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U.S. Consumer Response to Original Styles Featuring Traditional Burmese Textiles

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The focus of this study was to: (1) create five contemporary fashion designs reflecting visual art styles (Dondis, 1973) and incorporating colorful traditional Burmese plain fabrics and “Acheik” fabrics as well as Burmese traditional costume and artifacts as inspirations; (2) analyze the consumers’ responses to FEA attributes across five different garment styles; and (3) measure the aesthetic appeal of Burmese traditional fabric within fashion designs.

Since Burmese textiles were being promoted, Burmese cultural apparel and artifact styles were used as inspiration in creating the range of visual styles articulated by Dondis (1973). The conceptual framework for creating the survey design and analysis was the Functional, Expressive and Aesthetic (FEA) Consumer Needs Model (Lamb & Kallal, 1992). The survey deployed through an Amazon Mechanical Turk online survey was used to obtain a sample of 200 women. The purposive sample was 19-40 years of age, mostly white, college educated and from 40 states across the U.S.

The results of the analysis were two-part: (1) quantitative results for demographics and Likert scale questions for five different styles of garments that incorporated functional, expressive and aesthetic (FEA) considerations and (2) qualitative results of open-ended questions classified within FEA themes. Each style in the collection had a differing proportion of audience within the sample who supported the design.

This study showed replication of the importance of functional considerations found in previous research as well as the prominence of aesthetic and expressive considerations (Bye & Hakala, 2005; Adelaja, Salusso, & Black, 2016.) Qualitative statements emphasized design strength and weakness across the five designs within aesthetic considerations of attractiveness of style, flatter the wearer’s body, and design character. Figure 1 includes photographs of the modeled original designs included in the survey as well as sketches of the refined designs that reflect input from participants’ quantitative results and qualitative comments. In future design research, these refined designs could be made to satisfy a larger audience of consumers and also used to collect more data from other populations such as Burma and Thailand.

The authors recommend including consumer input into the design process to reap a potential sustainability benefit from apparel designs refined in response to consumer research before mass produced. Thus, more consumers could potentially highly value what they purchase and wear those designs with more frequency and longevity. This benefit would then result in much fewer garments being discarded and resources wasted on poorly designed apparel. Design research with consumer input would therefore contribute to a sustainability agenda.



Figure 1. Original design collection in five visual styles used to elicit compared design refinements based on quantitative and qualitative consumer response via Amazon Turk Survey.

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