

Chapter 19

Fashion Theory 3

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Introduction

In recent years, fantasy-themed balls, masquerades and similar mystical events for adults have been hosted by new companies that benefit from both the post-pandemic Millennial and Gen Z consumers, who desire to participate in experiences and the rise of romance and fantasy books on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. These events allowed the participants to dress up in fantasy-themed garments or, in the evening, wear and unite with character actors. (Rothenburg. 2024)



Figure 1: Doane Gregory. Universal Pictures.

Enchanting fantasy experiences always existed from Disney and Universal Studios, offering consumers the ability to explore mystical worlds through theme parks and fairs, resulting in billion dollars in revenue (Rothenburg, 2024).

Book Balls, a type of event in which it targets consumers on booktok, a popular community on TikTok that focuses on books being read and discussed, especially romance and fantasy novels. Certain events have been inspired by a book such as Starfall balls, which references the book series “ACOTAR” (Rothenburg, 2024)



Figure 2: Sarait Photography. Cedar City Starfall 2023.

Purpose and Problems for Consumers

Events developed by the book community offer opportunities for readers to attend and live out fantasy-themed experiences such as balls. This would require participants to seek evening wear with a fantasy yet elegant style. Typically, formal attires such as gowns/dresses may be purchased but lack mystical components that are suitable for these event themes. On the other hand, when participants seek garments with an outwardly appearance, they will then come across as juveniles and as a costume, lacking the maturity of elegance and formality. This creates a struggle for participants to find garments that are both mystical and formal. Another disadvantage is the limited use of these garments

since they are worn for a single occasion. This can increase the disappointment of participants due to a wasteful purchase of garments lacking multifunctionality.

Research Methodology

Data collection method purposive sampling

When discovering my target market, I came across a TikTok post detailing fantasy-themed events such as balls held this spring and summers in capital cities, including Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. The comment section of the post offered information on the type of people who will be in attendance and whether they have access to evening wear that follows the dress code. This method was more purposive since it focused on the specific demographics of TikTok users, especially those based in South Africa. Another indication of the age range for these users is the content of the books that were the centre of the ball's themes. Since the books consist of adult/explicit content, users interested in these events may range from 18 years old to 40 years old.



Figure 2: The charmed masquerade TikTok comment section, 2024 (screenshot by author)

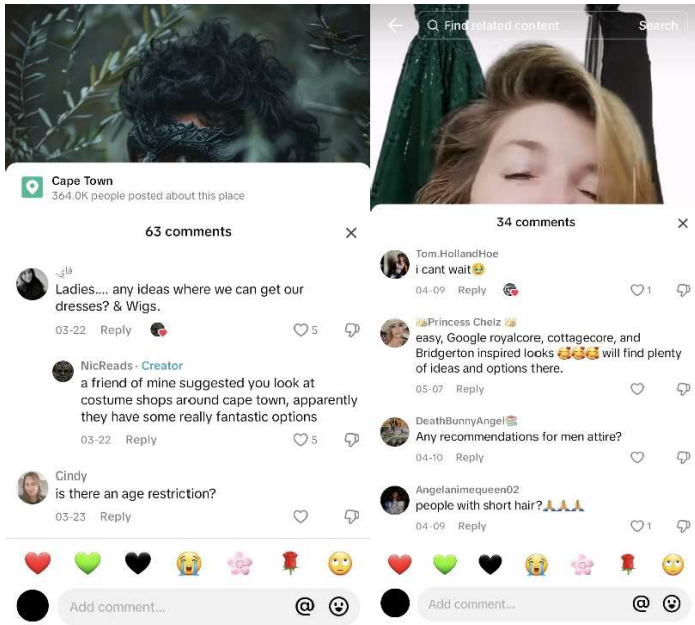


Figure 3: The charmed masquerade TikTok comment section, 2024 (screenshot by author)

Figure 4: The charmed masquerade TikTok comment section, 2024 (screenshot by author)

Purposive sampling findings

Middle class to high class adult individuals are best suited for these events because of ticket pricing and the cost of accommodating travel and attention. The majority of the commenters were females, which clarified that the majority of the attendees would be women. Although some considered purchasing ball gowns, they realised that practical garments that are suitable for outdoor venues or offer comfort and mobility, which allows the wearing to sit, walk and dance, are needed.

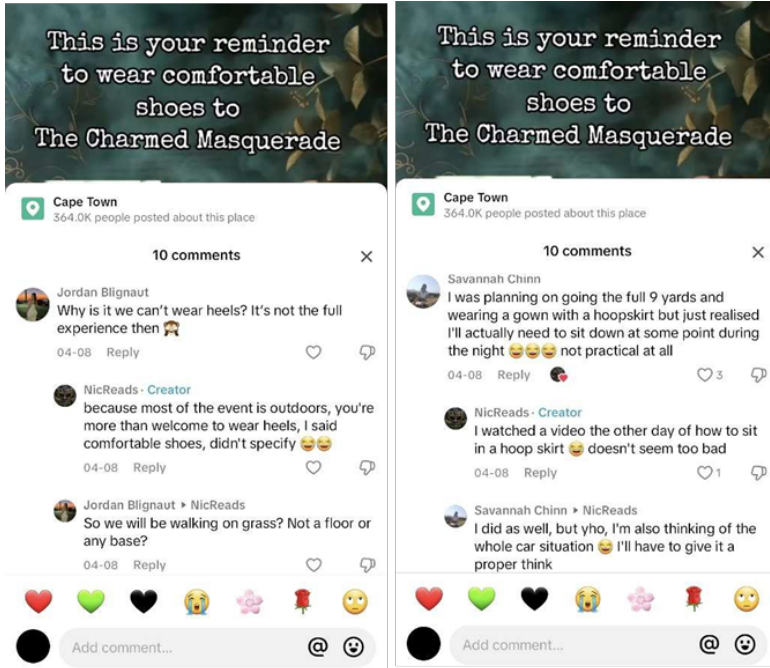


Figure 5: The charmed masquerade TikTok comment section, 2024 (screenshot by author)

Figure 6: The charmed masquerade TikTok comment section, 2024 (screenshot by author)

Another factor to consider is the use of the garments. The participants initially purchase them for a single event and later discard them unless they are used again for similar themed events. This could result in extravagant fantasy-themed garments being cost inefficient because participants spend a large amount of money on garments with a single purpose. In some way, this can have a fast fashion outtake where participants may contribute to fabric wastage. To summarise, this creates an issue for garments that are not reusable.

Data collection for snowball sampling

The second method was snowball sampling. The approach consisted of developing a survey with questions regarding the participants' knowledge of the book community, their access to garments with whimsical elements, their style preferences, their interest in sustainable garments, and their feedback on my garment designs for my retail collection. A Google form was developed with a shareable link to send to participants, and a few of them also shared it with their own friends, which caused the sampling method to have a snowball effect. Overall, when gathering responses, the participants provided their names and contact details.

Survey findings

The survey findings suggest that there are certain individuals who are familiar with book communities. Although few do not participate in such communities, many others do. When it came to question their interest in participating in fantasy-themed events, the majority did show interest; however, after analysing the response on their accessibility for fantasy-themed evening wear, the majority did struggle to search for those products in stores.

Based on the survey findings, most participants prefer designs with historical styles that have been modernised so that garments can be practical for changeable occasions. An example would be corsets that are suitable for fantasy balls, which can also be worn regularly for different events since they are a common trend in the present fashion. Another design element desired by participants is craftsmanship, which includes embroidery and beadwork. The technique will not only offer a mystical appearance but also implement 2024 fashion trends. A few suggestions include “incorporating elements of nature into these garments adds a unique and enchanting touch. I favour designs with subtle floral embroidery, delicate leaf motifs, or even small, nature-inspired embellishments such as pearl drops resembling dewdrops. Soft, flowing fabrics that mimic the natural movement of water or the gentle sway of leaves enhance the organic feel. These elements should be tastefully integrated to maintain the dress's

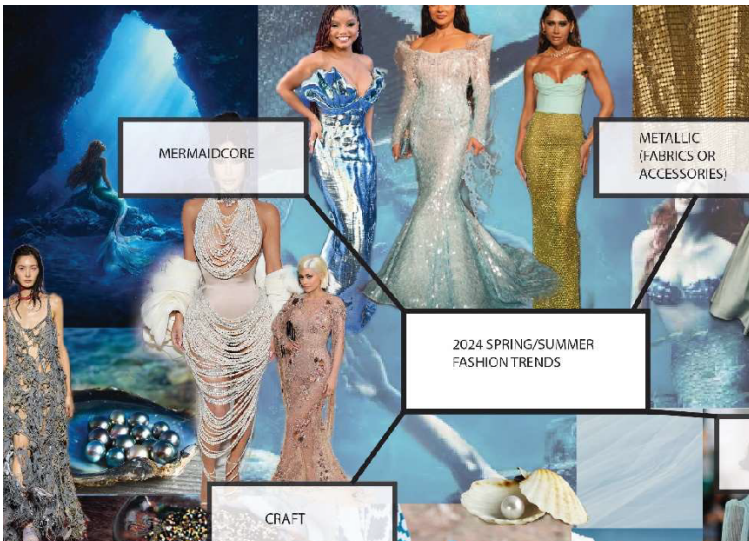
elegance and allow the wearer to feel connected to nature while still embracing the formal fantasy aesthetic” and “Few but complicated patterns of gold to replace the lack of jewellery”.

There were mixed responses concerning the idea of these products having a sustainable approach. It seems that few do not have an interest in minimising their participation in fast fashion or how this collection offers a slow fashion approach.

There were other participants who were interested in sustainability, preferring to purchase garments used for multiple functions and not contributing to fabric wastage and fast fashion.

There were positive responses from the technical drawings that were shown to the participants; however, a few made suggestions such as “A bit more details on the skirt so that it doesn’t look too plain.”

Fashion Trends in 2024



Mermaidcore

The 2023 “The Little Mermaid” movie release inspired fashion designers, who developed a recent trend called the Mermaidcore.

It is an aesthetic offering of marine themed pieces and products for a summer wardrobe (Marcus; Marsh; Sutton; Khan. 2024).

Styles include seashell-inspired bracelets, which sequentially skirt knitwear to layer a bikini. During special events, gowns with a fishtail hemline or shimmery materials can create an ocean-inspired appeal (Marcus; Marsh; Sutton; Khan. 2024).

Mermaidcore Origin

It is believed that the French couturier, Marcel Rochas, developed the mermaid silhouette and was displayed in the early 20th century haute couture. The design was later featured and recognised as the “aquatic-inspired gown” in Jean Patou, 1933, Vogue issue fashion magazine (S. Caruso. 2023). Mermaidcore remained on runways years later, notably from designers such as Bahía Maria, Siendrés and Versace (S. Caruso. 2023).

Mermaidcore In Media Trend

Vogue Arabia Ball

The ball theme “Mermaid of the Gulf” focused on mermaids, which inspired fashion and pop culture for years while bringing awareness to preserve the marine environment, as well as acknowledging the regions’ pearl divine heritage. In 2024, the Emirates Marine Environmental Group (EMEG) collaborated with the Vogue Arabia Ball to make efforts to preserve UAE biodiversity. (N. Ifteqar. 2024)

Many attendees to the ball incorporated the theme into their attires, ranging from dresses consisting of pearls and marine-hued embellishments to garments with silhouette draping and pleats that resemble ocean waves. (Ifteqar. 2024)



Figure 3: Dazi Production. Mahira Abdelaziz.

Figure 4: Dazi Production. Enjy Kiwan.

Figure 5:

Pearls

Pearls are trending in 2024 and are incorporated into garments and accessories to create an elegant, luxurious and feminine appeal. Pearls can be added to garments such as dresses, skirts

and shoes or used as accessories such as jewellery to develop a sophisticated look. (Levine. 2024)



Figure 10: Photographer Unknown. Kim Kardashian, 2024.

Figure 11: Photographer Unknown. Vivienne Westwood.

Translucent Dresses

Sheer dresses have a new alternative purpose in fashion; other than being common as beach wear, their use aligns with going-out aesthetics, which can introduce more creative yet risky styles, offering designers opportunities to elevate a classic sheer dress by exploring its silhouette and embellishment. (Stewart. 2023)



Figure 12: Photographer Unknown. 7 Fashion Trends that will be everywhere this summer

Figure 13: Photographer Unknown. Sheer fabric knowledge.

Craft Fashion

Craft served as the main theme for various Spring 2024 collections, which include patchwork and distressed leather at Prada; upcycled garments at Balenciaga; exaggerated embellishments at Loewe; and baroque lace patterns at Valentino. (Bobb. 2024)



Figure 14: Photographer Unknown. Diesel SS24

Figure 15: Photographer Unknown. Bottega Veneta SS24.

Figure 16: Getty Images. Kylie Jenner 2017

Target Market Demographic

- Book communities such as book clubs are found in different regions as well as on social media platforms, including TikTok, YouTube and Instagram.
- 18–35-year-old woman
- Middle-class to high-class income individuals. Those capable to afford to attend events/activities such as fantasy balls and masquerades are normally situated in urban areas.
- Consumers reside in cities.

Psychographic

Sustainability

Consumers are interested in purchasing products that not only have sustainable practices but also bring awareness of environmental pollution. This extends to the use of waste materials that are discarded in the ocean.

South African Craftsmanship

Consumers are interested in incorporating South African craftsmanship, such as beading and wired weaving, which are notably used in garments such as traditional attire or toys for children, such as wired cars.

Geographic

Urban Areas

Cities such as Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town are regions where products are accessible because of the popularity of booktok events located there. Many balls are situated in halls; they are lodges or fields that are mostly located in urban areas. Realistically, consumers will seek nearby clothing stores or boutiques that work well for these events.

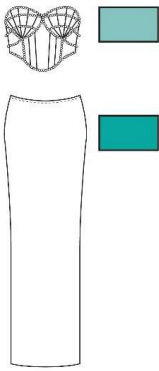
Retail Collection

Design Narrative

Fantasy meets fashion to create a hybrid of modern elegant and mystical clothing. The collection explores the duology luxury and mythology by introducing the unimaginable to reality, with influences of mythological aquatic creatures and marine biodiversity, from pearls, sheer, shimmering and metallic textures, to bring book lovers' dreams to reality. Mermaids/sea nymphs are experiencing an increase in media popularity from movies; social media platforms such as TikTok and fictional books, which overall created a community consisting mainly of

females with a passion for mythology, lead to a desire to become one by participating in fantasy balls to make their dreams a reality. The challenge that hinders the experience of people in the booktok community is finding appropriate evening wear inspired by fantasy themes without appearing too juvenile or as a costume. My collection offers a solution that meets the targeted consumers' needs by offering garments with a mystic and oceanic theme that compliments the oncoming spring/summer season and still appears fashionable so that consumers can feel confident and comfortable when wearing various events ranging from balls and medieval fayre to beach gatherings and ocean themed parties. The popularity of craftsmanship has increased in fashion, and the implementation of skills has not only followed this trend but also explored the significance of ability in South African culture by incorporating metal weaving/melding on the garment to reference the myth of how shiny objects attract sirens. This also brings awareness to ocean pollution regarding the discarding of harmful waste, which can be recycled and crafted for newer use in fashion. The garments create imagery of sea nymphs collecting shipwrecked treasures such as jewellery and fabrics that pollute the ocean, which are used to create a collection of clothing inspired by their environment.

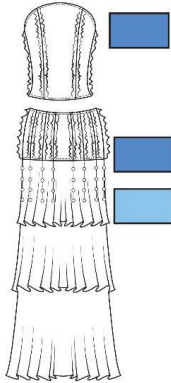
Range Plan For Garments



DESCRIPTION:
CROPPED CORSET TOP: PANUELLED CUPS
FASTENING: LACE-UP
FABRIC: TAFFETA, OR SATIN/SATEEN OR A
LEATHER FABRIC THAT RESEMBLES FISH SCALES

MEDIUM WAIST PRINCE SKIRT
ALTERNATIVE: MERMAID SKIRT
FASTENING: - closed-ended zip either on the side seams or CB
FABRIC: TAFFETA, LAME, OR SATIN OR A LEATHER FABRIC THAT
RESEMBLES FISH SCALES (Alternative is snake skin)

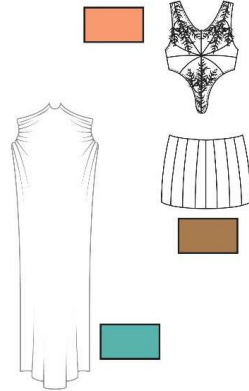
ADDED DE TAILS:
NETTED SCARF WORN AS HEADWEAR OR AROUND THE WAIST.



DESCRIPTION:
SLEEVELESS PANUELLED TOP
NECKLINE - STRAPLESS
FASTENING: - buttons (if)

**PANUELLED MEDIUM WAIST SKIRT WITH 3 LAYERED WITH FULLNESS
AND RAW EDGES.**
FASTENING: - closed-ended zip either on the side seams or front
panels.

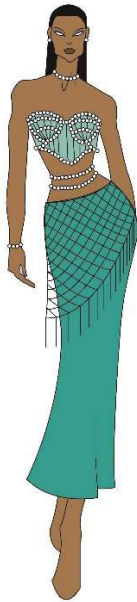
FABRIC: TAFFETA OR SATIN/SATEEN FOR BASIC TOP SECTION;
GOSAMER, SILK, ORGANZA, CHIFFON OR TULLE



DESCRIPTION:
TOP: SHARPSH SHAPED PANUELLED TOP
FASTENING: LACE-UP
FABRIC: TAFFETA, SATIN/SATEEN, OR CREPE, WITH COTTON LINING

BOTTOM: MEDIUM WAIST PANUELLED MINI SKIRT
FASTENING: 2-CLOSE-ENDED ZIP ON ONE SIDE SEAMS OR LACE-UP ON SIDE
SEAMS
FABRIC: SATIN/SATEEN, TAFFETA OR CREPE

SHIRT DETACHABLE LAYER
FASTENING: WELDED COPPER WIRE TO HOLD THEM IN PLACE
FABRIC: GOSAMER, SILK, ORGANZA, CHIFFON OR TULLE



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