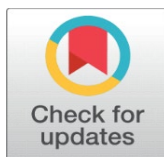
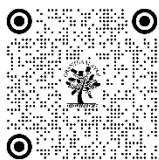


DESIGNING SUMMER WEAR APPAREL BY USING KUTHAMPULLY KASAVU SAREES

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ABSTRACT

The Kerala saree, sometimes referred to as the Kasavu saree in the region, is a moving representation of the rich cultural legacy ingrained in Kerala, India. These sarees, which are crafted by the expert craftspeople of the Devanga Chettiar group, which is based in Kuthampully, a small town in the Thrissur district, are the embodiment of centuries' worth of elaborate artistry and tradition. In the sleepy village of Kuthampully, which has a population of more than two thousand, there is an unflinching commitment to celebrating and preserving this ancient weaving heritage. This study investigates the traditional Kasavu sarees and their contemporary applications through a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The design process involved sourcing raw materials from Kuthampully, creating prints with reactive dye and smudge techniques. This study not only preserves the heritage of Kasavu sarees but also demonstrates their adaptability in modern fashion, offering a sustainable and innovative integration of traditional textiles into contemporary Western-style garments. This sustainable approach to fashion is not just a trend but a way to inspire change in the industry.

Keywords: Kasavu Saree, Traditional, Designing, Summer Wear

1. INTRODUCTION

A traditional garment worn by women in Kerala for a variety of events and festivals is the Kerala saree, also called the Kasavu saree. These traditional clothes, which include the Kerala Set-Saree, Set-Mundu, Neriyaath, Kavani, and Kasavu, are painstakingly weaved by the Devanga Chettiar community in Kuthampully, Thrissur district. These artisans, who were originally from Karnataka's Mysore district, moved their looms to Kuthampully many years ago to work for the Kochi Palace.

Located in the Thiruvilwamala grama panchayat in the Thrissur district, Kuthampully is home to over two thousand people who are committed to maintaining their traditional craft. The traditional mundum neriyaathum is made up

of two pieces of cloth, but a Kerala saree is usually made up of just one. These outfits are now frequently draped in different styles, with golden borders adorning simple white linen. The neriyathu was tucked inside the blouse when the mundum neriyathum was first worn.

The mundum neriyathum is used for both festival events and daily wear. It is distinguished by the Kara (coloured border strip), mundu (lower garment), and neriyathu (top garment). The hue of the blouse was used to indicate the wearer's age and marital status: green was used for single girls and red for married ladies. The Kasavu border, which is usually plated in gold or copper, has elaborate peacock or temple motifs on the pallu and straightforward line designs along the bottom [Baral et al. \(2019\)](#).

2. REVIEW LITERATURE

2.1. ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF KASAVU SAREES

Kerala Kasavu, also called 'Mundum Neryathum,' has its roots in the Buddhist era and represents a rich legacy that is intricately woven into Kerala's cultural fabric. This native cloth, which was originally exclusive to Kerala, eventually spread to other parts of southern India and came to represent the uniqueness of the region. Additionally, the fabric's design is influenced by Graeco-Roman art, particularly the 'Palmyrene' style.

Kerala Kasavu was traditionally worn as a garment pinned to the left shoulder and hung as a long piece of fabric with a coloured gold border. But because the pallu was not thrown over the shoulder, it was not worn in the traditional saree manner until the 1970s. Women all around India are currently enthralled with gold zari, and Kerala Kasavu sarees are becoming more and more well-liked. These sarees also captivate visitors to Kerala, who frequently buy them as gifts and souvenirs for family members back home. The income of Kerala saree vendors has increased dramatically as a result of this spike in demand.

The enduring appeal and cultural significance of Kerala Kasavu, which captivates a wide range of audiences and transcends regional borders, are reflected in the widespread appreciation for the dish. Kerala Kasavu, a representation of the state's exquisite craftsmanship and rich history, is still popular today, adapting to modern styles without losing its essential cultural identity [Balakumar \(2021\)](#).

2.2. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KASAVU SAREES

Kasavu sarees, which have their origins in Kerala, India, have a long history of handloom workmanship valued for their subtle grace. The word "kasavu" refers to the beautiful zari embroidery that adorns the border of the saree, which is made from fine gold or silver threads. [Rachel \(2018\)](#)

Three distinct clusters in Kerala—Balaramapuram, Chendamangalam, and Kuthampully—are known for producing Kasavu sarees. Every cluster has distinctive methods and features. While Chendamangalam is known for its half-fine zari and elaborate designs using 80s thread counts, Balaramapuram is well known for its use of pure zari and careful thread counts. Conversely, Kuthampully is renowned for its vivid colour combinations and unique weaving designs. Collectively, these groups add to the intricate fabric of Kasavu sarees, safeguarding a legacy of skill and artistry that has been appreciated for many years [Bansal \(2024\)](#).

Kasavu sarees are known for their pure white or off-white colour, which is enhanced with borders of gold or silver. The golden borders inspire ideas of

grandeur and riches, while the colour white represents purity and simplicity. Vibrant colours like orange, green, and red have been added to the borders of sarees in a style development, adding to their charm along with gold accents. [Kumari & Nadarajan \(2022\)](#)

The popularity of Kasavu sarees has grown in recent years, especially in the south Indian states that are adjacent to Kerala. At the same time, women are choosing the ease and sophistication of a one-piece saree over the traditional two-piece outfit, known as the mundu- veshti. This progression showcases a modern take on traditional clothing, appealing to a wider demographic while maintaining the classic allure of Kasavu sarees [Khanna \(2019b\)](#).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques to thoroughly investigate the traditional kasavu sarees, and its contemporary applications. The research is divided into two phases: origin and historical background and motif and garment development.

3.2. PHASE 1

3.2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to understand the historical background, cultural significance, and traditional techniques of Kasavu sarees. Sources included academic papers, historical texts, articles, and previous studies on Kasavu sarees and related textile arts. Archival research involved examining old records, photographs, and documents related to Kasavu sarees; this helped to trace the origins, evolution, and geographical spread of this art from Karnataka's Mysore district, moved their looms to Kuthampully many years ago to work for the Kochi Palace. [Divya & Kumar \(2023\)](#)

3.3. PHASE 2: MOTIF AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

3.3.1. ANALYSIS OF COLLECTED DATA

Data from secondary sources were analyzed to identify common themes and motifs in Western-style garments. Patterns, colours, and design elements were documented and categorized.

3.3.2. IDEATION AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Based on the analyzed secondary data, brainstorming sessions were held to ideate contemporary design concepts for summer wear garments. Sketches and digital illustrations were created to visualize these concepts.

3.3.3. RAW MATERIAL AND PROTOTYPE DEVELOPMENT

Selected design concepts were developed into prototypes. Summer western garments were developed from Kasavu saree material, and prints were developed using reactive dye and smudge techniques. Raw materials are sourced from Kuthampully, Thrissur district of Kerala, India.

3.3.4. FEEDBACK AND REFINEMENT

Prototypes were presented to designers and potential consumers for feedback. Based on the feedback, designs were refined and improved to meet aesthetic and functional standards.

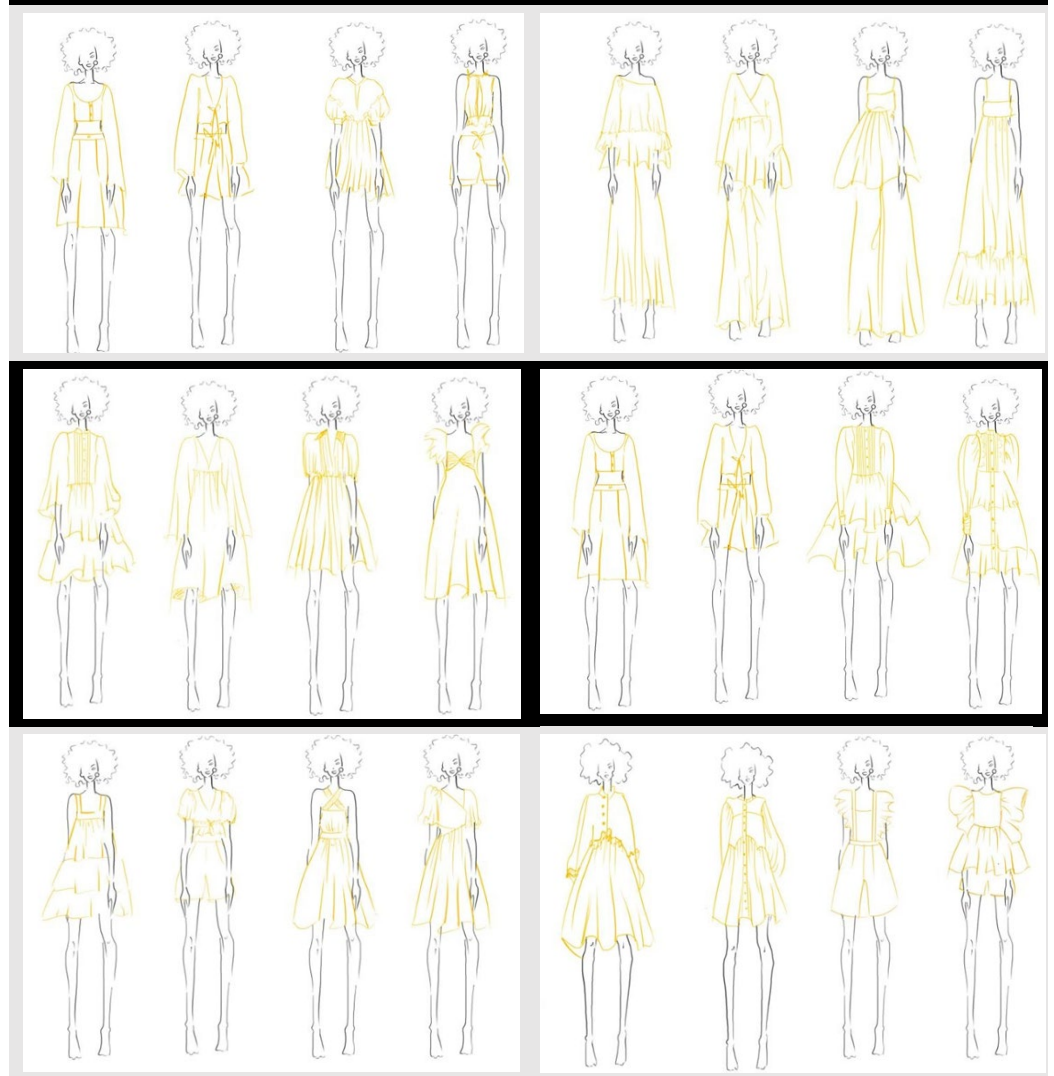
4. RESULT

4.1. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT – SILHOUETTE IDEATION

A variety of silhouette concepts were digitally designed to create summer wear collections that feature kasavu sarees, which are known for their lightweight qualities. These designs offer a blend of heritage and modernity by combining elements of old appeal with modern Western influences. Digital innovation gave rise to a wide variety of silhouettes that reflected the adaptability and diversity of kasavu sarees in meeting the needs of stylish people looking for comfort and elegance in the summertime.

Table 1

Table 1 Silhouette Ideation





4.2. PRINT DEVELOPMENT

Figure 1 a, b and c show digital prints were carefully developed to determine the best ways to print complex patterns onto the fabric. Once the patterns are complete, they are painstakingly transferred onto fabric with reactive dye and smudge techniques.

Figure 1



a



b



c

Figure 1 Author

4.3. DESIGN RENDERING

Digitally produced prints were incorporated into the silhouettes to create the final designs after silhouette ideation was completed. By ensuring the confluence of Western and vintage styles, Kasavu sarees were used to create light summer dress collections.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Digitally Rendered Design
Source Author

Figure 3

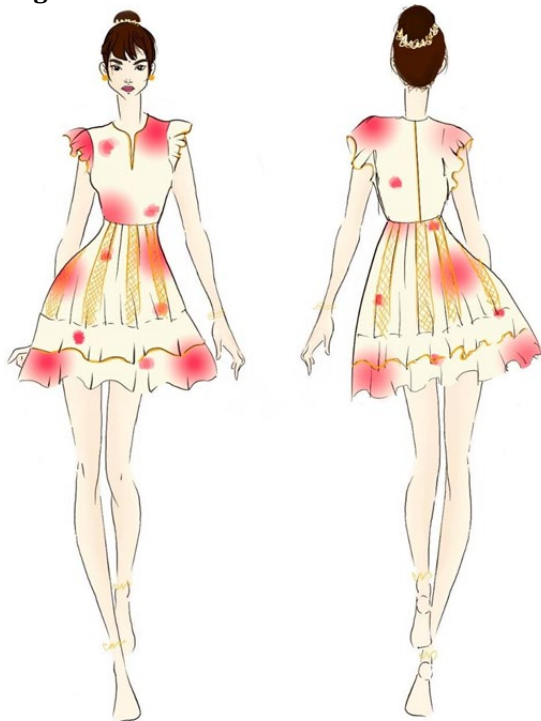


Figure 3 Digitally Rendered Design
Source Author

Figure 4



Figure 4 Digitally Rendered Design

4.4. GARMENT PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH

Kuthampully, situated in the Thrissur region of Kerala, is well known for its extensive, five-century-old handloom weaving heritage. Kuthampully, renowned for its elaborate patterns that adorn cotton and silk textiles, is a bastion of customary artistry. Here, weaving is more than just a way of life; it is a treasured tradition that has been passed down through the years to protect cultural heritage. Surplus sarees from Kuthampully are sourced at their original cost during the post-season, ensuring fair trading practices. After that, these sarees are made into various collections and sold to consumers, with a 30% profit going back to the weavers. By maintaining economic viability, this technique guarantees a balanced growth-profitability dynamic that is crucial for the community of weavers to flourish.

Figure 5

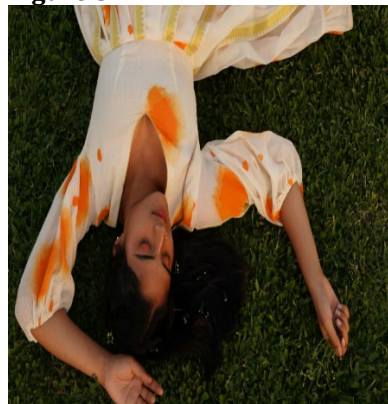


Figure 5 Final Gramnet-1

Figure 6



Figure 6 Final Garment-2

Figure 7



Figure 7 Final Garment-3

Figure 8



Figure 8 Final Garments

5. CONCLUSION

This study comprehensively explores the traditional Kasavu sarees and their contemporary applications through a mixed-methods research approach. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques, the research delved into the rich historical and cultural significance of Kasavu sarees while also innovating their use in modern Western-style garments.

The current study transitioned from historical understanding to practical application. By analyzing collected data, common themes and motifs were identified, which informed contemporary summer wear's ideation and concept development. The iterative process of prototype development, involving feedback from designers and potential consumers, ensured that the final designs were both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

This research not only preserves the heritage of Kasavu sarees but also demonstrates their adaptability and relevance in modern fashion. The successful transformation of traditional Kasavu materials into stylish, contemporary garments signifies a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation. This study not only paves the way for further exploration into the integration of traditional textiles into contemporary fashion but also inspires the fashion industry to appreciate and sustain cultural heritage.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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