

Documentation and design development of a multipurpose maternity collection based on Southeastern Ethiopian costume

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the documentation and design development of a multipurpose maternity collection inspired by Southeastern Ethiopian costume. Through extensive research on the cultural and traditional attire of the region, with a focus on garments for pregnant women, the author aims to create a collection that honors the cultural heritage of Southeastern Ethiopia while meeting the practical needs and comfort of expectant mothers. Key elements of Southeastern Ethiopian costume are identified and integrated into modern maternity wear designs, blending tradition with modernity. The design process includes sketching, pattern-making, fabric selection, and garment construction to bring the collection to life. This work contributes to the preservation and promotion of Southeastern Ethiopian costume through innovative design solutions for maternity wear, providing pregnant women with stylish and comfortable clothing options.

Keywords: Southeastern Ethiopian costume, maternity wear, cultural heritage, design development, traditional attire, pregnant women, innovation, comfort, style, preservation

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia, a land of ancient traditions and diverse cultures, boasts a rich tapestry of customs and rituals that permeate daily life. From the meticulous art of serving coffee to the intricate process of folding a dress, Ethiopian customs are deeply rooted in centuries of practice. The nation's ethnic and linguistic diversity further contributes to its cultural vibrancy, with over 80 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own language, customs, and traditions. Central to Ethiopian culture is the significance of clothing and adornment. Ethiopians possess a profound appreciation for beauty and decoration, which is reflected in their distinctively striking attire. Traditional costumes, adorned with enduring symbols such as the cross and the lion's mane, serve as tangible expressions of identity and heritage. Intricate hairstyles and facial tattoos further accentuate the aesthetic allure of Ethiopian fashion. In the southeastern region of Ethiopia, encompassing the Sidama, Gurage, Hadiya, and Halaba communities, traditional costumes hold particular significance. However, despite their cultural importance, these costumes have remained largely undocumented, placing indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage at risk of extinction. The lack of documentation not only hinders efforts to preserve and celebrate Ethiopia's diverse cultural heritage but also limits opportunities for innovation and creative expression within the fashion industry.

Furthermore, the field of maternity wear presents its own set of challenges and opportunities. Historically, maternity apparel has been overlooked as a distinct market segment, with limited options available to expectant mothers. However, evolving societal expectations, coupled with increasing media attention to pregnant celebrities, have spurred a transformation in maternity fashion. Today, expectant mothers seek stylish and functional clothing that accommodates their changing bodies throughout pregnancy and beyond. In light of these challenges and opportunities, this study seeks to address two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to document the traditional costumes of the Sidama, Gurage, Hadiya, and Halaba communities, shedding light on their cultural significance and aesthetic intricacies. Secondly, it endeavors to design and develop a collection of multipurpose maternity wear inspired by these traditional costumes, aligning with current fashion trends for the Spring/Summer 2024/2025 season.

Through this research, we aspire to bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, preserving Ethiopia's cultural heritage while embracing contemporary fashion sensibilities. By documenting traditional costumes and creating versatile maternity wear collections, we aim to promote cultural appreciation, foster sustainability, and celebrate the unique identity of Ethiopia's diverse communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

Velvet Fabric: Cotton spandex velvet fabric was obtained from local shops in Addis

Ababa, Ethiopia. The detailed fabric specification is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Fabric specification

Fabric specification	
Fabric composition	Cotton and spandex
Fabric type	Velvet
Composition of spandex	90% cotton and 10% elastane
Fabric structure	Twill
Fabric G.S.M	168
End per inch (EPI)	130
Picks per inch (PPI)	70
Warp count	30
Weft count	30

Equipment: The equipment required their functions is shown in Table 2 and throughout the course of this research and Table 3.

Table 2 Materials for costume documentation purpose

Name of materials	Functions
Digital camera	Digitally capture, archive, and preserve photographs of costumes and accessories. These saved photographs can either be instantly uploaded to a computer or saved in the camera for later transfer to a computer or printer. Therefore, it can be used for documentation purposes.
Digital sound record	Utilized as a primary and secondary data collection method for recording.
Color print	It is crucial for explaining and demonstrating various costume outfits, accessories, and hairstyles throughout the literature and final image materials pertaining to the concept.
Literature books	It is important to gather information of costumes.
Album size color Photo	It is crucial and required for recording outfit image.
Photo album	Used to gather pictures of colored costumes.

Table 3 Materials for costume documentation purpose

Name of materials	Functions
Tracing wheel	Transferring pattern forms on paper with a pointed wheel. Sharp wheel and carbon paper are used to transfer pattern shapes from carbon paper to muslin.
Awl	To indicate where the darts, pockets, trim, and buttonhole placements end, punch a 1/8-inch hole through the pattern.
Notcher	It has been used to mark seam allowance, center lines, ease notches, and distinguish the front and back of patterns by cutting a 1/4 1/16-inch opening at the pattern's edge.
Ironing machine and board	The iron is a little tool that is used to iron out creases in fabric. It is additionally referred to as a smoothing iron, flat iron, or clothes iron. The act of ironing is the process of removing creases from fabric using a hot instrument.
Digital camera	It is crucial to build a look book before shooting the finished contemporary clothing.
A lockstitch sewing machine	It is the most typical stitch that a sewing machine produces. It is helpful for putting the fabric pieces together. Dress shirt labels frequently use the phrase "single needle stitching," which refers to a lockstitch 5 thread overlook machine.
Overlock sewing machine	A specific type of stitch called an Overlock is used to sew over the edge of one or two pieces of fabric for edging, hemming, or seaming.

Methods

Phase 1: Documentation of Southeastern Ethiopian Costume

The study area focused on Sidama, Gurage, Hadiya, and Halaba costume. Sampling techniques included both probability and non-probability methods. Primary data collection methods included structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews, and observation. Secondary data was collected from various sources like the internet, books, journals, and periodicals.

Phase 2: Trend Analysis 2024/2025

Detailed fashion trend analysis was conducted for 2024/2025, focusing on color, style, texture, and finish.

Phase 3: Multi-purpose Maternity Wear Collection

The design and development process involved briefing the project, researching the client's ecosystem, brainstorming ideas, building the design concept, presenting and refining the work, and putting the design into production.

Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for data analysis, including charts and software for scientific analysis.

Data Presentation

Data was presented using textual, tabular, and chart representations to convey qualitative and quantitative information effectively.

informed consent, confidentiality, and privacy protection for all research participants

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identification and Examination of Traditional Costumes

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the research process, including The study focused on meticulously identifying and critically examining the traditional costumes of the Sidama, Gurage, Hadiya, and Halaba ethnic groups in Ethiopia's southeastern region. Through primary data collection methods such as

observation and interview questionnaires, insights were gleaned from original locations including Hawasa, Hosana, Halaba, Addis Ababa, Wolkite, and Butajira cities. Additionally, secondary information from cultural and tourism offices provided valuable context. The findings underscored the rich diversity and cultural significance embedded within these traditional costumes, serving as a tangible manifestation of Ethiopia's cultural heritage.

Seemma: It top clothing worn above the jacket and also it has thick layer. *Seemma* is worn only by elders in Sidama culture. They hold blade above the *Seemma* to show their bravery. *Seemma* can be called *Buluko*.



Figure 1 Seemma clothing

Men accessories

Heriboorra: It is cultural jewelry only the heros wear in Sidama culture . It is made up from the elephant teeth. It is available in variety of sizes.



Figure 2 Heriboorra jewelry

Machalla or Bilico: It is earring used by hero men made from silver and shows the higher status of the person in Sidama. Where as the feather which is called *womi cea* is used to show bravery of the men and by counting the number of feather we can understand the number of birds he hunted and also he used *Gunfaaara* hair style.



Figure 3 Machalla or Bilico

Documentation and Evolution of Maternity Collection

A key aspect of the study was the documentation and evolution of multifunctional maternity collections. By exploring the historical evolution and contemporary relevance of maternity wear within these ethnic groups, the research shed light on the intersection of tradition and

modernity. Through the creation of prototypes incorporating jewelry, accessories, and multipurpose cloth, the study aimed to bridge the gap between tradition and contemporary fashion, offering practical solutions for pregnant women while celebrating cultural identity.



Figure 4 Maternity collection

Promotion of Cultural Heritage

The study's findings underscored the importance of promoting Ethiopia's unique cultural heritage, particularly within the southeastern region. By documenting and preserving

traditional costumes, the research contributes to the preservation and promotion of cultural identity. Moreover, by understanding the background and current trends, the study provides valuable insights for

the emerging fashion industry in Ethiopia, highlighting the potential of

traditional fabrics as a foundation for innovation and creativity.

CONCLUSION

Traditional clothing and textiles serve as essential elements of cultural identity and heritage for every nation. In Ethiopia, the rich tapestry of traditional clothing across various ethnic groups reflects a profound sense of pride and dignity rooted in centuries-old traditions. This research has illuminated the significance of traditional attire among Ethiopian ethnic groups, particularly those in the southeastern region such as the Gurage, Hadiya, Halaba, and Sidama people. The benefits of this research extend beyond mere documentation. It offers tangible advantages for governmental agencies, cultural institutions, researchers, students, and the fashion industry. By developing clear documentation portfolios and utilizing museum galleries for cultural promotion, Ethiopia can showcase its rich cultural heritage to the world, fostering acceptance and appreciation from diverse audiences.

Moreover, the research serves as a valuable resource for educational purposes, providing students and researchers with insights into traditional attire and facilitating the development of innovative design collections. The emphasis on multi-purpose maternity clothing not only aligns with current fashion trends but also offers practical solutions for pregnant women while celebrating cultural identity. Looking ahead, there are several recommendations based on the findings of this research. Firstly, efforts should be made to compile archival costume

documentation and establish costume galleries for future reference. Secondly, cultural and tourism offices in cities such as Hawasa, Hosana, Wolkite, and Halaba should implement programs to educate the public about local culture and costume. Additionally, fashion designers can draw inspiration from traditional attire to create modern collections, incorporating smart textiles for enhanced functionality.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity to utilize costume documentation in the movie industry to preserve and showcase cultural attire in a sophisticated manner. Collaborations between academics and filmmakers can contribute to the production of documentary films featuring cultural costume aspects. In essence, this research serves as a cornerstone for the preservation, promotion, and innovation of traditional attire in southeastern Ethiopia and beyond. By embracing and celebrating cultural diversity, Ethiopia can strengthen its cultural identity while contributing to global cultural exchange and appreciation. Overall, this study not only celebrates Ethiopia's rich cultural diversity but also serves as a model for preserving and promoting traditional textiles and clothing worldwide.

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