



BLENDING CULTURES: A HANBOK-INSPIRED STREETWEAR LINE FOR SRI LANKAN YOUNG WOMEN

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This project presents a culturally infused streetwear collection for young Sri Lankan women, blending traditional and modern aesthetics. Showcasing the theme ‘Traditional to Modern,’ the collection transforms cultural heritage into contemporary fashion by integrating distinctive cultural elements into wearable designs. With the growing influence of the Korean Wave (Hallyu)—driven by K-dramas, K-pop, and Korean fashion—Sri Lankan youth, particularly Gen Z women, are increasingly drawn to Korean styles. However, limited local availability and high import costs make authentic Korean fashion difficult to access, creating a clear gap in the Sri Lankan market for culturally inspired yet affordable alternatives.

The fashion collection is conceptually rooted in “acculturation”, the process by which elements of one culture are adapted and blended with another while preserving local identity. Drawing primary inspiration from the traditional Korean hanbok, the collection reinterprets key design features such as voluminous silhouettes, wrap closures, curved lines, and soft layering into versatile, climate-appropriate streetwear tailored for Sri Lankan consumers. Fabrics, colours, and textures are carefully selected to align with tropical conditions while preserving the aesthetic sensibility of Korean-inspired fashion. This collection not only satisfies the fashion aspirations of Sri Lankan youth but also promotes cross-cultural appreciation, enabling wearers to connect with global trends without losing touch with their own cultural context. It fosters a sense of identity, confidence, and modernity, offering fashionable alternatives that bridge the gap between tradition and global fashion influences. Ultimately, the fashion collection exemplifies how fashion can serve as a medium for cultural dialogue, creativity, and innovation, illustrating the harmonious coexistence of globalization and local identity within contemporary apparel design.

Keywords: Korean fashion, Hanbok style, Acculturation, Streetwear

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INTRODUCTION

This project seeks to design a unique Spring/Summer 2023/24 streetwear collection for Sri Lankan urban Gen Z females aged 18–28 who are deeply interested in Korean pop culture, including K-dramas, K-pop, and contemporary fashion trends. The growing influence of Korean culture is evident in the everyday preferences and lifestyle choices of many young Sri Lankan women. However, despite this rising interest, Korean-style streetwear remains largely unavailable in the local market due to limited supply and the high cost of online imports (Yadav, 2023; Eggenberger, 2023).

To address this market gap among young Sri Lankan women, the collection seeks to introduce Korean design aesthetics into fashion tailored for young females in Sri Lanka. The project objectives are to draw inspiration from traditional Hanbok styles—an iconic element of Korean culture—and reinterpret them into a streetwear collection, a garment category highly popular among women aged 18–28. The distinctive features of the Hanbok are modernized to create fashionable yet practical attire suited for contemporary metropolitan lifestyles. This design approach is grounded in the concept of acculturation, where elements of an admired or dominant culture are seamlessly integrated into local traditions and everyday life.

The study involves researching and analysing the unique characteristics of Korean fashion, with a focus on Spring/Summer 2023/24 streetwear and trends, translating these into a culturally hybrid collection. The design process emphasises the creation of custom pieces with the flexibility of mixing and matching, incorporating distinctive colours, diverse fabrics, and functional detailing. The significance of this work lies in its potential to enrich the field of fashion design, particularly Korean-inspired apparel, with innovative ideas and fresh design directions.

METHODOLOGY

The design process began with an in-depth study of contemporary Korean fashion, with particular importance on the evolution of streetwear. This was followed by a detailed analysis of the traditional hanbok (Figure 1a), focusing on its symbolic significance, silhouette, colour harmony, material characteristics, and construction techniques. Market analysis was done through fashion brand analysis, mainly with LIANOX as the international fashion brand, based in Germany.

Based on these findings, the core design concept and objectives were established. Research into current streetwear trends and local consumer preferences was conducted simultaneously. The customer survey was done through the online



questionnaire. Attention was given to suitable materials, design techniques, and market feasibility. Linen and denim were selected for their breathability and suitability for Sri Lanka's tropical climate, as well as their potential to reinterpret traditional elements in a modern context. Techniques such as screen printing and pleating were incorporated to merge Korean traditional aesthetics with contemporary urban style.

A market survey targeting young Sri Lankan women was carried out to understand their fashion preferences, lifestyle habits, and interest in Korean fashion. The insights gained informed both the functional and visual aspects of the collection.

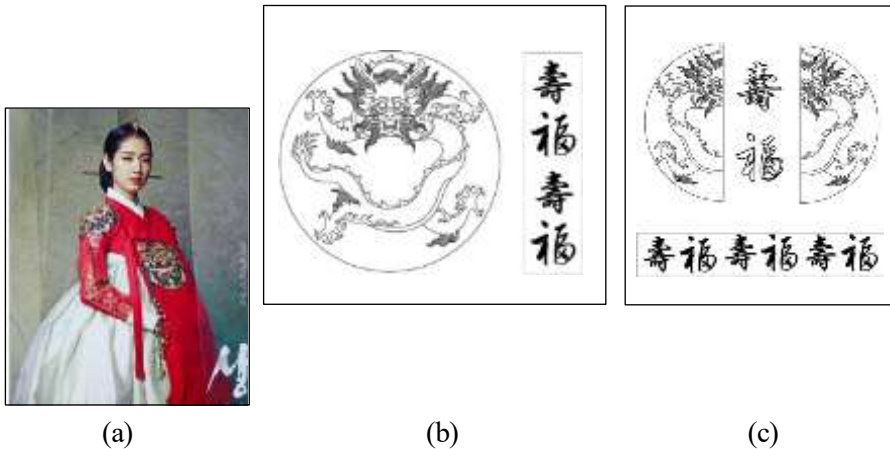


Figure 1: (a) Inspiration - Hanbok (b) and (c) Surface design motif developments.

The design development phase explored main visual elements such as shapes, lines, textures, and colours derived from the hanbok to create creative surface embellishments (Figure 1: b and c) using Adobe Illustrator software. Contemporary design strategies, including repetition, layering, and deconstruction, were employed to transform traditional inspirations into modern, wearable pieces. A solid colour palette, inspired by hanbok hues but adapted for streetwear appeal, was developed to ensure visual harmony across the collection. To support accurate garment construction and maintain production quality, detailed technical drawings (Figure 4) were developed. These provided precise specifications of proportions, seam placements, finishing details, and assembly guidelines, ensuring design integrity during the sewing process. After several rounds of refining and evaluating the designs, six outfits were finalized, brought to life, and carefully constructed. Together, these pieces form the complete women's streetwear collection serving as the final, tangible expression of this research-driven design journey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A market survey was conducted to assess the fashion preferences of young Sri Lankan women regarding Korean styles. A total of 136 responses were collected from the target market group. Among respondents, 94% were aged between 18–



28 years, confirming the relevance of this demographic as the primary audience. A significant 88% expressed a strong interest in Korean culture, 93% actively followed trends in Korean fashion, and 91% were willing to purchase Korean-inspired apparel if available locally. Furthermore, 49% showed specific interest in Korean street fashion, validating the project's design direction and highlighting a notable market opportunity within Sri Lanka's apparel sector.

The final outcome was a six-look streetwear collection that integrates traditional Korean aesthetics derived from the hanbok into contemporary silhouettes suited to Sri Lankan urban Gen Z females. The hanbok traditionally comprises the jeogori (a wrap-front jacket) and chima (a long skirt), often accessorised with a norigae (Tassel), a decorative tassel symbolizing good fortune, wealth, fertility, or health. Inspiration was drawn from its symbolic meanings, distinctive shapes, harmonious proportions, and cultural colour theory rooted in the yin-yang philosophy (Figures 2 & 3). The colour palette was adapted from the five traditional elements:

- Black (Water) – creativity, intellect, depth
- White (Metal) – purity, modesty, peace
- Red (Fire) – passion, prosperity, vitality
- Yellow (Earth) – centrality, nobility
- Blue (Wood) – stability, growth (integrated as an accent in selected looks)

In the collection, these colours were reinterpreted in fabrics such as linen and denim, chosen for their tropical suitability and applied through decorative techniques like screen printing, pleating, and asymmetric cutting. Each look reimagines hanbok features (wrap closures, wide straps, pleats) in functional, street-ready forms (Mayhew, 2023).



(a) (b)
Figure 2: Fashion illustrations of the six final looks from the collection. (a) Front look (b) Back look

The fashion collection presented in Figure 3 comprises six looks, detailed as follows:

Look 1: A long-sleeved top with a round neck featuring one overlapping sleeve held in place with wide straps, which showcases an all-over screen-printed dragon and Chinese character design. It is paired with a knee-length skirt decorated with wide straps.

Look 2: A V-neck hoodie with short sleeves and wide overlapping straps at the



front, styled with box-pleated short pants in red and white. The top features a decorative design with a printed dragon motif and Chinese characters.

Look 3: A V-neck front with long sleeves and an overlapping closure, complemented by a round back neckline embellished with a dragon print. The box-pleated red skirt exhibits an asymmetrical design with a side tail and a printed front strap.

Look 4: A short-sleeved top with a V-neck front and round-neck back, combined with a corset-style bodice that has wide side straps and a printed dragon motif. It is paired with loose trousers that incorporate wide straps and a decorative printed belt.

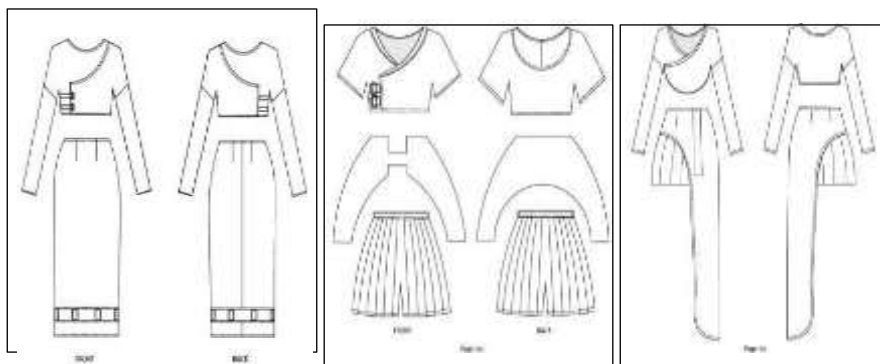
Look 5: A jumpsuit with a front overlap and side cut-out details, equipped with functional front pockets and a printed belt. It is styled with a long-sleeved jacket featuring screen-printed dragon motifs on both the front and back.

Look 6: A V-neck front and round-neck back top embellished with a dragon print and bell sleeves, as well as wide strap details. This look includes two-tone cargo pants with front and pleated side pockets, combining traditional elements with a modern utilitarian style.



(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

Figure 3: Live model photographs (Six looks: 1–6) showcasing the six final design outfits of the fashion collection.



(a) (b) (c)



Figure 4: Technical drawings of three looks of the collection related to Figure 3.
(a) Look 1 (b) Look 2 (c) Look 3

Figure 3 presents all six final looks modelled live, captured through a dedicated photoshoot to showcase the designs in real time. This approach enabled the evaluation of each garment's proportions, drape, detailing, and overall streetwear appeal in its intended context. Figure 4 displays the technical drawings of three selected looks, highlighting their pattern details.

By blending hanbok-inspired silhouettes, symbolic motifs, and bold colour combinations with streetwear functionality, the collection demonstrates how traditional Korean aesthetics can be adapted for Sri Lankan youth culture. This cross-cultural design approach not only meets a clear market demand but also demonstrates creative innovation and cultural appreciation within the local fashion industry.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

This design study developed a women's streetwear collection for Sri Lankan urban consumers aged 18– 28, inspired by the Korean hanbok through the concept of acculturation. Integrating traditional Korean elements with modern streetwear aesthetics addressed a niche market need for culturally adaptive fashion.

Design development drew on research into hanbok heritage and Sri Lankan consumer preferences, resulting in garments that combined symbolic detail with everyday wearability. Features such as crop tops, miniskirts, front cross-necklines, hoodies, layering, fabric manipulation, and gold graphic prints via screen printing reinterpreted hanbok aesthetics for contemporary appeal.

The two-year iterative process incorporated trend-responsive updates while retaining conceptual integrity. Findings demonstrate that structured design research can generate commercially viable, culturally inspired products, offering new pathways for silhouette innovation and heritage preservation in modern fashion contexts.

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