is an existing direction of development in a given field at a given moment. It can be short-term or long-term. It is also possible for many trends to exist at the same time, which can affect each other or create countertrends that contradict the originally created trends (Dybka, 2017). A trend is a prevailing trend, a general direction of development of social opinion towards something as a result of specific causes, resulting from product development or the appearance of new products (Dembicka, 2021). Trendsetters are those who create trends. They identify the trend, analysing the characteristics that define it, in order to then promote it among their recipients (Kucner et al., 2018). Andrzej Zybertowicz’s position on the discussed issue shows the blurring and ambiguity in the definitional area of a trend. It should be emphasized that trendsetters play an important role in the dissemination and popularization of trends, whom Tomasz Zelga (2016) defined as trend precursors and promoters – it depends largely on them whether a given trend will be long-lasting or not. According to Zelga, trendsetters are trend creators who are key “players in the process of creating new trends” (Zelga, 2014, p. 77). They are a group of precursors and promoters of alternative trends. They often come from different social and professional groups. They are the first to accept a new product or style, start using it, and promote it, thanks to which they are a link in the process of crystallising new consumption patterns followed by users (Zelga, 2014). Piotr Siuda described them as fans, admirers, and lovers of trends, who “lead in terms of implementing patterns and models related to pop culture consumption” (Siuda, 2012, p. 116). According to Siuda, a trendsetter has become an engaged recipient of trends, who is, on the one hand, a consumer of trends and, at the same time, creates them (Siuda, 2012). In turn, Jenny Bentley and Sual Mullar considered trendsetters as individuals who abandon, and sometimes even rebel against, established norms, lead change, and inspire others to follow in their footsteps. Their actions support changes in accepted social norms (Bentley and Mullard, 2019).

When considering trendsetters, it is also worth mentioning the figure of trendwatchers, who, alongside trendsetters, constitute a key group focussing

on current trends. Trendwatchers focus on the analysis of changes subordinated to marketing and PR activities, image creation, or relationships with consumers. The practical side of the analyses undertaken is then important. On the other hand, trendsetters are focused on creating needs, attitudes and patterns resulting from trends and fashions (Kucner et al., 2018). Fashion is an indispensable element of a trend. As Anna Dembicka (2021) notes, fashion is a factor that significantly influences the popularisation of a given trend in society. At the same time, it is thanks to current trends that fashion takes a given direction in its development. It is one of the main regulators of the behaviour of individuals in modern societies and, unlike custom, is very changeable: what is considered good and beautiful is especially what is new and comes from centres considered to be leading in this or that field at a given time and place. Fashion has the greatest and most visible impact on the way of dressing, combing, and make-up (PWN, 1997, p. 258). Emil Durkheim defined fashion as a phenomenon that occurs objectively and affects the entire society. Fashion in itself is not an aspect that should also be considered as a human psychological experience, because it is objective and exists in itself (Dembicka, 2021). Piotr Sztompka, on the other hand, considered that what is considered fashionable depends on the society in which fashion is created and on the times in which a given individual or social group lives (Sztompka, 2019). Georg Simmel wrote about fashion as a product of class division, according to which the upper class creates fashion for a given thing, phenomenon, way of perceiving it, etc., while the lower class strives to achieve this thing. The more popular and accessible something becomes, the more fashion fades away and another thing appears that is perceived in the category of “being fashionable”. Fashion is also a phenomenon that is changeable and short-term in nature (Roś, 2013, p. 94).

Based on the analysis of the literature, an operational definition of a trendsetter was developed, defining this concept as a person or company that has a significant influence on shaping trends and fashion in a given field. This may be a public figure (politician, writer, athlete, scientist), influencer (has a significant online presence and “wide reach” on social media platforms), fashion designer, artist or creative and inspiring individual who introduces innovative ideas, strategies of conduct, lifestyle and clothing styles, which are then imitated by others. Trendsetters often have the ability to predict changes in trends and create new, inspiring directions in fashion, design, music, etc. A trendsetter is often portrayed as someone who introduces and promotes new fashion trends and serves as an influential figure in shaping consumer behaviour.

## Method

The prepared operational definition of trendsetter allowed the generation of eight questions that were asked in free-form interviews with secondary school students from the Kraków district. The studied studies constitute a pilot

of a larger research project, the implementation of which was planned for 2025. The research was carried out in July 2024 using a qualitative research approach through the diagnostic survey method and the free-form interview technique, which consists in the exchange of questions and answers in the form of a conversation between the interviewer and the person undergoing validation. A qualitative research approach was used. The method chosen was the diagnostic survey method (it is assumed that the main use of survey research is exploration, description of society, and testing of hypotheses) (Pasek, 2019, p. 53) and the free interview technique, classically defined in sociology as an exchange of questions and answers in the form of an unstructured conversation between the interviewer and the person providing the answers (Przybyłowska, 1978). A free-form interview was adopted that takes the form of a specific face-to-face conversation (Apanowicz, 2002). Conventional piloting was used, which consisted of testing the tool as close as possible to its use in the primary survey on a small nonrandom sample of respondents (Grzeszkiewicz-Radulska, 2012, p. 115). The students were recruited by posting a question on the possibility of participating in the study on the social networks of groups of students in the Kraków district. More than a dozen people (20) volunteered to participate in the study and were interviewed, of which 12 interviews qualified for the final analysis due to their comprehensive responses. The author was motivated to discuss the subject due to the lack of exhaustive scientific achievements among Polish studies in this area, as well as research curiosity on the importance of trendsetters in shaping their clothing style strategy or behavior. The answers to the questions provided by the respondents were recorded on a computer, then processed (transcribed) using categorization keys in the following areas: fashion inspirations, clothing style, interest in fashion, the concept, and characteristics

Table 1

Basic information about the interviewees

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Place of residence	Education
1.	Weronika	Female	17	City	High school
2.	Anna	Female	20	City	High school
3.	Olimpia	Female	16	City	High school
4.	Małgorzata	Female	16	City	High school
5.	Dominika	Female	19	Village	High school
6.	Julia	Female	18	City	High school
7.	Maria	Female	18	City	High school
8.	Izabela	Female	19	Village	High school
9.	Agnieszka	Female	19	Village	High school
10.	Kamil	Male	20	Village	High school
11.	Tomasz	Male	19	Village	High school
12.	Szymon	Male	20	Village	High school

Source: own data.

of a trendsetter. The prepared responses were grouped and presented in descriptive form. The characteristics of the respondents are included in the Table 1, which shows that more girls (9) than boys (3) participated in the study, who attended secondary schools (technical and high schools), lived in rural areas (6 people) and urban areas (6 people). The age of the respondents was 16–20 years.

To extend the complexity of the research subject and to avoid simplifying the analysis of the relationship between trendsetters and individual fashion choices, an analysis of selected fashion brands is shown to give a (comprehensive understanding) of how trendsetters influence not only fashion, but also related lifestyle decisions among young people.

## Results

It is worth starting the analysis of the answers provided during the interviews with a question about the source of fashion inspiration of the respondents. Almost all of the respondents stated that they drew fashion inspiration primarily from social media and the Internet (11 people). The respondents indicated the following platforms from which they drew fashion inspiration, dressing style, as well as patterns of shaping their own everyday life (vocabulary, advice, etc.): Instagram (5 people), YouTube (3 people), Pinterest (3 people) or TikTok (3 people). Two people admitted that they had not sought fashion inspiration so far, they said “I am not very interested in fashion and I dress the way I want” – Man, 19 years old. The other two of the three men interviewed expressed a similar opinion. All of the women participating in the interviews showed that to a greater or lesser extent they drew fashion inspiration from social media, for example when choosing an outfit for special occasions, an outfit for school, for a meeting with friends or a date with a boyfriend. According to the research, it was women who showed interest in searching for fashion inspirations for their everyday style mainly online, less often during conversations with friends, while men, when asked about special occasions as well as their preferred style, drew inspiration from their loved ones (parents or siblings). The vast majority of the respondents stated (8) that they preferred their own, original style of clothing. The men (3) asked focused primarily on comfort. One of the participants admitted that his style varied depending on the situation or circumstances, because at school he preferred comfortable clothing, at work an elegant style, while in his free time, due to his passion for sports, he decided on a sporty style. Almost all of the women surveyed (8) also stated that comfortable clothing was the best, and they often emphasized in their statements that an important aspect in choosing clothing or style was emphasizing one's own body shape (3 respondents). Almost all of the girls surveyed were not satisfied with their appearance, complaining about their hair or body shape. Two of the respondents described their style as smart casual, one as vintage, while one of the girls surveyed indicated a typically feminine and glamour style, choosing mainly dresses or skirts instead of cardigan trousers,

which one of the respondents mentioned. Crucially, the obtained results show that the respondents hide their flaws and complexes (which they spoke about directly) in their clothing. The vast majority did not present one specific style that they promote. They use a sporty and casual style alternately, and an elegant style much less often, regardless of the circumstances in which they found themselves. It is noticeable that in some cases they encountered difficulty in clearly defining their individual way of dressing.

The research showed that the majority of respondents (7 people) are not interested in fashion. Only five of them indicated that the subject of fashion is close to them, and they try to be aware of emerging fashion novelties. The range of answers obtained suggests that the youth surveyed are not interested in fashion-related issues and prefer to focus on their own style, which depends on their taste, needs, circumstances and the size of their wallet, because the respondents implicitly indicated that following trends and premium brands is expensive. They consulted their fashion preferences primarily with female or male friends via internet conversations (less often face to face), while men consulted with their parents or siblings. The respondents indicated, ambiguously, that in shopping they focus on comfort and individuality, which is manifested not so much in clothing as in make-up, accessories or gadgets. Several of the respondents admitted that they buy counterfeit clothes or try to look for bargains. Several respondents said: "I buy what I like and I dress like that too". When asked to explain the concept of a trendsetter, the respondents were very effusive and talked a lot about it. According to them, a trendsetter is a person who creates, sets and disseminates specific trends, which they then use to inspire their recipients (9 people). Through their activities, trendsetters promote and also encourage (encourage) people to buy specific things or items (3 people). Two people perceived trendsetters particularly negatively, calling them "walking advertising banners" (Szymon, 20 years old) or "living advertisements" (Tomasz, 19 years old), which may indicate that they did not have much trust in this social category. One of the respondents questioned the validity of trendsetters' activities, considering that their activities do not bring positive effects to the outside world. Seven respondents identified a trendsetter with an influencer who conducts their business via tools such as Instagram and TikTok. The range of responses from respondents shows that, in their opinion, a trendsetter is someone who deals with fashion trends, creates them and inspires others to follow their style or to build their own, individual style.

Continuing the thread, it was decided to delve deeper into the topic of trendsetters and asked the respondents what they expect from this group of people and what characteristics should characterize trendsetters. According to the respondents, a trendsetter should, above all, be knowledgeable about fashion, create new trends, and have their own, individual style (9 people). In the opinion of the respondents, a trendsetter should be characterised by creativity (5 people), self-confidence (3 people), honesty and authenticity (6 people) and courage (2 people). According to the respondents, honesty plays an important role here because, as one of the interviewees pointed out, many trendsetters and conse-

quently influencers struggle with telling the truth to their target group. One of the respondents indicated that trendsetters have a great responsibility, which is why these individuals should manage trends carefully, especially when it comes to caring for the environment or ecology. Only one person was unable to indicate any characteristics of a trendsetter and indicated that one must have 'that something', because in her opinion not everyone can become a trendsetter just like that (Kamil, 20 years old). The obtained results paint a picture of a trendsetter who: must know about fashion, create trends thoughtfully, be creative, brave, and above all honest. If a trendsetter wants to be respected by his/her recipients, he/she must build a relationship with them based on truthfulness and authenticity. The respondents were asked to name trendsetters they know. Most of them (8 people) named trendsetters from whom they draw inspiration. They mentioned people such as: Sylwia Butor (1), Gabriela Bednarz (1), Sofia Richie Grainge (1), Weronika Sowa (1), Anna Lewandowska (1), Agnieszka Grzelak (1), Karolina Żebrowska (1), Dr. Colleen Darnell (1), Fausti, Hania, Julita and Kartonii (girls from Genzia) (1), Julia Kostera (1), Maffashion (1), Aleksandra Sosfa (1), Sarah Zerafa (1), Remigiusz Wierzgoń (1) and Karol Wiśniewski (1). This group sees the figure of a trendsetter as identical to an influencer. In other words, an influencer or celebrity with an account on social networks for young people creates and spreads new trends. The rest (4 respondents) were unable to indicate any contemporary trendsetter. Most of the respondents (7 people) admitted that they do not draw inspiration in terms of style and fashion from trendsetters. This group of respondents prefers their own style based on their preferences and taste. The rest of the respondents (5 people) admitted that they sometimes get inspired by trendsetters. None of the respondents indicated that they "blindly" follow the activities of trendsetters in terms of fashion preferences, trusting them completely. However, all respondents valued their individual style and did not feel the need to copy the style of trendsetters 'by force'; they only 'observe' and verify the products or fashion compositions presented by them.

The contemporary market allows the average recipient to buy new trends promoted by trendsetters expressed through clothes or various products. The respondents (7 people) indicated that in the past they had bought a product recommended by a trendsetter. Most often, these were clothes (5 people), cosmetics (4 people) or jewellery (3 people). A different approach to promoted trends was shown by four respondents who had not yet been convinced to buy such products. This approach was supported by the belief in the falseness and untruthfulness that trendsetters demonstrate in promoting given trends. One of the men indicated that he did not trust them because they were "paid for by given companies" (Kamil, 20 years old). Two respondents were afraid that a given item might turn out to be a product with defects that is not worth its price.



## Conclusions

According to the respondents, a trendsetter is a person who creates and promotes new trends. They are a propagator of new things in the field of fashion and style, and at the same time, they are an opinion-forming entity with a huge influence on their recipients. The results obtained showed that the respondents did not feel the need to be inspired by the trendsetters. They did not show the need to follow current trends “blindly”, preferring their own individual style, in which comfort and nonchalance prevail.

In most of the analyzed cases, young people tried to be interested in fashion, but this is only a superficial exploration of fashion topics. Many people had trouble clearly naming their own style, and when asked about concepts such as smart casual, oversize or dress code, preppy was awkward for them. The main place from which the respondents drew fashion inspiration was on social networks. None of the respondents searched for fashion magazines or books. This means that publications in the traditional form are “going away”. The respondents are not interested in fashion and do not have basic knowledge in this area, focusing on convenience and comfort. Women draw inspiration from the Internet and from friends, while men from their families.

Respondents indicated that one of the trendsetters, but also world-famous women perceived as worthy of emulation, is model Bella Hadid. The American model, who has been on the international catwalks for years, combines the latest fashion trends with clothes from the previous decade. She is a fashion inspiration when it comes to combining femininity with comfort by popularizing street styles.

People indicated by young people as trendsetters are most often people associated with social media and, therefore, influencers. Such individuals more often promote a given product or thing, and less often create these trends. Such answers showed that in the era of the Internet, influencers are trendsetters. Several respondents paid special attention to one of the functions of trendsetters. We are talking about driving consumerism by promoting various trends. Trendsetters do not always inspire trust among respondents.

The youth's answers show their need for quick and specific expression. The answers provided were economical, concise, and devoid of sophisticated vocabulary, and they often use abbreviations (e.g. instead of YouTube it is yt). They also lack industry-specific, fashion vocabulary or language, which may again indicate that knowledge of fashion is fragmentary.

## Discussion

The respondents pointed out an interesting difference in terms of dress between their, as they described it, generation and the older generation (millennials). According to them, millennials and Generation Z dress very differently, and indeed, many describe millennials as those who have never had style or followed



fashion trends. According to those surveyed, Generation Z has much more fashion knowledge or at least a greater sense of high fashion (Herjanto et al., 2023). At the same time, although there is an emerging awareness of fashion, of contemporary trends, the Gen Z generation, etc. have less of a need to lust after contemporary trends. They find the golden mean between what is fashionable and what they consider appropriate for themselves. Gen Z, in contrast to millennials, although interested in fashion, combine different styles, more or less popular brands. On the other hand, it can be observed that Millennials are a group that pays more attention to bigger brands such as Hugo Boss, Karl Lagerfeld and Armani. Their knowledge is most often cursory. Fashion has become a means of expressing one's personality, one's views and one's demands in life. Today's youth, although so inseparable from clothing and fashion, are accustomed to living according to the principle of the need to attract individuals of the opposite or same sex. Generation Z, unlike the Millennials, grows up with the conviction that they don't always have to look attractive, and that their clothes may have to be sloppy or reflect the prevailing trends, because it is not the clothes that define them as a person. On the contrary, the modern young person wants to look 'ugly'. According to preliminary research, young people are inspired by fashion trends from the late 20th century and early 19th century – Y2K fashion. One of the most popular brands promoting Y2K fashion is Juicy Couture, which is once again becoming popular with young people through the use of clothing items such as colourful velour tracksuits (preferably pink), sequins, hip trousers, combat boots and mini-skirts as the main inspiration for young people who combine all these elements. One of the main trendsetters of this trend is Paris Hilton, who based her entire image on Y2K fashion becoming, in part, the main promoter of this style as early as 2000. Pop stars popular in the early 2000s are becoming the benchmark for what young people consider fashionable today.

The respondents considered trendsetters as the “driving force” of consumerism by directing people's lives in their multidimensional actions and behaviors. L.W. Zacher (2018) had a similar opinion, additionally recognizing that it is difficult to clearly determine when a given trend was born, as many factors can influence this fact. Anna Dembicka (2021) had a similar opinion, claiming that a trend is a tendency, a general direction of development, a process of change as a result of specific causes, arising as a result of product development or resulting in the appearance of new products. In the opinion of the respondents, a trendsetter is an individual who creates and promotes new trends, especially fashion trends, but also trends of style and quality of life, therefore influencing human life on many levels. Quoted the Great Dictionary of the Polish Language (WSJP, 2024, online), which defines a trendsetter as “a person who sets new trends with their appearance, style and behaviour, including in the field of fashion and makeup”, this definition can be considered accurate. However, another source, the New Words Dictionary, provides two definitions of trendsetters. Firstly, they are “a young, attractive, and sociable person employed by a company to promote a given brand among people they meet”, and secondly, they are “people who introduce and popularise new trends in fashion, behaviour or lifestyle”

(Burzyński and Czeszewski, 2017, online). The respondents considered that trendsetters are not afraid to transgress the accepted social norm, which they did not fully support; however, these people who have an influence on shaping the opinion of the target group do not have to fear social rejection, which is why they are characterised by less tolerance related to the consequences that go hand in hand with the destruction of specific norms as a result of creating new trends – a similar position is presented by Cristina Bicchieri and Alexander Funcke (2018), who write that they (trendsetters) are the initiators of abandoning norms in leading all changes. The respondents emphasise that not everyone can become a forerunner of change; one must have a set of traits that predispose an individual to this. Referring to Alfred Kadushin, it can be pointed out that such individuals often belong to the margins of social groups that become part of society once a newly promoted trend is accepted by a specific social group. They achieve their actions thanks to a kind of autonomy and a sense of self-efficacy in the tendency to deviate from the established norm. Cristina Bicchieri and Alexander Funcke (2018) conducted a simulation that allowed them to specify several characteristics of a trendsetter. First of all, a necessary condition is the position of a person in social networks. The target group of recipients is equally important, as well as their attitude towards breaking norms. Then, often those who are popular on the Internet can take a leading position in creating and popularising new trends. However, the position in the media does not always guarantee effectiveness due to the social roles performed as well as the social position (politician), as it can be limited by various norms and sanctions, which means that it will not be able to fulfil the role of a trendsetter (Bicchieri and Funcke, 2018). The respondents considered that a trendsetter creates a trend and a way of functioning of fashion as well as ways of behaving – Tomasz Zelga in his considerations considered them to be precursors and propagators of alternative trends, coming from various social and professional groups, which was additionally confirmed during the analysis of the statements of a small group of respondents (Zelga, 2014). Knowledge of the fashion world is not a necessary condition for shaping fashion trends, wide contacts in the network, called reach, are enough to be able to influence the formation of opinions of network users (Maciejewski, 2014), especially its image and its proper shaping in social media, as Klaudia Cymanow-Sosin pointed out (Cymanow-Sosin, 2017). Anna Markwart, citing Adam Smith's theories on the image of changes in fashion, noted that in the case of the emergence of trendsetters or influencers, it is not the fashion taste or wealth possessed by an individual that constitutes the basis for the popularisation of a given individual because people imitate those who are liked, respected, with whom they sympathise, and whom they admire. The key is therefore admiration (Markwart, 2021). Krystyna Polańska (2016), looking for new trends in society, defined them as trend promoters, who constitute a group of pioneers of novelty. In turn, trendsetters are followed by trend propagators, who decide to accept novelty, only and exclusively when they notice this novelty in others, preferably in people they treat as an authority (Polańska, 2016). This shows the complexity of creating attitudes and willingness of young people

to be active on the Internet and the possibilities of influencing others. Reneta Ochoa-Dąderska and Agnieszka Chęcińska-Kopiec in *Problemy nowoczesnej edukacji* (2018) drew attention to the fact that in addition to trendsetters, we are also dealing with opinion leaders and influencers. In the opinion of the researchers, these concepts should be treated as synonyms. The analysis of the statements of the respondents confirmed their belief in the identical treatment of trendsetters and influencers (Ochoa-Dąderska and Chęcińska-Kopiec, 2018). A similar assumption was made by Piotr Łuczuk and Szymon Maj, who assumed that both influencer and trendsetter are identical concepts. Referring to Lisa Barone, who, based on observations in 2010, identified five types of influencer, where trendsetter is one of the categories of a modern influencer.

A trendsetter, also known as a discoverer, is „a person who is considered a trendsetter, who is the first to sense a new fashion (trend) and immediately becomes the center of attention in their field” (Łuczuk and Maj, 2023, p. 3). According to Yuli Liang, Seung-Hee Lee, Jane E. Workman, a trendsetter is a fashion influencer or fashion blogger who plays a key role in consumerism and the self-expression of individuals. Many fans turn to trendsetters for aesthetic inspiration and taste patterns, treating them as fashion gurus or idols. That is why it is so important to cultivate the trendsetter-recipient relationship (Liang et al., 2020). The role of a trendsetter has changed over the years, as it has changed from an additional (non-professional) occupation to a professional profession influencing the emergence and creation of trends, an initiator who transfers trends to the wider mainstream, reaching common use, and eventually (although not necessarily) losing popularity (Kucner et al., 2018, p. 23). Shu-Chuan Chua and Yoo-Kyoung Seock go a bit further in their considerations on the figure of a trendsetter. According to the authors of *The Power of Social Media in Fashion Advertising*, a trendsetter is not just an individual or a person, but the entire social media, which consists of various platforms, e.g. Instagram, Pinterest. Social media have become the main trendsetter, which allows for the dissemination of trends. One example is the aforementioned Instagram, which, due to its characteristics, has become the most influential source of knowledge about fashion – the fashion industry was undoubtedly the greatest beneficiary of this phenomenon (Chua and Seock, 2020). In 2012, the clothing brand Jack Wills implemented the “Seasonnaires” program. The company based its activities on recruiting young, attractive people who seemed “cool” and open to the target audience. These young people were given free clothes and accessories, and then attended parties, showed up in these clothes on campus, traveled to selected locations, and organized parties on the beach and in local clubs. The brand built its image as a friendly youth, open to their needs, and above all, began to be associated positively, associating itself with exciting events and youth cultural events (Chua and Seock, 2020).

In 2013, Manuel Kieselmann (2015) attempted to define the motivations of trendsetters at the time. The results showed that trendsetters were the main reference group for the public in terms of fashion. The respondents admitted that they were looking for fashion inspiration and advice on clothing in order

to arouse interest in others' clothing. The pilot studies presented partially confirmed this aspect. The studies clearly indicated that the more often a person buys certain products, the greater the broader influence they have on others in terms of clothing. Innovation and fashion are an indispensable element of marketing and the creation of trends, and consequently – the creation of trendsetters. Innovation in fashion is the tendency of an individual to buy brands and products that are different and new. In combination with shaping opinions, through the communication component, an individual can be perceived as a „trendsetter” (Kieselmann, 2015). In terms of trendsetters and their influence on the contemporary group of millennials, Yuli Liang, Seung-Hee Lee, and Jane E. Workman conducted a study involving 240 students of one of the American universities aged 19–22. The results showed that millennials, who need more diversity and seek it through fashion, sought their inspiration and involvement in social media and fashion blogs from trendsetters they know. Furthermore, greater engagement in social media seems likely to inspire young people to become the next fashion trendsetters, even if they were not previously involved in fashion (Liang et al., 2020, pp. 3–4).

One of the key trends in contemporary fashion is streetwear promoted by brands such as Suprema, Off-White, Vetements and Stüssy, for example. It is a style that emerged in fashion in the 1980s in New York. It draws inspiration from skateboarding and hip-hop culture, combining elements of sportswear, punk and street fashion (street style). The style is characterised by oversized clothing, i.e. bulky hooded sweatshirts or jeans, trainers and baseball caps. Currently, the most popular designer is Off-White founder Virgil Abloh, who popularised the distinctive yellow stripe as an essential styling element (Phatak, 2024). It is a trend strongly favoured and popularised among young people, especially on platforms such as Tik Tok and Instagram. Representatives of this style such as Nji Malone, Jannik, Alani Noelle (Top 100 Streetwear Influencers..., online) can be found here. One of the leading brands that provide inspiration for young people is Prada's 'little sister', MIU MIU. The brand's chief designer is fashion house founder Miuccia Prada, who is the granddaughter of Prada fashion house founder Mario Prada himself. The line was created almost 30 years ago with the idea of young people wanting to be part of the high fashion world. Trends such as, for example, ultra-short skirts, short jumpers, oversized leather jackets and ballet shoes became an inspiration for young people, especially girls who like to emphasise their feminine charms (Murawska, 2022). *Although the brand itself has been described as 'the master of the look of not-quite-right' ('the master of the look of not-quite-right')* MIU MIU became the most popular fashion brand in 2024 according to The Q3 Lyst Index platform (Brief, 2024). Fashion house Blumarine, headed by creative director Nicola Brognano, assumed that Y2K fashion was such an important signifier among young audiences that it created an entire collection inspired by early 20th century fashion. Other designers remained more subtle, with Tom Ford offering patchwork wide-leg jeans, Jacquemus one-button cardigans and Versace skirts with straps imitating protruding thongs or tight mini dresses and bandanas tied around the head (Murawska, 2021).

## Conclusion and recommendations

To sum up, a trend is a general tendency or direction in which social preferences, behavioral patterns, or stylings in a given field, such as fashion, design, technology, or culture, are changing. Trends can take various forms, and can be related to specific colors, patterns, products, or behaviors. Trends can arise spontaneously, but can also be created by stylists, influencers, or the media. Trends often change seasonally or cyclically, influencing what is popular and desirable at a given moment. Fashion, on the other hand, is a field that includes current trends and preferences for clothing, footwear, accessories, and other styling elements. Fashion reflects changing social, cultural, and economic tastes and preferences. Fashion can be created by designers, influencers, and also by people themselves through personal choices and styling. There are various trends, styles, and trends in fashion that evolve over time. An important role in fashion is also played by a sustainable approach, ethical production and care for the quality and durability of products. A trend is a broader concept, a process that focusses on fashion. Although the subject of individuals who influence contemporary society by creating trends is known and popularised, the concept itself is not so eagerly studied and used in contemporary science. This can be seen especially on the basis of the small number of quantitative or qualitative studies conducted in recent years on trendsetters. Polish literature is particularly lacking the aforementioned studies that could bring a bit closer the image of a trendsetter on the Polish market, taking into account a multi-level and holistic approach to the subject. The pilot studies discussed indicated the need for further analysis in this area.

The exploratory research showed the relevance of involving more men as well as including people who identify themselves neither as women nor as men in the study. In addition, as is apparent (not explicitly) from the content of the interviews, the topic of complexes and flaws that respondents conceal with their clothing as well as paying particular attention to inspiration on this topic is noted.

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## Summary

This study employed an analytical-synthetic method based on the literature on the subject as well as the results of qualitative pilot studies (structured free-form interviews) conducted among 12 respondents in July 2022. The research problem was formulated in the form of a question: Who are the trendsetters for young people (high school students) in terms of their fashion preferences and dressing style? The starting point of the work was to outline the concepts of trend, trendsetter, and fashion, then present the research concept and their results, supplemented by a discussion. According to the respondents, a trendsetter is a person who creates and promotes new trends, a propagator of novelties in the field of fashion and style, and an opinion-forming unit influencing its recipient. The respondents did not show the need to follow current fashion trends “blindly”, preferring their own individual style, in which comfort and nonchalance prevail. In most of the cases analysed, young people dressed according to their own preferences, and from trendsetters, they drew inspiration in terms of lifestyle and shaping strategies for everyday behaviour. Many people had trouble clearly naming their own style, and no answers were given for concepts such as smart casual, oversize, dress code, and preppy. Respondents treated trendsetters interchangeably with influencers. In light of literature analyses, there is a shortage of research in the discussed subject area, especially research conducted using combined methods.



## **Wpływ trendsetterów na styl ubioru i preferencje modowe młodzieży – badania wstępne**

### **Streszczenie**

W pracy zastosowano metodę analityczno-syntetyczną na bazie literatury przedmiotu, a także wyników jakościowych badań pilotażowych (ustrukturalizowane wywiady swobodne) zrealizowane wśród 12 respondentów w lipcu 2022 roku. Problem badawczy sformułowano w postaci pytania: Kim dla młodych ludzi (uczniów szkół średnich) są obecnie trendsetterzy w zakresie ich preferencji modowych i stylu ubierania się? Punktem wyjścia pracy było zarysowanie pojęć: trend, trendsetter, moda, następnie przedstawienie koncepcji badań, a także ich wyników, uzupełnionych dyskusją w omawianym obszarze. Według badanych trendsetter to osoba kreująca i promująca nowe trendy, propagator nowości w zakresie mody i stylu, jednostka opiniotwórcza mająca wpływ na swojego odbiorcę. Badani nie wykazywali potrzeby podążania „na ślepo” za obowiązującymi trendami modowymi, preferując swój własny, indywidualny styl, w którym przeważa wygoda i nonszalancja. W większości analizowanych przypadków młodzi ubierali się według własnych preferencji, od trendsetterów zaś czerpali inspiracje w zakresie stylu życia i kształtowania strategii postępowania na co dzień. Wiele osób miało kłopot z jednoznacznym nazwaniem własnego stylu – w zakresie takich pojęć jak smart casual, oversize czy dress code, preppy nie uzyskano odpowiedzi. Respondenci traktowali trendsetterów zamiennie z influencerami. W świetle analiz piśmiennictwa zauważany jest niedobór badań w omawianym zakresie przedmiotowym – zwłaszcza badań realizowanych metodami kombinowanymi.