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# EXPLORING THE TECHNIQUES OF CHANGING THE OUTER APPEARANCE OF SRI LANKAN WOMEN'S BODY SHAPES THROUGH GARMENTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

A study was carried out on exploring techniques of changing the outer appearance of body shapes of Sri Lankan women as they desire, without using uncomfortable inner garments and expensive custom-made garments. Although there are different techniques of changing the outer appearance of the body shape as they desire, this study focused only by selecting proper colours and with most efficient usage of their existing accessories and garments providing mass-market level solutions to women who are unable to find unique solutions due to financial status and lack of knowledge regarding fashion theories. Further, the explored solutions can be applied with day to day life experience and knowledge within a country like Sri Lanka which is a multinational country with different perspectives of clothing styles. An online survey has been conducted with more than 100 women who use branded garments and mass-market garment. Within the survey, ordinary methods that are used for this problem has been identified but most of them are expensive and custom-made solutions. The need for a mass-market level solution is highly observed and unawareness of women regarding the subject is also noted. Through experiments, novel solutions which are mass market-oriented and low-cost solutions were suggested to be used in day to day fashion styles. This study will provide a good foundation for apparel

manufacturers who cater to Sri Lankan market, to fill this market gap.

Key Words-Women body Shape, Effect of Colour, garments in different look

## **INTRODUCTION**

This research is aimed at exploring the methods of transforming Sri Lankan women's body shape as their desire through their clothing. Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural, multi-national country which consists of women with a vast range of body shapes. The need for the desired body shape is identical to one another such as some women willing to have a thinner look than they are while some women desire to have a fuller look than they are at present. Ordinary methods are being used such as creative pattern cutting methods, different material types, embedding prints, shapewear or padded garments in order to change their outer appearance. However, that may result in completely different body shape due to lack of knowledge about the correct methods of showcasing desired body shape and the customized solutions are costly which the average women could not afford.

A questionnaire survey was done by the researcher to find the problems within Sri Lankan women who are in the age range of 20-45 years, related to clothing. For the survey, both branded clothing users and mass-market level brand users gave feedback, which showcase the unawareness of women in achieving their

desired look and also non-availability of possible options in apparel shops.

When considering the awareness of present women about this topic, most of them aware of body shapers and padded garments. However, with high cost and non-comfortability of wearing those garments, most women don't like this solution. Further, suitable fabric prints and customized garments are available which cost high. But when it comes to mass-market level, the above methods will not be ideal solutions because above methods are used by women who have a deep sense of fashion. That is why a simple and less expensive method is needed. And also, for the betterment of mass-market customers who cannot afford for a customized garment, there must be a preferable solution which will give a result with minimum cost and maximum usage of existing garments.

The main objective of the research is to explore the techniques of changing the outer appearance of the body shape of Sri Lankan women to a skinny or fuller look as they desired with less cost and in most efficient usage of their existing accessories and garments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### History of Body Shape of Sri Lankan Women

History of Sri Lankan women's body shape can be explained with the great examples from the arts of Sigiriya to Kandyan era temple paintings and photographs of near past. They have clearly shown that the body shapes of most women were similar to the hourglass shape. "Sandesha Kavya" has clearly mentioned about the body shape of women in past in verbal form. ("සැලලිහිණි සිංහයා," n.d.) Following are some examples of ancient women's body shape of Sri Lanka.

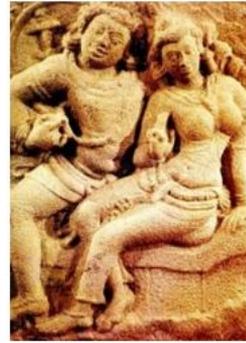


Figure 1- Isuru Muni Lover  
(Source: "Amuradhapura | MySriLankaTravel," n.d.)



Figure 2- Arts of Sigiriya (Source: Lanka, 2009)

### Present Body Shapes of Women

Six main body shapes among women have been identified through researches in globally (Klepp and Rysst, 2017) as shown in figure 3 below

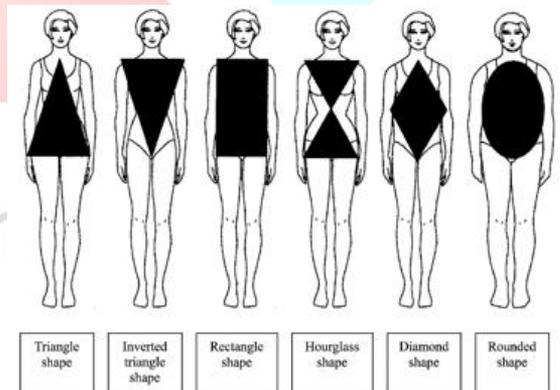


Figure 3- Body Shapes of Women (Source: "Different Types of Women's Body Shapes and Figures", n.d.)

In Triangle shape (Pear Shape) bust and shoulders are narrower than hips and butt with a round heavy bottom with a defined waist. Inverted triangle shape shows wider shoulders and bigger bust with narrow hip and a flat bottom while in rectangle shape (banana shape) shoulders, waist, hip and bust likely have around the same measurements with slender legs. In Hourglass shape, bust and hip are roughly the same measurements, with a narrower, defined waist. Diamond shape means the hip is broader than bust and shoulders with undefined waist and a large belly while in round shape (apple shape) less defined waist with the overall appearance of a round shape. (Klepp and Rysst, 2017).

#### Available methods for changing the outer appearance of body shapes of women

There are number of methods for changing body shape such as appropriate Pattern cutting techniques, use of proper fabrics, use of suitable prints, use of shapewear, use of illusion and selection of proper colours for garments.

#### Pattern cutting techniques

Pattern cutting techniques plays a major role in achieving the required body shape through garments. By selecting proper necklines, sleeves, and the silhouette, and applying them properly with pattern cutting techniques the outer appearance of the body can be changed. For example, cowl and boat neckline will make the body wider while v- neckline will downplay the size of the body (Fig.4) (Klepp, 2011).

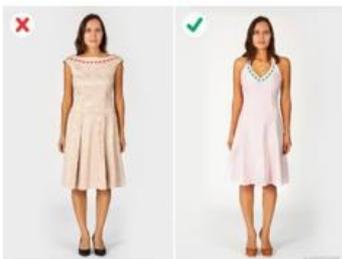


Figure 4-Neck Shapes (Source: 7 Fashion Mistakes We All Make," 2017)



Figure 5-Frill adding (Source: 7 Fashion Mistakes We All Make," 2017)

In order to achieve a narrow look pencil skirt and A-line skirt can be used. While frilled skirt help to emphasize areas covered by the skirt, puffed sleeves and cape sleeves will help to upsize body while long straight sleeves and raglan sleeves downsize body. Gathers, frills, shirring and smocking will enlarge wearer's body where ever wearer apply it (Fig 5) (Malish, 2010).

#### Quality of the material

Light to medium weight materials and fluid material will help to make a person look downsize such as chiffon, soft cotton while hard, heavy textured materials help to keep size upward. In addition to that glittery and shiny fabric attract the attention and emphasize parts than they are while fine-textured and matt look fabric make you look flat (Lowry, 2005). Further, fabrics cut on bias will drape well. Embossed velvet, cutwork fabric, net fabric, horse canvas, organdy, buckram, tarlatan fabric, taffeta, marquisette add fullness to the body ("How to add volume to a dress," n.d.).

#### Embedding prints

Small printed design will help to look downsize while big designs increase size up. And also, when a wide design is printed on contrast background, it will make wearer wide while small prints in less contrast colour will make wearer downsize. When it comes to stripes pattern, vertical stripes help to narrow the body while horizontal lines to broader the body(fig.6) (Klepp, 2011).

### Shapewear and padded garment

Full body corselet, girdle with high waist and corset will make the body flatter than they are while shoulder pads, padded bras and panties help to look body parts larger (fig.7) (Klepp, 2011).



Figure 6-Print adding (Source: "Look Skinnier | 10 Ways To Look 10 Pounds Skinnier! 2013)



Figure 7-Shapewear dressing (Source: "Look Skinnier | 10 Ways To Look 10 Pounds Skinnier! 2013)

### Changing Outer Appearance of Body Shapes of Women through garments

With the results of the online survey, some methods were identified in addition to the above methods which are not popular among women but will help to make a big difference.

1. Wearing the Same garment in different way
2. Changing the colour of the garment. (Lewis, 1997)

### Wearing same garment in different way

The same garment can be worn in different styles with the help of additional garments or accessories combining different fastening methods, adding outer layers, knotting and tucking (Klepp, 2011). Layering will add more up size look, changing the whole appearance of the wearer. When adding volume with layers correct materials should be selected (Klepp, 2011). Wearing a knot will decrease body shape because it will collect the bulkiness of hem area and distract the eye of others from the hem and attract to the knot adding a design feature to the existing garment (Ishiyama & Kawahara, 2008). The shawl will add more bulk all over the body especially in the neck area and make the wearer look upsize. (Klepp, 2011).

### Changing the colour of the garment.

According to the observations about colours, it is not inherent in objects but the surface of objects absorbs some colours while reflecting few colours. Those reflected colours are the colours that we see with eyes (Hunt,R.W.G.,1987).

When wearer wants to emphasize the body shape white,grey and khaki colours can be used according to literature research results while colour black and dark blue deemphasize body shape (fig.8) ("Slimming Fashion Tricks," n.d.)



Figure 8- Deemphasizing and Emphasizing body appearance with colours of the garment

(Source: "Which dress suits most for tall girls who are overweight? - Quora,"n.d.)

## Warm and Cool colours

Warm colours have the ability to deemphasize the shape of the wearer with the human eye and cool colour emphasizes space with eye resulting in emphasizing body size (fig.9) (Kueppers,H., 1980).



Figure 9-Warm, cool colours (Source: "Perbedaan Warna Hangat Dan Warna Dingin," n.d.)

This option simply means to select garments with suitable colours in order to have a fuller or slim look. This has been mentioned as a cost-free method because it is done with the selection of a garment to change the body shape. Some colours have receding effect with them while some have an expanding effect with them (PANTONE, n.d.).

## METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey was done in order to get customer feedback regarding their perception on selection of their garments and body shape. Sri Lankan women in the age range of 20-45 years were selected and their garment buying behavior and issues pertaining with the selection of garments were discussed in the first part of the questionnaire. From the second part, it was questioned about their desired body shape and how they would like to achieve it through garments. Several available solutions, such as customized garments with suitable silhouettes, use of proper prints, use of body shapers, adding accessories, selection of proper colours and changing the appearance of the garments were provided to choose from.

According to the feedback analysis, the options that are affordable to average customers who focus on mass-market level, were selected and experiments were carried out. The chosen options were, selecting the most appropriate colour of the same garment and wearing the same garment in different way in order to achieve the desired outer appearance of the body shape. Since unawareness of customers regarding above mentioned methods was noticed through the feedback, it was decided to explore them thoroughly. For the study, women with very thin/skinny body shapes and women with rounded body shapes combined with fuller body were selected in order to simplify the process.

### Selection of appropriate colour of the garment

A garment which has a simple silhouette was selected with warm and cool colours. These garments were fitted-on to above selected women and photographs were taken. Visual analysis was carried out in order to select the proper colours for selected body shapes.

### Same garment in different way

The garments that were already possessed by above women were carefully chosen and fitted-on by them. In order to achieve their desired body shapes, it was explored by combining/reducing layers, introducing accessories and changing the silhouette of the same garments and photographs were taken.

Validation of the results were done by getting feedback for the questionnaire which was prepared with the above mentioned photographs of each steps and asking whether they agree with the comment. Further, few experts in fashion field were interviewed to get their views regarding the results of the study.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

According to the questionnaire survey feedback analysis, it was revealed that women aware about achieving desired body shape through some expensive methods. They are unaware about changing the outer appearance of same garment could make a huge impact on body shape. Further, how colour of the garment affect to the body shape need to be explored as these are the answers to the most issues mentioned in the survey.

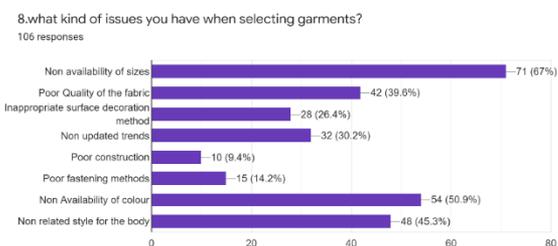


Figure 10-Bar Chart showing issues of selecting garments

According to the survey most women have problem of non-availability of sizes as they desire (fig.10). Along with that non availability of required colours and lack of suitable styles for a particular body shape were the most mentioned issues.

### Achieving fuller look for thin / skinny women

#### Combining an overcoat

This combination has given a fuller look to the wearer with long sleeves and coverage around the neck (fig.11).

Adding a knot to full-length overcoat has been given additional full look to the wearers bust area. And attract the eye to middle knot and trick eye to an upper size look.



Figure 11-Experiment with the full-length overcoat

Similar to full over coat half over coat also gives fuller look to the woman who wears with middle knot and adding long sleeves gives fuller look to the wearer (fig12).



Figure 12-Experiment with the half overcoat

#### Combining a shirt blouse

In order to add trendier look to the garment, open-front long sleeve shirt blouse was added with a tie. This rolled-up sleeves and the tie has added extra volume to hip area, elbow level and most importantly to bust area (fig.13). Instead of opened collar revealing thin neck, closed neck with a fashionable tie has given a up size look. Even though it is a little piece of cloth it has added little bulk and focal point with the neck.



Figure 13-Experiment with the shirt

### Adding a Shawl

Here, shawl has been dressed with less impact to the wearer changing focal point to the neck. Therefore, a considerable fuller effect has been achieved with the neck (fig.14).

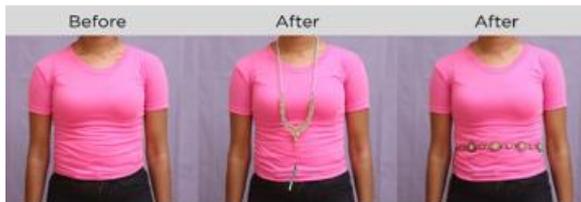


Figure 14-Experiment with the shawl

### Wearing a large necklace /belt

When wearer wears a body fitted garment, large jewelry can distract the eye from the body and focus on the pendant / belt hiding the skinny look of the body (fig.15).

Figure 15-Experiment with a large necklace & belt



### Wearing an off-shoulder top as a normal top

Revealing too much on shoulder has emphasized the skinnier look and it attracts attention to shoulder(fig.16). Instead of wearing it covering the body and smocked neck design has made a focal point showing more up size look.



Figure 16-Experiment with an off-shoulder top

### Wearing a top with long puff sleeves under the strapped dress

Considerable change can be seen with sleeve lengths and also bulky ness of sleeves has added upsize look to the wearer (fig 17).



Figure 17-Experiment with strap dress

### Achieving thin / skinny look for fuller women

#### Wearing an overcoat

This option has made the wearer look slim look even though it is adding more layers (fig.18). It is due to the coverage of bigger parts and distraction with the lengths of two layers.



Figure 18-Experiment with overcoat

#### Wearing a shirt blouse with button-open

This option has given more upsize look to fuller women (fig.19). With additional long layers to the body, wearer changed in to more upsize look. But when you close

some buttons you can achieve a down size look than you are with full open shirt.



Figure 19 -Experiment with full, half opened shirt

### Half opened shirt with roll up sleeves

This option has been done with sleeves which rolled up and creates a different look with deemphasizing body than before (fig.20).



Figure 20 -Experiment with half opened shirt in rolled up sleeves

### Wearing a necklace with large pendant

This option has made a focal point with body fitted garment and camouflage eye with pendant helping less focus on large bust area (Fig.21).

### Wearing a thin belt

This belt has made gatherings in the bust area but not much visible because it is a body fit garment( Fig.22). It has tricked the eye from creating a focal point with the belt. But the desirable result has not been achieved in considerable amount.



Figure 21-Experiment with large pendant necklace



Figure 22 -Experiment with belt

### Wearing a tight crop top

The outer layer has covered all excess revealing parts and hide fuller look in the bust area (fig.23). It has tricked the eye with a sense of receding effect with the body.

### Covering the baggy top with a middle-knot shirt

Shirt has made excess fabric fitted to body and up size the large bust area (fig.24). Knot has dragged the attention and give overall up size look.



Figure 23-Experiment with crop top



Figure 24-Experiment with knot in shirt

### Adding half tuck to baggy top

Adding full tuck is the most common methods while half-tuck is not much used(fig.25). But considering to full tuck half-tuck has more decreasing effect. When there is an excess amount of fabric instead of full tuck wearer can use a half-tuck without emphasizing whole waist area. Flatter look can be achieved to the bust to waist level area by this method.



Figure 25-Experiment with half tuck

Changing the colour of the garment to have a fuller look

Cool colours



Figure 26-Experiment with cool colours

Warm Colours



Figure 27-Experiment with warm colours

At a glance huge difference cannot be noticed. But when carefully observed changes in shoulder width and difference in bust area can be seen. When it comes to cool colours they have given a wider look to wearer while warm colors distract eye and emphasize down size of body.

**Changing the colour of the garment to have a down-size look**

**Cool colours**

Figure 28-Experiment with cool colours



Warm colours



Figure 29-Experiment with warm colours

Here also cool colour act as a wide range while warm colour trick our eyes as downsizing body shape.

### Validate the result

In order to validate the results, the photographs that were taken from each step were discussed with few experts in the fashion field and their feedback was taken. In addition to that an online survey was done with more than 130 people. According to the feedback received, below results were taken as a summery.

Feedback on achieving fuller look: adding an over coat can be considered as a method of changing body appearance but adding knot has middle impact on changing the appearance. Half over coat has not given considerable change to body appearance. But collared top in full open and half open manner has given considerable change to body appearance as results. Half shawl has not given impact on changing body appearance while full shawl gives medium results. As mentioned above necklace and belt has not given impact to change the body shape appearance. Changing the way of wearing off shoulder top has given good results in terms of changing the body appearance.

Feedback on achieving down-size look: Wearing over coat in full length and

rolling up sleeves of it has reduced body appearance according to the results. While wearing fully opened shirt reduce body appearance, half opened shirt does not affect for a considerable change. But wearing same shirt with rolled up sleeves has similar amounts for positive and negative results. Wearing both types of necklaces has not affected to change body appearance according to feedback. Wearing crop top over baggy top has taken considerable amount of plus points of changing body to thin appearance while shirt with knot over baggy top has same results. Tucking has reduced appearance according to feedback.

Role of colours in changing body appearance is proven in this survey also. As mentioned above cool colours has changed women's body appearance to fuller look while warm colours make fuller women look down size.

## ***DISCUSSION***

With the results of online survey, details were found about the issues when selecting garments and with the results, maximum number of women were suffering from lack of methods that gives proper body shape as they desire because of financial difficulties and health issues most of the women discourage in following traditional methods. Therefore, un common methods for that problem were searched with literature research and through experiments. Experiments were carried out with two options which were wearing same garment in different way and selecting proper colour of the garment. Those methods can be easily followed by Sri Lankan women due to the simplicity of following and minimum cost. The wearer has to search through her wardrobe and she will be able to find a number of garments which can be combined or change the way of wearing in order to achieve the desired outer appearance of

the body as shown in the experiments. As mentioned above, this is one of the best methods that can be used with the least cost in an effective way.

When it comes to changing the appearance of body shape with colour, women do not have to go for an additional money spending solution. Women should be careful enough to identify their own body shape and buy clothes with the above mentioned colours according to shapes.

Women in Sri Lanka need to make awareness about these simple methods in achieving their desired body shapes through available garments and that will uplift the fashion enthusiasm within those women.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Ordinary women in Sri Lanka do not aware of simple and less expensive methods in achieving their desired body shapes, except the traditional expensive methods that already exist. Therefore, this study aimed at providing simple and less expensive solutions within mass-market level by doing literature reviews and experiments.

Over coat and shirt can be used for both types of women but fastening should be changed in order to achieve better results. Jewelry doesn't play big role with body fitted garments while garment tucking can change the appearance of the body shape. Crop top can be used without revealing belly for better results for fuller women as well as strapped dresses can be worn with an under layer to get good results to slim women.

Not only neutral colours but also cool and warm colours play major roles in changing body shape such as reducing body size with warm colours and enhancing body size with cool colors.

These methods will not bear extra cost but will help women to see the fashion world from a new perspective level than

before. An ideal market gap will be given by this research for an emerging brand as well a sub-line can be introduced for well-established brands and it will be a remarkable experience in the fashion industry in Sri Lanka. Virtual models can be used for further researches which is cost effective and more efficient.

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