

Covid and the evolution of loungewear

By [Nicola Cooper](#)

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Covid-19 has impacted consumers of all backgrounds, of all interests, of all age groups with implications for every industry. More than ever, our consumers' changing behaviours and lifestyle shifts and attitudes require constant agility and hyper-awareness to the cultural landscape movement.



Credit: [Stay Home Club](#)

No trend is more notable than the significant shift to remote working. While we observed this steady transformation in business structures and a gradual increase in people choosing to work remotely pre-Covid, these changes accelerated into imposed adoption worldwide.

Research by the AfterCollege networking site shows that 59% of current job seekers look for a flexible work schedule from a prospective employer, while 70% said they're more likely to accept a job if there's the option to work from home at least one day a week. This further reinforced the millennials' approach towards a nomadic lifestyle or the hot desk approach.

The home as a multi-functional space

With the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, businesses have been forced into situations that demonstrated the benefits of remote working, and some of the most rigid companies were left with no choice but to adapt and transform, with many moving to adopt flexible workplace models.

As a result of this, homes have evolved into multifaceted zones to accommodate homeschooling, fitness centres, relaxation, recreation and remote workspaces, altering how businesses and employees think about work, lifestyle and productivity.

Our current confined and homebound reality will continue to influence consumer purchasing, and product or service opportunities. The demand for indoor fitness, remote working, and therefore comfortable yet stylish attire, present an opportunity for fashion businesses, brands and retailers.



Credit: [Rich Mhisi](#)

Comfort at the core

The fashion industry is reprioritising and repositioning comfort, lounge, athleisure and activewear categories to respond to the pandemic.

We've seen a rise in trends such as luxury sportswear, athleisure or sports luxe and the development of smart, luxury fabrics and sneaker culture as office spaces evolved to allow for more informal attire thanks to casual millennial business leaders and adaptable, progressive consumers. Strengthened 'stay-at-home' measures continue to fast track these fashion categories.

Minimal sportswear, sports luxe and athleisure are marrying comfort with luxury. The focus on high-quality fabrics accompanies the rise of luxury athleisure wear or activewear. It is an example of the increased cross-sector convergence where luxury fashion and athleticwear are no longer two distinct domains, as lines blur across the categories.



Credit: [The Knotty Ones](#)

Softness not only appears with silhouettes or textures. Menswear for 2021 includes pops of pinks and oranges, lavender and mints joining the earth tones for a reference to botanicas and offering a softer masculine side. These delicate colours are easily translated into the voluminous and oversized but simply juxtaposed by clean linear suiting.

Clean lines and tonal ensembles ensure that this collection maintains a minimal aesthetic and controls the narrative on show with a muted and sustained colour palette with strong silhouettes throughout.

The consumer demand spans virtually all age groups and markets, not only because it is chic or stylish but it's comfortable and brings a sense of lavishness to every situation. As one of the burgeoning markets building up to 2021, perpetuated by Covid-19, the loungewear market is poised to grow by \$19.5bn from 2020 to 2024, with a CAGR of 9% during the forecast period.

As the concept of wellness evolves beyond food intake or exercise, we can expect this value shift to impact consumers' purchasing priorities. A holistic approach is becoming a key motivator of consumer behaviour, underpinned by convenience, transparency and value.

Details that drive appeal

Through a comfortable and sophisticated 'back to basics' approach designers, brands and retailers can drive appeal, with details that provide comfort. Wide legs, elasticated waists and boxy silhouettes in neutral, cosy or tasteful textures add the duality of inside/outside versatility to items, and heels or formal footwear take a back seat to slides, sneakers or slippers as comfort becomes a priority.

Accessories that focus from the mid-torso up, such as headgear like caps, hats, scarves or hair accessories, and jewellery such as necklaces or earrings are aligned to dressed-up casual loungewear looks.



Credit: [Fashion Handbook South Africa](#)

Celebrities, magazines, influencers and retailers have adopted at-home imagery and uplifting language to promote and reflect the shift towards our homes becoming multipurpose spaces.

Teamed with the rise in 'wellness', this new dimension of casualwear and the stay-indoors wardrobe focuses on relaxed fit and rich fabrications. It's dually viewed as both practical and stylish for the modern consumer, generating the need for elevated basics across the board for those who desire the ability to move freely, for those commuting for work or for an easy transition from work to home or boarding a plane, train or bus.

Minimal and uncomplicated clothing moves to the forefront in 2021, delivering some calm to the present chaos of the world. Offerings from the likes of Jil Sander, Miuccia Prada and Lemaire boast clean architectural lines and an austere approach for a simple and elegant aesthetic.

An uncomplicated, quality-driven and sustainable mindset will continue to impact the fashion industry. It will impact not only sportswear and loungewear, but the larger fashion media space with content innovations such as home-shot fashion editorials driving possible short-term and long-term shifts within the industry.

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