

Collisions between the Fashion Industry, Media and Politics.

The framing of fashionable femininity in Soviet Lithuania's magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and Post-Soviet Lithuania's fashion blog *StiliuSOS* through political and technological perspectives

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MA Thesis: New Media and Digital Culture

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Utrecht University, February 2017

Abstract

Collisions between the fashion industry, technology and politics undergo constant transformations that can be visible in the content of fashion media. This thesis is oriented towards Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania's fashion industry and its media through technological and political perspectives. These two distinct periods encompass divergent political contexts that had and still have a visible effect on the country's society and the fashion industry itself. This study reflects the collision between media, fashion and politics by analysing the headlines and images of a former Lithuanian magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and a contemporary online fashion blog *StiliuSOS*. In order to investigate the latter media sections beyond their direct meaning and to observe political and societal alterations, a semiotic approach is used. The results show that the images and headlines in *Tarybinė Moteris* reflect the prevailing deficiency and political stagnation in Soviet Lithuania, a peculiar civil disobedience and restrictions over Soviet Lithuanian women's self-expression. During the occupation, the magazine could be used for two main reasons: as a tool of propaganda or as a tool of resistance against the Soviet regime. Also, the results demonstrate that Soviet Lithuania's women were still trying to embrace their fashionable femininity by making their own clothes that signifies their uniqueness and idiosyncrasy in comparison to Western fashion, which is based on mass-production and planned obsolescence. Hence, *StiliuSOS* show that an opportunity to purchase in capitalist society needs to be guided by fashion media. The results demonstrate that capitalism creates not only an option, but also an obligation to express oneself through consumerism that forms the capitalist ideology. Furthermore, both politics and media technology have a visible effect on the fashion industry and its development. Technological changes are visibly effected by societal and political transformations, which means that technology is not autonomous, but is also dependent on cultural and political factors. This study shows that fashion media and the fashion industry itself can be used as a beneficial research material in analysing political and societal processes.

Keywords: fashion media, technology, the fashion industry, power politics, image clothing, written garment, the signification.

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Introduction

“Dress is more than mere objects and materials people put on their bodies. Dress can be a sign or symbol that refers to or stands for meanings not inherent in the material or object. In sum, the physical body when dressed reflects the ‘social body’ or surrounding societal system”

— Bryan S. Turner

The fashion industry, media and politics are strongly bind with each other and create a compelling vision of modern society. Scholar of fashion and material culture Beverly Lemire states that “Political economies and cultural discourses of fashion present equally fertile dynamics, having shaped industries, defined communities and sparked conflicts” (2010, 1). The omnipresence and constant alterations of fashion, media and politics create beneficial conditions for their inevitable collision. Philosopher Douglas Kellner further explains that the fashion industry and its media can be easily affected by technologies and especially by a prevailing political situation, which is often maintained by economic aspects. He writes, “certain positions in media cultural texts reproduce existing political ideologies in current political struggles, [...] articulate conservative or liberal positions, while others articulate radical ones” (Kellner 1995, 59). The aforesaid idea about media as the reflection of liberal and radical political situations evokes a discussion about the content of fashion media as the environment that creates the signification and reflects an unrestricted display of power politics. In order to notice and perceive larger political transformations, one may choose such political reflections that create a high contrast with each other. As scholar of global politics Barrie Axford explains, political change “is the extent to which cultural factors and aesthetics have assumed a growing significance, not only in matters of political display, but as registers of power and interest” (2001, 2). Thus, the collision between the fashion industry, technology and politics undergoes constant transformations that can be visible in the content of fashion media.

This thesis is oriented towards Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania’s fashion industry and its media through technological and political perspectives. Two distinct periods – Lithuania during Soviet oppression and modern Independent Lithuania – were chosen since they encompass divergent political contexts that had and still have a visible affect on society and the fashion industry. In order to analyse political and technological transformations in this country’s society and the fashion industry, the paper as its corpus uses a former Lithuanian magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and a contemporary online fashion blog *StiliuSOS*. The purpose of this study is to answer the main research question, which is: how do transformations between

the framing of fashionable femininity in a former magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and the fashion blog *StiliuSOS* headlines and images reflect larger political and technological changes in Post-Soviet Lithuania's society and fashion industry? In order to make the paper more tangible, the main research question leads to additional sub-questions: how do *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* reflect the way that technological transformations affect Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania's society and fashion industry? How do *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* potentially contribute to shaping the perception of fashion and fashionable femininity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania?

Tarybinė Moteris was founded in 1920, as the magazine called *Moteris*, which translates to "Woman". The journal, which underwent cultural and political changes, was published until the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in 1940. However, the past success of the magazine remained unforgotten, so it was introduced to the general public once again in 1952, only under the name of *Tarybinė Moteris*, which translates to "Soviet Woman" (Moteris 2015). The magazine presented interviews with inspiring women, provided household advice, as well as information on the latest trends in dress, hair and makeup. In contrast to *Tarybinė Moteris*, an online fashion blog *StiliuSOS* was chosen as a reflection of Lithuania's new media scene. *StiliuSOS* is not only a blog, it is an online fashion platform, which was created by Lithuanian style expert Agnė Jagelavičiūtė. According to *StiliuSOS*, the main mission of the platform is to help people to solve issues related to their personal style (StiliuSOS 2016). The platform contains various features: consultations from professional stylists who assist in creating a person's individual style, online shopping, fashion news, and a fashion blog.

The aforesaid fashion media platforms were and still are dependent on the media technologies that structure and circulate them as well as political and societal alterations that can be seen in the content, or the words and images themselves. Both fashion media platforms will be analysed by using a semiotic approach, which will help to investigate the coherence between signs, words and visual representation in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* headlines and images. This case study focuses on political content and cultural beliefs that can be seen in words and images. According to Kellner, "ideology contains discourses and figures, concepts and images, theoretical positions and symbolic forms. Such an expansion of the concept of ideology obviously opens the way to the exploration of how images, figures, narratives, and symbolic forms constitute part of the ideological representations" (1995, 59). Hence, the aforesaid media platforms reflect different ideologies – communism in Soviet Lithuania and capitalism in Independent Lithuania – and create a beneficial environment for analysing the continuity of political discourse and technological transformations.

There is a small number of studies related to the convergence between fashion media and politics in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. A significant work, which was used as the basis of this study, was fashion investigator's Lija Janauskienė study about the peculiarities of the Soviet regime of fashion control that are reflected in the content of Soviet fashion magazines (2013). The academic community is mainly discussing the phenomenon of Soviet fashion as a tool of control over people and Soviet clothing peculiarities on the whole (Vainshtein 1996; Gurova 2009; Zakharova 2013). Hence, this thesis is going to contribute to existing, but quite vague discussions about the collision of fashion, politics and technology in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. The following study will demonstrate that Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania's fashion media can be analysed from different perspectives and reflect a more diverse reality. So to speak, the images and headlines of *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* contain specific signs, language and symbols that reflect a more profound meaning. The results of the study will show that *Tarybinė Moteris* reflect the main political tendencies in the 1980s: the prevailing deficiency and political stagnation, a peculiar civil disobedience and restrictions over Lithuanian women's self-expression. However, the deficiency and oppression induced Soviet women to embrace their creativity by making their own clothes in order to become fashionable. In contrast, the further investigation of *StiliuSOS* will show that today's women's desires need to be guided by fashion media platforms in order to help them choose wisely. However, capitalism creates not only an option, but also an obligation to express oneself through consumerism that forms the capitalist ideology.

This paper is relevant for humanities-oriented media studies field since it reflects the specifics of constantly changing media technologies in a unique – fashion media – scene, at the same time describing the importance of media in this industry. Furthermore, the author of this paper aims to show that transformations between the framing of fashionable femininity in headlines and images can reflect larger political and technological changes. The purpose of this research paper is to encourage more active discussions about the fashion media as a significant reflection of political and technological alterations. Little attention has been paid to the Lithuanian fashion media scene, especially to the development of media during the Soviet rule and after Lithuania's Restoration of Independence. The author of this paper aims to engage scholars' interest not only in Lithuania's fashion media platform, but in country's media scene in the whole.

1. Collisions between technology and the fashion industry

“Fashion is an industry that cleverly created its own media to support it”

— Caryn Franklin

According to Kellner, the power of media has always been indisputable: it shapes people’s social behavior, constructs perceptions about the world and forms political views. He states that “media culture provides the materials to create identities whereby individuals insert themselves into contemporary techno-capitalist societies and which is producing a new form of global culture” (Kellner 1995, 1). Hence, media does not particularly choose which part of one’s life to operate upon – it just happens to be *everywhere*. The ubiquity of media didn’t bypass the fashion industry. The earlier remark of Fashion Journalist Caryn Franklin makes a clear point: the fashion industry uses the media for its own benefit. Without media intervention, the communication process between creator and public would be highly complicated. The fashion industry discovered a valuable resource: media, and involved it in its further development as well as dissemination. The development of fashion media may seem incomprehensibly complex since it progressed through the centuries alongside technology and politics. As Kellner explains, “the forms of media culture are intensely political and ideological, and thus those who wish to discern how it embodies political positions and has political effects should learn to read media culture politically” (1995, 56). The aforesaid author’s position shows that political and technological aspects are closely interwoven: technology is dependent on political as well as cultural aspects, and vice versa. Hence, the following section distinguishes fundamental aspects of larger technological changes in the fashion industry and its effect on the industry’s development. The theoretical framework shows that fashion magazines and fashion blogs are constantly affected by shifting technologies and demonstrates their importance in the progression of the fashion industry. The following analysis is necessary to answer the research question since it covers fundamental technological transformations that influenced not only modern society on the whole, but also had/have an apparent impact on Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania’s society and the fashion industry.

1.1. The fashion magazine: the development and prevalence

Fashion is a vibrant industry that adjusts to constantly evolving technological changes and uses them to its own benefit in order to maintain and accelerate the industry’s development processes. Fashion journalist Julie Bradford claims that “fashion has to be written about and represented in some way to exist – otherwise it would just be a bunch of clothes with no back-

story” (2015, 50). Hence, the very first form of fashion media – fashion plates – laid a significant basis for fashion magazines that have contributed to the spread of the fashion industry, which has been using them as an effective communication and development strategy.

The emergence of fashion media can be singularly attributed to one form of print media – fashion magazines. The very first medium that highlighted fashionable femininity and clothing was the so-called fashion plate. According to writer and *The Charlotte Observer* columnist Mary Ellen Snodgrass, “the fashion plate was the primary medium for popularizing women’s and men’s clothing” (2015, 244). She explains that the aforesaid medium was used as an essential foundation for the first fashion magazine *Mercure Galant*, which was published by French publicist Jean Donneau de Visé in 1672 (Snodgrass 2015, 244-245). The latter collision between media and fashion laid the basis for the further prevalence of fashion magazines. Hence, the development of this media platform is related to constantly shifting technologies. The technological aspects of fashion magazines are mainly related to its creation (i.e. printing technologies) or distribution (i.e. communication technologies). For instance, the Industrial Revolution brought some visible technological improvements that accelerated the prevalence of the printed media. Professor of Journalism and Communication Jack Lule explains that “the fusing of steam power and the printing press enabled the explosive expansion of books and newspapers. [...] Urbanization, mass literacy, and new forms of mass media contributed to a sense of mass culture that united people across regional, social, and cultural boundaries” (2012). Thus, the development of manufacturing processes, the growth of the textile industry, the refinement of colour printing, and the rapid progress of transportation led to a wider distribution of fashion magazines.

Although fashion magazines are dependent on technologies in order to disseminate the significance of the fashion industry, it is also the medium as well as a form of mediated communication, whose purpose is to translate a specific message to the broader audience. Since this study is oriented towards the political reflections and content in fashion media platforms, it is important to analyse the fashion magazine as a print media form that creates meaning through words and images. Literary theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes states that “the small-scale models used by the big fashion designers constitute a purer corpus since they are closer to the logo-technical act; but precisely, this act is never fully finished until it reaches the fashion magazine stage, because it is the language of the magazine which gives the clothing created by haute couture the structure of a signifier and the power to signify” (2006, 73). Thus, even though fashion magazines are created in collaboration with human intelligence and technology, the language is the only substance that creates the signification and the perception

of fashion itself. Technology assists in creating new possibilities and a beneficial environment for the fashion industry, at the same time producing a tangible product – fashion magazines. For example, improvements in technology transformed the physical appearance of fashion magazines via fashion images, or so-called fashion photography. According to Snodgrass, “photography exhibited the appeal of fashion on real bodies” (2015, 454). Hence, technology assists in producing a tangible product – fashion magazines – that creates “the power to signify” (Barthes 2006, 73). Communication scholar Elliot Gaines states that “The experience of images, ideas, and messages appeals to individuals who identify with others engaged in a symbolic exchange that stimulates a sense of active unity between an interpreter and the real world” (2010, 61). Thus, technologies structure and circulate fashion magazines that contain visual representations as well as signs and symbols that may have many different interpretations that construct the perception of fashion and its industry.

Like other forms of print, in Barthes’ conception fashion media includes a latent message, which can only be comprehended in a specific social and political context. While talking about the signification in the words and images, Barthes states that “The meaning is *already* complete, it postulates a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions” (1972, 116). Hence, technology helps to construct the signification, but in order to understand and make it meaningful, it needs to have a special meaning in the culture, which mainly centers around societal and political factors. For instance, according to Janauskienė, a former Lithuanian Soviet fashion magazine *Banga* was constantly using the same words and rhetoric in its articles, giving the impression that all people used to wear modest, classic style clothes (2013). On the one hand, it can be construed as encouragement to wear only classic clothing as it were never going out of style. Whilst on the other hand, from a political perspective, the words and rhetoric could connote a different agenda: the content – words and images – may intend to persuade people to wear the same clothes in order to make them equal. If this were the case, the fashion magazine could be used as a tool of Soviet control and propaganda.

Overall, technology helps to accelerate the fashion industry’s development processes and to spread fashion magazines ubiquitously. Media technologies structure and circulate the aforesaid magazines that contains a specific content, which creates the perception of political and cultural transformations. According to Gaines, “media productions organize and preserve words, sounds, and images that can be accessed later in time and transported through space” (2010, 76). Hence, although the prevalence of the fashion industry wouldn’t be conceivable without constantly developing technologies, fashion magazines were and still are dependent on

political and societal alterations, which can be seen throughout the content, or words and images themselves.

1.2. Embracing new media

Nowadays the fashion industry is effectively embracing new media technologies and adapting them to its further development. According to fashion media scholars Djurdja Bartlett, Shaun Cole and Agnes Rocamora, “today this field is in the midst of deep social and technological changes. Its present, as well as its past, offer a unique opportunity to explore the complex, multi-layered nature of the processes that bind design, technology, society and identity together” (2013, 1). The political, social and technological changes form a larger landscape of fashion media. The purpose of this section is to analyse the collision between the fashion industry and new media, particularly focusing on online fashion blogs since they are a significant part of this thesis. Furthermore, the technological transformations in the fashion media scene (i.e. from a printed magazine to online blog) have a tangible influence on the fashion industry and the formation of fashionable femininity. However, technological changes are visibly effected by societal and political transformations, which means that technology is not autonomous, but is also dependent on cultural as well as political factors.

Nowadays, all the multiple elements that were shaping the content of fashion magazines also exist in various forms of new media. Rocamora states that “Understanding contemporary fashion practices also means understanding practices of digital media” (2016, 14). Hence, in order to perceive the significant technological transformations in fashion media, the term *new media* was broken down into five categories that were proposed by media scholars Martin Lister, Jon Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant and Kieran Kelly in their study *New Media: A Critical Introduction*. Firstly, nowadays fashion media provides “new textual experiences”, i.e. weekly/monthly fashion magazines were transferred to online websites, where the news is perpetually updated and articles are often supplemented with videos or hyperlinks to other useful websites. Secondly, fashion media creates “new ways of representing the world”, i.e. such fashion houses as *Balenciaga* or *Dior* are embracing 360-degree online filming technique in runway shows, which gives an opportunity to view the event on a mobile application (Dazed 2016). Thirdly, fashion media creates “new relationships between subjects (users and consumers) and media technologies”, i.e. practical style tips in magazines were transformed into online personal stylist mobile applications. Moreover, fashion embraces “new experiences of the relationship between embodiment, identity, and community”, i.e. fashion blogs embrace fashionable femininity, or as Bradford explains, give “guidance and inspiration on fashion and

beauty” (2015, 200). Lastly, fashion media creates “new patterns of organization and production”, i.e. fashion advertisements that comprised a considerable percentage of the magazine, were turned into the practical act of purchasing clothing over the Internet (Lister et al. 2009, 12-13). The proliferation of fashion media platforms has made the fashion industry omnipresent and accessible to the majority of society.

The above breakdown shows that fashion media have changed because of capitalism and a cumulative society’s demands on fashion (i.e. media can easily make readers into consumers or facilitate shopping experiences). According to Rocamora, “practices of fashion – practices of production, consumption, distribution and diffusion – are articulated through the media, and, more crucially, are dependent on the media for their articulation” (2016, 5). Overall, the fashion industry is strongly inter-twinning with the media and this relationship can’t be eliminated: fashion is too dependent on the very digital technologies that made it a significant part of society in the first place. Fashion media is changing together with processes in society that are influenced by economic, cultural and especially political factors that will be emphasized in further analysis.

In particular, fashion blogs have brought fashion media into a completely new dimension since they contain an idiosyncratic conception, which differs from other media platforms. Media scholars Kristina Sedeke and Payal Arora state that “the blogosphere has become a prime arena within which fashion consumers reside online, bringing to question who and what are the influencers within these new digital and cultural spaces in the fashion industry” (2013). The fashion blog is a form of the social network and feature of Web 2.0, which virtually connects people who aim to share fashion advice, provides useful information about up-to-date clothing tendencies and often emphasizes a consumerist approach to fashion.

According to Sedeke and Arora, “the radical change in communication allows users to participate, follow and discuss any trend and fashion news and purchase fashion items easily online. Fashion blogs are perceived as a *street of fashion*, as a source of authenticity and a display of the actual use of fashion by the general public” (2013). Hence, the main purpose of fashion blogs in their work is to extend the perception of the fashion industry by presenting up-to-the-minute posts, providing commentary on current fashion news, including the latest collections, and often advertising beauty products. Sedeke and Arora explain that fashion bloggers need to constantly follow the news in order to “be ahead of the fashion cycle” (2013). As Rocamora explains, “The short memory of blogs draws attention to the idea of temporality and the role of time in the definition of the blogosphere, and the fashion blogosphere in particular” (2012, 96). Hence, the temporality of fashion blogs’ posts reflects the impermanence

of fashion trends within capitalist context. In this particular case of fashion blogs, technology accelerates planned obsolescence, because the blog is constantly updated. Professor of Economics Jeremy Bulow defines “planned obsolescence” as “the production of good with uneconomically short useful lives so that customers will have to make repeat purchases” (1986, 729). Hence, fashion blog needs to be continually updated since the fashion tendencies are impermanent and constantly changing. According to political analyst and historian Thomas Frank, capitalism promotes the general idea of life and creates the illusion that one needs to purchase particular product, which is essential in order to improve one’s life or make oneself more beautiful, younger or *cooler* (1997). As Frank explains, “obsolescence found a new and more convincing language”, which creates “the disappearance of individualism” (1997, 13-14). Hence, fashion blogs accelerate consumer culture by creating needs as well as convincing that beauty and uniqueness can be achieved only by wearing a particular garment. However, planned obsolescence and mass-production actually create the boundaries for one’s self-expression and individuality. Furthermore, modern culture and politics, that are mainly based on capitalism, constructs notions about fashionable femininity. In this study, the term “fashionable femininity” means the conceptualizations of female sexuality as well as beauty that is emphasized and expressed through modern clothing and make-up. As professor and fashion researcher Jennifer Craik explains, fashionable femininity is “the ways in which bodies are fashioned through clothes; make-up and demeanor constitute identity, sexuality and social position” (2003, 45). On the one hand, fashion blogs shape cultural understandings of what it means to look like a successful woman in modern society. On the other hand, blogs make the beauty into product that woman needs to buy in order to become more beautiful and feminine, which shows that capitalism deliberately constructed the never-ending needs.

Overall, the latter discussion may raise the question: where do fashion magazines and fashion blogs stand today? Scholars of visual culture Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright state that “The way we rank media is based on where that medium stands in relation to older and newer media, and on cultural assumptions about the importance of various media and whether they are primarily oriented toward entertainment, news, or information” (2009, 156). Thus, it doesn’t mean that new media, which is based on technologies and the Internet, completely replaced the traditional media. For instance, the fashion magazine *Vogue* owns a website with constantly updated fashion news and videos. However, *Vogue* is mainly known as a legendary magazine, which has deep historical roots and still has a print run, so it can’t be replaced easily, even by new technologies. On the other hand, comparing fashion magazines and blogs overall, there are some apparent differences. As Rocamora explains, “the reader’s experience of the

text, here the magazine, is contained by its materiality, the limits of pages. The network of texts the magazine is inscribed in can be invoked but it can never be made fully present” (2012, 95). So to speak, the magazine has its own limitations: it is dependent on the number of pages and timing, so it can’t present up-to-date fashion news. In contrast, blogs are a constantly changing form of media, which reflect an ongoing presence of fashion. The posts are in a state of perpetual motion and, according to high-tech anthropologist Bonnie A. Nardi, “combine the immediacy of up-to-the-minute posts, latest first, with a strong sense of the author’s personality, passions, and point of view” (2004, 42).

Thus, according to Rocamora, fashion is a self-contained industry, which uses fashion blogs in order to reach the wider audience and create the perception of fashion *here and now*. She writes, “the flow of posts replicates the flow of goods, with the posts and goods of today promised to rapid take-over, out-fashioned by newer arrivals that freeze time, and fashion, online into a perpetual present” (Rocamora 2012, 97). Nowadays fashion blogs keep the industry on track, making it accessible basically everywhere. However, even though the blogosphere has the tendency to reach its readers and consumers rapidly, both media platforms – fashion magazines and fashion blogs – are beneficial to the fashion industry since they assist in spreading fashion news ubiquitously and contain an apparent consumerist approach.

2. Fashion media in Soviet and Independent Lithuania

During Soviet and Post-Soviet periods, Lithuania underwent deep cultural, technological and political transformations that have shaped the country’s fashion industry and media scene. According to Lithuanian communication theorists Natalija Mažeikienė and Kristina Juraitė,

The Soviet mass media was subordinated to the state ideology as its main instrument, enabling the state authorities to impose their propaganda and keep control over the population. [...] contemporary civil cultures and active public participation is being shaped by citizens’ memories of their media practices then and now (2014, 79).

Hence, section 2.1. represents the development of fashion in Soviet Lithuania (from 1940 to 1990) in order to gain a crucial knowledge of how the regime was controlling people’s self-expression through clothing in comparison to Western fashion, which, according to Frank, is currently based on capitalism and planned obsolescence. To be more specific, he states that modern society is “persuaded over and over again that the ‘alternatives’ are more valuable than the existing or the previous”, which means that people are often pressured into purchasing new products, or so-called “alternatives” (Frank 1993, 151). Section 2.2. covers the development of

fashion media in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania, including the main features of the cultural, social, and political changes since 1940. This part of the paper reflects that political changes had and still have more impact on Lithuania's society, the fashion industry and the formation of fashionable femininity. This section primarily demonstrates that politics has the power to control many spheres of everyday life, including fashion, especially when it is based on ubiquitous control and oppression.

2.1. A brief introduction to fashion and fashionable femininity in Soviet Lithuania

Janauskienė states that Soviet Lithuania's fashion industry was strictly controlled by the authorities and was used as a powerful tool for limiting people's personal freedom (2013). As fashion theorist Olga Vainshtein explains, "A particularly heightened awareness of individual differences in dress arose in reaction to the 'discipline' imposed by social dicta upon one's physical appearance" (1996, 66). Hence, the existence of the fashion industry during Soviet oppression in Lithuania is questionable since the regime was deliberately controlling people's dress and rejecting the Western position towards fashion. Janauskienė states that "Lithuanian fashion was changing in response to shifting processes of everyday life, so Western fashion trends were transformed and adjusted to the Soviet people" (2013). The following analysis demonstrates that Soviets were deliberately determining the fashion standards that consolidated the power of the regime, at the same time rejecting westernization and its liberal position towards fashionable clothing as well as free self-expression.

During the period of World War II, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which gave the green light for the Soviet army to invade the Baltic States. In June 1940, the Soviets occupied Lithuania. According to historian Egidijus Aleksandravičius, "the pact was a fatal and symbolic historical event which determined Lithuania's destiny and the nation's geopolitical future. This act not only caused the annihilation of the state of Lithuania, but also sent the fate of the nation, for fifty years, to a totalitarian prison" (2015, 560). Immediately after the occupation, the communists began the Sovietization of Lithuania. Aleksandravičius further explains that Soviets forced Lithuania to adopt their political system and traditions, as well as culture, in order to consolidate the regime (2015, 264). Hence, the Soviet Union was a huge mechanism, whose operation was dependent on people's obedience and homogeneity. According to Russian historian Larissa Zakharova,

In the Soviet context, as a result of the well-known tendency of the party-state apparatus to regiment everyday life, one cannot speak of fashion without reference to policy. Numerous mechanisms were employed to affect this

regimentation. One of them was rhetoric intended to manipulate and regulate material needs (2013, 403).

Hence, fashion was one of the aspects of daily life that was controlled by the authorities. Soviets were deliberately determining the fashion standards that consolidated the power and ubiquity of the regime. Only the government could decide, what kind of colour and model people were supposed to wear and how they were supposed to look. Vainshtein states that “A unitary aesthetic derived from the ideology of collective ‘leveling’ codified public behaviour, concepts of propriety, and thoroughly normative notions about beauty. For instance, precisely specified rules about colour coordination regulated people’s attire” (1996, 66). Soviet factories, that were producing mass clothing, were using specific colours, mostly shades of brown or grey. According to Janauskienė, such bland colours didn’t give an appealing appearance to clothing, so the fashion magazines, that were usually used as a tool of propaganda, tried to convince their readers that these shades reflect “delicacy and sophistication” (2013). Furthermore, Lithuanian Soviet fashion was centred on strict models and forms. Janauskienė explains that, unlike in Western countries, the word “fashion” in Soviet dictionaries wasn’t described as a constantly changing trend or a versatile industry, but as a specific, strict model or design (2013). Furthermore, the definition of “fashion” didn’t exist in official discourse until the 1970s, which reflects the authority’s purpose to conceal the awareness of fashionable clothing. Such notions put women in a complicated position: when dressing, they had to decide whether to adopt the Soviet reality and put themselves within the regime’s boundaries, or exclude themselves as exceptional individuals.

According to Janauskienė, the government in Soviet Lithuania prioritized gender equality and suppressed the idea of fashionable femininity (2013). As Vainshtein explains, “clothes had to correspond to place, time, and function; each person had to be clearly classified, and ideally, she had to represent her place in some group, whether it was based on age, gender, or social standing” (1996, 67). The words the author uses - surveillance, function, classified, represent – speak for themselves: official surveillance of the individual was reflected in clothing. Janauskienė states that the concept of fashionable femininity was controlled by the regime: clothes were supposed to correspond to specific functions (i.e. to protect the person from cold, rain or wind), but not to emphasize female beauty (2013). Sociologist Olga Gurova states that “in the context of media discourse the Soviet woman was considered primarily as a person, and after that as a woman” (2009, 78). Soviet women had to represent the *ideal* society, refusing their personal needs, taste for fashionable clothes and even femininity. For instance, *Tarybinė Moteris* tried to convince readers that sportswear looks good on everyone, regardless

of gender (Tarybinė Moteris 1983). The discipline of an ideology demanded that no one stand out from the masses: all pieces of clothing were created in order to equalize the people, and as a result, to deny the existence of fashionable femininity. Zakharova states the regime was even controlling the length of the dress: “The length of the item is what is most appropriate: covering the knee, and for the full-figured and elderly, 5-8 cm longer” (2013, 403). Because of such drastic restrictions, fashionable femininity was off-limits, reflecting an unrestricted display of power politics.

Soviet Lithuania’s fashion industry was strongly related to politics and the economy. Such scholars as Vainshtein and Janauskienė state that universal and modest clothing reflects the economic instability and political stagnation during Leonid Brezhnev’s rule in 1964-1982 (Vainshtein 1996; Janauskienė 2013). According to political historian Edwin Bacon, “Stagnation was seen to have taken hold across all spheres of public life. The Soviet economy slowed down, particularly when compared with Western Europe, and absolute declines in output became more frequent” (2002, 2). During aforesaid period, Soviet Lithuania had to undergo “the deficit”, which is a constant shortage of food and clothing. Janauskienė claims that “Concerning the poor economic and political situation, people were forced to learn, how to combine and adjust a poor selection of clothes to every season of the year” (2013). The Soviet Union tried to conceal its economic instability by dictating that everyone should wear modest clothes. Bartlett states that “Forced into the competition in everyday life cultures in which they lagged far behind the West, the socialist regimes suddenly had to try to produce their own version of socialist fashion” (2013, 48). All the mass clothing production was organized according to the authority’s economic plans, “within the hierarchically organized textile and clothing boards” (Bartlett 2013, 48). However, after Brezhnev was replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, the Lithuanian fashion industry became more independent. Janauskienė claims that changes in politics opened “broader opportunities to follow the tendencies of the Western world, to draw inspiration and to adopt democratic ideas on the topics of culture, music and fashion” (2013). Thus, the political changes eventually led to cultural and societal transformations, i.e. even though Lithuania was still restricted by the regime, the authorities lost its stronghold, so people were able to embrace the Western influence and culture more freely.

The Soviet Union was deliberately rejecting westernization and its liberal influence on the fashion industry. According to Bartlett, Cole and Rocamora, “socialism could not sartorially compete with Western fashion and certainly did not want to. It desperately needed ready-made models, which would be smart but would not challenge its slow concept of time” (2013, 48).

Hence, although Western fashion was based on a discourse of personal expression and freedom, trends in the Soviet Union were transformed according to the authority's requirements. However, even though fashion was comprehensively controlled, Lithuanians still tried to embrace Western fashion by wearing jeans. As Janauskienė notes, "denim clothing was considered not only as the symbol of freedom in all Baltic states, but also as a form of resistance against the Soviet regime" (2013). The authorities assumed that jeans were a harmful piece of clothing since they symbolized the freedom of Western countries and thus interfered with the formation of a utopian Soviet society. The regime tried to emphasize the creation of clothes by using the stated patterns to eliminate fashion as an uncontrolled process, which comes from Western countries. The previously mentioned features of Soviet fashion reflect a great contrast: Soviet fashion was based on communism and restrictions while Western fashion was (is) based on capitalism and planned obsolescence. Frank explains that capitalism encouraged people into constant purchasing, which "depends upon an eternal shifting of the products paraded before us, upon our being endlessly convinced that the new stuff is better than the old" (1993, 151). Thus, while the whole industry in Soviet Lithuania was constricted by ideology and economic instability, Western countries were rapidly producing easily accessible fashion, commensurate with consumerist ideologies of capitalism. Although Soviet Lithuania was experiencing a constant shortage of fashionable clothes, Western countries were embracing capitalism, which was (is) based on constant abundance, mass-production and constantly changing fashion trends. Although the previous discussion demonstrates that the fashion industry in Soviet Lithuania was mainly used as a tool for controlling people, the further investigation will show that Soviet Lithuanian women were still embracing their fashionable femininity by making their own clothes, which reflects their uninhibited desire to remain fashionable and unique despite political restrictions.

2.2. Lithuania's fashion media scene: from Soviet Union to Independence

Political forces powerfully influenced Lithuania's fashion media scene during the Soviet oppression. After the restoration of Independence in 1990, Post-Soviet Lithuania underwent various social, cultural and political transformations that affected the fashion industry. Lithuanian designers, stylists and fashionistas began to use new media as a development strategy. Hence, both political and technological aspects assist in shaping Lithuania's fashion industry: while the technological changes have created a convenient approach to Lithuania's fashion industry and accelerated its further development, political and

cultural transformations were and still are shaping the perception of fashion and fashionable femininity.

Media in Soviet Lithuania was strictly controlled by the authorities. The archival material of the Soviet Union, which was collected by Lithuanian historians Juozapas Romualdas Bagušauskas and Arūnas Streikus, indicates that “all press must be created in order to help governmental agitators and propagandists” (2005). They further explain that all forms of media – magazines, newspapers, publishing offices, radio, television – were controlled and censored by the central censorship institution called *Glavlit* (2005). Mažeikienė and Juraitė state that “The Soviet media system was subordinated to the state ideology, becoming its main instrument and enabling the state authorities to impose its propaganda and political control over the population” (2014, 80). According to Bagušauskas and Streikus, *Glavlit* aimed to prevent the regime from “ideological distortions and errors. [...] the most essential element of the regime was pre-censorship, which had multiple stages. Each publisher had to collect three separate forms of permission from the censor in order to collect, print and distribute the publication” (2005). As a result, Soviet Lithuania’s media scene was censored according to the authority’s demands, a process that verified its ubiquitous power and helped comprehensively manipulate people. On the other hand, every oppression unconsciously creates opposition, or so-called civil disobedience, and Soviet Lithuania was no exception. According to philosopher and political scientist Gražina Miniotaitė, civil disobedience “is emphasizing the priority of moral equality and individual freedom over other political values” (2008, 67). Lithuanians’ civil disobedience took many different forms and one of them was resistance through media. According to historian Živilė Račkauskaitė, “different underground organisations united in the 1970s, forming a national opposition and focusing on the survival of Lithuania. At the end of the 1980s, it became a national movement with its underground publications and an organisation united by the ideas of nationalism” (1998). Hence, the further analysis of *Tarybinė Moteris* will show that passive resistance was also apparent in Lithuanian fashion magazines during the 1980s.

The aforementioned dictation towards media didn’t bypass fashion magazines that were censored by the government or were used as a tool of propaganda. Soviet Lithuania’s fashion industry was publishing such fashion journals as *Banga* or *Tarybinė Moteris*, but they had to undergo pre-censorship. Lithuanian designer Dalia Jurginienė, who was writing articles for *Tarybinė Moteris*, explains that

During the Soviet occupation, the magazine was strictly controlled by the authority. I wrote the article about miniskirts and finished it with the sentence:

Mini won't do any harm and maybe in some situations will assist you. When the magazine was published, I was searching for that sentence, but I couldn't find it. It turns out that the sentence appeared too harmful for the authority (Marajovienė 2013).

The above reflection demonstrates the government's fear of losing control over the citizens: every sentence that encouraged liberalism and democracy in fashion magazines was eliminated. Gurova states that "women's magazines were the medium by which the State wrote its ideology as text on the surface of women's bodies" (2009, 78). Hence, The Moscow House of Models was publishing the magazine *Zhurnal Mod*, which was indicating the main "fashion" tendencies in the Soviet Union: determining or "recommending" the strict models that fit everyone or, as Janauskienė explains, "helping to choose a universal set of clothes, which can be combined with each other by changing the minimum additional details" (2013). All texts in Lithuanian fashion magazines were written "in an authoritarian way", considering *Zhurnal mod* as an example (Gurova 2009, 78). Janauskienė explains that magazines were using persuasive language and repetitive rhetoric in order to persuade people to wear modest and unexceptional clothes (2013). Vainshtein claims that "'modesty' was encouraged in the framework of an ideology of collectivism – discipline demanded that one not stand out from the masses" (1996, 71). Hence, the aforesaid analysis supports the fact that fashion was characterized as a strict model or design, and that the "recommendations" in magazines reflect the authority's rejection of fashion, transforming it into an insignificant feature of a "perfect" socialist society.

As mentioned in section 2.1., Soviet Lithuania was suffering the deficiency during Brezhnev's rule. During this period, fashion magazines were propagating functionality and modesty in clothing. The magazines were suggesting that their readers should make their own clothes, supplementing the articles with sartorial patterns (Janauskienė 2013). However, even though the latter point reflects the constant shortage of clothing, the suggestion to make their own clothes raises a significant question: maybe Soviet Lithuanian women were creating their own fashion perception and their clothing was actually more unique in comparison to Western fashion? To be more specific, the deficiency induced Soviet women to embrace their creativity in order to become fashionable. Additional patterns in fashion magazines reflect Soviet women's needs to remain fashionable and unique despite political oppression. According to Lithuanian designer Jolanta Talaikytė, "There was the sewing workshop in Vilnius, where professional seamstress could tailor the garment to one's requirements. [...] There were a lot of people who wanted to redesign a modest cloth to the fashionable one" (Urbaitytė 2015). As a former tailor of sewing workshop Valė Trečiokienė explains, "women were often coming with sewing patterns taken from fashion magazines, wishing to have the same or at least similar

fashionable garment” (Urbaitytė 2015). Hence, the above points demonstrate that Lithuanian women were still trying to find the way how to embrace their fashionable femininity and uniqueness despite authorities control. Even though government aimed to equalize the people, it received opposite consequences: women were creating their own fashion perception and their clothes were probably even more exceptional than Western women’s. To be more specific, Western fashion was (is) suggesting fashion tendencies that were (are) mainly mass-produced, so the idiosyncrasy in liberal women’s clothing becomes controversial. Although Western women had and still have an opportunity to purchase clothes and beauty products, they are actually constrained by capitalism, which stimulates a never-ending buying in order to become fashionable and “unique”. Overall, although fashion magazines in Soviet Lithuania underwent strict restrictions and were often used as a tool of propaganda, some of them were still encouraging their readers to remain fashionable by making their own clothes.

After the Restoration of Independence in 1990, Post-Soviet Lithuania had to take persistent steps to arise from the Soviet Union’s remains. Lithuania had to abolish omnipresent censorship, liberate the right to self-expression, and create a strong basis for the rise and development of new media. Mažeikienė and Juraitė state that

In the post-Soviet context, propaganda-driven media have disappeared, replaced by a neo-liberal media market. To ensure media freedom and pluralism, a rather liberal legislative framework and professional standards have been adopted, following the Western democratic media model (2014, 81).

Nowadays Lithuania embraces various media forms – from traditional to new media – and provides a beneficial environment for individual’s self-expression. Hence, the fashion industry became an independent field that developed its own media scene, which is oriented towards market demands. According to specialists in creative industries Jūratė Černevičiūtė and Viktorija Žilinskaitė, “media culture is becoming the dominant power of socialization, which creates new identification models and a lasting presence of style, fashion and behavior” (2009, 204). Thus, fashion media is used as an approach to information consumption and as a tool for socialization. Lithuanian fashion media is based on technologies and digital culture, which means that the fashion industry mainly uses new media platforms, such as social networks *Facebook* or *Twitter*, online websites and fashion blogs.

While talking about new media in Lithuania, public relations specialists Auksė Balčytienė, Aušra Vinciūnienė and Lina Auškalnienė claim that

Interactive technological developments, supported with economic models of small-scale online funding, and the development of online media and

blogosphere, are actually leading to the formation of completely new audience groups, new social movements, and new virtual formations (2012, 67).

Hence, the prevailing capitalism and the ubiquity of fashion media have already created a strong basis for consumerism and often emphasize a consumerist approach. To be more specific, online advertising is a dominant feature in Lithuanian fashion media: in one click, the reader can become a consumer. For instance, online fashion platform *StiliuSOS* provides an online service, which helps people to facilitate personal shopping and to form their own style (StiliuSOS 2016). The website provides an opportunity to shop directly from their website. On the one hand, it facilitates consumers shopping practices and helps to cope with difficulties in forming personal style, creating a virtual bond between the reader, stylist and media. On the other hand, it also may encourage impulsive purchasing, which is a common phenomenon in capitalist society. Such ambivalence of fashion media is inevitable within the context of capitalism: the fashion industry is based on selling and advertising, and it is oriented towards a potential consumer. This situation shows that even though technology provides a convenient approach to the fashion industry, the industry itself is mainly based on prevalent capitalism and consumerism that uses new media to its own benefit.

Overall, the previous analysis reflects a strong contrast between two different periods of fashion media in Lithuania. Although all media forms were suppressed during the Soviet occupation, nowadays the Lithuanian fashion media scene embraces ubiquitous technologies that help to emphasize the need of fashion in social and cultural contexts. Technology strongly assists in accelerating the fashion industry's further development and it facilitates accessibility to an omnipresent fashion world. During Soviet oppression, technology helped to spread fashion ideas that were either affected by power politics, which was transforming them into practically worthless information, or inspired women to make their own clothes in order to emphasize their fashionable femininity. In contrast, modern technologies in Independent Lithuania assist in the awareness of worldwide fashion trends *here and now*. The fashion industry is also affected by the modern political situation, which is based on capitalism, planned obsolescence, and mass-production that create needs and form perceptions of fashionable femininity and beauty.

3. Methodology

According to Barthes, fashion and its media are “part of a real social ritual”, which translates a specific meaning and has a capability to encompass cultural, political and technological changes (2006, 21). The main purpose of this study is to show the collision

between media, fashion and politics by analysing the headlines and images of *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS*. In order to analyse the latter media sections beyond their direct meaning, this paper uses semiotics as a method. This approach assists in demonstrating how the media technologies, as well as words and images themselves, together signify political meanings. Technology creates a convenient approach to the fashion industry and accelerates its further development, but political transformations more visibly influence the perception of fashion and fashionable femininity.

Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of sign, signified and signifier shaped the core of semiotics, which states that "all human communication is a display of signs, something of a text to be read" (Manning, and Cullum-Swan 1994, 466). While talking about the essence of signs in everyday life, de Saussure claims that "we shall throw new light on the facts and point up the need for including them in a science of semiology and explaining them by its laws" (1916, 17). Although semiotics is a broad discipline that involves various methodological tools, this Master's thesis specifically encompasses the approach from Barthes' perspective. Barthes states that basically everything that surrounds us has meaning since "every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, to appropriation by society" (1972, 107). The author analyses the whole fashion system from a semiotic perspective. In his analysis, garments can be reflected through image (fashion photography or drawing, or so called "image-clothing") and language ("written garment"). Barthes claims that "in principle these two garments refer to the same reality [...], and yet they do not have the same structure" (1967, 40). It means that each garment is made from different "substances" that create a different structure and perception of reality (Barthes 1967, 40). Barthes mainly focuses on the relationship between signified and signifier and studies not the actual clothing, but elements and descriptions in fashion magazines (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993, 108). Signified and signifier create a "tri-dimensional pattern", which couldn't exist without the sign (Barthes 1972, 113). The sign is what we actually see; the signifier is the form; the signified is the concept (Barthes 1972, 111). So to speak, fashion media creates non-verbal communication, which is open to interpretation. According to Gaines, "people use media for their own purposes and generally do not think critically about the persuasive nature of repetitive images and ideas that become normal because they are familiar" (2010, 15). Thus, semiotics helps to reveal the significance of images beyond their direct meaning and to reflect the coherence between sign, words and visual representation in fashion media.

Barthes proposed the whole semiotic system, which describes fashion and its peculiarities. The fashion system gives a whole new meaning and dimension to the clothing

industry. Hence, the specifics of semiotic analysis correspond with the purpose of this study: to analyse the headlines and images in a fashion magazine and blog, beyond their direct meaning. Furthermore, this study argues that politics has a more significant impact on society and the fashion industry than technological aspects. In this case study, the semiotic method helps to investigate political content, which is in the words and images themselves. Therefore, the following sections will outline the main arguments as well as the strengths and limitations of the semiotic approach.

3.1. Justification of the corpus: *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS*

The primary research question of this study is how do transformations between the framing of fashionable femininity in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* headlines and images reflect larger political and technological changes in Post-Soviet Lithuania's society and fashion industry? This study is oriented towards women's fashion and its media since the major part of the fashion industry is based on women needs and perception of fashionable femininity that are constantly influenced by societal, political and cultural alterations. Hence, in order to research the aforementioned aspects, the paper as its corpus used a former Lithuanian magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and an online fashion blog *StiliuSOS*. The author of this study analysed the headlines and images of these media platforms. Although the content itself provides the reader with significant information, the previously mentioned sections contain specific signs, language and symbols that reflect a more profound meaning, which contains "a whole system of values" (Barthes 1972, 116). Furthermore, Barthes states that "the structure of the photograph is not an isolated structure; it is in communication with at least one other structure, namely the text – title, caption or article – accompanying every press photograph" (1977, 16). Hence, the author of this paper analysed the headlines and images that reflect an incessant sequence of technological and particularly political changes in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuanian society and the fashion industry. The headlines that were used in this study were translated from the Lithuanian language by the author.

Since *Tarybinė Moteris* was re-introduced in 1952 under Soviet control and reflects different technological, cultural and political aspects in comparison with modern new media, this magazine was chosen as the research material. Barthes states that "by studying the clothing in magazines, it is possible to study a state of fashion without having to cut it artificially" (1967, 8). *Tarybinė Moteris* is a printed magazine, which was published during a very specific period of Lithuanian history, which was Soviet occupation. During this period, the fashion industry and its media were restricted and effected by the regime, which had a visible effect on the

creation of fashionable femininity. *Tarybinė moteris* was a monthly magazine, published from 1952 to 1990. The author of this paper chose to analyse the headlines and images of three articles that were published in the 1980s: “What’s new in the world of fashion in the 1980s?” (January), “For graduation evening” (April) and “Classic suits” (October). However, all the magazines couldn’t be analysed thoroughly due to their large content, so only specific sources were chosen for a more comprehensive analysis. The specific headlines and images were selected since they reflect the apparent political situation during the 1980s, which was economic deficiency and political stagnation during Brezhnev’s rule. As Janauskienė explains,

Even though the existence of fashion in Soviet Union receives a lot of skepticism because of a post-war, repressions, and especially prevailing deficiency, but with the joint efforts of scholars it was proved that the existence of ‘Soviet fashion’ was a genuine historical reality (2013).

Hence, the main purpose of this study is to analyse whether the headlines and images of the magazines reflect technological, economic, political, and cultural transformations in Lithuanian society. In contrast to the *Tarybinė Moteris* magazine, *StiliuSOS* was chosen as a reflection of Lithuania’s new media scene. As mentioned before, the platform contains various features: consultations from professional stylists who assist in creating a person’s individual style, online shopping, fashion news, and a fashion blog. Again, the whole fashion platform can’t be analysed thoroughly due to its large content, so the author chose to analyse the *StiliuSOS* fashion blog, which provides up-to-date fashion advice, discusses the recent trends, and gives information about the modern fashion industry. The author of this paper analysed the headlines and images of three posts from 2016: “Shop till You Drop? No!” (June), “Swimsuit – it’s not your enemy, it’s your best friend” (July) and “Madame has arrived. Beautiful, but covered in salad” (March). These particular headlines and images from 2016 were chosen since they demonstrate the newest fashion tendencies in Lithuania’s fashion industry. Furthermore, these sections of the blog’s posts may reflect the political and technological changes in Independent Lithuanian society and the fashion industry in comparison with Soviet Lithuania.

StiliuSOS is the most appropriate comparison for *Tarybinė Moteris* since both media platforms cover the same subject, which is the fashion industry. The blog and the magazine are published in sequential segments: *Tarybinė Moteris* had monthly issues while *StiliuSOS* posts are renewed basically every day. Moreover, both media platforms contain images that demonstrate distinct fashion tendencies that reflect cultural and political aspects during particular time periods in Lithuania. *StiliuSOS* and *Tarybinė Moteris* are significant parts of Lithuania’s media culture, reflecting the different political and social positions towards women.

Modern Lithuanian women have unrestricted freedom to form their own style and embrace fashionable femininity, which is in stark contrast to constricted Soviet women who didn't have the same amount of options related to the formation of fashionable femininity.

3.2. Semiotic analysis: strengths and limitations

In order to answer the main research question, semiotic analysis was used as a method. This particular approach was chosen since it helps to analyse the coherence between signs, words and visual representation in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* headlines and images. Hence, this study aims to investigate political content in the words and images themselves. According to Gaines, "Recognizing communication processes and strategies prepares people to understand media, make better use of its strengths, and cope with its effects and influence. Semiotic analysis and media literacy prepare the way for improved understanding and social discourse" (2010, 33). Hence, *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* headlines and images comprise of various signs that create the signification of cultural, economic, and political transformations in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. For example, looking from Barthes perspective, every element in semiotics has more than one meaning (Barthes 1972). For instance, images in the chosen media platforms reflect not only a captured moment, but also signify the structural and cultural meaning. The words and images themselves supplement each other and build the signification that reflect political and technological transformations during the specific time periods in Lithuania. In this particular study, semiotics assisted in analysing the chosen headlines and images beyond their direct meaning. So to speak, aforesaid sections of articles are comprised of specific structure, concept and words that build the signification, which may not be visible on the surface, but actually reflect the continuity of political discourse and technological transformations. However, this study has its own limitations. The limitation of this research is mainly its scale. The paper analysed only a limited number of *Tarybinė moteris* magazines and *StiliuSOS* posts. In order to gain a more explicit perspective about the possible political and technological changes in Post-Soviet Lithuanian society and the fashion industry, the author of the paper would have to compare all the headlines of aforesaid media platforms or more fashion magazines and blogs would have to be included. Furthermore, semiotic analysis cannot comment on actual reader behavior, the direct effect on audiences or the thoughts and intentions of the authors, it can only research signs and signs systems, words and visual representation.

4. Results

The following sections provide the results of this study. Section 4.1. presents political and technological reflections as well as transformations on the former magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and fashion blog *StiliuSOS*. Section 4.2. reflects the perception of fashionable femininity in these media platforms. The further analysis demonstrates that *Tarybinė Moteris* reflect the main political tendencies in the 1980s: the prevailing deficiency and political stagnation, a peculiar civil disobedience and restrictions over Lithuanian women's self-expression. *Tarybinė Moteris* could be used for two main reasons: as a tool of propaganda or as a tool of resistance against the Soviet regime. Even though Soviet Union was constantly rejecting women's self-expression through clothing, Lithuanian women were still trying to embrace their fashionable femininity by making their own clothes. The aforesaid point signifies that Soviet Lithuanian women's apparel were more individual and unique in comparison with Western fashion. In contrast, *StiliuSOS* reflects that an uninhibited freedom to purchase in capitalist society sometimes needs to be guided by fashion media. Even though the blog exalts its concern related to women's style formation, the following analysis shows that it is also centered around clothing promotion, which reflects prevailing capitalism and ubiquitous consumerism in Post-Soviet Lithuania. On the one hand, the headlines and images demonstrate that *StiliuSOS* inspires women to embrace their fashionable femininity despite their physical appearance and imperfections. On the other hand, the results show that the blog encourages to improve one's beauty and appearance through clothing and express the self through consumerism.

4.1. Political and technological reflections

Images and headlines from *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* give a possible reflection on political and technological transformations. The headline "What's new in the world of fashion in the 1980s?" in *Tarybinė Moteris* sends a denoted message about fashion tendencies all over the world, creating the image of a universal magazine.¹ The connoted message transmits a different reality, which is related to the political situation during Soviet oppression. The discussion about fashion trends during Brezhnev's rule in the 1980s may seem ironic: the prevailing deficiency in Soviet Lithuania withdrew the possibility to follow the world's fashion trends and especially to embody them. Since Lithuanian Soviet fashion was centered on strict models and forms, manufacturers had to constantly limit themselves by producing

¹ "Kas nauja madų pasaulyje 1980?" *Tarybinė Moteris*, January 1980.

unexceptional clothes from poor local supplies. It seems that the headline deliberately attempted to hide this oppression by giving the impression of freedom: here are the newest fashion trends that you, the reader, are free to embrace. On the other hand, the headline may reflect a completely different truth. To be more clear, “What’s new in the world of fashion in the 1980s?” signifies a bold statement: it doesn’t matter that Soviet Lithuania is in the midst of a shortage in supplies, women still deserve to emphasize their fashionable femininity and embrace fashion behind the curtain. Moreover, the intrepidity to write about global fashion can be related to a peculiar civil disobedience against power politics. As such the headline reflects some elements of counter-propaganda. Public writing about global fashion, when the country is suppressed by the regime, signifies a form of resistance, which, according to media scholar Modestas Grigaliūnas, is “communicated in the public space” (2010, 62). Hence, a resistance movement during the 1980s and Lithuania’s aspiration for freedom could encourage the magazine to write about liberal Western fashion.

Furthermore, the headline is supplemented with an image, which only partially supports the text (see Figure 1). The image denotes the vision of a global fashion, which comprises modern clothing trends: a specific cut of clothes (i.e. coat with bouffant sleeves or draped dresses), delicate accessories (i.e. clutch bag, scarf, petit hat, and a tie), variety of fabrics (i.e. silky dresses) and heavy make-up.



Figure 1. “What’s new in the world of fashion in the 1980s?” Source: *Tarybinė Moteris*. January 1980. Author’s screenshot.

At the connotative level, the image signifies the variety of clothing options that women are free to choose in democratic Western countries. The image could be used as an impulse to Soviet women to embrace Western fashion and acknowledge it beyond the boundaries of the regime, since it reflects more diverse and fashionable clothing in comparison with modest and strict Soviet garments. The photograph communicates women's confidence, which is reflected through fierce posing, i.e. placing the hand on the hip or carelessly holding it in one's pocket. Hence, the image could be an inspiration for constrained Lithuanian women since it demonstrates the self-awareness of liberal women toward the camera. Overall, both headline and image "refer to the same reality" since they are oriented towards Western fashion, which builds the signification of the social unrest (Barthes 1967, 40). People were dissatisfied with political restrictions that eventually caused the resistance movement, which reflects in the fashion industry and its media. The printed magazine presents aesthetics of fashionable clothing that create a clear perception of Western fashion. It tentatively demonstrates the regard for Western culture, which is a direct opposite of the ubiquitous regime.

In contrast, the headlines and images of fashion blog *StiliuSOS* reflect political transformations and shifting cultural values in modern Lithuania's fashion industry and society. The country had to overcome a complicated economic and political imbalance after the Restoration of Independence. The following image and headline "Shop till You Drop? No!" depicts how the economic deficiency and political oppression turned into a liberal society, which adopted Western culture and its perception of fashion (see Figure 2).



Shop Til You Drop?

No!

Agnė Kulitaitė

Figure 2. "Shop till You Drop? No!" Source: *StiliuSOS*. June 2016. Author's screenshot.

The first and the most essential sign in the image is an opened shopping bag with the eloquent phrase “We miss you already,” which at the denotative level depicts the fashion industry’s sentiments towards its consumers. However, the image reflects a different dimension of meaning and power of connotation in the context of a consumerist approach. First of all, for Barthes, the image contains the message, whose “substance is linguistic” (Barthes 1997). An opened bag may signify the fashion industry’s openness to its potential client, which is supplemented with a welcoming and pleasant phrase. The pronouns “we” and “you” create the feeling of commonness and closeness. In order to read those signs, the reader needs to have knowledge of contemporary fashion industry and its politics towards consumers. Western fashion is mainly based on capitalism and planned obsolescence, when consumers are strongly encouraged to purchase freely and often even carelessly. Hence, since the industry is dependent on consumerism, the image may be created to attract attention by manipulating one’s feelings. For example, a tempting phrase “We miss you already” inside the shopping bag may catch a reader’s attention and may get one to keep coming back as well as make repeat purchases. Hence, such manipulation through the words and images may help to turn the reader into a consumer.

Even though the image might attempt to change the reader’s position towards fashion, the headline “Shop till You Drop? No!” creates an opposite meaning. The headline denies a main concept of capitalism: people shouldn’t trust fashion advertisements unconditionally. To be more precise, the headline “Shop till You Drop” is a prevailing phrase in the fashion industry, which encourages people toward limitless purchasing. An instant denial “No!” signifies the rejection of irresponsible buying. All consumers have free will to choose wisely and to use consumerism to their own benefit, which is the main sign of a liberal society. According to Mažeikienė and Juraitė, women are free to develop their competence in “creating, participating and interacting in the media environment to practice one’s democratic rights and responsibilities” (2014, 84). Overall, the earlier analysis demonstrates that the headline and the image in the same post can have different meanings. Even though the image creates the signification of planned obsolescence through linguistic substance (an appealing phrase inside the shopping bag), the headline makes an opposite statement, which can be understood as a rejection towards irresponsible purchasing. *StiliuSOS* indicates that “we do not aim to sell as much as possible – we want you to choose the clothing, which looks amazing specifically on you” (StiliuSOS 2016). Hence, the aforesaid headline reflects discourses of the blog: to contribute to the creation of fashionable femininity, at the same time placing itself to a taste maker position. To be more specific, the blog creates the impression that women aren’t able to

choose and buy their own clothes, so they need that professionals take over those functions for them. This way fashion blog helps to decide, which particular cloth the consumer should purchase in order to become more beautiful or “unique”. Thus, this way *StiliuSOS* is placing itself between the consumer and the market.

Hence, the previous analysis reflects apparent political and technological changes in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. Figure 1 not only demonstrates political and economic stagnation during Brezhnev’s rule, but it also signifies that a former magazine could be used as a tool of resistance against the regime. The latter point partly denies the fact that women’s fashion magazines during the Soviet oppression were mainly used only as a medium for controlling people. The idea of “fashion and its magazines as a tool of propaganda” was discussed amongst such scholars as Janauskienė, Gurova and Vainshtein (Vainshtein 1996; Gurova 2009; Janauskienė 2013). However, the previous results demonstrate that certain writers and editors in Soviet Lithuania were possibly using the fashion industry and the magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* as a bold statement against political oppression by giving readers a rare chance to familiarize themselves with Western fashion. Hence, this specific finding demonstrates that little attention has been paid to the Lithuanian fashion media scene during the Soviet oppression. Nowadays the main discussions amongst scholars are centred around Soviet fashion magazines or Soviet fashion industry itself. Lithuania’s Soviet fashion and its media are mainly considered as the tool of propaganda or as a completely restricted part of everyday life. However, the previous analysis demonstrates that Soviet fashion magazines can be researched from different perspectives and may reflect a more diverse reality.

Soviet Lithuania’s fashion magazines can be understood from various perspectives that reflect political processes in society and the fashion industry. Hence, the previous analysis of the headlines and images of *Tarybinė Moteris* show that print media was still able to make the statement against the regime despite its thorough control – it wasn’t used only as a tool for satisfying the authority’s demands. In contrast, Post-Soviet Lithuania’s fashion blog *StiliuSOS* may try to discourage women from unnecessary abundance since modern fashion industry creates an unlimited selection of clothing. The headline “Shop till You Drop? No!” signifies capitalist society: women must control themselves and not give in to careless purchasing, which is in great contrast to a constant Soviet deficiency. The above points reflect how the political situation can affect and transform the fashion industry and its media: from being a constrained part of Soviet society, which despite restrictions, tries to make statements and give at least a slight chance to understand fashion tendencies behind the curtain, to a free-standing industry, which provides a countless number of clothing options. The *StiliuSOS* headline demonstrates

that an uninhibited freedom to purchase in fashion stores sometimes needs to be guided by modern fashion media. Although *StiliuSOS* may create the impression that it helps readers to not get lost in the fashion industry, it actually transforms such guidance into commodity, which puts the blog into taste maker's position. Aforesaid points signify an exceptional tendency in Lithuania's fashion industry: Soviet women's rights towards fashion were restricted by the omnipresent regime while today's women's desires need to be guided by fashion media platforms.

Some of the images and headlines of *Tarybinė Moteris* reflect a clothing deficiency and the prevailing perception of fashion in Soviet Lithuania. The magazine, published in April 1980, includes the article "For graduation evening," which is supplemented with a fashion sketch instead of fashion photography (see Figure 3).²



Figure 3. "For graduation evening." Source: *Tarybinė Moteris*. April 1980. Author's screenshot.

First of all, one may notice that the headline "For graduation evening" doesn't provide comprehensive information. As Barthes explains, "the image freezes an endless number of possibilities [whereas] words determine a single certainty" (2006, 153). The text selects from the image's many possible connotations to emphasize one interpretation. Although it may seem that the headline only explains what kind of information the reader can expect in a further article, the words themselves still have connotations. A direct reference to "graduation evening"

² "Išleistuvių vakarui." *Tarybinė Moteris*, March 1980.

demonstrates that Soviet women's clothing was strictly classified and had to respond to the specific occasion and time. As Vainshtein explains,

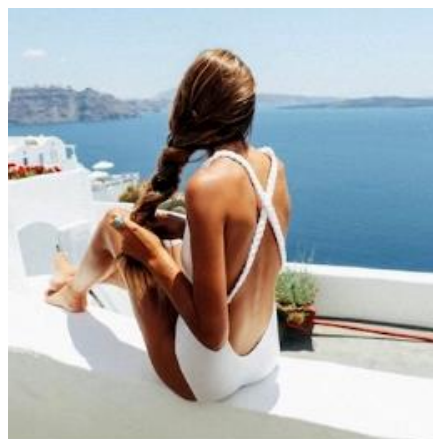
Vestimentary specificity had great significance for official surveillance over the individual: clothes had to correspond to place, time, and function; each person had to be clearly classified, and ideally, she had to represent her place in some group, whether it was based on age, gender, or social standing (1996, 67).

Hence, the headline creates the meaning that a specific garment can be used only *for graduation evening* and it isn't suitable for any other occasions. Such control of women's clothing reflects the authorities' requirements to fit into the frames of a perfect society. Yet, the picture denotes five different types of dresses for graduation evening, which conceals a more profound signification. On the surface, it may seem that all the dresses are completely different, but upon looking closer, one may notice that their cut, style, length, and shapes are identical. The dresses are only defined by their additional accessories – belts, tassels, embroidery – that are the main sign of the image's political implication. The authority's rejection of consumerism and the economic stagnation during Brezhnev's rule required Lithuanian women to embrace their creativity in order to improve their clothes by adding some exceptional details. The sketch reflects how the same dress can be transformed into many different styles by using needlework and additional, home-made accessories. The dresses reflect practicality and functionality: long sleeves could be easily cut off, so the dress, which was designed for autumn/winter seasons, later could be worn during spring/summer seasons.

The latter points signify that women were forced to learn, how to “adjust a poor selection of clothes to every season of the year” (Janauskienė 2013). Although the sketch reflects modest, probably mass-produced dresses, it still attempts to embrace Soviet women's fashion sense. The image signifies that despite the political and economic instability, Lithuanian women were encouraged to remain fashionable. Furthermore, the “do it yourself” tendency can be noticed in the entire *Tarybinė Moteris* magazine. To be more specific, the magazine was suggesting women to make their own clothes, supplementing the articles with sartorial patterns (the additional patterns can be found in Appendix 1). Hence, ten monthly magazines (out of twelve), that were published in the 1980s, contained additional images that instruct readers on how to make their own garments. In Barthes' terms, such images can be considered as “a mechanical analogue of reality,” because they are comprised of various signs, that create the signification in political, historical and cultural contexts (Barthes 1977, 18). The magazine's suggestion to make your own clothes signifies the authority's rejection of the fashion industry. However, even though the regime was constantly exalting modesty in clothing and didn't provide people

with a proper amount of clothing, such printed media as *Tarybinė Moteris* tried to encourage women to overcome political restrictions and embrace fashion by wearing homemade clothes.

While *Tarybinė Moteris* demonstrates Soviet Lithuanian women's practice of making their own clothes, the fashion blog *StiliuSOS* signifies an indisputable significance of fashion in independent Post-Soviet women's life. The further image and headline "Swimsuit – it's not your enemy, it's your best friend" demonstrates the significance of swimwear in modern women's lives (see Figure 4).³



**Maudymosi
kostiumėlis - ne
priešas, o geriausias
draugas**

Monika Repčytė

Figure 4. "A swimsuit – it's not your enemy, it's your best friend." Source: *StiliuSOS*. July 2016. Author's screenshot.

At the denotative level, the image depicts a woman who is wearing a white swimsuit. The swimsuit is a signifier, which takes the attention away from all the details around it. The viewer can only see a young woman's back; her hair is braided and doesn't cover the garment, so the whole attention goes to the swimwear and its idiosyncratic details in the back. At the connotative level, an undivided attention to swimwear signifies the main politics of the modern fashion industry: in order to advertise the garment, it must become significant and noticeable – other factors, such as model or surroundings, are just subsidiary. Such undivided attention to the swimwear signifies that the contemporary fashion industry is based on a consumerist approach: by proposing a "perfect" image of the cloth, the reader may be induced to purchase a similar piece of apparel. The headline "A swimsuit – it's not your enemy, it's your best friend"

³ "Maudymosi kostiumėlis – ne priešas, o geriausias draugas." *StiliuSOS*, July 2016.

only partly supplements the image. One may notice that the “written clothing” is based on personification (Barthes 1967). Such words as “enemy” or “best friend” may build an implied relation between the reader and the cloth. A swimsuit is often considered a risky piece of clothing since it highlights potential imperfections of women’s bodies. Personification may create the impression that a well-chosen swimsuit can become one’s favorite apparel, or, as the fashion blog claims, “your best friend”. Such cohesion between clothes and women seem like encouragement to embrace one’s fashionable femininity despite their physical appearance and possible imperfections. On the other hand, the headline may encourage women to improve their beauty and exalt their fashionable femininity through a specific piece of clothing and express the self through consumerism. Hence, the previous analysis demonstrates that both headline and image create an appealing and convincing presentation of a swimsuit that may help to expand the market. For example, in order to make the cloth a desirable product, the fashion industry needs to exalt it, make it noticeable and suggest that *it’s your best friend*.

Attention to the garment signifies Lithuania’s transformed position and politics towards fashion. *StiliuSOS* claims that the main purpose of its platform is to help women to solve the issues related to their personal style (StiliuSOS 2016). However, the above image demonstrates that the stated purpose of *StiliuSOS* may differ from its actual intentions. Even though the platform exalts its concern related to women’s style formation, the previous analysis shows that it is also centered on clothing promotion, which reflects capitalism and ubiquitous consumerism. On the other hand, the fashion industry couldn’t exist without its potential reader/client, so such politics by *StiliuSOS* is comprehensible. However, the fashion blog emphasizes the need to improve one’s appearance through clothing, which creates the pressure of perfection through compulsory sexiness. Such a position may create the impression that the blog tries to keep its balance between readers’ needs and consumerism, which brings a tangible benefit to the whole *StiliuSOS* platform. The latter points reflect a great contrast to *Tarybinė Moteris*, which strived to keep up with fashion trends that were adjusted to the political and economic situation. Hence, the perception of fashion has visibly changed: from being a restricted part of everyday life in Soviet Lithuania to consumer-based industry in Post-Soviet Lithuania.

The previous analysis also reflects technological transformations in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuanian society and the fashion industry. Both media platforms reflect the coherence between sign, words and visual representation. However, the printed magazine and online fashion blog demonstrate apparent technological differences. *Tarybinė Moteris* was a printed medium, which has never been fully present. For instance, the magazine was presenting fashion

tendencies only once a month, while the online blog provides up-to-the-minute posts, because a digital environment helps to keep them in permanent movement. The blog reflects an ongoing presence of fashion while a monthly magazine was dependent on timing. Hence, *StiliuSOS* distances itself from the printed medium. The fashion blog is a digital medium, which creates “new relationships between subjects (users and consumers) and media technologies” (Lister et al. 2009, 12). *StiliuSOS* creates a virtual bond between Lithuanian women and the fashion industry. Even though *StiliuSOS* doesn’t use hyperlinks that direct the reader to online shopping, the medium still includes some features of a consumerist approach. For instance, Figure 2 and Figure 4 reflect that the fashion blog is based on visual representations, or so-called digital images, that may affect reader’s actions and experiences. So to speak, the appealing images may form the reader’s impression of fashion and fashionable femininity as well as stimulate them to purchase the same garment. In contrast, *Tarybinė Moteris* was based on fashion photography, which provided a slight chance to visually observe fashion tendencies “on real bodies”, although the black and white printing technique limits thorough comprehension of fashion (Snodgrass 2015, 454). However, even though technology has been assisting in creating a beneficial environment and new possibilities for the fashion industry, the previous analysis of headlines and images shows that political changes had more apparent influence on society and the fashion industry than technological transformations.

The headlines and images of *StiliuSOS* and *Tarybinė Moteris* contain signs and symbols that reflect larger political and technological transformations as well as prevailing cultural values in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. The headlines and images of fashion blog *StiliuSOS* from June and July represent the indisputable significance of fashion in Post-Soviet Lithuanian society and remain distant from political, technological and aesthetic aspects that were reflected in the images and headlines of *Tarybinė Moteris* in the period of 1980.

4.2. The perception of fashionable femininity

The previous analysis indicates that *Tarybinė Moteris* possibly encouraged Lithuanian Soviet women to embrace their fashionable femininity by proposing Western clothing trends as well as suggesting that they make their own clothes, since the regime was rejecting the fashion industry. These latter points reflect that despite oppression, fashion was still considered as a powerful tool to express femininity in Soviet Lithuania. As mentioned in the previous analysis, ten out of twelve magazines in the period of 1980 proposed sartorial patterns that contain “technological origin” (Barthes 1976). This means that additional patterns instructed how to make a specific cloth (i.e. suit, swimwear or wedding dress) by using a common model and

measurements. On the one hand, a constant suggestion to make their own clothes demonstrates women's position in social structure: they weren't considered as exceptional individuals. Additional patterns create the meaning that the regime didn't provide Soviet women with fashionable clothes, which reflects suppression towards the fashion industry as well as commercial femininity in Soviet Lithuania. On the other hand, patterns signify that women's clothes were more individual and exceptional in comparison with Western fashion. Liberal women had unrestricted freedom to choose what they can and especially what they *want* to wear. However, Western fashion was mainly based on mass-production, which creates homogeneity amongst women. In contrast, prevailing deficiency induced Soviet women to embrace their own creativity in order to become fashionable. One may notice that *Tarybinė Moteris* was proposing strict models and forms, without any exceptional details or suggestions on fabric choice – the final result was dependent on women's personal creativity. Hence, even though the Soviet ideology demanded that people not stand out from the masses and become equal despite their gender, the magazine also reflects the opposite tendency. Soviet women strived to reject the omnipresent regulations of the regime and emphasize their fashionable femininity by making their own clothes.

During the research process it was noticed that *Tarybinė Moteris* was still proposing clothing that corresponded to the authority's demands in many respects. The further headline "Classic suits" and image create the sign that the aforesaid media platform was still proposing that its readers wear modest and universal clothes that the Soviet Union was constantly exalting (see Figure 5, page 37).⁴ On the surface, the headline "Classic suits" provides the reader with basic information. However, the adjective "classic" contains a latent message. The word often refers to a conventional shape and an established model. Hence, Soviet Lithuania's fashion industry was based on simplicity, universality and gender equalization. The magazine's headline "Classic suits" coincided with the authority's politics: to make all the people equal by deliberately suggesting *old classics* and disapproving of the need to emphasize femininity. Furthermore, the headline is supplemented with black and white photography. In this particular case, image clothing and written garment "refer to the same reality" (Barthes 1967, 40). The image complements the headline at both denotative and connotative levels. The picture comprises three separate photographs that denote women who are wearing classic suits. Hence, the image connotes universal apparel, which is suitable for *everyone*. Oversized and modest suit jackets build a shapeless silhouette, which hides the feminine figure and one's sexuality.

⁴ "Klasikiniai kostiumėliai." *Tarybinė Moteris*, October 1980.



Figure 5. “Classic suits.” Source: *Tarybinė Moteris*. October 1980. Author’s screenshot.

These factors build the signification that fashionable femininity, which was prevalent in Western society during the twentieth century, was strictly constrained by the authority throughout media in Soviet Lithuania. Furthermore, a strict model of suit denies the “fashionable body” and creates the meaning of constrained self-expression (Barthes 1967, 260).

In contrast, *StiliuSOS* signifies a different perspective on fashionable femininity in Post-Soviet Lithuania, which is reflected in the image and the headline “Madame has arrived. Beautiful, but covered in salad” (see Figure 6, page 38).⁵ The headline contains an ironic and even humorous tone, which reflects unrestrained fashion media’s politics towards women. The word *Madame* is mainly used as a form of polite address, which draws a respectful position towards women. The second part of the headline, which is “Beautiful, but covered in salad,” is in strong contrast to the word *Madame*. The joke in the headline “covered in salad” may signify women’s slight imperfections that they often like to exaggerate, even though they are beautiful despite their weaknesses. *StiliuSOS* may use a humorous tone in order to make their imperfections look insignificant, which may help to enhance their self-confidence.

⁵ “Madam parėjo. Graži, tik aplipusi mišraine.” *StiliuSOS*, March 2016.



Madam parėjo. Graži, tik aplipusi mišrainė

Agnė Jagelavičiūtė

Figure 6. “Madame has arrived. Beautiful, but covered in salad.” Source: *StiliuSOS*. March 2016. Author’s screenshot.

Hence, the whole headline signifies that modern Lithuanian women have a reputable position in modern society. It creates the impression that they aren’t pressured to embrace their fashionable femininity all the time: their beauty is truly valued despite imperfections.

However, the headline may have many different interpretations since it is dependent on the content: one may understand it precisely only after reading the whole post. The image provides a more profound and eloquent perception of fashionable femininity in modern Lithuania’s fashion industry and society. The image is comprised of four different photographs that at the denotative level depict four forms of different clothing: t-shirt, full cap, trainers and model on the catwalk who is wearing a gold skirt and blouse with puffed sleeves. Barthes states that fashion “<...> marks the relation between mass culture and its consumers: the Woman of Fashion is simultaneously what the reader is and what she dreams of being” (1967, 261). In this particular case, each photograph contains signs that create the meaning, which is related to modern women’s self-expression and fashionable femininity. The inscriptions on the shirt (“Sorry, can’t. I have to walk my unicorn”) and full cap (“Because I want to”) transmit a latent message. These garments in the image connote that modern Lithuanian women are free to make the statement and perceive their position in society through clothing. The inscriptions on the shirt and full cap signify that women can make their own choices and communicate them to the society through apparel. Hence, all four photographs are related to each other. The models on the catwalk generally represent an invisible bond between the fashion industry and women, and

may encourage readers to embrace fashionable femininity. The images also signify that a specific statement can be made through clothes and branding: from wearing a shirt or full cap with ironic inscriptions to embracing *Adidas* trainers. Barthes states that photograph transmits “a modification of reality itself” (1977a, 21). The image reflects that a prevalent notion of self-expression and democracy ensure that independent Lithuanian women can construct their identity, femininity and sexuality through fashion. The picture signifies that women’s position in society changed because of cultural circumstances and transformed perceptions of fashion. On the other hand, the previous analysis shows that capitalism creates not only an option, but also an obligation to express oneself through consumerism. According to Sturken and Cartwright,

Images are a central aspect of commodity culture and of consumer societies dependent upon the constant production and consumption of goods in order to function. Such advertising images are central to the construction of cultural ideas about lifestyle, self-image, self-improvement, and glamour” (2009, 189).

Hence, the aforesaid authors’ position can be referred to postmodernism: *StiliuSOS* shows that body can be easily transformed through clothing or branding. Capitalist ideology forms the perception that in order to construct an exceptional self-image, one may need to buy a particular garment that “helps” to make the statement. Hence, modern Lithuanian women are encouraged to purchase fashionable apparel since the self-expression through clothing is understood as the normalized behavior in capitalist society.

The previous analysis demonstrates that headlines and images in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* potentially contribute to shaping the perception of fashion and fashionable femininity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. The femininity and self-expression of Soviet Lithuanian women was limited by the authorities. Soviet women had to represent the *ideal* society by wearing modest clothes that equalized them and hide their femininity. In contrast, *StiliuSOS* demonstrates a completely different perception of fashionable femininity in Independent Lithuania. Although modern Lithuanian women can choose whether to embrace their fashionable femininity or to reject it by constituting their identity and sexuality, their decisions are still dependent on consumerism. So to speak, capitalism creates an obligation to express oneself through a specific piece of clothing.

5. Discussion

Lithuania's fashion media platforms, such as fashion magazine *Tarybinė Moteris* and online fashion blog *StiliuSOS*, are a beneficial test case for the political changes in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania's society and the fashion industry. According to Barthes,

The meaning loses its value but keeps its life. [...] it will be for the form like an instantaneous reserve of history, which it is possible to call and dismiss in a sort of rapid alternation: the form must constantly be able to be rooted again in the meaning and to get there what nature it needs for its nutriment and it must be able to hide there (1972, 117).

Hence, it may seem that the images and headlines of *Tarybinė Moteris* have lost their value since they don't have a direct influence on modern Lithuanian women, but the previous sections still transmit the signification in political as well as cultural discourses. The transformations in modern Lithuania's fashion industry and society become more visible and tangible when they are compared with historical alterations. In this particular case, *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* reflect the specific time periods: Lithuania during Soviet oppression and modern Independent Lithuania. Both the magazine and the blog contain the signs and symbols that offers the signification, which assists in understanding the reality and its transformations. Furthermore, both media platforms also help to produce readers' understanding of fashion.

The semiotic approach assisted in observing the political and technological changes that are reflected in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS*. The main purpose of this study was to answer the main research question: how do transformations between the framing of fashionable femininity in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* headlines and images reflect larger political and technological changes in Post-Soviet Lithuania's society and fashion industry? Thus, the headlines and images from January, April and October publications of *Tarybinė Moteris* reflect larger political changes during Brezhnev's rule in the period of 1980. The aforesaid sections reveal specific political and economic events as well as factors that were constructing Soviet Lithuania's society and the fashion industry: the prevailing deficiency and political stagnation, a peculiar civil disobedience against power politics and the resistance movement during the 1980s, control and restrictions over women's self-expression through fashionable clothing. The findings show that *Tarybinė Moteris* could be used for two main reasons: as a tool of propaganda, which was controlled by the authority or as a tool of resistance against the Soviet regime. Only a few elements signified that *Tarybinė Moteris* was dependent on the authorities and could be used as the mechanism of control against fashion as well as Lithuanian women. The analysis shows that the authority was rejecting the fashion industry as well as Western liberty by proposing universal clothing. Furthermore, Soviet women's clothing was strictly

classified and dependent on a specific occasion and time, which reflects the authority's requirements to fit into the frames of a *perfect* society.

A repetitive tendency, which was reflected on *Tarybinė Moteris* images and headlines, was economic deficiency during the 1980s. The suggestion to make their own clothes and emphasizing the importance of additional accessories demonstrates a constant shortage of fashionable clothing during Soviet oppression. On the other hand, additional patterns create the meaning that Soviet women's clothes could be more exceptional than mass-produced Western women's clothes. Hence, even though the regime didn't consider Soviet women as exceptional individuals and as a significant part of the society, Lithuanian women were rejecting such authority's notion by creating their own perception of fashion and fashionable femininity. Furthermore, a more comprehensive analysis of the headline "What's new in the world of fashion in the 1980s?" led to an essential finding of this study: *Tarybinė Moteris* could be used as a tool of resistance against the Soviet regime. The headline can be related to a peculiar civil disobedience against power politics and the resistance movement during the 1980s. Lithuania's aspiration for freedom could encourage the magazine to write about liberal Western fashion and show that Soviet women also have the right to embrace their fashionable femininity, despite an omnipresent Soviet control and restrictions. This result of the research denies the prevalent notion among academics like Janauskienė, Gurova and Vainshtein (Vainshtein 1996; Gurova 2009; Janauskienė 2013) that Soviet fashion magazines were comprehensively controlled by the authority – they also could be used as the statement on freedom and as a tool of resistance.

In contrast, the headlines and images in *StiliuSOS* demonstrate larger political transformations in Post-Lithuania's society and the fashion industry. The previous analysis shows that the online blog only partially embodies its stated purpose, which is to help women to solve the issues related to their personal style (StiliuSOS 2016). *StiliuSOS* may encourage women to embrace their fashionable femininity despite their imperfections or to emphasize their femininity by wearing a specific garment. Modern Lithuanian women can make the statement and perceive their sexuality, individuality and position in society through clothing. Furthermore, Lithuanian women's desires need to be guided by fashion media platforms in order to help them choose wisely. However, the aforesaid points put the blog into controversial position: the indicated politics of *StiliuSOS* may differ from its actual intentions. The blog may try to help women to choose clothing responsibly, but at the same time it may encourage them to purchase considering *StiliuSOS'* advices. That demonstrates that the blog is also based on a consumerist approach and capitalism. Modern fashion industry aims to manipulate women's feelings by using appealing advertisements in order to sell a specific product, which shows that

capitalism doesn't serve needs, but creates them. Hence, the blog may try to convince its consumer not to spend less *money*, but to spend less *time* searching for suitable garment and spend more on what precisely *StiliuSOS* recommends. Such notion puts the blog into taste maker's position, which creates a huge power within capitalism. Lithuanian women need to be guided by professional stylists and pay for *StiliuSOS*' services, which makes fashion judgement into a commodity. So to speak, they not only need to pay for a new apparel, but also for advice. Moreover, *StiliuSOS* may create the need to form a unique style and embrace fashionable femininity. For instance, Figure 4 (see page 33) and Figure 6 (see page 37) signify that women can enhance their femininity and uniqueness by wearing specific garment. Hence, the capitalism forms the notion that beauty can be achieved only by using a specific product that you, the reader, need to purchase. Overall, prevailing capitalism in Lithuania forms a new perception of fashion: an unlimited selection of clothing assists in forming Lithuanian women's fashion sense and embracing fashionable femininity, at the same time putting them in a complicated position while choosing a suitable garment. The aforesaid findings show that an opportunity to purchase in fashion stores sometimes needs to be guided by current fashion media. *StiliuSOS* helps to decide, which particular cloth the consumer should purchase in order to become more beautiful. Thus, this way *StiliuSOS* is placing itself between the potential consumer and the market, at the same time creating an obligation to express fashionable femininity through consumerism.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the media technologies, as well as words and images themselves, together signify political meanings. Hence, the main transformations in fashion and the fashion industry are mainly related to a former (Soviet Lithuania) and prevalent (Independent Lithuania) political situation. However, technology contributed in creating a more convenient approach to fashion industry as well as accelerating its further development. The results show that Lithuania's political transformations were affecting the fashion industry incessantly. Overall, the transformations between the framing of fashionable femininity on *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* demonstrate that the economic deficiency and political oppression in Soviet Lithuania have eventually turned into liberal society with free market capitalist notions about fashion and women's self-expression.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that fashion media and the fashion industry itself can be used as a beneficial research material in analysing political and societal processes. According to Lemire, "fashion as a catalyst of material change, as a visible sign of distinction, has a complex

past and an equally dynamic and contentious present” (2010, 1). Hence, during Soviet oppression, Lithuania had to overcome cultural, social, political, and technological restrictions that were shaping the fashion industry and women’s perception about the fashionable femininity. Even though the regime aimed to control all spheres of everyday life, Lithuanians have always found the way to fight back and fashion was a significant part of a silent resistance. The liberation of the country led the fashion industry to a capitalistic environment that transformed women’s perception towards clothing: fashion media can easily turn the reader into a consumer by suggesting a wide range of clothing options. Hence, while the whole industry in Soviet Lithuania was experiencing a constant shortage of fashionable clothes and was constricted by the ideology as well as economic instability, a modern Lithuania is producing a fast and easily accessible fashion, which is based on commodified self-expression, mass-production and constantly changing fashion trends.

Soviets used a wide range of methods that helped to control Lithuania’s fashion industry and its media while modern Lithuanian fashion is based on capitalism and planned obsolescence. Hence, some significant details might be unperceived in this thesis, so the study field still remains extremely broad. Since the discussions about Lithuania’s fashion industry through political perspectives are really vague, this study can be considered as a slight introduction to a future research papers. In order to gain a complete perspective of societal, political and technological transformations in Lithuania’s society and the fashion industry, one would have to compare all the headlines and images in *Tarybinė Moteris* and *StiliuSOS* or more fashion magazines and blogs would have to be included. Since Soviet oppression continued for fifty years, one could investigate in more detail how did other periods (i.e. Gorbachev rule) of occupation influenced Lithuania’s fashion industry. Furthermore, in order to extend an ongoing academic debate, the articles in aforesaid media platforms could be investigated since they provide the significant information, which can’t be seen in the headlines and images themselves.

This study raises a number of implications for future research in fashion and media scene. As mentioned before, more research is necessary to elaborate findings of this study. For a further research, one may investigate in a more profound basis that Soviet women’s clothes were more exceptional and individual in comparison with Western fashion, which is mainly based on mass-production and planned obsolescence. Furthermore, this study is mainly oriented towards the content of fashion magazine and the blog that reflect political meaning. Hence, the research could be extended in more detail how specifically media technologies affected the development and spread of Lithuania’s fashion industry throughout centuries.

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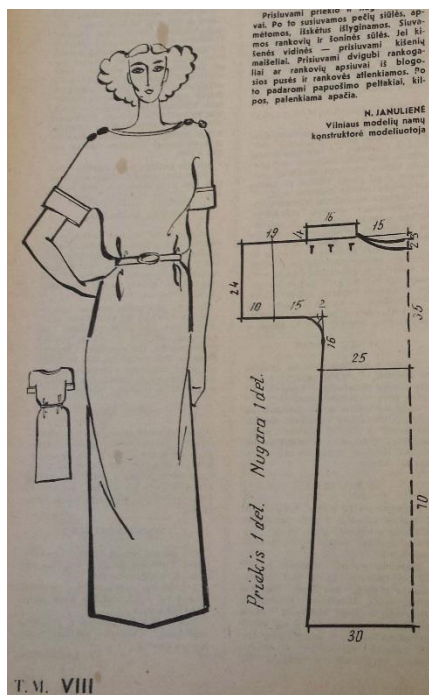
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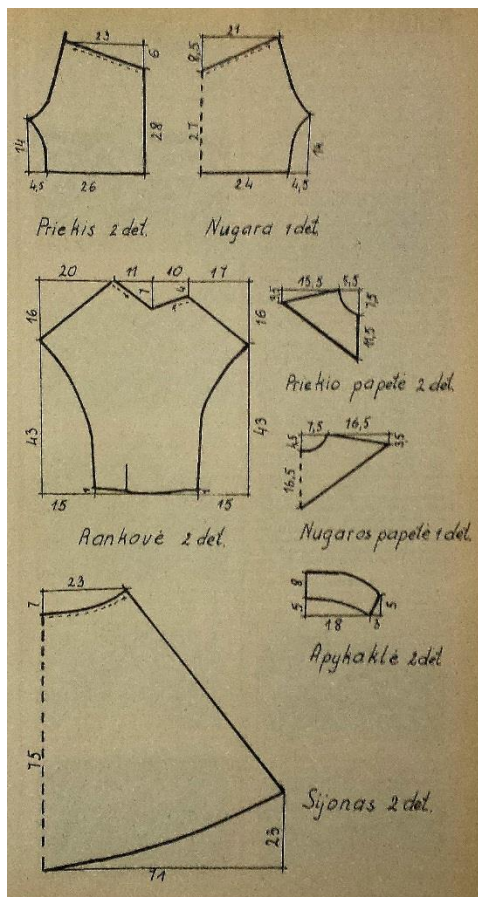
- Figure 1. “What’s new in the world of fashion in the 1980s?” Source: *Tarybinė Moteris*. January 1980.
- Figure 2. “Shop till You Drop? No!” Source: *StiliuSOS*. June 2016.
- Figure 3. “For graduation evening.” Source: *Tarybinė Moteris*. April 1980.
- Figure 4. “Swimsuit – it’s not your enemy, it’s your best friend.” Source: *StiliuSOS*. July 2016.
- Figure 5. “Classic suits.” Source: *Tarybinė Moteris*. October 1980.
- Figure 6. “Madame has arrived. Beautiful, but covered in salad” Source: *StiliuSOS*. March 2016.

Appendix 1: Additional sartorial patterns on *Tarybinė Moteris*

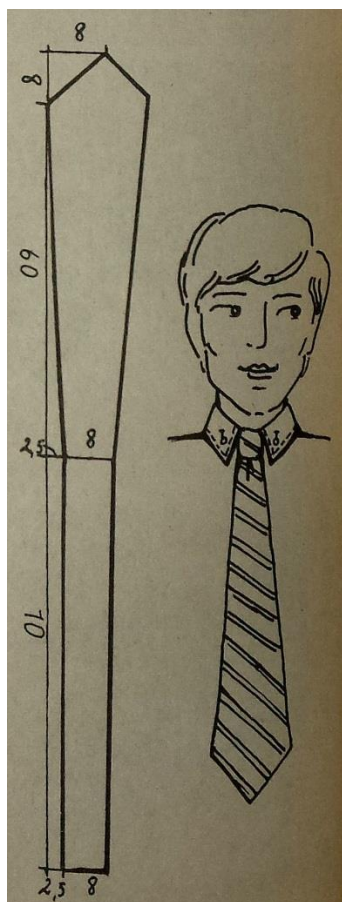
1. “Sarafan from a knitted fabric” (Sarafan pattern, March 1980)



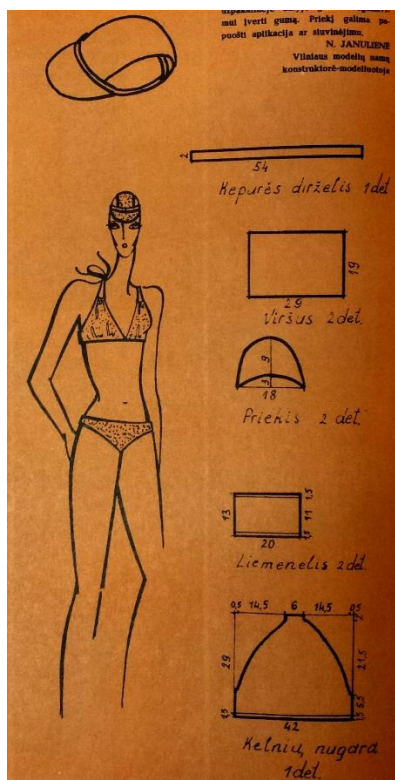
2. “For graduation evening” (Graduation dress pattern, April 1980)



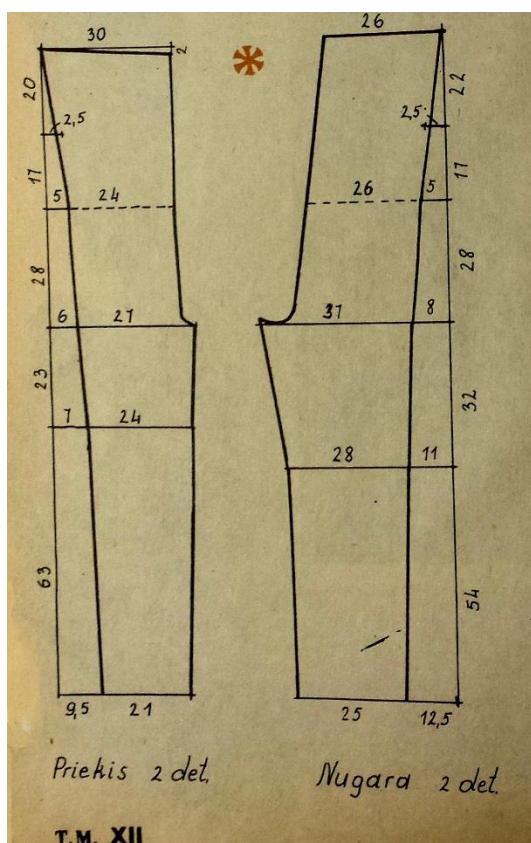
3. "This time about men" (Tie pattern, May 1980)



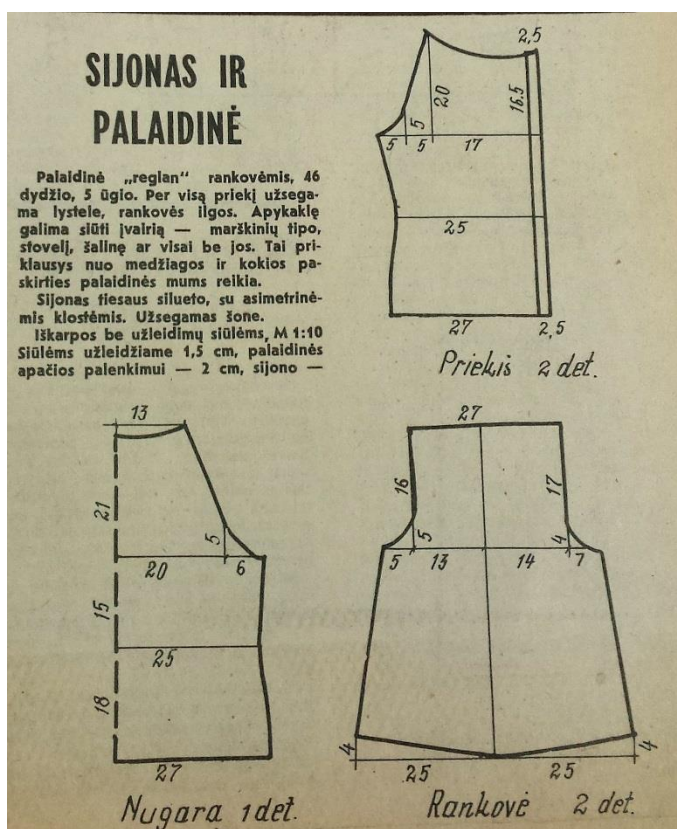
4. "For vacation and holidays" (Swimsuit pattern, June 1980)



5. "For youth – more imagination!" (Dungaree pattern, July 1980)



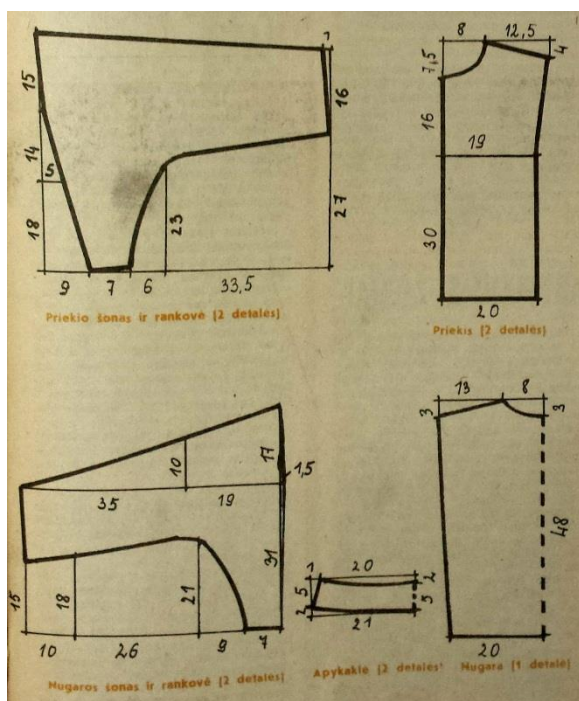
6. "Classic suits" (Suit pattern, August 1980)



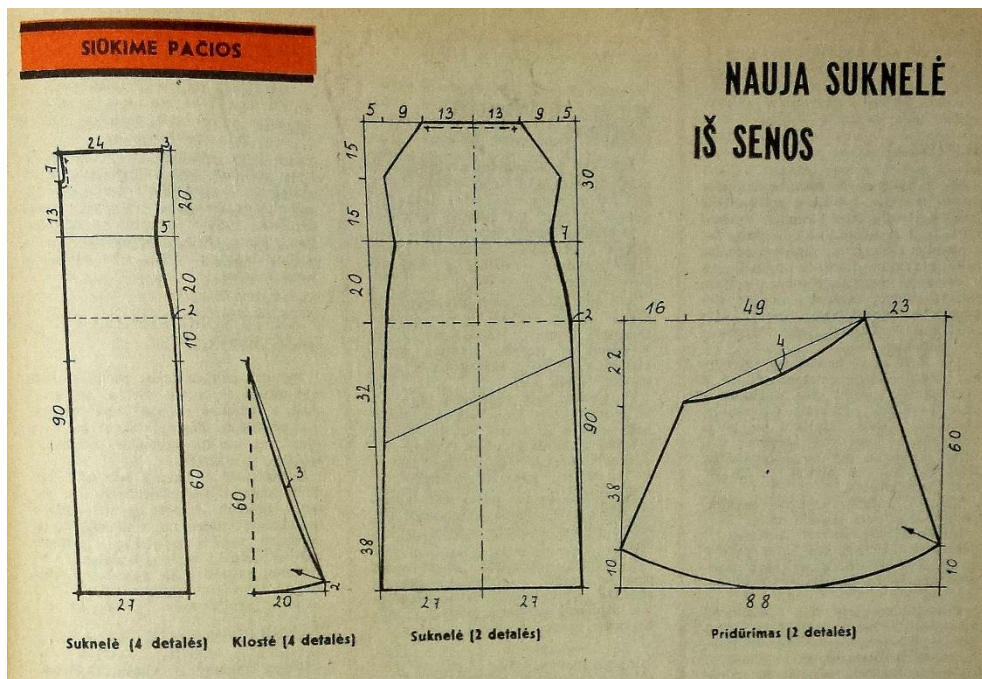
7. "Wedding attire" (Wedding dress pattern, September 1980)



8. "Jumpers, jumpers" (Jumper pattern, October 1980)



9. "New Year's Eve Party is coming" (How to make a new dress from an old one, November 1980)



10. "How to dress a full-figured body" (Blouse pattern, December 1980)

