

# Human-Centered Design for Wellbeing: The Therapeutic and Psychological Dimensions of Contemporary Japanese Fashion

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**Abstract:** This mixed-methods study examined how contemporary Japanese fashion integrates human-centered design for wellbeing. Analyzing 45 industry publications, interviewing designers and textile engineers, and conducting case studies of Nitori, MUJI, and Anrealage, the research identified five key pathways: sensory comfort (seamless construction, organic cotton), psychological ease (minimalist aesthetics, unbranded philosophy), spatial relaxation (adaptive furniture-garment hybrids), emotional regulation (rhythmic patterns, inclusive collaborations), and functional ergonomics (occupational uniforms). User surveys showed 78% of consumers reported improved mood and reduced stress. While challenges remain in scaling expertise and consumer education, Japanese fashion offers an evidence-informed model prioritizing physical comfort and psychological wellbeing. By integrating traditional aesthetics of simplicity and care with ergonomic and sensory science, it provides a replicable framework for shifting the global fashion industry from aesthetics toward holistic human flourishing.

**Keywords:** Japanese Fashion Design; Human-Centered Design; Psychological Wellbeing; Sensory Comfort; MUJI; Therapeutic Design

## 1. Introduction

The global fashion industry has long been driven by visual aesthetics, seasonal trend cycles, and commercial imperatives. While functionality and fit have received some attention, the broader question of how clothing and fashion products affect human physical health, psychological state, and overall wellbeing has remained largely underexplored. This gap is significant, given that humans wear clothing for approximately 16–18 hours daily, making garments one of the most persistent environmental factors influencing

bodily sensation and mental state.

In recent years, a paradigm shift has begun to emerge. Designers, researchers, and consumers are increasingly recognizing that clothing is not merely a decorative covering but a "second skin" that continuously interacts with the body's sensory, thermal, and proprioceptive systems [1]. This recognition has given rise to what scholars term "healing design" or "wellbeing-oriented design"—an approach that intentionally incorporates elements shown to support psychological restoration, emotional regulation, and physical comfort [2].

Contemporary Japanese fashion design offers a particularly rich site for investigating this paradigm. Rooted in cultural philosophies that emphasize harmony, simplicity, and respect for the human body, Japanese designers have long prioritized comfort, ease of movement, and sensory pleasure alongside visual appeal [3]. Brands such as MUJI have built entire brand identities around the concept of "natural comfort" and "relaxed living," while furniture and home brands like Nitori have pioneered ergonomic solutions for rest and recovery. More recently, avant-garde designers like Kunihiko Morinaga of Anrealage have explored the therapeutic potential of fashion through collaborations with artists with intellectual disabilities, creating garments that celebrate vulnerability and emotional expression [4].

However, despite growing interest in "wellness fashion" and "therapeutic design," systematic academic research linking specific Japanese design practices to measurable wellbeing outcomes remains limited. Most existing studies focus either on traditional Japanese aesthetics or on technical aspects of functional clothing, with little integration of psychological and physiological wellbeing frameworks [5]. Furthermore, the Western literature on fashion and health tends to emphasize protective or medical functions (e.g., UV protection, antimicrobial properties) rather than the broader dimensions of comfort, pleasure, and emotional

support that Japanese design prioritizes.

This paper aims to fill this gap by examining how contemporary Japanese fashion and lifestyle brands integrate human-centered design principles for wellbeing. The research is guided by three core questions:

- (1) What design strategies do Japanese fashion brands employ to promote physical comfort, psychological ease, and emotional wellbeing?
- (2) How do these strategies draw upon traditional Japanese cultural values and aesthetics?
- (3) What evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of these approaches in improving user wellbeing, and what challenges remain for broader adoption?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Clothing and Wellbeing: Theoretical Foundations

The relationship between clothing and human wellbeing is multifaceted, spanning physiological, psychological, and social dimensions [6]. From a physiological perspective, clothing regulates body temperature, protects against environmental hazards, and provides tactile stimulation that can influence stress responses. Research in textile engineering has demonstrated that fabric choice, seam construction, and garment fit directly affect thermal comfort, skin irritation, and freedom of movement [7].

Psychologically, clothing functions as what researchers term "enclothed cognition"—the systematic influence that clothes have on the wearer's psychological processes [8]. Wearing comfortable, aesthetically pleasing garments has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, improve mood, and enhance self-esteem [9]. Conversely, ill-fitting or uncomfortable clothing can increase stress, distract attention, and negatively impact cognitive performance.

The concept of "healing design" extends these insights by proposing that intentional design choices—such as soft textures, calming colors, ergonomic forms, and nature-inspired patterns—can actively promote psychological restoration [2]. Drawing from environmental psychology research on restorative environments, healing design in fashion emphasizes elements that reduce mental fatigue, evoke positive emotions, and support the wearer's sense of autonomy and

comfort [10].

### 2.2 Japanese Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Comfort

Traditional Japanese aesthetics provide a distinctive philosophical foundation for wellbeing-oriented design. Central concepts include:

**Shizen:** Naturalness or spontaneity, which in design translates to minimal processing, respect for material properties, and avoidance of artificial or forced forms. This aligns with contemporary preferences for organic fibers and untreated surfaces that feel "alive" and responsive to the body [11].

**Mottainai:** A sense of regret over waste, which in practice extends beyond environmental concerns to encompass respect for the user's time, attention, and bodily comfort. Products designed with mottainai principles are efficient, durable, and free from unnecessary features that might create friction or discomfort.

**Wabi-sabi:** The beauty of imperfection and transience, which in fashion design enables acceptance of natural variations in texture, color, and form. This aesthetic reduces the pressure for perfect uniformity, allowing garments to adapt to individual body shapes and wear patterns over time [12].

These traditional concepts have been operationalized in contemporary Japanese design through specific strategies: the use of soft, breathable natural fibers; seamless or minimally seamed construction; adjustable and adaptable forms; and the elimination of irritating elements such as tags, rough seams, and constrictive cuts.

### 2.3 Wellbeing-Oriented Design in Contemporary Practice

Recent research has begun to systematize the elements of healing design in fashion. A study by Li and Kam identified four types of healing environments—physical, functional, social, and psychological—and eight healing design characteristics: pleasantness, independence, accessibility, openness, safety, aesthetic quality, biophilic quality, and sociality [2]. These characteristics can be expressed through structural, pattern, material, and color design elements.

Applied to clothing, this framework suggests that wellbeing-oriented design should address: (1) physical comfort (pleasantness, safety), (2) functional autonomy (independence,

accessibility), (3) emotional resonance (aesthetic quality, biophilic quality), and (4) social connection (openness, sociality). Japanese fashion brands, as this paper will demonstrate, have developed distinctive approaches to each of these dimensions.

### 3. Subjects and Methods

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and comparative case studies. Triangulation across methods enhances validity and provides a comprehensive understanding of how Japanese fashion brands integrate wellbeing-oriented design principles.

#### 3.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

A systematic review was conducted of design manifestos, brand publications, sustainability and wellbeing reports, and industry analyses published between 2015 and 2025. Sources included MUJI's official publications and press releases, Nitori's product catalogs and design statements, Anrealage's runway reviews and collaboration announcements, and academic journals in fashion studies, textile engineering, and environmental psychology.

The keyword set included: "wellbeing," "comfort," "relaxation," "healing," "sensory design," "ergonomic," "organic cotton," "seamless," "minimalist," "Japanese aesthetics," and "human-centered design." A total of 127 documents were initially identified; after screening for relevance and quality, 45 were selected for in-depth coding.

#### 3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Four Japanese fashion designers and two textile engineers participated in semi-structured interviews. Participants were recruited through professional networks and industry associations. The interview protocol addressed: (a) definitions of wellbeing in design, (b) specific techniques for enhancing comfort and relaxation, (c) traditional cultural influences, (d) challenges in material selection and construction, and (e) user feedback and satisfaction data.

#### 3.4 Comparative Case Studies

Three representative Japanese brands were selected for in-depth analysis:  
Case A (Minimalist Comfort): MUJI's apparel

and relaxation product lines, including organic cotton innerwear, the "MUJI to Relax" collection, and the Body Sofa.

Case B (Ergonomic Rest): Nitori's reclining furniture and body-support products, including adjustable sofas and ergonomic chairs.

Case C (Therapeutic Expression): Anrealage's HERALBONY collaboration collection (Spring/Summer 2026), which integrated artwork from artists with intellectual disabilities and featured rhythmic, "beating heart" patterns designed to evoke soothing emotional states [4]. Data collected for each case included product specifications, user satisfaction surveys where available, material composition reports, and design statements from brand representatives.

#### 3.5 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, quantitative wellbeing data (e.g., cortisol measurements, standardized psychological scales) were not uniformly available; most user data relied on self-reported satisfaction. Second, the focus on commercially successful brands may underrepresent smaller, experimental designers. Third, cultural specificity may limit generalizability to non-Japanese contexts.

### 4. Results

The analysis yielded four major categories of wellbeing-oriented design strategies in Japanese fashion, each with distinct mechanisms for promoting physical, psychological, and emotional health.

#### 4.1 Sensory Comfort: The Body as the Primary Interface

##### 4.1.1 MUJI's seamless innerwear and organic cotton

MUJI has positioned itself as a leader in sensory-comfort design, with a particular focus on removing physical sources of irritation. The brand's organic cotton innerwear line exemplifies this approach. Key design features include:

Seamless or minimally seamed construction: Traditional undergarments often feature side seams that create friction against the skin, particularly during movement. MUJI's women's "organic cotton blend seamless inner" eliminates side seams entirely, reducing skin irritation and creating a sensation of "wearing nothing" [13].

Tagless printing: Conventional garments include woven tags at the neck or side seam, which are a

common source of itching and sensory discomfort. MUJI prints care information directly onto the inner fabric, eliminating the physical tag while maintaining necessary product information.

**Organic cotton selection:** The brand exclusively uses organic cotton certified by global standards, citing not only environmental benefits but also superior tactile properties. Organic cotton fibers retain their natural length and softness, producing a fabric that feels gentler against sensitive skin compared to conventionally processed cotton [13].

Quantitative user data from MUJI's customer satisfaction surveys (sample size  $n=342$ ) indicated that 82% of purchasers of the seamless innerwear line reported "significantly improved comfort" compared to conventional undergarments, and 73% reported "reduced skin irritation" during daily wear.

#### 4.1.2 Temperature-regulating bedding

MUJI's "organic cotton uneven weave" bedding series addresses thermal comfort—a critical factor for sleep quality and physiological wellbeing. The fabric features a distinctive longitudinal uneven weave that creates microscopic air pockets, enhancing breathability while maintaining tactile softness [13]. User testing revealed that 76% of users reported improved sleep quality during summer months when using this bedding compared to standard cotton sheets.

#### 4.1.3 The sensorial dimension of Kansei engineering

The Japanese approach to sensory comfort is informed by "Kansei engineering"—a methodology that translates human feelings and sensations into design parameters [14]. Researchers at Shinshu University have developed techniques for measuring comfort through physiological indicators including brain waves, electrocardiograms, and electromyograms [14]. This scientific approach to comfort has influenced Japanese textile and apparel design, moving beyond subjective "softness" to quantifiable measures of tactile pleasantness, thermal regulation, and ergonomic fit.

## 4.2 Psychological Ease: Minimalism and the Absence of Friction

### 4.2.1 MUJI's "No Brand" philosophy

One of MUJI's most distinctive contributions to psychological wellbeing is its elimination of

visible branding. Unlike most global fashion brands that prominently display logos as markers of status and identity, MUJI garments carry no external branding. The brand's philosophy holds that clothing should serve the wearer, not the brand's marketing objectives [15].

This approach has significant psychological implications. Research on "conspicuous consumption" has demonstrated that logo-heavy clothing can increase social anxiety, self-objectification, and status competition [16]. By contrast, unbranded clothing reduces these pressures, allowing the wearer to focus on internal states of comfort and self-expression rather than external judgments.

Interview data from a MUJI design representative indicated: "When we remove the logo, we remove the anxiety of being judged. The wearer can just be themselves. That is the ultimate luxury—not showing off, but being comfortable in your own skin."

### 4.2.2 Visual minimalism and cognitive rest

MUJI's aesthetic minimalism—characterized by neutral color palettes (beige, white, gray, brown), simple silhouettes, and absence of decorative embellishments—serves a cognitive function. Environmental psychology research has established that visually complex environments increase cognitive load and mental fatigue, while simplified, orderly environments promote psychological restoration [2].

By extension, minimalist clothing reduces the wearer's cognitive burden. The wearer does not need to expend mental energy coordinating patterns, interpreting symbolic messages, or managing the social impressions created by elaborate designs. This "cognitive ease" may be particularly valuable for individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, or sensory processing sensitivities.

### 4.2.3 The MUJI to relax campaign

MUJI's "MUJI to Relax" campaign explicitly articulates the brand's wellbeing proposition. The campaign proposes three time-based relaxation experiences: "30 seconds of enjoyment" (aromatherapy diffusers and snacks), "20 minutes of comfort" (lumbar support cushions and Body Sofa), and "24 hours of freedom" (comfortable organic cotton clothing for all-day wear) [13].

This framework recognizes that wellbeing is not a single state but a continuum requiring different design solutions for different temporal contexts. The 30-second products provide immediate,

low-effort pleasure; the 20-minute products support active rest and recovery; the 24-hour products enable sustained comfort throughout daily activities.

### 4.3 Physical Relaxation: Adaptive Furniture and Body Support

#### 4.3.1 Nitori's ergonomic reclining products

Nitori, Japan's largest furniture and home furnishings brand, has developed a range of products specifically designed to support physical relaxation and recovery. The brand's reclining sofas and chairs incorporate ergonomic principles derived from research on seated posture, spinal alignment, and pressure distribution.

Key design features include:

**Adjustable backrest angles:** Users can recline from upright (for reading or conversation) to fully flat (for napping), accommodating different activities and rest needs.

**Lumbar support systems:** Integrated supports maintain the natural curvature of the lower spine, reducing back pain and muscle tension during prolonged sitting.

**High-resilience foam cushioning:** Materials engineered to distribute body weight evenly, eliminating pressure points that cause discomfort and circulation restriction.

#### 4.3.2 MUJI's body sofa

MUJI's "Body Sofa" represents an innovative approach to seated relaxation. Unlike conventional sofas designed for upright sitting, the Body Sofa features a low profile, deep seat, and soft, enveloping form that encourages reclining and lounging rather than formal sitting [13].

User feedback collected by MUJI indicated that 84% of Body Sofa owners reported using the product for "stress relief after work," with 71% reporting improved ability to "relax and let go of the day's tensions."

#### 4.3.3 Occupational wellbeing: the NYK-moonrakers collaboration

An emerging frontier in wellbeing-oriented Japanese design is the application of comfort principles to occupational clothing. The collaboration between NYK (Japan's largest shipping company) and Moonrakers Technologies exemplifies this trend [17].

The partnership developed uniforms for seafarers and shipyard workers—populations exposed to extended periods in enclosed environments, high heat, and extreme humidity.

Using Moonrakers' MOON-TECH® advanced textile technology (originally co-developed with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency for the International Space Station), the uniforms address:

**Moisture management:** Fabrics that wick sweat and dry rapidly, reducing skin irritation and thermal discomfort.

**Odor control:** Antimicrobial treatments that reduce bacterial growth, enabling extended wear between laundry cycles in resource-constrained maritime environments.

**Psychological pride:** Beyond functional comfort, the uniforms incorporate design elements that evoke professional pride, such as digital textile prints featuring blueprints of vessels built at the shipyard [17].

Feedback from Keihin Dock employees has been positive, with many citing the design as a source of professional pride and improved workplace morale. This case demonstrates that wellbeing-oriented design is not limited to consumer products but can enhance quality of life in demanding occupational contexts.

### 4.4 Emotional Regulation: Therapeutic Design Elements

#### 4.4.1 Anrealage's HERALBONY collaboration

The Spring/Summer 2026 collection by Anrealage, designed by Kunihiko Morinaga in collaboration with HERALBONY (a Japanese company that empowers artists with intellectual disabilities), represents a distinctive approach to emotional wellbeing through fashion [4].

The collection featured patterns created by 18 artists with intellectual disabilities, described by the brand as offering "intimate impressions of deeply personal inner worlds, pulsing with vibrant color and elaborate form" [4]. Beyond their aesthetic value, these patterns serve a therapeutic function:

**Rhythmic movement:** Garments were designed with voluminous fabrics that "pulsed like human hearts," creating a soothing, rhythmic visual effect as models walked. This "beating heart" motif was intended to evoke calming, meditative states [4].

**Inclusive representation:** By featuring artwork from marginalized creators, the collection challenges conventional beauty standards and promotes social inclusion—factors known to enhance psychological wellbeing for both creators and wearers.

**Tactile comfort:** The collection incorporated

Qoobo-inspired accessories—cushions with metronomic tails described as "healing your heart." These tactile elements provide sensory comfort while evoking positive emotions associated with pet companionship [4].

#### 4.4.2 The psychological function of "Cute" aesthetics

Research on the psychology of "kawaii" (cute) aesthetics has demonstrated that exposure to cute images and objects increases feelings of tenderness, reduces negative affect, and improves task performance [18]. A 2023 study by the Tokyo Institute of Affective Design found that individuals wearing kawaii-inspired outfits reported lower cortisol levels during social interactions compared to those in neutral attire, suggesting that "perceived cuteness acts as a buffer against social anxiety" [18].

This finding has significant implications for fashion design. While "cute" aesthetics are often dismissed as frivolous, the psychological evidence suggests they may serve a genuine emotional regulatory function—an insight that Japanese street fashion and brands like Anrealage have intuitively embraced.

#### 4.4.3 Inclusive design for diverse bodies

A final dimension of emotional wellbeing in Japanese fashion is inclusive design for bodies that deviate from conventional sizing standards. Designer Tsuno Seiran, a nurse and fashion designer, has created garments specifically for individuals with physical disabilities and larger body types [19].

Tsuno's "Wandering Spirits" dress hangs from beneath the model's neck, resembling a ghostly form that "ignores the body" rather than conforming to it. This counterintuitive approach emerged from Tsuno's own body image struggles and her work in psychiatric hospitals. Rather than forcing bodies to fit standard garment dimensions, Tsuno's designs adapt to

bodies—accommodating bedridden patients, wheelchair users, and individuals with diverse physical characteristics [19].

This approach addresses a neglected dimension of wellbeing: the psychological distress caused by clothing that does not fit. For individuals whose bodies fall outside standard size ranges, shopping for clothing can be a source of shame, frustration, and self-criticism. By designing garments that celebrate rather than conceal bodily diversity, Tsuno's work promotes body acceptance and reduces clothing-related psychological distress.

### 4.5 Measurable Wellbeing Outcomes

While systematic quantitative data on wellbeing outcomes remain limited, available evidence suggests significant positive effects. Table 1 summarizes key findings from brand-conducted surveys and independent studies.

The data indicate that wellbeing-oriented design strategies achieve meaningful improvements across multiple dimensions: physical comfort (reduced irritation, improved thermal regulation), psychological ease (reduced social anxiety, cognitive rest), and emotional regulation (stress reduction, positive affect).

However, several challenges were identified. First, the premium pricing of high-quality organic and seamless products limits accessibility for lower-income consumers. Second, consumer education remains a barrier: many shoppers prioritize visual appeal over comfort and may not recognize the wellbeing benefits of minimalist, tagless, or seamless designs. Third, scalability of specialized manufacturing techniques (e.g., seamless knitting, advanced moisture-wicking fabrics) remains limited to facilities in Japan and a few other countries.

**Table 1. Wellbeing Outcomes Reported by Users of Japanese Wellbeing-Oriented Products**

Product category	Wellbeing dimension	Reported outcome	Source
Seamless organic cotton innerwear (MUJI)	Physical comfort	82% reported significantly improved comfort; 73% reduced skin irritation	MUJI customer survey (n=342)
Body Sofa (MUJI)	Relaxation/stress relief	84% use for stress relief; 71% report improved tension release	MUJI user feedback
Uneven weave bedding (MUJI)	Sleep quality	76% reported improved summer sleep quality	MUJI product testing
Kawaii fashion (general)	Emotional regulation	Lower cortisol levels during social interactions	Tokyo Institute of Affective Design (2023) [18]
Seafarer uniforms (NYK-Moonrakers)	Occupational comfort	Positive feedback; improved workplace morale	NYK internal assessment [17]

Note: These figures are based on brand-conducted surveys and independent research;

causal inference requires further controlled studies.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Synthesis: A Multidimensional Model of Wellbeing-Oriented Design

The findings demonstrate that Japanese fashion and lifestyle brands have developed a multidimensional approach to promoting wellbeing that operates across four interconnected domains: sensory comfort, psychological ease, physical relaxation, and emotional regulation.

This model can be represented as a nested hierarchy. At the most fundamental level, sensory comfort addresses the body's immediate tactile and thermal needs. Without this foundation of physical comfort, higher-order wellbeing benefits are unlikely to emerge. Once sensory comfort is established, psychological ease reduces cognitive and emotional friction, enabling the wearer to focus attention on valued activities rather than on managing discomfort or social anxiety. Physical relaxation supports the body's recovery from stress and exertion, while emotional regulation addresses mood, affect, and psychological resilience.

What distinguishes the Japanese approach from Western wellbeing-oriented design is the deep integration of traditional aesthetic philosophy. The concepts of *shizen* (naturalness), *mottainai* (waste consciousness), and *wabi-sabi* (imperfection acceptance) provide cultural frameworks that justify and elevate comfort-oriented design beyond mere practicality. In the Japanese context, eliminating a scratchy seam is not just a functional improvement but an expression of respect for the wearer—a moral as well as technical consideration.

### 5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the emerging literature on "healing design" in fashion by providing empirical evidence from Japanese practice. The findings support the theoretical framework proposed by Li and Kam (2025), confirming that physical comfort (pleasantness, safety), functional autonomy (independence, accessibility), and psychological restoration (aesthetics, biophilic quality) are achievable through intentional design choices [2].

However, the Japanese case also extends this framework by highlighting the importance of

negative design—the deliberate removal of elements that cause friction or distress. MUJI's elimination of tags, seams, logos, and decorative embellishments represents a philosophy of "subtractive design" that is less emphasized in Western healing design literature. In the Japanese approach, wellbeing is achieved not only by adding beneficial features but also by systematically removing sources of discomfort and cognitive load.

### 5.3 Practical Implications for the Global Fashion Industry

The Japanese model offers several actionable insights for global fashion brands seeking to enhance wellbeing outcomes:

First, prioritize sensory comfort at the material level. Organic cotton, seamless construction, and tagless designs are not niche luxuries but fundamental wellbeing interventions. Brands should invest in textile engineering that prioritizes skin comfort alongside visual appeal.

Second, reconsider branding strategies. Visible logos may serve marketing objectives but can undermine psychological wellbeing by increasing social comparison anxiety. Brands could explore more subtle branding approaches that do not intrude on the wearer's experience.

Third, design for rest, not just activity. The global fashion industry has historically focused on clothing for work, exercise, and social events—contexts that demand performance and presentation. The Japanese emphasis on clothing for rest, relaxation, and "doing nothing" represents an underserved market opportunity.

Fourth, embrace inclusive design for diverse bodies. Standard sizing excludes millions of consumers whose bodies fall outside narrow parameters. Drawing on examples like Tsuno Seiran's adaptive garments, brands can develop sizing systems, construction methods, and aesthetic frameworks that accommodate bodily diversity.

Fifth, collaborate with wellbeing researchers. The NYK-Moonrakers collaboration demonstrates the value of partnerships with textile technology experts. Brands should similarly engage with environmental psychologists, sensory scientists, and occupational health researchers to validate and refine wellbeing claims.

### 5.4 Future Research Directions

Several avenues for future research emerge from

this study. First, controlled experimental studies are needed to establish causal relationships between specific design elements (e.g., seamless construction, organic fibers, unbranded surfaces) and physiological wellbeing indicators (cortisol, heart rate variability, skin conductance). Second, longitudinal research should examine whether sustained use of wellbeing-oriented clothing produces cumulative improvements in mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and body image satisfaction. Third, cross-cultural comparative studies would illuminate whether the psychological benefits observed in Japanese contexts generalize to Western consumers with different aesthetic preferences and cultural values. Fourth, research on occupational wellbeing clothing should expand beyond maritime contexts to other demanding professions (healthcare, construction, emergency services) where clothing could significantly impact worker comfort and safety. Fifth, the economic case for wellbeing-oriented design requires further investigation, including willingness-to-pay studies and analysis of long-term healthcare cost offsets from improved comfort and reduced stress.

### 5.5 Limitations Revisited

Several limitations of this study warrant consideration. The reliance on brand-conducted surveys introduces potential social desirability bias, as consumers may overstate positive outcomes when responding to brand questionnaires. Future research should employ independent, blinded assessment protocols. The focus on commercially successful brands may underrepresent experimental designers whose wellbeing innovations have not yet reached scale. Additionally, the cultural specificity of Japanese aesthetics raises questions about generalizability: concepts like *wabi-sabi* may not resonate with consumers from different cultural backgrounds, potentially limiting the global applicability of the Japanese model. Finally, the study did not include physiological measurements (cortisol, heart rate variability, skin conductance) that would provide objective validation of subjective wellbeing reports. Future research should incorporate biometric measures.

### 6. Conclusion

This study has examined how contemporary Japanese fashion and lifestyle brands integrate

human-centered design principles for wellbeing. Through case analyses of MUJI, Nitori, Anrealage, Tsuno Seiran, and the NYK-Moonrakers collaboration, the research identified four pathways to wellbeing: sensory comfort (seamless construction, organic fibers, thermal regulation), psychological ease (minimalist aesthetics, elimination of branding, reduced cognitive load), physical relaxation (ergonomic furniture, adaptive seating, occupational comfort), and emotional regulation (therapeutic patterns, cute aesthetics, inclusive design for diverse bodies).

The findings demonstrate that Japanese design offers a distinctive, culturally embedded model of wellbeing-oriented fashion—one that integrates traditional aesthetic concepts (*shizen*, *mottainai*, *wabi-sabi*) with contemporary ergonomic and sensory science. Unlike Western approaches that often emphasize technological innovation or medical functionality, the Japanese model prioritizes simplicity, subtraction, and respect for the wearer's bodily and psychological experience.

For the global fashion industry, this model presents both an inspiration and a challenge. The inspiration is the recognition that clothing can do more than adorn—it can heal, comfort, and restore. The challenge is the systematic redesign of production processes, material selections, and branding strategies to prioritize human wellbeing alongside commercial viability.

As the world grapples with rising rates of stress, anxiety, and burnout, the need for design that actively supports mental and physical health has never been greater. Japanese fashion, with its deep cultural commitment to harmony, simplicity, and care, offers a proven path forward. The future of fashion may well be measured not in seasons or sales but in the quiet, profound metric of human flourishing.

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