

THE POPULARITY OF *SESHOESHOE* DRESS FOR BASOTHO WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to establish the value attached to *sheshoeshoe* dress. Specifically, the study assesses the perceptions of college staff, students and dressmakers with regard to the importance, uses, changes in dress styles and fashionability of the dress within the Basotho culture. A survey research design was employed entailing a questionnaire and a structured interview with both closed and open-ended questions. These tools were used to obtain information from staff and students of the Lesotho College of Education and from dressmakers operating within the Maseru Central Business District. In terms of the importance of *sheshoeshoe* dress the study has shown that *sheshoeshoe* dress is extensively worn by young and adult females. More than 50% of respondents under 35 years old as well as those over 36 years had worn or possessed at least one *sheshoeshoe* dress. Irrespective of marital status, possession of *sheshoeshoe* dresses by respondents was similar. Thus the number of *sheshoeshoe* dresses owned is not influenced by age or marital status. *Seshoeshoe* is therefore an important clothing item in a Mosotho woman's wardrobe.

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INTRODUCTION

National dress is linked to the socio-political concept of nation-state and political boundaries. It identifies citizens with their country. Sometimes a national dress might have originated as the dress of one ethnic group within a nation-state composed of many ethnic groups (Eicher & Sumberg 1995). Eicher and Sumberg (1995) further observe that ethnic dress demonstrates common or shared ways of dress that identify a group of people who share a common background and heritage. Traditionally Basotho dress was made mainly from an animal skin. However, through their close interaction with the Europeans, in particular the French missionaries in 1833, they began to adopt the Western dress (Gill 1993). The study focuses on Basotho women's dress known as *seshoeshoe*. The origins of *seshoeshoe* dress can be traced back to the mid 19th century. The Xhosa and Basotho women who were converted to Christianity wore blue print skirts after the German style. The skirts were introduced by German missionaries that had settled in the Eastern Cape and Natal. The Basotho people referred to the skirts as *terantala*. The concept of *seshoeshoe* as an identity dress for Basotho women emerged from *terantala* in the 1950s after they were provoked by the Xhosa women from Transkei who exhibited their national dress at a function held in Morija (Gill, personal communication, 2002). The impact of Western dress on the Basotho has been extensive. It did not only usher in *seshoeshoe* but even their traditional leather kaross (skin blanket) has been replaced with the colourful manufactured woollen blanket (Karstel 1995).

OBJECTIVES

The study seeks to establish the value attached to the different uses of *seshoeshoe* dress. Specifically the objective of the study is to assess the perceptions of college staff, students and dressmakers with regard to the importance, uses, changes in dress styles and fashionability

of *seshoeshoe* dress within the Basotho culture.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the inception of the *seshoeshoe* concept as an identity dress, *seshoeshoe* dress has evolved extensively resulting in a broad spectrum of styles and colours consumed as a major cultural identity dress for both elderly and young Basotho females. The extensive usage of the dress has led to establishment of a thriving small scale industry by *seshoeshoe* dressmakers that is playing a crucial role in the local economy. The following are among the popular uses for *seshoeshoe* dress: traditional festivities, wedding ceremonies, international functions as well as mourning gowns. However a challenge that has not been addressed is whether the new styles and the extensive usage from children to adults and different social activities has maintained the concept of national identity. Furthermore, despite this widespread use for the dress there is very little documentation. It is hoped that this study provides a better understanding of the dress and its current usage.

OVERVIEW

Definition of clothing and dress

Dress is defined in many different ways (Rouse 1989; Kaiser 1990; Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992). For example Kaiser (1990:5) sees the word "dress" as either a verb or a noun. As a verb, to dress refers to the act of altering or adding an appearance. As a noun, dress refers to the "total arrangement of all outwardly detectable modifications of the body and all material objects added to it". Kaiser (1990:4) further indicates that "clothing refers to any tangible or material object connected to the human body. This definition encompasses such items as pants, skirts, tops and other related body coverings (Roach-Higgins & Eicher 1993; Darmhorst 2008). For the purpose of the study, the focus is on dress as a tangible material object connected to the body (body covering)

and not dress as an assemblage of modifications or supplements to the body. According to Rouse (1989) clothing has an important role to perform in retaining a positive self-image and high self-esteem.

Individual and social identity of dress

The change from one status to another can be marked by changes in dress (Rouse 1989). A ritual or ceremony is normally performed to mark the change and the participants usually celebrate the occasion by showing off their special clothes. In social life individuals should know with whom they are dealing, and they have to be able to recognise each other's social identity. They need to know the role or roles each person plays, the groups they belong to, their status within those groups and even their status within the society as a whole (Rouse 1989).

As noted by Barnes and Eicher (1993) dress serves as a sign that the individual belongs to a certain group, yet simultaneously differentiates the same individual from all others. In other words, dress includes and excludes. This property of inclusion and exclusion is also carried over into the meaning of dress within the group. Therefore dress is an indication of the general social position of an individual in society. In the same vein Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) believe that a person's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same worth or identity that he appropriates for himself.

Lurie (1983) suggests that through what one is wearing, he or she can announce sex, age, class, occupation, origin, personality options, tastes, sexual desires and current mood. In societies that have retained their traditional form of dress, for example the kimono and the sari, this forms a clear sign of the national identity of their wearers. In addition, clothes of different nationalities and societies do not only indicate difference, but also show values and ways of life shared by the national group (Rouse 1989).

Clothing and fashion

Klopper (1991) notes that change can only be addressed through a consideration of transformations in the style. The current *seshoeshoe* dress styles have been influenced by style, acceptance and change as components of fashion. The concept of creativity is part of fashion (Frings 1999). Individuals and groups may innovate fashion aesthetically and technically to create new styles of clothes (Rouse 1989). According to Frings (1999), as new fabrics and ideas became available, people long for more new things. "Nothing motivates change so well as change itself" (Frings 1987:4). Frings (1999) further notes that fashion always occupies a position between the past and the future. By adopting the newest trends in dress styles one demonstrates that one is in touch with the times (Rouse 1989). This also shows that an individual has a feeling for, or has knowledge of, the direction in which styles and tastes are moving.

Culture and dress

According to Kaiser (1990) culture provides guidelines as to how individuals can interpret the meaning of clothes and/or what articles of clothing should be worn together. "Culture is a relatively abstract concept that describes the mental and physical artefacts that people value" (Kaiser 1990:349). Hamilton and Hamilton (1989) describe dress as a pan-human expression of culture that could be an extremely powerful, symbolic, ritualised way of expressing and reinforcing subtle values, relationships and meanings in human cultures. Barnes and Eicher (1993) further suggest that dress as a cultural phenomenon has several essential attributes: a person's identity is defined geographically and historically, and each individual is linked to a specific community. Therefore culture dictates the concept of "proper dress" for every social event even though there is room for personal choice (Perani & Wolff 1999).

ACCULTURATION

Acculturation is the adoption of a foreign culture as a result of close interaction between different cultures. It is a continuous process (Kaiser 1990). In Lesotho, acculturation began with the interaction of the Basotho and the Boers through wars and the arrival of the first missionaries in 1833. Not everybody was excited by the new ideas brought by the Europeans. Moshoeshoe's father Mokhachane and other counsellors of Moshoeshoe were strongly opposed to the missionaries (Gill 1993). The missionaries were not only interested in the preaching of the gospel, but in converting the whole man. The missionaries sought peacefully to undermine the foundation of the old Basotho society and to replace it with a Western Christian one. As part of their Christian teaching, the missionaries emphasised morality and decent dress, and the implication here was that the Basotho customary dress was un-Christian. To begin with, King Moshoeshoe I was presented with a Western blanket as a gift by Mr Howell in 1860 (Mokorosi 2017).

The colonisation of Lesotho by the British around 1867 and the inclusion of Basotho migrant workers in the South African mining industry, beginning with the diamond mines in Kimberley, contributed significantly to the popularisation of the Western dress among Basotho (Karstel 1995). Basotho women adopted the nineteenth century European fashion of wearing ankle-length, gathered dresses filled out with several layers of petticoats. These styles, although still frequently seen, have changed to be more in line with current Western styles. The Basotho became involved in agriculture, building techniques, health and literacy as a transferred knowledge from the West (Gill 1993), and their styles of dress were inevitably influenced in the process.

Traditional dress

A national or traditional dress identifies people as unique from others and often originates from the dress of one ethnic group within a nation

composed of many ethnic groups. It is linked to the socio-political concept of nation-state and political boundaries and identifies citizens with their country (Eicher and Sumberg 1995). Eicher and Sumberg further submit that ethnic dress may include items borrowed from other cultures and it is not static as careful investigation may reveal some changes over time. Ethnic dress is normally reserved for special occasions. Thus culturally inclined persons clothing collection will contain both modern and traditional dress ensembles, allowing them to adapt with ease and to communicate effectively with others and establish their desired image as any given situation may demand (Eicher and Sumberg 1995). However a traditional dress can be presented as an expression of traditional behaviour that identifies the individual in terms of local norms, ethnicity and gender. Tradition implies relatively slow change and the traditional dress can remain relatively unchanged over long periods of time (Jirousek 1997). On the whole, traditional cultures and their dress retain their characteristics because they are separated from external influences by environmental factors or by choice. However, it would be a mistake to assume that a traditional dress never changes.

New materials, accessories, or even garments may be introduced from time to time and be absorbed into the traditional dress aesthetic. The dress is most likely to change substantially under unusual and sometimes even socially traumatic circumstances. According to O'Neal (1998b) dress provides a constructed discourse that can be interpreted as expressing membership in a group with a common history, symbol system, and geography and of course instils pride in individuals in that they know who they are and where they come from. In the context of Lesotho, four clothing (dress) items remain central to the identity of the modern Mosotho: the blanket (worn by both men and women), the *seshoeshoe* (worn by women), the *mokorotlo*/Basotho hat (worn by men and women) and *molamu*, stick or *knob-kerrie* (carried by men).

METHODOLOGY

The study focused on the Lesotho College of Education community (staff and students) and selected dressmakers within the Maseru City. The former group represents the consumers of the product from *seshoeshoe* fabric while the latter represent producers. Students to a large extent represented perceptions and attitudes of youth while the staff represented the attitudes of the mature or elderly. A sample was obtained from a population of 200 staff members and 1048 students. Samples of 140 and 350 were selected respectively using a table or random numbers.

Sample sizes were above the required for 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval, to allow for sample mortality (Sheskin 1985; Babbie 1995; Leedy 1997; McMillan & Shumacher 1997; Delport 2005; Strydom 2005). Through a snowball sampling process 23 dressmakers were identified as part of the study (Cohen & Manion 1994; Babbie 1995; Berg 1995; Maree & Pietersen 2007; Nieuwenheis 2007).

Data on college staff and students were collected using both close-ended and open-ended questionnaires, and interview schedules were used for the dressmakers. The questions entailed three main sections: biographic information, perceptions of *seshoeshoe* and uses of *seshoeshoe* dress. The questionnaire for the college staff was distributed and collected by the researcher while the administration and collection of questionnaire to the students was done with the assistance of the lecturers and class monitors. Permission for administration of the questionnaires had been obtained from the college management. Face to face interviews were conducted with the dressmakers. Both the questionnaires and interview schedules were coded to facilitate analysis. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for UNIX release 6.1. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as Chi-square test were used to describe the college staff and students' responses and to

draw inferences concerning relationships between variables. There were no inferential relationships drawn from the dressmakers snowball sample.

Participation in this study was voluntary. No participant was forced or threatened into any of the interviews. Participants remained anonymous and the information they provided was treated as confidential. All original records were destroyed after data capturing and analysis.

RESULTS

A majority of both staff and students (70.9% and 68.5% respectively) did not make a distinction between *seshoeshoe* and *terantala* as the name for the dress versus the fabric although the latter is less popular. The results showed that there were many changes in *seshoeshoe* dress styles. Although the changes were favoured by the majority, some staff (40%) and students (34.4%) thought they were not impressive. Current styles are influenced to various degrees by fashionability and in relation to other African and Western styles. The majority of staff (48.7%) felt that the influence was mainly due to African and Western cultures while majority of students (55.4%) felt that the cause was fashionability. Perceptions on name, changes on style and the influence of the changes on *seshoeshoe* dress are shown in Table 1.

Styles and fabric materials used in combination have changed with increased Westernisation. The same applies to meanings associated with the new forms of dress. A variety of foreign clothing items have been assimilated into the traditional Basotho life-styles, for example, the headgear and the blanket. Basotho women adopted the nineteenth-century European fashion of wearing ankle-length skirts with gathers. This style, although still frequently seen, has changed somewhat to be in line with current Western styles (Levitas & Morries 1987). Basotho traditional *seshoeshoe* dress originally consisted of two types of styles – skirt and apron and full dress and apron. The modified

seshoeshoe styles are full dress or skirt with apron features such as pockets, tucks and belts in one piece.

Respondents noted a number of changes from the traditional *seshoeshoe* dress style. The current styles have too many copied styles and the Western or African styles were found to be too fancy or fashionable. There was concern that some current styles are made from imitation fabrics. There are now two or three-piece styles, dress styles with no aprons and there is a headgear. Some styles leave some parts of the body exposed for example thighs and shoulders and in others lengths are either too long or too short. There are skirts that are too tight fitting. In others there are too many decorations, different trimmings and lined styles. The new styles do not really give a true picture of

seshoeshoe as a Basotho dress. *Seshoeshoe* is faced with challenges of rapid change which are normal to traditional dresses as shown by Jirousek (1997) that new materials, accessories, or even garments may be introduced from time to time and be absorbed into the traditional dress aesthetic. The results indicate that style, taste, acceptance and fashion, play a crucial role with regard to the popularity of *seshoeshoe*, to both young and old Basotho women.

The attachment of the females to *seshoeshoe* dress in terms of those who have worn it, their love for the dress and how they feel when wearing the dress is summarised in Table 2. The results show that *seshoeshoe* dress is very popular for both female staff and students.

TABLE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF SESHOSHOOE DRESS STYLES

VARIABLES	STAFF		STUDENTS	
	N	%	N	%
<i>Seshoeshoe</i> versus <i>terantala</i>				
It means the same thing	56	70.9	126	68.5
There is a difference	23	29.1	58	31.5
Total	79	100	184	100
Recent changes noted in <i>seshoeshoe</i> dress styles				
Yes	77	96.3	155	87.1
No	3	3.8	23	12.9
Total	80	100	178	100
Extent to which changes are liked				
Very much	46	57.5	105	63.3
Not that much	26	32.5	35	21.1
Not at all	6	7.5	22	13.3
Not certain	2	2.5	4	2.4
Total	80	100	166	100
Opinion on the current <i>seshoeshoe</i> styles compared to earlier styles				
Not different to earlier styles	6	8.0	7	4.2
Better than earlier styles	39	52.0	103	62.0
Current styles look terrible	9	12.0	31	18.7
I am not certain	10	13.3	22	13.3
Other	11	14.7	3	1.8
Total	75	100	166	100
Current styles are mainly influenced by				
Fashionability	22	28.2	92	55.4
Western cultures	4	5.1	15	9.0
Other African cultures	8	10.3	14	8.4
Both African and Western cultures	38	48.7	34	20.5
I am not certain	3	3.8	11	6.6
Fashionability both African and Western cultures	3	3.9	-	-
Total	78	100	166	100

TABLE 2: POPULARITY OF SESHOSHOE DRESS

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	STAFF		STUDENTS	
		N	%	N	%
Have worn a <i>seshoeshoe</i> dress before	Yes	80	96.4	160	89.4
	No	3	3.6	19	10.6
	Total	83	100	179	100
Like wearing a <i>seshoeshoe</i> dress	Very much	73	90.1	144	83.2
	Not that much	8	9.9	24	13.9
	Not at all	-		3	1.7
	Not certain	-		2	1.2
	Total	81	100	173	100
Feeling when dressed in <i>seshoeshoe</i> dress	Very well dressed	63	77.8	99	57.6
	Reasonably well dressed	18	22.2	68	39.5
	No special feeling	-		3	1.7
	Do not like to wear it	-		2	1.2
	Total	81	100	172	100
Preference regarding type of dress worn mostly for every day purposes	<i>Seshoeshoe</i> dress	29	35.8	69	39.7
	Western attire	24	29.6	61	35.1
	Other African cultures	-	-	4	2.3
	No preference	24	29.6	23	13.2
	Not certain	4	4.9	17	9.7
	Total	81	100	174	100

Seshoeshoe dress is not normally worn daily but it constitutes a dress for special occasions or for special places. It is important therefore for the Basotho women's wardrobes to contain both a *seshoeshoe* dress and world fashion, to be worn as appropriate to the time and place.

Perceptions on the uses of *seshoeshoe* dress

Seshoeshoe dress has been used for a number of social purposes. It is usually presented as a gift to a bride by the parents of the bridegroom. A married woman is expected to have at least one *seshoeshoe* dress. Some women can possess more than four *seshoeshoe* dresses in their wardrobes. Change of status or a rite of passage is usually marked by special dress in certain cultures (Rouse 1989). Occasions when *seshoeshoe* dress is popularly worn are during cultural festivals and weddings. Table 3 presents some popular uses for *seshoeshoe* dress. *Seshoeshoe* dress in the form of men's shirts and pants is not yet popular. Majority of staff (74.7%) and students (81.6%) do not support the use of *seshoeshoe* as widows' mourning attire. Although there is freedom in regard to personal choice in dress, Perani &

Wolff (1999) argue that one's culture dictates appropriate dress for specific occasions.

Moshoeshoe's Day which is celebrated every year on 11 March is a great occasion for Basotho and an opportunity to display variety of *seshoeshoe* dress styles.

Female staff and students indicated that when wearing a *seshoeshoe* dress, women are more noticeable, well-dressed, comfortable, confident, attractive, beautiful, unique, respected, admired and presentable. They feel special, proud and perfect.

Significant statistical relationships

Apart from the univariate data analysis, the possibility of statistically significant relationships was explored by applying the Chi-square test using staff and student responses together. In this regard the variables of marital status, age and place of birth were correlated with several questions. The results are presented in Tables 4A to 4E. Statistically significant relationships were found to exist between style influence and marital status; style influence and age; uses of

TABLE 3: POPULAR USES OF SESHOESHOE DRESS

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	STAFF		STUDENTS	
		N	%	N	%
Number of <i>seshoeshoe</i> dresses owned	Zero	4	4.9	30	15.9
	One	4	4.9	44	23.3
	Two	15	18.3	38	20.1
	Three	18	22.0	33	17.5
	Four	13	15.9	23	12.2
	More than four	28	34.1	21	11.1
	Total		82	100.0	189
Occasions when <i>seshoeshoe</i> dress is mostly used	Cultural festivals	6	7.5	59	31.7
	Funerals	1	1.3	3	1.6
	Weddings	1	1.3	1	0.5
	As identity for associations	-	-	1	0.5
	To work	-	-	-	-
	Cultural festivals funerals, weddings, as identity for associations, other	15	18.8	49	26.3
	Cultural festivals funerals, as identity for associations, to work, other	8	10.0	6	3.2
	Cultural festivals, funerals, weddings, other	23	28.7	8	4.3
	Cultural festivals as identity for associations, to work	3	3.8	9	4.8
	Cultural festivals funerals, other	1	1.3	28	15.1
	Other (all the above)	22	27.5	22	11.8
Total		80	100	186	100
<i>Seshoeshoe</i> dress as a welcoming gift to a newly wedded bride	I support it	79	97.5	180	95.2
	I do not support	1	1.2	3	1.6
	Uncertain	1	1.2	6	3.2
	Total		81	100.0	189

seshoeshoe and age; and style influence and place of birth.

Table 4A shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between age and style influence. The largest proportion of the younger generation (57.1%) prefers styles that are fashionable, unlike the 47.9% of the older generation who prefer styles that are influenced by both African and Western cultures. Table 4B shows that 62% of single women compared with only 46% of married and 20.8% of widowed women believe that the current styles are influenced by fashionability. Some two-thirds of widowed women believe that both African and Western cultures influenced their choice of *seshoeshoe* dress styles.

Table 4C indicates that regardless of age, possession and use of *seshoeshoe* dress is very high, in particular nearly all respondents younger than 35 years (57%) and older than 36 (53.8%) had used or possessed a *seshoeshoe*

dress. Table 4D indicates that whether single (56.3%), married (55.1%) or widowed (60.0%) possession of *seshoeshoe* dress is almost the same regardless of marital status. This indicates the value or the importance of the dress to the Basotho women as a national identity dress. In Table 4E the p-value of 0.008 shows that, whether rural or urban, the style is influenced according to place of birth. Table 4E also shows that 53.8% of the rural respondents' style influence was due to fashionability and 50.0% of the urban respondents' style influence was due to both African and Western cultures.

Dressmakers perceptions on style and their popularity

Perceptions of dressmakers on the influences of the styles and their popularity are presented in Tables 5 and 6. As shown in Table 5, customers' choice from known styles, original creativity by dressmakers and customers are regarded as the major influences of style.

TABLE 4A: INFLUENCE OF AGE ON STYLE

CURRENT STYLES ARE MAINLY INFLUENCED BY	35 YEARS AND YOUNGER		36 YEARS AND OLDER	
	N	%	N	%
Fashionability	89	57.1	25	35.2
Western cultures	16	10.3	3	4.2
Other African cultures	13	8.3	9	12.7
Both African and Western cultures	38	24.4	34	47.9
Total	156	100	71	100

P=0.001

TABLE 4B: INFLUENCE OF AGE ON STYLE

CURRENT STYLES ARE MAINLY INFLUENCED BY	SINGLE		MARRIED		WIDOWED	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fashionability	59	62.1	50	46.3	5	20.8
Western cultures	6	6.3	11	10.2	2	8.3
Other African cultures	7	7.4	14	13.0	1	4.2
Both African and Western cultures	23	24.2	33	30.6	16	66.7
Total	95	100	108	100	24	100

P=0.001

TABLE 4C: INFLUENCE OF AGE ON SESHOESHOE DRESS

NUMBER OF DRESSES	35 YEARS AND YOUNGER		36 YEARS AND OLDER	
	N	%	N	%
None	31	16.2	3	3.8
Three and less	109	57.1	43	53.8
More than four	51	26.7	34	42.5
Total	191	100	80	100

P=0.003

TABLE 4D: RELATIONSHIP OF MARITAL STATUS AND NUMBER OF SESHOESHOE DRESSES POSSESSED

NUMBER OF DRESSES	SINGLE		MARRIED		WIDOWED	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	26	21.8	6	4.7	2	8.0
Three and less	67	56.3	70	55.1	15	60.0
More than four	26	21.9	51	40.2	8	32.0
Total	119	100	127	100	25	100

P=0.000

TABLE 4E: INFLUENCE OF PLACE OF BIRTH (RURAL OR URBAN) ON STYLE

INFLUENCE OF CURRENT STYLES	RURAL		URBAN	
	N	%	N	%
Fashionability	92	53.8	22	39.3
Western cultures	16	9.4	3	5.4
Other African cultures	19	11.1	3	5.4
Both African and Western cultures	44	25.7	28	50.0
Total	171	100	86	100

P=0.008

The ranking of the styles in terms of popularity is shown in Table 6. The old traditional full dress with apron seemed unpopular compared to other styles. Answering the question of whether seasons influenced the choice of different styles of *seshoeshoe*, the majority (65.2%) of respondents felt that the seasons did influence *seshoeshoe* dress styles. This was based on the fact that in summer customers prefer short sleeves and in winter long sleeves because in Lesotho winters are cold. In summer a wider variety of current styles, choice or creativity is displayed for customers. Cultural festivities were found to have no impact on the demand of *seshoeshoe* dress.

Dressmakers furnished the following information about *seshoeshoe*:

- The traditional Sesotho *seshoeshoe* dress is one with tucks, apron, lined and with pockets, whether it is a full dress, with or without an apron and a skirt with tucks, pockets, and with or without an apron.
- It can be expensive to make a *seshoeshoe* dress with tucks and an apron as a lot of fabric is used.
- Dresses made with imitation fabrics are cheaper.

CONCLUSION

In terms of importance the study has shown that more than 50% of respondents under 35 years old as well as those over 36 years had worn or possessed at least one *seshoeshoe* dress. It is further shown that whether single, married or widowed, more than 50% of the respondents possess about the same number of *seshoeshoe* dresses. Thus the number of *seshoeshoe* dresses owned is not influenced by age or marital status. *Seshoeshoe* is therefore an important clothing item in a Mosotho woman's wardrobe. Perhaps the higher number of dresses per individual among the staff members could be associated with their financial freedom compared to students. *Seshoeshoe* dress fits all occasions and when wearing it, Basotho women

are more noticeable, well-dressed, comfortable, confident, attractive and feel perfect.

Seshoeshoe dress is significant in a number of social occasions for Basotho. It is a welcoming present to the bride by the parents of the bridegroom. Change of status such as marriage is usually marked by *seshoeshoe* dress in the Basotho culture (Rouse, 1989). Other occasions when *seshoeshoe* dress is popularly worn are during cultural festivals like Moshoeshoe's Day, the King's birthday district celebrations and weddings. The modified *seshoeshoe* dress is more popular than the traditional style. A variety of styles have emerged resulting in a wide choice of *seshoeshoe* dress styles in the market.

Age influences style with the younger generation preferring styles that are fashionable but the current styles are also attractive on older people thus indicating that fashion change has a good impact on *seshoeshoe* dress. Both Western and west and east African styles have impacted on the fashionability of *seshoeshoe* dress. The dressmakers and consumers have created their own original styles, but these invariably possess elements of some foreign styles. Modern *seshoeshoe* styles use less fabric than the traditional *seshoeshoe* with tucks, apron and underlining. Being a truly prestigious dress for Basotho, depending on the nature of finishings and artistic work employed like embroidery, *seshoeshoe* dresses may be costly. Despite the important fashion changes, the original traditional *seshoeshoe* dress style has been maintained and remains adorable. The use for *seshoeshoe* fabric for men's shirts and pants is not yet popular but shows a developing trend. The fabric has also been used to make groups uniform such as women's societies or clubs, choirs and cultural groups. The use of the fabric for making widows' mourning attire was found unpopular. *Seshoeshoe* continues to grow in popularity and its use and development within Southern Africa needs further research.

TABLE 5: PERCEPTIONS ON INFLUENCES OF STYLES PRODUCED (N=23)

SOURCE OF INFLUENCE	YES		NO	
	N	%	N	%
Western styles	12	52.2	11	47.8
African styles	13	56.5	10	43.5
Customer's choice from known styles	22	95.7	1	4.3
Original creativity of the customer	23	100	-	-
Dressmakers' own original creativity	23	100	-	-
Imitation of styles	23	100	-	-
Other	1	4.3	-	-

TABLE 6: POPULARITY OF STYLES PRODUCED (N=23)

STYLE	POPULAR		NOT POPULAR	
	n	%	n	%
Skirt and blouse	23	100	-	-
Modified full dress without apron	22	95.7	1	4.3
Skirt and apron	19	82.6	4	17.4
Panelled ankle-length skirt	19	82.6	4	17.4
Full dress with apron (traditional)	16	69.6	7	30.4
Other	2	8.7	-	-

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the modern fashionable *seshoeshoe* dress should be manufactured in quantities and quality that will be targeted for export market.

Dressmakers should keep the unmodified *seshoeshoe* in their displays to ensure that it does not completely disappear from the market.

Further research should be carried on the perceptions of Basotho women on the use of *seshoeshoe* as the widows' mourning gown.

A comparative study of the use of *seshoeshoe* dress and the Basotho blanket among Basotho women as cultural identity is needed.

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