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## **DESIGN AND DEVELOP A GENDER-FLUID FASHION COLLECTION FOR SRI LANKAN MARKET, INSPIRING SAINT BASIL'S CATHEDRAL, MOSCOW**

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This research project aimed to promote gender inclusivity and diversity in the fashion industry in Sri Lanka by creating clothing designs suitable for individuals who do not identify with traditional gender binaries. The project involved selecting appropriate fabrics, creating patterns, prototyping and making adjustments to ensure the final pieces fit well and are comfortable to wear. The project prioritizes the cultural and social context of Sri Lanka and has had a significant impact on the gender fluid clothing preference community in Sri Lanka. It has created new opportunities for local designers and manufacturers to explore gender fluid clothing design and production, potentially opening up new markets and revenue streams. It has provided a much-needed platform for gender fluid individuals to express themselves through clothing, and has helped to raise awareness about different identities and the importance of inclusive and diverse representation in the fashion industry. The project has also created new opportunities for local clothing designers and manufacturers to explore gender fluid clothing design and production, potentially opening up new markets and revenue streams for the industry.

The project's recommendations for further action include expanding its reach through collaborations with local designers, manufacturers, and retailers, and advocating for greater inclusivity and diversity in the fashion industry. In conclusion, the gender fluid clothing project in Sri Lanka is an inspiring and innovative initiative that has made significant strides towards creating a more inclusive and diverse fashion industry as well as providing a safe and empowering space for gender fluid individuals to express themselves through clothing. Through its design principles, guidelines and collaborations, the project has helped to reshape the landscape of gender expression in Sri Lanka and beyond, and serves as a powerful example of the transformative potential of inclusive and equitable design.

Keywords: Gender fluid clothing, Sri Lanka, Gender expression

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**INTRODUCTION**

The title of the research project is Living la Vida Rebel, also known as living a rebellious life; and it is a gender fluid ready to wear clothing collection for people who are interested in gender fluid clothes of age between 25 to 35 years from Sri Lanka.

Gender fluid is a term used to describe people whose gender identity does not fit exclusively into the categories of male or female. Gender fluid people may identify themselves as a combination of genders are not concerned about their gender or have no gender at all. Gender fluid often experience discrimination and marginalization, and may face challenges when it comes to accessing gender-specific resources and services.

Gender fluid clothing, designed for gender-neutral, allows non-binary individuals to express their gender identity and preferences, breaking down gender stereotypes and promoting inclusivity towards clothes. The project was borne out of the realization that there is a lack of inclusive and diverse clothing options for gender fluid clothing preferences individual in Sri Lanka, leading to feelings of exclusion and discomfort.

This project explores the issues faced by individuals in relation to fashion, focusing on gender fluid and societal issues. Fashion stereotypes, which are not based on written materials but are influenced by designer and consumer choices, culture and the society, can be divided into many categories. Gender-based clothing stereotypes can confine individuals and hinder their ability to make their own life decisions. Society also expects people to dress according to their assigned gender, leading to gender binary clothing stereotypes. Breaking these stereotypes is crucial for individuals to express themselves as individuals and break the societal norms surrounding fashion. This abstract will provide an overview of the project's objectives, methods, results and recommendations.

The objective of this study is to investigate the opportunities and challenges of creating and promoting gender fluid clothes in Sri Lanka, and to explore the potential social and economic impacts of such clothing on individuals and communities. Also, this project aims to promote gender inclusivity and diversity in the fashion world in Sri Lanka.

**METHODOLOGY**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Details</b>
Issue	Challenges faced by gender fluid individuals in finding suitable clothing, especially in traditional societies.
Purpose	Provide solutions to the lack of gender fluid clothing options in Sri Lanka by researching trends, seasons, product requirements, and future predictions.
Problem Statement	Lack of clothing options for gender fluid individuals leads to discomfort and dysphoria, negatively impacting mental health and well-being.
Future Fashion	Increasing acceptance of gender fluid fashion. Gen Z and millennials challenge traditional gender roles. Notable examples: Harry Styles, Jaden Smith. Mainstream designers adopting gender-neutral fashion.
Season	Focus on Spring/Summer 2024, targeting the Sri Lankan market.
Customer Research	Target: 25-35-year-olds in Sri Lanka. New concept locally. Methods: surveys and consultations with celebrities/influencers.
Trend Research	Spring 2023 trends: Crop jacket suits, straight-leg pants and skirts, Bermudashorts, tailored jackets, asymmetric fashion.



Product Research	Emphasis on gender identity and expression. Increase in gender-neutral ready-to-wear clothing. Importance of removing labels and embracing individuality in fashion.
Brand Research	Example: Louis Vuitton. High-end, luxury brand. Marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion. SWOT analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.
Materials and Equipment	Required for project: Fabrics, sewing machine, cutting tools, measuring tools, thread, needles, closures (buttons, zippers), patterns, mannequins, labels, workspace with good lighting and ventilation, computer/design software.



(a) Close look of St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow (b) Concept board for fashion collection

Figure 01: idea development for the collection

(Kessler, 2024), (Ekyp), (Zetlaoui, 2023), (Klerk, 2024), (Becker, 2023), (harvard Health Publishing, 03), (Columinst, 2021), (Sanders, 2019), (Robinson, 2023),

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In terms of results, the project has had a significant impact on the gender fluid clothing preference community in Sri Lanka. It has provided a much-needed platform for gender fluid individuals to express themselves through clothing, and has helped to raise awareness about different identities and the importance of inclusive and diverse representation in the fashion industry. The project has also created new opportunities for local clothing designers and manufacturers to explore gender fluid clothing design and production, potentially opening up new markets and revenue streams for the industry.

Figure 02 shows the fashion illustrations of six developed designs and Figure 03 shows the final appearance of all six designs in different views. Below given a description for each design in detail.

Look (a), after researching trends for SS24 gender fluid clothing, this silhouette was developed and colours and print were developed using an inspiration analysis and concept developments. This was made out of polyester as shell fabric and 100% cotton jersey as lining. The garment is heavy, yet super comfortable to wear all day long. The contrast print gives the wearer a highlighted throughout the occasion.

Look (b) silhouette was designed mixed with trend research for the Louis Vuitton brand and inspiration concept development. That all over print gives a vibe to the wearer and the collar, pocket details as it highlights the garment through-out the wearing period. Look (c) print is developed with inspiration. This two piece set was connected together and the skirt pleating details mixed with the skirt print made the garment stand out. This is really a simple silhouette, yet it stands out from the crowd because of the small details.

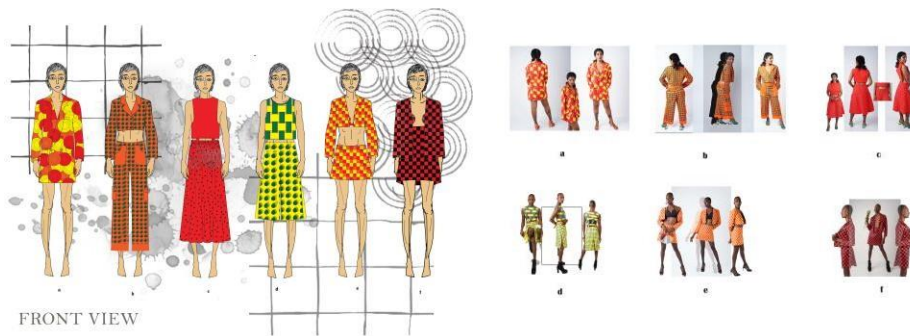


Figure 02: Front view of six selected fashion illustrations

Figure 03: Photos of the final out look of six designs of live modeling performance

Look (d) was created using the inspiration concept development and connected the two silhouette together as one. The top part was plain weave and was connected by stitched and mixed with two colourlines. The bottom part was a simple aligned print with the same two colours connecting the top with bottom as one piece. This skirt slit was given a comfortable vibe yet good looks to the wearer.

Look (e) is a three piece set that was inspired by trend research and concept development. This crop top with bralette to complete the look with a mini skirt gives the wearer a confidence to stand out in a crowd as themselves. Look (f) is a two piece set inspired by trend research and inspiration concept developments. This dress is connected to the body by loops and covers the breast-chest with a small piece of fabric and a jacket to complete the look. This light weight 100% polyester outfit gives the wearer real comfort during the wearing period. Those checkerboard colour print make the wearer stand out during any event as truly themselves.

All the garments are prepared to the unisex size chart and can be made to fit into any figure type. All these looks were inspired by trend research, Louise Vuitton brand research for gender fluid and by inspiration concept development. All the colours are from inspiration and match the Louise Vuitton brand ss24 colours and the ss24 colours.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, the project recommends expanding its reach through collaborations with local designers, manufacturers, and retailers, and engaging with the gender fluid community in Sri Lanka. Additionally, it urges continued advocacy for inclusivity and diversity in the fashion industry, both locally and globally, to create a more equitable world for all individuals, regardless of gender identity or expression.

The gender fluid clothing project in Sri Lanka is an innovative initiative that has made significant strides towards a more inclusive and diverse fashion industry, providing a safe space for gender fluid individuals. The project's design principles and collaborations have reshaped gender expression in Sri Lanka and beyond, demonstrating the transformative potential of inclusive design. According to market research conducted via google forms, key findings include: 49% of respondents were aged 26-30, 10% identified as gender fluid, and 36% earned more than 60,000 lkr per month. Many participants consider themselves fashion enthusiasts, and most describe their fashion choices as modern, with some willing to experiment. The survey also indicated that many respondents can afford branded clothing and follow fashion brands on social media. Additionally, most respondents prefer bright-coloured clothing, aligning with the project's inspiration from St. Basil's Cathedral and the pride flag, highlighting a market opportunity for bold, colourful and high-quality gender-fluid fashion in Sri Lanka.



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