

RESEARCH PAPER

Developing Sustainable Traditional Costume Designs Inspired by Saudi Traditional Fashion

Tahani Nassar Alajaji

Professor History of Clothing and Embroidery, Fashion and Textile Design Department, College of Art and Design, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Email: tnAlajaajy@pnu.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: The paper aims to determine the features of traditional fashion preferred by Saudi women while designing sustainable modern styles inspired by Saudi cultural heritage.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH: A descriptive-analytical method was used in this research, utilising questionnaires as a tool to identify and define the required characteristics for the suggested designs. The population sample of the survey consisted of 300 Saudi women.

FINDINGS: Designing sustainably developed traditional costumes that are commensurate with the modern age without affecting its traditional spirit. The paper found that the majority of women in Saudi Arabia, of different ages and social groups, own traditional costumes.

ORIGINAL/VALUE OF THE PAPER: The importance of the research is to preserve the traditional character of the costumes, design sustainable traditional fashion, and create availability for it to be worn and converted into multiple diverse styles; furthermore, contributing to supporting and encouraging the national heritage and preserving it through the traditional fashion industry in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

IMPLICATIONS: It is imperative that Ministry of Culture officials encourage and support the Saudi fashion industry. In order to produce and design sustainable fashion, mainly traditional, one must include courses in specialised fashion design programmes that are concerned with style sustainability. Another critical perspective to consider is research; however, the research must be conducted to relate to the sustainability of developed traditional costumes.

KEYWORDS: *Traditional Costumes; Saudi Arabia; Fashion; Sustainable*

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INTRODUCTION

Globalisation brought people of the world together to form similar lifestyle trends. Some societies were overtaken by other cultures, while others still resist foreign influence (Nasr, 2018, p.169). Fashion reflects several societal aspects; it mirrors the physical style change during a specific time period (Atta, 2009, p.266). Fashion design is the result of the integration of visual elements in the model with the basics of design to create values that correspond to the designer's vision and design in a practical way. The design process begins from within the designer and manifests in the final product. Today, sustainable designs drive the fashion industry to achieve economic growth. Sustainability is a way for manufacturers to cut production costs and retain product flow in the market (Muhammad, 2019, p.550). The largest apparel companies in the world are moving towards sustainable production and consumption (Kędzia and Dziuba, 2020).

Traditional costumes are an aspect of the tangible heritage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as they are cultural symbols that give people a sense of cultural identity (Al-Shaibi, 2018, p.310). They are characterised by aesthetic features that can be utilised to align with contemporary styles (Al-Shehri *et al.*, 2018, p.55). One example of such alignment is the change in women's Abaya¹ in Saudi Arabia. The Abaya is no longer considered outerwear. It has become an essential part of the style for women in Saudi Arabia (Alajaji, 2018).

The research responds to the need to develop sustainable fashion inspired by traditional style. The study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the trends of wearing traditional costumes among Saudi women?
- Is there a relationship between the modernised traditional costume and the costume specifications preferred by Saudi women?
- Is it possible to design a sustainable traditional fashion that meets global standards while preserving cultural value?

The relevance of the research is that it yields fashionable designs while preserving the original traditional character, and documents the trends of wearing classic² fashion among Saudi women. The paper also considers the sustainability of the products as well as their practicality; for example, the models can be converted to different styles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One way to assure the uniqueness of national identity is to preserve the folk heritage (Al-Nouri, 2019, p.309). Alajaji (2019, p.8) adds that there is a need to develop modern aesthetic designs

¹Abaya is cloak-like outfit that Muslim women wear over their clothes when leaving their houses.

²Classic fashion and traditional fashion are used interchangeably throughout this paper to refer to Saudi women's fashion worn between 1930 and 1980.

derived from traditional costumes to align with the modern age without distorting the classic character. Turning such ideas into products entails specialised knowledge that a designer should have (Abdullah and Al-Rifai, 2019, p.139).

The study of Al-Shaibi (2018: p.308, p.312) aimed to develop women's fashion by merging Indian and Chinese lines of style: their research sample consisted of eight innovative designs. The findings revealed the presence of statistical differences in the artistic side, contrary to the results attributed to the cultural appropriateness of the suggested models. Al-Otaibi and Menahi (2017) created designs for women's Galabiyas derived from heritage of the Asir region. Their research suggested innovative designs with a touch of modern style.

Shafei (2017) developed the skill of precision in analysing the aesthetic values of traditional Saudi costumes by using a simulation method of drawing its images. It also grew innovative capabilities to design contemporary fashion inspired by the aesthetic values of classic style using a simulation method of drawing its pictures. Abdel Aziz *et al.* (2016) showed the possibility of taking advantage of the Bedouin clothing designs in Damietta Governorate to create designs that allowed contemporary women to meet fashion and express heritage.

METHODOLOGY

The research followed a descriptive-analytical methodology. The study population was 300 women aged 17 and over in the regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The material sample was derived from traditional fashion for women in the Najd region of Saudi Arabia. There are 13 regions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and traditional costumes were divided according to their geographical locations in the past into 5 regions: the central region (Najd), the western region (Hejaz), the eastern region, the southern region, and the northern region.

A questionnaire was designed for women to determine preferred specifications for traditional costumes. The survey consisted of ten topics relating to the designs expected by participants. The end-product consisted of five designs based on participants' feedback.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to calculate the stability of the instrument. Pearson's was applied to determine the extent of the study's internal consistency and the relationship between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tables 1-12 below analyse the data from the questionnaires.

Table 1: Ages of the Sample

Age	Repetition	The Ratio (%)
17-24 years old	38	12.7
25-34 years old	58	19.3
35-44 years old	99	33
45-54 years old	69	23
55 years and over	36	12
Total	300	100

Source: Constructed by author

Table 2: Appropriate Cost for Traditional Dress

The Answer	Repetition	The Ratio (%)
100-499 Riyals	206	68.7
500-999 Riyals	70	23.3
1,000- 1,499 Riyals	11	3.7
1,500-1,999 Riyals	7	2.3
2,000- 2,499 Riyals	2	0.7
2,500-2,999 Riyals	2	0.7
3,000- 3,499 Riyals	-	-
3,500- 3,999 Riyals	-	-
4,000- 4,499 Riyals	1	0.3
4,500-4,999 Riyals	1	0.3
5,000 Riyals or more	-	-
Total	300	100.0

Source: Constructed by author

Table 3: Number of Traditional Dress Pieces per Year

The Answer	Repetition	The Ratio (%)
None	57	19.0
1-3 pieces	164	54.7
4-6 pieces	50	16.7
7-9 pieces	11	3.6
10 pieces or more	18	6.0
Total	300	100.0

Source: Constructed by author

Table 4: Opinions Regarding Wearing Traditional Dress

	Phrase	Degree of Consistency				The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement		
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely				Never	
1	Do you like the traditional developed fashion available on the market?	Repetition	56	76	142	21	5	3.52	0.930	3
		%	18.7	25.3	47.3	7.0	1.7			
2	Would you like your traditional costume to be versatile (so that it can be converted into another outfit)?	Repetition	76	88	85	29	22	3.56	1.18	1
		%	25.3	29.3	28.3	9.7	7.3			
3	Do you want to change the look of the traditional costume?	Repetition	36	52	123	47	42	2.98	1.17	6
		%	12.0	17.3	41.0	15.7	14.0			
4	Do you want the traditional costume to retain its original shape and not change?	Repetition	90	65	74	40	31	3.48	1.32	4
		%	30.0	21.7	24.7	13.3	10.3			
5	Do you want to change the traditional costume according to the current age?	Repetition	53	81	98	30	38	3.27	1.23	5
		%	17.7	27.0	32.7	10.0	12.7			
6	Are you having a hard time getting the right traditional outfit from the market?	Repetition	80	67	108.0	25	20	3.54	1.16	2
		%	26.7	22.3	36.0	8.3	6.7			
General mean = 3.39, general standard deviation = 0.670										

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.39 that sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 5: Opinion of the Sample about Traditional Dress

	Phrase	Degree of Approval					The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Scarcely	Start			
1	Body shape	58	54	112	42	34	3.20	1.23	3
	%	19.3	18.0	37.3	14.0	11.3			
2	Broad	94	92	87	18	9	3.81	1.04	2
	%	31.3	30.7	29.0	6.0	3.0			
3	Long	138	85	64	8	5	4.14	0.955	1
	%	46.0	28.3	21.3	2.7	1.7			
4	Short	17	24	86	73	100	2.28	1.17	9
	%	5.7	8.0	28.7	24.3	33.3			
5	Two pieces	18	39	120	64	59	2.64	1.11	7
	%	6.0	13.0	40.0	21.3	19.7			
6	Abaya	55	44	91	62	48	2.99	1.31	5
	%	18.3	14.7	30.3	20.7	16.0			
7	Ruched (ruffle) from midfield	33	41	114	67	45	2.83	1.17	6
	%	11.0	13.7	38.0	22.3	15.0			
8	Middle line cut	35	59	114	64	28	3.03	1.11	4
	%	11.7	19.7	38.0	21.3	9.3			
9	Other	29	27	67	57	120	2.29	1.33	8
	%	9.7	9.0	22.3	19.0	40.0			

General mean = 3.02, general standard deviation = 0.588

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.02 that the sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 6: Opinion of the Sample about Preferred Changes in Traditional Dress to be Ideal for Fashion

	Phrase	Degree of Consistency					The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
1	Change in shape Repetition %	74	81	96	28	21	3.53	1.16	3
		24.7	27.0	32.0	9.3	7.0			
2	Change in fabric Repetition %	109	94	74	14	9	3.93	1.03	1
		36.3	31.3	24.7	4.7	3.0			
3	Change in the sleeves Repetition %	54	84	113	34	15	3.43	1.06	5
		18.0	28.0	37.7	11.3	5.0			
4	Change in the neck slit Repetition %	61	72	106	40	21	3.37	1.15	7
		20.3	24.0	35.3	13.3	7.0			
5	To be widened Repetition %	63	81	109	33	14	3.49	1.08	4
		21.0	27.0	36.3	11.0	4.7			
6	To be in the decoration and embroidery Repetition %	69	74	91	38	28	3.39	1.23	6
		23.0	24.7	30.3	12.7	9.3			
7	Change in the colours Repetition %	88	78	86	30	18	3.63	1.17	2
		29.3	26.0	28.7	10.0	6.0			
General mean = 3.53, general standard deviation = 0.808									

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.53 that the respondents often prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 7: Opinion of the Sample about Traditional Dress and its Development

	Phrase	Degree of consistency					The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
1	Manual embroidery	152	66	64	12	6	4.15	1.02	1
	%	50.7	22.0	21.3	4.0	2.0			
2	Machine embroidery	60	84	115	27	14	3.50	1.05	2
	%	20.0	28.0	38.3	9.0	4.7			
3	Print	40	40	105	70	45	2.87	1.21	5
	%	13.3	13.3	35.0	23.3	15.0			
4	Ribbons	42	67	118	44	29	3.16	1.13	3
	%	14.0	22.3	39.3	14.7	9.7			
5	Patching or applique	36	50	110	57	47	2.90	1.20	4
	%	12.0	16.7	36.7	19.0	15.7			
General mean = 3.31, general standard deviation = 0.743									

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.31 that sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 8: Opinion of the Sample Regarding Wearing Traditional Dress: The Ideal Design

	Phrase	Degree of Consistency					The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
1	To be an authentic traditional costume	105	71	85	27	12	3.77	1.14	1
	%	35.0	23.7	28.3	9.0	4.0			
2	To be a developed traditional costume	92	89	81	28	10	3.75	1.09	2
	%	30.7	29.7	27.0	9.3	3.3			
General mean = 3.75, general standard deviation = 0.683									

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.75 that the respondents usually prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 9: Opinion of the sample Members Regarding Length of Traditional

	Phrase	Degree of Consistency					The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
1	Long	181	59	42	13	5	4.33	0.981	1
	%	60.3	19.7	14.0	4.3	1.7			
2	Short	14	18	68	90	110	2.12	1.11	3
	%	4.7	6.0	22.7	30.0	36.7			
3	Average length	60	57	92	53	38	3.16	1.28	2
	%	20.0	19.0	30.7	17.7	12.7			

General mean = 3.20, general standard deviation = 0.619

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.20 that sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 10: Pockets and Belt for Traditional Dress

	Phrase	Degree of consistency					The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never			
1	Belt	57	59	129	32	23	3.32	1.12	2
	%	19.0	19.7	43.0	10.7	7.7			
2	Pockets are hidden	89	65	103	32	11	3.63	1.12	1
	%	29.7	21.7	34.3	10.7	3.7			
3	Pockets are showing	39	47	121	57	36	2.99	1.16	3
	%	13.0	15.7	40.3	19.0	12.0			

General mean = 3.31, general standard deviation = 0.791

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.31 that sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table 11: Opinion of the Sample Regarding Sleeves in Traditional Dress

M	Phrase	Degree of Consistency				The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely			
1	Long Repetition %	103	70	103	20	3.83	1.02	1
		34.3	23.3	34.3	6.7			
2	Short Repetition %	39	56	123	50	3.07	1.14	4
		13.0	18.7	41.0	16.7			
3	Without sleeves Repetition %	13	19	57	84	2.02	1.12	6
		4.3	6.3	19.0	28			
4	Wide Repetition %	63	75	117	33	3.48	1.06	3
		21.0	25.0	39.0	11.0			
5	Tight Repetition %	20	43	109	76	2.68	1.12	5
		6.7	14.3	36.3	25.3			
6	Normal Repetition %	80	86	99	21	3.66	1.08	2
		26.7	28.7	33.0	7.0			

General mean = 3.12, general standard deviation = 0.548

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the general arithmetic average of 3.12 that sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Table12: Opinion of the Sample Regarding the Neck Slit Shape in Traditional Dress

1	Phrase	Degree of consistency				The Average	Standard Deviation	Arrangement
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely			
1	Circular Repetition %	78	78	99	30	3.58	1.12	1
		26.0	26.0	33.0	10.0			
2	Oval Repetition %	31	68	127	44	3.09	1.08	3
		10.3	22.7	42.3	14.7			
3	Square Repetition %	39	58	115	58	3.06	1.14	4
		13.0	19.3	38.3	19.3			
4	V-Shape Repetition %	54	69	107	44	3.27	1.17	2
		18.0	23.0	35.7	14.7			
5	Collar and Mard Repetition %	39	45	110	63	2.91	1.20	5
		13.0	15.0	36.7	21.0			
6	Straight Repetition %	28	33	110	70	2.67	1.18	6
		9.3	11.0	36.7	23.3			

General mean = 3.09, general standard deviation = 0.702

Source: Constructed by author

It is clear from the overall mean of 3.09 that sample members sometimes prefer the phrases of this topic.

Designing Sustainable Traditional Fashion that goes Together with Modern Style Without Affecting its Classic Character

A set of sustainable costumes to be worn in several ways was designed. The outfit is long, wide, and loose; this specification is one of the primary lines of the traditional Saudi dress. In addition to the sample, members asked that the traditional costume be multi-use (so that it can be converted to another outfit). The most desirable modifications also required that the changes be in the fabric, colours, and shape, and that decoration on the costume is done using manual embroidery and machine embroidery. The outfit should have hidden pockets, the sleeves should be long and regular, and the neckline should be circular and seven-shaped. The colour group used in the implemented designs are shown in Figure 1.

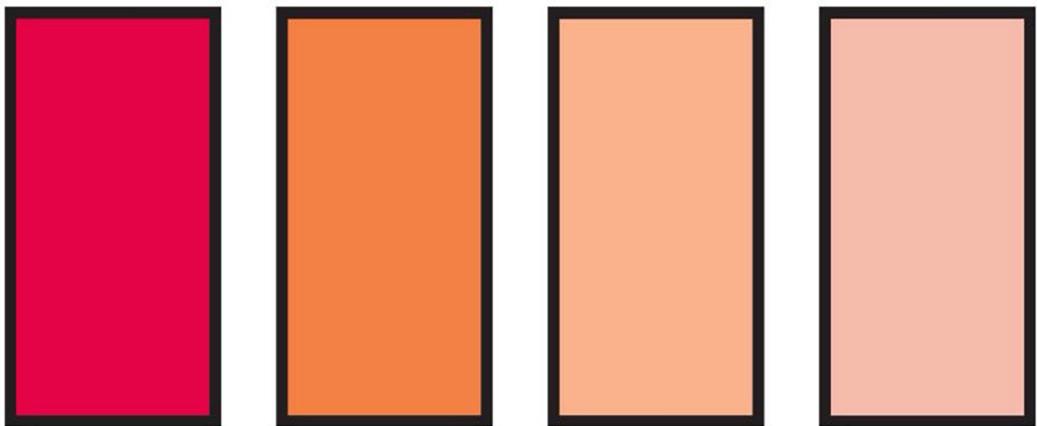


Figure 1: Colour Group Used in the Executed Designs

Source: Developed by author

The first design is a costume inspired by the traditional dress called “Al-Maqta” in the Najd region; it is a wide and loose costume. AlBassam (1988) and Figures 2-3 illustrate the traditional syllable form. The first design is characterised as a developed multi-use classic costume as it is worn in two ways. The first method is where the neck collar is circular. The slit is tight in the midline and is decorated with traditional decorative units called “Karaa”. These units are popular in the Najd region.

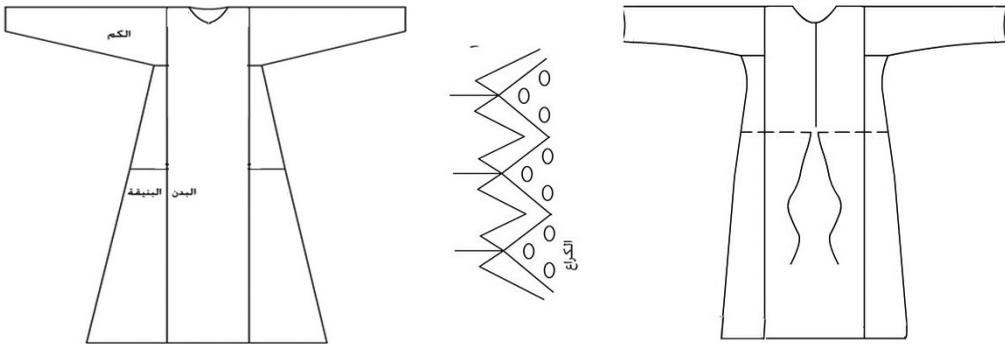


Figure 2: Flat Drawing for the First Design: The Traditional Syllable and the Traditional Decorative Unit Called “Karaa”

Source: Developed by author



Figure 3: The First Design

Source: Developed by author and Norah Alshareef

The second design is a costume inspired by the traditional uniform called “Thob” in the Najd region. The traditional dress is a wide and loose costume that takes the form of a square that is worn over the section and is known in many areas, including the Najd, the eastern and northern regions.

Usage (AlBassam, 1985, 1988) was also defined as urban in the north region (Alajaji, 2005) (see Figures 4-6). The second design is distinguished as a developed multi-use traditional costume, as it is worn in two ways. The first method is as a traditional dress development that has a circular neck collar that extends through a slit closed zipper that extends to the centre line and is decorated with traditional decorative units called “Shajara” (“the tree”). In the second way, the traditional garment is converted into Jonlah (skirt) after opening the clouds to the middle area so that the upper part hangs on the lower part and then tightens an elastic band around the midline.

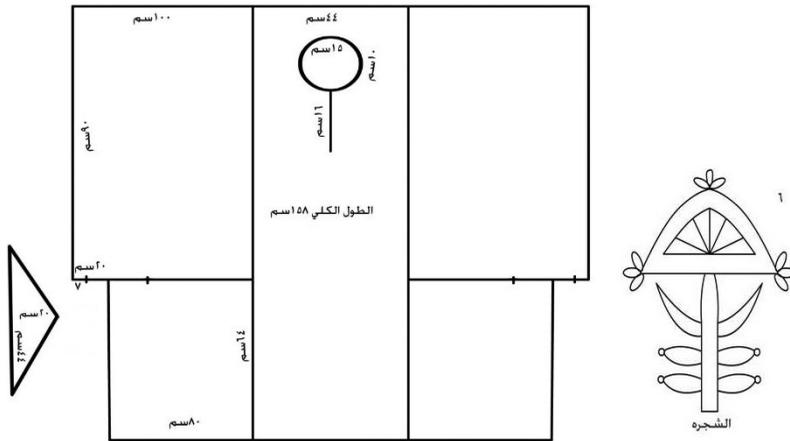


Figure 4: The Traditional Dress and the Traditional Decorative Unit Called “Shajara” (the tree) in the Najd Area

Source: Developed by author

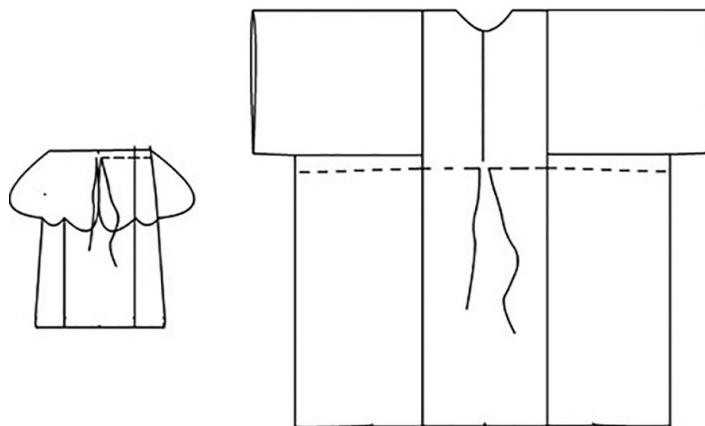


Figure 5: Flat Drawing of the Second Multi-Use Design

Source: Developed by author

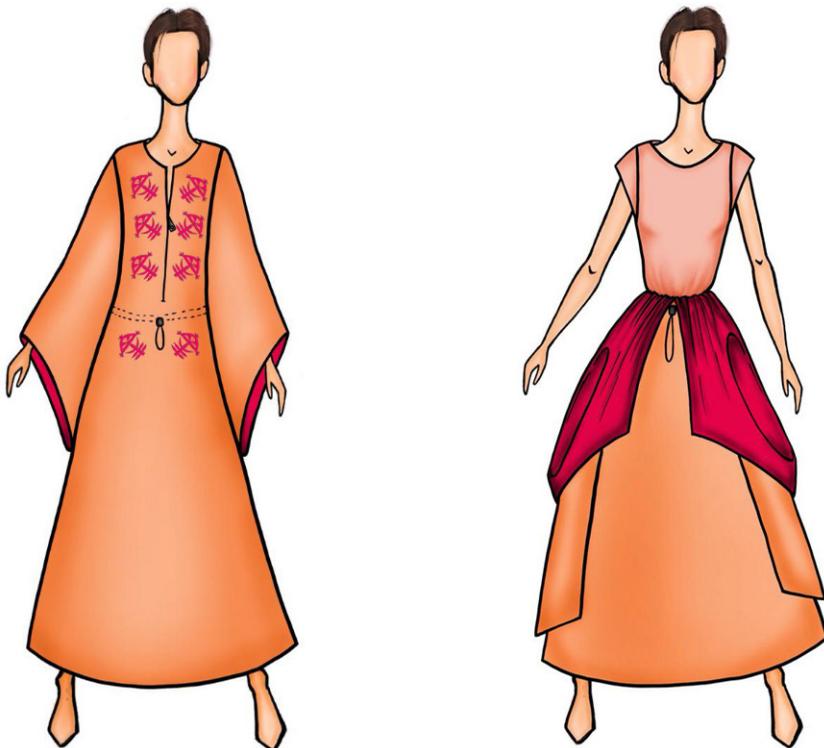


Figure 6: The second design

Source: Developed by author and Norah Alshareef

The third design is a costume inspired by the traditional uniform called “Al-Maqta” in the Najd region; it is also known as Al-Hadr in the northern region (Alajaji, 2005). The design is characterised as a developed traditional costume for multi-use, worn in two ways. The first, as a traditional costume, has a circular neck collar, and the side openings are closed with a zipper that extends from the tail line to the midline. It is decorated with traditional decorative units called “Al-Ajamiyya”, known in Al-Houta and Woody Al-Dawasir, using chain and branch stitches (see Figure 7).

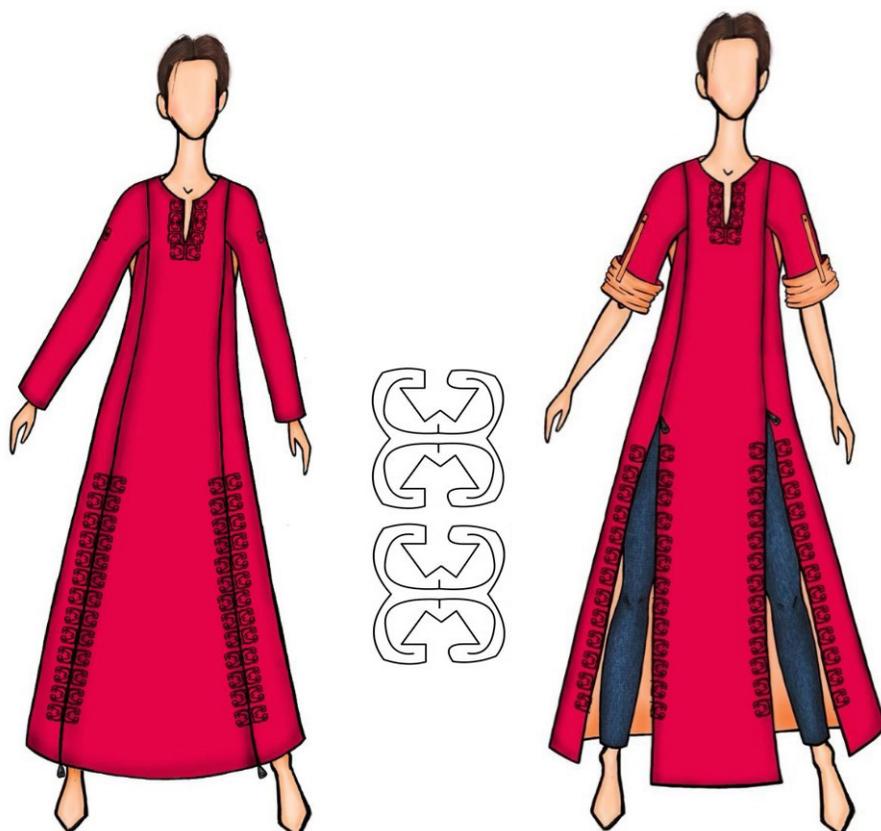


Figure 7: The Third Design with the Traditional Decorative Unit Called “Alajmia”

Source: Developed by author and Norah Alshareef

The fourth design is a costume inspired by the traditional uniform called “Almuqta” in the Najd region. The design is characterised as a developed multi-use traditional costume, worn in two ways. The first method as a traditional costume developed for the section where the neck collar is circular, there is a zipper compound on the two scales, and there is a ribbon around the midline. It is decorated with traditional decorative units called “Alasabi” (fingers), using chain and branch stitch. It can also be worn in another way and convert the traditional costume of the clip to another suit after removing the sleeves and banding the midline bar, as shown in Figure 8.

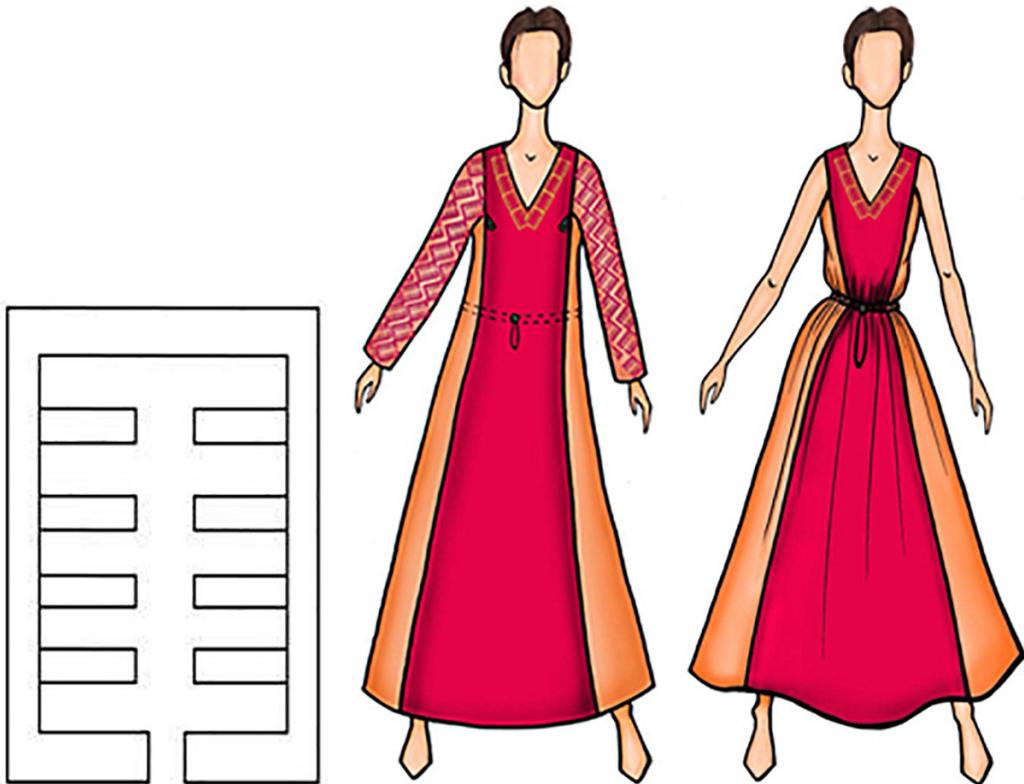


Figure 8: The Fourth Design, Worn in two Ways with “Alasabi” Decoration

Source: Developed by author and Norah Alshareef

The fifth design is a costume inspired by the traditional uniform called “Azbon” in the northern region (Alajaji, 2011). The design is characterised as a developed multi-use traditional costume, worn in three ways. The first method shows a traditional costume developed for the customer, open from the front and a cloud compound around the midline. It is decorated with traditional decorative units known in the Badia of Najd, using chain stitches, branches, and the installation of the ligament. It can be worn in another way where the traditional costume of the section to the upper part decorations convert to an open jacket from the front, and the lower part of the jungle (skirt) is wrapped around the middle, as shown in Figures 9-11.

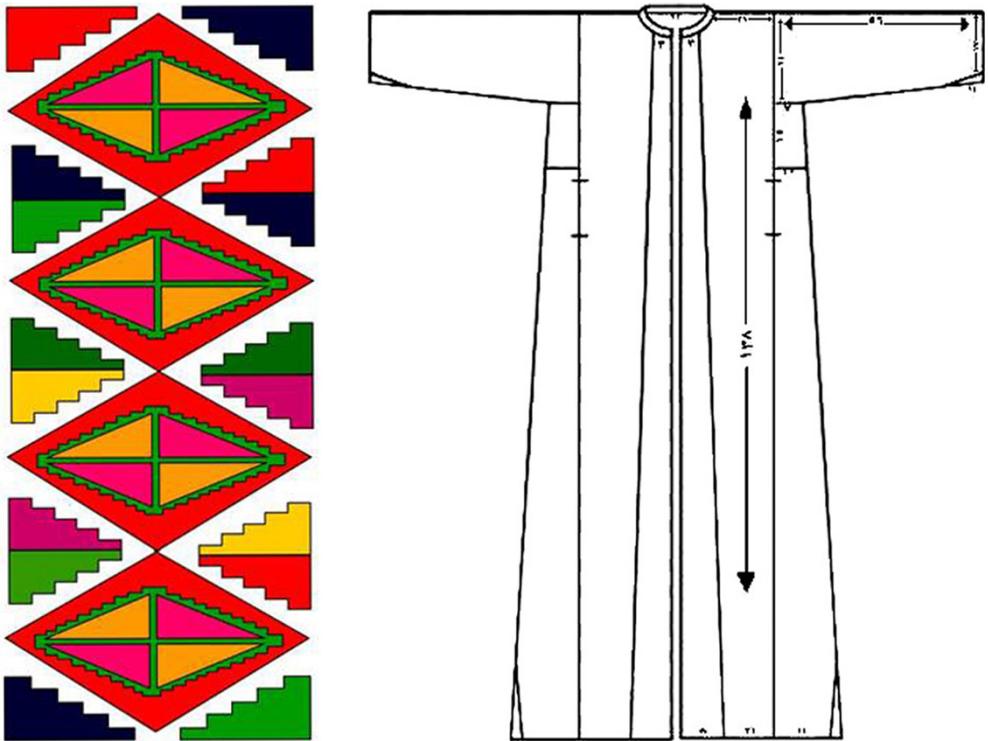


Figure 9: The Traditional Azboun and the Traditional Decorative Unit in the Najd Desert

Source: Alajaji, 2019

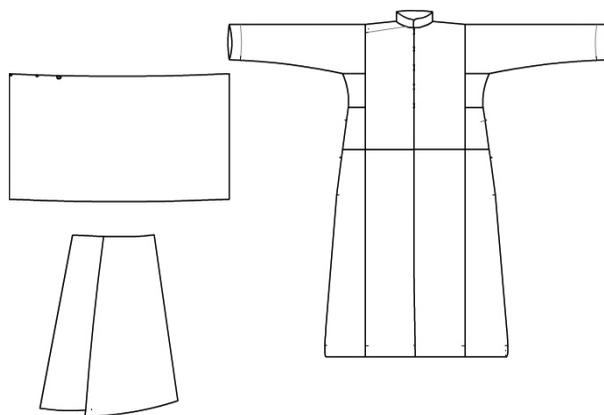


Figure 10: Flat Drawing of the Fifth Multi-Use Design

Source: Developed by author



Figure 11: The Fifth Design

Source: Developed by author and Norah Alshareef

CONCLUSIONS

Many women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of different age and social groups own traditional costumes at the rate of one to three. The average cost of traditional dress is around 100 to 500 Saudi riyals; this confirms the popularity of traditional fashion. Ghazi (2011) stated that clothing is one of the most critical elements of the material culture that determines an individual's belonging to a specific cultural or ethnic group. It is reflected in the enormous awareness of the materials used to make clothes and is linked to the diversity of geographical environments in which a person lives.

The most critical details required of the members of the sample were the modification in the fabric of the traditional costume; this is consistent with Abdullah and Al-Rifai (2019). Also, the use of innovative materials and techniques in designing the outfit and linking it to the design enriches the value of the outfit.

The specifications identified by sample participants include the desire that the costume is long, wide, and loose. The decorations must be handmade, and the neck collar should be circular. These are the characteristics of the primary lines of the authentic Saudi traditional costume.

Maadi and Salem (2019) emphasised that some of the methods used for sustainability must be highlighted by introducing a new vision from a new perspective and changing old ideas. In her study, Alajaji (2019) stressed the importance of underscoring traditional motifs through designing fashion and accessories and trying to reformulate them in a new innovative system to protect them from extinction.

One of the most important recommendations is to encourage and support the Saudi fashion industry by designing and producing sustainable fashion, mainly traditional fashion designs, to include courses in specialised programmes in fashion design that are concerned with sustainable styles. More studies and research in the field of developed traditional costumes and linking them to sustainability should be conducted.

This research has achieved important results, namely, defining special specifications for the developed traditional costumes that are suitable for modern life, in addition to preserving the original, traditional character. Also, designing sustainable traditional costumes so that they can be worn and transformed into other costumes; this contributes to supporting and encouraging the national heritage and preserving it through the traditional costume industry developed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This is in line with the strategic axes of the Saudi Vision 2030 by building a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation.

The most important recommendations are to encourage and support the Saudi fashion industry by producing and designing sustainable fashion, mainly traditional fashion design, and to include courses in specialised programmes in fashion design that are concerned with sustainable styles. More studies and research in the field of developed traditional costumes should be conducted, and they should be linked to sustainability.

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BIOGRAPHY



Tahani Nassar Alajaji is a Professor of History of Clothing and Embroidery, Fashion and Textile Design Department, College of Art and Design, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She is Chief Editor of the *Saudi Art Design Journal*. Professor Alajaji is also a member of the Effat University Board of Trustees, a member of the Scientific Committee for Humanities and Arts in the Ministry of Civil Service, and a member of the College of Design & Arts Research Centers. She is the recipient of the Arab Prize for Cultural Creativity Baghdad, 2013, and winner of the King Salman prize on Arabian Peninsula history (the best PhD thesis) 2014.

