

Contemporary Fashion Criticism of Paris Fashion Week (2000–2025): Models, Frameworks, and Professional Practices

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Abstract—Fashion criticism in the 21st century has expanded beyond elite journalism to include academic analysis, digital media, and audience participation. This review paper examines the evolution of contemporary fashion criticism from 2000 to 2025, using Paris Fashion Week as a central site of critical discourse. Through secondary literature and primary survey responses from fashion students, professional designers and fashion aware audiences, the study identifies recurring “criticism loops” related to creativity, wearability, inclusivity, sustainability and commercialization. The paper argues that Paris Fashion Week functions simultaneously as an artistic platform and an industrial system, where fashion is continuously negotiated between cultural expression and market demands. By proposing a structure negotiated between cultural expression to fashion studies, fashion education and professional design practice.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fashion criticism plays a significant role in interpreting fashion beyond visual appearance by linking garments to cultural meaning, identity, and social structures. According to Roland Barthes (2006), fashion operates as a system of signs that communicates meaning beyond material form. Traditionally, fashion criticism was dominated by elite journalists and editors who shaped public taste and defined aesthetic value.

However, the early 21st century marked a shift due to globalization and digital media expansion. As noted by Agnes Rocamora (2017), digital platforms

transformed fashion communication into a more participatory and decentralized process.

Within this evolving context, Paris Fashion Week (PFW) remains one of the most influential global fashion platforms (Steele, 2012). While celebrated for creativity and craftsmanship, it is also critically examined for issues such as inclusivity, sustainability, and commercial relevance. This paper explores how fashion criticism has evolved and identifies recurring patterns of critique within PFW between 2000 and 2025.

II. EVOLUTION OF FASHION CRITICISM (2000–2025)

In the early 2000s, fashion criticism was largely confined to print media, where professional critics evaluated collections based on aesthetics, craftsmanship, and designer identity (Breward, 2003). These critics acted as cultural gatekeepers within the fashion system.

Post-2010, the rise of blogs, social media, and online platforms democratized fashion criticism. As discussed by Susanne Skjulstad and Andrew Morrison (2020), digital environments enabled diverse voices—including students, influencers, and consumers—to participate in critical discourse.

Additionally, academic engagement with fashion increased significantly. Scholars such as Joanne Entwistle (2015) and Yuniya Kawamura (2018) emphasized fashion as a cultural and social system

rather than merely a design practice. From 2015 onwards, ethical concerns such as sustainability, labour practices, and representation became central to fashion critique (Henninger et al., 2017).

By 2020–2025, fashion criticism had evolved into a multidisciplinary field integrating visual analysis, cultural theory, ethical evaluation, and audience perception.

III. PARIS FASHION WEEK AS A SITE OF CRITICISM

Paris Fashion Week functions as both a creative laboratory and a symbol of fashion authority. It hosts heritage luxury brands alongside avant-garde designers, positioning itself as a global benchmark for innovation (Steele, 2012).

However, its dominance also invites criticism. According to Elizabeth Mora and Agnes Rocamora (2015), fashion shows operate within a public sphere where cultural meanings and industry values are continuously negotiated.

- Critics frequently describe PFW as:
- Conceptually innovative yet commercially distant
- Artistically ambitious but socially exclusive
- Trend-setting yet repetitive in references

Runway presentations often emphasize spectacle and narrative over practicality, aligning with what Caroline Evans (2013) describes as the “theatricality” of contemporary fashion. As a result, criticism extends beyond garments to include ideology, representation, and industry responsibility.

IV. CRITICISM LOOPS IDENTIFIED (2000–2025)

The study identifies recurring patterns of critique, referred to as criticism loops, which persist across seasons:

a) Creativity vs Wearability

Designers are praised for conceptual innovation, yet garments are often criticized for lacking practicality. This reflects the tension between symbolic fashion and everyday clothing (Entwistle, 2015).

b) Art vs Commerce

Fashion exists between artistic expression and economic production. As noted by Brian Moeran (2014), fashion operates as a form of cultural production influenced by market forces.

c) Inclusivity Loop

Despite increasing diversity, criticism persists regarding limited size inclusivity and token representation (Pham, 2015). Inclusivity often appears inconsistent rather than structural.

d) Sustainability Loop

Sustainability has become central to fashion discourse, yet concerns regarding transparency and greenwashing remain (Henninger et al., 2017).

e) Trend Recycling Loop

Frequent revival of past styles reflects what Herbert Blumer (1969) describes as collective selection, where trends emerge through cyclical social processes. These loops demonstrate that fashion criticism is cyclical and continuously renegotiated.

V. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative review-based methodology. Secondary data was collected from academic books, journals, and fashion criticism literature published between 2000 and 2025. Primary data was gathered through a Google Form survey targeting fashion students, professional designers, and fashion-aware audiences.

The responses were analysed thematically and compared with established theoretical frameworks (Kaiser, 2012; Kawamura, 2018) to identify recurring criticism patterns associated with Paris Fashion Week.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that Paris Fashion Week continues to be perceived as the most influential platform within the global fashion system. Designers appreciate its craftsmanship and conceptual innovation, while students demonstrate both admiration and critical awareness.

The study identifies several key issues within contemporary fashion criticism, including the gap

between creativity and wearability, tensions between art and commerce, limited inclusivity, sustainability concerns, and repetitive trend cycles. These challenges highlight the need for a more balanced, transparent, and socially responsible fashion system.

Suggested solutions include the development of adaptable design strategies, long-term inclusive practices, authentic sustainability measures, and stronger integration between conceptual fashion and everyday wear.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce that fashion criticism should not only evaluate aesthetics but also question ethics, accessibility, and cultural relevance.

VII. CONCLUSION

This review demonstrates that contemporary fashion criticism between 2000 and 2025 is characterized by recurring evaluation loops rather than fixed conclusions. Paris Fashion Week remains a powerful yet contested space where fashion is continuously negotiated between art, industry, and society.

Understanding these criticism loops provides valuable insight for designers, students, critics, and researchers. The study emphasizes the importance of structured and reflective criticism that integrates professional expertise with audience perspectives, making fashion analysis more inclusive and relevant for future practice.

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