

# What to know for womenswear S/S 2020

 By [Maroefah Smith](#)

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Polly Walters from WGSN recently outlined some of the trends the company has been tracking for womenswear in the lead up to spring/summer 2020.

Here's are some of the trends that you should keep in mind when buying and designing your upcoming womenswear collections.

Let's get to it!

## Blurring the lines between real and fake

"Currently, colour is following two clear directions: nature-inspired, organic hues that sit well with natural dyes and the growing importance in sustainability and artificial, screen-generated shades. Pastels are making a return in two distinctive paths with both barely there and digital looks emerging. Vibrant shades are still important and shifting up neutrals from core to fashion shades carried on with minimalist plays on beige," says Walters.

Pastels are having their time to shine, with new-ins increasing 22% year-on-year in spring/summer '19. Soft, natural dyes in barely-there colours tie in with the rise in minimalism. Cantaloupes and peaches offer a great move on from millennial pink tones but lean more towards the orange family.

Speaking of millennial pink, WGSN reckons its predecessor, this season, will be [neo mint](#). Not sold? Mint apparel was up 48% across spring/summer19 deliveries. Also in the younger market is the softer version of Gen Z yellow, the aptly titled mellow yellow. Yellow apparel increased by 159% in the UK across new-season deliveries, specifically at mid-market retail.

Elsewhere, neutrals shift towards baked and summery shades with warmer shades replacing the greyish minimalist options already on the market. While brown, in season-appropriate shades, is becoming a key colour for the season – beating out grey as the summer neutral; new-in apparel in this colour was up by 84% in the UK. On the other end of the spectrum, blues are bold and electric and almost neon in nature for spring/summer 2020. Another bold rendition is red, moving from sporty apparel to more sophisticated and contemporary pieces in line with the smartening of streetwear.

As indicated by Walters, the season is also driven by 'fake' colours. You know, the ones not found in nature. The synthetic rainbow in shades of hot pink, pea green, acid lime, hazard yellow and bold orange continue S/S '19's infatuation with neons. Fast fashion retailers have taken to these synthetic shades, with neon new-in apparel growing four-fold at this market level. The less commercially-appealing digital pastels, a complete contrast to the natural pastels, rely on artificial, man-made quality often incorporating ombre and iridescent finishes that sees colours bleeding into one another.



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### Feminine undertones

On the season's key items, Walters says: "There is a feminine undertone, which is continuing to lead collections. Whether it's via skin-revealing and figure-skimming silhouettes or demure, ladylike styles. The shift away from overtly casual-inspired looks is becoming more evident than ever."

How are key pieces being updated in spring/summer '20? Dresses are getting bigger, with little peek-a-boo details giving them an update. The high summer kaftan maxi dress is modernised with cutout designs along with voluminous sleeves paired with deep V necklines and slashes at the waist. Meanwhile, soft feminine dresses with subtle volume sleeves, a sold-out item at the retail level, continues to sell well.

For S/S '20, Walters suggests using the angel sleeve to offer newness. In line with the rise of elevated basics, simple knitted dresses infiltrate fashion territory with ribbed constructions and pops of solid tones. The ribbed midi dress grew by 180% in the UK and 60% in the US, which was all driven by trend-led retailers.



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Tops are starting to show more skin. The bow bralette offers versatility for this season and while it may appeal more to the younger, high fashion consumer, you will find that it works well when paired with tailoring – adding a feminine appeal to oversized suiting. The halterneck top is gaining momentum for woven jersey and knitted tops; the halterneck top grew 42% in the UK and 20% in the US.

The draped blouse is a cleaner update to the prairie blouse, says Walters. The draping of the blouse is mainly around the yoke with long straps, mock scarf designs adding newness. Who needs a back on a blouse? Cutouts, slashes and back fastenings are adding a sassy take on demure styles – the backless blouse grew 23% in the UK across spring/summer '19 new-ins.

Shorts may have been off the radar for a while but it has made a comeback on recent catwalks – making it a product category to watch for future seasons. For wider appeal, Walters suggests that you opt for mid-thigh, wide leg renditions as a more accessible look that will span for market levels. Jeans may have taken a back seat as tailoring grows more important, but it won't stay this way forever. A fresh way to bring jeans to your consumer? A barrel-leg with cropped hemlines.

Jumpsuit styles are still key as a result of the success of the boiler suit across the board. The jumpsuit increased by 35+% in the UK and 21+% in the US in online retail. For spring/summer '20, tone it down for a sleeker, more feminine look. In skirts, the growing popularity of maxi trapeze dresses has opened the door for tiered maxi skirts to become an important high summer staple.



Sleek jumpsuits at Errilia Wickstead S/S '19

Tailoring shows no signs of stopping. And to add a fresh take on a tailored classic, the blazer, how about adding a soft-waisted belt? Belted blazers remain key and show an increased presence in editorials and catwalks. Soft-waisted silhouettes drive newness – double-breasted and single-breasted. New season belted blazers increased 64% in the UK and 45% in the US, which was driven by luxury retailers. The utility jacket, on the other hand, forms part of the updating basics movement. To breathe life into this staple piece, use in a boxier fit in a contemporary aesthetic and crisp fabrics.

Hybrid styles are also coming into play – for a variety of reasons – which gives us the summer trench coat. The familiarity of the trench coat makes this a key item for experimentation and is updated in a more technical aesthetic with an elasticated waist, drawstrings and reflective and technical trims, says Walters. The trench is the fastest-growing coat style across spring/summer 19 new-ins, increasing 36% in the UK and 60% in the US in luxury retail.

## Fresher and more toned-down print and pattern

"The astounding retail presence of leopard print, tie-dye and checks decreased since and is giving way to fresher, more toned-down interpretations such as cloudy tie-dyes, tortoiseshell motifs and windowpane checks. Florals are also taking a backseat following a few seasons' obsessing with prairie looks and stories such as art-inspired motifs are coming into play instead. Photographic and placement prints are another one to watch, set to make a return following a strong presence on the catwalks," says Walters on this season's print and pattern trends.

Tie-dye makes its way back through softer, cloudy iterations. They're making a huge impact, increasing by 192% in the UK and 40% in the US across spring/summer new-ins. Stripes move in a similar way with hazy hues and ombre effects giving them an update. Organic textures come in as an alternative to animal prints. Walters suggests focusing on natural variations, bio dyes and microbial patterns. On the topic of animal prints, tortoiseshell comes in a much-welcomed replacement for leopard print.

Fashion is becoming more and more art-friendly. Boutiques continue to merge gallery and retail spaces to cultivate emotion and reason to buy; apply artsy prints through oversized brushstrokes and surrealist-style embroidery. Meanwhile, large-scale placement in abstract cutout shapes and silhouette renders are particularly fresh and give an art-house feel.

Following the return to logomania, a more discreet typeface is explored for S/S '20 – albeit eligible from afar. As in the

hand-scrawl artwork theme, it's a key vehicle for branding and slogans, although less obvious. The hand-drawn monochrome print is used in a more subversive, DIY aesthetic as well as a more delicate interpretation of hand-drawn and doodle prints; they're useful for statement slogans and activist agendas.



Modern Paisley print at Etro Woman S/S '19

Along with the general move away from prairie looks, nu meadow offers a substitute print in a punchier palette in mid-tones and larger irregular scales. Similarly, modern paisley moves into new space with punched up colours, off-beat fabrics and large scales – S/S '19 saw this print grow by 53% at UK online retail.

Checks, in an abstract form, are still being checked. The new wave of minimalism for 2020 is laying the base for simple proofs like the windowpane check print as seen at Chloe and Victoria Beckham. Off-grid checks are also a nice update to this print. Distorted and blended qualities are key for prints this season and are especially important for upgrading grids and checks, says Walters.

Elsewhere, stencilled outlines are taking florals into a more graphic direction while retaining a tropical and high summer feel. The mundane becomes a key graphic direction as utility and bad taste themes continue to garner pace across mens- and womenswear.



NYT t-shirt

## Fresh design details and simple editions

“With trends generally slowing down and retailers and brands alike shifting their focus into elevated core and classic items, fresh design details are more important than ever. Simple editions of new straps, off-beats seams or statement collars and pockets are transforming core items into fashion-led designs, offering a sweet spot between commerciality and newness,” says Walters.

The summery qualities of linen offer casual comfort in loose and airy dimensions with natural crepe and high twisty arms. Linen grew by 49% in the UK and 18% in the US year-on-year at retail. While woven checks plateau, the importance and variety of tailored trends help them remain the biggest pattern shareholder, holding 19% of print category on the recent catwalks. An easy way to update your basic linens, faded stripes in pastels and worn effects give rise to casual holiday and perennial nautical stripe looks.



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Summer brights offer a way in for your cotton drills, allowing you to bridge the gap between denim and utility in vibrant colours. Texture gives sheer jerseys a lovely recondition – on the A/W 19/20 catwalks, sheer knits and tops were up 63% year-on-year. For spring/summer '20, semi-sheer jerseys are given texture and structure through the use of Devoré, Bernat yarn and Jacquard in geometric and subtle irregular patterns.

Denim is one of the main culprits in the sustainability conundrum and, as a result, it's been a key focus for retailers and brands to invest in terms of fabric innovation and techniques. Keeping that in mind, drive denim through eco-conscious choices; organic jeans were up by 114% in the UK and 55% in the US year-on-year at retail.

As the minimalism of the 1990s continues to influence trends, a key detail coming to the fore is the spaghetti strap. It's a

key update, tying the overarching feminine looks of the season and works best as back details, says Walters. Pleats continue as a dependable detail across multiple categories but feel freshest when applied to tops and dresses as well as in unexpected fabric choices like linen and coarse cotton. That being said, pleats grew fastest in skirts, increasing 56% in the UK and 23% in the US year-on-year.



Back details at Cecile Bahnsen S/S '19

Knotted details are continuing to uptick and go hand in hand with the rise in volume silhouettes and the return to minimalism reinterpreted for a soft and comfortable look. It's led by the knotted skirt, which is up 49% in the UK.

Decorative straps provide a super easy update to tried and tested items – diamante, beading, textual fabric flowers and pearls are all noted. Pearls were up 44% in the UK and 29% in the US at luxury retail across new-ins. The cut-and-paste-block allows you to incorporate sustainable practices and reduce waste in the design process and offers plenty of scope to capitalise on deadstock and left-over fabrics.



Exaggerated collar and rider pocket at Nanushka

Exaggerated collars lend a design edge to classic and core pieces – collared shirts and blouses are up 18% in the UK across S/S '19 new-ins. As consumers have really warmed up to romantic and prairie looks in the past few seasons – bows increased 52% in cotton new-in apparel, driven by mass market retailers – you can amp up the femininity factor with girly, oversized and long straps for dresses, blouses and tops.

Graphic cutouts may work well for certain levels of the market as it adds designer appeal to familiar silhouettes. You may bring newness with a more graphic aesthetic – from barely-there slashes to statement-making iterations with architectural inspiration.

In opposition to volume looks, the form-fitting look is also being tracked. To apply the contouring detail work with waist-defining, body contouring styles that emphasise the female form via darts and ergonomic seams.

The rider pocket is another detail that offers ease when updating pieces. Use new iterations of Western-inspired pockets as an easy update to shirts, jackets and coats.

## ABOUT MAROEF AH SMITH

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