



Haneen: Connecting Cultures through Craft

Amal Alharthi, King AbdulAziz University, Jennelle Alvares, Heriot-Watt University & Wijdan Tawfiq, King AbdulAziz University

Keywords: Apparel Design, Craft, Culture, Saudi Arabia, Scotland

Introduction and Conceptual Framework: The purpose of this collaborative design project is to experiment with creative and sustainable ways in incorporating two distinct cultures within the production of a garment which is representative of the Scottish lifestyle and the Saudi heritage rich in intricate design elements. The paper demonstrates this through the creation of a high-end fashion brand named “Haneen” representing the message of nostalgia and memorable traditions in a changing world. It provides input on traditional Saudi dressing and their unique features in terms of threads, embroidery, and craft techniques. Additionally, these eccentric attributes are combined with fabrics and silhouettes predominant to contemporary Scottish outerwear. While Bandoni Hughes and Nagel (2015) state that fashion is democratized by bringing individuals closer on a global scale through digital innovation and social media that depict influences, viral trends and new apparel designs all on an aesthetic level; Crane and Bovone (2006) express the importance to create and sustain material culture through fashion design which have adapted to evolving styles and disseminated through societies and are being produced by new generations for diverse demographics.



Figure 1: Saudi royalty dressed in *Bisht*

Fashion as a material culture and craft have a symbiotic relation where high-level craft and handmade elements represent quality and cultural value of garments. Craft skills embedded in cultural history assist industrial design methods where brands utilize these skills as a differentiating factor between them and the fast fashion mainstream (Tuite & Horton, 2019). Traditional Saudi clothing is known for their prestige in using gold thread and creating detailed embroidery patterns through craft processes (Alotaibi & Starkey, 2020). In particular, this design was inspired by a popular full-length mantle worn by Saudi men called “*Bisht*” (Figure 1). In most of the places in Scotland, a majority of clothing was produced using wool; Wadmal, was a commonly used fabric for winter clothing mainly overcoats (Figure 2) as it was a dense and coarse wool material (Wilcox, 2016).

Furthermore, Brown and Vacca (2022) express the need to sustain culture through material cultural exchange carried out through design development by the fashion industry in a transparent and appreciative way in the form of craft as it is extensively interconnected with tradition, memory and culture. The combining of Saudi Arabian traditional embroidery with Scottish outerwear is a key aspect to the design process of the garment.

Process, Technique, and Execution: The FEA framework, which focuses on design criteria based on the target consumer, was used to interpret Saudi and Scottish cultures to intertwine the



Figure 2: Barrock region jacket, 1696. Wool. Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland

respective style aspects to design the garment (cf. Lamb & Kallal, 1992). For this design, the targeted users are both dignified male and females, between the ages of 25-40 with sufficient disposable income and are demographically located in Saudi Arabia and Scotland. By using the FEA model which stands for the functionality of the product along with its expressive and aesthetic aspects allows the garment design to combine the traditional *Bisht* embroidery of gold threads from Saudi culture with the classic Scottish overcoat silhouette and natural wool fabric to express status and cultural significance while simultaneously adhering to their practical lifestyles. The overcoat was designed to fit both the male and female body with the silhouette loose and simple yet structured with smooth and tailored lines forming the shoulders and the front robe opening with buttons making it comfortable for both genders. It is an A-line knee length coat with a mandarin style collar and embroidered detailing at the shoulder ends, gold stitching on the front and two thin gold lines running down the length of the back of the garment. To aid in overall cohesion, the embroidery was strategically placed and carefully hand stitched at the shoulders and by the seamline.

Aesthetics Properties and Visual Impact: The color palette used for the garment incorporates both the lavish gold of Saudi culture and the simplicity of a neutral brown tone often seen in Scottish overcoats to maintain a balance of colors representing the two cultures. The design combines the use of *zari* gold threads for the embroidery to represent the rich in heritage Saudi traditional style which brings about a nostalgic feeling for consumers in the Saudi region; the embroidery pattern is incorporated within the modern Scottish silhouette which reflects its clean-cut stitch pattern that is globally popular and widely accepted by both genders and exhibits the emotion of warmth and comfort for its consumers. Hence, achieving a principle of harmony where the contrasting components complement each other smoothly within the design without disturbing the aesthetics and attractiveness of the garment's appearance. The coat is designed to be worn for extravagant occasions as the *Bisht* embroidery and stitch pattern give the garment an overall royal finish.

Design Contribution and Innovation: Retaining material culture through apparel design is an innovative step forward towards connecting different cultures on a global scale. The brand Haneen designs this overcoat to depict the cultures of both Saudi Arabia and Scotland as an attempt to sustain cultural representation in contemporary fashion through cultural exchange between countries with contrasting consumers, aesthetics, and apparel design techniques. The design demonstrates an exploratory and innovative method in combining two aesthetic styles, creating a branding, and marketing the design for two varying demographics. The garment piece contributes to the need for sustaining cultures and traditions as well as enhances the demand for globalization through different industries. The FEA framework for apparel design aids the designer and marketer in providing an extensive set of aspects for consideration when creating a brand and designing garments while keeping the Saudi and Scottish consumers at the forefront during the design process. It allowed for focus on the functionality of the garment in terms of keeping warm, mobility and comfort; how it is expressive of dignified status and cultural identity; and lastly the overall aesthetic the consumers would view as unique and appealing. The study contributes to bridging the gap in connecting cultures and there is a need for more research to understand the ways in which craft enhances fashion design and communication between different cultures of varying countries.

References

- Alotaibi, S. M., & Starkey, S. (2020). Retaining Ethnic Identity in the Apparel Design of Modern Saudi Dress. *Proceedings of the International Textile and Apparel Association Annual Conference*, 77(1). <https://doi.org/10.31274/itaa.11853>
- Bendoni, W. K., Hughes, M. Ü., & Nagel, A. (2015). Fashion disruption in the digital age. *Proceedings of Global Fashion Management Conference at Florence*, 333-337. <http://db.koreascholar.com/Article/Detail/299187>
- Brown, S., & Vacca, F. (2022). Cultural sustainability in fashion: Reflections on craft and sustainable development models. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 18(1), 590-600.
- Crane, D., & Bovone, L. (2006). Approaches to material culture: The sociology of fashion and clothing. *Poetics*, 34(6), 319-333.
- Lamb, J. M., & Kallal, M. J. (1992). A conceptual framework for apparel design. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10(2), 42-47.
- Tuite, A., & Horton, K. (2019). Crafting symbolic value: art, craft, and independent fashion. *Creative Industries Journal*, 12(3), 284-300.

References for Figures

- Figure 1: Saudi Arabesque, (2016, August 29). *Traditional urban men's dress of Saudi Arabia*. <https://saudiarabesque.com/traditional-urban-men-s-dress-of-saudi-arabia-continued/>
- Figure 2: Wilcox, D. (2016). Scottish late seventeenth-century male clothing: some context for the Barrock estate finds. *Costume*, 50(2), 151-168.

