



# The Role of AmaZulu Traditional Attire in the Globalised Fashion Industry: A Content Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Recently, AmaZulu traditional attire of the Zulu people in South Africa has gained recognition and influence in the globalised fashion industry. As a part of South Africa's rich cultural heritage, AmaZulu's traditional clothing reflects the customs, beliefs, and identity of AmaZulu. In the globalised fashion industry, AmaZulu traditional attire has been incorporated into various aspects, including runway shows, fashion campaigns, and cultural festivals. Designers and fashion houses have drawn inspiration from AmaZulu traditional attire, integrating elements such as vibrant colours, intricate beadwork, and unique patterns into their collections. The purpose of this article was to discuss the role of AmaZulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry. A qualitative content analysis was adopted to guide this article using existing scholarly writings such as articles, book chapters, and theses. The findings of this article pointed out that AmaZulu traditional attires had specific shapes and designs that are rooted in cultural practices and beliefs. While the basic structure of the *isicholo* and *isidwaba* has been retained, modern adaptations often feature modifications to the silhouette and design. The findings of this article demonstrated that the global fashion industry often faces challenges in accurately representing traditional attire from different cultures. This article concluded by affirming that in an increasingly globalised world, there is a growing demand for diverse and authentic cultural representations. AmaZulu traditional attire offers a unique and distinct cultural identity that reflects the heritage of the Zulu people. This cultural diversity and representation appeal to fashion designers, consumers, and enthusiasts who are seeking something beyond mainstream fashion.

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## INTRODUCTION

The traditional AmaZulu attire has become well-known in the globalised fashion world, where designers and fashion houses have included it in their collections. Through fashion shows and festivals, AmaZulu fashion is made more widely known, aiding in the promotion and preservation of this rich cultural heritage on a global scale. However, to prevent cultural appropriation, it is crucial to approach the display of AmaZulu traditional attire with sensitivity and respect.

It is prudent to foreground this study by providing a brief historical background on the Zulu traditional attire so that this article can be contextualised. The Zulu nation (hereafter, AmaZulu) is one of South Africa's largest ethnic groupings and has a long history that is strongly embedded in their cultural traditions and

practices.<sup>1</sup> Generally, the traditional attire has changed over time to reflect historical, social, and political shifts.<sup>2</sup> AmaZulu nation had a unique and established clothing culture before European immigrants arrived.<sup>3</sup> Most of the materials used to create traditional Zulu clothing came from their surroundings. The front and rear of men's bodies were frequently covered by "izinene," or loincloths fashioned of animal hides. In addition, they dressed themselves with accessories including arm bands, anklets, and necklaces made of beads. Women wore "isidwaba" or "isikhakha," which are skirts made of grass, plant materials, or animal skins. These skirts frequently featured elaborate embroidery, which demonstrated the talent and imagination of Zulu women.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, they wore beaded bracelets, necklaces, and other accessories, the style of which varied according to a woman's age, marital position, and social standing.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, scholars agree that AmaZulu traditional attire started to change with the entrance of European colonists in the 19th century.<sup>6</sup> The use of animal hides and natural fibres in AmaZulu traditional clothing gradually decreased because of the spread of Western fabrics like cotton and wool and the impact of European fashion. AmaZulu dress patterns were influenced by European missionaries and traders as well. The traditional wardrobe of the AmaZulu started integrating materials and clothing from Europe, such as shirts, pants, and gowns.<sup>7</sup> The fact that they incorporated beading and other conventional ornaments into the new dress styles, however, allowed them to continue to preserve certain aspects of their cultural identity.

Following the end of colonialism and the liberation of South Africa, there was a renaissance of interest in maintaining and promoting indigenous cultures, especially AmaZulu traditions and attire. Traditional clothing became a source of pride and identification for AmaZulu as they began to publicly embrace their cultural history.<sup>8</sup> Even in modern times, AmaZulu attire is an integral component of the culture and is frequently worn for rituals, festivals, and special occasions. The rich cultural history of AmaZulu clothing is kept alive and vibrant in contemporary South Africa thanks to younger generations continuing to master the craft of beadwork and traditional clothing construction.<sup>9</sup> In this article, the researchers using a qualitative content analysis seek to answer the following questions and discuss the role of Zulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry;

- a) What elements of Zulu traditional attire have been incorporated into modern fashion trends?
- b) What cultural festivals or events showcase Zulu traditional attire in the global fashion industry?
- c) What are the challenges or concerns regarding the representation of Zulu traditional attire in the global fashion industry?
- d) How are Zulu traditional garments, such as the *isicholo* or *isidwaba*, adapted to fit modern fashion trends?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

South Africa is known for its rich cultural diversity, with numerous ethnic groups each having their distinctive traditional clothing. This diversity provides a wealth of inspiration for designers. This view is shared by scholars who affirm that South Africa is known for its rich cultural diversity, with numerous ethnic groups each having

<sup>1</sup> Motshidisi Shawn Manyeneng and Owen Seda, "Sincerity, Authenticity and the Artistic Imperative in Contemporary Zulu Indlamu Costume," in *8th International DEFSA Conference* (Durban: Design Education Forum of Southern Africa, 2019); Mduzuzi Mtshali, "Interrogating the Synthesis of African Traditional Rituals and Spirituality in Contemporary South African Dance: Critical Reflections on the Dance Work of Vincent Mantsoe, Moeketsi Koena, and My Own Work" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020); E, B Madondo, "Interviewed in Durban International Convention with Researchers". (2019). Durban in South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Mona Abaza, "Shifting Landscapes of Fashion in Contemporary Egypt," *Fashion Theory* 11, no. 2-3 (2007): 281-97.

<sup>3</sup> Ngema, Vusabantu. "Interviewed in Durban International Convention with Researchers". (2022). Zululand in South Africa

<sup>4</sup> Zanele Lucia Radebe and C M Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa," *Gender and Behaviour* 14, no. 3 (2016): 7733-63; Nomthandazo Annaglad Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)" (University of Kwazulu Natal, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Funso Afolayan, *Culture and Customs of South Africa* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004); Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa."

<sup>6</sup> Deborah Whelan, "Changing Zululness: Capturing the Mercurial Indigenous Vernacular Architecture of the Eastern Seaboard of Southern Africa," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 2006, 71-82.

<sup>7</sup> Bonisile Pretty Khethiwe Zungu, "Meaning behind the Use and Wearing of Traditional Beadwork at Msinga Area" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)."

<sup>9</sup> Marcus A. Winters, "Understanding the Gap in Special Education Enrollments Between Charter and Traditional Public Schools," *Educational Researcher* 44, no. 4 (May 1, 2015): 228-36, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X15584772>; Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa."

their own distinctive traditional clothing.<sup>10</sup> This diversity provides a wealth of inspiration for designers. For instance, traditional South African garments, such as the *Xibelani* skirt or the *Basotho* blanket, have gained popularity both within and beyond the country's borders, finding their way into international fashion markets. Numerous studies show that traditional attire plays a significant role in attracting tourists interested in experiencing and learning about South Africa's diverse cultures.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars further note that adapting traditional attire to align with contemporary fashion trends while preserving its authenticity is indeed a delicate balance, particularly in the context of African attire.<sup>12</sup> It involves finding creative ways to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, respecting cultural heritage while making garments relevant to changing tastes and styles.<sup>13</sup> This process requires a deep understanding of the cultural significance of the attire and a nuanced approach to design, materials, and presentation. Evidently, when done thoughtfully, it can result in a beautiful and culturally meaningful fashion that appeals to a global audience. The literature of this study also points out that it is essential for designers and fashion artisans to strike the right balance between preserving authenticity and adapting to contemporary fashion trends is a nuanced process.<sup>14</sup> This is attributed to the fact that balancing authenticity and contemporary fashion trends is paramount in maintaining elements of traditional attire that have deep cultural, historical, or religious significance. This means that any adaptation should be done with utmost respect for these aspects. This view was shared by various scholars who affirm that balancing authenticity and contemporary fashion trends also involves considering sustainability.<sup>15</sup> It is inevitable that striking the right balance between preserving authenticity and adapting to contemporary fashion trends is a nuanced process, and it is a challenge faced not only in the context of African attire but also in many other cultures with rich sartorial traditions.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this article, the researchers used fashion as an identity and expression concept. Self-expression via clothing has an enormous influence.<sup>16</sup> It is a means of expressing one's unique personality, concepts, beliefs, and sense of fashion. Individuals can distinguish themselves from others in ways that help them feel distinctive and self-assured by embracing originality in fashion.<sup>17</sup> Since ancient times, individuals have utilised clothes and other items to convey their position, identity, and values through fashion. Different cultures have used fashion to express themselves in various ways across time. In this article, the researchers used the conceptual framework to argue that AmaZulu cultural attire has an influence on the mainstream fashion industry beyond South Africa. Furthermore, to highlight the beauty and distinctiveness of AmaZulu culture, the researcher argues that designers from all over the world add AmaZulu-inspired features to their collections. The promotion and preservation of AmaZulu cultural attire on a global scale is made possible by this intercultural interchange.

## METHODOLOGY

In this article, a qualitative research methodology was employed using content analysis as the primary tool for data collection. Qualitative research entails identifying individuals, themes, and circumstances.<sup>18</sup> A qualitative

<sup>10</sup> Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)"; M H Mukwevho and K J Khosa, "A Quest for Cultural Emancipation through Traditional Attire in Mphambo Village, Vhembe District of South Africa," *Anthropologist* 33, no. 1–3 (2018): 59–66.

<sup>11</sup> Maisa Correia Adinolfi, Tembi Tichaawa, and Gugulethu Banda, "The Importance of the Fashion Industry in the South African Tourism Context" 37 (August 31, 2018): 239–52.

<sup>12</sup> Mukwevho and Khosa, "A Quest for Cultural Emancipation through Traditional Attire in Mphambo Village, Vhembe District of South Africa."

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Pozzo, "Fashion between Inspiration and Appropriation," *Laws* 9, no. 1 (2020): 5; Neil Howlett et al., "The Influence of Clothing on First Impressions: Rapid and Positive Responses to Minor Changes in Male Attire," *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal* 17, no. 1 (2013): 38–48.

<sup>14</sup> Doroteja Mandarić, Anica Hunjet, and Dijana Vuković, "The Impact of Fashion Brand Sustainability on Consumer Purchasing Decisions," *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 15, no. 4 (2022): 176; Nilesh Bhandari et al., "Barriers to Sustainable Sourcing in the Apparel and Fashion Luxury Industry," *Sustainable Production and Consumption* 31 (2022): 220–35.

<sup>15</sup> Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković, "The Impact of Fashion Brand Sustainability on Consumer Purchasing Decisions"; Patrizia Gazzola et al., "Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach," *Sustainability* 12, no. 7 (2020): 2809.

<sup>16</sup> Howlett et al., "The Influence of Clothing on First Impressions: Rapid and Positive Responses to Minor Changes in Male Attire"; Jordan Efremov, Marija Kertakova, and Kuzmanovska Vangja Dimitrijeva, "Expression of Personality through Dressing," *Tekstilna Industrija* 69, no. 1 (2021): 28–35.

<sup>17</sup> Sertanya Reddy, "Styling The Self: Fashion As An Expression Of Cultural Identity In a Global World," *Diakses Pada* 28 (2009).

<sup>18</sup> John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

content analysis makes sure that the research project's premise is compelling, and that the data logic follows it. The goal is to identify the content's essential elements and present them effectively in the study.<sup>19</sup> The main purpose of this paper was to analyse the role of AmaZulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry. Accordingly, “qualitative content analysis is one of the numerous research methods used to analyse text data.”<sup>20</sup> The purpose of qualitative content analysis is frequently restricted by the definition provided by Nowell et. al, which states that “content analysis entails going through the transcripts methodically to determine how frequently different themes are discussed and to consider what is said regarding each theme.”<sup>21</sup> As a result, this method was chosen since it can analyse text precisely. The foundation of qualitative content analysis is the study of the content in accordance with the research question created by the researchers.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in this paper, the main research question was *What is the role of AmaZulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry?* This question provided an in-depth understanding of the AmaZulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry. This article employed a qualitative content analysis because the nature of this article was to critically analyse the role of AmaZulu traditional attire. Lastly, the researchers were also able to properly understand and explain the paper's findings thanks to the content analysis.

## FINDINGS

In this section, it is important to highlight that AmaZulu traditional attire frequently consists of items like the *isicholo* (a traditional AmaZulu hat), *isidwaba* (a cowhide or fabric skirt), *isicolo* (a rectangular piece of fabric worn around the chest), and *ibheshu* (a leather or fabric apron). The essence of AmaZulu culture has been preserved while these costumes have been reinterpreted and modified to meet contemporary fashion trends. Fashion shows and festivals honouring AmaZulu culture, such as the Durban July horse race in South Africa, frequently feature AmaZulu traditional clothing on the catwalk. This exposure gives AmaZulu designers and artisans the chance to become known internationally and grow their businesses. It also helps promote AmaZulu fashion. The research questions are answered in this section of this article using scholarly literary writings to yield trustworthy results.

### *What elements of Zulu traditional attire have been incorporated into modern fashion trends?*

It is crucial to note that scholars point out that traditional Zulu attire, which is rich in colour and cultural meaning, has influenced contemporary fashion trends in a variety of ways.<sup>23</sup> Fashion is a dynamic and ever-changing industry, and designers frequently draw influence from diverse cultures and traditional clothes to create fresh and innovative collections. The incorporation of brilliant colours, patterns, and other features from Zulu traditional dress into modern fashion can add a sense of vitality, excitement, and cultural depth. Incorporating features from many countries into fashion can be a way to celebrate global customs while also boosting cross-cultural understanding and cultivating respect for the beauty and distinctiveness of different civilisations.<sup>24</sup> It gives designers the freedom to experiment with new styles, techniques, and design languages, resulting in a more diverse and inclusive fashion world.<sup>25</sup> Evidently, in a globalised world, the fashion industry has the chance to celebrate variety while supporting ethical and responsible design processes. Designers may produce collections that commemorate cultural history and stimulate creativity in the fashion world by embracing cultural inspirations with respect and openness.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs, “The Qualitative Content Analysis Process,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62, no. 1 (2008): 107–15.

<sup>20</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (2005): 1277–88.

<sup>21</sup> Lorelli S Nowell et al., “Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (2017): 1609406917733847.

<sup>22</sup> Nancy L Leech and Anthony J Onwuegbuzie, “An Array of Qualitative Data Analysis Tools: A Call for Data Analysis Triangulation,” *School Psychology Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (2007): 557.

<sup>23</sup> Radebe and Van der Bank, “Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa”; Mkhwanazi, “Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen).”

<sup>24</sup> Reddy, “Styling The Self: Fashion As An Expression Of Cultural Identity In a Global World”; Grace Nkumane, “The Traditional Dress of the Zulu Woman: A Return to the Roots,” in *Indigenous Knowledge Conference*, 2001, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Rowan C Gatfield, “The Isimodeni Style: Traditional Beadwork, Zulu Trinket or South African Sartorial Tradition on Durban’s Golden Mile?,” *Anthropology Southern Africa* 42, no. 2 (2019): 127–48; Khaya Mchunu, “Matri-Archive, Creativity, and Beadwork: Toward an Inclusive Design Process,” *Design and Culture* 15, no. 3 (2023): 367–91; Nita Gleimius, Emma Mthimunye, and Evelina Subanyoni, *The Zulu of Africa* (Lerner Publications, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Reddy, “Styling The Self: Fashion As An Expression Of Cultural Identity In a Global World.”

**What cultural festivals or events showcase Zulu traditional attire in the global fashion industry?**

Studies have shown that there were no specific global fashion events or festivals exclusively dedicated to showcasing Zulu traditional attire. However, elements of Zulu traditional attire and other African-inspired fashion in general, have occurred in fashion weeks, festivals, and exhibits that highlight cultural diversity and global fashion influences.<sup>27</sup> New York Fashion Week and London Fashion Week often include presentations by designers with diverse cultural backgrounds. African-inspired fashion might be showcased during certain collections, presenting an opportunity for Zulu traditional attire to be featured. There are other music and cultural festivals, such as the Afropunk Festival, that are important in the fashion sector. The Afropunk Festival is a music and cultural celebration of African and African diasporic culture, including fashion. Attendees frequently wear distinctive and imaginative outfits influenced by their cultural history, which may include parts of Zulu traditional attire.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, museums and cultural organizations in Africa will occasionally curate fashion exhibitions that examine the impact of African textiles and patterns on global fashion. As part of their overall depiction, such shows may include Zulu traditional attire.<sup>29</sup> Also, the traditional Zulu dress for women called "isidwaba" or "isicholo," is a colourful garment made from different fabrics and adorned with beadwork. Designers might draw inspiration from the silhouette and embellishments to create modern dresses that pay homage to Zulu fashion. The following are pictures that show the old and modern Zulu traditional attire for males.



Fig 1. Old Zulu traditional attire<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Sakhiseni Joseph Yende and Vusabantu Ngema, "Indlamu: An Image of Zulu Upper-Class Culture of the Past," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (March 17, 2023): 300–311, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20234310>; Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa."

<sup>28</sup> Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa"; Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)."

<sup>29</sup> Nokwanda Bathabile Zondi, "A Dissection of the Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Systems Act 6 of 2019: Substantive Issues and Foreseeable Consequences for Creative Industries in South Africa" (Faculty of Law, 2021); Maheshvari Naidu, "Indigenous Cultural Bodies in Tourism: An Analysis of Local 'Audience' Perception of Global Tourist Consumers," *Journal of Social Sciences* 26, no. 1 (2011): 29–39; Marcia Tandy, "Mass Media's Cultivation Effect on Traditional Cultural Attire: Quantitatively Describing Downstream Shifts in the Social Identity of Tertiary Students Using Questionnaires" (The IIE, 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Source:<https://africangrace.co.za/shop/clothing/traditional-attire/traditional-zulu-mans-outfit/>



Fig 2. Modern Zulu traditional attire<sup>31</sup>

### Females



Fig 3. A mixture of old and new attire<sup>32</sup>



Fig 4. Old females attire<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Source: <https://africangrace.co.za/shop/clothing/traditional-attire/traditional-zulu-mans-outfit/>

<sup>32</sup> Source: <https://thegrace.co.za/zulu-traditional-attire/>

<sup>33</sup> Source: <https://thegrace.co.za/zulu-traditional-attire/>



Fig 5. Modern female Zulu traditional attire<sup>34</sup>

***What are the challenges or concerns regarding the representation of Zulu traditional attire in the global fashion industry?***

The representation of AmaZulu traditional attire in the global fashion industry can present various challenges and concerns. Scholars point out that one important issue is the potential for cultural appropriation, which occurs when components of traditional AmaZulu clothing are removed from their native cultural context and commodified for profit without a clear appreciation or knowledge of their value.<sup>35</sup> This may result in misunderstandings or misrepresentations that uphold stereotypes or are disrespectful of AmaZulu culture. The proper representation of traditional clothing from many cultures presents problems for the global fashion business. It is imperative to make sure that AmaZulu traditional clothing is accurately depicted, which requires appropriate study, consultation, and collaboration with the AmaZulu community.<sup>36</sup> Correct or accurate portrayals can prevent cultural importance from remaining and help prevent cultural erasure.

It is crucial to use sustainable sourcing strategies for materials and moral production techniques that are consistent with the beliefs and customs of AmaZulu while blending traditional AmaZulu attire into international fashion.<sup>37</sup> The portrayal of AmaZulu traditional attire needs to be inclusive and varied, reflecting the greater cultural and racial diversity within the AmaZulu group itself. As AmaZulu culture is dynamic and includes many different styles, designs, and influences, it is crucial to avoid essentialising or homogenising it.<sup>38</sup>

***How are Zulu traditional garments, such as the isicholo or isidwaba, adapted to fit modern fashion trends?***

The *isicholo* (a women's headdress) and *isidwaba* (a skirt) are two examples of traditional AmaZulu attire that have undergone modifications to meet current fashion trends. While retaining their cultural significance, these clothes have changed in several ways to fit in with modern fashion.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, natural materials like braided grass and animal skins were originally used to make traditional AmaZulu attire.<sup>40</sup> In more recent modifications, fabrics made of more widely accessible materials, such as cotton, silk, or synthetic fibres, have taken their place. In modern adaptations, a larger range of colours or designs may be used to appeal to contemporary fashion

<sup>34</sup> Source: <https://famousdurban.co.za/africa-fashion-week-london/>

<sup>35</sup> Mukwevho and Khosa, "A Quest for Cultural Emancipation through Traditional Attire in Mphambo Village, Vhembe District of South Africa"; Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa"; Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)"; Debrah Mtshelwane, Lizelle Brink, and Jan Alewyn Nel, "Impression Management within the Zulu Culture: Exploring Tactics in the Work Context," *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 42, no. 1 (2016): 1–13.

<sup>36</sup> Elin Alexandersson and Rasha Matlak, "Cultural Differences in Fashion Magazines: Targeting Vogue," 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Gazzola et al., "Trends in the Fashion Industry. The Perception of Sustainability and Circular Economy: A Gender/Generation Quantitative Approach."

<sup>38</sup> Mbusiseni Celimpilo Dube, "The Tourism Potential of Zululand North of the Tugela River with Special Reference to Zulu Culture and History" (2011).

<sup>39</sup> Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa"; Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)."

<sup>40</sup> Manyeneng and Seda, "Sincerity, Authenticity and the Artistic Imperative in Contemporary Zulu Indlamu Costume."

sensibilities, but vibrant colours and patterns, which are distinctive to AmaZulu culture, are still often used. AmaZulu cultural attire is frequently updated to emphasise its adaptability and versatility. They can be styled and combined with other contemporary apparel pieces to make original and stylish combinations.<sup>41</sup> For instance, *isicholo* can be matched with Western-style dresses or outfits, and *isidwaba* can be worn with a contemporary shirt or top.

Scholars highlight that the AmaZulu traditional attire has gained visibility and recognition through fashion shows and runway presentations. AmaZulu-inspired aspects have been welcomed by designers and fashion houses and incorporated into their designs, bridging the gap between conventional and contemporary fashion.<sup>42</sup> Due to this exposure, traditional AmaZulu attire is now more widely recognised as a stylish and fashionable choice. Despite modern modifications, it is crucial to remember that traditional AmaZulu attire continues to have an important cultural influence. The adaptations aim to preserve the cultural heritage while embracing contemporary fashion trends, allowing individuals to express their cultural identity in a modern context.

## DISCUSSION

The current article seeks to discuss the role of AmaZulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry. AmaZulu as a nation has a wide variety of attire for different traditional ceremonial purposes as well as cultural events. Furthermore, modern, and Westernised attire is worn daily, and women dress differently depending on their marital status. Traditionally, the Zulu wore animal skins and hides, as did most other African traditional clothes. This article's findings show that fashion, as a strong form of artistic expression, can encourage cultural exchange and raise global awareness. The fashion industry may set an example for cross-cultural collaboration and understanding by embracing the cultural depth and beauty of many civilizations, thereby building a more harmonious and interconnected world.

The findings of this article further point out that Zulu traditional attire and African-inspired fashion events not only promote the beauty of African-inspired fashion but also help to represent and recognise diverse cultures in the fashion business. However, it is critical that these depictions are done with respect and cultural sensitivity, acknowledging, and appreciating the cultural origins of the designs and giving credit to the communities and artists that inspire them.

The findings of this article reveal some challenges with globalisation of Zulu traditional attire. These challenges include the potential for cultural appropriation, which occurs when components of traditional attires are removed from their native cultural context and commodified for profit without a clear appreciation or knowledge of their value. It was also highlighted that appropriation can contribute to the erasure of the AmaZulu people's real voices and identities when traditional symbols and rituals become divorced from their roots. This article's findings also show that Zulu traditional apparel, such as the *isicholo* (a circular hat) and *isidwaba* (a traditional skirt for women), may be altered to meet modern design trends through a variety of innovative reinterpretations. The findings demonstrate that designers can draw inspiration from the silhouettes, fabrics, colours, and embellishments of traditional Zulu clothes to produce contemporary items that integrate Zulu culture with modern fashion sensibility.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the global fashion industry approaches the representation of AmaZulu traditional attire and other cultural elements with cultural sensitivity and respect. Collaboration and dialogue with the AmaZulu community are essential to ensure that the cultural significance of the attire is properly understood, acknowledged, and respected. Designers and fashion brands must give credit to the source of inspiration and, when appropriate, seek permission and involve the community in the creative process. Also, responsible representation and appreciation of AmaZulu traditional costume can result in significant cultural interaction, mutual respect, and celebration of global culture variety. It can also provide economic opportunities for AmaZulu artisans and designers while supporting fair trade and ecological practices. The global fashion business can positively contribute to cross-cultural understanding and appreciation by taking an ethical and culturally sensitive approach.

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<sup>41</sup> Thenjiwe Magwaza, "The Conceptualisation of Zulu Traditional Female Dress in the Post-Apartheid Era," *Kunapipi* 24, no. 1/2 (2002): 193–204; Radebe and Van der Bank, "Exploring Alternative Views on the Western Miniskirt and Isigcebhezana in the Patriarchal Zulu Culture of South Africa."

<sup>42</sup> Yuri Siregar et al., "Disrupting the Fashion Retail Journey: Social Media and GenZ's Fashion Consumption," *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 2023; Mkhwanazi, "Ukubaluleka Kwemvunulo Yomdabu Osikompilweni Lwabantu Besifazane Abangamazulu Basendaweni Yakwanobamba (Weenen)."

## CONCLUSION

The article's emphasis on the significance of AmaZulu traditional costume in the globalised fashion business emphasizes the necessity of cultural sensitivity and respect while reflecting and combining Zulu cultural features into modern fashion. It stresses the importance of avoiding cultural appropriation, which can result in the misinterpretation and exploitation of traditional symbols and designs. When features of a culture are copied or imitated without knowing or respecting their value and historical context, this is referred to as cultural appropriation. This can result in damaging stereotypes, the monetization of cultural traditions, and the erasure of the genuine meaning of the culture.

Using the identity and expression conceptual framework, the article examined the role of AmaZulu traditional attire in the globalised fashion industry. This article agrees that beyond South Africa, AmaZulu cultural attire has a significant influence on the mainstream fashion business. The beauty and individuality of AmaZulu culture have attracted the attention of designers from all over the world as civilizations become more intertwined in a globalized society. This intercultural exchange has resulted in the adoption of AmaZulu-inspired characteristics into international fashion lines.

It is critical for fashion industry participants to approach the representation of AmaZulu traditional dress with an ethical and responsible perspective. Collaboration with AmaZulu communities is critical to ensuring that the designs' cultural roots are properly recognised and appreciated. Working with people of the culture can result in authentic portrayal and create opportunities for AmaZulu artists and artisans to be appropriately recognised and compensated for their work.

The fashion industry can appreciate the beauty and uniqueness of AmaZulu traditional costume while contributing to a more inclusive and culturally aware fashion scene by taking a culturally sensitive approach and engaging in respectful relationships. This approach not only benefits the global fashion industry but also promotes cross-cultural understanding and appreciation for many cultural heritages. This article concludes by affirming that in an increasingly globalised world, there is a growing demand for diverse and authentic cultural representations. AmaZulu traditional attire offers a unique and distinct cultural identity that reflects the heritage of the Zulu people. This cultural diversity and representation appeal to fashion designers, consumers, and enthusiasts who are seeking something beyond mainstream fashion.

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