



“EMBRACE INNER ESSENCE”– DESIGNING PLUS-SIZED BEACHWEAR CLOTHING LINE FOR THE SRI LANKAN MARKET

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The worldwide fashion sector has historically sidelined plus-sized women by focusing mainly on styles that fit slimmer figures. In Sri Lanka, this challenge is even more significant, with very few fashionable beachwear options available in larger sizes. Plus-size is generally defined as US size 14 and above, along with further categories like super-size (1X–6X) and extended size (7X and beyond). Although there is an increasing demand for stylish and confidence-boosting beachwear among plus-sized women, the market still presents limited variety in styles, colours, and fits. To fill this void, a plus-size beachwear line has been created under the Sri Lankan brand Lagoon Lab, inspired by bioluminescent jellyfish (*Aequorea Victoria*), aimed at young adults aged 25–30 in the Western Province for the Spring/Summer 2025 season. This collection aspires to empower plus-sized women by offering fashionable, trendy, and revealing pieces that honour body diversity and enhance self-esteem. Essential design strategies include the utilisation of comfortable, stretchy fabrics such as ITY four-way knit and power net, selected for their capacity to deliver both support and flexibility. Techniques such as optical illusion, sublimation printing, and well-placed frill detailing are used to flatter fuller body types and boost the overall aesthetic. By combining aesthetics with practicality, this collection not only caters to an overlooked market segment but also confronts traditional beauty standards in Sri Lankan fashion. Lagoon Lab's initiative represents a significant move towards inclusivity, allowing plus-sized women to fully enjoy leisure and beach activities without sacrificing style or comfort. This endeavour underscores the vital importance of inclusive design in modern fashion and serves as a rallying cry for both local and international brands to widen their size ranges and embrace diversity in their offerings.

Keywords: plus size, beach wear, Sri Lankan market, women empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

The Sri Lankan fashion industry faces significant challenges in catering to the diverse needs of all body types, particularly plus-sized women. According to studies, 55.6% plus-sized women in Sri Lanka were significantly dissatisfied with the local clothing market, which has not yet addressed their requirements properly. (Kumarasiri, 2020). As per the research problem, an online survey was conducted to identify the critical issue: the lack of fashionable, body-positive, and aesthetically pleasing beachwear designed specifically for plus-sized individuals, especially within the Western Province. 69.5% of women are dissatisfied that the current market offers limited stylistic diversity, colour variety, and tends to prioritise concealing rather than celebrating natural body shapes. This gap highlights the need for innovative and inclusive fashion solutions. In response, the project aims to develop a stylish, trendy, and comfortable plus-sized beachwear collection for Spring/Summer 2025/26, targeting Sri Lankan women aged 25 to 30 residing in the Western Province.

The design concept is inspired by the ethereal qualities of bioluminescent jellyfish (*Aequorea Victoria*), symbolising fluidity, confidence, and radiance. The collection will strategically apply sublimation printing, frill details, and optical illusion techniques to create visually flattering silhouettes that enhance and celebrate diverse body forms. This initiative seeks to conduct comprehensive market research to accurately understand the fashion needs, preferences, and expectations of plus-sized women regarding beachwear in the local context. Furthermore, it aims to assess existing market limitations, identify gaps, and translate these findings into innovative design concepts. The project will also focus on material experimentation, testing garment construction methods, and ensuring optimal levels of comfort, durability, and functionality.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilised a mixed-methods strategy, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to thoroughly address the recognised issue and market opportunity. The first qualitative phase involved an extensive literature review of scholarly articles and industry analyses related to plus-size apparel, beachwear, and the associated challenges faced. This review was bolstered by a detailed examination of both international and local markets for plus-size clothing and beachwear, featuring a comparative assessment of brand strategies and their existing product lines.

A survey was conducted on plus-size women aged 25-30 in Sri Lanka's Western Province, aiming to gather demographic and psychographic information. The survey, which was shared for over a year, received 177 responses. The survey also revealed respondents' fashion preferences in design and product point of view, and satisfaction with market options available in the beachwear product category. The design techniques for the collection were tested on ITY four-way stretch fabric and power mesh, assessing factors like stretchability, water resistance, sublimation printing on digital printable quality, and drape characteristics.

The design development phase incorporated insights obtained from all previous research. Drawing inspiration from the ethereal nature of bioluminescent jellyfish (Figure 1: (a)), the collection was envisioned using techniques such as sketching, deconstruction, layering and adding ruffles (Figure 1: (b)). This creative process led to the development of pattern blocks, garment construction, fittings, and ultimately, a professional photoshoot. The final results were thoroughly documented in a lookbook and presented to pertinent stakeholders.

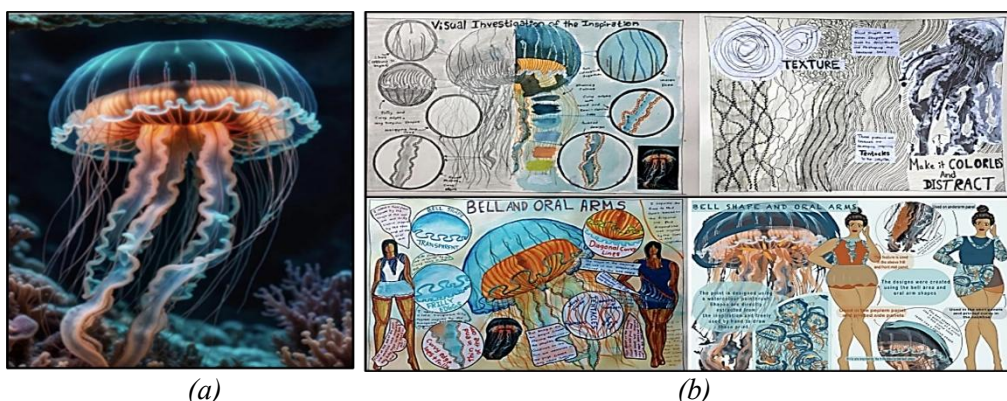


Figure 1: Concept and design developments: (a) Inspiration, (b) Concept and design development pages

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSIONS

Research shows a notable deficiency in the Sri Lankan market for fashionable, trendy, and flattering plus-size beachwear. While the global market for plus-size women's clothing is anticipated to increase, the plus-size beachwear category remains largely overlooked (Precedence Research, 2025). In Sri Lanka, the existing designs often prioritise excessive coverage and fall short of providing the modern, stylish choices that many plus-size women desire — items that showcase and celebrate their curves. Currently, there are no local brands that provide a specialised line of plus-size beachwear. A customer survey validated this demand, with the majority of respondents aged 25-30 (87.7%), primarily from Sri Lanka's Western

Province (61.4%). 69.5% of plus-size women expressed their dissatisfaction with local options for plus-size clothing, particularly in the beachwear segment.

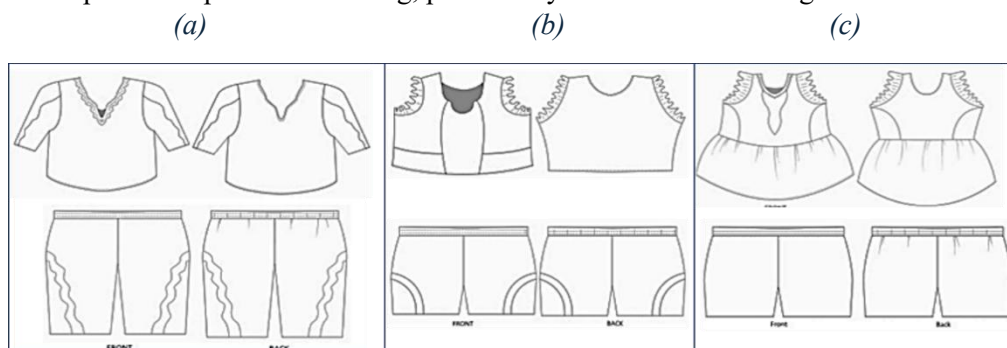


Figure 2: Technical drawings of three outfits: (a) Look 1(Fig.3(a)), (b) Look 2 (Fig.3(b)), & (c) Look 3 (Fig.3(c)).



Figure 3: Live modelling for six final design outfits: Six looks (a) to (f)

After finalising the collection, the technical drawings (Figure 2) were made. This collection boasts a vibrant colour palette that includes Cobalt Blue, Deep Teal, Light Turquoise, Spiced Orange, Tangerine, and Canary Yellow. Three surface modification techniques were employed: sublimation printing, frills, and optical illusion in printing. Selected materials include ITY four-way fabric and power net (mesh), known for their exceptional stretch, quick-drying properties, durability, and water resistance. Three-thread overlock seams were chosen instead of French seams for enhanced strength, flexibility, and comfort. Figure 3 shows (a) to (f), the final different looks in fashion range and design details, as follows:

Look (a): The two-piece set, frilly sleeves with a sublimation-printed and round neckline and shorts. Side mesh and a curved printed line panel are matched in design.

Look (b): Two-piece set, frilly decorations with printed mid-panel in top and printed side seam connected with side seam to make printing. Mesh peplum with elastic back. **Look (c):** Two-piece set with long pants, printed panels, mesh fabric, sleeveless deep V-neck with a triangle-printed panel and frills on the side seam of the top.



Look (d): Two-piece set, elbow-length mesh sleeve top, knee-length pants, printed curvy panels between the four-way and the mesh.

Look (e): Two-piece set, top with curved sleeves, mesh peplum is joined to the waist, and the hem, and the short with a solid elastic waistband on the back.

Look (f): The two-piece set includes a skirt attached to a short- and long-sleeved top. The underarm has a triangular solid panel, and the wrist of the sleeve has frills on it.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Plus-size fashion, defined as US size 14 and above Sri Lankan women, represents a growing demand among young women seeking stylish and body-flattering beachwear for the spring and summer seasons. Despite this demand, the availability of fashionable beachwear for plus-sized women in Sri Lanka remains significantly limited. The market lacks variety in size inclusivity, colour palettes, and modern styles, often focusing on designs intended to conceal rather than celebrate the body. A customer survey revealed a clear demand for trendy, well-fitted beachwear offering full coverage while enhancing body confidence. The designs incorporate sublimation printing, frill details, and optical illusion techniques to create flattering silhouettes and emphasise body positivity. This initiative aims not only to provide comfortable and aesthetically appealing garments but also to empower plus-size women with more fashion choices that reflect current trends. It is anticipated that this collection will foster greater inclusivity locally while promoting confidence and self-expression through contemporary beachwear.

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