

Current Practice in Fashion Design Education: A Review of Global Perspective

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Abstract – The rapid evolution of the global fashion industry requires a parallel transformation in pedagogical strategies. To address this need, this paper presents a systematic literature review and thematic synthesis of global pedagogical practices and theoretical frameworks shaping fashion design education. In this study, the term theoretical framework refers to a conceptual, pedagogical model that explains how learning, creativity, design, and innovation occur within fashion education. In this research, these frameworks are not viewed as abstract theories but as applied models that connect educational philosophies with real-world teaching and learning. A systematic search of recent literature was conducted across major academic databases, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Research Rabbit, using Boolean operators. This resulted in an initial pool of over fifty studies. Fifteen core research papers were then selected through backward snowball sampling based on citation relevance published between 2014 and 2024. Thematic synthesis of these studies identified sixty-seven theoretical frameworks, thirty-eight of which were categorized under six themes: Teaching and Learning Approaches, Creative Design Processes, Cultural and Aesthetic Perspectives, Sustainability and Ethics, Technology Integration, and Entrepreneurial Pathways. The review concludes that the future of fashion education lies in adaptive and hybrid models that integrate these diverse yet interconnected competencies. The findings reveal the emergence of hybrid, value-driven pedagogical models that incorporate sustainability, technology, creativity, and entrepreneurship to enhance the future readiness of fashion education. Ultimately, this synthesis and cross-contextual comparison provide a strong foundation for educators and policymakers, offering insights for adapting these global practices to guide curriculum development and pedagogical innovation within the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Fashion Education; Pedagogy; Competency Development; Teaching Methods; Global Practice

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I. Introduction

The contemporary fashion industry stands at the intersection of creativity, commerce, technology, and cultural transformation. Today's fashion designers are expected not only to master technical design processes but also to integrate competencies in digital prototyping (Bertola & Teunissen, 2018), sustainability (James, 2021), and entrepreneurial strategies (Lang & Liu, 2019). These evolving demands highlight a gap in fashion design education: traditional programs, historically dominated by master-apprentice studio-based instruction, often fail to prepare graduates for the interdisciplinary, reflective, and systemic challenges of the modern industry (Faerm, 2012). This paper addresses this gap by systematically reviewing and synthesizing global pedagogical frameworks in fashion education. Guided by the research question: *What are the current global practices and theoretical frameworks in fashion design education?* the study maps these frameworks into thematic categories to provide a comprehensive overview for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

The study has two objectives: first, to identify and categorize the theoretical frameworks shaping fashion education worldwide; second, to critically examine these frameworks to reveal trends, tensions, and implementation challenges. Unlike prior studies that focus narrowly on sustainability or technology, this review consolidates multiple perspectives into a holistic synthesis, offering both descriptive insights into current practices and prescriptive guidance for future curriculum development (figure 1).

II. Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, designed to ensure comprehensiveness, transparency, and replicability. Unlike narrative reviews that often provide selective accounts, the SLR process follows structured steps to identify, screen, and analyze literature systematically.

A. Identification of Literature

The first stage involved developing a search strategy aligned with the research question. Six keywords were derived from the study's objectives: *fashion design education*, *global perspectives in fashion education*, *fashion pedagogy*, *creative education in fashion*, *fashion curriculum development*, and *trends in fashion design teaching*. These keywords were selected to capture both traditional and emergent domains of fashion education.

The search was conducted across multiple sources, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and the citation-tracking tool Research Rabbit. Boolean operators and truncations were used to broaden the search (e.g., "fashion AND pedagogy," "sustainability AND design education"). To ensure relevance and timeliness, the search was limited to publications from 2014 to 2024. This yielded an initial pool of over fifty sources, comprising journal articles, book chapters, and conference

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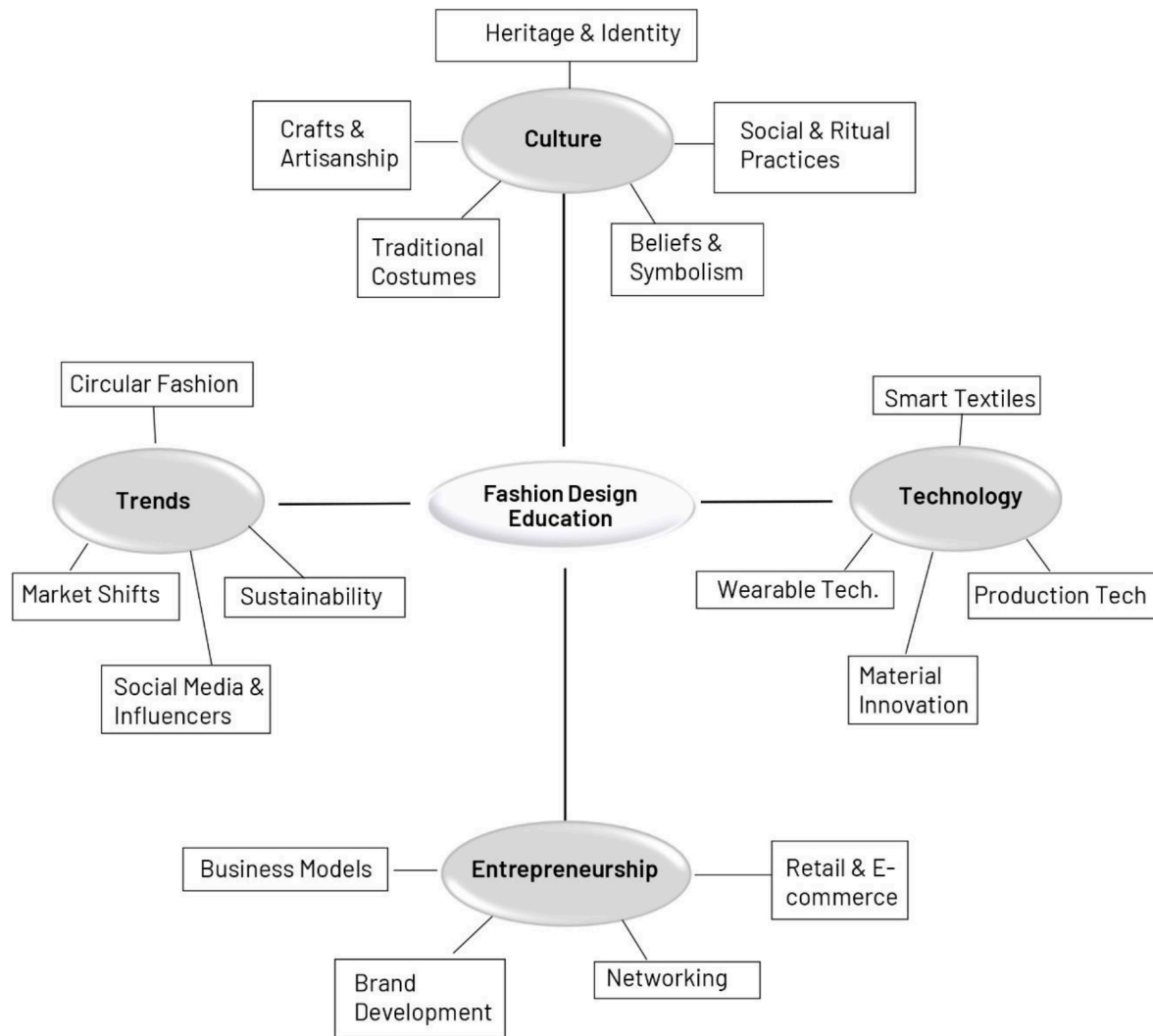
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proceedings.

Figure 1

A conceptual map illustrating the core industry drivers—Culture, Trends, Technology, and Entrepreneurship—that shape today's fashion design education (Developed by the author)



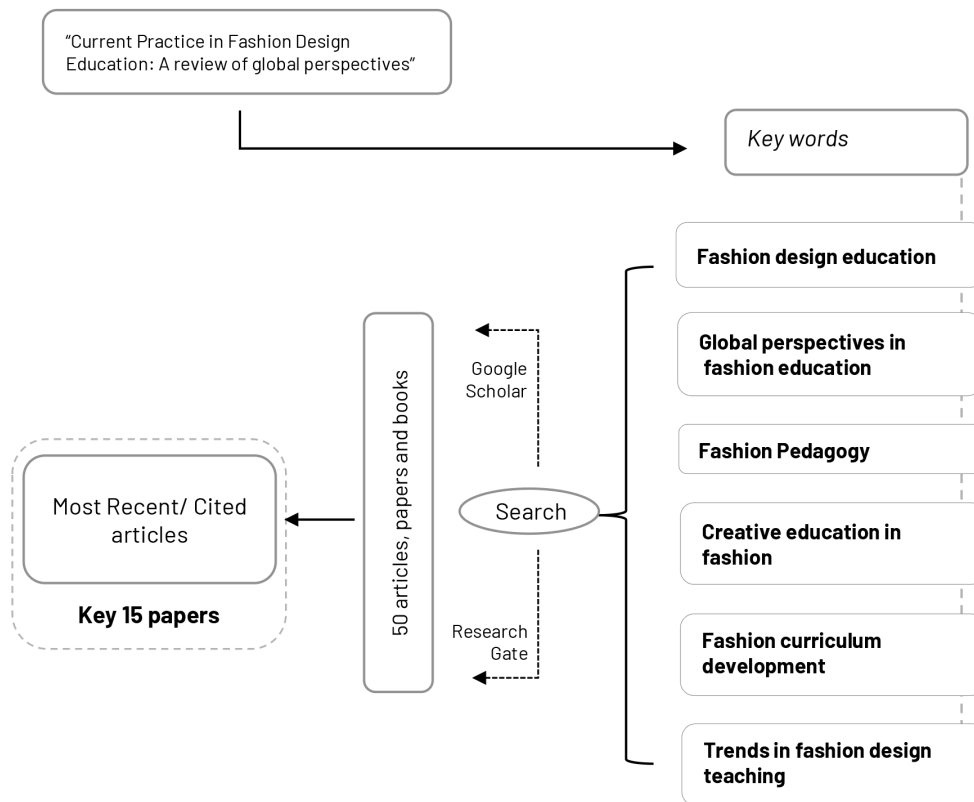
Note. Figure 1 visualizes the primary drivers influencing fashion design pedagogy. The central node represents Fashion Design Education, surrounded by the four key industry drivers: Culture, Trends, Technology, and Entrepreneurship. Each driver is further defined by its specific, constituent elements (e.g., Crafts, Sustainability, Material Innovation, Business Models). The structure illustrates how these external drivers and their internal components collectively inform and shape educational frameworks.

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Figure 2
Systematic Literature Review Process (Developed by the author)



Note. Figure 2 illustrates the multi-stage process used to identify, screen, and select literature for the study. Stage 1 involved developing a search strategy using five targeted keywords across databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Research Rabbit, with Boolean operators applied to refine results. Stage 2 applied inclusion and exclusion criteria, filtering out works that lacked pedagogical focus or methodological rigor. The process incorporated backward snowball sampling and citation analysis, ultimately narrowing an initial pool of over fifty sources to a final corpus of fifteen key publications directly aligned with the research objectives.

B. Screening and Selection

Selection followed a two-step process. First, backward snowball sampling was conducted by scanning reference lists to identify seminal works frequently cited. Second, the corpus was refined based on citation count (indicating influence) and direct relevance to the research question. This produced a final corpus of fifteen key publications.

C. Data Extraction and Categorization

For each publication, a structured data extraction template was employed to systematically capture key information. This included the full APA citation, the research aim and objectives, the geographical context, and the methodological approach. Additionally, the relevance of the

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publication to the study was recorded, along with a comprehensive summary and any theoretical frameworks identified.

This systematic process ensured consistency in recording data and facilitated later comparison. Approximately seventy distinct theoretical frameworks were identified across the fifteen studies. These frameworks were then analyzed using inductive thematic synthesis, which allowed clusters of related frameworks to emerge naturally.

Analytical coding was guided by recurring pedagogical constructs, such as learner-centered approaches, sustainability integration, and technology-mediated instruction. Frameworks sharing conceptual or methodological similarities were coded under six major themes, ensuring consistency and conceptual coherence across sources. Source credibility was ensured by prioritizing peer-reviewed journal articles and validated conference proceedings, supplemented by seminal theoretical contributions where relevant.

As shown in Table 1, the synthesis of fifteen key publications highlights prevailing trends and frameworks in contemporary fashion education. Collectively, these studies reveal a shift toward student-centered, interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate digital tools, sustainability, and cultural relevance, reflecting the global evolution of pedagogical practices.

Table 1

Data extraction summary of 15 key publications (Developed by the author).

Author(s) & Year	Research Aim	Methodology	Context / Region	Frameworks / Relevance
Gao et al. (2019)	Explore multimodal teaching strategies in vocational fashion programs	Theoretical & analytical (lit. review)	China & Malaysia	Multimodal pedagogy, VR/AR integration; relevance to student-centered practice
Gao, T. (2024)	Apply VR in fashion design teaching	Descriptive & analytical (lit. review)	China (Jiangxi Normal Univ.)	Experiential Learning, TEL, VR for creativity & sustainability
Dumitrescu & Motta (2023)	Framework for hybrid analogue-digital craftsmanship	Practice-based research	Sweden & Italy	Post-disciplinary design, TEL; bridging traditional & digital
Kushwaha (2024)	Impact of AI on teaching in fashion education	Analytical (lit. review)	India (NIFT, with global references)	AI, EDM, Constructivism; personalization & automation
Bertola & Teunissen (2018)	Fashion 4.0: digital transformation	Conceptual & case studies	Europe/global	Smart Factories, Networks, Products; industry-aligned
Bednall (2022)	Reforming fashion higher education (Owner-Learner Model)	Conceptual, lit. review	UK	Implementation Staircase; student co-creation

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Faerm (2012)	Evolution of fashion design pedagogy	Lit. review (conceptual)	US (Parsons, FIT) vs. Europe	Identity formation, Constructivism; vocational vs. theoretical contrast
Richardson (2021)	Apply Appadurai's 'global scapes' in teaching	Theoretical, reflective pedagogy	UK/global	Global cultural flows (ethnoscapes, mediascapes); globalization framework
Rissanen (2017)	Reimagine fashion ed. as serving human needs	Conceptual manifesto	Western HE (Parsons, Australia)	Transition Design, Metadesign, Redirective Practice; sustainability pedagogy

James, A.M. (2021)	Sustainability in HE as a core design tool	Qualitative lit. review + educator insights	UK/global	Experiential learning, Constructivism, systemic sustainability integration
James, A. (2021)	Pedagogical shifts for sustainability	Qualitative analysis	UK/global	Systems thinking, experiential learning, value-based learning
Indonesian Batik Study (2019)	Integrate Batik into curricula for cultural & ethical learning	Lit. review, case studies, student interviews	Indonesia	Cultural Studies, Constructivism, heritage & sustainability
Creative Process & Critical Thinking Study (2020s)	Role of creative process & critical thinking in pedagogy	Theoretical & case analysis	Global comparative lens	Wallas's Creative Process, Sternberg's Triarchic Theory, and curriculum reform
Post-Disciplinary Design Study (2020s)	Cross-disciplinary fashion pedagogy	Case-based illustration	European context	Post-disciplinary design, hybrid methods; digital + traditional convergence
Sustainability-focused chapter (2020s)	System-level reform for HE	Conceptual & lit. synthesis	Global	Sustainability pedagogy, co-creation, aligns with the reform agenda

Note. Table 1 summarizes 15 key publications included in the systematic review, highlighting author/year, research aim, methodology, context, and key pedagogical frameworks. Adapted from the author's synthesis of the reviewed literature.

D. Analytical Approach

The analysis used a dual strategy. First, thematic analysis grouped frameworks into six themes, Teaching and Learning Approaches; Creative Design Process; Culture and Aesthetic Perspectives; Sustainability and Ethical Lenses; Technology Integration; and Entrepreneurial Pathways, analyzing each for core concepts, competencies, and pedagogical contributions. Second, intra-thematic cross-case analysis compared implementations within each theme, highlighting convergences (shared strategies) and divergences (context-specific adaptations), such as VR-based studios in China versus artisan collaborations in Europe. This approach allowed the study

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to move beyond mere cataloguing, revealing deeper patterns, tensions, and innovations in global fashion design education.

III. Thematic Findings and Discussion

The analysis revealed six dominant thematic categories, each encompassing a cluster of interrelated theoretical frameworks.

A. Teaching and Learning Approaches

This theme captures foundational educational theories reshaping the student-teacher dynamic and the learning environment. The analysis of teaching and learning approaches reveals a cohesive shift in fashion education towards pedagogies that are interactive, student-centered, and critically engaged. This evolution is fundamentally supported by technology, which acts as a catalyst for these theoretical principles.

Table 02

Comparison of key teaching and learning theories applied to fashion education (Developed by the author)

Theory	Core Principle	Application in Fashion Education
Constructivist & Social Constructivist	Learners construct knowledge through experiences, interactions, and collaboration.	VR/AR and AI provide interactive spaces for students to experiment, constructing knowledge through active, social engagement
Model-Based Learning	Understanding is built through active experience and the use of conceptual/physical models.	Workshops use methods (e.g., cultural probes) as "forms of construction" for students to grasp abstract aesthetic principles.
Experiential Learning (Kolb, 1984)	Learning occurs through a cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation.	VR and AI tools immerse students in the design process, enabling real-time reflection and rapid iteration.
Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving	Developing purposeful, self-regulatory judgment through analysis, evaluation, and inference.	Framed as an essential skillset for graduates; a lack of teaching in this area is linked to deficient student creativity.
Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1972)	Education is a liberatory practice that empowers learners to challenge oppressive systems.	Students develop critical awareness of unsustainable consumption and their agency to drive change.
Facilitation Theory (Rogers, 1983)	The teacher acts as a facilitator, creating supportive environments for self-directed learning.	Teacher shifts from knowledge transmitter to creativity nurturer, emphasizing relationships and self-efficacy
Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL)	Using digital tools to support and enhance teaching and learning processes	VR, AI, and CAD enhance learning through visualization, collaboration, and rapid prototyping

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Sustainable Pedagogy	Integrating principles of environmental sustainability and resource efficiency into education.	Digital tools (VR, AI) reduce material waste, aligning learning goals with sustainable design practices.
Cognitive Load Theory Ma me ac	managing the load on working memory to facilitate knowledge acquisition.	Multimodal strategies integrate stimuli to manage complexity and free cognitive resources for creativity.

Note. This comparative chart summarizes how key learning theories are applied in contemporary fashion education. Adapted from the author's synthesis

B. Creative Design Process

Frameworks here focus on the cognitive and procedural dimensions of designing. Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Creativity (Sternberg, 1988) emphasizes synthetic (generating novel ideas), analytical (evaluating ideas), and practical (applying ideas) abilities. In fashion pedagogy, this theory is used to diagnose gaps in creativity and balance imaginative ideation with problem-solving and application (Mark, 2021). Design Thinking has been widely adopted as a human-centered process. Beyond product creation, it provides students with a structured methodology for tackling systemic challenges such as sustainability and inclusivity (Faerm, 2012; Bertola & Colombi, 2021).

Design Process Theory (Jones, 1992) outlines stages of divergence (opening the design space), transformation (recognizing patterns), and convergence (making final decisions). This model has been applied to structure creative workshops, providing a practical workflow from ideation to material realization (Bednall et al., 2006). The WI-WE Framework (Wearing Intentions–Wearing Expressions) conceptualizes fashion as communication between wearer and garment. In education, it trains students to think beyond form and function, situating design within social interaction and meaning-making. The designer's role is to solve the central equation ($WI = WE$), making the relationship between wearer intention and garment expression tangible (Bednall et al., 2006).

The creative design process, as outlined by these interconnected theories, begins with Sternberg's Triarchic Theory, which provides the foundational why by defining the three core cognitive abilities required for creative achievement. This principle of balanced abilities is then operationalized through the how of Design Thinking, an iterative methodology that integrates creative and critical thinking. To give this methodology a concrete structure, Design Process Theory (Jones, 1992) serves as the what, offering a practical three-stage workflow. Finally, this entire framework finds its specific domain application in the context of the WI-WE Framework, which provides fashion designers with a unique lens to solve the central equation of wearer intention and garment expression.

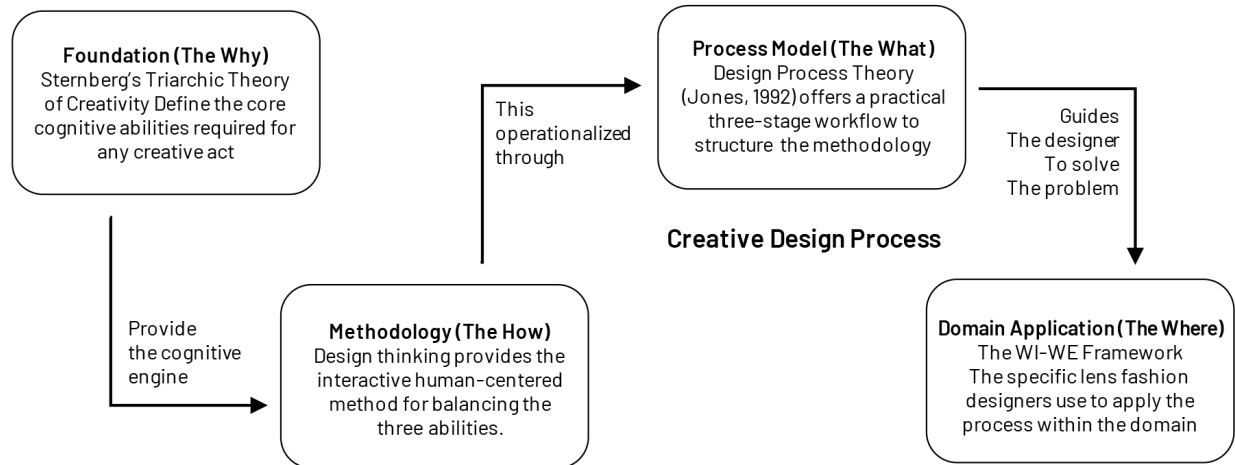
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Figure 3

A layered framework of creative design theory, from cognition to application (Developed by the author)



Note. This integrates four interconnected dimensions. Foundation (The Why), Methodology (The How), Process Model (The What), and Domain Application (The Where) to demonstrate how creativity progresses from cognitive understanding to applied design practice. The framework synthesizes Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Creativity, Design Thinking, Jones's (1992) Design Process Theory, and the WI-WE Framework to map the transition from idea generation to real-world fashion design solutions.

C. Culture and Aesthetic Perspectives

This theme situates fashion within cultural and aesthetic systems. Cultural Studies (Hall, 1997; Barthes, 1983) provides tools to interpret fashion artifacts as "texts" laden with symbolism. For example, Batik has been studied as both a cultural preservation and a commercial product, revealing tensions between authenticity and market adaptation (Rissanen, 2017). This lens allows students to analyze how cultural meanings are produced, consumed, and sometimes appropriated. Appadurai's Theory of Global Cultural Flows conceptualizes fashion as embedded in disjunctive global networks (-scapes). Richardson (2021) applied this to study how global brands and local cultures intersect in design education, examining the flow of aesthetics, capital, and ideologies. Postmodernism and Poststructuralism critique stable meanings and Eurocentric narratives. By emphasizing multiplicity, hybridity, and deconstruction, these frameworks invite students to reimagine fashion as a fluid, culturally contested practice.

Furthermore, Fashion Theory (Holt & Cameron) and Semiotic Analysis (Barthes) are used to analyze fashion as a social language and cultural industry, examining how it reflects and shapes social norms, values, and hierarchies.

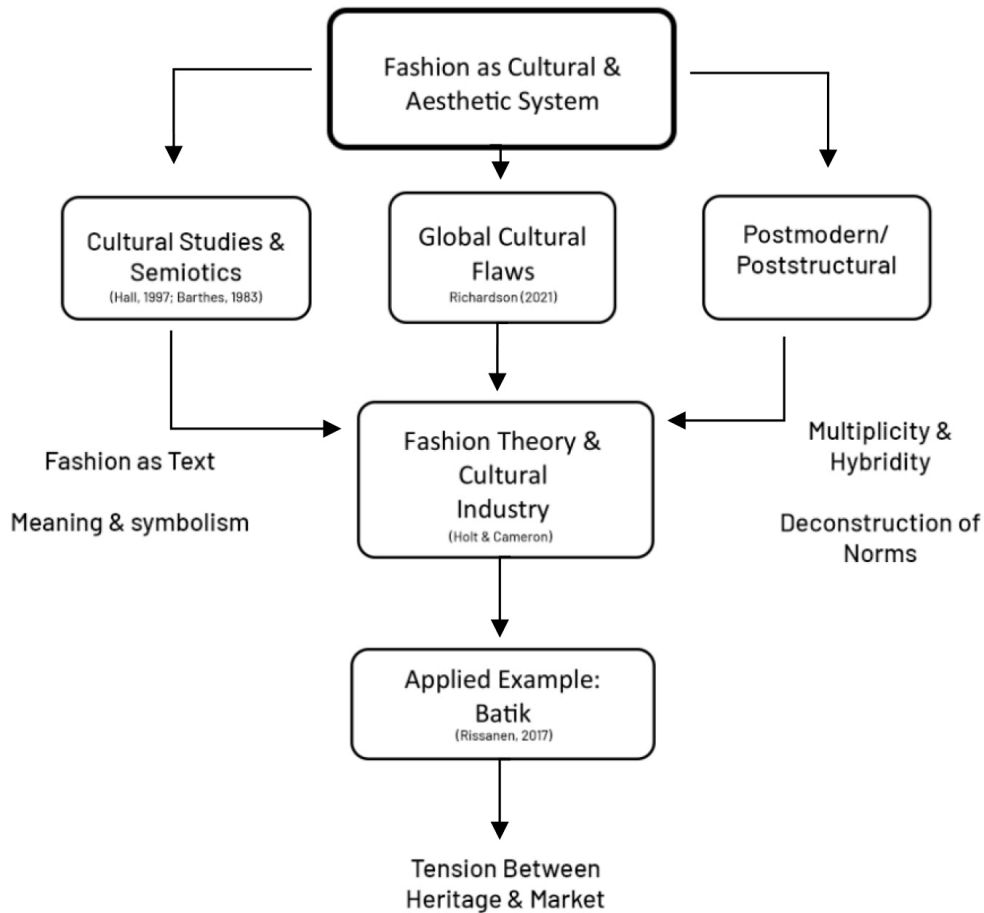
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Figure 4

Fashion as a Cultural and Aesthetic System: Theoretical Framework (Developed by the author)



Note. This diagram illustrates how fashion operates as a cultural and aesthetic system through multiple theoretical perspectives.

E. Sustainability and Ethical Lenses

Frameworks in this category address the ethical purpose and systemic responsibilities of fashion. Doughnut Economics (Raworth, 2017) encourages designing within ecological ceilings and social foundations. Applied in fashion education, it redefines the purpose of design projects around planetary boundaries and social equity (Rissanen, 2017). Max-Neef's Theory of Fundamental Human Needs (Max-Neef, 1991) distinguishes between genuine satisfiers and pseudo-satisfiers. Fashion is reframed as a medium to fulfill needs like participation, identity, and affection, rather than mere status consumption (Rissanen, 2017). Sustainable Pedagogy (Sterling, 2011) and Circular Economy

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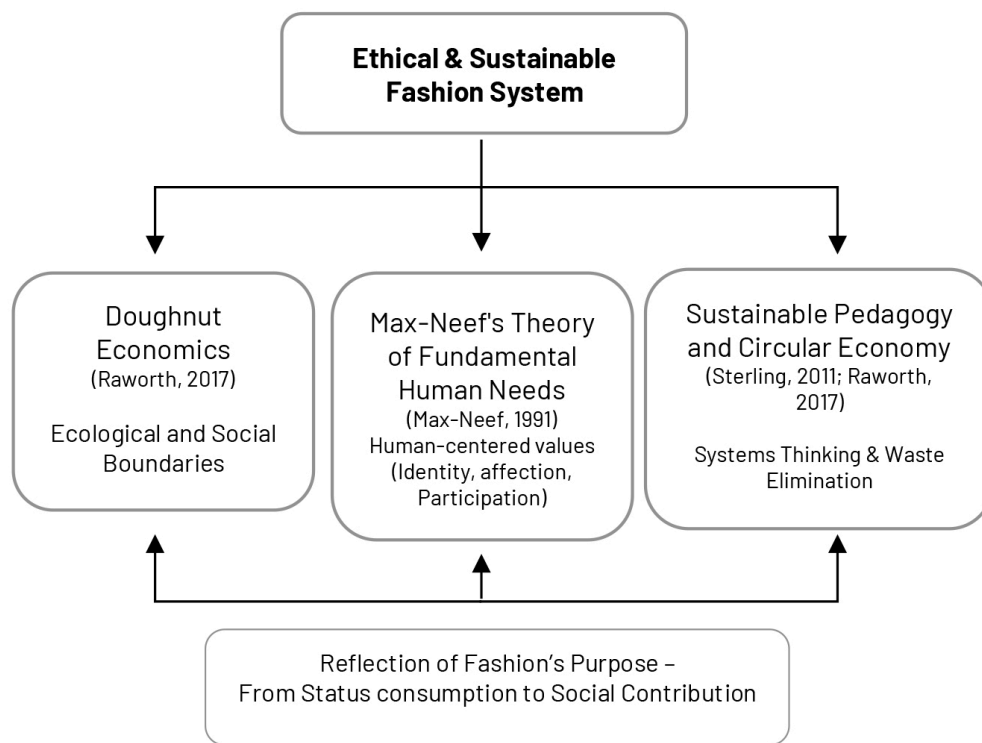
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Theory guide curricula toward systems thinking and waste elimination. Rissanen (2017) advocates for teaching not just products but closed-loop systems. This is practically supported by digital tools like VR and AI, which reduce material waste through virtual prototyping (Gao, 2024; Dumitrescu & Motta, 2023).

Transition Design and Metadesign emphasize designing the rules and frameworks that will govern sustainable futures. These higher-order approaches shift pedagogy from "designing objects" to "designing systems of change," preparing students to redirect practices and create 'micro-utopias' (Rissanen, 2017).

Figure 5

Interconnected Theoretical Frameworks for Ethical and Sustainable Fashion Education (Developed by the author)



Note. This conceptual model visualizes how sustainability and ethical theories contribute to reorienting fashion education and practice.

F. Technology Integration

Fashion education's digital transformation is guided by key frameworks that address both adoption and integration. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains how students' willingness to use tools like AI hinges on their perceived usefulness and ease. While Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) provides the broad rationale for using digital tools to improve education, Embodied Cognition ensures this integration complements, rather than replaces, essential hands-on and sensory learning. Ultimately, these approaches are contextualized within the Industry 4.0 framework, which

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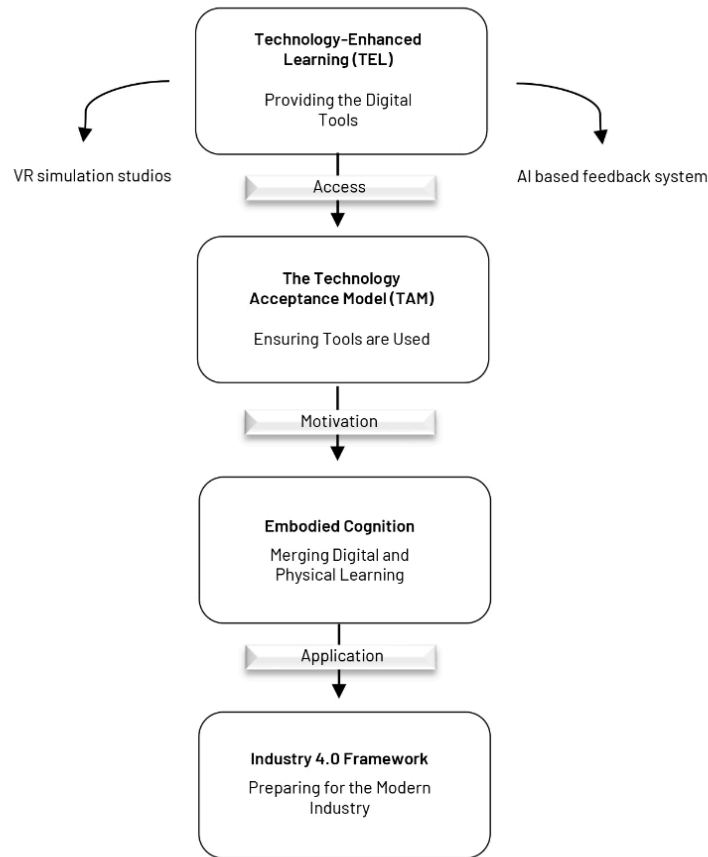
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prepares students with the systems- thinking needed for a modern, technology-driven industry.

Figure 6

A Sequential Model of Technology Integration in Fashion Education (Developed by the author)



Note. This conceptual model illustrates the progressive integration of technology within fashion education.

G. Entrepreneurial Pathways

The final theme reflects the need for graduates to navigate uncertain career landscapes. Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) explains entrepreneurial intention through attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control. In fashion education, it clarifies why some students pursue ventures despite systemic barriers like lack of capital or competence (Lang & Liu, 2019).

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and Self-Efficacy Theory highlight the importance of building student confidence through skill mastery and role models. Lang & Liu (2019) emphasize that entrepreneurship training must cultivate both business skills and the belief in one's capacity to succeed.

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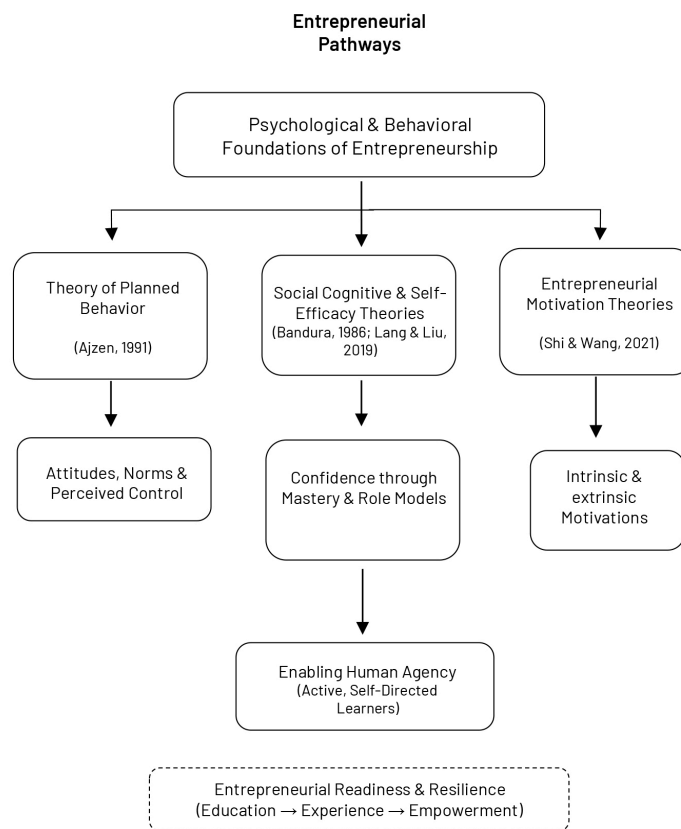
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Entrepreneurial Motivation Theory distinguishes intrinsic drivers (passion, autonomy, creativity) from extrinsic (profit, recognition) (Shi & Wang, 2021). Programs that integrate reflective practice with business training tend to produce more resilient graduates by addressing this complex blend of motivators (Lang & Liu, 2019).

The perspective of Human Agency in Entrepreneurship frames students as active agents whose potential can be cultivated through tailored education, experience, and support systems, moving beyond the notion that entrepreneurs are simply "born."

Figure 7

Theoretical Model of Entrepreneurial Pathways in Fashion Education (Developed by the author)



Note. This model conceptualizes entrepreneurial development in fashion education as a progression shaped by interconnected psychological and behavioral theories.

Discussion

This thematic analysis offers a compelling view of how contemporary fashion education is transforming to meet the complex demands of the twenty-first century. The study reveals that

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competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, sustainability, and entrepreneurial agency are no longer isolated outcomes; instead, they are interconnected pillars of a holistic, learner-centered pedagogy. This convergence reflects a global trend toward educational models that prepare designers not only to create but to critically engage with social, cultural, and technological challenges.

A key insight from the analysis is the integration of experiential and technology-mediated learning. Globally, programs are leveraging digital tools—ranging from virtual reality to AI-assisted prototyping—to enhance engagement, reflection, and skill acquisition. Yet, the findings emphasize that technology is most effective when balanced with hands-on practice, ensuring that emerging designers maintain sensory awareness and craftsmanship while navigating Industry 4.0 environments. This trend underscores the shift from traditional, skill-focused instruction to hybrid pedagogies that cultivate adaptable, future-ready learners.

Another significant pattern is the embedding of sustainability and ethical responsibility within the curriculum. Frameworks such as Doughnut Economics and Max-Neef's Theory of Fundamental Human Needs demonstrate that fashion education is increasingly guiding students to view design as a vehicle for social and environmental impact, rather than mere aesthetic output. Globally, this reflects an educational imperative to align pedagogy with sustainability goals, while locally, it highlights an opportunity for countries like Sri Lanka to cultivate designers who can address pressing ecological and social challenges.

Finally, the analysis highlights the growing importance of entrepreneurial development in fashion education. Programs that foster self-efficacy, reflective practice, and intrinsic motivation equip graduates to navigate uncertain career landscapes, innovate responsibly, and transform creative ideas into meaningful ventures. This trend signifies a move beyond conventional business training, positioning designers as active agents of change capable of shaping both industry and society.

Taken together, these findings point toward a hybrid, globally-informed pedagogical model that integrates experiential learning, technology, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. The significance of this synthesis lies in its ability to inform curriculum design, policymaking, and institutional strategies worldwide. For global fashion education, it provides a roadmap to cultivate ethically aware, versatile, and innovative designers. For Sri Lanka, it offers a pathway to strengthen the creative economy, address skill mismatches, and empower a new generation of designers to contribute sustainably and innovatively to both national and international fashion landscapes.

IV. Conclusion

This study highlights the evolution of global fashion design education toward an integrated, learner-centered, and competency-driven model. Creativity, technology, sustainability, cultural

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literacy, and entrepreneurial skills now operate as interconnected pillars, shaping designers who are critically aware, ethically responsible, and industry-ready. For Sri Lanka, these insights offer a roadmap to craft curricula that honor local culture and sustainability while aligning with global standards. Ultimately, the future of fashion education lies in adaptive, interdisciplinary, and value-driven frameworks—preparing a new generation of designers capable of innovating, leading, and transforming the global fashion landscape.

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