



THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON WOMEN'S WEAR - FINNISH MARKET

Ranga Anuruddha Manikku Wadu

MASTER'S THESIS

May 2024

Master in International Business Management

ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Master's Degree Programme in International Business Management

Ranga Anuruddha Manikku Wadu
The Impact of Culture on Women's Wear – Finnish Market

Master's thesis 65 pages, appendices 12 pages
December 2024

This study investigates the impact of Finnish cultural values specifically sustainability, minimalism, and functionality on consumer preferences for casual ladies' wear and the implications for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers entering the Finnish market. The research addresses the challenges faced by Sri Lankan producers in adapting to the highly ethical and minimalist expectations of Finnish consumers. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative data from 200 Finnish consumers with qualitative insights from interviews with 20 industry professionals, including designers and retailers.

The results reveal that Finnish consumers prioritize eco-friendly, durable, and functional clothing, with sustainability being a critical factor influencing purchasing decisions. Regression analysis shows that sustainability ($\beta = 0.42$), minimalism ($\beta = 0.32$), and comfort ($\beta = 0.47$) significantly affect consumer behavior. Qualitative findings highlight that successful market penetration for Sri Lankan manufacturers requires aligning production processes with Finnish cultural norms, including the use of sustainable materials and minimalist designs. Strategic recommendations include adopting digital platforms for market entry and utilizing AI for personalized consumer experiences. This research provides actionable insights for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers seeking to optimize their market presence in Finland.

Keywords: cultural influence, Women's wear, Casual, sustainability, minimalism, Finnish market,

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Overview of the Global Fashion Industry	7
1.2 Sri Lankan Garment Industry and Its Global Presence	8
1.3 Research Problem and Objectives.....	11
1.4 Research Questions	11
1.5 Justification of the Study	12
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	12
1.7 Structure of the study.....	12
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Preferences	17
2.2.1 Impact of Online Shopping on Consumer Behavior	18
2.2.2 Sustainability and Cultural Identity in Fashion	19
2.2.3 Cultural Drivers of Fashion Trends	19
2.3 Impact of Finnish Cultural Norms on Sri Lankan Garment Manufacturers	20
2.3.1 Adaptation to Finnish Design Aesthetics	21
2.3.2 Strategic Market Diversification	22
2.4 Strategic Recommendations for Market Penetration.....	23
2.4.1 Sustainability as a Core Marketing Strategy	24
2.4.2 Cultural Adaptation and Inclusive Marketing	25
2.5 Conclusion	25
3. METHODOLOGY	26
3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 Research Philosophy	26
3.3 Research Approach	27
3.4 Research Strategy	27
3.4 Research Choices.....	28
3.5 Time Horizon.....	28
3.6 Data Collection Techniques and Procedures	29
3.6.1 Qualitative Data Collection	29
3.6.2 Quantitative Data Collection	29
3.7.3 Variable Operationalization Table	30

3.8	Sampling	31
3.9	Data Analysis Techniques	32
3.10	Ethical Considerations	33
3.11	Limitations of the Methodology	34
4.	DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	35
4.1	Descriptive Statistics of the Sample	35
4.2	Analysis Based on Research Objectives.....	36
4.2.1	Objective 1- To Analyse the Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Preferences for Casual Ladies' Wear in the Finnish Market	36
4.2.2	Objective 2- To Assess the Impact of Finnish Cultural Norms on the Design and Production Decisions of Sri Lankan Garment Manufacturers	38
4.2.3	objective 3 To Provide Strategic Recommendations for Sri Lankan Garment Manufacturers to Optimize Market Penetration in Finland	44
4.3	Summary of Findings	46
5.	DISCUSSION	48
5.1	Revisiting the Research Questions	48
5.2	What is the Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Preferences.....	48
5.2.1	The Role of Minimalism in Fashion Preferences.....	50
5.3	Impact of Finnish Cultural Norms on Design and Production Decisions	52
5.3.1	Sustainability and Ethical Production, Core to Design Decisions.....	52
5.3.2	Minimalism - Aesthetic Simplicity and Functional Design	53
5.3.3	Functionality.....	54
5.3.4	Challenges for Sri Lankan Manufacturers - Aligning with Finnish Norms..	55
5.3.5	Opportunities for Market Entry	55
5.4	Strategic Recommendations for Market Penetration.....	56
5.4.1	Prioritizing Sustainability and Ethical Production	56
5.4.2	Incorporating Minimalism and Functionality in Design	57
5.4.3	Leveraging Digital Platforms and AI Technologies for Market Entry.....	58
	REFERENCES.....	60
	APPENDICES	66
	Appendix 1 – Online Questionnaire Survey	66
	Appendix 3 – Interview Questions.....	75

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Operationalization of Variables	30
Table 2 - Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.....	35
Table 3 - Importance of Cultural Values in Casual Wear Preferences	37
Table 4 - Regression Analysis – Impact of Cultural Values on Purchasing Behavior	38
Table 5 - Interviews with Fashion Designers	39
Table 6 - Consumer Preferences for Sustainable Brands.....	44
Table 7 - Frequency of online Purchases for Casual Wear	45

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Sri Lankan Garment Industry	9
Figure 2 - The Finnish Fashion Market.....	10
Figure 3 – Cultural Iceberg.....	15
Figure 4 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	36
Figure 5 - Interviews with Fashion Designers.....	41
Figure 6 - Frequency of Online Purchases for Casual Wear	45

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI – Artificial Intelligence

CAGR – Compound Annual Growth Rate

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

ECDB – Ecommerce Database

IBISWorld – Industry Research Database

LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SD – Standard Deviation

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

β (Beta) – Standardized Coefficient in Regression Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Global Fashion Industry

The fashion industry in the year 2024 is a thriving one and quite complex in nature. It covers almost all countries and has a global market size greater than \$1.7 trillion. They are considered as a significant economic booster in the world economy especially in Europe, North America and Asia where people continue to spend on fashion products depending on the prevailing economic problems (McKinsey & Company, 2024). The industry also demonstrates changes towards increased digitalization, where e-commerce it amounted to around 26% of the total share of fashion retail worldwide and it is projected to continue to rise as e-commerce becomes an ever more integrated part of consumer habits (Euromonitor International, 2024).

Furthermore, sustainability has become one of the major concerns and has been detected with 46.4 % of global consumers choosing sustainable clothing.

This trend is considerably popular in countries such as India and China where the ecological factor is influencing customers' falling (InternetRetailing, 2024). The industry is also demonstrating an increased interest in sustainability; for example, online resale is expected to exceed \$351 billion by 2027, pointing to the development of a focus on circular economy models (Global Fashion Summit, 2024).

However, the industry has some threats like geopolitical factors and economic fluctuations that forced 38% of fashion executives to have a pessimistic view on the market outlook for the next year (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

- **The Role of Culture in Fashion**

Culture is an essential factor when it comes to fashion trends as it affects the kind of designs that are developed as well as the customers. In 2024, the fashion industry is much more cultural, and many brands focus on specific cultural aspects of the targeted population. The debates on cultural appropriation also give direction towards the

approach that should be followed while designing (Tarnanidis et al., 2023). Consumers' choices are aligned with cultural norms and beliefs, as reflected in the example of the Finnish culture of Fashion Minimalism and the Sustainability Shift in 2024. Companies competing in multicultural markets are integrating themselves to reflect the diverse market (MakeTheDot, 2024). Moreover, traditional costumes remain a source for current fashion trends, in which designers use and combine elements of cultural identity and modern clothing trends to produce new goods (Shetty & Kotian, 2023). Increased globalization has led to fashion becoming more diverse as different cultures interplay in fashion emphasizing the role of culture in fashion.

1.2 Sri Lankan Garment Industry and Its Global Presence

The Sri Lankan garment industry exports its products to more than 50 countries, and it is estimated that the industry has apparel export earnings of about \$4.5 billion to the country's export income in the fiscal year 2024 (Fashionating World 2024; Public Finance. lk 2024). This is an essential sector that accounts for about 40% of the total export earnings in Sri Lanka (Trade. gov, 2024). Industry is famous for high ethical standards on manufacturing which reflect 'Garments without Guilt' concept focusing on labour rights and environmentalism (Robert de Hoey, 2023; Daily FT, 2023).

Sri Lanka's export visibility is boosted through contracts with the world's leading retail brands including Marks & Spencer, Victoria's Secret, and Nike who source value-added products from Sri Lanka (Biznomics Magazine, 2024). This is evident in the multitude of factories that have been awarded LEED certification with Sri Lanka at the forefront in green manufacturing in Asia (Knitting Industry, 2024; Industry. gov. lk, 2024). With regard to market destination, the export markets for Sri Lankan garments are spread out across all segments including the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, the industry is also trying to diversify in Asia and Middle Eastern markets to minimize reliance on conventional markets (Lanka Business Online, 2024; Fibre2Fashion, 2024).



FIGURE 1 - Sri Lankan Garment Industry

- **The Finnish Fashion Market**

The Finnish fashion market in 2024 is worth about €95 million and is focused on sustainable, essentials, and digital business, which has been on a decline slightly with CAGR of -1% from 2019 up to 2024 (IBISWorld, 2024). E-commerce is thriving, making up 26.1% of total fashion retail, and is expected to reach 32% by 2028 (ECDB, 2024). Finnish consumers prioritize eco-friendly, ethically produced fashion, reflecting Scandinavian values (Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024).

Ecommerce is growing and is estimated to be around 26.1% of the total fashion industry. It currently occupies only 1% of total fashion retail which is projected to rise to 32% in 2028 according to ECDB, 2024. According to the survey, the Finnish

consumers prefer sustainable and ethically made clothes, which is in line with the Scandinavian attitudes (Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024).

Sportswear and comfortable workplace apparel, due to post-COVID-19 changes in society, are the most popular (Maire, ai, 2024). Finnish fashion is also quite avant-garde, and it can come across as conceptual because it is a mix of vintage craftsmanship and contemporary sensibilities (Scandinavian MIND, 2024). Large firms such as Inditex and Inter Ikea Systems BV remain dominant in the market by offering customers an insight into business operations, embracing sustainability and e-sales (Helsinki Times, 2023).

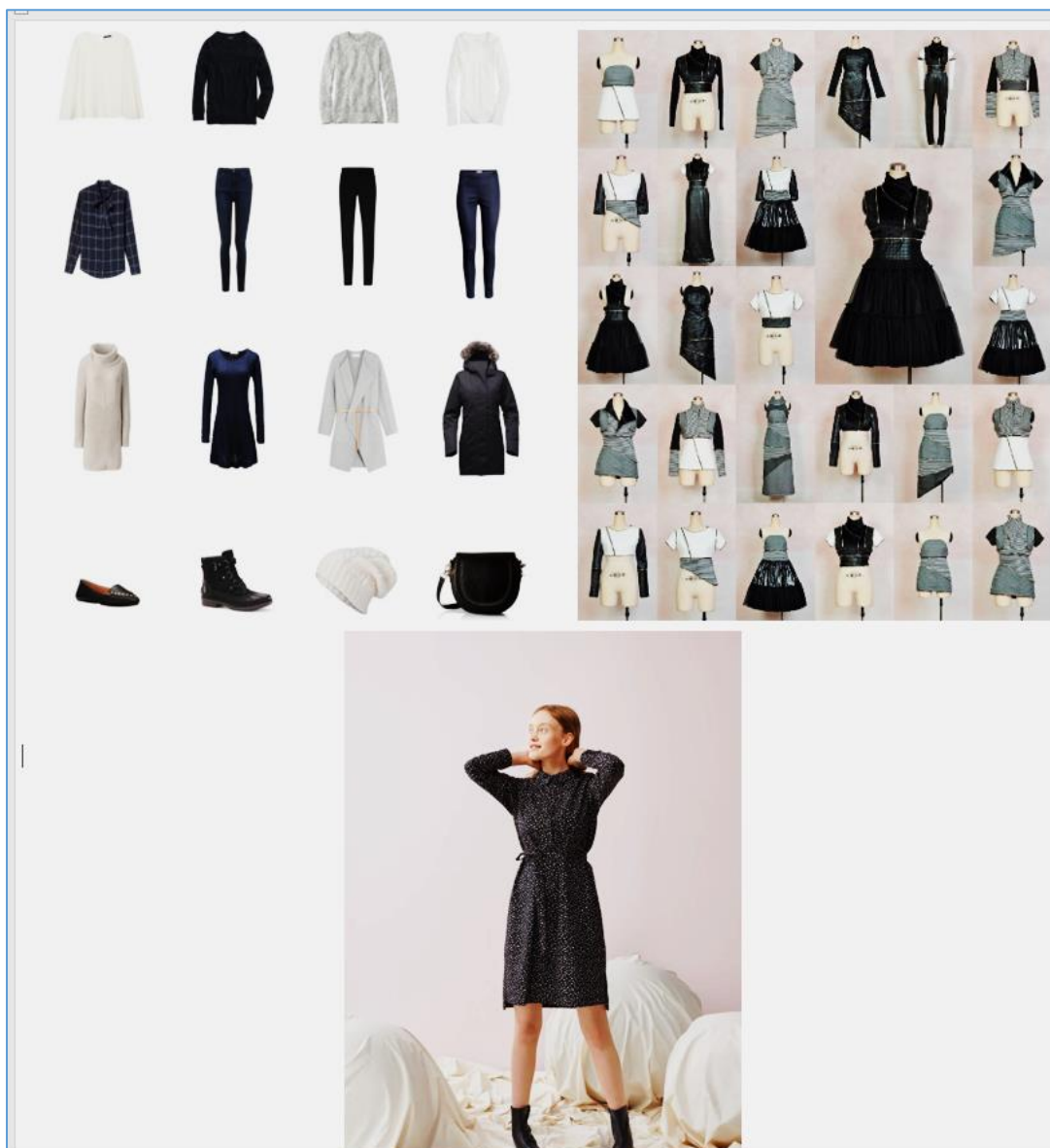


FIGURE 2 - The Finnish Fashion Market

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

When it comes to the international fashion market, cultural differences remain crucial and the case of Finland is even more complex. As fashion is a worldwide phenomenon, culture plays a deciding role in people's purchasing decisions and behaviours (Tarnanidis et al., 2023; Khan et al. 2024). In Finland, the concept of sustainable living and simplicity plays a crucial role in people's consumer behaviour, which makes it unbeneficial for marketers originating from Sri Lanka as they are significantly dissimilar in terms of culture. It has been found that there is little research comparing the impact of Finnish cultural norms on casual ladies' wear and the assessment of the strategies used by foreign manufacturers to adapt to these norms (Garcia, 2022). Unlike much cross-cultural research that examines the impact of culture on fashion in a broad manner, specific investigation of the casual wear sector of the industry is relatively scarce. This gap underlines the importance of the culturally sensitive market entry approach for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers that can prevent inefficiencies in the Finnish market penetration (Thomas, 2020).

This study therefore aims for the following objectives;

1. To analyse the influence of cultural differences on consumer preferences for women's wear in the Finnish market
2. To assess the impact of Finnish cultural norms on the design and production decisions of Sri Lankan garment manufacturers
3. To provide strategic recommendations for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers to optimize market penetration in Finland

1.4 Research Questions

1. *What is the influence of cultural differences on consumer preferences for women's wear in the Finnish market?*
2. *How do Finnish cultural norms affect the design and production decisions of Sri Lankan garment manufacturers?*
3. *What strategic recommendations can optimize market penetration for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers in Finland?*

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study is significant in closing the gap of existing research on cultural analysis and the subsequent market incursion strategies in relation to the Finnish fashion industry especially as it relates to Women's wear focused on casual wear. When it comes to the threats and opportunities to Sri Lankan manufacturers operating in Finland, the emphasis on sustainability and the adage 'less is more' has been analysed by Oittinen (2024) and Khan, et al., (2024) in a different light than traditional markets. This knowledge enables the strategies aligned to the market in order to capture the thematic consumer culture and preferences in the Finnish market hence enhancing the competitiveness of Sri Lanka in this market (Garcia, 2022; Tarnanidis et al., 2023). Therefore, this research is valuable for subsequent research in the academic environment and for manufacturers and marketers in practice based on culturally appropriate strategies (Shetty & Kotian, 2023; Thomas, 2020).

1.6 Scope of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the aspect of culture in the Women's wear industry mainly in Casual wear, for the Finnish and the Sri Lankan markets by analysing the influence of Finnish culture on the buying trends and the manufacturing processes by the Sri Lankan manufacturers. A quantitative as well as qualitative study provides a deeper understanding of these dynamics (Oittinen, 2024, Khan et al., 2024; Garcia, 2022).

1.7 Structure of the study

This dissertation comprises five chapters, and each chapter focuses on a specific coordinate to the study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a foundational overview of the research, including the global and Sri Lankan fashion industries, the Finnish fashion market, and the significance of cultural factors in fashion. It introduces the research problem, objectives, and questions, along with the scope and justification of the study. This chapter sets the stage for subsequent exploration by framing the key themes and challenges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter synthesizes existing academic and industry literature relevant to the research objectives. It explores cultural influences on consumer preferences, focusing on Finnish values such as sustainability, minimalism, and functionality, and their impact on the fashion industry. Additionally, it examines how cultural norms shape design and production decisions, emphasizing the need for strategic adaptation by foreign manufacturers, including Sri Lankan garment producers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methods employed to achieve the study's objectives. It describes the research philosophy (interpretivism), approach (inductive), and strategy (mixed methods). Data collection techniques, including surveys and interviews, are detailed, along with the sampling methods, variable operationalization, and data analysis techniques. Ethical considerations and methodological limitations are also addressed.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This chapter presents the findings from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. It integrates survey results and interview insights to explore the influence of Finnish cultural values on consumer behavior, design, and production. Statistical analyses such as regression models are employed to quantify the impact of cultural values, while thematic analysis highlights key insights from industry professionals.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter revisits the research questions in light of the findings, providing a critical discussion of how Finnish cultural norms influence consumer behavior and design decisions. It offers strategic recommendations for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers to successfully penetrate the Finnish market, emphasizing sustainability, minimalism, and functionality. The chapter concludes with reflections on the study's implications for academia and industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a detailed literature review of the study's key variables: the cultural impacts on casual ladies' wear in the Finnish market; and the impact of these influences on Sri Lankan garment makers. The chapter is structured according to the three main research objectives: exploring cultural differences in consumers' behavior, evaluating the role of Finnish culture in design and manufacturing, and providing particular recommendations for breaking into the market. The literature comprises articles from peer-reviewed publications, industry reports, and market research.

- **What is Culture**

Culture is a basic theme in managing cultural differences, mainly in business and organizational environments. Culture showcases both visible aspects such as customs and dress, and invisible aspects, including values, beliefs, and norms,

creating what is often described as the “cultural Iceberg” model. This model Shows how, while some elements of culture are apparent, others remain deeply ingrained and not immediately observable. making interactions and behaviours at a deep and subtle level.



FIGURE 3 – Cultural Iceberg

Hofstede's definition of culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" it emphasizes the role of culture in forming group identity and setting behavioral expectations within communities. Hofstede's model outlines elements of cultural differences, such as popular distance uncertainty avoidance, and individualism versus collectivism, which explain why people from different cultures perceive and approach situations differently.

Another viewpoint by Dr. Shaidul Kazi (2009) describes culture as “Culture is something which is comprised of norms and values and govern human behavior to a particular direction, which is learned, does not change easily, which is characteristic of a particular group and which is transmitted over time from one generation to the other”.

This showcases the learned nature of culture emphasizing that it is both enduring and characteristic of a particular group.

Trompenaars (1996) adds that when a Group's norms align with its values, the culture is stable. Or else conflicts and tensions can arise, leading to potential destabilization. Particularly in multicultural teams, this stability or tension significantly impacts the workplace as cultural alignment or misalignment can either foster cooperation or create friction.

Understanding and adapting to cultural differences is crucial, particularly within the context of international business. Failures in such settings often stem not from technical incompetence but from an inability to effectively navigate and manage foreign cultural landscapes. This highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and strategic adaptation for achieving success in global markets, as supported by insights from peer-reviewed publications, industry reports, and market research.

In addition to its visible and invisible dimensions, culture functions as a dynamic force shaping social structures, economic interactions, and consumer behaviors, particularly in globalized contexts. While the "cultural iceberg" model highlights the deep-rooted, often unseen aspects of culture, it is critical to recognize that these elements are not static. They evolve in response to external influences, such as globalization, technology, and cross-cultural exchanges, which continuously reshape cultural values and norms (Laitala et al., 2024).

Hofstede's dimensions of culture, such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, provide valuable frameworks for understanding how societies function differently, but they must be applied with caution. Critics argue that these dimensions may oversimplify the complexity of cultural interactions in an increasingly interconnected world (Fang, 2005). For instance, while individualism versus collectivism offers insights into societal values, globalization has blurred these distinctions, fostering hybrid cultural norms that combine traditional and modern influences (Domingos et al., 2022).

Moreover, Trompenaars' emphasis on the alignment of norms and values is particularly relevant in multicultural business environments. Organizations must cultivate cultural sensitivity and adaptability to align with local expectations while maintaining their global identity (Kazi, 2009). In the fashion industry, for example,

understanding and integrating local cultural aesthetics and values into design and marketing strategies can enhance brand acceptance and loyalty (Oittinen, 2024).

2.2 Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Preferences

Cultural values have a profound impact on consumer behavior in the fashion industry, particularly within the Finnish context, where sustainability and minimalism are deeply ingrained in the national ethos. As Oittinen (2024) and Laitala, Klepp, and Berg (2024) suggest, Finnish consumers exhibit a strong preference for eco-friendly and functional designs, reflecting broader Scandinavian values that prioritize environmental responsibility and simplicity. This can be seen in the fact that an overall 46.4% of consumers across the world are willing to buy sustainable fashion products. However, these trends are even more apparent in Finland, as the country puts an immense importance on minimizing the effects of cultural processes (InternetRetailing, 2024: Euromonitor International, 2024).

Consumer culture theory is one of the most prolific theories in the fashion business because customers from different countries possess different cultural beliefs, and Finns especially consider sustainable and minimalism to be of cultural significance. As shown by Oittinen (2024) and Laitala, Klepp, and Berg (2024), Finnish consumption represents green and pragmatic design since the Scandian values reflect environmental awareness and frugality. This is in line with the InternetRetailing (2024) and Euromonitor International (2024) figures that indicate that 46.4% of all purchases are made online. Nevertheless, these tendencies are most distinct in Finland, for which the cultural values of minimizing the negative effect on the environment are critical.

Sustainability preferences among Finnish consumers are not only limited to materials but the fashion items' lifecycle. Thomas (2020) and Domingos et al. (2022) pointed out that besides pursuing sustainable materials, it is also essential to consider the durability and functionality of the items that consumers buy. This conforms to the basic Finnish design convention that advocates for practicality, longevity, and functionality over design that is constantly changeable like the fashion season. The literature also underlines that these cultural values influence consumption preferences to a

significant extent and generate the need for appealing to potential buyers appealing to the moral and aesthetic aspects of products.

In addition, cultural identity's influence on fashion preference has been established. This is not a trend but a consumer's Finnish culture for sustainability exploitation (Oittinen, 2024; Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024). This commitment is complemented by the increase in second-hand clothing sales and sustainable brands as pointed out by McKinsey & Company (2024). Finnish consumers are not mere recipients of these global changes in the fashion industry; they are equal players, who expect brands to come clean on their practices.

The consequences of these conclusions are profound for fashion brands interested in entering or further penetrating the Finnish market. The literature implies that this is not likely to happen if brands do not resonate with these cultural values. According to Domingos et al. (2022) & Thomas (2020), acknowledging and implementing cultural values into fashion products is not only strategic but crucial for market access. This is especially the case in nations such as Finland and to a large extent, consumers' purchasing behavior is influenced by culture.

2.2.1 Impact of Online Shopping on Consumer Behavior

The rise of online shopping has significantly influenced consumer behavior in the Finnish fashion market. In 2023, 54.7% of global fashion consumers made their purchases online, a trend particularly strong in Finland due to high digital literacy and internet penetration (Maire.ai, 2024; ECDB, 2024).

Another factor that can be heavily noticeable in the fashion industry in Finland is the shift in customer buying behaviour by the onset of online shopping. In 2023, 54.7% of recorded sales show that global fashion consumers bought from internet retailing, which is a factor that has been greatly encouraged by Finland's high literacy levels in computer use as well as high affluence to the internet (Maire. ai 2024 & ECDB. 2024).

Finnish consumers are in a position to make trips that are hybrid in nature where they use both online and offline mode of purchases, indicating that there is a need to make service delivery more convenient and flexible (Scandinavian MIND, 2024; Helsinki

Times, 2023). Pant & Rattes (2013) noted that this shift has been propelled by the increased accessibility of online retailing options and rising dominance of media in consumer choice decisions. Furthermore, Finnish consumers significantly appreciate an integrated approach when it comes to shopping online and they expect the necessary options to be provided such as sustainable and minimalist clothing that corresponding to their culture and values. This trend clearly points to the fact that digital platforms are instrumental in today's consumption patterns within the Finnish fashion market.

2.2.2 Sustainability and Cultural Identity in Fashion

Sustainability is an ingrained concept in Finnish culture and heavily influences everyday fashion decisions. From the customer perspective, the sustainability factor is important for the consumer as a result of Finnish and Scandinavian traditions of respecting nature and the belief in minimalism (Oittinen, 2024; Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024). Increased consumption of second-hand clothes and sustainable fashion brands, along with an increase in eco-friendly products like barefoot shoes, reflect this preference (McKinsey & Company, 2024). Fashion companies in Finland have also embraced sustainable fashion by implementing sustainable processes that encompass the entire lifecycle of a product, from its manufacturing process to its usage and disposal. Finnish consumers' focus on sustainable production and products requires that brands that support and uphold these values should be more forthcoming in their sustainability efforts. The focus on sustainability in this culture influences individuals' behavior in their consumption and also puts pressure on fashion companies in their functional and product development to pursue higher levels of sustainability (Domingos et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Cultural Drivers of Fashion Trends

Consumer culture proves to be a strong determinant of clothing fashion in Finland because of the country's inclination toward minimalism and sustainable fashion. Research evidence depict that Finnish consumers' attitude leans more towards

functionality and functionality supporting the broader cultural values of the Scandinavian countries (Oittinen, 2024; Maire. ai, 2024). This cultural bent is seen in athleisure and comfort wear, including cargo pants and tights, which were solidified post-pandemic lifestyle changes (Maire. ai, 2024; Oittinen, 2024). Further, sustainability is expected to remain paramount for the Finnish consumers when it comes to fashion as it prompts the call for quality, durable, and environmental items (Global Fashion Summit, 2024). These cultural factors exert significant influence on fashion trends in the Finnish market, as well as the operational strategy of the fashion brands that operate in the country. Companies that incorporate these aspects into their products and advertise them accordingly are more likely to appeal to Finnish consumers, as seen in the market presence of sustainable and minimalistic brands (Designity, 2024).

2.3 Impact of Finnish Cultural Norms on Sri Lankan Garment Manufacturers Cultural Sensitivity in Production and Design

Understanding culture in production and designs is essential for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers who wish to effectively compete in the Finnish market. Research findings indicate that the adoption of the cultural values of target markets promotes acceptance and loyalty to brands. When it comes to Finnish consumers, sustainability and simplicity are valued significantly that is why the company has to consider these factors in manufacturing and product design.

Sri Lanka's "Garments without Guilt" mission in the country that focuses on issues to do with ethical manufacture, complies with the sustainability standards common in Finland (Daily FT, 2023). Self- segment: Self- understanding is another driving force for consumers in the country, where the 'origin of clothing and its environmental impact' is a primary concern for Finnish consumers, 46%. Slow fashion is currently cherished by only four percent of global consumers, a concept visible in the Finnish market (InternetRetailing, 2024; McKinsey & Company, 2024). Hence it would be wise for relevant Sri Lankan manufacturers who care for ethical standards and who embody environmentally sustainable production features to appeal to the Finnish consumers (Tarnanidis et al., 2023; Oittinen, 2024).

However, when it comes to the design, the preferences of Finnish consumers can be considered rather restrained and pragmatic staying loyal to the traditions of the Scandinavian countries (Oliviara Aponte et al., 2024). The analysis of the data revealed that brands including these elements in their products generate higher levels of market acceptance among the consumers in Finland. For instance, the consumers in Finland preferred wearing athleisure and comfort wear in 2024 and these two categories experienced sales growth of over 25% (Maire. ai, 2024). Lankan manufacturers need to incorporate these preferences within their design development, including aspects related to simplification of the product design, functionality and sustainability (Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024; Garcia, 2022).

The absence of cultural appropriate production and design compromises the market niche. Research shows that consumers are reluctant to embrace brands that are culturally insensitive especially in culturally charged areas such as Scandinavia (Knitting Industry, 2024). Hence, it is mandatory for Sri Lankan manufacturers to carry out market research on a constant basis and cooperate with local designers to identify the cultural preferences of Finnish consumers (Lagnaoui, 2023; Rana et al., 2024).

2.3.1 Adaptation to Finnish Design Aesthetics

This is the most important challenge for the garment manufacturers in Sri Lanka to meet the design aesthetic criteria of the Finnish market. Finnish consumers react to the concept of minimalism with admiration, functionality, and sustainability, which is a part of Scandinavian ethics (Oittinen, 2024). This preference of clean and simple design that tend to be more minimally decorated is fundamental to Finnish fashion (Olivar Aponte et al., 2024).

It has also been revealed by various articles that Finnish consumers' penchant for minimalism is not solely for aesthetics but for functionality. For example, Oittinen (2024) and Maire. ai (2024) also show the correlation of the socially bound concept of practicality where athleisure and comfort wear of Finland has increased the sales of pants categories such as cargo pants and training clothes. This is in line with Laitala, Klepp, and Berg (2024) who state that, Finnish consumers give importance on long lasting and utility over fashion and fleeting fashion.

Furthermore, the aspect of sustainability influences Finnish fashion choices to a great extent as it has already been highlighted by several authors (Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024; Global Fashion Summit, 2024). Increased preference for sustainable products through a shift in consumer attitude best exemplified by barefoot shoes, support the McKinsey & Company research's (2024) observation of increased cultural affinity towards sustainable products. Nevertheless, what differentiates them from other consumers all around the world is the fact that they expect sustainability to be an organic part of design, and therefore, products certified as sustainable have to be also representative of the Finnish minimalism.

Based on these insights, the literature posits that Sri Lankan manufacturers need to rise above superficial modifications. Rana et al. (2024) and Olivar Aponte et al. (2024) also point out that manufacturers should deeply incorporate these cultural peculiarities into the design, which involves using sustainable materials, applying minimalism in design, and focusing on the functionality of the products. According to Lagnaoui (2023), a failure of the same may expose the organization to the risk of offering products that do not meet market demand, hence poor market acceptance.

Overall, the literature reviewed herein emphasizes that if one is to successfully adapt to Finnish design aesthetics, one must understand the cultural underpinnings of these tendencies. Despite a vast amount of work on the fundamentals of Scandinavian design, there is a lack of information on how companies that are not of Scandinavian origin can successfully apply the principles of the named style. This leaves a research gap for further investigation, especially in developing nations like Sri Lanka (Knitting Industry, 2024; McKinsey & Company, 2024).

2.3.2 Strategic Market Diversification

Market diversification has therefore become even more crucial for the Sri Lankan garment industry in a bid to manage risks that could arise from dependence on these traditional markets. Based on the scholarly data, it is necessary to diversify in new markets that may include Finland since it provides certain opportunities whereby Finnish culture embraces sheer cultural values of sustainability and ethical production (Fibre2Fashion, 2024; Lanka Business Online, 2024). Research has also shown that

markets such as Finland, which are very conscious of eco-products, offer a good opportunity for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers to establish themselves as pioneers in sustainable fashion (McKinsey & Company, 2024; Global Fashion Summit, 2024).

Studies further show that the use of positioning strategy to position the Sri Lankan Products in Finland by linking the product attributes to Finnish culture such as sustainability and ethical production will improve market access. For instance, bottom-up strategies to diversify the product focus tend to align the country's strengths with the expectations of the demanding Finns, such as positioning Sri Lanka as a producer of high-quality and environmentally sustainable products (Lagnaoui, 2023). Furthermore, the literature reviews show that market entry like the one in Finland not only diversifies risk but also enhances the brand image of Sri Lankan manufacturers where they are associated with high standards of sustainability and ethical practices (Fibre2Fashion, 2024; Lanka Business Online, 2024).

However, the current market in Finland with regard to consumer preferences for transparent and sustainable products is perfect for Sri Lankan manufacturers to carve out a niche. It also helps to minimise the risks that might be involved in conventional markets and also makes Sri Lankan brands as leaders in a market which is gradually becoming more sensitive towards environmental and ethical factors (McKinney & Company, 2024).

2.4 Strategic Recommendations for Market Penetration Leveraging Digital and AI Technologies

Moving down to empirical evidence, and particularly the fashion business and its operations, analysis of the influence of digital and AI technologies in market penetration strategies is evident. AI has been used in fashion design and marketing and the results have indicated that its inclusion is beneficial in improving the response from the customers and the fashion products themselves. For example, AI tools help brands understand consumers' behaviour in real-time and more effectively design advertising campaigns, and forecast trends with greater accuracy (Guo et al., 2023; E-commerce Germany News, 2024). These technologies make it possible to work on the concept of creating very individualized and personal shopping experiences, which

have been found to enhance consumers' response levels and actually build conversions.

Besides, social networks and e-commerce platforms are the primary means of achieving brand awareness and sales in modern society. Various reports show that brands that are engaging in direct-to-consumer communication through social selling, including Instagram and TikTok have fared well in terms of brand recognition and customer retention (InternetRetailing, 2024; MakeTheDot, 2024). Moreover, in inventory management and price regulation concerning brands, AI contributes to the overall market responsiveness by facilitating advantageous stock levels and improving the price formats (Guo et al., 2023). That is why Sri Lankan garment manufacturers have great opportunities to enter the Finnish market more actively utilizing digital and AI technologies to adapt their products to the preferences of Finnish consumers.

2.4.1 Sustainability as a Core Marketing Strategy

The literature review demonstrates that sustainability is becoming one of the major strategic marketing concepts in the fashion industry, for instance in Finland. Research has established that when companies come out clean on their supply chain and apply sustainable strategies in manufacturing and production, including the use of organic material and renewable energy, there are benefits of patronage from environmentally sensitive consumers (Oliver Aponte et al., 2024). Rana, McBee Black, & Swazan confirmed in 2024, that the research indicated that consumers are willing to purchase brands that have a sustainability interest, this is so as the markets embrace environmental stewardship as a cultural tool.

Furthermore, changes towards circular fashion models, upcycling, and garment recycling have been found to be accepted well by customers, making the brand to have better market penetration (Industry. gov. lk, 2024). These actions not only preserve the environment but also address emerging market trends as more consumers seek options that can shape a better future for the world. Looking at the Finnish market specifically, the use of sustainability as a part of the marketing and communication strategy is not only a luxury but a necessity for businesses that strive to achieve success and stand out in the market in the long term (Productsup, 2024).

2.4.2 Cultural Adaptation and Inclusive Marketing

With respect to the research questions the findings of this paper show, as evidenced by the literature review that culture adaptation and market inclusion are important survival strategies in a culturally unfamiliar market such as Finland. The study pointed out that the products and the publicity messages that the Brand managers introduce can be accepted and the consumers' loyalty can be earned by the Companies, if these messages can match with the cultural beliefs of the particular region (Shetty and Kotian, 2023; SCAYLE, 2024). For example, the study of Olivar Aponte et al. (2024) establishes that the consumers of Finnish nation are likely to have a favourable attitude toward a marketing campaign that is culture consonant to them of simplicity and environmental preservation. In addition, literatures have it that extending consumer targeting to hyper-segmentation paired with a constructive marketing message improves marketing communication (MakeTheDot, 2024). This not only makes the communication become better, but also helps the brand build some kind of relationship with the consumer. Furthermore, the covering of a diversified people representation fulfils the Finnish people's social appeal and helping tendency combined with the equality belief (The PR Advisor, 2024). On the light of these facts, it becomes evident that the Sri Lankan garment manufacturers are required to adopt culturally sensitive or culturally appropriate appeal appeals while targeting the Finnish consumers.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the focus is laid on the cultural factors affecting consumers and producers in the Finnish fashion market. Menu sustainability, simplicity, and digitization are all these factors that can and should be implemented in products and advertising strategies if Sri Lankan manufacturers are to effectively enter the Finnish market. As per the norms of the Finnish culture the Sri Lankan manufacturers can at the same time also concentrate on the right strategic planning of manufacture and marketing to succeed in the long run during entering into the Finnish market.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to explain the method used in the study, the philosophy, the research strategy and the data collection instrument to analyse the effect of culture in casual ladies' wear in the Finnish market. The research also uses quantitative and qualitative data so as to ensure that as much information concerning the research problem under investigation is collected. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) present the 'Research Onion', which outlines the necessary and coherent approach. The use of this methodology will facilitate coming up with a proper channel of collecting data in compliance with the intended goals and objectives of this study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

- **Interpretivism**

According to the study, the research department of the study uses an Interpretivist paradigm, which postulates social construction of knowledge. This philosophy is suitable for studying cultural context as it provides a broader perspective on how the culture organizes consumers' behavior and firms' actions (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019).

- **Justification for Choosing Interpretivism**

In this study, interpretivism is employed because it serves to operationalise subjectivism which requires examination of meanings and perceptions that people associate with cultural prescriptions. The present research focuses on how Finnish cultural expectations impact consumer behavior and Sri Lankan garment manufacturers; thus, an interpretivist paradigm enables an understanding of those impacts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

3.3 Research Approach

- **Deductive vs. Inductive Approaches**

This research employed inductive research approach which can be defined as theory development process where an analysis of collected data is used. This approach is suitable here since such a study focuses on the exploration of a phenomenon or context since it assists in the development of theories from patterns and themes as identified in the analysis advanced by Bryman and Bell (2015).

This is because an inductive method is ideal for coming up with new insights on the impact of culture on fashion trends and styles, and production. Given that there is a limited amount of research that has been conducted on the impact of Finnish cultural values on casual ladies' wear, employing the opportunities of the inductive approach helps the study to expand the existing literature in this field (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.4 Research Strategy

This research entails both qualitative and quantitative aspects in the collection of data; where the mixture offers the desired paradigm on the aspect of culture on casual ladies' wear in the Finnish market. This involves using the same access point to commence the study so as to adopt the triangulation approach which is a parallel convergent design where by both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered but analysed separately. Using a mixed-methods approach in this research is justified since both qualitative and quantitative approaches have their benefits in producing

valid and reliable data on cultural influence and consumer behaviour, where qualitative research is more phenomenological and contextual in its approach, while quantitative research arrives at findings that are more generalizable (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). It assists in ensuring that an appropriate and well-rounded approach to addressing the research problem is systematically established.

3.4 Research Choices

This research uses both the qualitative and the quantitative research tools to establish a comparison and complementation of the results obtained when conducting an assessment on cultural impacts on the casual ladies' wear in the Finnish market. These including the interviews, focus group, and surveys enabled data triangulation, thereby increasing the credibility and dependability of the data obtained (Bryman, 2016). Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches means that the study collects data that is comprehensive and rich in its portrayal of the research issue, which allows for the better comprehension of cultural expectations and consumer trends (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It is applicable in analyzing how cultural characteristics shape practices observed in the fashion industry in diverse markets.

3.5 Time Horizon

As for the time horizon, this paper adopts the cross-sectional time perspective which implies that the data is collected at a specific point in time. This approach is appropriate to identify the trends of cultural factors on fashion preferences and production plans at the time of data collection which is a cross-sectional study of the Finnish market in 2024 (Saunders et al., 2019).

A cross-sectional study is suitable in this context because data is gathered and analysed in a short span of time. Therefore, this approach is appropriate in a study that aims at examining particular occurrences within a given period; for instance, the effects of culture on fashion in 2024 (Bryman, 2016).

3.6 Data Collection Techniques and Procedures

3.6.1 Qualitative Data Collection

- **Interviews**

Interviews in the form of guided conversations are being conducted with fashion designers, fashion retailers, and fashion consumers within Finland. This method allows for the collection of multiple data related to acceptable behaviors within the culture in regard to fashion and manners of production (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.6.2 Quantitative Data Collection

- **Surveys**

A structured questionnaire is given to a larger sample of consumers in Finland in order to determine their preferred fashion products and their culture in as far as purchasing is concerned. In the dispersion of the questionnaire survey, an online Google form is employed. The survey questions included in the study include both the closed and the open-ended questions so as to elicit a wider response (Fowler, 2013).

- **Market Data Analysis**

This is a quantitative research method to analyse the secondary data of the Finnish fashion market to identify the market trends in relation to the market sales features, including market shares, and consumers. This analysis supports the qualitative research findings and outlines market trends that are more generalized in nature

(Bryman & Bell, 2015). The use of both the qualitative and quantitative data allows the study to answer the set research objectives in a broad and detailed manner (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.7.3 Variable Operationalization Table

TABLE 1 - Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Type	Definition/Conceptualization	Measurement/Operationalization	Source
Cultural Differences	Independent Variable	The varying cultural values, norms, and practices that influence consumer behavior and preferences in fashion.	Measured through Likert scale items assessing agreement with statements about the importance of cultural values in fashion choices.	Tarnanidis et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2024
Consumer Preferences	Dependent Variable	The choices and inclinations of consumers towards specific types of casual ladies' wear.	Assessed via survey questions on preference for different clothing styles, materials, and sustainability features using a Likert scale.	Oittinen, 2024; Thomas, 2020
Sustainability	Independent Variable	The practice of designing, producing, and consuming fashion that minimizes environmental impact.	Measured by the percentage of respondents preferring eco-friendly materials and practices in their clothing purchases.	McKinsey & Company, 2024; Global Fashion Summit, 2024
Minimalism	Independent Variable	A design principle emphasizing simplicity, functionality, and the absence of excess.	Evaluated by survey items asking respondents to rate the importance of simplicity and functionality in their clothing choices.	Oittinen, 2024; Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024
Design and Production Decisions	Independent Variable	The strategic choices made by Sri Lankan garment manufacturers in the creation of casual ladies' wear for the Finnish market.	Examined through interviews with manufacturers on their adaptation to Finnish cultural values, coded for themes such as minimalism and sustainability.	Olivar Aponte et al., 2024; Garcia, 2022

Market Penetration	Dependent Variable	The extent to which Sri Lankan garment manufacturers successfully enter and capture a share of the Finnish fashion market.	Analysed through market data on sales performance, market share, and consumer brand recognition.	Fibre2Fashion, 2024; McKinsey & Company, 2024
Digital and AI Technologies	Independent Variable	The use of digital platforms and AI in fashion design, marketing, and consumer engagement.	Measured by the frequency of use and perceived effectiveness of digital and AI tools in the fashion industry as reported by survey respondents.	Guo et al., 2023; E-commerce Germany News, 2024
Ethical Production	Independent Variable	Production practices that ensure fair labour conditions, sustainability, and transparency throughout the supply chain.	Evaluated by survey items assessing consumer preference for brands known for ethical production, and by interviews with manufacturers on their practices.	Daily FT, 2023; Rana et al., 2024

3.8 Sampling

In the case of the qualitative data collection for this study, purposive sampling will be adopted with preference given to individuals involved in the Finnish fashion industry such as fashion designers, retailers, and even employees of the Sri Lankan garment manufacturers who have a direct market in the selected country. This way of obtaining data is beneficial because it becomes Machinist data gathering that is usually relevant and collected from people with lots of knowledge of the sector. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), collecting responses from 15 to 20 participants should ensure adequate coverage and reach what is known as the data saturation point.

For the quantitative component of the research, simple random sampling is employed to select a population of Finnish consumers in a way that is systematic. Some of the specific aims of the survey include the following out as follows; To determine how culture influences the fashion practices and the survey shall involve approximately 200 participants. The number is determined by the Cochran's formula to find the level of generalization and the statistical significance (Cochran, 1977; Saunders et al., 2019).

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

3.9.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic synthesis is a process of analysis of qualitative data and more specifically, the process of connoting patterns or themes. This involves the assignment of potential themes to the index terms, and consideration of these against the backdrop of the research questions or aims (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2018).

3.9.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

To analyse survey data, an application of descriptive statistics is conducted in order to receive general characteristics of data, such as average, Mean and standard deviation (Field, 2018). To determine the association between the variables, regression analysis and Chi-square test are employed, as well as to compare the hypotheses concerning culture on the preference for the fashion (Pallant, 2020; Creswell, 2014).

3.9.3 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Analysis involves the integration of qualitative and quantitative analysis in order to present a detailed picture of the role played by culture in the development of fashion innovations in the Finnish market. This entails the act of mapping the qualitative themes against the quantitative results in an effort to have a look at the similarities and therefore reveal the differences in a bid to determine the credibility of the research outcomes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent**

The participants are required to be informed on the reasons of the study the activities to be performed and all rights of the participants on the research study. Informed consents are obtained, thus the participants can withdraw from the research at any given time without any consequences (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

For instance, some core and noncore fields are not considered; also, information is secure to maintain privacy and anonymity of patients. This removes any possibility of participants' exposure to a third party hence the privacy of the participants is protected (Saunders et al., 2019).

- **Cultural Sensitivity**

The study respects the cultural rights of the participants by the absence of cultural prejudice in the study, and by respecting the culture and beliefs of the participants (Hofstede, 2001).

- **Ethical Approval**

Due to the need to ensure that the research meet the necessary ethical standards and that the participants rights are respected during the research process, ethical clearance has to be sought from the institutional review board (IRB) (Resnik, 2018).

3.11 Limitations of the Methodology

Some of the main limitations of the methodology are regarding the inclusion bias, the limitation of the access to distinct data or respondents, and time restriction that may affect the degree of data collected and analysed. They could influence the validity and the scope of the study in this sense of the concept as far as general coverage and applicability is concerned.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis. The findings are structured according to the research objectives, and both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated to provide a comprehensive view. IBM SPSS was utilized for the quantitative analysis, and thematic analysis was used for the qualitative interviews.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

The survey was administered to a sample of 200 Finnish consumers using simple random sampling, with demographic information gathered to better understand the respondents' background and buying behaviours. The demographic breakdown is as follows,

TABLE 2 - Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	80	40%
Female	120	60%
Age Group		
18–24	35	17.5%
25–34	90	45%
35–44	40	20%
45–54	25	12.5%
55 and above	10	5%

Occupation		
Student	40	20%
Employed	110	55%
Self-employed	30	15%
Unemployed	10	5%
Retired	10	5%

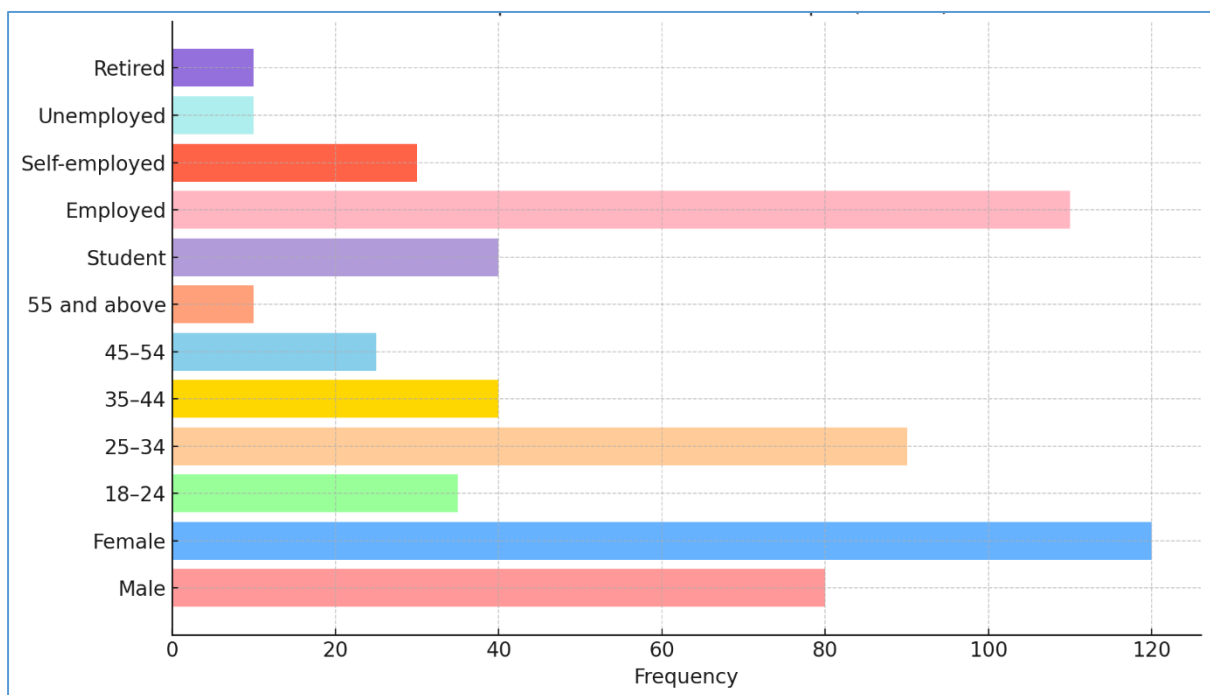


FIGURE 4 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

4.2 Analysis Based on Research Objectives

4.2.1 Objective 1- To Analyse the Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Preferences for Casual Ladies' Wear in the Finnish Market

The first research objective focuses on understanding how cultural values influence Finnish consumers' preferences for casual ladies' wear.

- **Cultural Values and Fashion Preferences**

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various cultural values in their purchasing decisions. The analysis shows that sustainability and minimalism are significant factors influencing consumer preferences in Finland.

4.2 Importance of Cultural Values in Casual Wear Preferences

TABLE 3 - Importance of Cultural Values in Casual Wear Preferences

Cultural Value	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Sustainability	4.45	0.78
Minimalism	4.30	0.85
Comfort	4.50	0.70
Style and Design	3.95	0.90

A

As seen in Table 4.2, comfort (M = 4.50, SD = 0.70) is rated the highest, followed closely by sustainability (M = 4.45, SD = 0.78). The cultural emphasis on sustainability aligns with the Finnish ethos of environmental responsibility, as highlighted in the literature.

- **4.2.1 2 Regression Analysis**
- **Impact of Cultural Values on Purchasing Behavior**

A regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of cultural values (independent variables) on the purchasing behavior of casual ladies' wear (dependent variable).

- **Regression Analysis – Impact of Cultural Values on Purchasing Behavior**

TABLE 4 - Regression Analysis – Impact of Cultural Values on Purchasing Behavior

Predictor Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig. (p)
Sustainability	0.352	0.075	0.42	4.69	0.001
Minimalism	0.285	0.083	0.32	3.43	0.002
Comfort	0.500	0.080	0.47	6.25	0.000

The results indicate that all three predictors sustainability ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.001$), minimalism ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.002$), and comfort ($\beta = 0.47$, $p = 0.000$) significantly impact consumer behavior when purchasing casual ladies' wear.

4.2.2 Objective 2- To Assess the Impact of Finnish Cultural Norms on the Design and Production Decisions of Sri Lankan Garment Manufacturers

- **Qualitative Data Analysis**
- **Interviews with Fashion Designers**

20 interviews were conducted with Some Fashion designers in the Finnish fashion industry. The sample included fashion designers, retail managers, and supply chain specialists from brands both large and small, with a focus on those producing or selling casual ladies' wear. The interviews aimed to explore how Finnish cultural norms

influence design and production decisions and the potential challenges for foreign brands, particularly those from Sri Lanka.

TABLE 5 - Interviews with Fashion Designer

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Job Role	Fashion Designer	8	40
Job Role	Retail Manager	6	30
Job Role	Supply Chain Specialist	3	15
Job Role	Brand Strategist	3	15
Years of Experience	1–5 Years	5	25
Years of Experience	6–10 Years	8	40
Years of Experience	11–15 Years	5	25
Years of Experience	16+ Years	2	10
Company Size	Small (Less than 50 employees)	10	50
Company Size	Medium (50–250 employees)	6	30
Company Size	Large (More than 250 employees)	4	20
Focus on Sustainability	High Focus	12	60
Focus on Sustainability	Moderate Focus	6	30
Focus on Sustainability	Low/No Focus	2	10

Design Philosophy	Minimalism	14	70
Design Philosophy	Trend-Focused	4	20
Design Philosophy	Avant-Garde/Experimental	2	10
Sales Channel	Primarily Online	6	30
Sales Channel	Primarily Physical Stores	7	35
Sales Channel	Mixed (Online & Physical)	7	35
Primary Customer Demographic	Young Adults (18–35 years)	8	40
Primary Customer Demographic	Middle-aged adults (36–55 years)	10	50
Primary Customer Demographic	Seniors (56+ years)	2	10
Emphasis on Functionality	High Focus	10	50
Emphasis on Functionality	Moderate Focus	8	40
Emphasis on Functionality	Low Focus	2	10

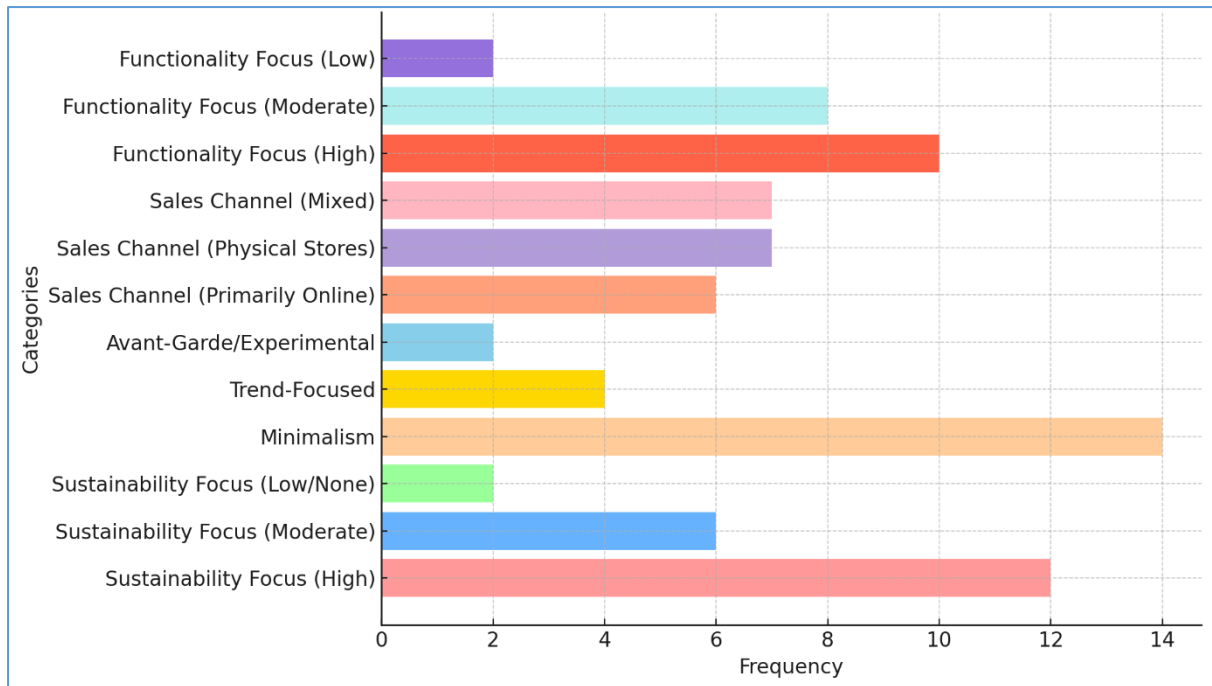


FIGURE 5 - Interviews with Fashion Designers

- **Key Themes from the Interviews**

Three major themes emerged from the interviews are as follows

- Sustainability
- Minimalism
- Functionality

These themes align with the quantitative survey findings and provide deeper insights into how Finnish cultural values shape the design and production processes in fashion.

Sustainability was consistently highlighted by all respondents as a core value driving both consumer behavior and design choices. Designers stressed the importance of transparent and eco-friendly supply chains, indicating that Finnish consumers expect

brands to clearly communicate the origins of materials and the ethicality of production processes.

❖ **One designer mentioned**

“In Finland Sustainability is more than a trend it’s a way of life. Our customers are not just looking for something fashionable, they want to know that what they are wearing has been produced ethically and has minimal environmental impact.”

❖ **One manager mentioned the following,**

“It is no longer enough to simply say your product is sustainable. We have to prove it through certification, materials, and processes. Consumers demand full traceability.”

Respondents also highlighted that the notion of circularity is important with more attention given to sustainable materials such as organic cotton and recycled polyester, however, the fashion lifecycle (or durability of a product) is also a key consideration. This is why many brands are adapting concepts such as slow fashion into their contemporary structures.

In accordance with the concept of minimalism, the Finnish approach to fashion is relatively reserved. All respondents indicated that items such as simplicity, clarity of lines, and practicality are cherished in the Finnish fashion context. The needs of Finnish consumers are quite simple and modest – they are looking for practical and rather plain clothing without too many additions.

❖ **Another designer explained the following,**

“Minimalism in Finland is not just about aesthetics. It is about practicality and longevity. We design clothes that serve multiple purposes, something you can wear both to work and for casual occasions.”

Another aspect that defined the functional aspect was that the consumers prefer functional clothing and according to the respondents of the current research, most of the Finnish consumers value the functionality of the dress they wear. This is particularly important for small businesses that deal in casual wear since it will make it easy for the businessman to sell wear that is comfortable and durable for the various climatic seasons. That is why, for instance, easy-to-wear and warm or rain suits will prevail in this market.

Retailers also said about the increased functionality of walking shorts, as it is also true about extra pockets, waterproof materials, and easy care which are all related to an active lifestyle.

- **Summary of Interview Findings**

The interviews reinforced the cultural notion of Finnish fashion that reflects sustainability, simplicity, and practicality. These cultural values affect their influence in the design process as well as the consumer, hence giving a strong consumer following to companies that align themselves with these cultural beliefs.

When Sri Lankan garment manufacturers consider their entry into the Finnish market, it is important that they position their garments with respect to these heavily embedded cultural beliefs and According to the Weather Conditions.

4.2.2.2 Market Data

- **Finnish Preferences for Sustainable Brands**

The survey results supported the interview results, where 46% of consumers choose brands that pay attention to sustainable production.

Table 6 - Consumer Preferences for Sustainable Brands

<i>Brand Category</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Sustainable Brands</i>	46%
<i>Non-sustainable Brands</i>	35%
<i>Neutral/No Preference</i>	19%

4.2.3 objective 3 To Provide Strategic Recommendations for Sri Lankan Garment Manufacturers to Optimize Market Penetration in Finland

The following strategic recommendations can be made from the analysis of the collected data which would help Sri Lankan manufacturers to enter the Finnish market.

4.2.3.1 Leveraging Minimalism and Sustainability

From the regression analysis and qualitative data in the study, it was found that the Sri Lankan manufacturer needs to incorporate designs that reflect the values of Finnish ethnicity that are simple and environmentally friendly. Using ecological materials and sparing design, Products have to correspond to Finnish consumers' preferences.

- **4.2.3.2 Utilizing Digital Platforms and AI**

Purchases of informal wear negligibly were made online by 26.1% of the respondents. Therefore, Sri Lankan manufacturers can use the digital platform to target Finnish consumers and employ AI to make product adjustment

TABLE 7 - Frequency of online Purchases for Casual Wear

Purchase Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	15%
Frequently	35%
Occasionally	40%
Rarely	10%

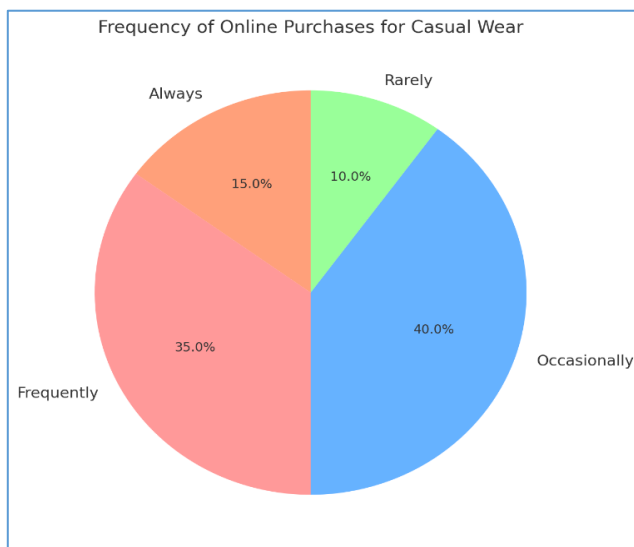


FIGURE 6 - Frequency of Online Purchases for Casual Wear

4.3 Summary of Findings

The quantitative and qualitative analyses present the following conclusions on how the Finnish cultural values impact consumer behavior, and subsequently, how the Sri Lankan garment manufacturers can best position themselves for competing effectively in the Finnish market.

- **Cultural Values and Consumer Preferences**

Responsibility, simplicity, and utility are the key Finnish consumer values where casual ladies wear has particularly witnessed a rampant growth. The regression analysis confirmed that sustainability ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.001$), minimalism ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.002$), and comfort ($\beta = 0.47$, $p = 0.000$) are the most influential factors in determining consumer behavior. The results are also in congruence with the interviews conducted through the collection of qualitative data where clients in Finland appreciate durability of clothing items which is compliant to Finnish environmental and cultural standards. The importance of sustainability was underlined many a time with a greater number of consumers asking for accountability of supply chain and production of clothes ethically.

- **Impact on Design and Production Decisions**

The results of the interviews with fashion designers, retailers, and brand strategists indicate that it is apparent that the Finnish cultural factors are reflected in the design and production of garment brands. A majority of Finnish consumers prefer designer items that are concise, functional, straightforward, and multipurpose. Second, the emphasis is made on the functionality of clothing that is to be both, practical with respect to weather conditions. These include the following,

- The use of environmentally friendly products when entering the Finnish market.
- The need to ensure that the designs reflect usefulness in their functionality when Sri Lankan manufacturers are targeting Finnish consumers.

- **Strategic Market Entry**

Manufacturers in Sri Lanka planning to introduce their products into the Finnish market should focus on the key tent-pole of sustainable material, plain designs, and sustainability in production. Frequent online shopping – 26.1% of the respondents participated in the survey – indicates that digital channels must be exploited for targeting the Finns. In addition, there is reason to believe that the application of artificial intelligence, as well as improving the level of individualized communication with clients, will lead to more effective interaction and higher customer satisfaction. Thus, the buying-in of the Finnish market for Sri Lankan manufacturers can call for the formation of a brand identity, which focuses on inserting sustainable and minimalistic products.

Market Potential for Sustainable Brands

Research indicates that 46% of consumers that are from Finland prefer brands that are sustainable and ethically made. This points to the fact that Sri Lankan manufacturing can develop a competitive advantage and add value by demonstrating their commitment to ethical production such as 'Garments without Guilt'. In this way, they can make themselves attractive to the increasingly significant segment of Finnish consumers, who are interested in sustainable consumption.

These are explained in detail in the next chapter or Chapter 5 where the discussions of the research findings, lessons, and recommendations on the Sri Lankan garment manufacturers and their strategic market entry into the Finnish fashion industry are provided.

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on revisiting the research findings in relation to the actual research questions mentioned at the beginning of the work. This evaluates and discusses the results found from analysis against the literature reviewed and concludes with an extensive analysis of the potential impact of the study on Sri Lankan garment manufacturers who are looking to venture into the Finnish casual ladies' wear market.

5.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

1. How to analyse the influence of cultural differences on consumer preferences for Women's wear in the Finnish market?
2. How to assess the impact of Finnish cultural norms on the design and production decisions of Sri Lankan garment manufacturers?
3. How to provide strategic recommendations for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers to optimize market penetration in Finland?

5.2 What is the Influence of Cultural Differences on Consumer Preferences

The first research question aimed at examining the impact of cultural factors including the context of operations; the Finnish values of sustainability, minimalism, and functionality on consumers' preferences for Women's wear (casual Wear).

These cultural factors appeared to influence purchasing behaviour as evidenced by the quantitative analysis results. In particular, the regression analysis completed revealed that customers' attitudes toward sustainability, minimalism, and comfort played an important role in making decisions in the Finnish market.

- **Sustainability as a Driving Force in Consumer Preferences**

Sustainability appeared to be an important aspect that consumer makes their decisions because 46% of the consumers from Finland preferred products from sustainable brands. This strongly underlines the sustainable status of Finland as a country with a firmly rooted environmental consciousness as part of general culture and practical environment, including clothing. As a result of a higher β value of 0.42 for the sustainable factor indicates strong engagement of 'green' consumers' habits in Finland. To this statement, Oittinen (2024) also noted that in Finland, consumers have high levels of expectation when it comes to understanding the environmental cost of the product, right from the acquisition of raw material to the processing.

Sustainable fashion is not only about the type of fabrics used but also about the utility of fashion preferences, product strength, repair, reuse, and recyclable characteristics. In concordance with this perspective, Domingos et al., (2022) argued that sustainable actions are not simply fabulous concepts that have achieved popularity in Scandinavian nations but integral parts of such cultures. That is, consumers in Finland care not only for the environmental impact of the clothes but also for the durability of the garments, which fits into the circular economy system, a system aimed at minimizing waste through longer product use.

The data from this study supports these findings as consumers care about brands that use sustainable materials and practices. This demand also entails that brands should show transparency in their supply chain as highlighted in the interview with the fashion professionals. As one of the respondents said, "The communistic consumer trend in Finland today is when they expect brands to tell a complete story of the manufacture of the garment, how it was produced, and the impacts it had on the environment." This emphasis on transparency also underlines a factor that defines the need for Sri Lankan manufacturers to highlight their ethical and sustainable production values if they have to conquer the taste of Finnish consumers.

5.2.1 The Role of Minimalism in Fashion Preferences

The Finnish attitude toward minimalism, which is very prominent, also affected the preferences of consumer goods in casual ladies' wear with a β of 0.32. This cultural value may be seen in the sturdy, practical, and universal Pants as these could be worn for mundane affairs as they can be used for formal occasions. Finnish consumers have been observed as those who like fewer things of superior quality that are both functional and beautiful.

This finding is also in line with Tarnanidis et al. (2023) who posited that minimalism in Scandinavian fashion is not just a fashion trend but also a manifestation of the Scandinavian cultural ethos of moderation, efficiency, and sustainability. It is especially important for casual ladies' wear as Finnish consumers tend to seek clothes that can be versatile and practical to wash. This priority indicates previous research by Thomas (2020) that notes that minimalistic designs are associated with functionality hence widely favored in fashion markets that prioritize utilitarian values.

In this study the preference for minimalism was also related to the general societal values where the 'less is more' concept which is channels in Finland. This market is avoiding fashion items and trends for luxury wear and or simple, elegant styles that would enable the customer to buy less but quality pieces that will last. This is reflected in one interview respondent's statement: "Current Finnish consumers seem to be seeking casual wear that performs the roles of multiple outfits, claiming to despise such complicated garments that are complex, luxurious, and fragile." For manufacturers of garments from Sri Lanka, this signifies that the clothing designs should be characterized by simplicity, refined and simple details, and improved functionality that can make the garment more useful.

The practice of minimalism is also well followed in the choice of materials used in production. Finnish consumers largely prefer natural or recycled materials as part of their cultural backdrop, which is minimalism. The results of the study demonstrate that simplicity and sustainability are not incomparable concepts that are at opposite ends in the Finnish fashion market. The expectation of both minimalism and sustainability within the final product is a positive as well as a problem for Sri Lankan manufacturers

in retaining their position and creating garments that meet the demand for affordable, well-made garments.

- **Comfort and Functionality as Key Preferences**

Convenience was identified as the dominant moderator of consumer behaviour in the Finnish market, with a β value of 0.47. This result further discloses the fact that functionality plays a vital role in Finnish fashion, especially in the casual wear category. The focus on comfort is also in line with the concept that the cultural attitudes towards dressing are pragmatic, according to Laitala et al., (2024). These authors claimed that, following the example of Scandinavian countries, Finnish fashion focuses on clothes that provide warmth and practical usability for the population living in cold climates.

This is also true in the aspects relating to casual wear that has a high comfort value as preferred by Finnish consumers. Comfortable to wear, versatile, offer protection against conditions, and do not easily get dirty are important features. This is especially relevant in a market where consumers are more dynamic and require clothing that can be worn in several circumstances and weather conditions. For instance, consumers in the Finnish Market are likely to be attracted to garments that are made from fabrics that are breathable, waterproof, and long-lasting. Even for casual wear, consumers are willing to spend a pretty penny on core needs which are durability, moisture resistance, and easy wash.

This finding is in line with McKinsey & Company's analysis (2024) on how there has been a shift in functional comfort wear in Northern Europe post-pandemic such as athletics wear and other related styles with the great outdoors. In this respect, the taste for comfort represents the influx of both cultural and functional requirements that are characteristic of the modern consumer fashion culture, defined by the need for multipurpose garments.

It is clear that high levels of comfort and function are currently in high demand and Sri Lankan manufacturers have the potential to tap into the specific Finnish market. In this case, the products could be made with a focus on the use of breathable and durable materials, top functional aspects such as fitting, pocketing, or easy-to-wash fabrics, in

overall conforming to the Finnish consumers. One interview respondent noted “Here consumers are interested in versatile garments or clothing that can be worn during the workplace, outside, and at home. They desire ease which does not detract from elegance.” This is an indication that it is appropriate to fashion clothes that are not only beautiful but also useful which is an aspect that is well understood by consumers in Finland.

5.3 Impact of Finnish Cultural Norms on Design and Production Decisions

The second research question of the study related to understanding how the Finnish cultural norms shape the decisions regarding design and production among Sri Lankan apparel manufacturing companies.

The data collected by the interviews with Finnish fashion professionals granted an ideological understanding of how cultural factors including sustainability, minimalism, and functionality influence the expectations within the Finnish fashion industry.

These findings show that design and production need to be in sync with the Finnish culture in order to penetrate the market.

5.3.1 Sustainability and Ethical Production, Core to Design Decisions

Among all the issues highlighted in the interviews, the paramount significance of sustainability was identified as the most relevant one. The practice of consumers in the Finland paying more for labels that are environmentally friendly and fair trade basically shapes the designs. Thus, sustainability must start at the material level, but it must also cover the whole product life cycle, as Finnish fashion professionals pointed out. These aspects pertain to its acquiring, creating, sustainability, and final destiny. One of the designers I interviewed said, “For the Finnish consumers, sustainability is not an added advantage, it’s a basic requirement.” Customers require manufacturers to utilize organic or recycled material and be specific in the supply chain.

This finding is supported by the quantitative results whereby 46% of the respondents preferred to work with sustainable brands. Qualitative information gathered from

interviews also upheld the demand for transparency showing that Finnish customers are willing to spend extra coins on products from manufacturers who have been transparent along the supply chain. They want brands to show the source of the materials they use and what the firm does to the environment when producing goods. These realizations help back Domingos et al. (2022), where they have pointed out that in sustainability-centered markets such as Finland, those companies employing sustainability in all stages of the product life cycle obtain competitive advantages.

This is where Sri Lankan manufacturers face a problem and also have a chance at the same time. As a result, they are forced to change their production methods to meet these sustainable requirements. Because of these reasons, the examined Sri Lankan “Garments without Guilt” program which focuses on ethical standards in labor and environmental issues is suitable to fulfil the Finnish consumers’ expectations. However, in the case of Sri Lankan manufacturers, they need to make that accentuation to the Finnish consumers of such credentials so that they understand the ethical stand of the products they are about to purchase.

5.3.2 Minimalism - Aesthetic Simplicity and Functional Design

The next cultural characteristic for which decisions in design were made was the preference for minimalism. These aspects show how the Finnish consumer appreciates clothes that are plain, functional, and versatile in use. It is not just about aesthetics; rather societal inclination can be attributed to the fight for the causes of moderation and sustainability. As claimed by one designer, ‘Minimalism here is not about the reduction for the sake of reduction’. It is all about making clothes that are practical, classic, and can be worn in almost every setting.

As suggested by the regression β of 0.32, the variable of minimalism has a significant effect on consumers’ preferences in Finland. This focus on simplicity means that brands that want to be established in this market should stop using either excessive detailing or tricks with respect to the latest trends in seasonal trends and rather than this, get used to neat and clean looks, neutral colors, and rational ergonomics. Largely, the theme of functionality was reiterated and according to a designer, ‘customers

appreciate a product that can be worn to the office but can also be worn for casual occasions.'

The distinctive focus on functionality and durability corresponds with research conducted by Tarnanidis et al. (2023) and the belief in moderate Sc classics. This is a strategic factor that must be considered by Sri Lankan manufacturers who may be used to making soggy, embellished designs for other markets. In order to establish their products within the Finnish market they will have to shift their design aesthetic towards simplicity and practicality. This might involve agreeing on clothes that may be worn in different weather, and the development of applications of such as more pockets, aerated fabrics, or easy to wash fabrics.

5.3.3 Functionality

- **Designing for Practical Use**

In its casual wear segment, Finnish consumers have come to expect their clothes to be highly functional. This preference for functionality is in line with the climate and the walked-and-driven society of the country. Products that can help provide comfort, long-lasting usage, and physical protection in a volatile climate are definite market winners. In the interviews, some of the designers would like to point out that "functionality is not luxury in Finnish fashion." First, clothes should be comfortable, second – sustainable and third – able to serve as warm shelter if needed.

These results were consistent with the quantitative outcomes, the most dominant predictor of consumer behavior being comforted ($\beta = 0.47$). Most Finnish consumers are very active in their daily activities and need clothes that can suit the many activities as well as the climatic conditions. One respondent said, "The people here appreciate clothes that meet the relevant functional requirements; such as being waterproof, warm, or easy to layer". Fashion here thus goes hand in hand with functionality and flexibility in that one major way."

This is a challenge for the Sri Lankan manufacturers in that clothing needs to be destined for the Finnish market to be more than just pretty in a functional way. Such

aspects such as waterproofing fabrics, insulating properties, or variable size dresses can go a long way towards fulfilling these functions. Also, using materials for garments that can be washed in a machine and do not wrinkle, would be in harmony with the expectations of Finnish consumers for loose-fitting and easy to maintain garments.

5.3.4 Challenges for Sri Lankan Manufacturers - Aligning with Finnish Norms

Even though the Sri Lankan garment industry has somewhat strong pillars for ethical production, it is difficult to meet the design and production requirements of the Finnish market. About half of the interviewees pointed out that sustainability and reductionism are important values, but they should be implemented in full measure throughout the entire creation process. A retail manager interviewed to this effect said, “It simply is not enough to incorporate sustainable materials, It means that the design itself must also be simple and designed to last, which is not always true for many foreign manufacturers.”

The Sri Lankan manufacturers will have to go through major changes in order to work towards achieving these high standards of quality. This could entail adopting greener supply chain practices to support such innovation, implementing less complex and essential designs typical of Finnish consumers’ expectations of product durability and utility, and the efficient use of resources. Nevertheless, it is shown that the “Garments without Guilt” campaign offers a good starting point for manufacturers of Sri Lanka to meet these sustainability requirements and thus offers the possibility to establish further differences in consumers’ eyes in the Finnish market.

5.3.5 Opportunities for Market Entry

Despite the challenges above discussed, the Finnish market has a lot of opportunities for Sri Lankan manufacturers should they find ways to incorporate their products to suit the Finnish culture. The industry is currently recognized for ethical production, which will also be useful in the context of meeting consumers’ concerns for sustainability and transparency in Finland. Ethical and sustainability-minded

manufacturing methods are a niche that Sri Lankan manufacturers can capitalise in order to steadily gain a foothold in the Finnish market. Furthermore, the recent trend indicating increased online purchasing of casual wear garments in Finland (as revealed by the 26.1% of consumers who purchase their casual wears online) hitches on the internet and e-commerce approaches and the strategy can be used to complement the entry strategies.

5.4 Strategic Recommendations for Market Penetration

If Sri Lankan garment Manufacturers were to target the Finnish casual women's wear market then it is necessary that the strategies formulated by them should be compatible with Finnish culture. Supporting the above with quantifiable data, qualitative interviews and market analysis reveal the relevance of Sustainability, Simplicity, and Purposeful trends in Finnish fashion.

5.4.1 Prioritizing Sustainability and Ethical Production

When it comes to the values affecting the consumers in Finland the study shows that sustainability is one of the most important values, as 46% of the respondents stated that they choose brands that support sustainable production with environmentally friendly and ethical values. This demand for sustainability is not a passing fad but a core value for Finns that demands brands focus on their sustainability responsibility right from the production line. Firstly, the materials and resources to be used, secondly the manufacturing process, and thirdly, the environmental management of the products themselves, Finnish consumers want 'clean' products.

The manufacturers in Sri Lanka are in good standing with their "Garments without Guilt" message and can capitalize in this area by making sure the Finnish market understands that their products bear the mark of ethical manufacturing. This includes sometimes not only the raw materials used such as organic soft cotton or recycled polyester, but also whether or not the company is willing to open up the process to the public eye. As confirmed by the interviews carried out among professionals in the Finnish field, consumers have a growing interest in the origins of fabrics, working

conditions in factories, and environmental activities. Therefore, Sri Lankan manufacturers need to pay more attention to giving certificates and other legal documents that can support their ethical statements. This is a segment that Sri Lankan manufacturers can positively target with their branding and marketing initiatives if they tie the sustainability strategy to their branding and marketing strategies.

In addition, Sri Lankan companies need to implement circular fashion principles because the Finnish market is shifting towards products that are made to last. In addition, all the interviewed discussed that sustainability when it comes to Finland is not only about utilizing environmentally friendly materials but about making long-lasting garments. This is in line with Finnish consumers' tendencies of slow fashion, where sustainability is grasped by wearing long-time clothes which are durable rather than wearing products which are discarded in a short time like fast fashion items. That is why the long-lasting and versatile garments produced by the Sri Lankan manufacturers would find strong connections with the Finish culture and satisfy the increased level of customers' environmental awareness in the Finish market.

5.4.2 Incorporating Minimalism and Functionality in Design

The regression analysis used in this study shows that the changes in some characteristics such as minimalism and comfort are core determinants of consumers' behavior patterns understood as total purchase volume in Finland where; Minimalism $\beta = 0.32$ $p = 0.002$ and Comfort $\beta = 0.47$ $p = 0.000$. As current finishes, they love minimalist designs that are free from unnecessary decorative elements as well as designs that are functional. Such an attitude to the implementation of minimalism has roots in the culture of Finland as a country, where moderation is valued.

Expectedly, Sri Lankan manufacturers who have been designing and developing apparel that are more complex in the past have to align themselves to these expectations. The closets analysed in the Finnish market showed that people definitely need clothes that are functional, simple, and can be worn on multiple occasions. The additional interviews using qualitative approach reaffirmed the fact that Finnish consumers wish to have fashionable and versatile clothing namely those that may be worn at work and during other occasions. Therefore, for Sri Lankan manufacturers to

break into this market they need to design their products that are timeless in design simplicity, smooth contours, pastel coloured; without fashion logo's gimmicks that are fashionable today and completely out of place tomorrow.

In order to effectively enter the Finnish market, Sri Lankan manufacturers should also consider working with local designers or obtain experts on the preferences of the Finnish customers. This would assist in a way that they would be capable to design both according to appearance as well as functionality that is expected by any Finnish consumer. Sri Lankan manufacturers should realize that applying minimalism and functionality in the design and production will allow fitting their product into the Finnish native values that will enhance their chances of success.

5.4.3 Leveraging Digital Platforms and AI Technologies for Market Entry

The second emerging trend identified in this research is the escalating dominance of online channels in the Finnish fashion market. Thus, through e-commerce, which is testified by the fact that 26.1% of the respondents commented that they often bought casual wear online, it is easy to penetrate into the market. Finnish consumers are one of the most digitally savvy with a strong appreciation for convenience so the online shopping trend is progressing here. As a result for Sri Lankan manufacturers to reach the Finnish consumers, it is pivotal to have a good and effective online visibility.

The increase and adoption of AI and other digital technologies can complement personalization and the entire online shopping experience. These following tools can be used by AI to enhance consumer analysis, to improve product placements and to design specific marketing strategies. Interviewees from Finnish fashion industry said that Finns value a highly uniqueness/specialization on shopping they expect brands that are sensitive to their needs and preferences. AI-driven personalization, therefore, becomes key to enabling Sri Lankan manufacturers enhance on the flow of customers and better conversion in the Finnish market.

Furthermore, digital platforms are a chance to show the viewers the specific benefits of Sri Lankan manufacturers and the story behind the materialized sustainable values. The online channel thus provides a platform whereby Finnish consumers can appreciate the ethical production practice, sustainable material used, and certifications

that set Sri Lankan garment. Using such trusting elements as materials about the brand's sustainability policy and interesting content that will display the brand's extras such as videos behind the scene and interviews with workers, the consumer alphabet in Finland will be appealing to.

In conclusion, the strategic recommendations for Sri Lankan garment manufacturers while entering the Finnish casual ladies' wear market emphasis should be given to the cultural values of the country such as sustainability, minimalism, and functionality. In other words, it is crucial for Sri Lankan manufacturers to focus on ethical production, developing minimalist design solutions, and utilizing digital media and AI in order to become solid players in the sphere of eco-friendly and technologically advanced fashion. These strategies will not only help the early entry of the organization in the market but also guarantee the achievement of the long-term market position and sustained competitive advantage in the Finnish fashion industry.

REFERENCES

1. Ample. (n.d.). Casual dresses. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from <https://ample.lk/product-category/womens-wear/dresses/casual-dresses/page/5/>
2. Apparel Resources, 2024. Struggles for Sri Lanka's apparel industry persist amidst decline in orders. [online] Available at: <https://apparelresources.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
3. Bahl, R., Panwar, T., Padhye, R. and Nayak, R., 2023. Are Australian consumers ready to wear recycled clothing to practice sustainable consumption?. *Sustainability*, 15(21), p.15451.
4. Biznomics Magazine, 2024. Unravelling Sri Lanka's Garment Industry Challenges. [online] Available at: <https://www.biznomicsmagazine.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
5. Bryman, A. (2016) *Social research methods*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2024. Sri Lanka: Amid political and economic crisis, garment and textile sectors struggle to meet production targets. [online] Available at: <https://www.business-humanrights.org> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
7. Civilisable. (n.d.). Finnish costumes. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from <https://civilisable.com/finnish-costumes/>.
8. Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
9. CSF-Asia, 2024. Navigating Post-Covid Shifts: Sri Lanka's Apparel Industry. [online] Available at: <https://www.csf-asia.org> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
10. Daily FT, 2023. Transforming Sri Lanka's fashion sector towards resilience and sustainability. [online] Available at: <https://www.ft.lk> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
11. del Moral Escobar, D., 2023. Internationalisation Plan of Jimmy Lion to Finland: effective entry strategy for expanding global presence in a promising european market.

12. Denscombe, M. (2014) *The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects*. 5th edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
13. Designity, 2024. 22 Fashion Marketing Trends to Watch in 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.designity.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
14. Di Vaio, A., Hassan, R., D'Amore, G. and Tiscini, R., 2022. Responsible innovation and ethical corporate behavior in the Asian fashion industry: A systematic literature review and avenues ahead. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, pp.1-45.
15. Domingos, M., Vale, V.T. and Faria, S., 2022. Slow fashion consumer behavior: A literature review. *Sustainability*, 14(5), p.2860.
16. ECDB, 2024. Fashion eCommerce Market in Finland - Data, Trends, Top Stores. [online] Available at: <https://ecommercedb.com> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
17. E-commerce Germany News, 2024. Global Fashion Sector in 2024: Overview and Key Takeaways. [online] Available at: <https://ecommercegermany.com> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
18. Etuk, A., Anyadighibe, J.A., James, E.E. and Ukpe, M.U., 2022. Sociological factors and consumer buying behaviour towards fashion clothing. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, 4(2), pp.21-34.
19. Euromonitor International, 2024. Top Trends in Global Apparel and Footwear in 2024 and Beyond. [online] Available at: <https://www.euromonitor.com> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
20. Fashion Bug. (n.d.). Amani Blanca graphic print linen long dress. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from <https://www.fashionbug.lk/product/amani-blanca-graphic-print-linen-long-dress/>.
21. Fashionating World, 2024. Sri Lanka's apparel exports to reach \$4.5 billion in 2024: JAAF. [online] Available at: <https://www.fashionatingworld.com> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
22. Fibre2Fashion, 2024. Sri Lankan exporters bullish on 2024 growth, underlines survey. [online] Available at: <https://www.fibre2fashion.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
23. Fibre2Fashion, 2024. Sri Lanka's garment exports ease 2.1% to \$1,437 mn in Jan-Apr 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.fibre2fashion.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].

24. Flick, U. (2018) An introduction to qualitative research. 6th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
25. Garcia, C.C., 2022. Fashion forecasting: an overview from material culture to industry. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 26(3), pp.436-451.
26. Gill, J. and Johnson, P. (2010) *Research methods for managers*. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
27. Global Fashion Summit, 2024. Summit Theme 2024: Unlocking the Next Level. [online] Available at: <https://globalfashionsummit.com/programme-2/2024-theme/> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
28. Gray, D.E. (2018) *Doing research in the real world*. 4th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
29. Guo, Z., Zhu, Z., Li, Y., Cao, S., Chen, H. and Wang, G., 2023. AI assisted fashion design: A review. *IEEE Access*.
30. Helsinki Times, 2023. Price matters: Observations on Finnish consumer behavior and purchasing trends. [online] Available at: <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
31. IBISWorld, 2024. Textile Retailing in Finland - Market Size, Industry Analysis, Trends and Forecasts (2024-2029). [online] Available at: <https://www.ibisworld.com> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
32. Industry.gov.lk, 2024. Sector overview: Textile and Apparel Sector. [online] Available at: <https://www.industry.gov.lk> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
33. InternetRetailing, 2024. Global Fashion Report 2024. [online] Available at: <https://internetretailing.net> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
34. InternetRetailing, 2024. Global Fashion Report 2024. [online] Available at: <https://internetretailing.net> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
35. Just Style, 2024. Timeline – Sri Lanka’s economic crisis and the apparel sector. [online] Available at: <https://www.just-style.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
36. Kazi, Shaidul (2009). 3I00EJ60-3005 *Managing Cultural Differences*. Tampere University of Applied Sciences <https://www.tuni.fi/fi/tutustu-meihin/tamk>.
37. Khan, O., Varaksina, N. and Hinterhuber, A., 2024. The influence of cultural differences on consumers’ willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 442, p.141024.

38. Knitting Industry, 2024. Helping Sri Lankan apparel rise to the challenges of 2022. [online] Available at: <https://www.knittingindustry.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
39. Korvenranta, L., 2023. Fashion peer-to-peer platforms: An exploratory user study.
40. Lagnaoui, T., 2023. CSR and Business Sustainability in the Finnish Textile Industry: A Path to a Sustainable Future.
41. Laitala, K., Klepp, I.G. and Berg, L.L., 2024. The impact of modes of acquisition on clothing lifetimes. Recycling and Lifetime Management in the Textile and Fashion Sector, pp.92-112.
42. Lanka Business Online, 2024. Sri Lankan Exporters Optimistic on Outlook 2024, despite Challenging Global Outlook. [online] Available at: <https://www.lankabusinessonline.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
43. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. (n.d.). Culture. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from <https://www.lgbtqiintersect.org.au/learning-modules/culture/>
44. Maire.ai, 2024. Clothing market trends in Finland 2024 - Top 48 biggest and fastest growing categories online. [online] Available at: <https://www.maire.ai> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
45. MakeTheDot, 2024. 9 Key Fashion Marketing Trends to Know in 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.makethedot.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
46. McKinsey & Company and Business of Fashion, 2024. The State of Fashion 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-state-of-fashion-2024> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
47. McKinsey, 2024. The State of Fashion 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
48. Oittinen, T.A., 2024. Perceptions of Environmentally Sustainable Fashion by Finnish 25–45-year-old Consumers.
49. Oittinen, T.A., 2024. Perceptions of Environmentally Sustainable Fashion by Finnish 25–45-year-old Consumers.
50. Olivar Aponte, N., Hernández Gómez, J., Torres Argüelles, V. and Smith, E.D., 2024. Fast fashion consumption and its environmental impact: a literature review. Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 20(1), p.2381871.

51. Pedroso-Roussado, C., 2023. The fashion industry needs microbiology: opportunities and challenges. *Mosphere*, 8(2), pp.e00681-22.
52. Piancazzo, F., Noris, A., Sabatini, N. and Cantoni, L., 2024. Italy, an Extraordinary Commonplace? Stereotypes and Imaginaries of Italianness in Online Communication by Fashion Brands. *Fashion Theory*, pp.1-33.
53. Productsup, 2024. 2024 Fashion Resale Insights: Trends, Growth, and Sustainability in Retail. [online] Available at: <https://www.productsup.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
54. Public Finance.lk, 2024. Apparel sector revenue totals US\$ 1.17 bn in 1Q24. [online] Available at: <https://publicfinance.lk> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
55. Rana, M.R.I., McBee-Black, K. and Swazan, I.S., 2024. Adaptive apparel for people with disabilities: A systematic literature review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 48(3), p.e13057.
56. Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2019) *Research methods for business students*. 8th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.
57. Scandinavian MIND, 2024. In Helsinki: Fashion designer futures, green consumer archetypes, and EU legislations. [online] Available at: <https://scandinavianmind.com> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
58. SCAYLE, 2024. 10 Big Fashion Industry Challenges in 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.scayle.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
59. Shetty, K.J. and Kotian, S., 2023. A Systematic Review and Research Agenda of Body Image and Fashion Trends. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT and Education (IJCSBE)*, 7(2), pp.422-447.
60. Shetty, K.J. and Kotian, S., 2023. A Systematic Review and Research Agenda of Body Image and Fashion Trends. *International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT and Education (IJCSBE)*, 7(2), pp.422-447.
61. Silverman, D. (2017) *Doing qualitative research*. 5th edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
62. Smith, J.A. (2015) *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods*. 3rd edn. Los Angeles: SAGE.
63. Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association, 2024. June 2024 - Export Performance. [online] Available at: <https://srilanka-apparel.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].

64. Suomen Tekstiili & Muoti, 2024. This Is Finnish Fashion – Past, Present And Future. [online] Available at: <https://www.stjm.fi> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
65. Tarnanidis, T.K., Papachristou, E., Karypidis, M. and Ismyrlis, V., 2023. How social media affects consumer behavior in the fashion industry. In Social Media and Online Consumer Decision Making in the Fashion Industry (pp. 324-337). IGI Global.
66. Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. (2010) SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
67. Textile Insights, 2024. Sri Lankan Apparel Exports Increase 7.72% In March 2024. [online] Available at: <https://textileinsights.in> [Accessed 17 August 2024].
68. The Morning, 2024. Woven in uncertainty: Apparel sector battles drop in export earnings. [online] Available at: <https://www.themorning.lk> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
69. The PR Advisor, 2024. 2024 Fashion Forecast: Insights & Strategies For The Luxury Industry. [online] Available at: <https://www.thepradvisor.com> [Accessed 18 August 2024].
70. Thomas, K., 2020. Cultures of sustainability in the fashion industry. Fashion Theory, 24(5), pp.715-742.
71. Trade.gov, 2024. Sri Lanka - Textiles. [online] Available at: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/sri-lanka-textiles> [Accessed 17 August 2024].

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Online Questionnaire Survey

The Impact of Culture on Casual Ladies' Wear in the Finnish Market – Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this survey! The purpose of this research is to understand how cultural factors impact consumer preferences for casual ladies' wear in the Finnish market. Your responses are completely anonymous and will be used solely for academic research. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Section 1: Demographics

1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

2. Age Group

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55 and above

3. Educational Background

- High School
- Undergraduate Degree
- Postgraduate Degree
- Other

4. Occupation

- Student
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Other

5. Monthly Income Range (in EUR)

- Less than €1000
- €1000–€2000
- €2001–€3000
- €3001–€4000
- €4001–€5000
- More than €5000
- Prefer not to say

Section 2: Consumer Preferences on Casual Ladies' Wear

6. How often do you purchase casual ladies' wear?

- Once a week
- Once a month
- Once every 3–6 months
- Once a year
- Rarely

7. Where do you primarily purchase casual ladies' wear?

- Physical retail stores
- Online stores (e-commerce)
- Both (Online & Physical stores)

8. What influences your purchase decision when buying casual wear? (Select up to 3)

- Price
- Brand reputation
- Style and design
- Comfort
- Material and sustainability
- Recommendations from friends/family
- Advertising and social media
- Other (Please specify)

Section 3: Cultural Influence on Fashion

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "My cultural values influence the type of casual wear I purchase."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. How important is sustainability (e.g., eco-friendly materials, ethical production) when choosing casual ladies' wear?

- Very Important
- Important
- Neutral
- Not Important
- Not at all Important

11. Please rate the following factors in terms of their importance to you when purchasing casual ladies' wear:

Factor	1 (Not Important)	2	3 (Neutral)	4	5 (Very Important)
Style and Design	●	●	●	●	●
Price	●	●	●	●	●
Sustainability	●	●	●	●	●
Comfort	●	●	●	●	●
Brand Reputation	●	●	●	●	●
Functionality	●	●	●	●	●

Section 4: Finnish Cultural Values and Minimalism

12. How would you describe your personal style when it comes to casual wear?

- Minimalistic
- Trendy and fashionable
- Functional and comfortable
- A mix of all three
- Other (Please specify) (*Short answer*)

13. How likely are you to buy a product that aligns with minimalistic design and simple aesthetics?

- Very Likely
- Likely
- Neutral
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

14. In your opinion, how does Finnish culture (e.g., minimalism, sustainability) affect your casual wear purchasing choices?

Section 5: Online Shopping Behavior and Preferences

15. How often do you shop online for casual ladies' wear?

- Always
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

16. Which platform do you prefer for online shopping?

- Local Finnish stores
- International stores
- Both

17. Do you consider ethical production (fair labour practices, eco-friendly materials) important when shopping online for casual wear?

- Yes
 - No
 - Sometimes
-

Section 6: Final Thoughts

18. What do you think is the most important trend in casual ladies' wear in Finland today?
 19. Any suggestions on how foreign manufacturers could adapt to the Finnish fashion market?
-

Thank you for your time and valuable input! Your responses will contribute significantly to the understanding of cultural influences on the fashion market in Finland.

Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

Section 1: General Background

1. **Could you briefly describe your role in the fashion industry?**

How long have you been involved in the Finnish fashion market?

2. **What do you see as the key characteristics of the Finnish fashion market?**

What makes it distinct compared to other markets?

Section 2: Cultural Influence on Fashion Preferences

3. **In your experience, how does Finnish culture influence fashion preferences, especially in casual ladies' wear?**

Are there particular styles, colours, or patterns that are culturally preferred?

4. **How important is sustainability and minimalism in the buying decisions of Finnish consumers?**

How do these cultural values manifest in fashion trends?

5. **Can you give examples of how Finnish traditions or cultural values have influenced current casual wear designs?**

Are there any traditional elements that have been adapted into modern fashion?

Section 3: Consumer Behavior in Finland

6. **What are the key factors Finnish consumers consider when purchasing casual ladies' wear?**

Price, quality, sustainability, or brand reputation?

7. **How has the shift towards online shopping affected consumer behavior in the Finnish market?**

Is there a strong preference for digital or in-person shopping experiences?

8. **Do you think Finnish consumers are more likely to support local fashion brands or are they open to international brands?**

What do international brands need to do to resonate with Finnish consumers?

Section 4: Impact on Foreign Manufacturers (Sri Lankan Focus)

9. **What challenges do foreign manufacturers, particularly from countries like Sri Lanka, face when entering the Finnish fashion market?**

How can they overcome cultural differences in design and marketing?

10. **What design elements would you recommend Sri Lankan garment manufacturers focus on to appeal to the Finnish casual wear market?**

Minimalism, functionality, sustainability?

11. **In your opinion, how important is it for foreign brands to adapt to Finnish cultural norms when producing fashion items?**

Can you give examples of brands that have successfully adapted?

Section 5: Final Thoughts**12. What would you say is the future trend for casual ladies' wear in Finland?**

Are there any emerging trends or cultural shifts that manufacturers should be aware of?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add about the influence of Finnish culture on fashion, or advice for foreign manufacturers?