



Versatile bridal wear

by

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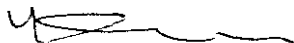
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**Cape Town
October 2010**

DECLARATION

I, Yu-Chieh Chen, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation/thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.



Signed

24 November 2010

Date

ABSTRACT

In the 19th and 20th Century, products were manufactured with little concerns for the environment. The result of this was an over flowing of low quality products and a high elimination rate, especially in the fashion industry where constant change is the nature of the business. Particularly in bridal wears, the sustainability is deficient and practicality is limited, bridal garments would only be worn once and are usually highly priced.

The purpose of this research is to explore whether consumers are willing to contribute and make a difference to our environment by opting for versatile bridal wear. In order to obtain information regarding the bridal industry of Cape Town, a qualitative approach was applied to ensure that the end products will meet customer needs. Store visits and informal interviews were used as the primary methods, and Internet and magazines were used as secondary methods to gain relative information about the market.

The information collected, regarding modern women's opinions on the concept of an interchangeable bridal range, current fashion trends and the concept of Slow Design, forms the foundation to the development of my range - versatile bridal wear. The entire range consists of 14 garment pieces that are interchangeable to form 6 or more looks. This allows the wearer to dress up according to their desires. As a result, these dresses are reusable and thus overcoming the problem of costly garments, which are only worn once.

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THE PROPOSAL

THE PROPOSAL

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the research problem

Fashion in South Africa is growing, where more and more local designers are introducing their designs to the stage of fashion. With the concerns of environment and eco-friendly awareness, to design sustainably should become the first priority when it comes to designing. With these emerging designers, it is exactly the right timing for them to implement sustainable and Slow Design theory into their designs in order to lengthen the lifespan of products.

1.2 Statement of research problem

A wedding is one of the most important days in one's life and when it comes to the wedding gown, every woman would like to have the most elegant one and keep it after the wedding to remember the memorable day, but due to the nature of its purpose, they often have a very short lifespan regarding the frequency of wearing it, and are highly priced.

When looking at the industry of these garments, a gown costs approximately R5000 or more. In the case where customers purchased these gowns, instead of renting, they are often packed away after their initial purpose.

1.3 Significance to knowledge/knowledge gap

In the 19th and 20th century where products had been manufactured without any

concerns regarding the resources and the environment, it is crucial that a front line producer, designer, to implement the practice of sustainability.

Although re-designing on an existing object had been practiced in design fields such as furniture and fashion, examples of these practices on bridal wear is not very common yet.

1.4 Topic area

My main focus here is to design a range targeting in women wear, more precisely, bridal wear, that is versatile and will be able to be seen as another outfit, other than its original intention.

My aim is to design wedding dresses that can be converted to another look so that it can be worn after the initial of purchase to prolong the lifespan of the garment thus make a contribution to sustainable design.

1.5 Clarification of basic terms and concepts

Sustainability: the ability of being long lasting

Slow design: the idea of making a linkage between designer, the product of which they produce and the end user.

1.6 Objectives of the research

The purpose of this research is to explore whether the consumer is willing to contribute and make a difference to our environment by opting for a versatile bridal wear and to what extent, regarding their financial ability, can they contribute. This

research will be targeting on South African women, as well as women from eastern country, Taiwan, of different age groups in order to gain information from a wider range potential customers.

1.7 Sub-question

In order for the reader to have a better understanding of this document, sub-questions are formed which will be answered in each chapters.

The sub-questions are as follows:

- 1.7.1 How can slow design theory contribute to prolonging the lifespan of a designer's products?
- 1.7.2 What influences of western fashion have affected my upcoming bridal range?
- 1.7.3 How will the concept of "reuse" be incorporated into my designs?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous/existing research

The Slow design theory which was developed by Alastair Fuad-Luke was derived from the slow food movement, which was founded in 1989, by Carlo Petrini.

The basic theory of "Slow" is to "allow linking products and their producers to their places of production and to their end-users who, by taking part in the production chain in different ways, become themselves co-producers", as well as encouraging consumers to slow down their paces to minimize the ecological footprint (Rossi *et al.*, 2006:1).

Alastair Fuad-Luke applied the same concept but in the design point of view, he pointed out few examples of what a sustainable designer should keep in mind:

1. Components of designed object should be able to reused and recycled
 2. Focusing on the real need of the consumer, rather than market driven needs
 3. Encourage modularity of the product so that it is possible to repair or reuse in order to improve functionality
 4. educate clients and users by encouraging sustainable literacy and graphicacy
- (Fuad-Luke, 2004)

Designs today are produced to fulfill non-stop consumer needs, most products are manufactured to fulfill the desire and not the actual needs. In order to increase the revenue of a business, the manufacturing of these products are not intended for long lasting purpose (Fuad-Luke, 2004).

Product are so economically driven that the real meaning of the products disappears,

therefore Alastair Fuad-Luke recommend that while designing, economic factors should be put aside temporary, so that the design can meet the real needs of consumer and the environment, as the theory of "slow design" was meant to refocus on individuals; socio-cultural community; environmental well-being (Fuad-Luke, 2004).

Extending the lifespan of a garment can be approached in two ways: re-style existing product or, adopt the slow design theory where of the designer should at the first stage when producing the products, keep in mind of how it can be reused in the later stage.

For the unwanted garment to be worn again by means of re-styling and reusing them has long been practiced. In UK, a London based retailer, *Junky Styling*, allows the customer to bring in old but quality garments for them to re-style and give it a second life (Clark cited in Kay, 2006).

In the furniture industry, an Argentine designer, Diego produced a furniture piece called Tona Chair. This is multipurpose furniture which can either be used as a chair or a table by flipping them over, the user can place them as they desire, therefore the lifespan of this furniture will be longer compare to the one that only serves one purpose (Core 77, 2010).

The industrial revolution in 18th and 19th century, which enabled companies to manufacture products efficiently with the aid of machineries, products is manufactured to accomplish the vast demand of the market, the relationship between the designer and the owner simply lost the connection in between (Clark, 2008). However, living in the 21st century, to design responsibly is not an interest of someone anymore, but an imperative practice that we should all participate to maintain and to better the planet,

as Claudia Donà expressed: "we live in a world overflowing with our own productions, a world in which objects besiege us, suffocate us, and very often distance us from one another both physically and mentally.....they make us forget how to feel, to touch, to think. Accustomed to living in a uniform light, we have grown oblivious of the shadows and fearful of the dark" (Fuad-Luke cited in Donà, 2004). To design responsibly has become an obligation of all designers.

2.2 Theoretical underpinning

According to the several outcomes of Fuad-Luke's Slow Design theory, "encourage a reduction in economic, industrial and urban metabolisms, and hence consumption, by: serving basic human needs; designing for people first, commercialization second; re-awakening individual's own design potential; and catalyzing social transformation towards a less materialistic way of living" (Fuad-Luke, 2004).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

The main goal of this research is to create alternative options for potential customers to become part of the group who is aware of the damage humans are causing to environment.

I aim to produce "bridal wear packages" where additional garments will be sold with the wedding dress so that the wearer can explore their own way of wearing the dress, hence, extend the life of the garment.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

My method of investigation will be through store visits, internet, magazines and informal interviews with both local and foreign women from different age group ranging from age 20 to 35 years.

I will analyse the information of which I am intending to research on to understand whether consumers are willing to accept the concept of reusing their garments that I am intending on implementing into my range. Feedbacks from the research will be analysed and useful information will be taken into consideration when I design my range.

4 DELINEATION OF THE REAEARCH

My research on the information will be based on bridal store visits, internet, magazines and informal interviews with women from Cape Town, as well as relatives in the eastern countries, Taiwan, through e-mail, facebook and msn tools. The reason

for gathering information on women from different countries is to gain wider aspect on modern women's viewpoint on what they think about the concept of which I am intending on placing into my emerging range.

5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Through this research I would like to make my design more meaningful than just a range of tedious wedding dresses, which will be completed by combining the essence of Slow Design theory into my range. The ultimate end product will be versatile dresses that have a second life which will lengthen the lifespan of it that will ultimately reduce the high elimination rate of products.

6 EXPECTED OUTCOMES, RESULTS and CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

I am expecting to produce versatile dresses that are able to transform into a second outfit in order to prolong the lifespan of the garment to reduce the consumption of resources.

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THE DISSERTATION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The setting

The purpose of this research is to explore whether consumers are willing to contribute and make a difference to our environment by opting for versatile bridal wear. This research will be targeting South African and foreign women from different age groups in order to gain information with regards to potential customers.

Fashion in South Africa is growing as an industry, particularly where more and more local designers from various cultures are introducing their designs to the fashion stage. The primary concern for designers should be towards design sustainability and a trend towards eco-awareness (as a result of growing environmental concerns). Now is the time for the emerging designers to implement sustainable design and Slow Design through the production of garments that promotes versatility (where the entire look is matched with various optional garment pieces to create a different look for other occasions, such as honeymoon, weekend or day wear).

For a designer to be part of "Slow Design", they should focus on aspects such as:

- Designing products that can to be reused;
- Focusing on real customer needs and the practicality of the designs;
- Educate clients and users about sustainability by printing written or graphical information on clothing tags;
- Encouraging the disassembly of the products so that it is possible to repair and reuse in order to improve functionality.

A wedding is one of the most important days in one's life and when it comes to the wedding gown, every woman would like to be confident in her gown. However, wedding gowns often

have a very short lifespan, in terms of the duration of which they are worn.

In the wedding industry, gowns cost approximately R5000 or more each and in the case where customers purchase these gowns, instead of renting, they are often packed away after their initial purpose and rarely used again.

In the 19th and 20th century, where products were manufactured without any concerns for the resources and the environment, it is crucial that a designer, who is in the front line of any production, implement the concepts of sustainable design and "Slow Design".

Although redesigning an existing object has been practiced in design fields such as furniture and fashion, examples in the bridal wear industry are not very common, and it is in this aspect that I hope to make a contribution.

The reusing and redesigning of existing garments has been practiced in the past. In casual wear, for example, new life can be given to an old pair of denim jeans by removing the legs portion (leaving the waist and the hip areas) and replacing it with woven fabric to end up with a denim skirt, as shown in figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1: Simple extravagance, *Denim and fabric tiered skirt*, 2009.

(Simpleextravagance.com, 2009)

My main focus, however, is with an exclusive product and a niche market. My aim is to design a range, targeting smart women, more precisely bridal wear, which can be converted to everyday wear. The aim is to produce a range of garments that are versatile, multi-functional and interchangeable.

The transformation practice will be done in either of the following methods:

- Gowns will be paired with a shawl, bolero, pants or various garment pieces that can be matched with the dress itself so that it appears to be another look, or
- The gown itself will have different components, for example bows or panels, that can be removed or adjusted thus it can be worn repeatedly where it was previously designed for only a single, specific occasion.

1.2 Purpose statement

My aim is to design garments that can be converted into another look so that they can wear it after the initial purchase to prolong the lifespan of the garment thus making a contribution to sustainable design.

1.3 Sub-Questions

Throughout this document, each chapter will provide new information to the reader, and will, at the same time answer the sub questions that are derived from the main problem. The sub-questions are:

- How can the Slow Design theory contribute to prolong the lifespan of a designer's products?
- What influences of western fashion have affected my upcoming bridal range?
- How will the concept of "reuse" be incorporated into my designs?

Chapter 2 is the literature review. This chapter clarifies the theory of *Slow Design* on which this document is based. Examples of designs/designers that had adopted the same concept of the theory from various design disciplines will be mentioned.

Chapter 3 provides a background for my inspirations. This chapter has information and explanations on how wedding gowns have changed since the medieval period up to the present.

Chapter 4 outlines the practical approach on how information that was acquired, through various ways of information gathering methods, were analysed and then eventually combined into a bridal range. At the same time, images of my design are included for a better understanding of the range.

Chapter 5 analyses the market feasibility of my bridal range. Aspects such as description of the industry and market, competition, future market potential and recommendations of business strategies to promote my products are taken into account.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a theoretical framework will be provided based on the Slow Design theory by Alastair Fuad-Luke. The concept of modular design will also be discussed, and subsequently, existing practices that have adopted these methods will be touched on.

The Slow Design theory, developed by Alastair Fuad-Luke, was derived from the slow food movement, which was founded in 1989, by Carlo Petrini.

The basic theory of "Slow" is to "allow linking products and their producers to their places of production and to their end-users who, by taking part in the production chain in different ways, become themselves co-producers" (Rossi et al, 2006:1), as well as encouraging consumers to slow down their paces to minimize the ecological footprint.

2.2 Slow Design

Alastair Fuad-Luke applied the same concept but from a design point of view. He pointed out that a sustainable designer should keep the following in mind:

1. Components of the designed object should be able to be reused and recycled.
2. Focus on the real needs of the consumers, rather than market driven needs.
3. Encourage modularity of the product so that it is possible to repair or reuse in order to improve functionality.
4. Educate clients and users by encouraging sustainable literacy and graphics.
5. Question and challenge the status quo surrounding existing products.
6. Create maximum benefits of wellbeing to the possible audience.

7. At all stages of the product life cycle, be sure to eliminate the use of toxic or hazardous substances that will be a threat to humans and other forms of life.
 8. Maximize product benefits to socio-cultural potential clients
- (Fuad-Luke, 2004)

These days, products are manufactured to meet consumers' high demand. Most products are manufactured to fulfill the desires of people and not their actual needs. Products are not made in a way for it to last long, because by doing this, consumers will need to replace the broken product with a new one, which will only benefit the company's revenue.

Products are so economically driven that the real meaning of the products fades away. Designers should put the economic factors aside temporarily, while designing, so that the design can achieve the real needs of the consumer and the environment, because the theory of slow design was meant to refocus on individuals, socio-cultural community and environmental well-being (Fuad-Luke, 2004).

The problem of the over-flowing of low quality products as well as the rapid elimination and replacement of old designs exists. I would like to solve this problem by designing garments targeting a niche market, which is the bridal wear, that will be able to last longer by creating good quality designs and allow them to be interchangeable and versatile so that there is a possibility for it to be worn again.

Extending the lifespan of a garment can be approached in two ways: Firstly, re-style existing products, or secondly, adopt the slow design theory, where the designer should, at the first stage of producing products, keep in mind of how it can be reused at a later stage.

My method of reusing these garments is to allow them to be interchangeable within the "package" which the garment is going to be sold with. In this package, brides can interchange garments, transforming it into a casual look so that they are ready to depart on honeymoon

after the wedding without worrying what they should wear. The new transformed outfit can also be worn to other occasions

2.3 Existing practice

The re-styling and re-using of unwanted garments, in order for them to be worn again, has long been practiced. Junky Styling, a London based retailer in the United Kingdom allows the customer to bring in old but quality garments for them to re-style second life (Clark cited in Kay, 2006). Figure 2.1 is an example of a scarf that is transformed from an unwanted suit.



Figure 2.1: Junky styling, *hooded suit scarf*, 2010. (Junky styling, 2010)

In the furniture industry, an Argentine designer, Diego, produced a furniture piece called Tona Chair, (Figure 2.2). This multipurpose furniture piece can either be used as a chair or as a table by flipping it over, the user can then place it as they desire. Therefore the lifespan of this furniture piece will be longer compared to the one that only serves one purpose (Core 77, 2010).

TABLE OR CHAIR?

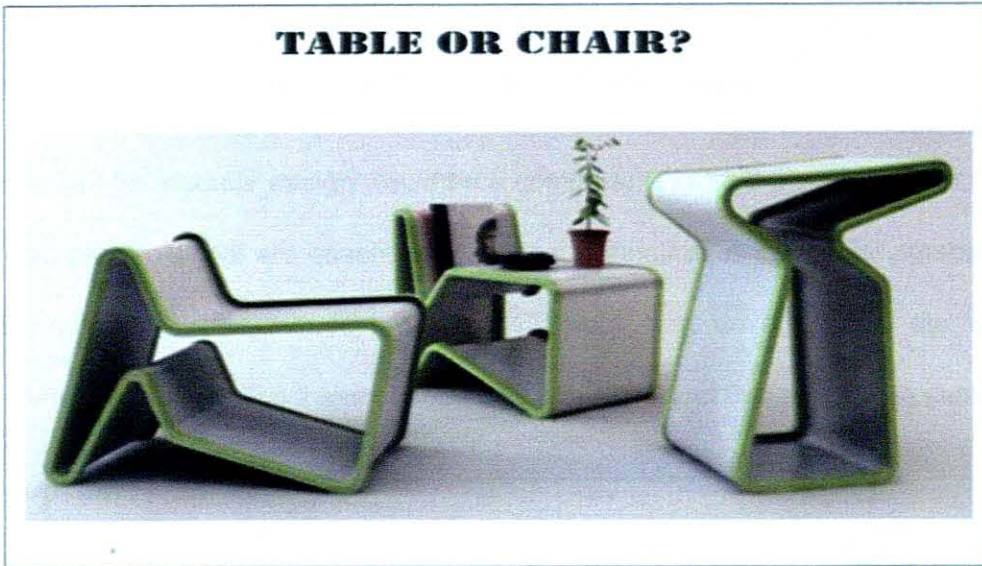


Figure 2.2 Diego Gonzalez King, *Tona chair*, 2007. (Coroflot.com, 2010)

During the 18th and 19th century, the Industrial Revolution enabled companies to manufacture products efficiently in order to meet the vast demand of the consumers. In this period, the relationship between the designers and the product owners simply lost connection (Clark, 2008). However, living in the 21st century, to design responsibly is not just an interest for designers anymore. It has become an imperative practice that we should all participate in, in order to maintain and to better the planet. Claudia Donà expressed:

"We live in a world overflowing with our own productions, a world in which objects besiege us, suffocate us, and very often distance us from one another both physically and mentally.....they make us forget how to feel, to touch, to think. Accustomed to living in a uniform light, we have grown oblivious of the shadows and fearful of the dark."

(Donà, 2004)

2.4 Modularity

A key point of slow design is to produce modular designs. This means allowing the product to

be composed of various elements. The advantage of modular design is that it enables the users to replace the broken elements instead of the entire product.

An example of a modular design would be a computer (Figure 2.3). A computer is a group of electronic elements that are assembled to serve a function. A traditional personal computer consists out of a screen, mouse, keyboard, CD-Rom, hard drive, speaker etc. When any of these elements malfunction it can be replaced with a product that serves the same function.



Figure 2.3 MAC, *desktop set*, 2010. (yahoo.com, 2010)

2.5 Summary

According to the several outcomes of Fuad-Luke's slow design theory, slow designs "encourage a reduction in economic, industrial and urban metabolisms, and hence consumption. This is achieved by serving basic human needs, designing for people first and commercialization second, re-awakening individual's own design potentials, and catalyzing social transformation towards a less materialistic way of living" (Fuad-Luke, 2004), and this is in line with the aims of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF WESTERN WEDDING GOWNS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will familiarize the readers with the history of the wedding gown, more specifically with regards to how it has changed through time, from the medieval period to the 21st century. Historical examples provided will be linked to how I approached my design range and I will attempt to address the question of how the influences of western fashion have affected my upcoming bridal range.

3.2 Medieval period

Royal marriage was an alliance between two countries, which often consisted of political importance, therefore young brides would dress up excessively so that they looked outstanding and magnificent. This was done to uphold the image of her country and to impress the people from the groom's country. Brides often wore gowns encrusted with precious gems such as diamonds, sapphires, rubies, pearls and emeralds. These gowns were symbols of wealth and status.

During this period, colours that were used in wedding gowns were rich colours such as red, purple and black. These colours were difficult to acquire and were therefore more precious, expensive and also reflected higher levels of wealth.

3.3 18th Century

The white gown, which was made popular by Queen Victoria, has maintained its position through to the 21st century. Figure 3.1 is an image of Queen Victoria in 1840, she wore a white silk and Honiton lace, with a matching head veil, of which the train measured 18 feet. This

impressed the audience and soon became the fashion of wedding gowns (Wedding gowns, 2009).



Figure 3.1: Alexandrina Victoria, *court gown*, 1854. (china.com, 2010)

White, or any variation of white, symbolized the purity, innocence and virginity of a bride; as a result, it was favoured during this time period. Blue was also a popular colour due to its association with the Virgin Mary, which symbolized purity and eternal love. Brides who wore blue believed that their husbands would always be true and loyal to them. Even if their gown was not blue, they would include blue accessories to be worn with the wedding dress. Since then this has become a tradition.

Wedding gowns of brides in the lower section of the social hierarchy would be dresses that were usually being worn as daily wear. Embellishing the dress with ribbon and laces changed it into a wedding dress.

3.4 19th Century

Wedding dresses in this period followed what was in fashion at that time. It was the time where brides first wore gowns that revealed their knees. However, this style did not last long because it was seen as inappropriate for a church service.

The interruptions of the First and Second World War, which impacted all levels of society, apparently changed the style of wedding gowns. Owing to the limitation of resources, clothes were rationed and uniforms could be seen everywhere. After the war period when fashion bloomed again people were eager to wear luxurious and voluminous wedding gowns.

Different styles of wedding gowns came into play after the world war. These included the dropping of the waistline in the 1920's to its usual length. During the 1930's the style was padded shoulders, big sleeve features, sweet heart shaped neckline (refer to figure 3.3), high waist empire line dress and the extravagant circular skirt (DressFinder.com, 2006).



Figure 3.2: Mary Woodworth Bradley, 1935 wedding gown, U.S.A. (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010)

3.5 Contemporary bridal fashion

Bridal gowns have changed into various shapes, lengths and colours in time. Designer Monique Lhuillier, a Filipina fashion designer which is based in Los Angeles, has in her latest collection designed a short wedding dress (Figure 3.4), which is predicted to be seen more often at weddings.

In most of the traditional weddings, white gowns were, and still are, the main colour to be worn, which represents the purity of the marriage. Nowadays, fashion designers, such as Vera Wang, have brought the colour black into her designs (Figure 3.5; 3.6; 3.7 and 3.8), which has become a fashion statement and a whole new view on wedding gowns (4marry.net, 2010).

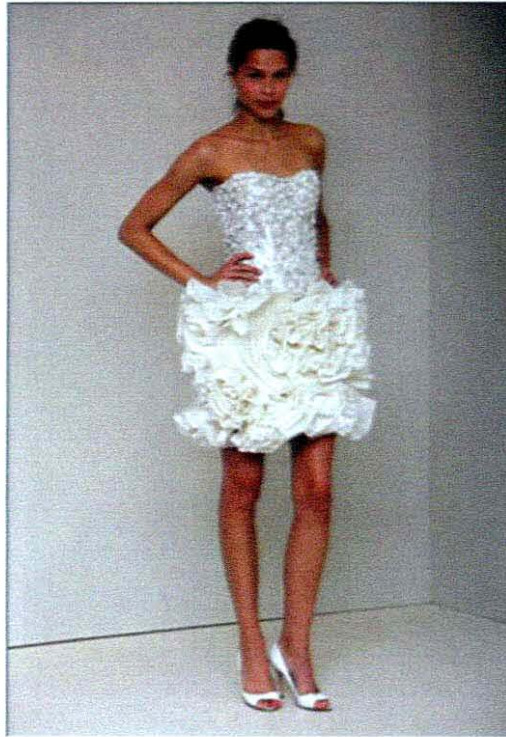


Figure 3.3: Monique Lhuillier, *Bridal Spring 2011*. 2010 (Monique Lhuillier.com, 2010.)

In most of the traditional weddings, white gowns were, and still are, the main colour to be worn, which represents the purity of the marriage. Nowadays, fashion designers, such as Vera Wang, have brought the colour black into her designs (Figure 3.5; 3.6; 3.7 and 3.8), which has become a fashion statement and a whole new view on wedding gowns (4marry.net, 2010).



Figure 3.4: Vera Wang, *Black wedding gown*, 2009. (Verawang.com, 2010)



Figure 3.5: Vera Wang, *Fall bridal collection*, 2010. (Verawang.com, 2010)



Figure 3.6: Vera Wang, 2010 *Spring bridal collection*, 2009. (Verawang.com, 2010)



Figure 3.7: Vera Wang, 2010 *Spring bridal collection*, 2009. (Verawang.com, 2010)

3.6 Hybrid of past and present

With the information that I have acquired from the primary research, interview with a bridal boutique owner, also a qualified photographer, Michael Liu, there is evidence that weddings are shifting to a more casual ambiance regarding the colour, silhouette and the entire mood of wedding ceremonies.

Keeping in mind the shift of wedding traditions towards a more casual approach, and the global economic situation, I would like to produce ten to fourteen garment pieces, of various lengths and colours, but keeping the white shade fabrics as my main focus, and adopting those forecasted colours and styles into my entire bridal collection, hereby acknowledging Slow Design and the principles of sustainability by being versatile and interchangeable.

3.7 Summary

Bridal gowns evolved over time as well as the colour and silhouette of the gowns. I would like to use the examples from the past as a guide for designing my upcoming bridal range. Inspired by the challenging colours of wedding gowns nowadays and the variety of fabrics that are available, I will design my range and take into consideration the essence of the slow design theory. I will create versatile bridal ranges enabling the brides to mix and match garments pieces within the bridal package to create their own outfit according to their personal preferences. Product development will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR PRACTICAL COMPONENTS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the practical approach on how I gathered and analysed my information. It furthermore explains how the concepts from the Slow Design theory, which is to design products that can be reused, were implemented into my range of clothing.

4.2 Field/approach and method

I am focusing on fashion design, which is the field of my study. In order to obtain information regarding the bridal industry in Cape Town, a qualitative approach was applied. I used store visits and informal interviews as primary methods, and Internet and magazines as secondary methods to gain relative information about the market.

Stores that were visited in Cape Town were Sophia Boutique, Wedding time bridal boutique, Jagadi in Claremont and Bride & Co. at Century City. From these stores my aim was to acquire information on style, price and consumer behavior regarding their preferences on wedding dresses.

4.3 Data analysis/Findings

The results collected from various sources, which included store visits, informal interviews, internet and magazines, were used as a guideline of the aspects I should consider when designing my ranges. The results have shown that aspects such as style, price and lifestyle have changed over time, which leads to the change, and transformation of wedding dresses.

The feedback from Michael, the owner of Sophia bridal boutique, pointed out, which wedding dresses in his store were the best sellers and which ones were difficult to sell. The differences are usually in the style and colour of the dresses. Michael has been the owner of the bridal boutique for 8 years. He explained that some customers do not know what shape of wedding dress suits them best, so the assistant in the store has to assist and give advice to the customer.

Informal interviews were done with 20 women from the age of 20 to 32 years. Questions that were asked include:

- Will they purchase wedding dresses with the concept of reusing it after the wedding?
- What do they think about the idea of wedding dresses being sold as a package?
- How much are they willing to spend on wedding dresses?
- Which colour, style and shape do they prefer?

The results from the interview were positive; it showed that 70% of the women interviewed liked the idea of a versatile wedding dress. The same amount of money could rather be spent on buying a wedding dress that is versatile and more practical than buying a wedding dress that can only be worn once.

Colour-wise, 85% chose white as their wedding dress, whereas 15% would attempt to dress in daring colours such as black, or colours of soft pastel shades such as peach, purple and blue that is currently in fashion. The budget for the wedding dress varies from R3000 to R8000, depending on the cost of their venues and other expenses for the wedding.

Regarding the style and silhouette, the majority opts for dresses that will cover their flaws and suit their budget. The length of the dresses varies according to the type and venues of the wedding, for example, a shorter dress will be more favorable for a beach wedding. However, the ultimate choice of the style and silhouette depends on personal preference.

Information sourced from magazines and Internet showed that there is a shift from the traditional church wedding towards a more casual wedding held in hotels or the outdoors. For outdoor venues such as a beach wedding dresses need to be clean cut and convenient to move in.

Therefore, in order to accomplish these requirements and simultaneously apply the Slow Design theory to support my thesis, I reasoned that to produce versatile wedding dresses with a concept of selling it as a “bridal package”, would offer a convenient way of dressing to the bride.

Designing wedding dresses that are versatile increases the frequency of wearing these garments, in other words, these outfits satisfies the initial need of the customer (for wedding purpose). After the wedding it can be worn to other occasions when they replace it with the pre-designed garment piece that was meant to substitute an item of the wedding dress in the bridal package. This achieves the essence of the Slow Design theory, which supports the principle of extending the lifespan of an object, where products should be reusable and the design should focus on the customer needs rather than market driven needs.

4.4 Products

The range consists of 14 interchangeable garment pieces. Each outfit is supported by images, followed by descriptions of the design, the fabric choice, colours and the styling. Images are to be seen later in this chapter.

These garments include:

1 x draped body suit,

1 x bolero,

1 x tailor jacket,

2 x pants,

2 x floor length dress

2 x mid-thigh length dress

2 x corsets

3 x long skirt,

While designing these garments, I have kept in mind how it can be paired with other garment pieces to create alternative outfits for each individual. The customer can either wear it with the alternative piece that is designed for the garment, or even match it with garments that they already own, in this way; it enables the original wedding dress to be worn more frequently.

Designs 1 to 5 are created for the customer to mix and match with garment pieces within these groups, whereas design 6 is set to be unchangeable.

4.4.1 Design 1



Figure 4.1 Yu-Chieh Chen, August 2010, Cowl neck body suit with asymmetrical tiered skirt

Soft pastel shades are the main trends in the clothing industry as well as in bridal wear in 2010 and will be in 2011; therefore I use this soft salmon georgette as the colour for this dress. This outfit consists of two separate pieces. The bodice is a double-layered cowl neck body suit with snap button at the gusset. It is worn with a tiered and flared skirt with a train. The length of the skirt is knee length at the front with a train at the back. The skirt can be substituted with a black, high-waist pencil skirt that is made from peach skin fabric.

4.4.2 Design 2



Figure 4.2 Yu-Chieh Chen, August 2010, Strapless asymmetrical dress with floor length skirt

This is a thigh-length asymmetrical layered dress that has a separate floor length column skirt. The strapless dress contains four layers of fabrics, which are: lining, boning, Dutch satin and chiffon. The boning layer keeps the dress in shape and ensures a better posture. On the outer layer, chiffon pieces have been randomly placed on various satin layers to tone down the shine of Dutch satin, so that it creates a soft feeling for the entire dress. The dress is completed with an invisible zip at a slightly v-shaped centre back. White fabric was chosen for this dress, as shades of white are still the mainstay of wedding dresses.

The skirt piece can be replaced with pre-paired pants that are made from cotton fabric with slight stretch. Details of these pants are the pin tucks which are focused at the bottom leg portion.

4.4.3 Design 3



Figure 4.3 Yu-Chieh Chen, August 2010, Strapless dress with pleated styling

Wedding dresses are becoming more and more casual as not all weddings are held in a formal church. Alternatively, people opt for outdoor or beach weddings. In this case, shorter wedding dresses are more favourable.

Taking into consideration the wind at the beach, this dress is designed to be simple yet elegant. Instead of adopting any excess fabrics that are inconvenient for windy beach weather, there is pleated detail at the right hand side of the bust. Fabric used here consists of iron-on silver beads all over, thus breaking the plain Dutch satin fabric. The same fabric that is used for pleating is used under the bust. The fabric is double folded and runs under the bust to the centre back. The dress is closed with an invisible centre back zip and has three strings of crystal beads that run horizontally above the zip, providing some excitement from the back view.

4.4.4 Design 4



Figure 4.4 Yu-Chieh Chen, August 2010, Strapless bodice with ruffle skirt

Inspired by the daring colour for a wedding dress, I have chosen black for this dress. This outfit is separated into bodice and skirt, the same fabric were used for both pieces.

Boning supports the bodice and has ruche chiffon layered at the bust section. The skirt has various layers of ruffles with a mixture of embroidered lace and chiffon fabric sewn onto Bonita satin which is the major fabric used for the skirt. The embroidered lace and chiffon adds a subtle romance to the skirt and interacts with the bodice.

The bodice can be worn with a bolero and tapered trousers, as shown in figure 4.4. The fabric used for the bolero is cationic chiffon; it has a slight sheen that creates a luxurious finishing. The tapered trousers that can be worn with the bolero have a low crotch and loose fit by the hip area, followed by double folded hems.

4.4.5 Design 5



Figure 4.5 Yu-Chieh Chen, August 2010, Single shoulder corset with ruched skirt

This is a two-piece wedding dress, corset bodice and full skirt. The corset hugs the body perfectly with boning support. At the left hand side of the shoulder, handmade three-dimensional flowers of various sizes are sewn to fill up the shoulder piece as a decorative purpose to the basic corset. This is followed by the full length asymmetrical skirt, the skirt consists of four layers, which are lining, Coco satin, gathered chiffon and ruche which creates interesting dimensions. Handmade flowers are sewn randomly onto the ruche. The skirt can be replaced with the pants that were mentioned in 4.2.2.

4.4.6 Design 6



Figure 4.7 Yu-Chieh Chen, August 2010, Column dress with detachable draping

This dress is fitted at the bust and waist but with a soft and floaty skirt, which is similar to Grecian style clothing. The bust area is emphasized with gathered chiffon. The chiffon fabrics are cut into strips and are twisted to form a spaghetti look. Then they are sewn at the edge of the bust and brought to one shoulder then to the back.

The draped chiffon that falls to the ground is a detachable hooked-on piece that can be removed, which will leave the dress with a clean finishing.

4.5 Relevancy of product with theory

To apply the concept of reusability, that is associated with the principle and practice of Slow Design, I have applied the information with regard to the current trend in bridal wear, colour and style into my designs. At the same time I have kept in mind how the garments can be matched with other garment pieces within my range in order for these garments to be reused thus overcoming the problems of costly garments, which are only worn once. These garments allow the bride to dress up in a garment that was once particularly meaningful in her life and makes them usable for other occasions.

4.6 Summary

To attain the concept of re-usability that was mentioned in the Slow Design theory from my previous chapters I have applied the information, such as the current trends in bridal wear, colour and style, which I obtained through my research, into my designs. At the same time I had to keep in mind how the garments can be matched with other garment pieces within my range enabling these garments to be reused so that it solved the problem of costly garments, which are only worn once. These garments simultaneously allow the customer to dress up in a garment that was once especially meaningful in her life for other occasions.

CHAPTER FIVE

MARKET FEASIBILITY/ RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will be explaining the market feasibility of the products that I am producing. As all feasibility studies investigate and identify potential problems, I will focus on aspects such as the description of the industry and market, competition, future market potential and recommendations of business strategies on how I will go about promoting my products.

5.2 Bridal industry and markets in Cape Town

Statistics has shown that there is an increase in the number of marriages over the past 10 years. In other words, more people are getting married and the bridal market is growing (My digital life, 2010).

The bridal industry in Cape Town is a large market, as wedding expositions takes place each year at various places in Cape Town. Some examples are: The Garden Route wedding expo, Canal Walk bridal fair and The Cape Town wedding festival. With all these different exposition events, it proves that the bridal industry is a huge market and has the potential of improving.

When researching the current local providers of wedding dresses on the Internet, the result easily reaches 20 to 30. Therefore it is important for your products be noticeable amongst the various providers. From the information gathered, most of the bridal dresses are priced quite high, whether they are from chain stores or designer labels, these dresses easily exceed R 5000 per garment. Although one can understand the exclusivity of a designer label, the prices which the customer is paying is really too high.

5.3 Competition

As one can see from the number bridal wear companies who take part in various exhibitions that are held in Cape Town, and advertisements which designers placed in fabric stores, this is a very competitive market, I do not intend to compete with large chain stores such as Bride & Co. I would rather prefer to create dresses that let the customer feel confident and provide personal advice and styling for each individual.

In addition, I will design extra garment pieces that can replace the skirt of the wedding dress, adding an extra bolero, jackets or pants to create another outfit transforming it into a more convenient outfit for other occasions. By doing this, it adds value to the dress because it offers versatility.

5.4 Anticipated future market potential

The dresses I produce have the ability to facilitate convenience by reducing time spent pondering on what to wear after the wedding ceremony. The bride can instantly take off the skirt and change into a pre-designed pair of classy pants or a romantic skirt to create a whole new outfit from the original wedding dress.

My dresses will be produced in limited quantities and sold in packages and reduce anxiety for the brides, helping them with what to wear after the wedding. This prolongs the lifespan of a dress that was meaningful to them on only one occasion, because they can wear it again after the wedding ceremony.

5.5 Recommendations/Business strategy

5.5.1 Advertising and promotion

The Internet is a very popular tool to advertise and spread information. The number of advertisements that pop up during the period of time that one browses through the Internet is quite high. I am planning to open a blog and publish information on Face book about my business. Photos of dresses will be available to the customers to browse through.

Furthermore, I will have brochures at fabric stores to increase publicity and inform potential customers about the products that I offer. Promotional-wise, I will offer coupons to customers who purchased dresses and reward them with discounts on accessories that I produce as a sideline.

5.5.2 Distribution channels

I am planning to use the Internet as part of my advertising tool so that when customers see the dress they want, they can come to the retail store, which I will be leasing in Claremont, Cape Town, to have their measurements taken and dress fitted. Once the dress fits properly, they can purchase the product. By this means I will distribute my dresses directly to the customer.

5.5.3 Pricing

Pricing of the product depends on the costs of raw materials, but the cost of designing, pattern making and sewing will also be included. The cost price will be increased by approximately 300% after adding up all the costs of raw material, labour and overheads.

5.5.4 Operations

Although Internet marketing will be my method of promoting my products, I will also require a store for potential customers to fit their dresses. I hope to rent approximately 20 square metres of floor space that is located on the second or third floor of a building, in order to lower

my monthly expense, because the rent costs less than on the first floor.

All materials will be purchased from the local fabric stores. My business focuses on a niche market therefore it is unnecessary to buy large amounts of raw materials overseas.

5.6 Summary

The results of researching the current bridal market enabled me to extensively understand the other products that my products are competing with. To compete with stores that offer similar products, I plan to provide one-to-one consultations so that I understand the requirements of each customer. In addition, wedding dresses are designed in such a way so that they are interchangeable which provides convenience. The above-mentioned will be achieved by renting retail space where customers can fit their dress. The Internet will be used as marketing tool to complete the entire plan of promoting my clothing range.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of my research has been to investigate the need for versatile bridal wear in the current bridal market in Cape Town, as well as creating alternative options for potential customers who is aware of the damage humans are causing to the environment and make customers aware of the waste associated with purchasing an expensive garment, which was traditionally used on a single occasion.

Alastair Fuad Luke, theorist of Slow Design, supports the concept of versatile bridal wear, which I am producing. Alastair Fuad Luke's theory of Slow Design has mentioned that as a designer, one should produce products that are able to fulfill consumer needs rather than market driven needs. I always believe that a design should solve a problem and simultaneously improve convenience.

After researching the evolution of the western wedding gown, I have acquired knowledge in the history of bridal wear and a clear understanding of how it has changed over time. These changes often occurred either to fulfill human needs during that specific period of time, or it might be due to the influence of social matters. From the perception of why and how changes happen, I have considered the lifestyle of 21st century women and applied appropriate alterations to the wedding dresses that I design.

To ensure that I can produce products that are able to compete with the current bridal market, I have designed 14 garments that can be interchanged with each other, so that it creates a variety of style in order to compete with similar existing businesses, which will be one of the selling strengths for my range.

Keeping in mind the essence of the Slow Design theory, which is to design to fulfill human needs first and commercialization second, I have produced a range of versatile wedding

dresses that fits in with the current bridal trend, suits the lifestyle of 21st century women, and combine the essence of the Slow Design theory.

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