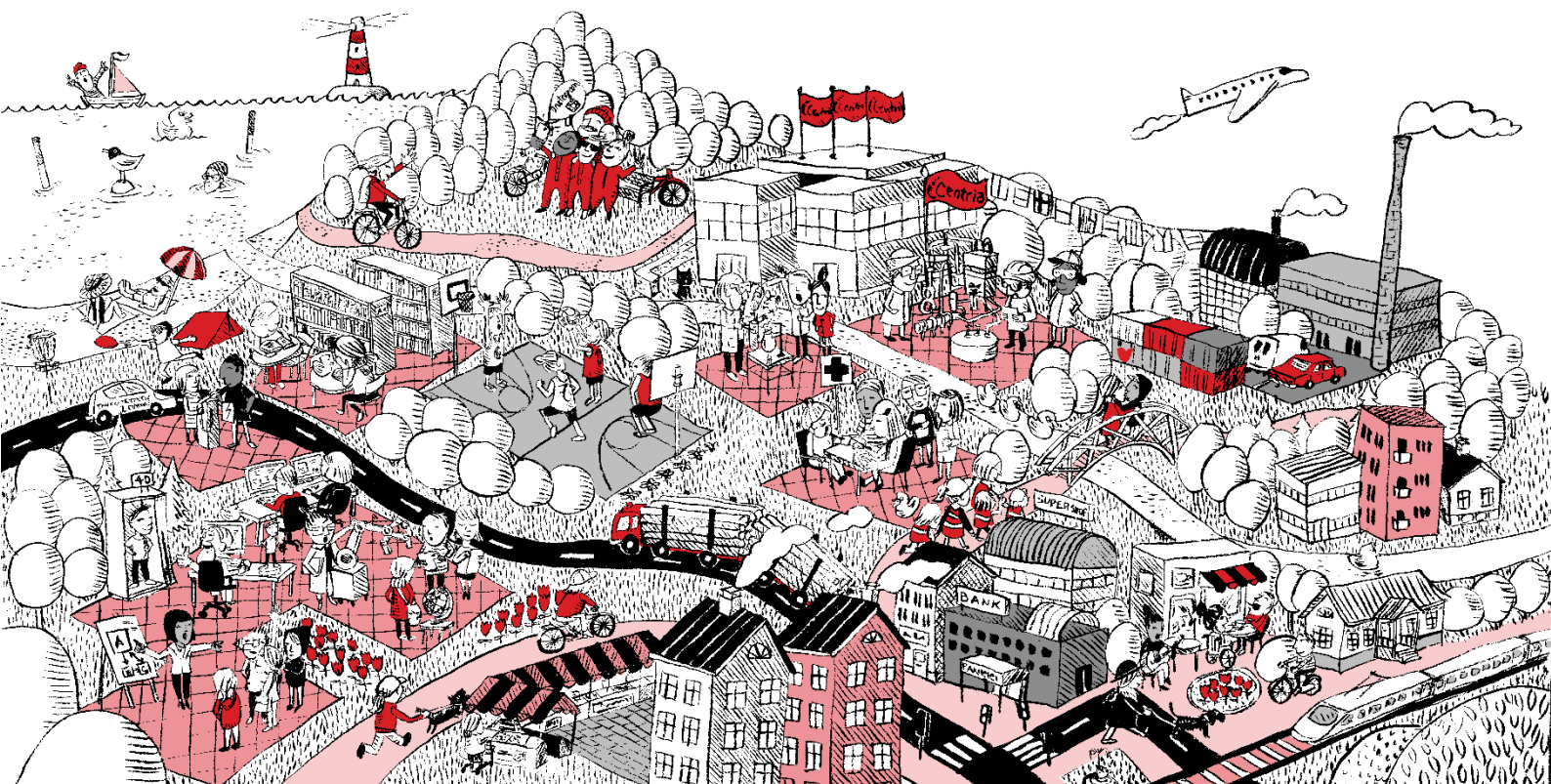


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**FASHION SHOW EVENT PRODUCTION FOR SOROPTIMIST
INTERNATIONAL FINLAND, A WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
ORGANIZATION**

Celebrating real women on the catwalk

Thesis
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ABSTRACT

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Name of thesis FASHION SHOW EVENT PRODUCTION FOR SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL FINLAND, A WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION. Celebrating real women on the catwalk		
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<p>The commissioner of the thesis is Soroptimist International Finland (SIF), a voluntary women organization which promotes the equality and position of women worldwide. The thesis is an overview on women empowerment in the fashion industry and its implementation in the fashion show production. The aim of the thesis was to observe how the fashion industry has presently evolved in order to reflect society and embrace social advancements. The objective of the thesis was to have an outlook on the fashion industry and current phenomenon in order to implement a knowledge base practice in real time. The thesis theoretical framework was written to understand the foundations of the fashion industry and its recent progress towards inclusion and diversity. Furthermore, the author investigated how fashion can be used as a tool of empowerment for women. In recent years the runway platform has been taken by inspiring figures and style icons such as celebrities, influencers, everyday women, real life heroines, female leaders and all other sorts of role models. These women are intended to set an example for society, raise awareness and a global voice for women empowerment. SI Jakobstad provided the writer with an opportunity to take part in an independent practice-based work project. The practice-based project focused on the production of a fashion show event with an insight on women empowerment. To support the theory accessible in the thesis theoretical framework, the writer presented the outcome of the research in the empirical part through utilization of quantitative research method. The quantitative research was conducted through survey, attendees were provided with a questionnaire at the end of the runway show. Data results provided evidence on the audience reactions and opinions. Accordingly, the event evaluation measured the success of the fashion show production and provided constructive feedbacks for further developments and implementation.</p>		

Key words

body positivity, diversity, fashion, fashion industry, fashion model, fashion show, inclusion, women empowerment

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

Centria UAS

Centria University of Applied Sciences

SI

Soroptimist International

SIJ

Soroptimist International Jakobstad

SIF

Soroptimist International Finland

ABSTRACT
CONCEPT DEFINITIONS
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1 INTRODUCTION WORLD

Fashion is the business of manufacturing and selling garments. With a current value of 3,000 billion dollars generated in 2020, the global fashion industry is a prominent sector of today's world economy in terms of employment, labor force, trade and finance (FashionUnited 2021). The international fashion market consists of various interdependent enterprises and services operating in design, production, distribution, marketing, retailing, promotion and advertisement. The fashion supply chain employs and connects millions of people worldwide, from the raw material suppliers to the end consumers. The fast evolution of the global fashion industry is a result of the postmodern consumer culture driven by governments, companies and citizens. Our economy has built an entire system based on consumerism. In today's society, people are encouraged to see fashion as a fast and ever-changing trend, inducing people to buy more. Thereby, the fashion industry is one of the largest industrial sectors around the world. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2021.)

The fashion industry has conquered the international markets. Trends for the current and upcoming seasons are followed across borders and cultures. However, the global fashion industry is subject to a lot of controversy in terms of beauty standards, racial and social discrimination. Modelling agencies are known to be very selective and exclusive in terms of model casting. Runway models are expected to fit a certain profile with specific features, measurements and height. For decades, the fashion industry has sprayed the idea that a fashion model cannot be average, preventing real women to make an entrance into the fashion scene. In fact, models portrayed on runways and marketing campaigns are rarely representing the various women body types or ethnic and cultural diversity of our world. Worldwide consumers have long claimed the lack of average consumer representation. Accordingly, the industry is starting to implement real change by promoting unity and body positivity into the fashion world. The battle against discrimination continues, making it possible for models of all sizes, body types, ethnicities, gender, ages and abilities to be a part of the industry.

The thesis is an overview on women empowerment in the fashion industry and its implementation in the fashion show production. The aim of the thesis is to observe how the fashion industry has presently evolved in order to reflect society and embrace social advancements. The objective of the thesis is to have an outlook on the fashion industry and current phenomenon in order to implement a knowledge base practice in real time. The practice-based project enabled me to assimilate the elements of fashion show production and empower women and young girls on the runway. In fact, the primary objective of

the fashion show production was to break away from the norms conveyed by the fashion industry and feature everyday women in lieu of traditional runway models. The fashion show event celebrated diversity and included all women regardless of age, ethnicity, body type, occupation, or modelling experience. The intentions of this practice-based project were to plan, organize and coordinate a successful event which met the audience satisfaction and paid tribute to women.

As the event was arranged for a worldwide women empowerment organization, the concept of the fashion show was developed around the core values and purpose of the target audience. Soroptimist International is a voluntary women organization which promotes the equality and status of women worldwide while supporting women through volunteer service and enabling opportunities for educational growth, career development and personal empowerment. Accordingly, the purpose of the event was to empower women and young girls through a fashion show production which reflected the recent developments of the fashion industry in terms of diversity, body positivity and inclusion. The assigned development task of the thesis project was a fashion show event production showcasing the collections manufactured by antecedent students of the fur fashion design center of Centria UAS. The thesis covers the different aspects of the fashion show production with an overlook on women empowerment through the fashion industry.

The theoretical framework was written to understand the foundations of the fashion industry and its recent progress towards inclusion and diversity. The theoretical study is structured into three chapters. Chapter 2 provides an insight on the fashion industry, the chapter includes a brief history of fashion show production, diverse reasons to produce a fashion show, various types of fashion shows within the fashion industry and a description of fashion week. Chapter 3 is a perspective on women empowerment through the fashion industry focusing on the recent advancements of the modelling industry. This chapter provides information on the advantages and downsides of modelling agencies, it defines the different types of fashion models and their roles within the industry, lastly the chapter discusses the lack of diverse consumer representation in the fashion industry. Chapter 4 redefines the concept of fashion as a means of reform for social progress, it contains information about fashion as a powerful form of self-expression, fashion as a phenomenon of social movement, the fashion industry impact on society and fashion as a form of protest and call for change.

The implementation of the theoretical study is presented in chapter 5. The chapter introduces the practical part and the research part of the practice-based thesis. The objective of the practice-based work project was to elaborate a fashion show which reflected the recent improvements of the fashion industry in

terms of diversity, and inclusion. The objective of the research was to find out how to use fashion and fashion show productions as a tool of empowerment and change. This fifth chapter presents the background and motivation for the research, intentions and goals of the research, the question at the origin of the research subject, hypotheses of the research as well as the general applied research approach which allows to understand the development of the analyzes and results presented in chapter 8.

The practical framework is presented in chapters 6 and 7. The practical implementation is reported in two chapters comprising event planning and event production of a real time fashion show event. Event planning is the process of designing, planning and delivering a successful event which meets the client's needs and requirements. Event planning is presented in the sixth chapter, it contains information about the client, project scope, concept and theme selection, merchandise and documentation. Event production is the creation and staging of a performance, the seventh chapter encompasses team assembling, site management, rehearsal, and fashion show event. In view of a practice-based thesis, relevant data was collected for future analysis and evaluation of the fashion show practical implementation aiming to assess the quality of the show production and measure the event success.

The empirical part of the thesis is presented in chapter 8 which displays the research methodology, data analysis and results of the quantitative research. The quantitative research was conducted through survey to evaluate the performance from the perspective of the audience. Attendees were provided with a questionnaire at the end of the runway show in order to collect recent and relevant data. The questionnaire was divided into four sections that explored diverse domains including personal information, event assessment, promotion of fur and leather products, and the participants' perspective towards fashion and the fashion industry. Next, collected data was organized, summarized, and manipulated to notice relationships, patterns, and trends. Data was then analyzed, interpreted, and presented in a format that maximizes clarity and impact such as graphs and charts. Visual reports were generated for easy analysis, result evaluation and interpretation. Data collection provided evidence on the respondents' reaction and opinions. Accordingly, the event evaluation measured the event success and provided constructive feedbacks for further developments and implementation.

For the overall, proper and accurate completion of this thesis, the secondary source materials that are being taken into consideration are an e-book intitled Guide to produce a fashion show, 4th edition by Judith C. Everett, Kristen K. Swanson and José Blanco F, published in 2018, in addition to books, journals, articles in newspapers, magazines and websites related to current phenomenon involving the fashion industry and women empowerment movements, along with their validated information.

2 THE RUNWAY WORLD

A runway show is a creative way to showcase a designer's clothing line to an audience as it enables potential buyers to visualize fashion looks on live models. During a fashion show, the designer's artistic vision is embodied by models walking down the catwalk. All elements constituting a fashion show are intended to highlight a designer's collection and create an atmosphere which translates the designer's vision and captivate the public's attention. Fashion show events are a major form of promotion, they showcase a designer's work, engage an audience and motivate their purchasing decision in order to engender sales. Moreover, fashion shows contribute to a brand's identity development as it engenders market visibility and expands a brand's business network. At the occasion of the spring/summer and fall/winter fashion week, fashion shows are used to communicate the industry's recent advancements and unfold the latest fashion trends to the general public. In recent years, the fashion industry has remarkably evolved due to the impact of globalization on our world's economy which favors international trade, technological advancement, flows of information, investment, and people.

2.1 Origination of fashion show production

The history of fashion show production starts back in 1858, when Charles Frederick Worth also known as father of couture opened the first couture house in Paris. The House of Worth was specialized in perfumes, ready-made clothing and haute couture collections. Worth adapted nineteenth century dresses to make them more suited to everyday life, he became the official dressmaker of Empress Eugenie of France, Empress Elisabeth of Austria, Queen Victoria and many more. In 1851, Worth met his wife, Marie Vernet who later became the first live model in recorded history. The English designer had the revolutionary idea to arrange private fashion parades and present his creations on live models rather than exhibit his clothes on mannequins or fashion dolls. Live modelling was an innovative method which allowed clients to see the colors and movements of the fabric on a living person in such manner that they could visualize themselves into the fashion looks. After Worth, many other couturiers launched their fashion house and adopted the promotion and sales methods pioneered by Charles Frederick Worth. These were the beginning of modern fashion shows. Since then, the fashion show production has remarkably evolved. (Beautifully invisible 2012; Everett, Swanson & Blanco 2018, 19.)

Charles Frederick Worth was at the origin of the global modern fashion industry as we know it today. In fact, Worth was the first to create new fashion trends each season to increase sales and market demand. The British designer would arrange private fashion parades in order to present his latest seasonal collection. Accordingly, exclusive clients would select fashion styles and place their order for further production. Worth was acclaimed internationally for the utmost luxury of his garments; in fact, his prestigious work gave rise to the term haute couture in 1908. Moreover, Worth was the first couturier to sew branded labels into the clothing as a means of dissuading other designers from reproducing his designs. (Trubert-Tollu, Tetart-Vittu, Martin-Hattemberg, Olivieri, & Lacroix 2017.) In 1868, Worth founded “La Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne”, a professional trade association that sets specific standards of conduct for a fashion house to call itself Haute Couture. The association still exists today as part of “la Federation de la Haute Couture et de la Mode”. (Beautifully invisible 2012; Hearst UK 2021.) Currently, the couture association counts more than a hundred members, amongst them, Chanel, Dior, Valentino, Versace and many other grand couturiers (DN-MAG 2021).

The concept of fashion week began in Paris, when dressmakers started hiring live models to show couture items at the occasion of private fashion parades. In the early nineteenth century, Paris was considered as the fashion capital of the world. In fact, the French tradition of haute couture was already acknowledged internationally. In 1940, French couture became unavailable to the world due to the German military occupation of World War II. Dressmakers were prohibited to communicate styles and send fashion designs overseas. Furthermore, American journalists were prevented from traveling to Paris and report the latest trends of the French couture. Hence, American fashion made its debuts in 1943 when Eleanord Lampert, a New York fashion publicist launched press week to feature the work of American couturiers. In 1950, press week became an annual event which eventually evolved into New York Fashion Week. In 1958, the second official fashion week was established in Milan. The first official Paris Fashion Week was only held in 1973, when French fashion made its returns on the runaway after the war. In 1984, the British fashion council created London Fashion Week. Presently, New York, Paris, Milan and London are recognized as the big four fashion capitals in the world. (Stanton 2021; Subha 2019.)

2.2 Reasons to produce a fashion show

Fashion shows are a dramatic and exiting form of promotion. The primary purpose of a fashion show is to sell merchandise by launching and promoting a designer’s collection, especially during international

fashion weeks. People who attend and livestream fashion shows are genuinely interested in fashion trends and fashion innovation, making of them ideal target customers. The objective of a fashion show is to increase customer traffic, attract prospective clients and retain returning customer's loyalty. Retail stores may arrange fashion shows to boost sales and strengthen their position as fashion authorities. However, the most effective form of promotion within the fashion industry is at the occasion of the biannual global fashion week, where fashion designers come together to showcase their latest line to a worldwide audience. In fact, the international fashion week is a highly visible event that engages media and public's attention, driving them to view and purchase the latest fashion. Most well-known designers have reached international recognition after presenting their collection on the runway. The runway exposure allows designers to gain publicity and fortify their brand image. (Desjardin 2020; Everett et al. 2018, 24–25.)

Staging a fashion show contributes to a brand's image development. Fashion brands benefit from the event's exposure to build a reputable and trustworthy brand image. Brand image is the customer's impressions, ideas, and beliefs held about a brand based on the customer's experiences, observations and interactions with a company (Pahwa 2021). When purchasing a branded product, people estimate that the notoriety of the brand's name will provide value to the product, not only because of its quality but also because of the significance associated with that product. Indeed, a strong brand image indicates what the company stands for and highlight a brand's vision and mission. Consequently, people may feel like a branded product may provide them with a certain status contributing to social acceptance.

Consumers often purchase clothing from brands that are either perceived as high class, fashionable or trendy, and that fit into a particular peer group or subculture. In fact, when purchasing designers' clothes, the consumer is not only acquiring a product but also the image associated with that product. Hence, the importance of building a strong, positive and consistent brand image which contributes to the recognition and evolution of the brand. Besides, brand image facilitates the introduction of a new item under the same brand name (Pahwa 2021). Therefore, when people assist to a fashion show, they are systematically inclined to buy the latest designer's collection as they already esteem and acknowledge the clothing brand. (Kokemuller 2019; Management Study Guide 2021.)

Fashion show events provide valuable networking opportunities. Designers get to enhance their business network by making a new set of contacts. In fact, before and after the show, dressmakers get to meet other influential fashion designers, and all sorts of professionals working in the fashion show production

industry such as event producers, stylists, casting directors, hair and makeup artists, photographers, choreographers, technicians and many others. Additionally, fashion show events enable designers to meet and interact with powerful figures representative of the industry such as fashion editors, directors, department heads and journalists. Getting to know people of the industry enables fashion designers to exchange creative ideas, look for new prospects, discover upcoming trends, gather information and connect with people interested in partnership and collaboration. Furthermore, networking with fashion influencers, important clients and international buyers is in the best interest of the designer as they acquire, sell and promote a designer's clothing line. (Entrepreneur Media, Inc. 2021.)

Nowadays, fashion designers are using the runway platform to make social statements, defend a cause and raise awareness on issues that align with the designer's beliefs and values. Designers often have a personal vision or mission that they wish to convey through their brand image. The catwalk is a creative and influential platform which enables designers to make a visual statement by expressing their imagination beyond clothing. By sharing their concerns about injustice, inequalities, discrimination, prejudice, racism and sexism, fashion designers encourage their audiences to arise and fight for their rights. In fact, fashion has the faculty to engage audiences and power change. Many brands have contributed to the recent advancement of the fashion industry as they voice the opinion of the oppressed and emphasis on diversity, inclusivity and social progress. Besides, activist runway shows allow to engage the interest of new customers, as people resonate and identify themselves to the designer's mission statement. Some charitable groups and organizations host fashion show events in collaboration with retail stores and fashion students to promote goodwill, raise funds and benefit others. (Accelerate TV 2020; Everett et al. 2018, 25.)

2.3 Fashion show categories

The fashion market is a massive industry which can be segmented into three separate market levels: retail, national and trade. Thereby, the nature of a fashion show can vary according to the merchandise selected and researched outcome. Fashion show events can be organized as small, casual presentations or as large, spectacular performances. Accordingly, small-scale fashion show events need minor preparations and a few staff members. Clothing stores frequently select participants from their own personnel and fashion schools commonly recruit students to volunteer in a practical work experience. (Everett et al. 2018, 25). Large-scale fashion show events require months of planning and preparations, it usually takes six months to a year to plan the entire event procedures. Production shows require a team of experts

specialized in the fashion show production industry. Fashion shows can be categorized within three main types of production: informal shows, formal runway shows and production shows. (Everett et al. 2018, 26.)

The informal show is the most basic form of fashion show production. These events require minor preparation when compared to formal and production shows. Informal shows are casual presentations which do not necessarily require stage, music, or lighting. While there are no specific requirements or theatrical elements involved, the informal show may incorporate props to highlight the clothing lines featured. Informal shows are used to display manufacturers and retailer's merchandise in a showroom or sales floor during market weeks. (Everett et al. 2018, 27; London Fashion Week Festival 2021.) A market week is a period in which apparel wholesale vendors present their recently produced line to prospective buyers and retailers looking to review and buy the latest fashion for their store. During market weeks, retailers display goods for sale to exclusive buyers and arrange informal fashion shows featuring live models walking through the store sales floor or parading around the temporary showroom. (Apparel Search Company 2020.)

The formal runway show, also known as fashion parade, is the standard fashion show as we know. Distinguishable by its conventional characteristics such as the simplicity of its presentation and its linear catwalk choreography, formal runway shows are quite common among the fashion industry. During fashion week, formal runway shows are used as primary tool of promotion for designers and manufacturers. Retail stores may arrange fashion parades to attract new consumers and improve sales. These conventional and popular events require prior planning and about two to six months of preparation (Everett et al. 2018, 28). In fact, a formal runway show comprises music, lighting, staging, models, location, and theme. Additionally, attendees may expect a cordial reception, hospitality, light meals and refreshments. The duration of a formal show is about fifteen to thirty minutes, during which models walk down the catwalk consecutively in pairs, groups or individually. The number of models can vary according to the show's scenes and merchandise selected. (Everett et al. 2018, 27; London Fashion Week Festival 2021.)

Finally, the production show, also referred as spectacular or dramatized show is defined by its theatrical and dramatic aspects aimed to immerse the audience into the designer's world. Production shows are the most elaborated and expensive type of fashion shows. All elements comprised in a production show emphasize on fashion trends and highlight the merchandise displayed. The elements of a production show include lighting effects, stage setting and background such as backdrops and scenery, exclusively

produced or live music, special entertainment or live performances such as acting, dancing and choreography. The duration of a production show is about one hour, depending on the total amount of merchandise displayed and the number of models participating in the parade. Generally, fifteen to fifty models are needed to perform in these extravagant performances. (Everett et al. 2018, 26; London Fashion Week Festival 2021.)

2.4 Fashion week

Fashion week is the official fashion rendezvous, in which the industry's top designers and fashion houses present their new ready-to-wear and haute couture collections. Twice a year, the fashion elite gather in the four fashion capitals of the world: New York, Paris, Milan and London, to view the latest trends and innovations of the fashion industry displayed at the occasion of the spring/summer and fall/winter fashion week. Additionally, small scale fashion weeks are held in every major city of the world. Haute couture shows are uniquely produced in Paris, the world's capital of high fashion. Couture shows are the foundation of fashion innovation and a source of inspiration for mainstream fashion. To remain profitable, most high fashion houses produce a seasonal ready-to-wear collection in addition to the haute couture line. The global capitals of ready-to-wear fashion are New York, Milan and London. Ready to wear shows are held six months prior to the selling season enabling manufacturers to produce the merchandise ordered by retailers for the upcoming selling season. Fashion weeks are held twice a year to accommodate seasonal weather changes and encourage consumers to purchase new clothes on a regular basis. (Everett et al. 2018, 28.)

Invitations to fashion week's runway shows are sent to exclusive guests such as international buyers and retailers, press and media, celebrities, influencers and special guests such as socialites and friends of the designers. All attendees play a primary role in the promotion and financial gain of a designer's collection. During fashion week, merchandise is shown as a sequence of runway shows allowing retailers, media and journalists to uncover trends for the upcoming season. International buyers and retailers attend fashion week shows to preview, select, and order new-fashioned merchandise for their store. Fashion journalists assess the clothing lines featured while fashion magazine editors identify and report the fashion trends for the upcoming season. Celebrities and influencers are invited to attend fashion week shows to increase the event visibility, engage audiences and generate extensive press and mass media coverage. Fashion week shows are exposed to mass media coverage which provides an excellent platform to communicate fashion trends and information to the general public. (Meriwether 2017.)

3 CELEBRATING REAL WOMEN ON THE CATWALK

For decades, the fashion industry has sprayed the idea that a fashion model cannot be average, preventing real women to make an entrance into the fashion scene. However, the industry is waking up to the customer demands and is starting to showcase diversity and promote unity and body positivity into the fashion world. Fashion is symbol of change, progress and innovation. As the mirror of our society, the industry has an eye towards advancement and seeks to embrace new trends. What was once considered has the high standards of beauty is now highly disputed. Therefore, the industry is adapting to the changing needs and demands of global fashion consumers. The world is evolving, and the fashion industry is adopting a new approach towards its audiences. In recent years the runway platform has been taken by inspiring figures and style icons such as celebrities, influencers and all sorts of role models. These women are intended to set an example for society and raise a global voice for women empowerment. Designers are portraying the image of a strong independent power woman on the catwalk. Audiences are inspired and encouraged to believe in themselves and embrace their differences.

3.1 Modelling agency

The purpose of a modelling agency is to manage and promote the career of fashion models. Modelling agencies offer great advantages for aspirant models wishing to debut a career in the modelling industry. Most professional models are affiliated to a mother agency which represents them and act on their behalf. A “mother agency” or “main agency” assists and guides models through their modelling career. After signing a contract, the mother agent trains the models in the profession, he/she helps them to elaborate their portfolio, find castings and negotiate contracts with clients. The mother agent manages model’s bookings, schedule, transport, and accommodation. Modelling agencies derive their income from commissions on contracts obtained by models affiliated with their brand. The biggest agencies work with photographers, fashion magazines, large advertising companies, department stores, designers, haute couture and ready-to-wear houses. Each season, modelling agencies organize open calls and dispatch model scouts in public areas to recruit candidates and find models with unusual looks and faces. Clients prefer to recruit models through agencies or casting calls as it allows them to save time and find a large selection of candidates which fit their requirements and expectations. (Everett et al. 2018, 126; Helmer 2019.)

A casting is a search and selection of profiles that allows a recruiter to find one or more candidates for a project. Depending on the objective of the commercial, campaign, or runway show, the fashion show production company or producer contacts modelling agencies and requests a search for models. Accordingly, the casting director introduces candidates corresponding to the image that the client wishes to associate with his product or service. The model's selection process is either conducted in person during an audition or through a professional photo book provided by modelling agencies. When applying for a position, all candidates are requested to submit photographs which allow clients and recruiters to visualize what type of clothes, hairstyle, accessory, or shoot might be suitable for the candidate. As soon as the producer or client chooses the models, the agency or casting director is responsible for employment procedures, such as contract, schedule, and payment method for the fee. (Everett et al. 2018, 126.)

Modelling is perceived as a prestigious and glamorous career; however, the modelling industry can have many downsides. Modelling agencies are highly selective and exclusive in terms of model casting. In fact, to become a model, one must have specific body measurements and height corresponding to the agency guidelines. The modelling industry has been brought into disrepute, after being repeatedly accused of promoting unhealthy body image and constraining models to restrict weight gain despite the health problems and eating disorders it can cause. Models are compelled to maintain a strict diet which often leads to poor nutrition habits, weight loss, and fasting. Moreover, the industry has been prosecuted for practicing unethical working conditions. Countless models have been subject to heavy criticism, mistreatments, racial discrimination and sexual harassment in the working environment. Besides, due to the excessive competition on the market, models can be replaced from one season to another. As a matter of fact, modeling is a short-lived career which does not include retirement or health care benefits. Models' basic working conditions are yet to be improved. (Everett et al. 2018, 127–128; Mellinger 2018.)

3.2 Fashion models

A model is a professional that lends his/her image to the fashion industry at the occasion of photoshoots, commercials and fashion parades. A model's career is based on physical appearance hence the need to show great care for body image and healthcare. Fashion models use their physique and acting skills to present and sell the latest creations of the haute couture and ready-to-wear houses. The role of a model is to embody the designer's vision and give life to the collection on the catwalk by showing the colors and movements of the fabric to inspire audiences. The product features are highlighted to promote the

designer's collection at its best. Fashion models contribute to the brand's image development as they engage the audience's interest and influence consumer purchasing behavior to generate sales. Models can work as freelancers, or with a modelling agency which acts as an intermediary between models and clients. (Everett et al. 2018, 118–119; Job Hero Limited 2021.)

3.2.1 Fashion model categories

Overall, there are two major categories of fashion model, the commercial model and the editorial model. When applying to a modelling agency, the mother agent will decide whether the candidate is more suitable for commercial or editorial modelling. Model's classification is determined according to the candidate's look and aptitudes. In fact, each market sector has as a proper modelling style which encompasses different set of skills and approaches. For instance, physical requirements, poses, posture and attitude may vary according to the type of modelling. Commercial models are more relatable to target consumers, their body image can vary in height, sizes and shapes. Whereas editorial models are idealized and represent a sort of fantasy, their physical appearance must correspond to a certain profile which is very specific in terms of age, body measurements or height. (Goodstein 2016.)

Commercial models are the women we see on television ads, newspapers, billboards, magazines and catalogues. Commercial models have a classic, youthful appearance and an approachable, relatable look which enables them to work with the mass-market. Their tasks include fittings, shootings, and posing for advertisements, campaigns, catalogues, commercials, and television. The purpose of a commercial model is to sell products of the fashion industry to consumer markets. Commercial models focus on building a solid relationship with the client in order to become brand ambassadors. A brand ambassador is an individual hired to represent a label with the intention to communicate a brand's identity and promote its products to generate sales and raise brand awareness. (Everett et al. 2018, 119; Kiniry 2019.)

Editorial models are the women we see in high fashion magazines and top designer's runway shows, notably at fashion week. Editorial models have small measurements and a peculiar look, their appearance is young, lean, and charismatic. These high-status models work for prestigious fashion designers and fashion houses. Their tasks include posing for high fashion magazine and displaying products at runway shows, notably during the international fashion week. In view of a fashion show, editorial mod-

els attend meetings, fittings, shootings and rehearsals. The purpose of an editorial model is to communicate the latest fashion trends to the public, influence the mass market, and build a brand's identity by defining its credibility. (Everett et al. 2018, 119; Kiniry 2019.)

3.2.2 Professional versus amateur models

In view of a runway show, a crew of models is recruited to perform on the catwalk. Depending on the size of the event, budget and resources available, the event director seeks participants at the occasion of a casting call. Runway models can either be experienced or amateur candidates. Fashion show directors may have the impression that professional models facilitate and fasten the project implementation. In fact, trained models work proactively and ensure a flawless performance which contributes to the event success. However, non-professional models also attach great importance to their role and responsibilities. Besides, amateurs are open-minded, enthusiastic, eager to learn and progress (BookModels 2021). When a group of models is uniquely composed of amateurs, the director needs to recruit additional participants to secure the readiness and fluidity of the show. Alternatively, directors can assemble a team of both professional and amateur models, that way experienced models can lead beginners and serve as example through the event operations. (Everett et al. 2018, 129.)

Professional models can be recruited from modelling agencies which provide them with advanced training and work experience. Accordingly, trained models are acquainted with runway procedures and modeling techniques which allows them to adjust quickly to new environments and circumstances. In fact, a professional model can adapt to customer's requirements in order to achieve the expected outcome. Producers may prefer to work with knowledgeable and adept models because they are able to change outfits promptly and memorize a choreography easily. Moreover, professional models are compliant and adaptable, they know how to manage stress, counter challenges, handle last minute changes and work efficiently with other team members. Trained models perform in an expert and elegant manner, they know how to walk confidently, pose on a runway with attitude and present a collection in a way that emphasis on the garment features and promotes a designer's line at its best. Modelling agencies enable professional models to work with prominent global designers in addition to smaller markets. (Everett et al. 2018, 129; Patrick 2011.)

Amateur models can be recruited from social media, public places, retail stores, fashion schools and organizations. Anyone can participate in a runway show without prior experience. Retail stores and organizations frequently request customers and personnel to display their merchandise whereas fashion schools select students, friends or relatives to feature the creations of fashion design students on the catwalk. When working with amateur models, the model coordinator or choreographer trains the participants during rehearsals. The training is based on the fundamentals of runway walk, pose, turn and timing. Some producers prefer to work with amateur models because their physical appearances are relatable to the general public. In fact, amateur's body image does not constrain to the industrial standard body measurements, their body can vary in size, shape or form enabling consumers to self-identify and visualize themselves into the clothes. (Everett et al. 2018, 128–129.) Studies have shown that consumers would prefer to see more “real people”, or “average-sized models” featured in marketing campaigns, media and runway shows (Herrema 2015).

The major differences between professional and amateur models are their outlook and objective. Professionals perceive modelling as a full-time lucrative career, their objectives are to set goals and build a strong business network in order to achieve professional growth and career success. Unlike professionals, amateur models take part in modelling activities for pleasure rather than financial gain, their objectives are to acquire new skills and engage into recreational modelling experiences as a form of hobby or entertainment. In exchange of their services, amateur models may receive a little remuneration or recompense such as a certificate of appreciation, present or discount on merchandise. Professional models are legally bound by contract and remuneration which implies meeting the client's expectations, complying to all responsibilities attributed and achieving the desired outcomes. In contrast, non-professional models are unconstrained by law, salary or obligation which signifies they preserve freedom of choice and decision making. In fact, amateur models might have restrictions or objections regarding schedule, tasks or outfits attributed. As a result, fashion directors may feel that working with amateur models can be challenging as it requires more time, effort and flexibility. (Everett et al. 2018, 129.)

3.2.3 Celebrities and influencers at fashion shows

Due to Covid 19 global pandemic, this year the spring/summer fashion week 2021 became a digital event. Designers had the possibility to record presentations in advance or live stream their runway show in real time, enabling spectators to unfold the latest trends online. (Wright 2021.) Accordingly, celebrities were invited to make an appearance as runway models in order to attract fan bases, engage public's

interest and consumer's brand loyalty. For instance, in January 2021, actresses such as Demi Moore and Cara Delevingne walked for Fendi at Paris Fashion Week, together with 90s supermodels Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell (Norwin 2021). Just like professionals, many celebrities and influencers have walked the runway for well-known designers during fashion week. As a matter of fact, their presence engages audiences and reinforces brands image. The association of a celebrity with a brand can positively influence a consumer's brand perception. In fact, consumers often associate the image, notoriety or values of a celebrity to the brand they collaborate with. (Min, Chang, Jai, & Ziegler 2019.) Celebrities who take part in runway shows can either be collaborators or friends of the designer (Bourne 2014).

While some celebrities take part in runway shows, others are remunerated to attend designer's shows. Celebrities such as Rihanna and Beyoncé are paid up to \$100,000 to make a public appearance during fashion week (Bourne 2014). Celebrities are exposed on the front seats of the runway to generate press and media coverage, in fact, their presence ensures publicity and brand exposure. As for example, on 6th October 2020 at Paris Fashion Week, celebrities such as Margot Robbie, Kristen Stewart, Lily Rose Depp and many others were invited to attend in person Chanel's spring/summer show 2021 (Malivindi 2020). Some superstars even sign exclusivity contracts with fashion brands to attend or participate in designer's show, act or model in marketing campaigns, wear and promote a designer's collection at fashion week, oscar ceremonies, Hollywood parties and other significant or formal events (Bourne 2014). For instance, the academy award winner Jennifer Lawrence signed a three-year partnership contract with Dior for a sum of \$15 Million; she became the new face of the brand and promoted Dior's designs on the red-carpet year after year (Chan 2014).

In the same way, fashion houses partner with influencers to generate social media buzz and create brand credibility. Influencers are individuals which share their opinion on social networks and create a community among internet users sharing similar interests. Influencers include Instagram and other social media figures, YouTube content creators, fashion bloggers, photographers, or television show hosts (Everett et al. 2018, 16). Prominent influencers have an impact on millions of people across the world. Accordingly, fashion brands collaborate with this fashion leaders during digital marketing campaigns to benefit from their influence on target consumers. Their role is to create social media contents by posting videos, pictures and comments in order to promote a brand, product or fashion style. As the name suggests, their function is to influence internet users in their purchasing decisions. Influencers play an important role in the promotion of a designer's collection during fashion week, they share live videos of top designer's fashion shows and give personal feedbacks on trends, outfits and collections to their follower

base. Therefore, international consumers do not have to wait for the fashion press and media to release photographs and articles about latest trends and fashion innovation. (Hashaw 2019; Vigan Klein 2016.)

Thanks to the democratization of social media, influencers can now share outfits and fashion styles with global communities in real time. Today, social media influencers are creating a new category of models that may not correspond to the traditional runway model profile. Instagram is a social media platform which provides an interesting space to explore differences and diversity. Social media modelling is inclusive of all body types, ages, races, genders, sexualities and abilities. Social media models are opposing themselves to traditional modelling and challenging the industry to reassess the conveyed perception of beauty (Williams & Williams 2017). Body positive influencers are encouraging audiences to embrace their natural beauty and normalize body hair, cellulite, scars, stomach roll, stretch marks, skin conditions and any other feature which is presently seen as imperfection (Firman 2018). Their intention is to send a positive and healthy message to its female consumers in order to improve confidence and self-esteem. In recent years, Instagram influencers were invited to model in marketing campaigns and runways (Williams & Williams 2017). For instance, Tess Holiday, a popular curve model and Instagram body positive influencer was given the opportunity to make a powerful statement while modelling in lingerie at the occasion of the Victoria's Secret runway show reproduction (Brar 2016; Williams & Williams 2017). Tess Holiday's intention was to send a worldwide message of self-acceptance by encouraging women to embrace their bodies and feel proud about who they are.

3.2.4 Role model not runway model

Carrie Hammer is an American fashion designer, entrepreneur and founder of the body positive movement Role Models Not Runway Models. In 2012, the designer launched Carrie Hammer Custom Apparel, a clothing brand that empowers women in their professional and personal life. Carrie Hammer had initiated her career as an advertising sales executive when she realized that the selection of fashionable women's workwear was very limited despite the growing market demand in recent years. Accordingly, Hammer had the innovative idea to integrate and celebrate the role of women in the business world by creating a custom clothing line that caters the underserved working women market. Hammer's intention is to provide fashionable, feminine and professional clothes which enable women to feel confident, beautiful and powerful. The designer's custom line is designed according to the client's body measure-

ments and specifications in order to ensure that the garments are comfortable and suitable. (GenHER- aration 2017.) Carrie Hammer said, “The clothes are supposed to compliment the women, not the other way around” as opposed to the fashion industry practices” (Likorish 2016).

At the occasion of the New York Fashion Week 2014, the designer Carrie Hammer made her debuts on the runway and revolutionized the face of the fashion industry by replacing traditional runway models by everyday heroines and female leaders such as CEOs, entrepreneurs, executives, editors, philanthropists, activists, actors, writers, gold medalists and many other role models. In fact, Hammer is an activist and feminist whose aim is to promote equality and empower women on the catwalk. Therefore, the designer selects executives and other powerful figures from her client base to walk and display her tailored collection during fashion week. The powerful women featured on the runway are setting an example for our society and inspiring others to succeed. In fact, Carrie Hammer believes that models should inspire audiences by their success, power, passion, personality and purpose rather than physical aesthetics (Vagianos 2015). Accordingly, Hammer’s objective is to change the world’s perception of beauty and redefine what it means to be a model. Young women should look up to role models that encourage audiences to pursue their dreams and achieve career success. (HuffPost Style & Beauty 2021; LinkedIn 2021.)

Role Models Not Runway Models is a marketing campaign which emphasis on diversity, body positivity and inclusion. In lieu of traditional fit fashion models, the designer casts inspirational role models who buy and wear the clothes in real life (Likorish 2016). All women featured on the runway are at the top of their respective field and represent female mentors for different types of women (Vagianos 2015). Each season, Hammer collaborates with a new variety of role models to ensure that everyone can see itself reflected on the runway (Likorish 2016). These female mentors are shifting the definition of beauty and making a positive impact on people lives and careers. The campaign objective is to inspire audiences, empower women and encourage the global fashion industry to adopt new practices. Today, Carrie Hammer is an innovative marketing advisor and consultant at Role Models Not Runway Models. The designer works with powerful figures, press and partner brands globally. Hammer’s aspiration is to create a shift in the global fashion industry, wherefore her mission is to help other businesses to elaborate purpose driven marketing campaigns which resonate with their target market and align with global consumers’ needs. (LinkedIn 2021; New York Business Journal 2016.)

3.3 The lack of diverse representation in the fashion industry

The fashion industry aspires to prestige and therefore creates a world of illusion and fantasy which appeals and inspire audiences but does not represent the reality of the world we live in. Models portrayed on runways and marketing campaigns are rarely representative of the ethnic and cultural global diversity and the various women body sizes, shapes or skin complexions. In fact, studies have shown that consumers are negatively impacted by the media exposure to white thin ideal images which lead women to engage in appearance comparison and conduct to low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. In response, several designers have decided to break away from the aesthetic norms set by the fashion industry to challenge the existing conventions. In recent years, the industry has seen a rise in ethnic and body type representations. Designers are featuring women reflective of our world's diversity to demonstrate that there is more than one definition of beauty, their intention is to convey a worldwide message of self-acceptance and unity among women.

The global fashion industry has been subject to a lot of controversy in terms of beauty standards, racial and social discrimination. As a matter of fact, the lack of racial and body type representation in the global industry has been a major issue in recent years. Beauty has long been commercialized and codified. For decades, the global fashion industry has conveyed the idea that western beauty is the universal beauty ideal. Western beauty ideals comprise features such as high cheekbones, small noses, large eyes, narrow faces, light skin, and a youthful, lean and tall physical appearance. In fact, most models featured on the runway have a young thin white aesthetic which represents the western beauty ideals and exemplar body type standard. In 2014, a study found that 70% of Vogue magazine covers portrayed western models and promoted western beauty ideals worldwide, even in Latin America and Asia whereas the population does not identify with western beauty standards (Hankart 2019). The aesthetic norms established by the fashion industry are based on a very limited representation of women and do not apply to all female consumers across the globe. (Givham & Reyes Morales 2020; Hankart 2019.)

In recent years, the phenomenon of globalization has caused the industry to render a greater accountability on how beauty is depicted on the runway and marketing campaigns. With the rising of the international middle class, the expansion of business networks and technological advancements, the global fashion industry was compelled to extend the representation of global fashion consumers (Givham & Reyes Morales 2020). Accordingly, the industry has started to implement real change by offering a more diverse representation and improving inclusion programs. In fact, fashion brands are reevaluating their beauty system and becoming all-inclusive in order to reflect the rising numbers of moneyed consumers

worldwide (Givham & Reyes Morales 2020). In previous years, models of color, designers and business professionals claimed to be underrepresented in the fashion industry. In fact, statistics reveal that in spring 2015 models of colors represented 17% of the participants during fashion week. The spring season 2021 saw an obvious rise in racial diversity with 41.3% models of color. New York Fashion Week spring 2021 was the most racially diverse among all the major fashion capitals, with 57,1% models of color which is more than half of the participants. (Schimminger 2020.)

Today, all female consumers should be able to see themselves reflected on the runway in terms of body type, ethnicity, age or physical ability. The emergence of the body positive and all-inclusive movement is starting to create a major shift, making it possible for all women to be a part of the industry. As for example, in 2017 the sisters Scaffidi had the original idea to organize an Anti-Victoria's Secret Fashion show which objective was to diversify the global vision of beauty and celebrate women of all shapes, sizes and backgrounds. The Anti-Victoria's Secret fashion show portrayed real women in lieu of runway models to celebrate body inclusivity. In fact, the outfits showcased on the runway were designed by the participants and tailored according to their body measurements. The fashion show included everyday women with disabilities, dwarfism, real life heroine and survivors such as Tessa Desiderio Snyder whose leg was amputated during her battle with cancer, or for instance Casey Hanstein who survived a car accident and suffered from a broken spine (Larbi 2017). The Anti- Victoria's secret models shared their story and life experiences with audiences, their intention was to demonstrate that beauty radiates from within and is defined by confidence and personality rather than physical appearances. (Justich 2017; Larbi 2017.)

The global industry is acting for change and wants to convey a worldwide message which promotes unity, body positivity and self-acceptance. The movement seeks to break away from the aesthetic norms imposed by the industry and expand the global definition of beauty by celebrating differences and individuality. Young women are encouraged to embrace their bodies and stop striving for perfection. The global industry is working towards progress hoping to cater the underserved markets and offer a more diverse and realistic representation of global female consumers. Every woman should be included and empowered on the runway. However, many fashion brands are still resistant to change and do not consider or include elderly, disabled and larger women (Givham & Reyes Morales 2020). Fashion brands and underserved consumers need to continue their protests and support the body positive and all-inclusive movement in order to create long time change in the global industry. Everyone should be represented and have a face in the fashion industry. Afterall, we all are fashion consumers.

4 FASHION A TOOL OF ADVANCEMENT FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Our society is impacted by cultural, political, social, and economic factors which have direct repercussions on fashion movements. Fashion is a mirror of our society in its ever-changing trends, it records our history and reflects our society advancements. Over years, individuals have used fashion as a powerful form of self-expression and symbol of change and revolution. In fact, fashion represents more than just clothing, it symbolizes a person's interest, identity, ideology and philosophy. Indeed, people use fashion to construct their social identity, distinguish themselves and express their individuality or in contrast appertain to a group sharing similar values. Furthermore, fashion is a social phenomenon and has a profound impact on our society. It can be used as an effective form of communication to send a message to an audience, start a movement, fight for a cause, and call for change. Fashion could act as a tool of advancement for women empowerment by promoting the status of women, raise awareness, stand up for justice, equality and encourage women to express themselves. Ideally, fashion could encourage social progress and change the face of the world.

4.1 Fashion as a powerful form of self-expression

People often underestimate the power of dressing. Whether you are dressing for a job interview, a promotion, a business meeting or a formal networking event, you probably want to be viewed as confident and powerful. In fact, the clothes you wear in your social and professional life can reveal a lot about yourself. The first impression people will have about a person often depends on their presence, appearance, body language and fashion sense. Hence the importance of being dressed appropriately and in accordance with circumstances. For instance, in a working environment it is recommended to portray a clean, presentable and professional appearance. In fact, a well-suited business attire may induce people to perceive us as successful and proficient in the professional environment which can lead to future career developments. Dressing for success can have a positive impact on the way people perceive us and even the way we perceive ourselves. Studies demonstrated that clothing can really bring out assurance and strength of character to a person, making them feel empowered in their personal and professional life. (Guttman 2020; Norava 2018; Vallorini 2018.)

Clothing can enhance a person's skills and productivity. In fact, our fashion choices have an ensuing effect on our attitudes and behavior. Research suggests that formal attires can boost a person's creativity,

attention and negotiation skills (Positive Prescription 2021). In fact, when people feel comfortable and confident in their clothes it has a direct impact on their posture, temper, body language and even motivation (Positive Prescription 2021). Besides, the principal of color theory shows that colors have an emotional and psychological impact on individuals. In fact, colors can affect a person's temper, feelings and emotions. Some individuals have a power color which provide them with a "go get it attitude" and assist them in facing difficulties encountered throughout the day. For example, light blue indicates professionalism and tranquility whereas dark blue suggests consistency and reliability. Black is the color of authority and power while white characterizes purity, freshness, focus and a clear emotional state of mind. (Kumar 2019.)

Fashion is a powerful form of self-expression; each morning we choose clothes according to our mood. Our fashion style expresses how we feel, who we are and who do we want to be. Fashion is a silent language through which we communicate our identity and individuality. We buy and select clothes according to the self-image we want to portray. The selection of our wardrobe can project our preferences and diverse interests to others. When getting dressed, people often consider whether the clothes they are going to wear will address the message they want to convey. Research demonstrates that our clothes can display our personality and improve our psychological and emotional state. The Journal of Experimental Psychology indicates that 96% of people feel a shift in their mindset when changing outfits through the day (Kumar 2019). In fact, fashion styles, shapes, colors and comfort can have a direct effect on people attitude, behavior and temperament. Moreover, our clothing style can describe how we perceive and project ourselves in the world, it can reveal our personality, status, age, income, lifestyle, outlook or purpose. (Kumar 2019.)

4.2 Fashion, a phenomenon of social movement

A fashion movement is the ongoing clothing trend emerging from a segment of the population; usually a younger generation or a category of a people sharing similar interests, tastes or needs in a particular time and place in history. Each decade is defined by a new fashion movement that has respective beliefs, moral values and dress codes representative of the era. Younger generations have a need to distinguish themselves from the previous generations and therefore create new fashion movements in terms of language, literature, manner, patterns of behavior, trends or clothing styles. Fashion movements are affected by social contexts and cultural movements which have a direct influence on fashion consumer's

purchasing behavior. (Barnard 2002.) Many research findings on fashion psychology and clothing choices are subject to the cultural values of the society in which the person lives. In fact, through the outfits and accessories worn, we affirm that we belong to certain social, cultural, religious or professional values. Accordingly, clothing can assist young people in expressing their personal identity and gives them a sense of belonging to a social group. Clothing, hairstyle, makeup, tattoos are all ways of existing and standing out socially. (LoveToKnow 2021; Sacher 2015.)

Each social group has influential fashion leaders or trendsetters which incite younger generations to adopt the latest fashion trends. We live in a society where people admire and imitate public figures such as fashion models, celebrities, and social media influencers. Younger generations have a natural tendency to seek for approval and wherefore imitate their peers to feel socially accepted and appertain to a certain group or fashion movement (Barnard 2002). On the contrary, some people prefer to adopt unconventional looks in order to stand out and differentiate themselves from others. In modern society, people attribute a meaning to fashion styles. In fact, clothing can convey information about one's interests, ideas, beliefs, moral values, financial situation, social power and class affiliation (Medvedev 2021). When purchasing a branded product, upper class consumers estimate that the notoriety of a brand's name is symbol of privilege, prestige and power. In contrast, working class consumers may feel that it is unnecessary to pay more for a branded product which presents the same characteristics and function than an unbranded one. In fact, households with high incomes consume and pay more attention to their appearance while households with low incomes pay more attention to the way they consume. (LoveToKnow 2021; Medvedev 2021.)

4.3 Fashion industry impact on society

The fashion industry has long implied that the so-called fit model represents the ideal body shape in terms of fashion standards. The top fashion designers use fit model's measurements to create sample size garment's fittings as a starting point for their collection. In view of photoshoots and runway shows, stylists are compelled to cast runway models conforming to the sample size measurements in order to fit into any of the designer's creations. The couture body is characterized by a slim and tall figure, small waist and narrow hips. The couture body fit measurements were long defined by the American size zero or European size 34, 36. However, in order to stay svelte many models, put their health at risk to the point of starvation and hospitalization. (Clements 2013.) In August 2006, Luisel Ramos, a Uruguayan runway model died of anorexia while performing at Madrid Fashion Week. Later that year, Ana Carolina

Reston, an elite Brazilian fashion model died in similar circumstances due to complications associated with an eating disorder. The two tragic deaths initiated a storm of bad publicity for the fashion world compelling the global industry to redefine customary procedures, ban size zero models and reassess the conveyed perception of beauty. (Phillips 2007.)

Sample size may provide one answer to the origins of the thin body in fashion. One other possible explanation is that the quantity of images brought with the press and media promotes a body aesthetic which has little references to the diverse body sizes and shapes. In fact, only a reduced part of the world's population represents the ideal body measurements publicized by the industry. Over the years, the global fashion industry has sprayed the idea that fashion models incarnate perfection in terms of body aesthetics and fashion sense. Accordingly, female consumers were encouraged to imitate fashion models in order to feel beautiful and socially accepted. Often perceived as role models, fashion models are representatives of the fashion industry and act as intermediary between brands and consumers by setting the beauty standards of our society and influencing consumer's buying decision and perception of the ideal body image.

For many years, women have been impacted negatively by the industry which portrays young, thin and white aesthetics as the universal beauty ideals. The stereotypical beliefs of the ideal female body image induce women to engage in social comparison which engenders inferiority complex, body dissatisfaction and eating disorders. As a result, many women engage in weight loss and plastic surgery such as liposuction, abdominoplasty or rhinoplasty to meet the beauty standards of the industry. Women have long engaged in personal oppression trying to meet unattainable ideals. In fact, it is common practice in the fashion, advertising and publishing industry to edit and magnify model's images with Photoshop and other social media filters such as Instagram. The fashion industry has been misleading its consumers for years as it sold fantasy instead of reality. The gravity of the problem is such that nowadays people who do not fit those beauty ideals have low self-esteem and feel socially excluded because they do not see themselves reflected in the fashion and beauty industry. (Deutsche Welle 2021; Luxiders Magazine 2020.)

In 2000, the British medical association or BMA came out with a report on the rise of eating disorders linked to the imitation of skinny models portrayed on media, television and advertising campaigns. The fashion industry was accounted for the promotion of unhealthy body image affecting young women. Back in 1998, the eating disorder association had conducted a survey at the occasion of the bread for life campaign. The research revealed that 98% of women between 18 and 24 wished that fashion magazines

would feature more average sized models. In response to this survey, the industry decided to make amends by promoting a more realistic and healthy body image. Advertisers, agencies and magazines are showcasing models with a wider range of body sizes and shapes. The modelling industry is acting for change with a body positivity campaign aiming to raise awareness, promote healthy nutrition and convey a message of self-acceptance. (Gillan 2000.)

4.4 Fashion as a form of protest and call for change

The work of a designer goes beyond clothing, fashion designers deliver an idea of beauty and witness our time. In fact, fashion designers are great influencers and creator of fashion movements. Social history indicates that women have progressively used fashion as a form of protest to liberate and emancipate themselves. (Barnard 2002). As for instance, in 1960 the British designer Mary Quant introduced the mini skirt in UK, symbol of youth culture and sexual liberation (Forman 2014). Women used fashion worldwide as a form of emancipation, in fact the mini skirt was seen as a rebellion to the repressed post war generation and the utilitarian fashion style of the 50s (Foreman 2014). Throughout history, multiple designers dedicated their artistic work to femininity and feminism to improve women's status and promote gender equality. Accordingly, their women perception was manifested through artistic expression by choice of colors, materials and styles displayed in their collections. Designers such as Christian Dior and Gabrielle Chanel have stood for women's rights and improved their lifestyle (Achim 2019).

In the 19th century, women's fashion was mostly designed by men, the clothing was exuberant and consisted of long skirts, bustles, petticoat, bustier, corsets and dressing gowns. As opposed to the traditions, the French designer Gabrielle Chanel liberated and empowered women by revolutionizing women's fashion. In fact, Chanel replaced ostentatious luxury gowns by feminine, elegant and comfortable looks such as the Chanel's suit which consists of a collarless jacket with pockets and a matching mid-length skirt with straight cuts intended to provide absolute freedom of movement (Vernose 2020). At a time when women were desperately struggling for modernity and change, Chanel was acclaimed for her avant-garde style, she made the front page of cover magazines worldwide and became one of the most influential fashion designers of all times. Soon the most powerful women adopted and worn Chanel's looks like a symbol of emancipation. (Owsley 2018.) Gabrielle Chanel portrayed the image of a fashionable, strong and independent woman, the designer once said, "A girl should be two things: who and

what she wants”, in fact Chanel’s brand vision is to empower and emancipate women (GemmeCouture 2016).

At the occasion of the Chanel’s show for the spring/summer collection 2015, Karl Lagerfeld, the creative director of Chanel from 1983 to 2019, envisioned a feminist political protest with slogans and signs that declared “History is Her Story”, “Women’s Rights are more than Alright “, “Ladies First”. In the same way, Maria Grazia Chiuri, Christian Dior’s creative director since 2016, staged an activist runway show for the fall/winter collection 2019. The fashion show featured models wearing slogans t-shirts showcasing feminist quotes such as “Sisterhood is powerful”, “Sisterhood is global” and “Sisterhood is forever”. In fact, t-shirts with quotes are a simple way to make a powerful statement and let the world know what we stand for. Fashion designers are using the runway platform to make a visual impact on audiences and encourage them to join the emerging fashion movement. In recent years, designers have empowered women through fashion as they portray the image of a powerful independent woman on the catwalk. (Achim 2019.)

Fashion is a highly visible medium that engages media and public’s attention. Accordingly, fashion has the power to make a statement and convey a clear message to society. Fashion shows are an effective form of communication which can be used to raise awareness, call for change and encourage people to express their concerns about injustice. In recent years, the fashion industry has elevated the voice of general public through catwalk shows, campaigns and slogans. In fact, designers are actors of change and contribute to social advancement as they connect and unite women towards progress. Today, the industry conveys a message of self-acceptance and incites women to accept each other differences. Female consumers are encouraged to feel great about themselves and embrace their bodies regardless of sizes or shapes. The face of fashion is changing, the global industry is acting to raise public awareness and promote body positivity, equality, inclusivity and solidarity among women. The aim of this new fashion movement is to eradicate criticism, racism, harassment, prejudice and any other form of injustice or discrimination. (Dolgova 2017; Newman 2020.)

5 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Implementation is the process of moving an idea from concept to reality, it can be the execution of a plan, idea, design, specification or policy (Smartsheet Inc 2021). Practical implementation enables to put into practice what is learned in theory, books, and other secondary source materials. The fifth chapter introduces the practical part of the practice-based thesis which consists of a fashion show work project reflective of the recent advancement of the fashion industry in terms of diversity and inclusion. The objective of the research was to find out how to use fashion and fashion shows as a tool of empowerment and change. The fifth chapter presents the background and motivation for the research, intentions and goals of the research, the question at the origin of the research subject, hypotheses of the research as well as the general applied research approach which allows to understand the development of the analyzes and results presented in chapter 8.

5.1 Practical implementation approach

The thesis theoretical framework is written to understand the foundations of the fashion show industry and its recent progress towards inclusion and diversity. Furthermore, I investigated how fashion can be used as a tool of empowerment for women. The theoretical framework enabled me to gain knowledge and gather fundamental information about the fashion industry while understanding its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Research on the fashion industry origins, evolution, and prospects, was essential in this regard, as it provided the foundations for making contextualized and factual decisions when elaborating the practical implementation plan. The implementation plan identified the goals to be achieved, challenges, and project phases intended to plan a research approach and develop an effective action plan (Smartsheet Inc 2021). The action plan is the tactic used to achieve a goal, vision, mission, or strategy; it includes a preparatory listing of all the tasks that need to be completed for the practical implementation of a project.

Practical implementation is a set of plans and activities that are meant to put the theory learned into action so as to gain practical experience in real world settings. SI Jakobstad provided me with an opportunity to take part in an independent practice-based work project which involved the production of a

fashion show event with an insight on women empowerment aiming to apply the fashion industry recent advancements in a reflective practice. Accordingly, the practical implementation of the fashion show work project was anchored to the theoretical framework of the thesis and the reviewed literature which served to identify the major concepts associated with the thesis topic and to present the most current research on female empowerment in the fashion industry. The objective of the practical implementation was to apply the knowledge acquired in theoretical studies and use the expertise and experience gained during practical expert duties associated with event management studies to elaborate a fashion show project which paid tribute to women empowerment.

In the initial planning phase, intentions were set to achieve better goal attainments. As discussed in the third chapter of the theoretical framework, over the past few years, the runway platform has been taken by inspiring figures and style icons such as celebrities, influencers, everyday women, real life heroines, female leaders and all other sorts of role models. Accordingly, the first intention was to feature everyday young women on the catwalk in lieu of traditional runway models to reflect the recent advancement of the fashion industry in term of inclusion and diversity. The research question at the origin of the practice-based work project was: How to empower women through a fashion show production?

Accordingly, the second intention was to investigate how fashion can be used as a tool of advancement for women empowerment as reported in chapter 4. The goal was to encourage young women to use fashion as a powerful form of self-expression through the process of merchandise selection which enabled participants to express their identity, individuality, personality, and creativity. Furthermore, clothing can have an impact on people attitude and behavior, accordingly young women were encouraged to select garments which made them feel confident and powerful. Finally, the third intention was to encourage young women and girls to take up new roles and make their dreams come true while engaging in a fun recreational modelling activity, acquiring valuable experience, as well as interacting and connecting with women from different cultures, ages, and backgrounds.

5.2 Empirical study approach

Educational research is the process of academic inquiry designed to investigate the process of instruction and learning. Empirical studies can be qualitative or quantitative, I chose to apply the quantitative method of research because it is experimental, statistical and allows to measure, test, and describe a theory or hypothesis. The information collected was run through statistical analysis enabling to easily draw conclusions for the research. Data collected with this approach was expressed in numbers and graphs. The general purpose of quantitative research is to explain, predict and investigate relationships, describe current conditions, or examine impacts or influences on designated outcomes. The outcomes of quantitative research were presented in chapter 8.

In view of the quantitative research, I started out with a research design to guide decisions that needed to be made about conducting the research and making plans. The research design investigated when and how to collect the data, what data to gather and from whom, finally how to analyze the data. The aim of the research was to assess the elements of the fashion show production, measure the event success, inquire whether participant's purchasing behavior was influenced by the merchandise displayed on the runway and find out what are the respondent's perspectives towards fashion and the fashion industry practices. The first hypothesis examined whether fashion shows are an effective form of promotion and communication that can influence consumer's purchasing behavior and encourage them to adopt new fashion trends, in this case, fur and leather garments. The second hypothesis verified whether fashion can really provide a feeling of empowerment to support the theory of the theoretical framework. Finally, the third hypothesis addressed the unethical practices of the fashion industry to find out the respondent's perspectives towards fashion models and modelling.

The quantitative study was conducted through an audience survey, attendees were provided with a questionnaire at the end of the runway show. Through audience survey I collected significant data and looked for statistical evidence behind the information gathered to have a final conclusion that will either back up the hypothesis or go against it. Data results provided evidence on the audience reactions and opinions. Data collection and analysis were interpreted and described to clarify the research findings and discuss what they meant in the context or field of practice. Accordingly, the event evaluation measured the success of the fashion show production and provided constructive feedbacks for further developments and implementation. Event assessment helps to refine the process, improve the service, and determine what steps need to be taken in the future to master skills or understand a concept at a deeper

level. Event evaluation helps to reflect on the learning process and focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the practical implementation.

6 EVENT PLANNING

Event planning is the process of designing, planning and delivering a successful event which meets the client's needs and requirements. The function of an event planner is to create a customized event which leaves a lasting impression on target audiences. The most common reasons for undertaking events include promoting social interactions and entertaining. An event can be defined as a well-planned and organized occurrence in the hope of meeting or achieving specific goals for the benefit of an organization, a group of people or a person. The sixth chapter describes the course of action taken to plan and achieve the desired purpose of the fashion show practical implementation. The chapter includes information about fashion show event planning theory and its implementation in a real time knowledge practice. Main tasks involved in the event planning process of the fashion show included pre-event market research, meeting with the client, define project scope with the five W's planning method, establish event requirements, define and manage budget, select a venue, identify the target audience, create a unique design for the event, elaborate a concept for the event and themes for the collections, select and organize runway looks, prepare and print documentation. The key to a successful event is making sure that it is well planned and fully meets the needs of the client and target audience.

6.1 Client

The commissioner of the thesis and client of the event is Soroptimist International Finland (SIF), a voluntary women organization which promotes the status and equality of women worldwide. The name Soroptimist comes from the Latin word "Soror Optimum" which means "Best for women". Founded in 1921, Soroptimist is an international federation that has been supporting women and girls for a hundred-year. In 2021, SI celebrates a centenary of action, achievement, and progress for women empowerment. Soroptimist International (SI) stands for democratic decision-making, human right, peace, and equity. SI raises a global voice for women empowerment and contributes to building a better world through awareness, advocacy, and action in local, national, and international communities. Today, Soroptimist International operates within 121 countries and counts approximately 72,000 members worldwide. SI Finland comprises 53 Soroptimist clubs across the country and a total of 1,033 members committed to educate, encourage, and support other women. The Finnish Soroptimist Club is part of the SI Europe federation. Soroptimist International includes five federations SI Africa, SI Southwest Pacific,

SI Great Britain & Ireland, SI Europe, and SI Americas. (Founder Region Fellowship 2018; Soroptimist International Finland 2021.)

Soroptimist is an international network of professional women from diverse countries, cultures, and professions. These inspiring women bring their expertise and experiences together to improve the life of children, women, and young girls worldwide. SI is more than just an organization; it is a fellowship which promotes diversity, international goodwill and understanding, women's welfare, unity, and friendship. Soroptimist International is making a difference by helping global women to overcome obstacles through volunteer service, support, and sisterhood. The Soroptimist members act as female mentors and role models, their intention is to inspire other women to be an advocate, a speaker, a leader, and a role model for the next generation of Soroptimist. Therefore, SI supplies access to networking opportunities, mentoring, quality education, and other services aimed at creating a life of significance, success, and personal fulfillment for women globally. SI vision is that all women and girls get the resources and opportunities to reach their full potential and live their dreams. (Soroptimist International Finland 2021.)

Soroptimist mission is to act as advocate for women's issues and provide them with opportunities for social and economic empowerment. On that aim, SI supplies access to quality education to ensure that women and girls have the necessary schooling or training to unlock their potential, enter the workforce and support themselves financially. SI helps women through treasury, time, and talent. In fact, the Soroptimist clubs elaborate inspiring community projects aimed at raising money for the benefit of women and girls. The non-profit service organization helps women by providing the primary source of financial support for their families and by supplying the resources they need to improve their education and employment prospects. The worldwide organization gives access to quality education, social justice, leadership, and career developments for women's economic empowerment. SI promotes women rights, gender equality, peace, justice, and strong institutions. SI mission is to stand up for women and connect them towards progress. (Soroptimist International Finland 2021.)

SI Jakobstad was established in 1972 and counts about 32 members (Soroptimist International Jakobstad-Pietarsaari 2017). The commissioner of the practice-based thesis is Anki Sampert, a member of SI Jakobstad club. On 17th May 2019, the president of SI Jakobstad, Marita Westerlund hosted a festive gathering to celebrate the past year's achievements and acknowledge the work and dedication of Finish Soroptimist members. The purpose of this event was to bring together Soroptimist International Finland for a meeting of the representative council and invite national Soroptimist sisters for a

stay in Jakobstad. The Jakobstad region is in northern Swedish Ostrobothnia and is made up of five municipalities: Jakobstad, Nykarleby, Pedersöre, Larsmo, and Kronony. The Jakobstad region has close to 50,000 inhabitants and is well known for its large number of companies and strong entrepreneurship spirit. In fact, Jakobstad region is recognized for promoting creativity, culture, and international entrepreneurship. (Jakobstadsregionen 2019.)

In view of the festivities, the president and members of SI Jakobstad organized the leisure activities and program of the SIF clubs meeting. The aim was to organize a special event which enabled Soroptimist guests to experience something unique and characteristic of the Ostrobothnia area. Ostrobothnia is the center of fur farming in Finland, it is renowned internationally for its fur industry. The fur industry is an important employer and source of tax revenue especially in the rural municipalities of Ostrobothnia. The regional council of Ostrobothnia has always emphasized the importance of fur farming in the regional strategy, which defines the most important development effort in the region. The Centria's fur fashion design department goal was to raise global awareness in fur fashion design to develop the regional fur industry. Accordingly, Pia Blomström, ex project manager of the fur fashion design center suggested to incorporate a fur fashion show event in the Soroptimists leisure time activity program to present garments and accessories made of the best Ostrobothnian fur. In fact, Jakobstad has the highest concentration of fur farming in Finland and is renowned for its fur quality nationally.

To greet and entertain the Soroptimist members with appreciation, the president of SI Jakobstad, Marita Westerlund came to an agreement with Pia Blomström, ex project manager of the fur fashion design center and scheduled a fashion show production in the Soroptimist leisure activity program. As the ex-project manager of the fashion design center was in search of a fashion show production team, I seized the opportunity to volunteer and take up the role of fashion show coordinator. The role of the event coordinator is to bring all the elements of a fashion show together, which includes planning all the arrangements, delegating responsibilities, rehearsing the show, and accepting accountability for all details.

SI Jakobstad provided me with an opportunity to take part in an independent practice-based work project. The aim of the project work was to apply the business and event management competencies acquired during professional studies. The assigned development task of the thesis project was a fashion show event production displaying the collections manufactured by antecedent students of the fur fashion design center of Centria UAS. Coordinating a fashion show event allowed me to gain experience in project planning, decision making, problem solving, leadership, management, and personal de-

velopment. Through this enabling opportunity SI Jakobstad implemented the organization values, mission, and vision by providing me with an opportunity to achieve my educational goals and live my dream.

6.2 Project scope

Five W's (who, what, when where, why), is a project management method which helps to investigate a business idea and plan for success. When planning for an event, it is important to do some preliminary research to gather, manage and utilize information. The organizer must identify potential threats and elaborate an action plan to minimize and counter risks. The five W's is a useful manner to analyze or solve a problem. "Who", as in who is the target audience? Identify potential customers and select a specific target market. "What", as in what is the main purpose of the event? Determine the nature of the service or product offered. Think about the type, scale of the fashion show event and goals to be achieved. "When", as in when would the event occur? Define the date, time, and duration of the event. "Where", as where would the event take place? Choose the location of the event, rent a venue, and check its accessibility. And finally, "Why", as why would people want to attend the event? Clarify the uniqueness of your approach and differentiate your service from competitors. (Fern Exposition Services 2021.)

Before meeting with the clients of the event, I conducted a preliminary research about Soroptimist International. After getting familiar with the core values and purpose of the global organization, I elaborated a fashion show proposal which included prospective ideas and information about concept and theme selection, procedures, practices and aims of the fashion show work project. The first meeting with the clients was held six months before the actual event. At this occasion, I got acquainted with the thesis commissioner and the president of SI Jakobstad club. During this meeting, the clients and I defined the project scope of the event by applying the five W's planning method. Accordingly, I established a fashion show plan which comprised information about the type, size, venue, aims and objectives of the show production. The date, and time of the event were settled according to the leisure time activity program of SI Finland visit in Jakobstad. Marita Westerlund, president of SI Jakobstad club made sure to find a convenient timeframe for all attendees. Next, the target audience of the event was identified enabling me to create an effective event strategy, adopt suitable approaches and find a message which resonated with the audience.

The target audience is a representation of the ideal customer based on market research and existing information about regular customers. A specific target audience is determined by identifying the most valued customers and looking for their common criteria. To understand the profile and characteristics of the target audience, the event planner must gather demographic, psychographic, and geographic information as well as consumer purchasing behavior, interest, income, and spending habits. Emphasis on the audience which is more likely to attend the event and purchase the merchandise. Merchandise is selected according to the targeted consumer's needs and preferences to appeal to the clientele. Fashion shows have two types of audience recognized as the guaranteed audience and the created audience. The guaranteed audience is determined in anticipation, it could be existing customers, potential buyers, media representatives or investors. Whereas the created audience is aimed to attract and create a new customer base. (Everett et al. 2018, 50–52.)

The fashion show event was arranged for 150 Soroptimist members. The target audience was predefined and identified through gender, age, occupation, and interest. The audience consisted of women ages 30-60 who came from different regions of Finland to attend the event in Jakobstad. The attendees had different educational backgrounds, professions, income levels, status, and lifestyles but they shared one common interest which is to improve the lives of women and young girls through volunteer service, support, and empowerment. Accordingly, the nature of the practice-based work project was to plan, organize and coordinate a successful event which met the SIF Club satisfaction but most importantly which contributed to the cause of the worldwide organization by celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusivity. "Celebrating real women on the catwalk" was a fashion show event which featured everyday young women in lieu of traditional runway models. The purpose of the fashion show production was to empower young women through fashion and encourage them to take up new roles.

When planning a fashion show, it is essential to make a budget estimation, anticipating all the cash inflows and outflows to ensure the feasibility and profitability of the project. The budget coordinator defines the funding sources for the event: sponsorship, vendor financial support, silent auctions, donation, or ticket sales. Based on realistic assumptions, estimate the expenses of a fashion show event by defining the scope of the work and listing the activities and resources needed along with their pay rates. The approximate cost of the event is calculated to cover all necessary expenses, such as: venue rental, food catering, show personnel, promotion, photography, video and technology, technical support and staff, supplies, miscellaneous which includes taxes, licenses, insurance, and emergency reserve to counter any potential risk. After aggregating the total costs of the event, the budget coordinator can set a spending limit and make necessary changes if the expenditure overruns. The budget estimation requires permanent

monitoring and control to ensure that the actual costs do not exceed the estimated costs of the event. (Everett et al. 2018, 57–59.)

As the fashion event was organized for a thesis practice-based work project, Centria UAS authorized me to conduct a fashion show event and welcome SIF Club members at the occasion of a festive gathering in Restaurant Allegro. Centria UAS granted the permission to reserve the restaurant space after the lunch hour and access the campus facilities and equipment for free. Restaurant Allegro provided chairs, tables, and a small central stage to arrange the scenery, seating pattern and runway configuration. The merchandise and staff supplies were loaned from the fur fashion design center of Centria UAS. Five students were recruited from the International Business bachelor's degree to volunteer in a practical based project work task related to the course Introduction to Event Management. The show personnel handled the event production and the event photography to document the performance. Technical support such as sound system and microphones were loaned from the Rotunda conference room of Centria UAS. The Rotunda conference room was booked at no cost and transformed into a dressing room for the models. The non-professional models which participated in the show performance offered their services gratuitously. All elements comprised in the planning and production of the event were completely free of charge.

6.3 Concept and theme selection

The title of a runway show informs the audience about the nature or purpose of the event. All fashion shows are centered around a general theme which allows the audience to understand the relation between the fashion collections and the designer's vision. The factors to consider when selecting a theme are the present season, current trends, styles, materials, colors, and merchandise categories such as beachwear, lingerie, sportswear, business attire and many others. Some designers or organizations produce fashion shows to raise funds or make social statements, therefore; the concept of a show can be developed around a caritative cause, recent social events or a specific target audience. An elaborated show can be segmented into separate scenes when presenting multiple designer's collections or when displaying diverse types of merchandise. However, all scenes must be in accordance with the general theme of the show to create uniformity. Fashion looks, music, lighting, and decorations should match the chosen theme to create an overall atmosphere. (Everett et al. 2018, 56.)

The title and theme of the fashion show was “Celebrating real women on the catwalk”. As the event was arranged for a worldwide women empowerment organization, the concept of the fashion show was developed around the core values and purpose of the target audience. Soroptimist International is a voluntary women organization which promotes the equality and status of women worldwide while supporting women through volunteer service and enabling opportunities for educational growth, career development and personal empowerment. In recent years, the runway platform has been taken by inspiring figures, role models and amateur models. These new types of models are intended to set an example for society and raise a global voice for women empowerment. Accordingly, the purpose of the event was to empower women and young girls through a fashion show production which reflected the recent developments of the fashion industry in terms of diversity, body positivity and inclusion. Amateur models were empowered through the planning and production process of the event which included casting, merchandise selection, fitting, rehearsal, schedule and other real time event procedures. Young women were encouraged to take up new roles and engage in recreational modelling experience.

Models for the show were recruited from streets, public places as well as my workplace and circle of friends. Usually, model scouts look for candidates with a certain look, height, size, and fashion style. As opposed to the modelling industry strict requirements, I decided to recruit a diversity of young girls and women who did not comply to the traditional runway model profile. While investigating the crowd to find potential models, I looked for individuals with a lot of charisma, personality, individuality and style. When approaching the models, I initiated the conversation with a pep talk and asked the candidates if they would be interested in being the stars of a fashion show event intended for a practical thesis work project. I was truly surprised to discover that all the participants had fantasized about being a runway model for one day. Some had even tried to attend open calls and castings, but their candidature was instantly dismissed because their height was slightly below the agency’s requirements. Some had never even thought that they could have the potential and opportunity to participate in a show performance and take up the role of runway model.

“Celebrating real women on the catwalk” is a fashion show which celebrates all women regardless of their age, body size, ethnicity, occupation, or modelling experience. Eight inspiring women took part in the runway show performance, ages 20 to 37 years old. These women were diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, height, size, personality and style. Female participants had diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds including Finland, Sweden, Norway, Bangladesh, Nepal and Thailand. Moreover, all participants had different status, occupation, income, educational level, background and lifestyle. Employees, housewives, career-oriented women, parents, and students from different universities took time to

participate in this unique experience despite their busy lives and schedules. The aim was to empower these women through fashion and give them the opportunity to have a real runway modelling experience.

Many young women fantasize of what it would be like to be a runway model, the makeup, hair, designer's cloth, and the excitement of walking down the catwalk bringing up fearlessness, power, and self-confidence. The hardest part for an amateur model may be to bring life to the cloth, walk in high heels, and find self-assurance to take up the room. Therefore, the participants were encouraged to select clothes that matched their personality, expressed their individuality and made them feel empowered, confident and beautiful. Fashion is a powerful form of self-expression, the right outfit can really bring out assurance and strength of character to a person, regardless of their modelling experience. With the right attire and attitude, anyone can perform as runway model without prior experience and still give a remarkable performance on the catwalk. There are plenty of charismatic women out there which would be willing to acquire a modelling experience in exchange of some appreciation and a few professional pictures to create a portfolio or share social media content.

Aspiring models were invited to come individually at the fur fashion design studio department of Centria UAS to select suitable clothes and get to know each other better, it is essential to build a strong relationship with the people you are working with. One of the leadership aspects is to create a bond and understanding with other members to build a proficient and solid team. The models were encouraged to express their creativity by selecting clothes which they genuinely liked and most importantly clothes which matched their personality and fashion style. My goal was to empower these women through fashion. The idea was to apply "the superhero" concept: a regular person which in certain occasions wears a power suit and transforms himself/herself into a superhero, ready to face the world. In the same way, these women had an opportunity to escape their everyday life, step up on the runway and reveal themselves to the world as powerful women.

6.4 Merchandise

Runway looks are selected according to the target customer needs and requirements. Merchandise selection is based on the intended audience demographic and psychographic criteria. An appropriate merchandise selection aims to engage customer's interest and influence consumer's behavior leading to an increase in sales activity. Fashion houses and retail stores elaborate seasonal collections in accordance with current trends; they produce, display, and promote their own merchandise. Whereas organizations

and schools intending to produce a fashion show event commonly borrow and display fashion looks from local retailers, designers, and fashion design students. Merchandise is classified according to the fashion show's theme and scenes, merchandise categories, model's order and designer's strategic vision. Runway looks are coordinated and categorized to ensure a fluent merchandise flow. Loaned merchandise must be recorded and secured from damage or robbery during fittings and transportation. (Everett et al. 2018, 96–97.)

The Finnish Soroptimist guests had the opportunity to discover a unique selection of luxurious fur and leather products from several collections designed by students and professionals during workshops. In addition to empowering young women through a fashion show production, the objective of the event was to promote the Ostrobothnian fur industry by organizing a fur-only show which displayed the ideas, work, and projects of several fashion design students. Centria University of Applied Sciences in Jakobstad was the only university in Finland specialized in fur fashion design and marketing. The university degree got introduced in 1996 and was developed until June 2019. The studies included both fur design and business studies enabling students to acquire the necessary skills to function in the global fur industry. I was part of this education and followed a business-oriented program with a specialization in fur design and marketing.

During workshops, students were encouraged to work creatively on themes to elaborate inspiring collections and create a wide variety of fur fashion products. All fur and leather products were unique in terms of designs, patterns, colors, textures, sewing technics, and styles. From the most classic and conventional styles, reflected in comfortable coats and jackets, to the most edgy and avant-garde garments. All kinds of possibilities found their place in these collections made of the finest natural skins such as fox, mink, racoon, rabbit, astrakhan, pony, seal and many more. Collections were carried out together with several sponsors and co-operators across Finland and abroad, including fashion and home decoration companies, material suppliers and regional fur farmers which enabled students to develop products with the best quality materials. The center of fur fashion design collaborated with a broad range of international designers and craftsmen from diverse sectors of product design. The results of the creative workshops were presented at many events and exhibitions in Finland and at the MiFur annual fair in Milan, Italy.

In view of the runway show, fashion looks designed by fur fashion design students were carefully planned, selected, and organized in terms of style, design, color, techniques, and innovation to present fresh ideas and original looks on the runway. Merchandise was categorized into six collections

composed of fur and leather jackets, coats, blazers, vests, capes, shawls, bodices, skirts, and dresses. The splendor of fur was also reflected in accessories such as hats, collars, scarves, gloves, and bags. Fur coats and leather jackets were the main attraction as it enabled amateur models to display one-piece of clothing at the time and change rapidly into the next look without having to undress themselves. This changing method enabled amateur models to save time and display multiple products during a single fashion show. All items were easy to wear and ideal to fight the Finnish winter cold temperatures. Moreover, the merchandise was versatile and easy to combine with comfortable, casual, and sporty outfits. In fact, fur and leather products can be incorporated in all fashion trends and styles, it can bring a note of distinction and sophistication to ready-to-wear clothing.

6.5 Collections

The main sources of inspiration for the collections were women nature, personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors. Each woman is unique and different in its own way, although, studies reveal that people share common behavioral patterns and personality traits. Psychology researchers conducted several studies, experiments, and surveys to collect and analyze data through personality tests such as the Enneagram, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator of 16 personality traits, or the Big Five preferred by scientists. Based on behavioral-science systems, people's personalities can be identified and classified into distinct categories. Personality typing systems are useful to describe diverse human natures and comprehend the overall mechanism that triggers people to act in a certain way. Moreover, personality analysis can help to understand the ways through which people view, experience, and approach the world. (Taylor 2020.) Accordingly, each collection incarnated the essence of six different types of women, manifested through artistic expression by choice of colors, materials, songs, and styles displayed in the collections.

The first collection, "The elegance of the pink panther" comprised six outfits. The look for this collection was inspired by the 40s fashion trend characterized by formal dresses, vintage fur coats, suede blazers, gloves, high heels, and wide retro feathered hats. The collection embodied a classic, sophisticated, and luxurious woman. Sophistication, sobriety, and refinement were the key points of this collection. The tones were sober colors such as white, black, dark blue and brown which gave a simple, conventional, and elegant look. The purity of white and the naturalness of beige and browns were the best counterpoints to the seriousness of black and the professionalism of blue.

The second collection, “Romance” consisted of seven outfits. As the scene’s title suggests, the look for this collection evoked romanticism while displaying feminine beauty. The fashion looks comprised fur capes and short coats with voluminous fox collars and cuffs. The collection represented a romantic, sensitive, graceful, kind, and gentle woman. The tonalities serving as guideline for this collection were pastel colors in pink often associated with innocence and romance, and soft tones such as beige and light grey which gave a juvenile air to the collection.

The third collection, “Gipsy woman” contained five outfits. The look for this collection was inspired by the French novel *Carmen* written by Prosper Mérimée. In the novel, Carmen is a highly seductive, passionate, ardent, and dangerous gypsy woman who bewitches and manipulates men with her bohemian looks. Accordingly, the collection incarnated a lively, charming, mischievous and freedom loving woman. The fashion looks for this collection were shawls, long dresses, and floor length coats with fur adorning necks and cuffs making of these garments’ veritable jewels. Outfits highlighted femininity, seduction, and good taste through their pieces. Passionate red was the star color of this collection.

The fourth collection, “A dramatic affaire” comprised seven outfits. The looks for this collection brought all the attractive potential of leather fashion to the force. The collection embodied a highly seductive and obscure side of femininity and its decadent inner sexuality, represented by skin-tight leather miniskirts, leather cut like lace ensembles, long and short leather jackets, lacquered and leopard printed leather vests. A powerful, magnetic, hypnotic, mysterious, and provocative woman was personified through this collection. The mixture of textures reflected an image which emphasized female sensuality. Some outfits had a particular sculptural dimension and futuristic designs. The primary color used to highlight the theme was black with some touches of silver, dark red and metallic black shades.

The fifth collection, “Cherry bombs” included five outfits. “Cherry bombs” represented a cheerful, dynamic, playful, and adventurous woman who seeks sophistication, but with a strong casual, practical and sportive influence. Fashion looks combined perfectly with other in-fashion materials such as denim and knitwear, complimented by boots and high heels shoes. The collection included semi-sporty coats for younger women in electric tones. Fuchsia, green, violet, intense turquoise, light blue, and pastel pink made up the range of colors. The clothing line comprised vividly colored garments and accessories which added joy and carefreeness to the runway. Moreover, the collection matched the dynamic and modern personality of the young women participating in the runway show. Models were encouraged to compliment the fur, leather garments and accessories with their personal ready-to-wear style to give a casual look to the collection.

Lastly, the sixth collection “WonderFurs” consisted of five outfits. The clothing line was an explosion of colors and displayed the most extravagant, and surprising clothing. Most designs were inspired by childhood fairy tales. The collection was characterized by several mid-length fur coats with prominent collars, a fuchsia fox cape inspired by the little riding hood tale and a navy-blue fox dress mixed with multicolored fabric inspired by Alice in Wonderland. The intensity of fuchsia, pink, blue, green, and purple colors reflected the personality of an imaginative, artistic, creative, and fun woman. “WonderFurs” was the most colorful and exuberant collection of all. Colors are visual stimulators and have a direct impact on people’s feelings and psychological state. Accordingly, vivid colors can positively impact emotions, attitude, behavior, and state of mind. Bright, eye-catching colors were ideal to conclude a fashion show event which entertained without losing its sense of glamour and elegance. A runway show where the wildest fantasies turned into reality while celebrating female nature and personalities.

The versatility and multipurpose character of fur and leather materials was displayed by creating both functional and elegant collections which demonstrated the timelessness and adaptability of these noble materials. Six collections were created from which models were free to choose one or two items per collection. Fur fashion designs came in an assortment of colors, sizes, shapes, and styles. Models were free to choose coats, outfits, and accessories to complement their personal outfit and fashion style. The latest fashion in ready-to-wear was combined with fur and leather fashion. Models were encouraged to select casual outfits from their personal wardrobe and personalize the selected fur, leather fashion looks with their everyday style. Designs were sophisticated, practical, and easy to wear at any time of the day that is why all the collections tended towards comfortable clothing which are adaptable to modern women lifestyle. Fur and leather garments can become a part of everyday life, for both young girls and women. Everything was designed and conceived so that women’s natural elegance flowers to the surface, bringing out the best in every woman.

During the fitting session, the aspirant models were requested to “come as they are”. The participants were encouraged to express their creativity by selecting clothes which they genuinely liked, felt comfortable with, and matched their personality. Next, I verified the proper fitting of the merchandise selected and effectuated all necessary adjustments with the help of safety pins to ensure a perfect fit. Afterwards, runway looks were organized, and recorded by placing a name tag or piece of paper-tape on the inner collar or lining of the item to easily sort and locate the garments. The tag indicated the model’s name, title and number of the collection, as well as the model’s order. For example: Theresa, Collection 2 “Romance”, 2/7. Then, product shots were taken to create the documentation of the event such as ideal chart, model fitting sheets and final lineup. Moreover, product shots helped to keep track of the garments

chosen and record the fashion looks. Afterwards, each garment was categorized per collection, and placed on an individual model rack according to the number of the collection and model's order of rotation. A total of thirty-five outfits were presented by eight models participating in the runway.

6.6 Documentation

Organizing a fashion show event requires prior planning and organizational skills. In the beginning of the process, a fashion show plan was established to determine the project scope. A fashion show plan is a document which includes fundamental information such as: title of the show, theme and scenes, type of the show, type of merchandise, name of the producer or production company, leadership team information, target audience, venue, budget plan, schedule, and planning calendar. Depending on the size of the event production, a fashion show is planned six months to one year prior to the event. A timeline listing all preparatory tasks and operations enabled me to save and manage time. Time management is essential, it is the ability to organize and plan the time spent on a day's activities. Proper time management increases efficiency and maximize productivity. Next, a planning calendar helped me to delegate tasks to all team members, stay on schedule and set deadlines for the successful completion of the project. (Everett et al. 2018, 52–53.)

Early in the planning process, the merchandise was organized according to product types, colors, textures, designs, techniques, innovation, and fashion styles to create a merchandise flow among looks. The ideal chart is a plan listing all merchandise categories that helps to determine the number of outfits needed for the show. Merchandise categories were then converted into separate scene themes. The scene themes evolved from the general show theme and enabled to make a distinction between merchandise categories. Each scene theme comprised twelve looks from which eight models selected one look or in some cases two looks per collection. In the ideal chart, the amount of merchandise was double than the number of garments and accessories featured on the runways. In fact, seventy-two looks were listed in the ideal chart and only thirty-five looks were selected. A minimum of one minute per look was planned in accordance with the runway distance and the music scenes duration. The ideal chart included the name of all merchandise categories and the number of garments to select per category.

After recruiting models for the show, a model list was created to gather fundamental information such as model's name, age, contact details, and sizing information. Following the merchandise selection and

fitting session, a model fitting sheet was established to record the fashion looks selected by the participant. The individual model fitting sheet is a visual planning which includes photographs of items selected along with their order of appearance in the collection. Moreover, model fitting sheets comprised useful details such as model's name, headshot, and merchandise lineup. Merchandise lineup indicates the order in which the model will present each product on the runway. On the fashion show day, the individual merchandise lineup acted as a guidance for the models while changing runway looks.

Next, a final lineup was elaborated for each of the collections. The final lineup is a listing of merchandise and models in order of appearance per collection. The final lineup sheet comprised the title and number of the collection, number of fashion looks presented per collection, and product shots classified according to the merchandise lineup. Under each product shot appeared the name of the model responsible for the item and her order of appearance in the lineup. When establishing the final lineup for each collection, I made sure that the models had enough time to complete their runway walk comfortably, change into the next fashion look and lineup for the next rotation or following collection. Before the rehearsal, the final lineup listing was distributed to all team members and posted on the dressing room exit door enabling the backstage manager and models to coordinate and follow the instructions.

Lastly, the program of the event was established and sent to all team member and participants to provide detailed information about schedule and programmed activities. The venue arrangements started on Friday 17th May 2019, at 13h30. Two hours and a half were planned to accommodate the dressing area, transport the merchandise, install the music equipment, arrange the seating pattern and runway configuration in Restaurant Allegro. The models arrived at 15h30, thirty minutes before the rehearsal. This time enabled models to grow familiar with the venue, runway area, dressing room, merchandise, program, and make acquaintance with the show personnel and other female participants. The rehearsal was held from 16h00 to 17h30. An hour and half were scheduled to train the inexperienced models and teach them the fundamentals of runway walk, pose, turn and timing.

From 17h30 to 18h00, models and team members had thirty minutes for coffee break. From 18h to 19h, models had an hour time to get ready for the show and prepare their own hair and makeup look. At 19h00, all participants were dressed, styled and aligned as stated in the final lineup. At 19h30, I greeted the audience with a welcoming speech and introduced the event program while outlining the aim, message and purpose of the fashion show work project. The fashion show performance initiated at 19h 40 and ended at 20h15, the show lasted about thirty-five minutes. Next a photo shooting session

was held at 20h30 to document the event and create a portfolio for the models. Finally, the event post procedures were conducted between 21h00 to 22h30.

7 EVENT PRODUCTION

Event production is the creation and staging of a performance. An event is an important and striking experience which arouses people's interest. Memorable events don't just happen which is why it is important to find a specific focus for a well-defined target audience. Organizing and running an event requires many resources and real expertise. The event producer is creatively responsible for the creation of the event and leads the production team towards the implementation of the event operations. The function of a fashion producer is to elaborate runway shows which communicate the artistic and strategic vision of the client and interpret the designers' collections to the public. The producer gathers and coordinate all the elements needed to bring the project into realization and deliver a memorable experience. The seventh chapter describes the course of action taken to execute and stage the fashion show production. The chapter includes information about fashion show production theory and its implementation in a real time knowledge practice. Main tasks involved in event production included team assembling, site management, scenic design, sound installation, rehearsal, fashion show production, and event photography.

7.1 Team assembling

Planning and producing an event require a lot of time and effort. Fashion houses may hire a fashion show production team whereas retail stores, charitable organizations and fashion schools may assemble a team with their own personnel. Building an effective team is indispensable as the success of a project is the result of close collaboration between team members. After assembling a team, the event producer assigns respective roles to all collaborators, delegates responsibilities, distribute tasks, and manages group meetings. The fashion show production team can be divided within two main categories, the leadership team, and the production team. The leadership team takes most of the initiatives and leads the production teams towards the realization of the project. (Everett et al. 2018, 46.)

7.1.1 Leadership and production team

The leadership team includes an event producer, budget coordinator, promotion coordinator, merchandise coordinator, model coordinator and stage coordinator. An event producer or show director can work

for a fashion show production company or as a freelancer. The producer is responsible for the technical and practical implementation of an event. Her/his mission is to coordinate all operations and team members to interpret the client's visual identity and bring its project into realization. The show director works in association with the budget planner and promotion coordinator. The budget coordinator manages all financial aspects in terms of expenditure and revenue. The promotion coordinator collects information on customer expectations and on competition as means to plan, develop, and implement promotional programs for the event. The merchandise coordinator works in collaboration with the stylist. Their role is to compose and prepare a runway collection in accordance with the theme and target audience. The model coordinator recruits and supervise models through all operations, including fittings and choreography. The stage manager coordinates the production teams and direct all technical procedures such as stage and backstage preparations, equipment management, administrative procedures, public safety, and comfort. (Everett et al. 2018, 46–47.)

The stage personnel include a set-up and cleanup crew responsible for the installation and dismantling of the stage along with the maintenance of the premises before, during and after the event (Everett et al. 2018, 184–185). Sound and light technicians are required to install and uninstall all necessary equipment, test, and verify the reliability of technical and scenic devices to ensure sound quality and lighting effects (Everett et al. 2018, 162–164). Depending on the duration of the show and the number of outfits displayed, the runway choreographer oversees the stage scenography and decides whether the models will parade in a line, cross each other, or walk around the room (Everett et al. 2018, 138). Photographers plays a decisive role in the promotion of a designer's clothing line, their mission is to film and photograph the merchandise worn by models on the catwalk which will later be published and broadcasted (Improve Photography LLC 2021). Finally, the announcer or the master of ceremony officiates in front of the public and manages the course of the event; her/his main purpose or objective is to greet, guide and inform the audience upon the theme and objective of the event, designers, collections, and other entertainments inclusive in the event (Everett et al. 2018, 169).

The backstage crew consist of managers, models, and service personnel. The role of a model is to display and sell merchandise by bringing life to the designer's collection by showing the colors and movements of the fabric on the catwalk. The model's objective is to promote the designer's clothing line and motivate consumer's purchasing behavior. (Everett et al. 2018, 118.) Under the producer or designer's indications, hair stylist and cosmetologist create model's hair and makeup looks to compliment the runway collections (Everett et al. 2018, 137). Dressers help the models to prepare and change their outfit

between each scene, they verify that models are wearing the right outfit and effectuate necessary adjustments. Most importantly, dressers ensure that the merchandise is protected and returned after the show. (Everett et al. 2018, 179.) The cue personnel are essential to the coordination of a fashion show, they make sure that the models are on stage at the right time and in the right order according to the final lineup (Everett et al. 2018, 169).

7.1.2 Fashion show production team and their roles

The bachelor's degree of Business Administration, International Business at Centria UAS, enabled me to acquire the practices and procedures of event management. Along the years, I took part in several practical expert duties related to fashion show production, the aim was to gain expertise while operating in a professional business working environment. Accordingly, I engaged in diverse sectors of the fashion show industry and participated in several fashion show activities. On these occasions, I took up the role of model, beautician, dresser, stylist, merchandise coordinator, choreographer, model coordinator, stage manager, backstage manager, and fashion show director. As a result of these practical expert duties, I acquired valuable skills and obtained a key understanding of the various aspects, roles and responsibilities comprised in a fashion show production.

The thesis practice-based work project enabled me to apply the event management skills and knowledge acquired during practical expert in a real-life fashion show implementation. During the event production process, I assumed diverse types of roles and responsibilities including fashion show producer, merchandise coordinator, model coordinator, stage manager and announcer. The fashion show producer is accountable for the conception and execution of the event. The merchandise coordinator responsibilities were to develop concepts and ideas for the collections, plan the ideal chart, select runway looks, do fittings, and create the final lineup. The model coordinator duties were to scout models, do fittings, create model fitting sheets, plan model fashion looks and walk, plan backstage configuration, and train models during rehearsal. The stage manager responsibilities were to secure the venue and equipment, plan the music playlist for the event, coordinate technical and production aspects, direct staff members, create the runway configuration and seating pattern. Finally, I ensured the role of announcement during the runway event to introduce the aims, objectives, concept, theme collections of the fashion show production.

According to the size of the event, I estimated the help needed and assembled a production team to coordinate and execute the event production. Each team member was assigned an individual task or divided into smaller groups. The show personnel were responsible for conducting diverse event operations, their duties and responsibilities included setting-up and cleaning up the venue, sound system installation, backstage management, cue announcement, event photography and music. In total, fifteen people, including myself, contributed to the elaboration and success of the fashion show production.

The set-up crew consisted of three students; their task was to conduct the venue arrangements in preparation of the event. According to the venue schematic plan, the set-up crew had to shift the restaurant chairs and tables in order to create the seating pattern and runway configuration. A computer, two microphones, and speakers were borrowed from the Rotunda conference room for the sound system installation. The set-up crew verified the proper functioning of all electronic devices and adjusted the sound system volume in view of the rehearsal. Assigned duties also included transporting merchandise from the fur fashion design center to the dressing room, organize the dressing area, create an individual space for each model, and organize fashion looks on racks as stated in the model fitting sheets. After the show, the same students helped me to clean up the venue. Firstly, loaned merchandise was returned to the fur fashion design center and classified according to the final lineup. While rearranging the looks, I removed the name tags from the clothes and made sure that all items were returned in good condition. Finally, all the equipment and furniture were taken back to their original place. At the end of the event, the venue was restored to its original state.

Another student was delegated the role of backstage manager and starter. The backstage manager assignment was to supervise the models in the dressing room and ensure that they appeared on stage at the right time. The student arrived at the venue before the rehearsal to familiarize with the dressing room configuration and the final lineup of the show. The final lineup sheets were posted on the exit door enabling the backstage manager to direct and coordinate models during the performance. The final lineup acted as a guideline through the entire event, the backstage manager and models followed the listing of merchandise and model's order of appearance as per collection. Before each scene, participants aligned next to the exit door enabling the backstage manager to verify the model's order and looks in respect to the lineup. Furthermore, the student was responsible for cueing the models onto stage after each rotation to ensure that they got on the runway in due time. Even under the rush and pressure, the backstage manager was able to remain calm and handle her tasks in an exemplary manner.

The photographer was also an International Business student who volunteered to film and photograph the models behind the scenes, on the runway and on a photo shooting session. The student had a passion for photography and a good Canon camera with zoom lens designed for fashion photography. To thank the amateur models for their precious time and service, a photo shooting session was arranged to build a modelling portfolio enabling models to book future gigs or simply share quality images on their social media content. The photo shooting consisted of a headshot, a three-quarter photo, one full length shot and one group picture. The challenge was to shoot inexperienced models and produce quality images without editing or retouching the photographs to portray the model's natural beauty. Photographers are storytellers, their mission is to capture the essence of people through their looks, facial expressions and emotions which display their authentic self.

On the photo shoot, the models worked closely with the photographer and posed with their favorite fashion looks. The photographer had an opportunity to collaborate with talented young girls and create spectacular fashion images. The young student acted in a professional manner by ensuring that models felt comfortable and had a great modelling experience. While shooting, the photographer communicated with the models to give them suggestions and positive feedbacks intended to make them feel beautiful and empowered. Amateur models are often skeptical whether they are doing a good job, accordingly the photographer showed them the good shots he had taken to reassure them and motivate the models to be more confident. During the photo session, models had fun and enjoyed the process, they were encouraged to be creative, express their personality, have freedom of movement, shake their hair, and smile rather than just make a standard fashion pose with serious facial expressions. The aim of the photo shoot was to create images which immortalize the natural beauty and authenticity of these inspiring women.

The models participating in the show were requested to arrive thirty minutes before the rehearsal in order to get acquainted with the venue, receive instructions and to ensure that all the participants were present and ready to start at the exact given time. When all the models arrived, I made a general announcement on the stage and distributed the program and schedule to all the participants. Next, the models were introduced to the dressing area and to their personal space. Each model had a table, a chair and a rack displaying the fashion looks as per order in the collections. A copy of the final lineup and model fitting sheet was placed on each model's table so that they could get acquainted with the procedures.

After getting familiar with the venue configuration, models took part in a run-through rehearsal to practice the runway walk, pace, pose, turn and timing. Models were encouraged to smile, express themselves, feel empowered and walk along with the rhythm of the music. After the practice, the performers had some time to rest and get acquainted with each other around a warm cup of coffee. The runway looks preparation started at 18h00, the production team did not include dressers, hairdressers, or makeup artists. In fact, models were requested to do their own hair and makeup styling to reflect their true self on the runway and to have a natural look which matched the different theme collections. During the rehearsal, the participants developed a sense of camaraderie and thereupon helped each other to create simple hair and makeup looks in view of the show performance. One of the models was studying to become a beautician, so she kindly assisted the other girls to do their makeup look. The look preparation in view of the show performance, was a privileged moment which created unity and fellowship between female participants. I was truly pleased to notice the solidarity among women of different ages, status, nationalities, backgrounds, and lifestyles.

The music designer was my friend and faithful companion who kindly offered to act the part of Disc Jockey and direct the music playlist during the runway performance. Accordingly, I selected a variety of songs from my personal musical background and elaborated a music playlist with the guidance and expertise of the music designer. Each song had to be engaging in its own way and reflect the collection theme. According to the number of outfits being displayed in the collection and the models walking pace, some of the songs had to be shorten or extended. Before the event, the DJ reviewed the music playlist to understand exactly when to cut or replay the songs to have a smooth transaction between sounds and create rhythm or harmony between sounds. During the rehearsal, the DJ had the opportunity to practice and make the necessary adjustments with the real time equipment, models, and runway routine.

7.2 Setting the design and atmosphere of the event

The design and atmosphere of an event depends on the budget and capacity of the premises. The venue layout consists in organizing the runway area, it is a strategic plan concerning the dressing room and runway platform placements, stage design, seating configuration and site's facilities. The scenery and atmosphere of the event should visually represent the fashion show theme. Staging is the orchestration of all the scenic elements of a fashion show production in terms of lighting, sound, decoration, and chore-

ography. The stage manager is responsible for the scenography design and coordination of the stage production team which involves sound and light technicians. The sound designer acquires the music copyright permissions and creates the music mix or playlist animating the event and accentuating the theme or designer's concept. The lighting designer creates lighting effects with spotlights and other installations to highlight the clothing lines. Staging, lighting, and music are great assets to engage an audience and create the right atmosphere for a show. (Everett et al. 2018, 150–152, 162–164.)

The site management started after the lunch hour break, on 17th May 2019 at 13h00. The venue was ideal for a fashion event, in fact, it was spacious, modern, and benefited from natural sun light. Moreover, the venue had access to all required facilities such as cloakroom, licensed refreshments and food services, disabled access, disabled and gender mix toilets. Restaurant Allegro had room capacity for at least 200 seated guests which means that the venue was large enough to welcome 150 audience members. Besides, the venue was close to bus stops and other transportations enabling the attendees to find and access the venue without difficulty. Restaurant Allegro provided seats, tables, and a small central stage to create the scenery, runway, and seating configuration.

When creating the runway area, the seats were arranged in a way that all attendees could see the models walking down the catwalk towards the stage. Unfortunately, the venue was not equipped with a raised catwalk platform, so the set-up crew used some black tape to mark out the runway delimitations on the floor from the central stage to the Rotunda. The Rotunda conference room was booked well in advance and transformed into a practical and organized changing room for the models. The dressing room provided easy access to the stage allowing models to enter and exit the runway rapidly. Live models walked in a certain order of appearance, accordingly every time a model completed her rotation, another performer would appear on the runway. The runway routine was a conventional presentation, models would perform a linear catwalk until the central stage, pose, turn, and return backstage.

A personal space was created for each model to change in the dressing room. Each model had a designated area equipped with a mirror, dressing table, a packing box and a personal rack which displayed the model's outfits and accessories according to the final lineup order. During fashion shows, models only have a few minutes to change into the next outfit and get back on stage. Since models do not have time to replace the items on their hanger, merchandise is often thrown on the tables, chairs, or floor creating a lot of chaos and confusion in the backstage. Usually, dressers assist the models while changing looks and put back the merchandise on the racks after each model rotation. Models were responsible for wearing and changing their own fashion looks. Accordingly, a packing box

was placed next to each model rack enabling the participants to dispose the clothes after each rotation. This packing method secured merchandise from misplacement, damage, or loss.

Music is the perfect tool to create atmosphere in a fashion show performance. The atmosphere of the event was conceived by an appropriate music selection and the elaboration of a music playlist. Music playlist is the inventory of music selection, it includes the name of the artist, title, and length of the song. The link to the music mix for each collection was listed in the final lineup sheets and sent to all participants, enabling models to get familiar with the show soundtrack before the rehearsal practice. While creating the music mix, I associated different musical genres, and avoided overly used music. The objective of the show soundtrack was to create a welcoming environment and enhance the theme and atmosphere of the event.

Accordingly, each collection was illustrated by a specific song which matched, complimented, spoke for the garments but most importantly a song which embodied the essence and character of a woman. Music has a direct impact on people's feeling and emotions, it can make you laugh, cry, dance and move. In fact, music speaks louder than words, it is a language and creative form of expression used to communicate with others. Accordingly, the music playlist was used to communicate a certain feeling and emotion related to the clothes. Fashion and music go hand in hand, the style and tempo of music aimed at interpreting the garments of the collections. Each collection was associated with a song enabling spectators to acquire a better understanding of the author's perspective and artistic aspirations.

7.3 Rehearsal

Ideally, the preparatory process of the fashion show starts the day before the actual event. A rehearsal prior to the show is necessary to verify the proper functioning of the equipment, effectuate necessary adjustments, coordinate all participants, and team members to ensure the fluidity of the show. The stage and venue layout are settled before the rehearsal enabling models to perform in the same circumstances than the actual runway, with suitable music and lighting. First, a run-through rehearsal allows the models to assimilate the runway choreography pattern and practice the catwalk according to the lineup. Afterwards, a full-dress rehearsal enables to review the overall aspect of the live performance such as timing, team coordination, model's walking pace, outfit change, music, lighting effect and others technical components. Time the rehearsal to make sure that the models stay on schedule and appear on stage at the

right time. The duration of each scene and transition is calculated to create a fixed timetable for the event. (Everett et al. 2018, 176–179.)

In preparation of the show performance, a rehearsal was held from 16h00 to 17h30 to practice the model's lineup, rotation and walk. The aim of the rehearsal was to train inexperienced models by teaching them the fundamentals of runway walk, pose, turn and timing. The rehearsal enabled models to develop their stage presence and gain assurance while performing on the catwalk. In view of the rehearsal, I made some preparatory research about runaway walk to plan the show routine and train the models by giving specific directions. Models were requested to arrive on time and wear casual clothes for the practice. Moreover, the participants were asked to bring comfortable shoes or high heels used to perform the runway walk. After the models arrived at the venue, I took a moment to thank everyone for their participation and gave some instructions about the strategic plan for the rehearsal. The rehearsal was divided in three parts: a run-through rehearsal, a polishing rehearsal, and a final rehearsal.

The run-through rehearsal allowed models to see the set, warm up, practice some runway exercises, walk the runway distance with the theme songs, and learn the catwalk routine. The catwalk routine consisted of a simple linear catwalk. Models exited the backstage, walked until the end of the runway, stepped up on stage, posed for a few seconds and walked back. During the first practice, the DJ and I observed the models' walking pace, body language, posture, head movement and presence to provide them with constructive feedbacks for further improvement. The guidance during rehearsal consisted of minor corrections and creative suggestions. While practicing the walk for each song, models were encouraged to feel extraordinarily beautiful, smile, be themselves, feel confident, powerful, and express their individuality. The polishing rehearsal enabled the models to feel more assertive and correct the sections that needed to be addressed. During the second practice, the models were trained to walk on the beat of the music and understand the relation between the collection theme and the song. Lastly, the final rehearsal permitted amateur models to practice the entire performance as in the real time event, including opening, presentation, and finale. All collections were rehearsed three times enabling models to practice the runway walk, model rotation and transition between collections.

7.4 Fashion show event

A fashion show consists of an opening, a presentation, and a finale. After the reception and placement of the media and audience, the announcer welcomes the guests and presents the program of the event.

The music starts playing and the lights turn on gradually to reveal the first model walking down the catwalk. The opening of the fashion show intends to capture the attendee's attention, its purpose is to immerse the public into the world of the designer. The presentation of the clothing line is displayed by models walking consecutively or performing in a choreography. The fashion show finale should visually indicate the end of the performance. After featuring the last runway look, the models return on stage and execute a final walk to greet the public. The closing model parade is followed by the salute of the fashion creator. To conclude the show, the designer is acknowledged and acclaimed with applause from the public. The first and last impression of the performance is fundamental as it influences the spectator's judgment which determines the outcome and success of the event. (Everett et al. 2018, 139–140, 183–184.)

The fashion show event was held on 17th May 2019, in Restaurant Allegro at Centria University of Applied Sciences. The event program started at 19h00, Marita Westerlund, president of SI Jakobstad welcomed the Soroptimist members of Finland and presented the leisure activity program of the annual festive gathering 2019. The theme of the evening was “Coming together-get to know your sisters”. At this occasion, the Soroptimist sisters got to share stories and experiences while enjoying some food, refreshment, live music, and entertainment. The highlight of the event was a formal fashion show production intitled “Celebrating real women on the catwalk”. At 19h30, the audience members were invited to take a seat and appreciate the star attraction of the evening.

Once all attendees had found their seat, the president of SI Jakobstad made an announcement on the central stage to introduce me as the fashion show producer of the event. Accordingly, I stepped up on stage, introduced myself, and greeted the audience with verbal acknowledgements. When conducting the opening speech, the main target was to provide the audience with a better understanding of the practice-based work project by presenting the aims, objectives, concept, and themes of the fashion show production. Furthermore, I described how young women had been empowered through the process of event planning and production. After conducting the speech and announcing the first collection, I gave a signal to the DJ and backstage manager to indicate the opening of the performance.

Meanwhile, the models were dressed, styled, lined up and ready to hit the catwalk in style. Before stepping out on the runway, the backstage manager made sure that models were aligned according to their order of appearance and that fashion looks conformed to the final lineup. The opening of the show started with a slow and steady music, enabling models to take time, walk slowly and get used to the crowd. During the performance, live models walked in a consecutive order. Every time, a model would

complete her rotation, another performer would appear on the runway and walk down the catwalk. At the end of each collection, the models would have time to change into the next fashion look as I introduced the following collection.

During the runway, I assumed the role of announcer and took a few minutes to introduce each collection. The interval time between scenes allowed me to warm up the audience, engage their attention and describe the theme and inspiration for the next collection. Between scene transactions, models only had a few minutes to change into the next outfit and get back on stage. Fur coats and leather jackets were the main attraction as it enabled amateur models to display one-piece of clothing at the time and change rapidly into the next look without having to undress themselves. This changing method enabled amateur models to save time and display multiple products during a single fashion show.

As the show progressed, the dynamism of the music and vitality of the show augmented gradually. The women and young girls performing on the runway became more confident and livelier after presenting each collection. Audiences were kept at the edge of their seats through the entire performance. The fashion show ended with a greeting speech and a finale featuring the participants clapping and walking down the catwalk in consecutive order. At this occasion, the public raised and took the room with a storm of applause, you could see the glimpse in the eyes of the models and the enthusiasm in the faces of the spectators. “Celebrating real women on the catwalk” was a formal runway event which lasted thirty-five minutes, featured eight inspiring young women and displayed thirty-five looks made of the best quality of Ostrobothnian fur. In total, fifteen people, including myself, contributed to the elaboration and success of the fashion show production. The event was arranged for 150 Soroptimist International Finnish members which traveled from various parts of Finland to attend the event at the occasion of the SI Finland clubs festive gathering.

At the end of the show, the audience seemed overwhelmed by the experience and gratified the models and team members with big applause and compliments. Many came to congratulate me personally by expressing their thoughts and appreciation. Some audience members even asked me if it was possible to purchase or reproduce some of the garments displayed on the runway. I was extremely pleased to receive the spectator’s comments and collect feedbacks through a questionnaire aimed at quantitative research. While giving the closing speech, I requested the spectators to take part in an audience survey to assess the quality of the show production and measure the event success. In view of a practice-based

thesis, relevant data was collected for future analysis and evaluation of the fashion show practical implementation. Accordingly, forty pencils and questionnaires were placed on a table next to the central stage enabling Soroptimist audience members to provide opinions and reactions for future reference.

8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research method is a technique or a procedure which is mostly undertaken for the collection and gathering of various information and data from an intended group of people. There are several methods taken into consideration for the collection of various data, which entirely depends on the aim and purpose of the research intended. The accurate data can be collected through giving out questionnaires, one on one interviews and through using the secondary data. Typically, two kinds of research methodology are utilized which are given as quantitative research method and qualitative research method (Veal 2006). For the collection of the information, I took the approach of quantitative research methodology, through creating and distributing a set of questionnaires. The main objective for implementing the quantitative research methodology was to analyse the participants opinions and reactions after the fashion show production. The audience survey was held after the event with the intension of gathering valuable information as per the audience perspective. Finally, the findings of the questionnaire were analysed by using the SPSS software package for statistical analysis.

8.1 Quantitative research method

Typically, the quantitative method of research is targeted towards dealing with the statistical analysis of the data or information accumulated through the survey. To project accurate and reliable outcome for the research, the investigation relies on numerical evidence. Furthermore, this particular methodology focuses on the gathering of the numerical data intended to explain a specific phenomenon. The questionnaire included pertinent questions which are easy to read and understand and are accurately suitable for answering immediately. The aim of implementing quantitative research is to be able to discover the demand for wanting to determine the state of something, discover the demand of the quantitative answer, the numerical alterations in expression of the data and finally, for the analyzation of hypothesis (Veal 2006, 40).

Furthermore, there are components that totally depend on the reliability and validity of the research executed. The final execution of analysis is done through implementing SPSS software package. When dealing with quantitative data, I developed a list of questions while keeping the fashion show aim and audience in mind. Next, collected data was organized, summarized, and manipulated to notice relationships, patterns, or trends. Data was then analyzed, interpreted, and presented in a format that maximizes

clarity and impact such as graphs and charts. Visual reports were generated for easy analysis and result evaluation. Afterwards, the data was labeled and described in small paragraphs.

8.2 Data analysis

Audience survey can help to improve a product or service, measure customer satisfaction, improve customer attention or gain insight to help make better business decisions. Participants were asked to take part in the survey right after the show to collect immediate response, when the information is still fresh on their mind, enabling guests to give pertinent feedbacks on their experience. The implementation of the survey was held in Restaurant Allegro, Centria University of Applied Sciences, in Jakobstad, Finland. The questionnaire was divided into four sections that explored diverse domains including personal information, event assessment, promotion of fur and leather products, and audience perspective towards fashion and the fashion industry. The questionnaire comprised twenty-one close-ended questions enabling survey participants to select from a list of categories for their responses such as male or female. The technique of the research is entirely based on quantitative research method.

For the quantitative research, forty questionnaires were circulated at the end of the event and thirty-nine audience members took part in the survey. The intention or the motive of the questionnaire was to obtain detailed insights upon participants' demographic information such as gender, age, status and evaluate the diverse elements of the fashion show production, give the audience a voice about fur, leather fashion and understand their perspective towards fashion and the fashion industry. The responses that were accumulated were overall satisfying and substantial. Nevertheless, to be able to have a clear understanding and to comprehend the proposed survey along with its outcomes, the report is inclusive of figures. The responses or the output is considered for further analysis, inspection and then compared in reference to the responses provided in the survey. The information or data collected from the questionnaire were then updated into the SPSS software package to illustrate the analysis of the data and then additionally, interpreted in the set of various figures.

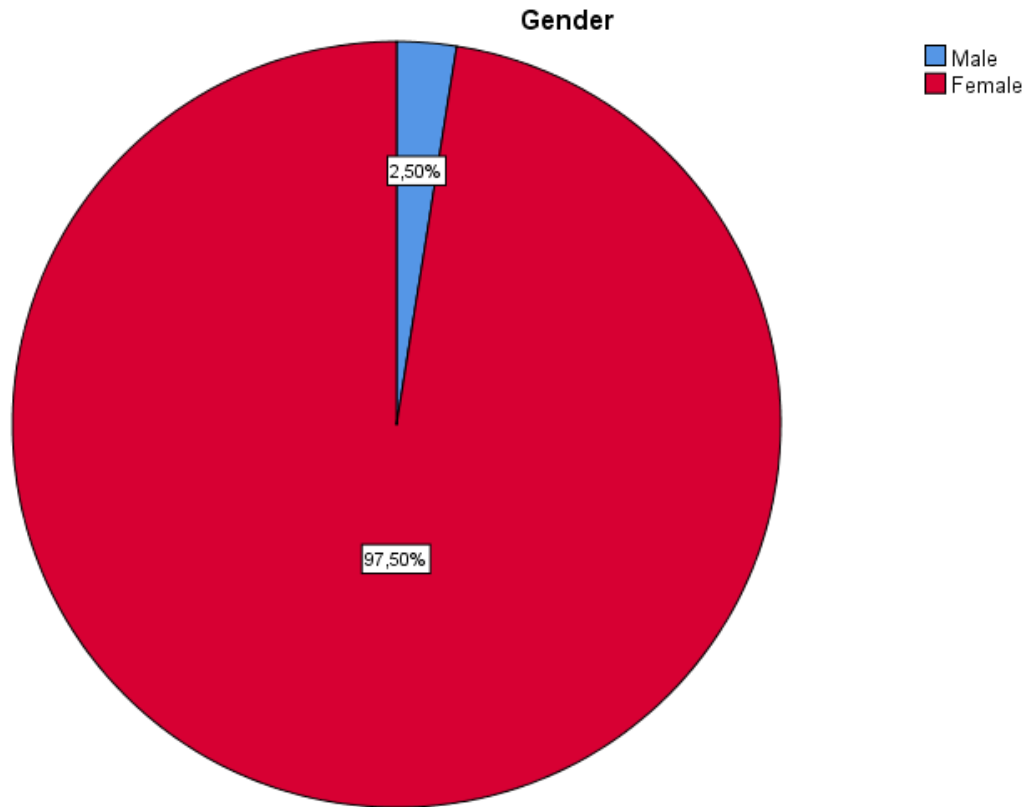


FIGURE 1. Gender

The first primary data and basic demographic question that was put forward in the survey was the gender. The two options to choose from were given as 'Female' and 'Male'. As we can clearly observe in Figure 1, more numbers of female were actively participating in the fashion show or the event, than the number of males. More than 97.50% of audiences were female and less than 2.50% of audiences were male who were present in the fashion show. The findings in Figure 1 revealed that the large majority of attendants were female members from the worldwide organization of SI Finland and the minority were male attendees who took part in the fashion show production as part of the show personnel.

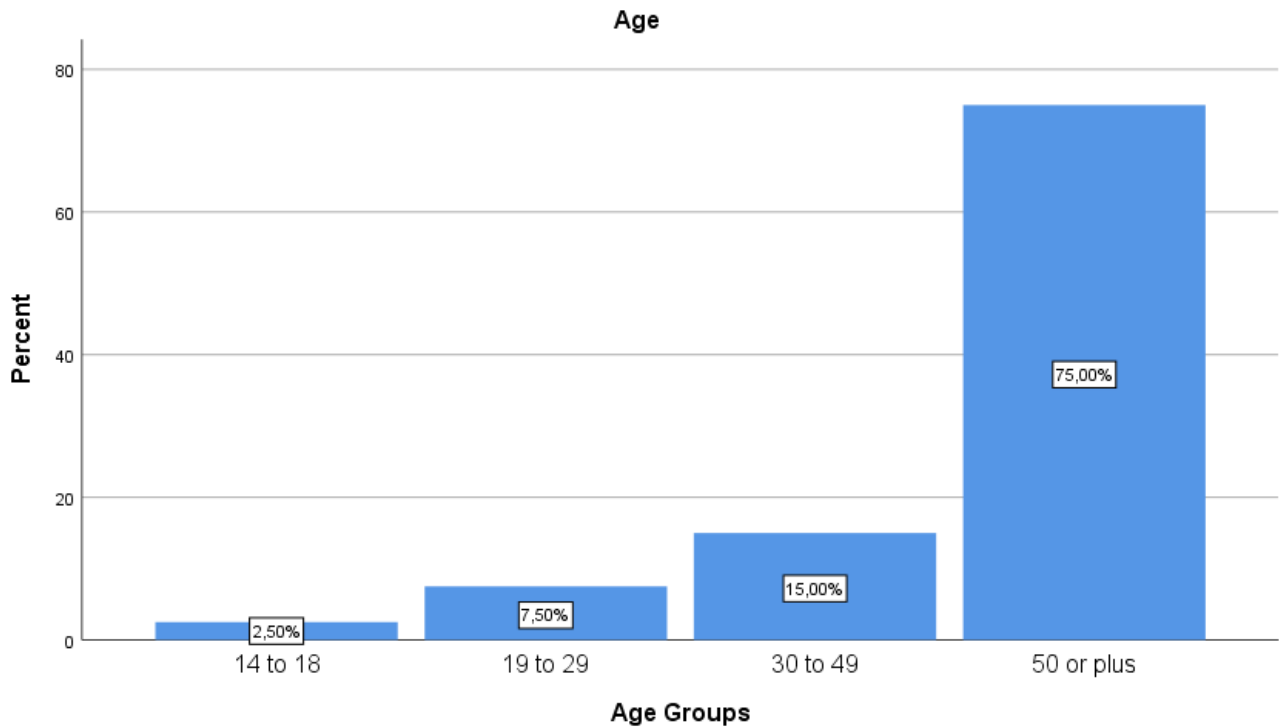


FIGURE 2. Age groups

The second primary data and basic demographic question that was put forward in the survey was to choose the age range of the participants. The question includes four choices in total which were given as age groups ranging between '14 to 18', '19 to 29', '30 to 49' and lastly '50 or plus'. The above given bar chart clearly shows that the spectators varying between the age from '14 to 18' were only 2.50%, audiences from the age of '19 to 29' were at 7.50%, and the participants from the age of '30 to 49' were at 15.00%, whereas the audiences between the age of '50 or plus' were whopping 75%. From this bar chart, the results suggest that women above 50 are more likely to attend social and leisure activities perhaps because they have less obligations and more financial security.

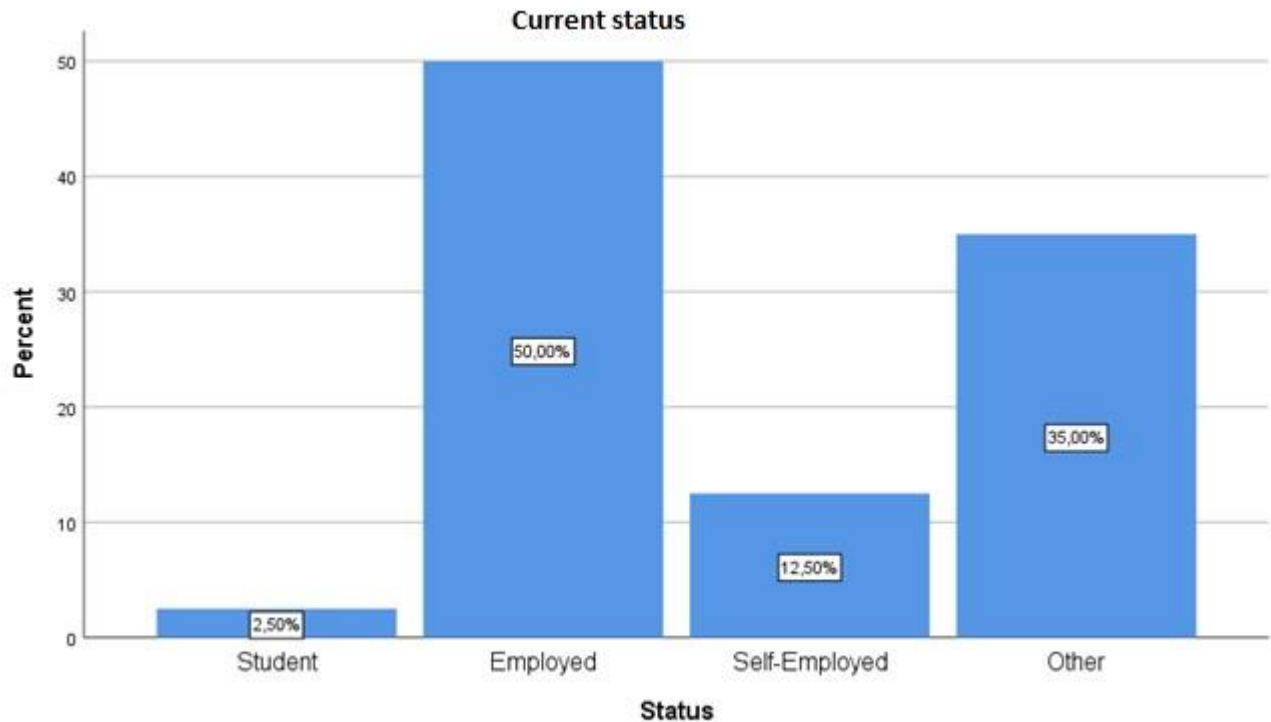


FIGURE 3. Current status

The third primary data and basic demographic question of the questionnaire enabled individuals to choose their current status. On the above figure the current status of the participants has been clearly displayed. Half of the participants chose their current status as 'Employed', according to Figure 3, 50.00% of them were currently employed. Secondly, 35% of the spectators had chosen the option given as 'Other' which excludes them from being a student, employed or self-employed. Thirdly, 12.50% of the spectators selected 'Self-employed' which means they may be entrepreneurs operating their own business. Lastly, spectators with the least percentage of 2.50%, indicated that they were currently studying by choosing the option 'Student'. We might conclude that the major part of respondents, exactly 50% were engaged professionally.

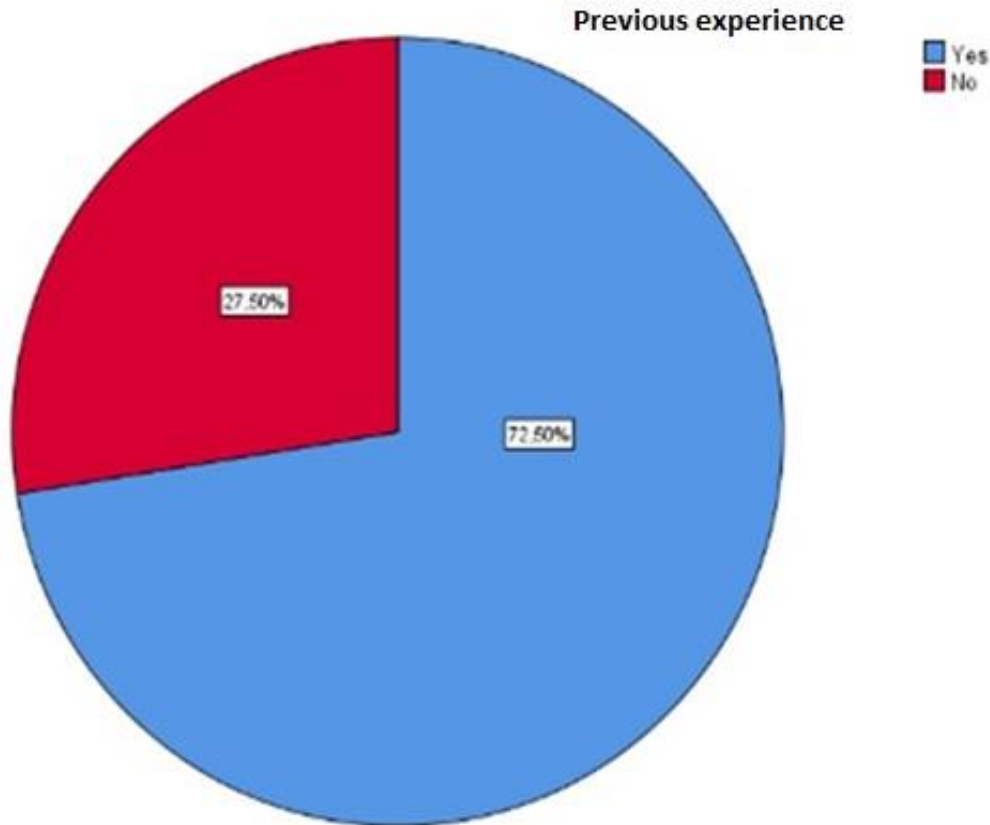


FIGURE 4. Previous experience

The fourth question presented two options to choose from, spectators were asked whether they had attended a fashion show production before or not. The two simple choices were given as 'Yes' or 'No'. The pie chart clearly displays that 72.50% of the spectators had already attended a fashion show before. Whereas 27.50% of the respondents had never taken part in a fashion show or similar event. Most of the respondents had participated in a fashion show before which proves that fashion shows are a popular form of promotion and entertainment. Gladly, a few participants had their first fashion show experience at this occasion. First experiences are unforgettable as it creates memories, stories and generate strong emotions and feelings which leave a lasting and memorable impression.

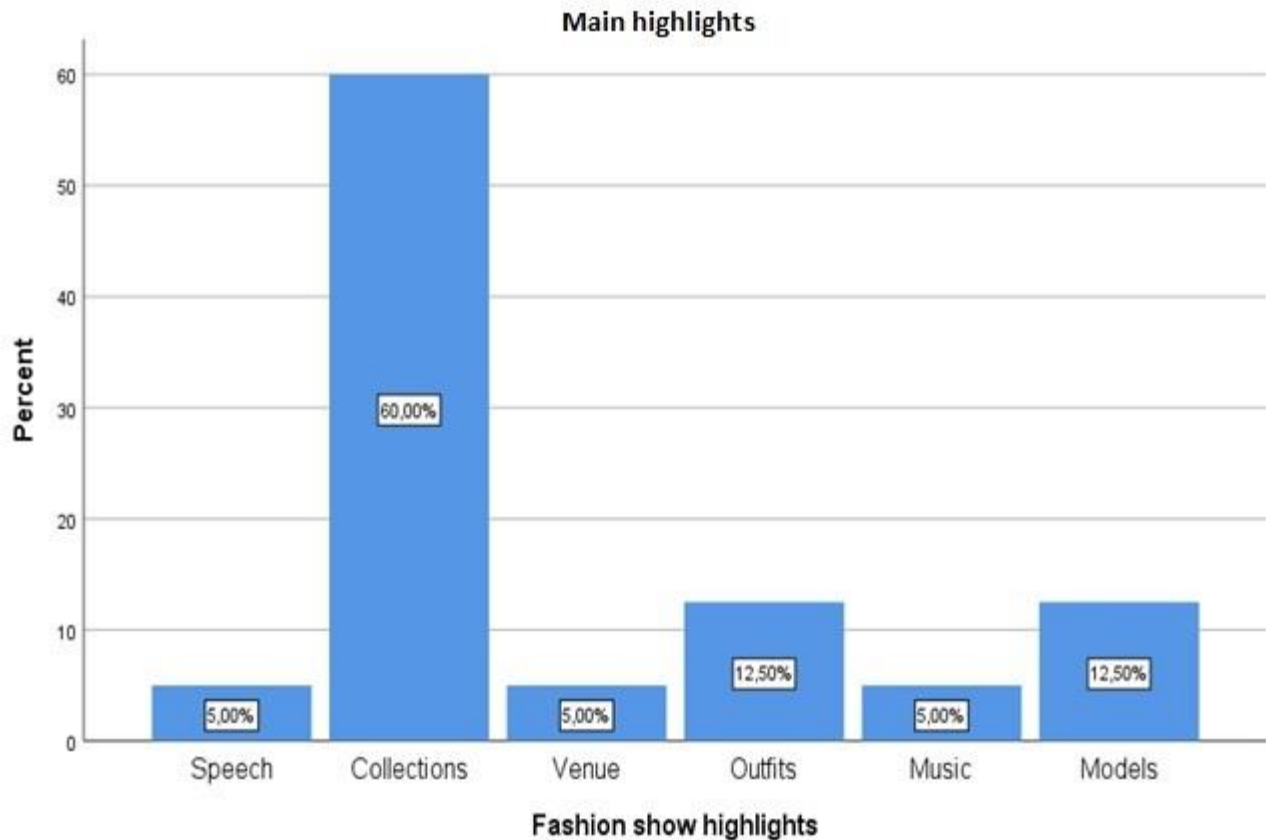


FIGURE 5. Main highlights

In the fifth question, the participants were able to select the highlight of the show. Six choices were given as followed: ‘Speech’, ‘Collection’, ‘Venue’, ‘Outfits’, ‘Music’ and finally ‘Models’. While looking at the given bar chart, we observe that 60% of the audience chose the option ‘Collections’ as the main highlight of the entire show, that is more than half of the participants. Whereas 12.50% of the respondents selected the option ‘Outfits’ and ‘Models’ as the main attraction of the fashion show production. Finally, only 5% of the respondents elected ‘Speech’ and ‘Music’. Figure 5, clearly shows that the composition and variation of the collections and their theme was appropriate, appealing and engaged the audience interest.

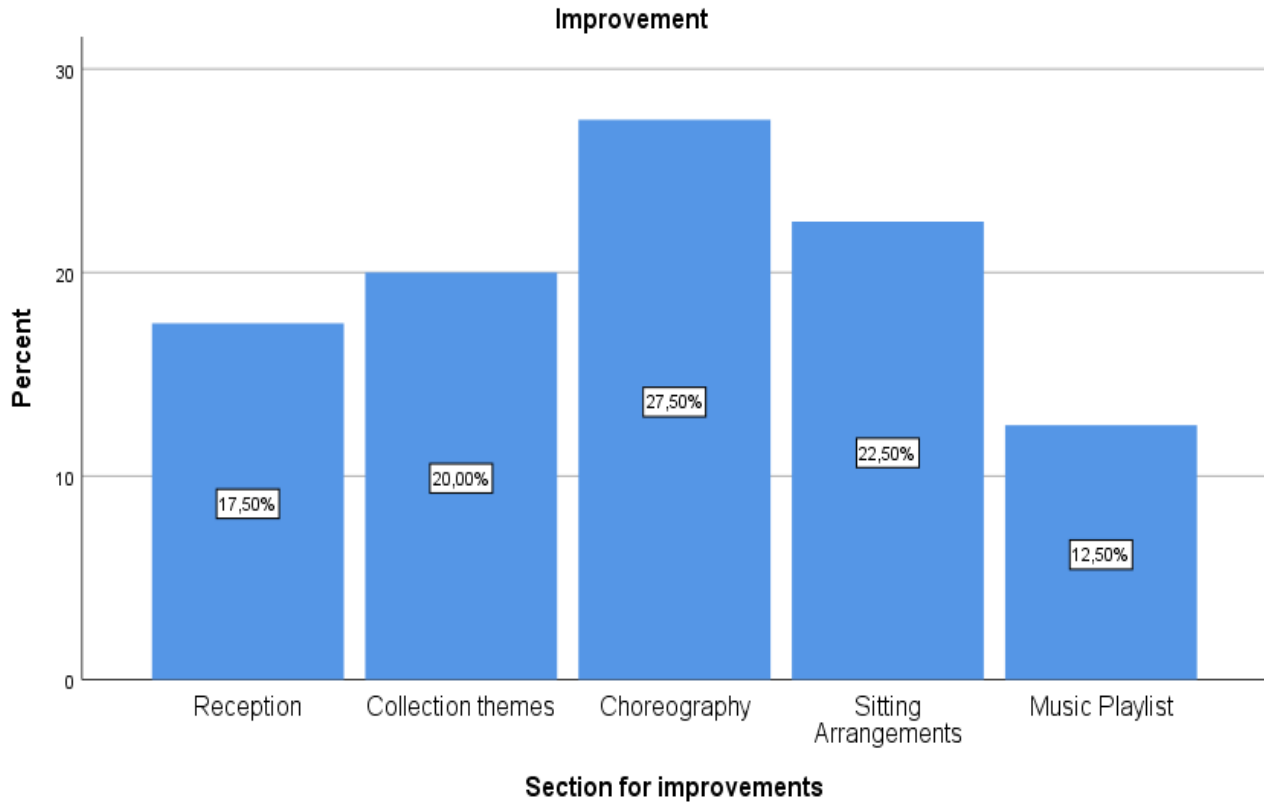


FIGURE 6. Improvement

The sixth question investigates the elements of the fashion show production which need further improvement. Five choices were given as 'Reception', 'Collection themes', 'Choreography', 'Sitting arrangements' and 'Music playlist'. As we can see in the bar chart all given choices need some improvement. But the major number of respondents chose the option 'Choreography', to be taken into foremost priority and consideration for improvements with 27.50% of the respondents who chose this option. The next option, 'Sitting arrangements' has the second highest number of spectators with 22.50% looking for improvement. The other option, 'Collection themes' has the third highest number of spectators with 20% looking for improvement. For the fourth option, there were 17.50% of the participants looking for improvement in the choice 'Reception'. And finally, with the minimum number of respondents looking for improvement in the category 'Music playlist' is given as 12.50%, where we clearly understand that the music playlist is one of the least categories that needs more room for improvement and has been appreciated by more than 87% of the participants in total. We might conclude that the music playlist complemented the products displayed on the runway and matched the theme of the collections. The choreography is the major element which needs improvement. In fact, the choreography consisted of a simple linear catwalk which enabled amateur models to easily memorize the runway walk or routine.

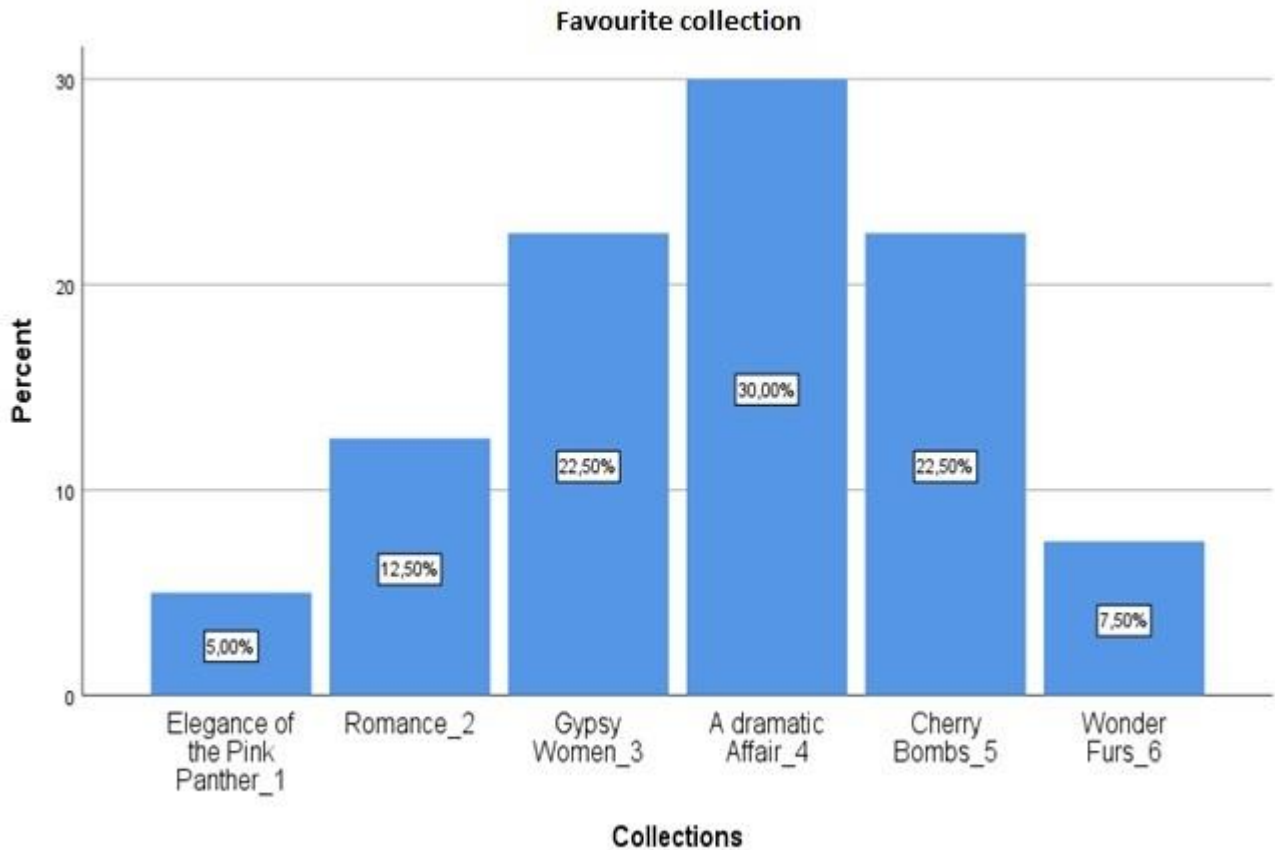


FIGURE 7. Favorite collection

The seventh question of the questionnaire was specifically about the fashion collections that were presented during the show. Collections were presented into separate scenes, each collection had an appropriate music, fashion style, and theme. Out of six collections, the participants had to designate their favorite collection. Choices were given as ‘Elegance of the pink panther_1’, ‘Romance_2’, ‘Gypsy women_3’, ‘A dramatic Affair_4’, ‘Cherry bombs_5’ and finally ‘WonderFurs_6’. Figure 7 reveals that ‘A dramatic Affair_4’ was the most popular collection, 30% of the respondents selected this collection as their favorite one. Followed by 22.50% of the spectators who preferred the collections ‘Gypsy women_3’. Again, 22.50% of the participants favored ‘Cherry bombs_5’. The collection ‘Romance_2’ came on the third place with 12.50% of the participants who voted for this collection. Followed by 7.50% of the spectators whose favorite collection was ‘WonderFurs_6’. Lastly, the minimum percentage given was for ‘Elegance of the pink panther_1’, only 5% of the respondents preferred the first collection.

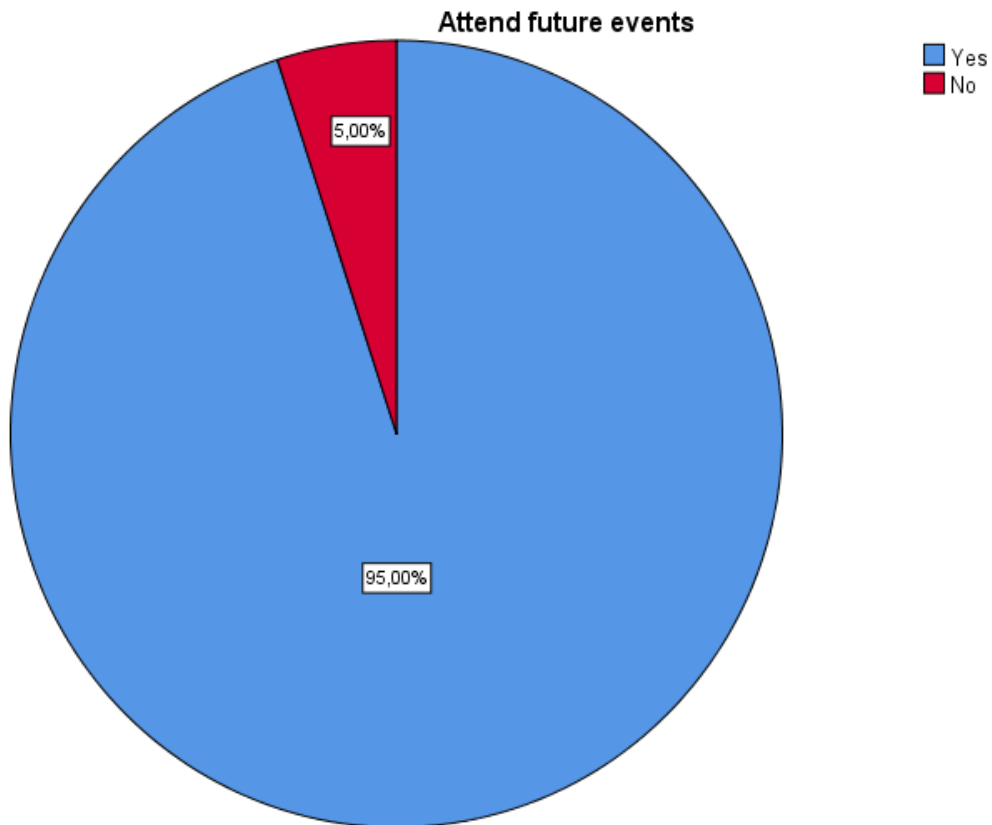


FIGURE 8. Attend future events

The eighth question was related to whether the participants would like to attend a similar event in the future based on their experience with this fashion show production. In the survey, this question was only inclusive of two choices, the options were given as 'Yes' and 'No'. We can clearly see on the following pie chart that there is a whooping increment in the choice given as 'Yes', where 95% of the total number of the respondents would like to attend a fashion show in the future. Whereas sadly, only 5% of the audiences had chosen 'No', as an answer and do not want to attend a similar event. The number of respondents wanting to attend a fashion show in the future is much higher than the percentage of people who do not want to.

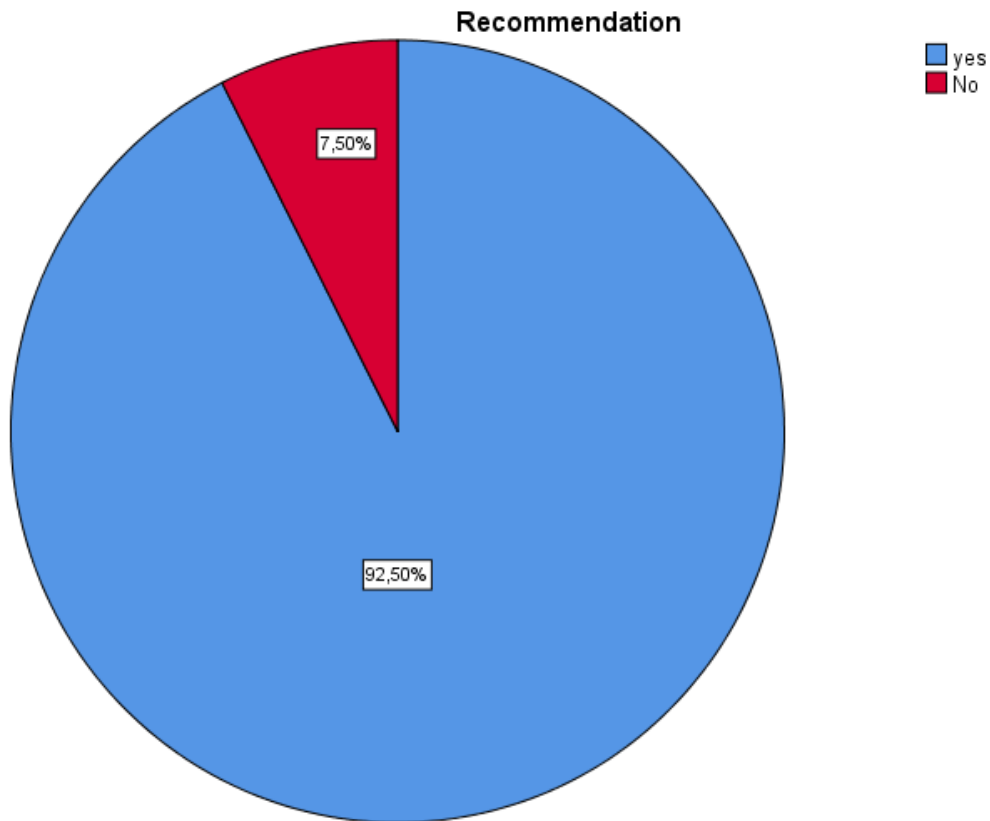


FIGURE 9. Recommendation

This particular question is about whether the audience who was present for the fashion show would recommend this event to their surrounding. The question only had two options given to choose from which were given as as 'Yes' and 'No'. The above given pie chart indicates that more than 92.50% of the respondents chose the options 'Yes' and were willing to recommend this kind of fashion show or event to others. Whereas only 7.50% chose the second option 'No' and would not recommend this event to their friends. Data reveals that the large majority of respondents would recommend the event to other people.

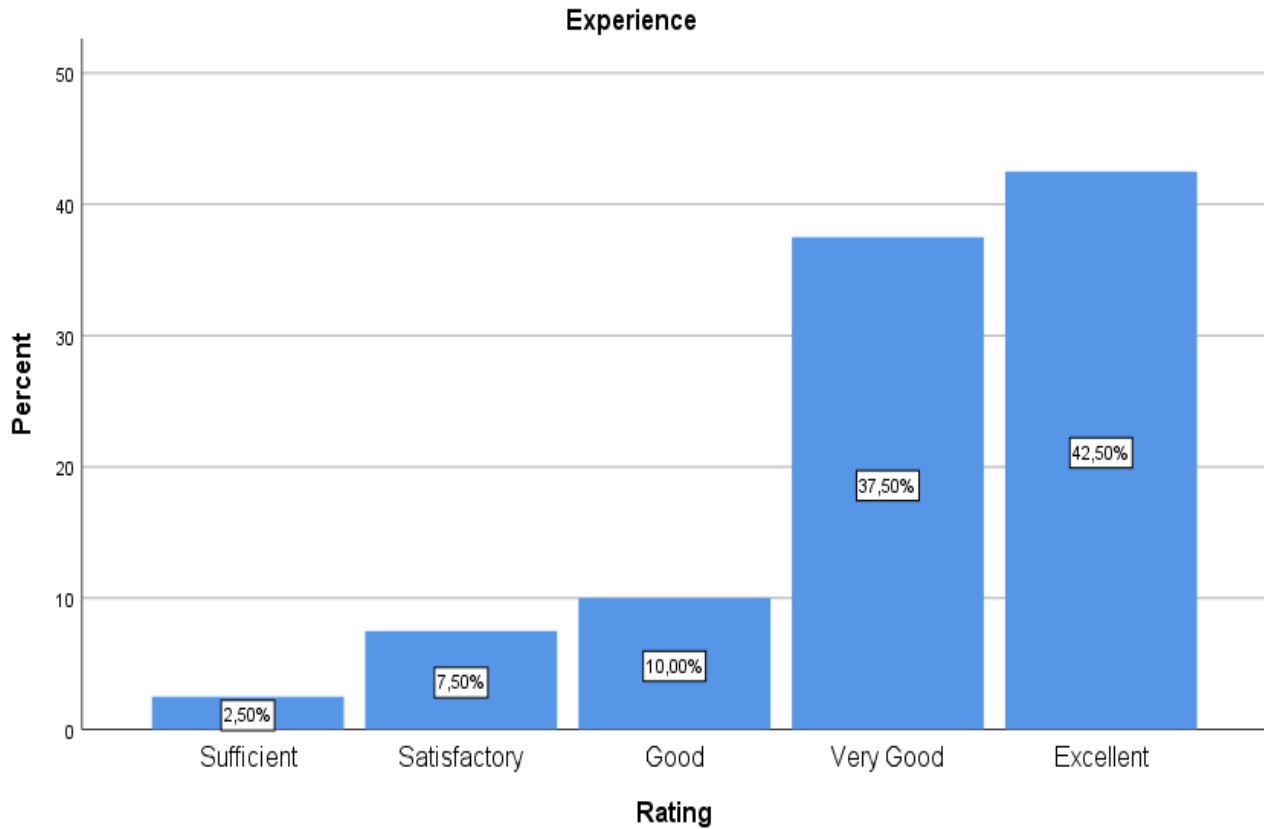


FIGURE 10. Experience

The tenth question of the questionnaire rates the audience overall experience as per their observations, impressions and reactions throughout the event. The respondents were given five grading scales to choose from, given as 'Sufficient', 'Satisfactory', 'Good', 'Very Good' and finally 'Excellent'. The highest percentage of respondents graded the fashion show as being 'Excellent' and it was 42.50% of the participants. The second highest percentage of respondents selected the option 'Very Good' and it was 37.50% of the participants. The third highest percentage of spectators chose the option 'Good' and it was only 10% of the participants. The option 'Satisfactory' was chosen by 7.50% of the participants. Finally, 2.50% chose the option 'Sufficient' and it was only a small percentage compared to the results in other options. Figure 10 clearly displays that the greater part of respondents rated the overall fashion show experience as 'Excellent' and 'Very Good'.

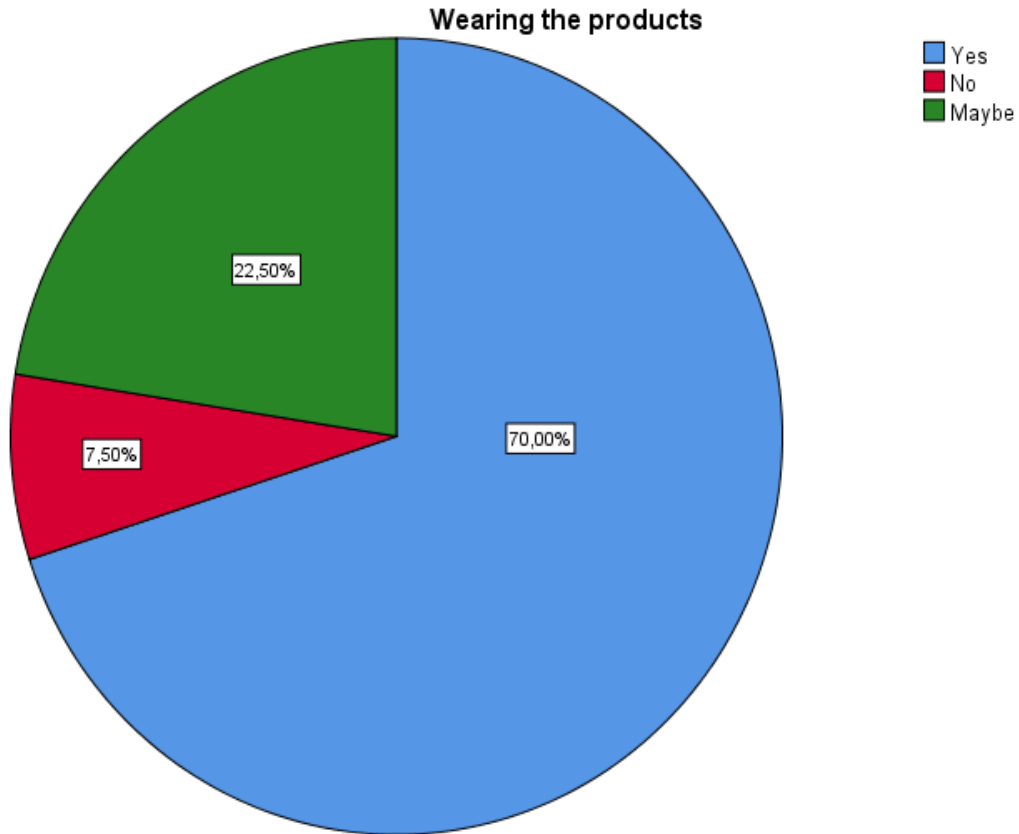


FIGURE 11. Wearing the products

In the eleventh question of the survey, the audience was asked if they would like to wear fur and leather products after attending the show and seeing fur, leather garments and accessories displayed on the runway. The question was inclusive of three simple options to choose from which were given as 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe'. As from the above given pie chart, we clearly see that 70% of the respondents gave a positive response by choosing the option 'Yes'. On the other hand, 7,50% of the participants responded by choosing the option 'No', suggesting that they are not comfortable or not willing to wear fur and leather garments. Finally, 22.50% of the audience responded by choosing the option 'Maybe', which means that they are not so sure whether they would like to wear and include leather and fur products in their fashion style. Most participants were induced to wear fur and leather products after seeing a fashion show which exclusively promotes fur and leather fashion trends.

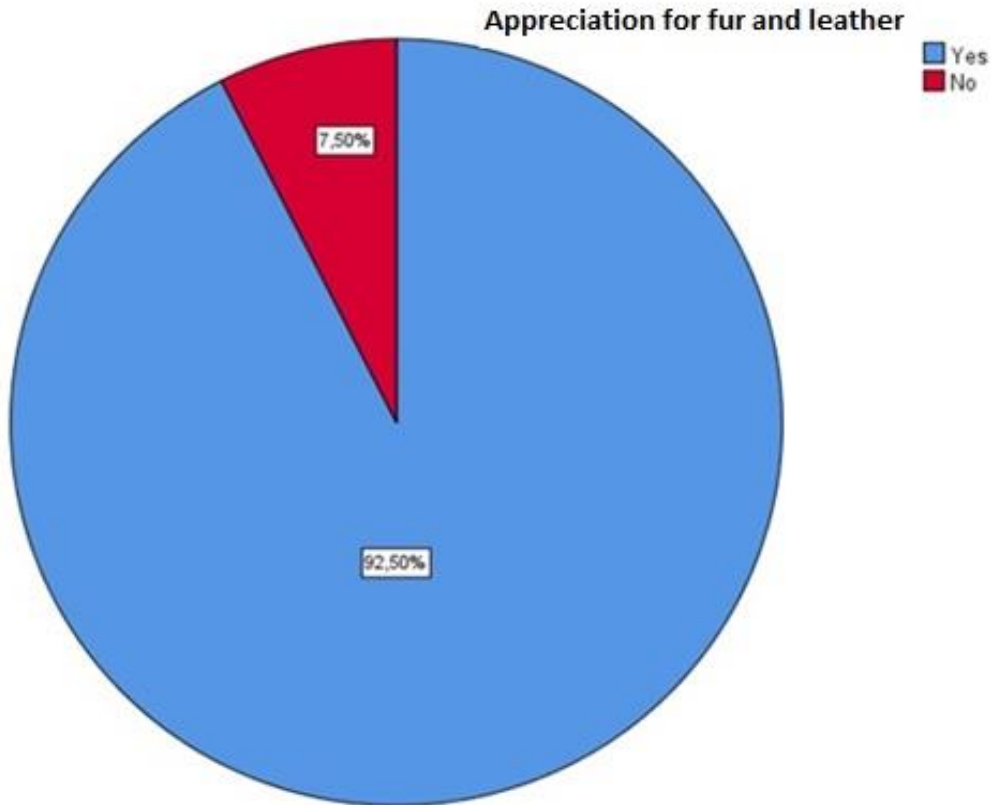


FIGURE 12. Appreciation for fur and leather

In the twelfth question of the survey, the spectators were asked if they liked real fur and leather products or in other words, if they were encouraged or influenced to purchase real fur and leather garments after viewing a large selection of fur, leather fashion looks. Two simple options were given to choose from, given as 'Yes' and 'No'. The pie chart highlights that more than 92.50% of the respondents liked to incorporate real leather and fur products in their style and were actually influenced by the merchandise displayed as they chose the first option 'Yes'. Whereas more than 7.50% of the respondents selected the second option 'No', which suggests that they do not like or appreciate the use of real fur and leather products in fashion. Overall respondents liked and appreciated to wear fur and leather products.

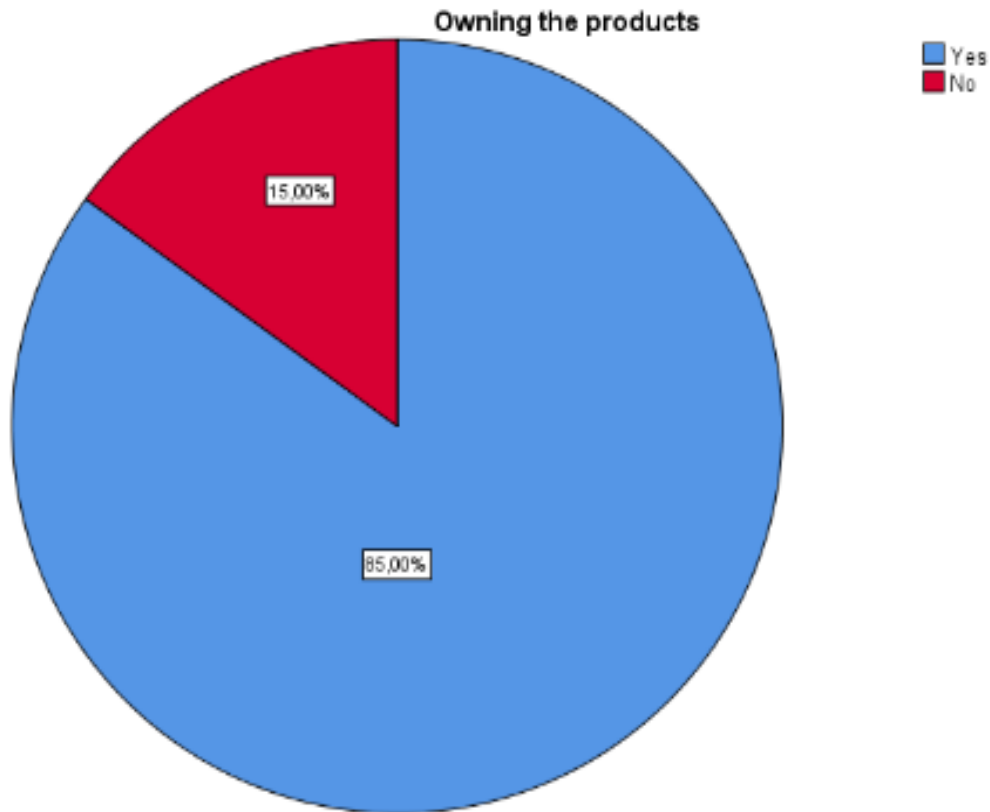


FIGURE 13. Owning the products

The thirteenth question of the questionnaire researches whether respondents had previously purchased or owned real fur and leather products. Participants were only given two simple and basic options to choose from, given as 'Yes' and 'No'. In the pie chart, we can observe and understand that 85% of the participants had already purchased or owned leather and fur garments and accessories. On the other hand, 15% of the participant did not own or wore real fur and leather products. The percentage of respondents who buy and wear real fur, leather products is much higher than the ones who do not own this type of products.

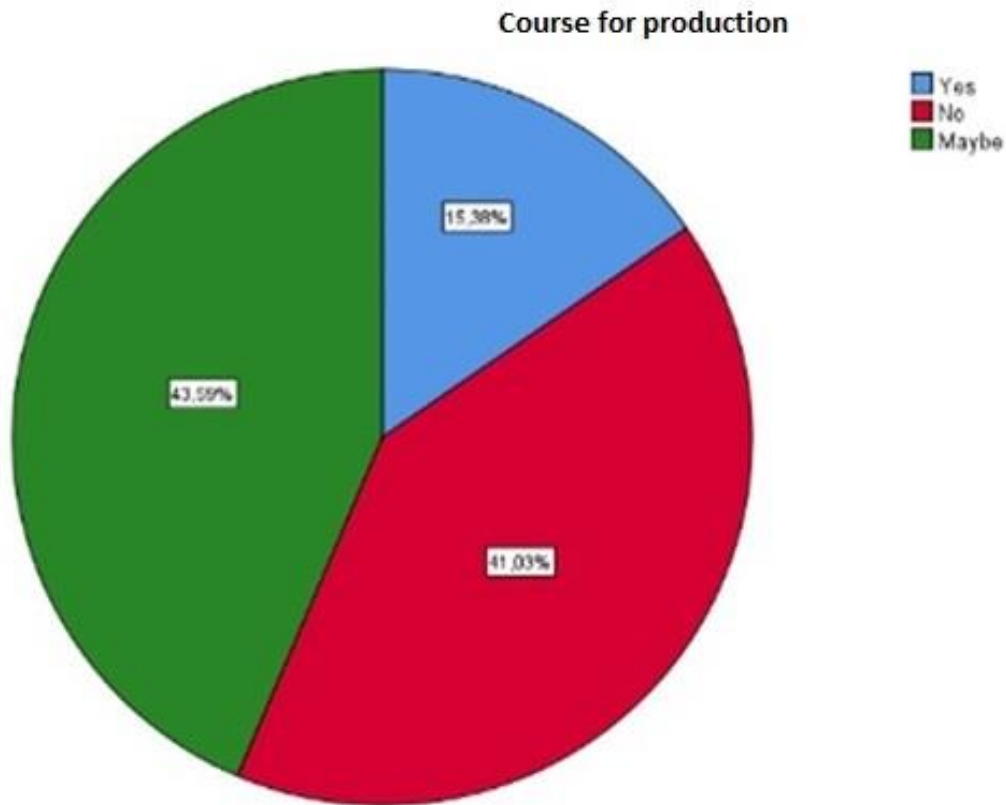


FIGURE 14. Course for production

The fourteenth question was related to whether the participants would be interested in joining a creative weekend course to learn how to create small leather and fur products such as accessories. The question was inclusive of three simple options to choose from which were given as 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe'. As from the above given pie chart, we clearly see that more than 15.38% of the respondents chose the option 'Yes', and would be interested and willing to take part in a fur fashion design weekend course. On the other hand, more than 41.03% of the respondents selected the option 'No', indicating that they did not wish to participate in a fur fashion design course. Whereas more than 43.59% of the participants responded with the option 'Maybe', where they have shown the interest to acquire the course but are confused and uncertain whether they can attend. Overall respondents selected the options 'Maybe' and 'No', perhaps because most of the attendees came from different parts of Finland and stayed in Jakobstad just for a weekend visit or it might also be due to a lack of time or interest in fur fashion production.

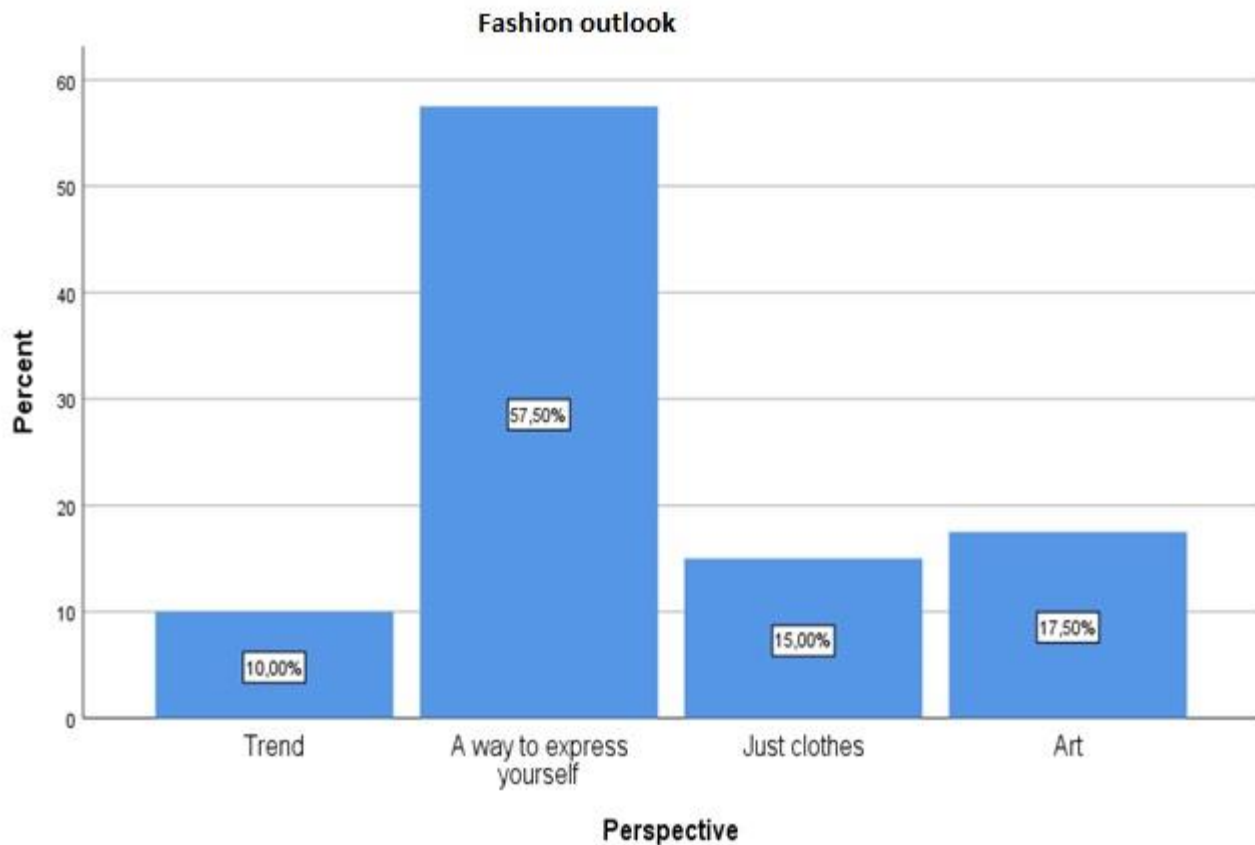


FIGURE 15. Fashion outlook

The fifteenth question that was included in the questionnaire was for respondents to choose, what fashion meant to them or what were their perspective or outlook toward fashion. In total, four alternatives were given to choose from, presented as 'Trend', 'A way to express yourself', 'Just clothes' and finally, 'Art'. As per the outcome from the thoroughly analyzed data from the bar chart, we can easily understand that only 10% of the respondents comprehend fashion as a 'Trend'. Surprisingly, more than 57,50% of the participants identified and perceived fashion as 'A way to express yourself'. Sadly, 15% of the spectators consider fashion as 'Just clothes' and finally, more than 17,50% of the individuals understand and embrace fashion as a form of 'Art'. Figure 15 reveals that a greater number of respondents considered fashion as a form of self-expression.

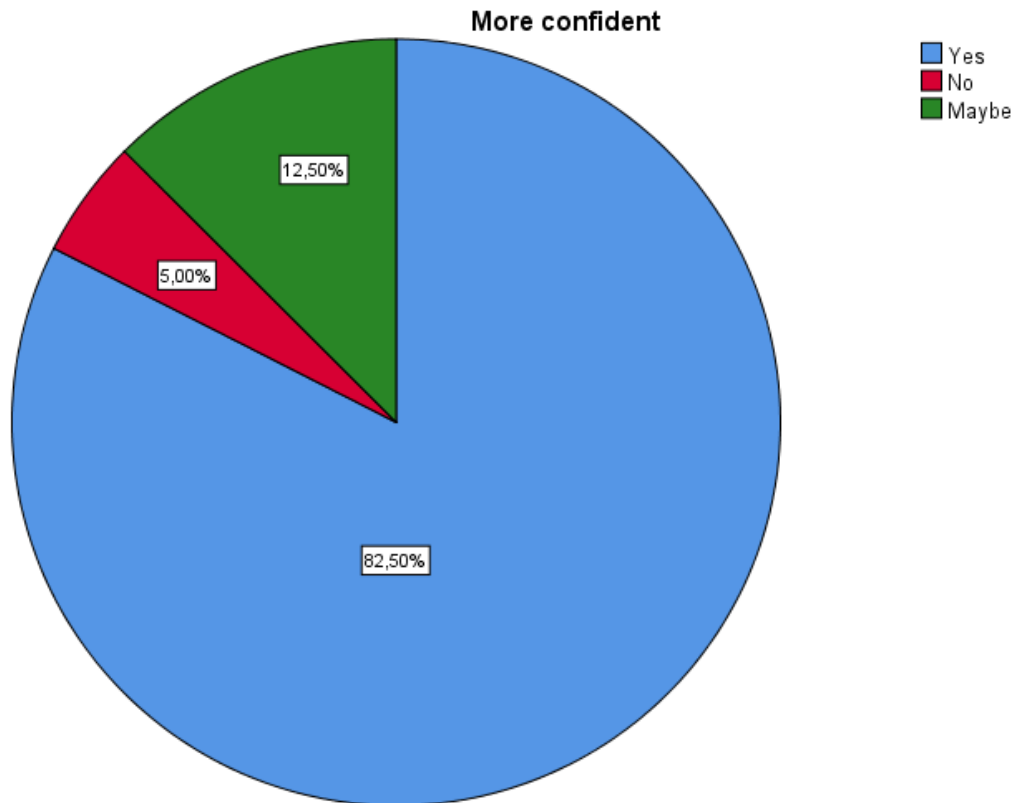


FIGURE 16. More confident

The sixteenth question of the survey investigated whether fashion choices could positively impact the respondent's attitude and behavior while researching if participants experienced a boost in self-confidence when wearing a nice outfit or piece of clothing. The question was inclusive of three simple options to choose from which were given as 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe'. As from the above shown pie chart, we can clearly observe that more than 82.50% of the respondents selected the option 'Yes', which reveals that these people experience an increase in their confidence level when wearing a nice outfit or piece of clothing. On the other hand, 5% of the participants responded by choosing the option 'No', suggesting that they do not feel more confident or self-assured when wearing a nice garment. Whereas more than 12.50% of the respondents selected the option 'Maybe', which indicates that they are not sure whether fashion has an ensuing effect on their level of confidence. In regards to Figure 16, we can draw the conclusion that the vast majority of participants felt more assertive and confident when wearing a nice set of clothes.

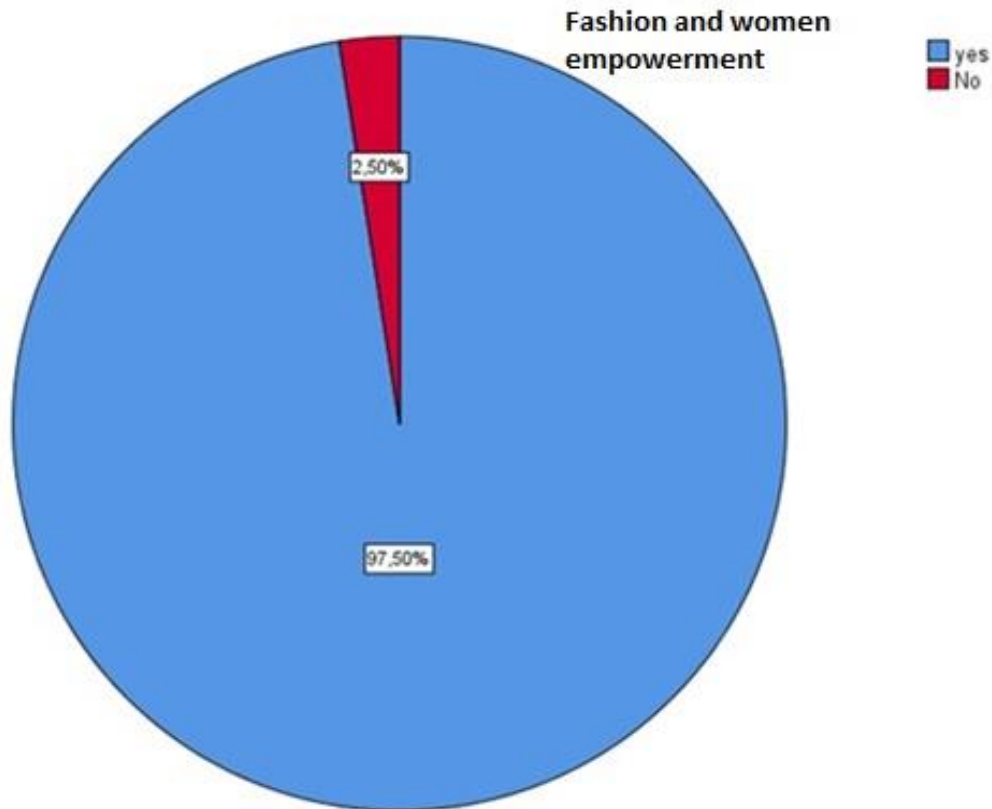


FIGURE 17. Fashion and women empowerment

The seventeenth question given in the survey inquired whether fashion provides a feeling of empowerment and can be used as a tool of advancement for women empowerment, from the respondents experience and point of view. Two simple and basic options were given as 'Yes' and 'No'. Figure 17 reveals that 97.50% of the respondents believed that clothes and fashion can actually empower women. On the other hand, a small percentage of participants, only 2,50% did not think of fashion as a tool or form of empowerment and did not believe that clothes can empower women in anyway. The findings highlight that almost all respondents believed and affirmed that fashion can provide a feeling of empowerment and can be used as a tool of advancement for women empowerment.

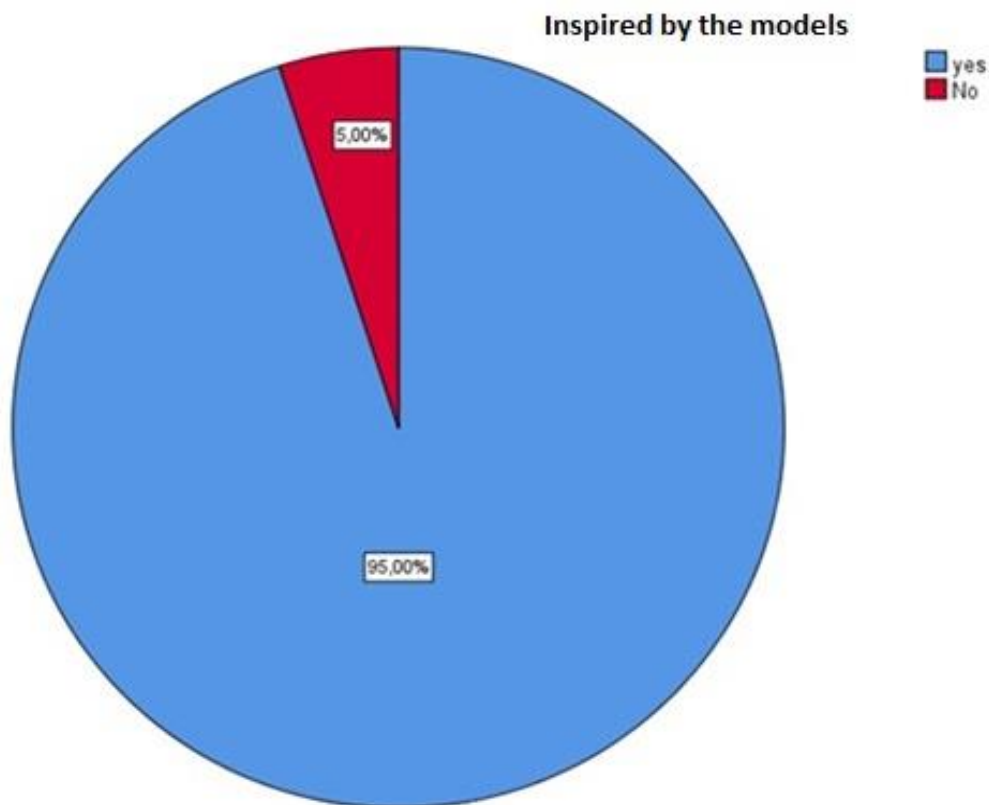


FIGURE 18. Inspired by the models

The eighteenth question of the survey was given with two options to choose from, whether the respondents who attended the event were inspired by the models of the fashion show or not. The two choices were very basic and simple, given as 'Yes' or 'No'. The above shown pie chart, clearly displays that 95% of the participants selected the option 'Yes' and were inspired by the models and pleased to see everyday women instead of runway models. Whereas 5% of the participants selected the option 'No', which suggests that they did not find the models featured to be more inspirational than regular models. Data indicates that the large majority of respondents were excited and inspired to see regular young women taking up new roles on the runway whereas only a minority of participants did not find the models to be particularly inspiring.

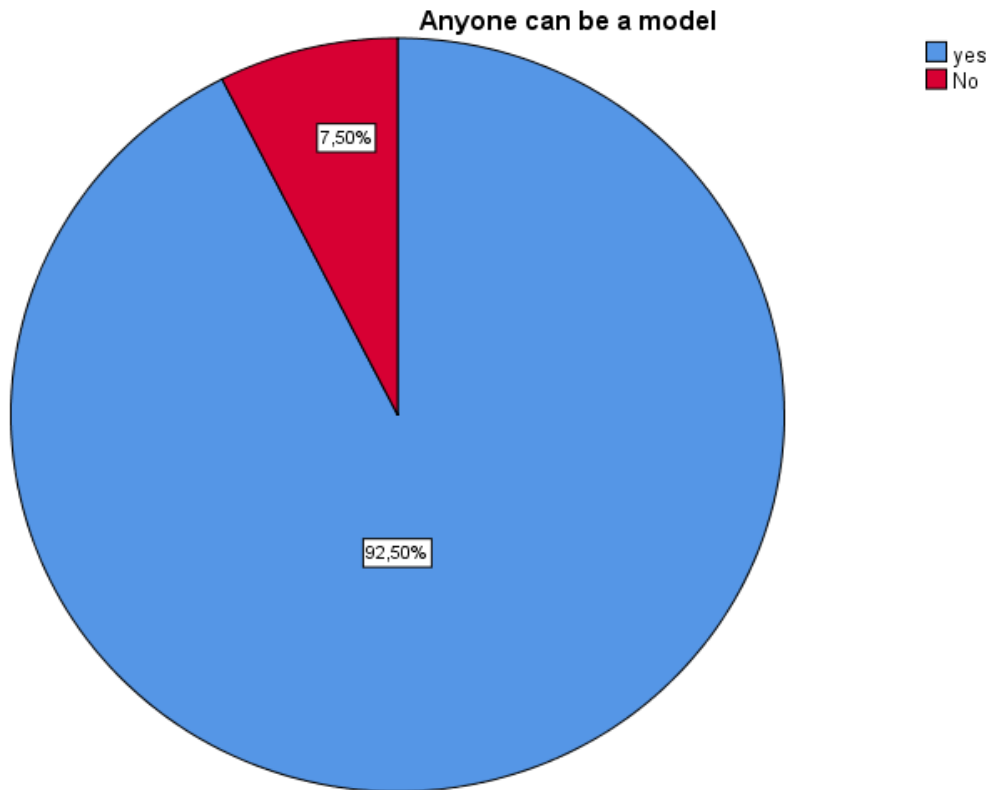


FIGURE 19. Anyone can be a model

The nineteenth question presented two options to choose from, the spectators were invited to share their opinion on whether anyone could be a model. Two simple options were given as 'Yes' and 'No'. According to the pie chart, 92,50% of the respondents selected the option 'Yes' meaning that overall participants believed that anyone can become a model and perform on the runway. Whereas, more than 7% of the respondents elected the second option 'No', which tell us that they did not think anyone can be or is capable of being a model. Data reveals that a higher percentage of participants think that anyone can take up the role of fashion models and still give a remarkable performance on the runway if provided with an opportunity.

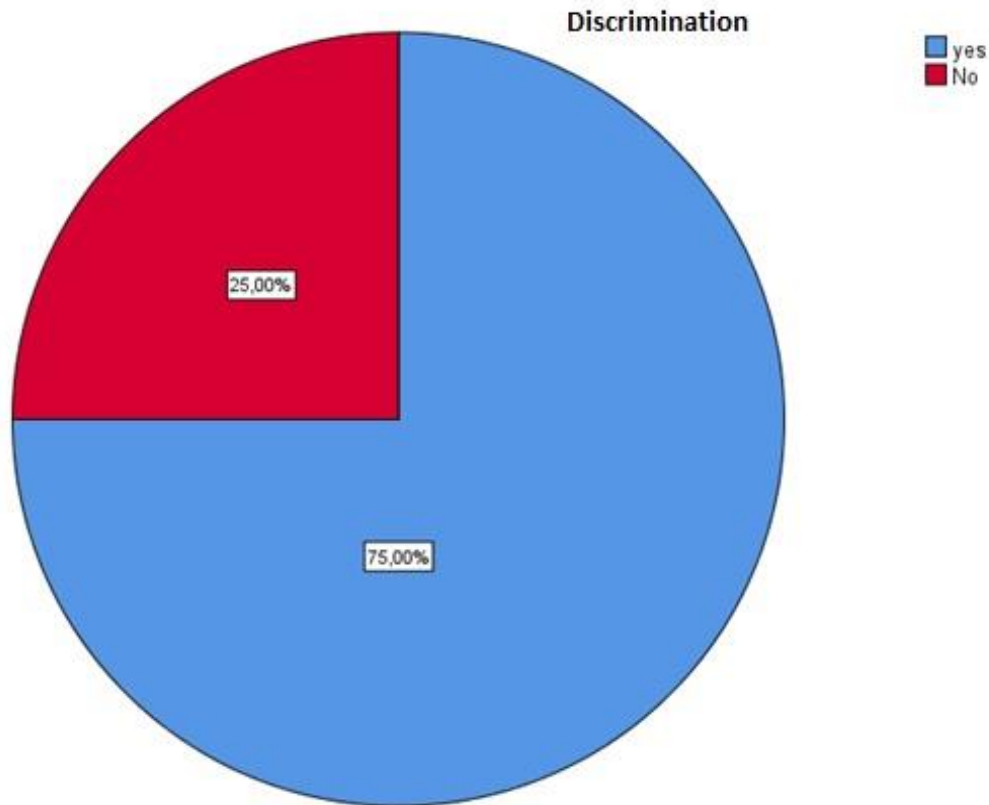


FIGURE 20. Discrimination

In the twentieth question of the survey, the participants were asked if they thought that women were being discriminated in the modelling world. Two options were given to choose from, whether 'Yes' or 'No'. In the above shown pie chart, it is totally clear and understandable that 75% of the participants presumed that women were being discriminated in the modelling world. Whereas 25% of the respondents did not think that the fashion world discriminated women in anyway. Findings tell us that a great number of respondents perceive the global modelling industry as being discriminatory to most women. In fact, the global fashion industry has been subject to lot of controversy in terms of beauty standards, racial and social discrimination. The lack of racial and body type representation in the global industry has been a major issue in recent years. The industry is trying to make amends by promoting body positivity, inclusion and diversity on the runway. In recent years, the fashion industry has seen a rise in ethnic and body type representations. However, the global industry still needs to work towards progress in order to change the overall negative perception that people have about the fashion and modelling industry.

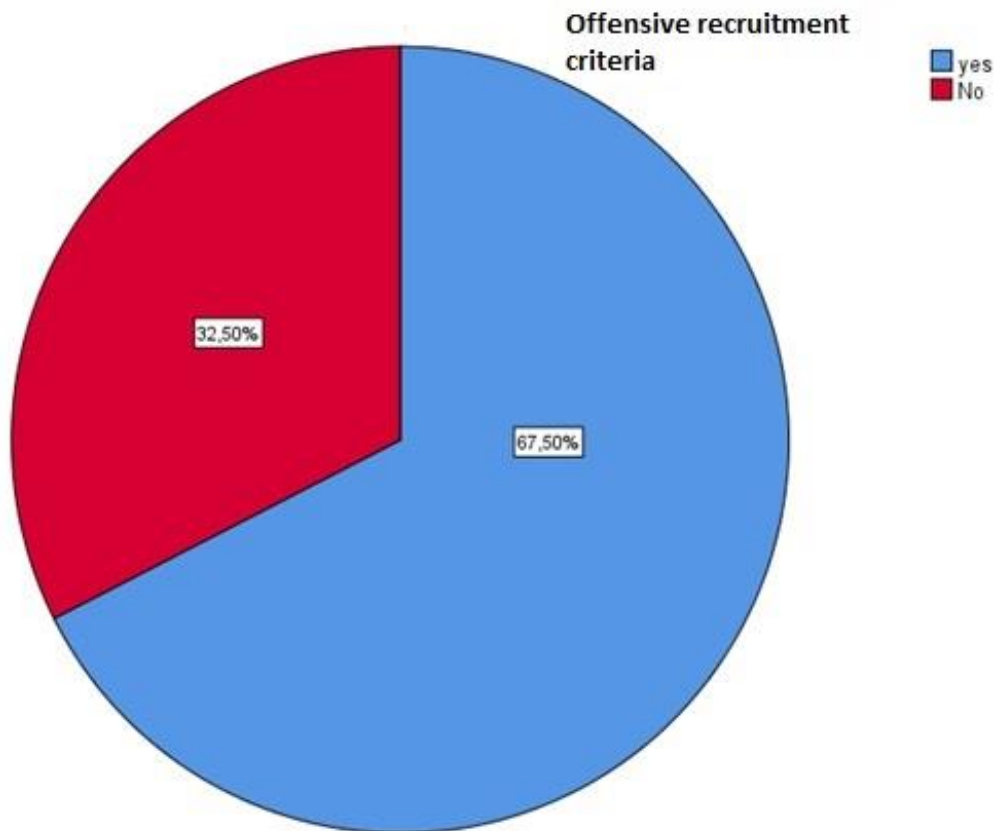


FIGURE 21. Offensive recruitment criteria

The twenty-first and last question of the survey was related to whether model recruitment agencies criteria are offensive to women. The respondents had two choices or options to choose from, given as 'Yes' and 'No'. We can clearly see on the following pie chart that 67.50% of the respondents thought and considered that model recruitment agencies criteria were disrespectful or offensive to women by choosing the first option 'Yes'. Whereas more than 32.50% of the participants, did not believe that modelling agencies criteria were offensive to women by selecting the option 'No'. Findings revealed that a higher percentage of respondents believed that the requirements or criteria to become a model are offensive towards women. For decades, modelling agencies were highly selective and exclusive in terms of model casting, the industry still needs to work towards progress to change the overall perception people have about the modelling industry.

8.3 Findings of the quantitative research

Findings revealed that from the people who responded the audience survey, 95% were female and only 3% were male participants. Figure 1 indicates that the large majority of attendants were female members from the worldwide organization of SI Finland and the minority were male attendees who took part in the fashion show production as part of the show personnel. The research group comprised thirty-nine people aged 14 to 50 or above. However, 75% of the participants were women above 50 years old as indicated in Figure 2. Accordingly, we might conclude that female participants above 50 may have free time, resources and financial assets to attend entertainments and leisure activities. Moreover, people over 50 are insightful and can provide relevant feedbacks filled with wisdom. Regarding the demographic status stated in Figure 3, half of the participants were employed, 12% were self-employed, only 2% were students and 35% selected others.

More than 70% of the spectators who participated in the event, had already participated in similar kind of fashion events before which demonstrates that fashion shows are a popular form of entertainment and major form of promotion. Most of the participants already had an overall idea and knowledge about these kinds of events, enabling the respondents to suitably compare the fashion show production with their previous experiences. Thirty-nine respondents provided relevant feedbacks to assess the overall event experience, most specifically focusing on the highlight of the show, further improvements, favorite collection, future attendance, recommendation, and overall rating of the event.

According to the audience survey data results the highlight of the fashion show was the collections displayed on the runway. Six collections were presented to display the versatility and beauty of fur and leather fashion while promoting the Ostrobothnian fur quality industry. All collections were carefully planned, selected, and organized in terms of style, design, color, techniques, and innovation to present fresh ideas and original looks on the runway. Moreover, each collection had its own theme and song which complimented the garments and communicated the fashion style. We can presume that the variation and particularity of the collections played an essential role for the success of the fashion show event. The favorite collection out of six was 'A dramatic affair_4' which was one of the longest collections with a total of seven outfits presented on the runway. The looks for this collection brought all the attractive potential of leather fashion to the force. Some outfits had a particular sculptural dimension and futuristic designs which showcased the creative work and talent of fashion design students.

When evaluating the elements of the fashion show production, we realize that all the components need room for further development including reception, collection themes, choreography, seating arrangement, and music playlist. In this case, the choreography needs to be taken into foremost priority and consideration for future improvements. In fact, the catwalk choreography consisted of a simple linear catwalk to enable amateur models to memorize the runway routine easily. The catwalk choreography was designed according to the venue layout and runway configuration involving the distance between the dressing room and the central stage. Even though the event was planned, prepared and displayed at its best, there is always room for constructive feedbacks which help to develop and improve the overall fashion show production and provide a greater public experience in future events. Overall, a great number of respondents rated the experience of the event as being very good, and even excellent. The vast majority of the respondents shared that they would recommend similar events to their surrounding and that they would surely like to attend more of these events in the future.

Fashion shows are major form of promotion in the fashion industry. Designers use this popular form of event to communicate new trends, share information and fashion styles. The objective of the research was to evidence whether the audience would be encouraged to adopt fur, leather trends. More than 90% of the participants reported that the variety of fashion looks and styles displayed on the catwalk had engaged their interest in fur, leather fashion and that they were positively influenced by the fur and leather items displayed. We can deduce that most of the participants were induced to wear fur and leather products after seeing a fashion show which exclusively promoted fur and leather fashion trends. Most of the participants liked and already owned fur and leather products, making of them ideal target customers. According to the demographic data results, employed women ages above 50 years are the ideal target market for fur and leather products. After viewing the looks presented, 92% of the respondents felt a desire for purchasing and incorporating leather and fur items in their everyday style. Most of the respondents, exactly 85%, actually possessed their own fur and leather products so it appears that the merchandise displayed on the runway was adequate and suitable for the target audience.

Next, the participants were invited to share their opinion and perspective towards fashion and the fashion industry. First, the participants were requested to share their outlook towards fashion. Surprisingly, 57% of the participants identified and perceived fashion as “A way to express yourself”. In fact, fashion is a powerful and creative form of self-expression which can be used to communicate one’s identity and

individuality. According to the findings, 82% of the respondents experience an increase in their confidence level when wearing a nice outfit or piece of clothing. Accordingly, the participants were asked if they thought that clothes and fashion could empower women and serve as a tool for women empowerment. Findings highlight that 97.50% of the respondents believed and affirmed that fashion can provide a feeling of empowerment and can be used as a tool of advancement for women empowerment.

Moreover, the audience was inspired by the models of the fashion show who displayed vibrant and glamorous clothes. The objective of the fashion show production was to feature everyday young women in lieu of traditional runway models to display a more diverse representation of women and promote inclusion on the runway. Young women were empowered through fashion and given an opportunity to assume the role of runway model while engaging in a fun and recreational modelling activity. Data indicates that 95% of the respondents were excited and inspired to see regular young women taking up new roles on the runway. As per their perspective, 92% of the respondents believe that anyone can be a model if provided with an opportunity.

Runway models do not always need to have previous experience or fit the traditional runway model profile. In fact, 75% of the participants presumed that women were being discriminated in the modelling world. Moreover, 67.50% of the respondents thought and considered that model recruitment agencies criteria were disrespectful and offensive to women. Aspiring models often need to suit a specific profile which involves strict body measurements and height. Women who do not fit those requirements or profile are systematically excluded, which is why many people find that model recruitment agencies criteria are offensive to most women. In fact, the global modelling industry has been subject to a lot of controversy in terms of beauty standards, racial and social discrimination. The modelling world is still acting towards progress making it possible for women of diverse ages, ethnicities, abilities and body types to be included in the modelling world.

9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the conclusion chapter is to reflect what was done and found, how the study contributes to the industry, academia, and reviewed literature. The results of the research are linked to the theoretical framework to discuss findings in relation to the literature review. The primary aim of the thesis was to observe how the fashion industry has presently evolved in order to reflect society and embrace social advancements. The main objective of the research was to find out how fashion and fashion shows can act as a tool for women empowerment and change. SI Jakobstad provided me with an opportunity to take part in an independent practice-based work project. The practice-based project focused on the production of a fashion show event with an insight on women empowerment.

When conducting the theoretical study, the origins, evolution, and prospects of the fashion industry were investigated in order to acquire a key understanding of its principles and practices. The theoretical framework enabled me to gain knowledge and gather fundamental information about the fashion industry while understanding its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Accordingly, a successful event was planned, organized, and coordinated in order to meet the aim and objectives of the research. The purpose of the fashion show production was to empower young women through fashion and encourage them to take up new roles.

My first intention was to break away from the aesthetic norms set by the fashion industry and challenge the existing conventions by replacing traditional runway models by everyday young women aiming to offer a more realistic and diverse representation of female consumers. According to the findings, audiences were excited and inspired to see regular young women taking up new roles on the runway. My second intention was to investigate how fashion can be used as a tool of advancement for women empowerment. The research confirmed the existing hypothesis on what previous authors have found in regards to fashion and its relation to empowerment. Young women were encouraged to use fashion as a powerful form of self-expression and select garments which made them feel confident and powerful. Finally, my third intention was to encourage young women and girls to take up new role and make their dreams come true. Ordinary young women were given an opportunity to engage in a fun recreational modelling activity, acquire valuable experience, interact, and connect with women from diverse cultures, ages, and backgrounds. The research in this matter helped to solve the research problem which was: How to empower women through a fashion show production?

The aim of the quantitative research method was to assess the elements of the fashion show production, measure the event success, inquire whether participants' purchasing behavior was influenced by the merchandise displayed on the runway and find out what the respondents' perspectives towards fashion and the fashion industry practices are. From the case study and analysis of the survey results, I can conclude that overall the respondents had a memorable experience and appreciated the fashion show event. After viewing the looks presented, most of the respondents felt a desire for purchasing and incorporating leather and fur items in their everyday style which confirms the first hypothesis of the research. The first hypothesis examined whether fashion shows are an effective form of promotion and communication that can influence consumer's purchasing behavior and encourage them to adopt new fashion trends, in this case, fur and leather garments. According to the demographic data results, employed women ages above 50 years are the ideal target market for fur and leather products.

The second hypothesis verified whether fashion can really provide a feeling of empowerment to support the study of the theoretical framework. Data indicated that participants in the survey experienced a feeling of empowerment when wearing a nice outfit or piece of clothing which confirms the overall theory presented in literature reviews and previous researches suggesting that fashion can have an ensuing effect on people's feeling, emotions, attitude, behavior and therefore can be used as a tool of advancement for women empowerment. Finally, the third hypothesis addressed the unethical practices of the fashion industry to find out the respondents' perspectives towards fashion models and modelling. The results highlighted that a considerable number of respondents perceived the global modelling industry as being discriminatory and believed that the requirements or criteria to become a model are offensive towards women. The findings complement previous studies and confirm existing hypothesis on what precedent authors have found in perspective to fashion as form of empowerment and the fashion industry unethical practices and need for change. The results met my expectations and confirmed the hypothesis of the research.

The aims and objectives of the thesis were successfully achieved in terms of theoretical research, practical implementation and research evaluation. The research methodology used was effective in answering the research questions. Data results provided evidence on the audience reactions and opinions. Accordingly, the event evaluation measured the success of the fashion show production and provided constructive feedbacks for further developments and implementation. Overall, it was a very good experience, I implemented what was learned in the theoretical study and applied the knowledge acquired in a practical implementation which met the SI Finland Club satisfaction but most importantly which contributed to the cause of the worldwide organization and reflected the recent advancement of the fashion

industry by celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusivity. “Celebrating real women on the catwalk” was a fashion show event which included all women regardless of their age, body size, ethnicity, occupation, or modelling experience.

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FASHION SHOW PRODUCTION FOR SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL FINLAND, A WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ORGANIZATION

Celebrating real women on the catwalk_ Questionnaire

1. Your gender

- Male Female

2. Your age

- 14 to 18 19 to 29
 30 to 49 50 or plus

3. Current status

- Student Employed
 Unemployed Self-employed
 Other

4. Have you ever attended a fashion show before?

- Yes No

5. What was the highlight of this fashion show? What did you like the most?

- Speech Collections
 Venue Outfits
 Music Models
 Others

6. What could be improve?

- Reception
- Collection Themes
- Presenter
- Sitting Arrangement
- Choreography
- Music Playlist
- Others

7. Which was your favorite collection?

- Pink Panther
- Romance
- Devil Tango
- A Dramatic Affaire
- WonderFurs
- None

8. Would you like to attend a similar event in the future?

- Yes
- No

9. Would you recommend this event to your friend?

- Yes
- No

10. How would you rate your overall experience?

- Sufficient
- Satisfactory
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

11. After attending a fur and leather garment runaway, do you feel like wearing fur and leather clothe?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

12. Do you like real fur and leather products?

- Yes
- No

13. Do you have real fur and leather clothes?

- Yes
- No

14. Would you be interested in joining a weekend course in order to learn how to create small leather and fur products?

- Yes No Maybe

15. What is fashion according to you?

- Trend A way to express yourself
 Just clothes Art

16. Do you feel more confident when you wear a nice outfit?

- Yes No Maybe

17. Do you think that clothes can empower women?

- Yes No

18. Did you felt inspired by the models of this fashion show?

- Yes No

19. Do you think that anyone can be a model?

- Yes No

20. In the modeling world, do you think that women are discriminated?

- Yes No

21. Are model recruitment agencies criteria offensive to women?

- Yes No

Thank you very much for your participation!

The Elegance of the Pink Panther_2:

6



Cajsa

Theresa

Orathai

Mehnaz

Jasmine

Cajsa

The Pink Panther Theme Song (Original Version): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OPc7MRm4Y8>

Romance_4:21

7



Emma
0:10

Theresa
0:50

Orathai
1:30

Johanna
2:10

Mehnaz
2:50

Theresa
3:30

Emma
4:10

Dimitri from Paris - Toujours l'amore: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9-Qz0Fix5A>

Gypsy Woman_ 3:46_



Cajsa



Orathai



Mehnaz



Ayesha



Jasmine

Crystal Waters - Gypsy Woman: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KztNlg4cvE

A Dramatic Affair_ 3:57



Cajsa
0:06



Jasmine
0:46



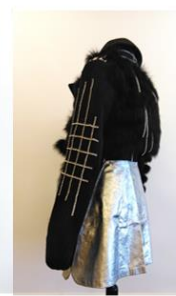
Orathai
1:26



Ayesha
2:06



Jasmine
2:46



Cajsa
3:26



Johanna
4:06/Song
end 3:57

Strangers – Portishead: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4TxEsRxltg>

Cherry Bombs_ 2:20_



Theresa

Mehnaz

Cajsa

Ayesha

Johanna

Cherry Bomb - Dakota Fanning (Lyrics):<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hn3e16Q00E>

WonderFurs_ 3:00



Cajsa

Ayesha

Jasmine

Emma

Orathai

Par-T-One vs INXS - I'm So Crazy (2001):<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7TsY2OZwTE>





CELEBRATING REAL WOMEN ON THE CATWALK