

Development and Design of Thai Song Dam Costumes Toward International Fashion: Nong Song Hong, Ban Phaeo District, Samut Sakhon Province

การพัฒนาออกแบบเครื่องแต่งกายในวัฒนธรรมไทยทรงดำสู่แฟชั่นระดับสากล ตำบลหนองสองห้อง อำเภอบ้านแพ้ว จังหวัดสมุทรสาคร

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คำสำคัญ: ไทยทรงดำ,
การออกแบบแฟชั่นเชิงวัฒนธรรม,
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Abstract

Background and Objectives: The Thai Song Dam costumes of Nong Song Hong Subdistrict, Ban Phaeo District, Samut Sakhon Province represent a long-standing body of weaving wisdom that has been passed down through generations. They constitute a valuable local identity worthy of preservation and transmission to future generations. This study aims to conserve, revitalize, and promote Thai Song Dam weaving traditions as a sustainable form of cultural heritage while exploring their adaptation within contemporary fashion contexts. Furthermore, it seeks to develop Thai Song Dam costumes into innovative fashion products that reflect ethnic identity and align with international fashion standards. The specific objectives were 1) to study the identity and symbolic meanings of Thai Song Dam textile patterns in Nong Song Hong, 2) to synthesize concepts for value creation and the development of Thai Song Dam costume design toward international fashion, and 3) to evaluate the developed fashion prototypes and promote cultural tourism within the community.

Methods: The study employed a mixed-methods approach combining participatory action research (PAR) and creative research. The data were gathered through field observations, in-depth interviews with ten artisans and elders, focus group discussions with community members and designers, and co-creation workshops producing ready-to-wear and high fashion collections. In addition, the quantitative data were collected from 150 consumers using structured questionnaires assessing satisfaction in five areas: cultural identity, design aesthetics, functionality, comfort, and market potential.

Results: The research findings revealed that significant Thai Song Dam motifs, such as the "Khok Khut" motif, which symbolizes strength, and the "Dok Paet" motif, which represents abundance, can be appropriately applied to contemporary fashion design, resulting in two fashion garment prototypes: 1) Ready-to-Wear, featuring indigo-dyed casual garments with simplified ethnic motifs, and 2) High Fashion, comprising gowns and suits with enlarged embroidered and digitally printed patterns. The overall level of satisfaction was high ($\bar{X}$ = 4.37, S.D. = 0.41), indicating that consumers held positive perceptions toward the developed fashion prototypes. Cultural identity received the highest rating ($\bar{X}$ = 4.50, S.D. = 0.38), reflecting clear recognition and acceptance of the distinct ethnic identity. Other dimensions were also at a high level, including aesthetic design quality ($\bar{X}$ = 4.47, S.D. = 0.41), market potential ($\bar{X}$ = 4.43, S.D. = 0.39), wearing comfort ($\bar{X}$ = 4.25, S.D. = 0.40), and functionality ($\bar{X}$ = 4.18, S.D. = 0.46).

Application of this study: The project bridged traditional heritage and contemporary innovation, establishing a model for integrating cultural wisdom into creative economy. The participatory process empowered artisans, encouraged intergenerational knowledge transfer, and fostered a community brand identity aligned with Thailand's "Soft Power" strategy.

Conclusions: This study aimed to preserve and develop the weaving wisdom of the Thai Song Dam community in Nong Song Hong, Ban Phaeo District, Samut Sakhon Province, so that it can be sustained as cultural heritage and appropriately extended into contemporary fashion. Employing a mixed-methods research design that integrates participatory action research and creative research, the study found that significant motifs of Thai Song Dam textiles, such as the “Khok Khut” and “Dok Paet” motifs, demonstrate strong potential for application in contemporary fashion design. This resulted in the development of two garment prototypes: ready-to-wear and high-fashion designs. Consumers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the prototypes, particularly in terms of cultural identity and design aesthetics. The study therefore demonstrates that integrating local wisdom with fashion innovation can generate cultural, economic, and creative tourism value, while sustainably supporting knowledge transmission and the enhancement of the community's cultural power, or soft power.

บทคัดย่อ

ที่มาและวัตถุประสงค์: เครื่องแต่งกายไทยทรงดำของตำบลหนองสองห้อง อำเภอบ้านแพ้ว จังหวัดสมุทรสาคร เป็นภูมิปัญญาการทอผ้าที่สืบทอดมายาวนาน เป็นอัตลักษณ์ท้องถิ่นที่มีคุณค่าต่อการสืบทอดไปยังคนรุ่นหลัง การศึกษานี้เพื่ออนุรักษ์ พื้นฟูและส่งเสริมภูมิปัญญาการทอผ้าไทยทรงดำให้คงอยู่ในฐานมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมที่ยั่งยืน สามารถประยุกต์ใช้ในบริบทแฟชั่นร่วมสมัยได้อย่างเหมาะสม สามารถพัฒนาเครื่องแต่งกายไทยทรงดำให้เป็นผลิตภัณฑ์แฟชั่นเชิงนวัตกรรมที่สะท้อนอัตลักษณ์ชาติพันธุ์และสอดคล้องกับมาตรฐานแฟชั่นระดับนานาชาติ โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะเพื่อ 1) ศึกษาอัตลักษณ์และความหมายเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของลวดลายผ้าไทยทรงดำในตำบลหนองสองห้อง 2) สังเคราะห์แนวคิดเพื่อสร้างคุณค่าและพัฒนาแบบการออกแบบเครื่องแต่งกายไทยทรงดำสู่แฟชั่นระดับนานาชาติ และ 3) ประเมินต้นแบบเครื่องแต่งกายที่พัฒนาแล้ว รวมถึงแนวทางส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรมภายในชุมชน

วิธีการศึกษา: ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบผสมผสานระหว่าง การวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการแบบมีส่วนร่วม (participatory action research: PAR) และ การวิจัยเชิงสร้างสรรค์ (creative research) โดยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากการสังเกตภาคสนาม การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกช่างทอและผู้อาวุโสในชุมชนจำนวน 10 คน การสนทนากลุ่มกับสมาชิกชุมชนและนักออกแบบ รวมถึงการจัดประชุมเชิงปฏิบัติการสร้างสรรค์เพื่อพัฒนาต้นแบบเสื้อผ้าแฟชั่นทั้งประเภท ชุดสวมใส่ในชีวิตประจำวัน (ready-to-wear) และ ชุดแฟชั่นระดับสูง (high fashion) นอกจากนี้ ยังเก็บข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณจากผู้บริโภค 150 คน โดยใช้แบบสอบถามประเมินความพึงพอใจ 5 ด้าน ได้แก่ อัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรม ความงามเชิงออกแบบ การใช้งาน ความสะดวกสบาย และศักยภาพทางการตลาด

ผลการศึกษา: ผลการวิจัยพบว่าลวดลายไทยทรงดำสำคัญ เช่น “ลายโคกคุด” ซึ่งสื่อถึงความเข้มแข็ง และ “ลายดอกแปด” ซึ่งสื่อถึงความอุดมสมบูรณ์ สามารถนำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในงานออกแบบแฟชั่นร่วมสมัยได้อย่างเหมาะสม เกิดเป็นต้นแบบเสื้อผ้าแฟชั่น 2 รูปแบบ ได้แก่ 1) ชุดสวมใส่ในชีวิตประจำวัน ที่เน้นความเรียบง่ายและใช้ผ้าย้อมคราม และ 2) ชุดแฟชั่นระดับสูง ที่เน้นการออกแบบเชิงศิลป์และใช้เทคนิคการปักและพิมพ์ลายดิจิทัล ระดับความพึงพอใจโดยรวมอยู่ในระดับสูง (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.37, ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.41) สะท้อนให้เห็นว่าผู้บริโภคมีการรับรู้เชิงบวกต่อผลงานต้นแบบแฟชั่นที่พัฒนาขึ้น ด้านอัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมได้รับคะแนนสูงที่สุด (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.50, ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.38) แสดงถึงการยอมรับและตระหนักถึงความเป็นเอกลักษณ์ทางชาติพันธุ์อย่างชัดเจน ส่วนมิติอื่น ๆ ได้แก่ ความงามเชิงออกแบบ (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.47, ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.41) ศักยภาพทางการตลาด (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.43, ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.39) ความสะดวกสบายในการสวมใส่ (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.25, ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.40) และการใช้งาน (ค่าเฉลี่ย = 4.18, ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 0.46) ล้วนได้รับการประเมินอยู่ในระดับสูงเช่นกัน

การประยุกต์ใช้: โครงการนี้สร้างสะพานเชื่อมระหว่างมรดกวัฒนธรรมและนวัตกรรมร่วมสมัย เป็นแบบอย่างของการบูรณาการภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่นเข้ากับการพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจสร้างสรรค์ กระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมช่วยเสริมพลังให้แก่ช่างทอ ส่งเสริมการถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้ระหว่างรุ่น และสร้างอัตลักษณ์แบรนด์ชุมชนให้สอดคล้องกับยุทธศาสตร์ “Soft Power” ของประเทศไทย

บทสรุป: การศึกษานี้มุ่งอนุรักษ์และพัฒนาภูมิปัญญาการทอผ้าไทยทรงดำของตำบลหนองสองห้อง อำเภอบ้านแพ้ว จังหวัดสมุทรสาคร ให้สามารถดำรงอยู่ในฐานมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมและต่อยอดสู่แฟชั่นร่วมสมัยได้อย่างเหมาะสม โดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบผสมผสานระหว่างการวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการแบบมีส่วนร่วมและการวิจัยเชิงสร้างสรรค์ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าลวดลายสำคัญของผ้าไทยทรงดำ เช่น “ลายโคกคุด” และ “ลายดอกแปด” มีศักยภาพในการนำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในงานออกแบบแฟชั่นร่วมสมัยได้อย่างโดดเด่น เกิดเป็นต้นแบบเสื้อผ้า 2 รูปแบบ ได้แก่ ชุดสวมใส่ในชีวิตประจำวันและชุดแฟชั่นระดับสูง ผู้บริโภคมีความพึงพอใจต่อผลงานต้นแบบในระดับสูง โดยเฉพาะด้านอัตลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมและความงามเชิงออกแบบ งานวิจัยนี้จึงแสดงให้เห็นว่าการบูรณาการภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่นกับนวัตกรรมแฟชั่นสามารถสร้างคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรม เศรษฐกิจ และการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสร้างสรรค์ พร้อมทั้งสนับสนุนการถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้และการสร้างพลังทางวัฒนธรรม (Soft Power) ของชุมชนได้อย่างยั่งยืน

Introduction

The Thai Song Dam, also known as Lao Song, is one of Thailand's most distinctive ethnic groups, recognized for their strong sense of cultural identity, traditional weaving craftsmanship, and spiritual values embedded in daily life. Historically, the Thai Song Dam migrated from the *Sip Song Chu Tai* region - now part of northern Vietnam and Laos to central Thailand during the late Ayutthaya and Thonburi periods (Srisuchat, 1995; Chantachon, 2002). Communities in Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, and Samut Sakhon have maintained their unique traditions, including the use of the *Lao Song* language, ancestral rituals, and handwoven indigo-dyed costumes that reflect social structure and moral beliefs (Sirithanya, 2006; Wongphuka, 2018).

The traditional Thai Song Dam costumes, such as the *seua hee* (black indigo jacket) and *sinh lai tang mo* (striped skirt), embody aesthetic and spiritual symbolism. Each motif represents natural balance and ancestral respect such as *lai khok kut*, a geometric pattern signifying resilience, and *dok paet*, an eight-petal floral motif symbolizing fertility and prosperity (Duangporn, 2011). These visual expressions link art, identity, and belief, serving as a living archive of ethnic wisdom passed down through generations. However, the rapid growth of industrial fashion, urbanization, and market homogenization has led to a decline in the daily use of traditional attire and a disruption of intergenerational cultural transmission (Phadungchai, 2020; Kawicha, 2016).

In the 21st century, global fashion trends have shifted toward sustainability and cultural authenticity, generating opportunities for traditional crafts to gain renewed visibility (Fletcher, 2014; Gwilt, 2014). The Thai government's Creative Economy policy promotes cultural-based industries as drivers of innovation and national soft power (Howkins, 2001; Thailand Creative Economy Agency, 2020). Within this framework, integrating Thai Song Dam textile heritage into international fashion aligns with the broader goal of using culture as a tool for economic development and cultural diplomacy (Nye, 2004; The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2021). Fashion, as both aesthetic and symbolic communication, has become a medium for representing identity and cultural narratives on global stages.

Research Gap

Although several studies have explored ethnic textiles and traditional dress in Thailand such as those of the Hmong, Karen, and Phuan groups, there remains limited research focusing specifically on Thai Song Dam fashion in the context of global fashion design. Most previous research emphasized cultural preservation rather than design innovation or market-oriented development (Kawicha, 2016; Thitiporn, 2019; Phadungchai, 2020). Moreover, participatory approaches integrating artisans, designers, and consumers have rarely been applied in developing contemporary ethnic fashion in Thailand. This study therefore fills the gap by combining cultural research, creative fashion design, and participatory processes to develop Thai Song Dam costumes into internationally competitive fashion products.

Research Objectives and Significance

This study aims to:

1. Analyze the creation of identity and symbolic meanings of Thai Song Dam textile patterns in Nong Song Hong, Ban Phaeo, Samut Sakhon.

2. Synthesize design concepts and develop Thai Song Dam fashion prototypes that integrate traditional motifs with modern fashion elements.

3. Evaluate the developed products for their cultural, aesthetic, and market potential while fostering cultural tourism and community-based creative economy.

The significance of this research lies in its dual contribution: academically, it expands understanding of cultural fashion design rooted in ethnographic context; practically, it provides a framework for transforming intangible heritage into tangible fashion products that sustain both identity and economy. The outcomes contribute to Thailand's strategic goals in creative industry development and soft power enhancement, positioning Thai Song Dam fashion as a bridge between heritage and innovation.

Literature Review

Thai Song Dam textiles embody a deep relationship between culture, belief, and craftsmanship. The creation of traditional garments such as the *seua hee* (indigo jacket) and *sinh lai tang mo* (striped skirt) reflects not only functional design but also symbolic representation of social and spiritual values (Sirithanya, 2006; Wongphuka, 2018). Motifs such as *lai khok kut*, symbolizing resilience and continuity, and *dok paet*, representing fertility and prosperity, are woven into fabrics to communicate moral virtue and ancestral respect (Duangporn, 2011). These visual languages serve as a tangible form of cultural transmission, preserving collective memory across generations (Srisuchat, 1995; Chantachon, 2002). However, the increasing influence of industrial fashion and globalization has gradually diminished the daily use of traditional attire, necessitating innovative approaches to revitalization (Phadungchai, 2020; Kawicha, 2016).

Recent studies in cultural fashion design emphasize the reinterpretation of traditional heritage through modern creative processes. Fletcher (2014) and Gwilt (2014) highlighted sustainability and ethical design as crucial aspects in balancing cultural authenticity with market demands. Barthes (1983) conceptualized fashion as a semiotic system; fashion, as a system of meaning-making, operates within broader socio-cultural structures. Craik (2009) argued that fashion functions as a cultural regulator that negotiates identity, gender, and power relations in society. Similarly, Young (2010) discussed the ethical dimensions of cultural borrowing, emphasizing the importance of respectful reinterpretation rather than cultural appropriation. In this context, the reinterpretation of Thai Song Dam motifs in this study reflects a dialogic transformation rather than mere extraction, ensuring cultural legitimacy through participatory processes.

The global shift toward the creative economy has positioned culture as a key driver of innovation and economic resilience (Howkins, 2001; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2010). In Thailand, this concept is reinforced by the Creative Economy Framework (2020–2030) and the National Cultural Strategy (2022–2037), which promote culture-based industries as instruments for both income generation and soft power projection (Thailand Creative Economy Agency, 2020; Ministry of Culture, 2022). Nye (2004) introduced the concept of soft power as the ability to attract and influence through culture and values rather than coercion. Fashion, as a medium of cultural diplomacy, embodies this potential by transforming local identity into global visibility. UNESCO (2021) further emphasized safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as integral to sustainable development. Therefore, developing Thai Song Dam costumes into international fashion represents not only an act of cultural preservation but also a strategic pathway toward sustainable creative economy and national cultural identity reinforcement (Fletcher & Tham, 2019; Vongsathorn, 2023).

Research Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach integrating participatory action research (PAR) and creative research frameworks to ensure both cultural authenticity and empirical rigor. PAR was applied to actively engage the Thai Song Dam community throughout all research stages, emphasizing collaboration, reflection, and collective action among artisans, designers, and researchers (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007). Creative Research complemented this process by enabling design experimentation and prototype development grounded in cultural narratives and aesthetic reinterpretation (Candy & Edmonds, 2018). The integration of these approaches allowed the study to balance cultural preservation with contemporary innovation.

The research design was guided by a conceptual transformation model (see Figure 1), which illustrates the pathway from cultural heritage to sustainable fashion innovation. Within this framework, traditional knowledge functions as the foundational input and is reinterpreted through the participatory design processes. The developed fashion products were subsequently validated through consumer evaluation and positioned as mechanisms contributing to community empowerment and national soft power. This conceptual structure ensured coherence between cultural analysis, creative development, market validation, and sustainability outcomes.

The study was conducted in Nong Song Hong, Ban Phaeo, Samut Sakhon, one of the most active Thai Song Dam communities in central Thailand. The site was purposively selected due to its strong heritage in traditional weaving, natural indigo dyeing, and costume craftsmanship (Thai Song Dam Research Group, 2024). The research was carried out from January to December 2024, enabling continuous engagement in community activities, textile production cycles, and co-design workshops. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling and comprised three groups: ten local artisans and elders with expertise in symbolic motifs and weaving techniques; five professional fashion designers and ten design students involved in co-creation activities; and 150 consumers who participated in the prototype evaluation. The consumer sample size was determined to ensure adequate representation and reliability in assessing aesthetic perception, cultural value, usability, and purchase intention. Consumers were selected through purposive and convenience sampling from local markets and cultural networks, with demographic distribution across genders, age groups, education levels, and occupations. This diversity allowed for comparison across market segments and enhanced the validity of the findings.

Data collection employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure triangulation and research validity. Qualitative data were gathered through field observations, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions exploring weaving practices, symbolic meanings, and community perceptions. In addition, co-creation workshops were organized to develop two fashion categories—Ready-to-Wear and High Fashion by integrating traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design principles. These participatory sessions embodied the transformation process illustrated in Figure 1 and facilitated collaborative learning between generations.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring consumer satisfaction across five dimensions: cultural identity, design aesthetics, functionality, comfort, and marketability. A 5-point Likert scale was applied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to determine consumer perceptions. The questionnaire was developed based on relevant literature and research objectives, and its content validity was assessed using the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) by three subject-matter experts. All items met the acceptable IOC criteria before data collection. The reliability of the instrument was further tested, and the results indicated satisfactory internal consistency. Qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify key cultural values and patterns of participation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The integration of both data strands through triangulation ensured consistency between cultural insights and statistical findings, reinforcing the conceptual transformation model.

Ethical standards were strictly upheld throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, and the study received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University (Reference No. BSRU-HREC-025/2024). Intellectual property rights regarding textile motifs and developed designs were co-owned between the research team and the community to ensure equitable benefit sharing. These ethical safeguards supported respectful cultural engagement while promoting sustainable creative collaboration aligned with community-based development principles.

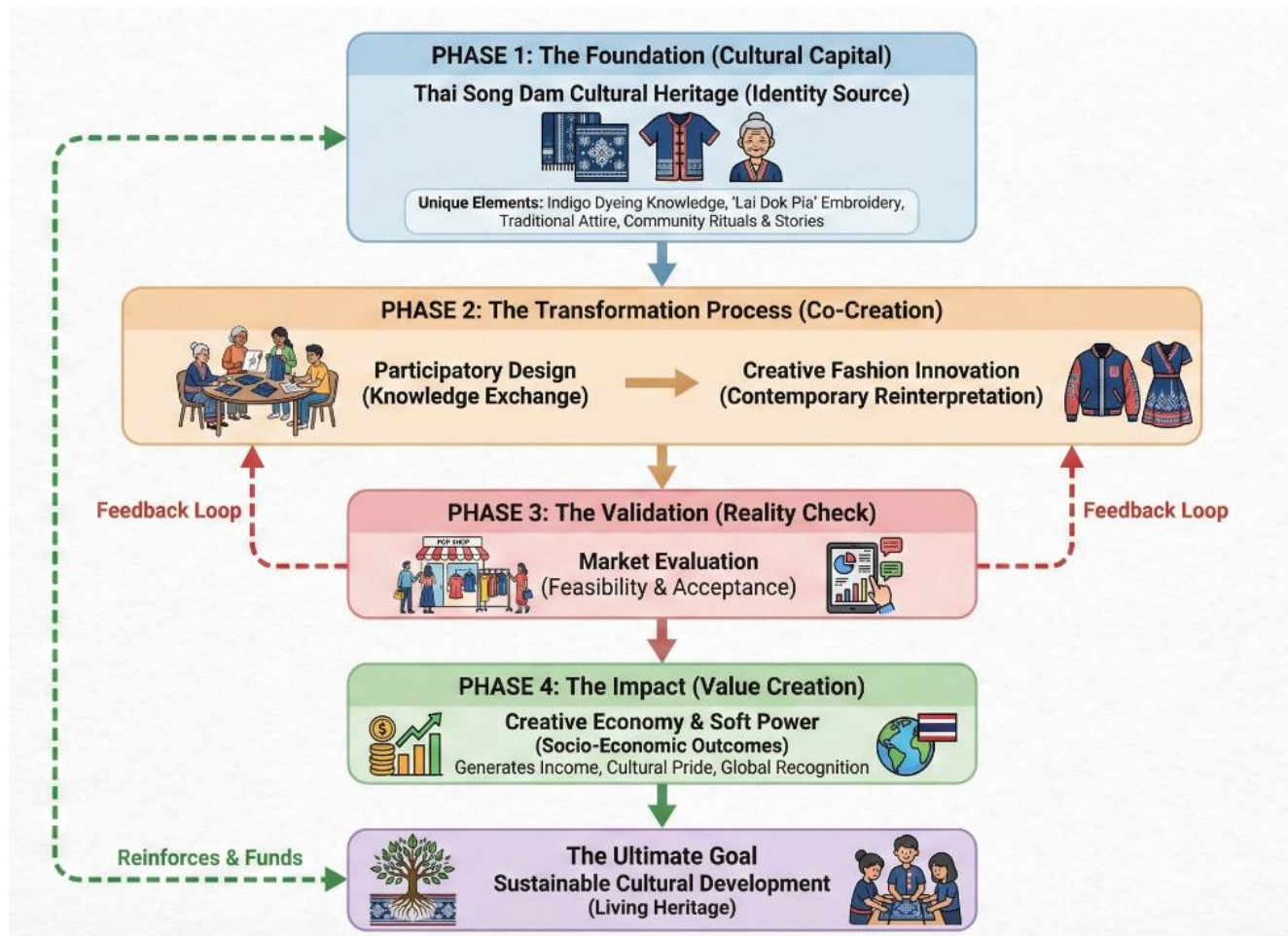


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Thai Song Dam Fashion Development
 (Source: Kienwong, 2024a)

Research Results

The findings indicate that Thai Song Dam costume traditions function as a dynamic form of living heritage, where cultural identity, symbolic meaning, craftsmanship, and contemporary innovation converge. The results are organized into four analytical dimensions: 1) cultural identity and symbolic structure, 2) design development through participatory co-creation, 3) consumer and expert validation, and 4) community empowerment and sustainable creative economy integration.

1. Cultural Identity and Symbolic Meaning

Field investigation in Nong Song Hong confirmed that Thai Song Dam textiles embody a deeply embedded symbolic system linking spiritual belief, cosmology, and social structure. Garments such as the *seua hee* (black indigo jacket), *sinh lai tang mo* (striped skirt), and *pha piew* (shoulder cloth) represent more than functional attire; they encode gender roles, moral values, and ancestral continuity. Motifs including *lai khok kut*, symbolizing endurance and equilibrium, and *dok paet*, representing fertility and prosperity, operate as visual metaphors of balance among human, natural, and spiritual realms (Sirithanya, 2006; Wongphuka, 2018).

These findings reinforce the understanding that textile forms operate as cultural semiotic systems rather than decorative artifacts. As illustrated in Figure 2, traditional costume composition reflects an integrated worldview in which aesthetics, ritual, and identity coexist. The reinterpretation of these motifs in contemporary fashion thus becomes a mechanism of cultural continuity rather than cultural replacement.



Figure 2 Traditional Thai Song Dam Costumes

(Source: Kienwong, 2024b)

These designs reflect a harmony between people and nature, reinforcing the idea that fabric is not only an aesthetic object but also a carrier of spiritual meaning. The continuation of these designs through contemporary reinterpretation thus ensures cultural survival in modern contexts.

2. Design Development and Co-creation Process

The participatory workshops generated two distinct yet interconnected fashion collections that synthesized traditional symbolism with modern design logic. The design synthesis was structured around seven core components: style, items, silhouette, color, detail, technique, and materials.

The Ready-to-Wear collection emphasized cultural minimalism and functional adaptability. Indigo-dyed cotton fabrics were combined with refined *dok paet* embroidery, and silhouettes were relaxed and semi-structured to accommodate contemporary urban lifestyles while maintaining symbolic identity.

In contrast, the High Fashion collection explored artistic reinterpretation and exhibition potential. Enlarged *lai khok kut* motifs were translated through digital textile printing and handcrafted embroidery, while garments such as layered gowns, asymmetrical skirts, and structured jackets incorporated mixed-fabric construction techniques (Fletcher & Tham, 2019).

The co-creation process facilitated reciprocal knowledge exchange. Elders transmitted symbolic interpretation and weaving techniques, whereas designers introduced digital pattern scaling and fashion trend integration. This process did not dilute authenticity; rather, it expanded symbolic vocabulary into a contemporary design language. As presented in Figure 3, the design outputs demonstrate a balanced negotiation between tradition and innovation, validating participatory design as a method for sustainable cultural transformation.



Figure 3 Design Sketches and Prototype Garments Developed During Co-Creation Workshops
(Source: Kienwong, 2024c)

The co-creation process fostered mutual learning among artisans, designers, and students. Elders provided traditional knowledge about symbolism and weaving, while young designers introduced digital design tools and trend-based pattern development. This collaborative approach resulted in products that were both culturally authentic and commercially viable (Suwannarat, 2018; Piamsuk, 2021).

3. Consumer Satisfaction and Expert Evaluation

Quantitative analysis of 150 respondents indicated a strong positive reception of the developed prototypes. The overall satisfaction level was high ($\bar{X}$ = 4.37, SD = 0.41), demonstrating favorable consumer perception. Cultural identity received the highest rating ($\bar{X}$ = 4.50), followed by design aesthetics ($\bar{X}$ = 4.47), marketability ($\bar{X}$ = 4.43), comfort ($\bar{X}$ = 4.25), and functionality ($\bar{X}$ = 4.18). The relatively low standard deviation values (SD < 0.50) indicate consistent evaluation patterns among respondents.

Table 1 Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation of Thai Song Dam Fashion Prototypes

Evaluation Criteria	Mean $\bar{X}$	SD	Interpretation
Cultural Identity	4.50	0.38	Very High
Design Aesthetics	4.47	0.41	High
Functionality	4.18	0.46	High
Comfort	4.25	0.40	High
Marketability	4.43	0.39	High
Overall Mean	4.37	0.41	High

Beyond consumer evaluation, five experts in fashion and cultural heritage assessed the collections across authenticity, creativity, functionality, aesthetics, and market potential. The expert rating ($\bar{X} = 4.52/5$) reinforces the credibility of motif adaptation and the feasibility of positioning Thai Song Dam fashion within a broader cultural branding strategy. Figure 4 illustrates the exhibition context in which prototypes were publicly presented, serving both validation and cultural communication functions.



Figure 4 Exhibition of Thai Song Dam Fashion Prototypes

(Source: Kienwong, 2025a)

4. Community Empowerment and Sustainability

The participatory process generated measurable social impact within the community. Intergenerational knowledge transmission was strengthened through workshop-based learning, where elder artisans mentored younger participants in indigo dyeing and weaving practices. Simultaneously, youth introduced digital tools and contemporary styling approaches. This bidirectional exchange enhanced both cultural preservation and adaptive innovation.

As shown in Figure 5, the co-design workshops cultivated collective ownership and renewed pride in local heritage. The research findings indicate increased interest among community members in developing creative entrepreneurship initiatives linked to textile and fashion production.



Figure 5 Community Co-Design Workshops Between Artisans and Designers

(Source: Kienwong, 2024d)

The integration of cultural production, participatory innovation, and market validation aligns with Thailand's creative economy and soft power strategies (Howkins, 2001; Nye, 2004; Thailand Creative Economy Agency, 2020). The results demonstrate that participatory design operates as a structural mechanism connecting cultural preservation with socio-economic development.

5. Summary of Results

Overall, the study confirms that Thai Song Dam textile motifs can be systematically transformed into globally adaptable fashion products without compromising symbolic authenticity. The integration of cultural semiotics, participatory co-creation, consumer validation, and community empowerment establishes a comprehensive framework for sustainable cultural fashion development. As illustrated in Figure 6, the transformation pathway links cultural heritage to participatory design, creative economy, soft power projection, and long-term sustainability.



Figure 6 Summary Model of Thai Song Dam Fashion Development Linking Cultural Heritage → Participatory Design

→ Creative Economy → Soft Power → Sustainability

(Source: Kienwong, 2024e)

Discussion

The findings of this research reaffirm that the Thai Song Dam costume is not merely a form of ethnic attire but a medium of cultural communication, symbolizing identity, resilience, and creativity. The adaptation of traditional motifs into contemporary fashion through participatory and creative design processes reveals the potential of cultural fashion to function as both a form of heritage preservation and an engine of local innovation. This discussion interprets the results through four dimensions: (1) cultural semiotics and identity formation, (2) creative co-design and innovation, (3) fashion as soft power and creative economy, and (4) sustainability and intergenerational transmission.

1. Cultural Semiotics and Identity Formation

The reinterpretation of *lai khok kut* and *dok paet* motifs within modern garments reflects Barthes' (1983) concept of fashion as a semiotic system a symbolic language expressing cultural meaning through visual form. In the Thai Song Dam context, these motifs not only function aesthetically but also represent values such as perseverance, fertility, and harmony between human and nature. The process of transforming these designs into new contexts aligns with Kawamura's (2005) notion of fashion as a "cultural production system," in which social actors, including artisans, designers, and consumers, co-construct meaning through the processes of creation and interpretation.



Figure 7 Comparison of Traditional Dok Paet Weaving Pattern and its Reinterpretation in Ready-to-Wear Design
(Source: Kienwong, 2024f)

This study confirms that cultural symbols can retain authenticity even when adapted into new design languages, provided that reinterpretation respects their original narrative. Such transformation helps revitalize intangible heritage and strengthens identity expression in modern society (Sirithanya, 2006; Wongphuka, 2018).

2. Creative Co-design and Innovation

The co-creation workshops demonstrated that PAR can effectively bridge local wisdom and professional design practice. Artisans contributed traditional techniques and symbolic knowledge, while designers introduced modern aesthetics and digital technology. This aligns with Suwannarat (2018) and Piamsuk (2021), who emphasized that participatory design fosters creative ownership and sustainable innovation.

Table 2 Comparative Features of Co-designed Thai Song Dam Fashion Collections

Collection Type	Key Design Concept	Market Target	Key Design Features
Ready-to-Wear	Simplicity, functionality	Minimal <i>dok paet</i> motif, indigo dye	Natural cotton, hand stitching
High Fashion	Artistic expression	Cultural events, exhibitions	Digital printing, embroidery, layering

The collaborative method not only produced fashion prototypes but also created new social interactions within the community. This finding supports Fletcher (2014) and Gwilt (2014), who advocated for fashion design as a socially engaged and ethically responsible practice. Co-design thus becomes an educational tool that empowers both artisans and emerging designers, positioning fashion as a process of mutual learning and cultural regeneration.

3. Fashion as Soft Power and Creative Economy

The study illustrates how fashion can serve as soft power a form of cultural diplomacy that communicates national identity through creativity and aesthetics. As Nye (2004) noted, soft power derives from attraction rather than coercion. The presentation of Thai Song Dam fashion in local exhibitions and media coverage demonstrated Thailand's cultural richness and potential for global recognition.



Figure 8 High Fashion Presentation Inspired by Thai Song Dam
(Source: Kienwong, 2025b)

These findings correspond with Thailand's Creative Economy Framework (2020–2030) and National Cultural Strategy (2022–2037), which promote the integration of heritage into innovative industries (Thailand Creative Economy Agency, 2020; Ministry of Culture, 2022). The fusion of local identity with market potential exemplifies Howkins' (2001) concept of creativity as a driver of economic value. Thus, Thai Song Dam fashion becomes not only an aesthetic expression but also a policy-relevant model for community-based creative entrepreneurship.

4. Sustainability and Intergenerational Transmission

Sustainability in this study transcends environmental concerns, encompassing cultural continuity and social inclusion. The use of natural indigo dye and handwoven fabrics represents Fletcher and Tham's (2019) principle of "Earth Logic," aligning design with ecological and ethical awareness. More importantly, intergenerational knowledge transfer between elder artisans and young participants demonstrated a living model of cultural sustainability.



Figure 9 Knowledge Transfer Between Elder Weavers and Fashion Students During Co-Creation Workshops

(Source: Kainwong, 2024g)

This supports Freire's (1970) concept of dialogic learning, where knowledge evolves through participation and reflection. The process not only strengthened local identity but also inspired younger generations to value their heritage as a source of innovation and livelihood. Therefore, sustainability in fashion extends to sustaining people, culture, and creativity together.

5. Limitations and Recommendations

While the study achieved its objectives, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size of consumers was confined to one province, which may not fully represent broader market preferences. Future research should expand to other Thai ethnic communities for comparative analysis. Additionally, further exploration of digital fashion platforms and virtual exhibitions could enhance global outreach, while collaborations with international fashion institutes may foster cross-cultural dialogue and innovation (Vongsathorn, 2023).

6. Summary

In summary, this study demonstrates that participatory and creative design can effectively transform Thai Song Dam textile traditions into internationally relevant fashion while preserving cultural authenticity. Fashion thus serves as a bridge connecting heritage and innovation, community and economy, and local wisdom and global visibility, fulfilling Thailand's vision of soft power through sustainable cultural development.

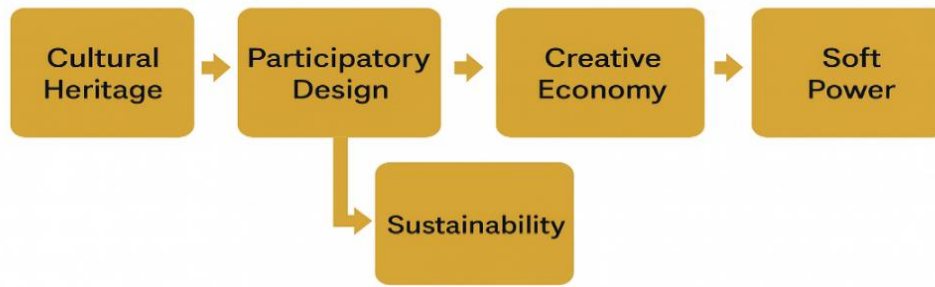


Figure 10 Conceptual Framework of Thai Song Dam Fashion Development

Linking Cultural Heritage → Participatory Design → Creative Economy → Soft Power → Sustainability.

(Source: Kienwong, 2024h)

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that Thai Song Dam fashion can be systematically elevated from traditional craftsmanship to contemporary fashion products with potential for international markets. This transformation was achieved by integrating traditional motifs with modern design elements while preserving cultural authenticity. The synthesis of style, silhouette, color, materials, and techniques enabled the garments to retain symbolic meaning while adapting to current fashion standards. As a result, the prototypes successfully combined ethnic identity with global fashion relevance.

The evaluation results confirmed that consumers and experts responded positively to the developed collections, particularly in terms of cultural identity and aesthetic value. These findings indicate that culturally rooted fashion can compete in broader markets when supported by thoughtful design development and quality production processes. The integration of traditional indigo dyeing, handwoven textiles, and contemporary tailoring techniques strengthened the uniqueness of the products, which is an important factor for differentiation in international fashion markets.

Beyond product development, the study shows that fashion innovation can serve as a tool for community-based development. The participatory design process enhanced collaboration between artisans and designers, promoting knowledge transfer and increasing community confidence in cultural entrepreneurship. This collaborative approach not only produced fashion collections but also strengthened local identity and pride.

Furthermore, the results suggest that the developed fashion prototypes can be linked to cultural tourism initiatives within the community. Activities such as weaving demonstrations, indigo dye workshops, and fashion exhibitions can be incorporated into cultural tourism programs. These initiatives allow visitors to experience Thai Song Dam heritage directly, transforming fashion from a commercial product into a cultural attraction.

By integrating fashion development with experiential tourism, the community can generate diversified income sources while preserving its cultural heritage. Such an approach supports sustainable development by balancing economic growth, cultural conservation, and social participation. Therefore, Thai Song Dam fashion represents not only a creative product but also a practical strategy for strengthening community sustainability and cultural visibility.

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