

POLISH FASHION INDUSTRY

Start from Scratch

During the communist era, Poland didn't have any access to western trends in fashion. Poland was closed for any development in fashion, which resulted in a low activity in the field. Poland had only one national fashion enterprise named MODA POLSKA (Polish Fashion) which associated all of the best Polish designers. "Moda Polska" had a lot of boutiques in the whole of Poland and organized fashion shows in Warsaw twice a year, only for very wealthy people. The company was closed in 1998.

After 1989, when communism had gone, Poland started to get up from years of backwardness and people got more used to wealth; they had contact with western fashion in color magazines and in television. People acquired access to the latest fashion trends via friends who had migrated to Germany (then GDR), USA and Scandinavia.

In the 90ties Polish economy started to develop and foreign companies began to run their Polish departments. People who were artistically gifted started to choose fashion fields of studies, Polish people wanted to look like their western neighbors, but Poland still could not be seen as a trendsetting country. Nowadays fashion industry in Poland is growing really fast. Every year the amount of fashion companies, online fashion companies and designers is getting bigger and bigger, what means that anyone now has got access to fashionable clothes and accessories, often made in Poland.

When H&M opened its first boutique in Poland in 2003, it began the chain shops era in Poland. At the same time Polish clothing group LPP created a brand named Reserved, and later more brands like: House, Reserved Kids, Cropp and Mohito. LPP is the biggest Polish enterprise that has designers and design offices only in Poland; at this moment it has already 700 shops in Poland and 324 in Europe.

Manufacturers, brands, designers

"Polish clothing companies – the story of their success

The largest and most important clothing manufacturers in Poland include: Bytom SA, LPP SA, Warmia SA, GETEX, Telimena SA, DCG SA Vistulagroup.

The brands Reserved, House, Cropp, Mohito and Promostar produced by the Gdańsk based LPP SA are the best example of the international success of Polish clothing.

Polish clothing companies have been largely successful on the national market and abroad. They have become ambassadors of the Polish economy worldwide."

(from: www.forum-ekonomiczne.pl)

Foreign fashion groups like Spanish INDITEX are very successful in Poland. Brands like ZARA, Bershka, Stradivarius and Pull&Bear are the most popular among young Polish customers. During the last 10 years, all the biggest worldwide companies opened their boutiques in Poland. Since 2000 shopping centers were built in all major Polish cities. Even small fashion companies and independent designers opened their boutiques at the most desirable addresses in Warsaw, Krakow, Wroclaw, Poznan or Lodz.

Nowadays the main sales sector of the latest trends in fashion is on the Internet.

Designers start their adventure with selling their projects at their own online shops.

Some of them put their products onto a website which connects more niche designers. The most popular one is called **SHOWROOM** (www.shwrm.pl) where you can find all the biggest independent brands in Polish fashion for women, men or even for kids.

These brands are becoming more and more successful what prove that this industry is getting really well. Companies you must know are:

Fly High – creative sports wear, inspired by music, spring, with the most fashionable features of these season (www.flyhighstore.pl);

NOH8 SNDCT – sophisticated fashion for T-shirts with the rock-'n-roll edge (www.noh8.eu).

Risk made in Warsaw – very popular brand specially in Warsaw, based on grey cotton hoodies (blouses) and casual track-suits and dresses, both male and female (www.riskmadeinwarsaw.pl)

LOCAL HEROES – casual wear made by two young women, clothes with very noticeable patterns and writings, also popular in USA, thanks to a very good promotion (www.localheroesstore.com) (www.riskmadeinwarsaw.pl);

Reykjavik District – men's fashion only in Scandinavian designs, made by Olly Lindal, who worked in the biggest Island's fashion company NTC, he moved to Poland and started to run this brand with huge success among Polish men (www.rekjavikdistrict.com);

SHE/S A RIOT – from Warsaw, label is promoted as a unique fashion that people always wanted, but that was hard to find in chain shops (www.shesariot.com);

US – jewelry brand, making their pieces of stainless, bracelets with words and parallel lines. One can make an order of a special writing (www.us-words.com).

At this moment, it is highly noticeable how this sector has changed during the last few years. On every street in Warsaw you can see many people wearing Polish designs, the most visible brands are:

LILOU – jewelry company, very popular in Poland, also they have their boutiques in Paris (www.lilou.pl);

SABRINA PILEWICZ – exclusive accessories label (bags, wallets) one of the most recognizable brands in Poland (www.sabrinapilewicz.com);

ANDRZEJ JEDYNAK – fur brand with traditions (1978) (www.andrzejjedynak.pl);

WITTCHEN – leather accessories (bags, wallets, leather jackets) started by Jędrzej Wittchen in 1990 (www.wittchen.com);

BATYCKI – leather brand, very popular by amber addition on their products (www.batycki.pl);

WOJAS – very successful leather shoes brand (www.ri.wojas.pl);

BYTOM – men's elegance fashion label selling modern suits (www.bytom.com.pl);

VISTULA – complete formal wear for men (www.vistula.pl);

HEXELINE – established by Halina Zawadzka in 1989 it is a brand for women in every age, available in many countries in Europe and Asia. (www.hexe.com.pl).

More recognizable designers, that have already a good position in Polish fashion sector, work on their own hands, most of them started from the website sale but then expanded to the boutiques in whole country. Now, all the biggest Polish brands are treated as exclusive fashion, reason why is rather simple: Polish people alike other are very sensitive to the influence of pop stars, celebrities or bloggers. When those groups of well known people started to promote Polish brands on the biggest events, people started to copy them. All the

brands were getting more and more popular, prices were getting higher, but those who can afford these goods do not complain. The most exclusive and popular companies are:

EVA MINGE – one of the most successful Polish designers. The brand has over 20 years of tradition. Eva Minge is the main designer; she is making elegance clothing for women. The brand is also known abroad, she has already had her fashion shows in many important fashion weeks and events (www.evaminge.com);

GOSIA BACZYNSKA – the most important Polish designer in woman's fashion. She makes very elegant and modern clothes, she has formal and casual labels, she has already performed in Paris Fashion Week for few times. She is one of the favorite stars and celebrities designers, she has her devoted enthusiasts among Polish actresses who keep the fame of Gosia's brand (www.gosiabaczynska.com);

MACIEJ ZIEN – Fashion, wedding fashion and interiors designer, born in Poland, his name is the most recognizable by the Polish people. Most of Polish stars wears his designs on their wedding, he designed interiors for many famous people, he showed his collections in National Museum. He has also his prêt-à-porter collection. He won all of the most important fashion awards in Poland. His fashion shows are the biggest events in Warsaw, covered by Polish nationwide media. He runs also an interior label named ZIEN HOME (2010) (www.zien.pl)

LA MANIA – made by Polish business woman Joanna Przetakiewicz (2010), an exclusive women's label, designed for very elegant women, the brand is the icon of Polish exclusive lifestyle, women love La Mania clothes, because of grace and the best quality. The supporter of Joanna's brand is Karl Lagerfeld, her best friend (www.lamania.eu);

DAWID WOLINSKI – Polish designer, has women's and men's label, very popular among Polish celebrities. His designs are very elegant, his brand is called "The luxury of Polish designs". He performed in Fashion week in Lisbon (2004). He sells the collections in USA at Tracey Ross's and in Maxfield, his dresses were shown in ELLE Portugal and Germany. He has many famous customers, also international celebrities like Nicole Richie, Dita von Teese, Paris Hilton. He was a part of jury in TOP MODEL tv-show (www.dawidwolinski.com);

PAPROCKI & BRZOZOWSKI – duo of designers who have been working together since 2000, they are another favorite Polish brand of many Polish stars, they have a casual sport label of blouses, elegant label for women, wedding label. Now there are cooperating with T-MOBILE on T-MOBILE fashion Project (www.paprockibrzozowski.com);

BOHOBOCO – the modern fashion concept made by the duo of Polish designers Kamil Owczarek and Michal Gilbert Lach. It is a relatively new brand but it has already reached a big number of customers, thanks to great projects for women, elegant dresses and accessories (www.bohoboco.com);

JOANNA KLIMAS – Polish designer, who first showed her designs in Polish versions of fashion magazines (1994): ELLE, Glamour, Cosmopolitan, Marie Claire, Twój Styl, PANI, ViVa or GALA. She became a popular designer, she designed a dress for ABSOLUT calendar in 1998 (the only Polish designer who did that). She won the ELLE Award, she designed costumes for the National Opera in Warsaw, she supports a "Fashion Couture" project. Joanna is the leader of jury for England and Poland, she performs her designs on Polish Fashion Week, her designs are simple and minimalistic what made her so successful (www.joannaklimas.com);

TERESA ROSATI – one of the most experienced Polish designers, her brand specializes in cocktail dresses, evening and wedding dresses, the only Polish designer who performed her collection in New Jersey Fashion & Beauty Week in 2012. She makes her clothes of the best textiles from Italy (www.teresarosati.com.pl);

NATALIA JAROSZEWSKA – Polish famous designer, painter and graphic designer. She has been designing for over 10 years. She has a lot of devoted customers, thanks to her feminine dresses and ethereal clothes. She makes graphics for fashion magazines. Natalia wrote a book with a patronage of Polish Historical Museum called "Chłopczyce, uwodzicielki, damy – polska moda międzywojenna" about Polish interwar fashion (www.jaroszevska.eu).

Events, shows, fairs

The fashion sector is now very developed, it is not only about designing any more. Companies try to reach more customers all the time. Their ideas are more and more creative, but of course the main way of advertising the potential clients are fashion shows, fashion events or fashion fairs.

The biggest and the most important fashion event in Poland is [Poland Fashion Week](#) – specifically [Fashion Philosophy Fashion Week Poland](#). A cyclic event which has been organizing since 2009 twice a year in Lodz. First 9 editions were in EXPO of National Trades Lodz, but the 10th edition will be in May 2014 in EXPO LODZ (built in 2012). The Directors of PFW are Irmina Kubiak and Jacek Klak, the Organizer is The Creative Group MODA FORTE. The Polish Fashion Week is divided into sections:

[Designer Avenue](#) – is the part of all exclusive Polish and foreign fashion. Over the years all aforementioned designers took part in this event. The designers who can get an opportunity to show their collections are chosen by Program Committee: Hanna Gajos (Rynek Mody), Wojciech Grzybala (Grazia), Olivier Janiak (fashion journalist) and Marta Kalinowska (ASP) and many more.

[OFF OUT OF SCHEDULE](#) – alternative part of PFW, fashion shows of the best avant-garde designers. Showing unusual and different fashion, also in this part the designers are chosen by Program Committee: Slawek Blaszewski (stylist), Krzysztof Graban (HIRO Free magazine), Ewa Kosz (Ultra Żurnal magazine), Tobiasz Kujawa (blogger), Janusz Noniewicz (KMAG magazine) and many more. Designers who had already performed in this section:

- . Paulina Plizga (www.paulinaplizga.com)
- . Jarosław Ewert (www.jaroslawewert.pl)
- . Kas Kryst (www.kaskryst.com)
- . KUBALANCA (www.kubalanca.com)

[YOUNG FASHION PHOTOGRAPHERS NOW](#) – the event accompanying PFW, showing and promoting works of unknown fashion photographers. They are also chosen by program committee for this section.

[LET THEM KNOW](#) – Free lecture series for people from fashion industry, exchanging experience between designers, producers, photographers.

[SHOWROOM](#) – The biggest and the most popular zone of PFW, where designers and brands show their collections of clothes, jewelry and accessories. It is the main trade section, for fashion buyers, fashion companies, customers. It is getting more and more developed (last time there was over 100 different brands from Poland and other countries).

Second important fashion event in Poland is [WARSAW FASHION STREET](#) placed in Krakowskie Przedmiescie, Warsaw. This year WFS has its 10th anniversary, the event will be 22-23 of June 2014. WFS includes; FASHION CHILDREN SHOW, NEW LOOK DESIGN CONTEST, TALENT WFS, WFS GALA, OFF FASHION and MAIN FASHION SHOWS.

The information about brands taking part in WFS will be know soon, designers must pay from 8.000 to 12.000 (PLN) for a chance to perform their collections there.

(www.warsawfashionstreet.pl)

Next event is [Warsaw Fashion Weekend](#), one of the largest and the most prestigious fashion events in Poland. It is organized in EXPO CENTRE XXI in Warsaw. The last edition was 4-6th of April 2014. WFW includes fashion shows, showrooms of designers from Poland and other countries. (www.targimodypozn.pl).

WARSAW FASHION DEMOCRACY - The event placed in BLUE CITY Shopping Centre in Warsaw, is organized by the same people who do WFW. This is a great occasion to see all the newest collection by Polish designers, buy some new pieces with the help of the best Polish stylists (www.fashiondemocracy.pl).

More alternative event for Polish designers, graphics and artists in **IDEAFIX**, organized in Krakow. It supports young artists of fashion, culture and literature (www.ideafix.pl).

A very popular event in the Silesia Province is **SILESIA FASHION LOOK**, organized in Silesia Shopping Centre in Katowice. Once a year, the most important Polish designers display their new collections there, fashion shows are connected with performances of many t- stars and celebrities (www.silesiafashionlook.pl).

Smaller but also popular fashion event in Warsaw is **FASHION IN WARSAW** (winter edition) –fashion trades, placed in KINOTEKA cinema in Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. Last edition was on 2nd of February 2014, about 50 designers showed there their collections of clothes, jewelry, children toys (www.bluecity.pl/fashioninwarsaw).

Fashion promotion: bloggers

As in other countries, in Poland the biggest influence on young Polish people have fashion bloggers.

For the last five to six years they have become not only people who are interested in fashion, who like to be trendy, but the most popular of the bloggers have now a status of celebrities, they take part in every important fashion event. Some of the bloggers only concentrate on clothes, other on accessories, or even on cooking connected with fashion. Still, nowadays, they sometimes replace stylists. Most popular bloggers in Poland are:

MAFFASHION - the best known Polish fashion blogger, her name is Julia Kaczynska, she has her fashion blog for about five years. Over these years, she became the most recognizable person, thanks to her casual and sporty style. She is always invited on every fashion event, fashion weeks, she also takes part in New York Fashion Week, Stockholm and London Fashion Week (www.madamejulietta.blogspot.com).

JESSICA MERCEDES - Jessica Kirschner, born in Germany (1994), the most classy Polish blogger, who has the real knowledge of the worldwide fashion industry. Favorite blogger of Polish fashion enthusiasts (www.jmerced.com).

LUBIE SZPINAK - Combined fashion and food blog by young actress Marta Wierzbicka, popular among Polish cooking enthusiasts. She mixes posts about fashion (clothes, accessories) and cooking, she cooks the food herself, she also put videos with the instruction on her blog (www.lubieszpinak.blogspot.com).

VANITAS - blog by Olivier Waimea, born in Kassel but he has been living in Poland since he was 7. His blog is about men's fashion and also about cooking. He mixes casual fashion with formal suits. He is very popular among Polish men (www.vaniitas.blogspot.com).

Bloggers also contribute to the development of the other section of Polish fashion industry, the alternative hip hop fashion sector. Polish hip hop music labels have their own collections of clothing both for women and men. It became more a lifestyle than a fashion, even people who are not interested in hip hop music wear the clothes, because of very specific designs and writings.

PLNY – clothing label made by WIELKIE JOL RECORDS from Warsaw , which is divided on smaller labels, right now the newest project is PLNY LALA- women's clothing based on cotton casual clothes with the very funny

and ironic writing “Warszawska Lala” (what simply means “Warsaw Doll”) They are also making clothes for men (www.plny.pl).

PROSTO – Another Warsaw hip hop label made by PROSTO Music Records, they have promoted the biggest stars of Polish hip hop music industry. PROSTO is more popular among men, the label is based on cotton and jeans wear (www.prosto.pl).

LIFESTAB – Label made by Patryk “Burzka” Burzynski, based on clothes with “POZDRAWIAM” writing, very popular in Warsaw (www.lifestab.com).

Polish television stations have been more and more interested in fashion programs recently. They decided to create Polish version of the most popular ones:

PROJECT RUNWAY (tvn), **Projektanci na Start** (fox life), **Top Model** (tvn)

A website that connects all Polish designers and helps to promote them is Polish Fashion Industry run by Aga Wierzchowska. We can find there all information about the industry, trades, fashion shows and boutiques which are good to know (www.polishfashionindustry.pl).

Future development

Foreign media agree that the Polish fashion sector is still growing slower than western Europe or in USA, but they are aware that Poland made enormous progress in the last 20 years. The most luxury brands want to have their boutiques in Poland. Vitkac shopping centre which was built in Warsaw made a place for all exclusive brands which have not been in Poland yet for example Louis Vuitton, the icon of luxury.

“Polish fashion industry is growing like in any other European country, the quality of Polish brands is comparable to the luxury brands, and designs are really interesting as well” (translated into English from “Na Temat” Tomasz Jacykow Polish stylist)

“Polish fashion industry is growing really fast, there is a bigger and bigger need for luxury goods, my clients go to Milan or Paris much less than before, because they can buy these goods in Poland” - Maciej Zien designer (translated from Polish from Gazeta Finansowa <http://gf24.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/58-61.pdf>)

“The main problem in Polish fashion industry is that Polish designers are still the niche in this sector, because of global giant chains shops. But not only, Polish designers want their brand to become luxury immediately, unfortunately their labels are still to alternative for Polish people, that is why they cannot sell the collection to the average Polish customer. Next crucial defect in this sector are prices. Of course Polish people are getting more wealthy every year but still the designers put their prices too high, so they lose market to chain shops” – Katarzyna T. translated into English by me from (www.lamode.info.pl)

“The Polish clothing industry is slowly but steadily developing. Over the last few years it has been building and promoting its new image, marked by fashionable designs, innovative technologies and impeccable workmanship. This is the basis of success for Polish companies on the Polish market and abroad.”

According to the data provided by the Fashion Industry Entrepreneurs’ Association Lewiatan in 2010, a growth in employment when compared to 2009 was recorded:

- among textile manufactures – by 4.1%
- among clothing manufacturers – by 2.3%

(from: www.forum-ekonomiczne.pl) - government website)

Magda Łęczycka

Trainee FIT Warsaw

General website: www.textiles.pl