

The Impacts of Globalization on Maya Dress Practices and Textile Artisanry in Contemporary Yucatán

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Background/Purpose: There are few, if any, cultures of the world that have not been affected by the mechanisms of globalization. Although, the beauty of ancient Maya culture has inspired art and design throughout the world, it has also been affected by outside influence since contact with colonizers. In Mexico, acculturation has intensified as rapid globalization has brought new products, people and ideologies to the modern Maya. The artifacts of Maya culture, specifically dress, have been acculturated just the same. In the present day, the popularity of ethical fashion has brought the design, production and sale of artisanal crafts to the forefront of the textile and apparel marketplace. Due to the importance of preserving Maya heritage, there have been many studies on culture and craft (Appadurai, 1986; Little, 2005; Kowalski, 2009). However, little has been studied on how the production of artisan crafts affects the consumption and use of traditional dress by the artisans who create it. This study investigates 1) how modern technology, global markets and tourism have altered the design and sale of the *huipil* (traditional Maya garment), and 2) how this garment has come to be used as a commodity, and less an expression of cultural identity for female Maya artisans.

Methods: This study used the grounded theory method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to investigate the connections between artisanship, globalization, and dress beginning with a literature review of Maya identity, consumption, tourism, craft design and contemporary culture that drove multiple field research conducted in 2015 and 2016. Ethnographic observations, photos, and artifacts were collected from artisans in Yucatan. In March of 2016, qualitative interviews were conducted with 8 textile artisans, and translated from Yucatec Maya/Spanish to English. Lastly, a photo-elicitation study conducted in December of 2016 documented daily dress practices of the artisans.

Findings: The literature review uncovered associations between globalization and indigenous dress practices. These themes included Maya socioeconomic marginalization and stigmatization of traditional dress, the access to mass-market products, and the popularity of Maya culture in the tourist market effected change in dress as the production of adapted cultural products for sale increased, and the regular consumption of the *huipil* decreased among artisans. (Castañeda, 2004; Greenfield, 2006; Rogal, 2010). Interview responses confirmed that comfort, cost and serviceability were factors in selecting modern over traditional clothing. On the subject of adapting traditional designs both for sale and use, artisans agreed that new materials, rapid sewing technologies, stylistic influences seen online, and tourist tastes were drivers of change. Furthermore, artisans concurred that now (as opposed to the pre-tourism economy) their primary motivation for creating *huipiles* was to sell them. Responses also confirmed that the *huipil* is only regularly used on special occasions or when selling handicrafts at market. The photo

elicitation imagery documented activities from the artisan's perspective and uncovered the dress practices of 4 distinct generational groups. Women in the 65+ group subscribed to traditional dress on a daily basis. Women in the middle group (age 25-65) wore modern style clothing daily, and traditional dress when selling at the market. The youngest group of women (under 25) never wore traditional garments. Children and youth (18 and under) not only wore modern clothing, but their garments included American brand logos and pop culture imagery. From field observations of sales activity within the craft marketplace, it was noted that increased tourist visitation to Punta Laguna had created a new opportunity for artisans to sell *huipiles*. Designs had been adapted and new styles developed. Items like blouses, modern dresses, bags, wallets, napkins, necklaces and earrings were developed using the embroidery methods traditionally used to make the *huipil*. It was evident that artisans spent the bulk of their craft-making time creating these modified products in quantity, shifting the focus away from making *huipiles* for themselves.

Conclusions: This study highlighted how the commodification of the *huipil* has reshaped Maya dress identity. The findings conclude that female members of rural Maya communities in Yucatán Peninsula are in fact electing to forego the daily use of traditional costume for modern clothing styles due to globalization influences that alter the production, design and, in effect, the use of traditional garments by artisans. The availability of mass market apparel, demand for cultural products, and access to global trends via technology and cultural exchange via tourism are all major contributors to the abandonment of traditional dress by younger generations. This paradigm shift distinctly shows rapid changes in dress across generations. While young Maya women may've lose interest in wearing traditional *huipiles*, the popularity of Mexican-made ethical brands are reintroducing the modified *huipil* in high-end fashion, and may trickle down into Mexican mainstream fashion. There is no doubt that there is more to be found about how female Maya youth will embrace or decline dress heritage in the future and temper their own individual expressions cultural identity in an increasingly connected world.

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