

SUSTAINING CULTURE THROUGH INTANGIBLE STRATEGIES:

CASE OF UZBEK TRADITIONAL

CLOTHES

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ABSTRACT

Current fashion discipline usually focuses on tangible strategies from culture. As cultural heritage studies underline the importance of both tangible as well as intangible culture.

While intangible strategies are crucial part of culture, most studies focused on tangible strategies of cultural practices. The current thesis investigates intangible strategies of culture. In this research, intangible strategies include knowledge, practices, skills and meanings behind cultural practice, specifically the nonphysical aspects of them. What are the intangible strategies behind traditional clothes, and how can we implement them in designing modern clothes?

This concept is particularly important when it comes to modernization and globalization (mass production and homogenization) because its effects on cultural practices have a degree of endangerment. Knowing the issues affecting cultural practices allows strategies that may help to decrease potential but currently unknown risks of endangerment. Thus, the research undertook the following specific questions: 1) What tangible and intangible strategies are used in Uzbek traditional clothes? 2) What intangible strategies are seen crucial in Uzbek traditional clothes? 3) How do these strategies can be promoted in designing modern clothes?

The research looked at cultural practices as seen in traditional clothes specifically focused on intangible strategies behind them. The research used clothing life cycle and cultural studies as its key concepts to provide an objective to understand the problem and to come up with possible recommendations.

The main research objective is to explore intangible cultural strategies in traditional clothes. The research undertook 3 specific objectives to explore this. First, the research observed production of traditional fabrics and designs of clothes to identify the intangible strategies behind them. Second, it assessed the craftsmen, ethnographers, sellers, designers and consumers response on intangible strategies used in traditional clothes. Third, it identified intangible strategies that can be applied to modern clothes.

The research found that intangible strategies is crucial for the safeguarding the fabrics and patterns of traditional clothes. The craftsmen made fabrics follow the ancestral knowledge and skills while fabrics sold in market do not usually consider the intangible strategies. Rather market sold materials focus on tangible strategies such as how appealing: fabrics, colors and patterns look. When taking current mass market clothes into consideration, the mis interpretation or mis application of intangible cultural strategies of fabrics and patterns might lead to potential risk of sustaining cultural heritage. This lead to understand fabrics sold in mass market are not produced with intangible strategies in mind. Second, the research identified intangible strategies in craftsman made fabrics, its importance behind tangible strategies of clothes. This lead to know that intangible strategies play crucial role in sustaining cultural practices specifically in terms of meanings of fabrics and patterns.

The key informant interviews with craftsmen, experts and designers validated the revival of traditional clothes locally as well as internationally. This is due to aesthetic and exotic appeal of fabrics to international designers while locally it is considered as crucial part of national identify and worn during holidays and special occasions.

Finally, the research identified design strategies for modern garments that maybe adopted from cultural strategies. Designers need to adopt more modern designs in combination with traditional fabrics. This will help them to stand out and appeal to consumers and create a garment that carries value. This is due to association of traditional fabrics with high quality: handmade, uses materials and dyes that are natural and thus has a positive correlation to human well-being.

In general, the research aimed to explore the intangible strategies of traditional clothes, and its role in sustaining culture. The study found that inconsideration of intangible strategies behind traditional clothes, increases the loss of cultural meanings and forms of fabrics and patterns in them. Second, the designers should consider both tangible and intangible in designing clothes and explain to their customers.

Keywords: Cultural sustainability, intangible strategies, traditional clothes