Interpretation of clothing heritage for contemporary tourism

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Abstract. In tourism is the first impression of essential meaning as tourists falling by what they see. In designing the clothing image, for commercial use in tourist sector, should be considered that clothes are consistent with the clothing habits of the region and that comply with the heritage story and style of the geographical area. Clothing image of the tourism representatives of the Bohinj region (Slovenia) has been developed. When designing, the inspiration was sought in historical and contemporary clothing image and heritage stories, in elements that representatives of the community recognize as their own cultural heritage. Affiliated clothes for tourism employees should have a useful function of comfortable workwear with heritage expression, meaning clothes are to be accepted as “everyday” clothes and not as a costume.

1. Introduction

Clothing is non-verbal communications medium and therefore an important factor in establishing the first impression, demonstrating the identity and enhancing its authenticity. In tourism is the first impression of essential meaning as tourists falling by what they see.

Cultural heritage is the result of the development of human creativity in the past, today it can be just considered as a starting point in the creative process that leads to innovative product with the heritage dimension. In our case, designing clothes, our heritage is rewritten to make it attractive to modernity. We try to make it part of ourselves, and ourselves as part of it, adapting to our image and desires [1].

In designing the clothing image, for commercial use in tourist sector, should be considered that clothes are consistent with the clothing habits of the region; that comply with the heritage story and style of the geographical area; as well as clothes should be adjusted to the working conditions and the diversity of jobs with comfortable models and materials. Clothing must identify the employee and enable welfare, combining with individual accessories, and easy care [2]. On the other hands, in Slovenia, expressing affiliation through a clothing image is mostly associated with affiliated costumes [3]. On the other hands, in Slovenia, expressing affiliation through a clothing image is mostly associated with affiliated costumes, which is understood as costumes for special occasions [3].

Dress, especially affiliated clothing, is a form of non-verbal communication – a means of interaction conveying a message through symbolism. Affiliated clothing is a type of dress which enables the reception and promotion of ideas, and makes it easier for individuals and groups to identify the roles which they are to present through their clothes [4].
2. Experimental Part

Clothing image of the tourism representatives of the Bohinj region, Slovenia (employees in information centres at different local events, tourist guides, vendors of local handicraft and other products) has a meaningful value, since its primary function is a clear expression of belonging to a community and thereby strengthening loyalty to the local environment [4].

Employees in tourism and representatives of local handicrafts in Bohinj region often dress versions of the national costume or replaces of historical clothing image of Alpine herdsmen and with this try to present the local heritage and identity. In addition, they add to a costume modern fashion accessories: comfortable shoes, jewellery, glasses, socks, jumpers. Clothes are often uncomfortable and nevertheless they give an impression of a costume, there is always a doubt about their authenticity.

Designing clothing image with included Bohinj identity is a huge design challenge, which is left to the designer interpretation of the appearance of the modern Bohinj affiliation dress. There are two possible interpretation, the first one where destination identity may relate to the stylization (transformation of forms, materials and models) of past Bohinj clothing heritage, a combination of modern clothing pieces with ones from the past. The second one is the interpretation of the tradition based modern image of the garment.

2.1. Design inspiration – Bohinj bouquet

In order to form a new group identity, history must be reconstructed. A presentation story and symbols of the area must be extracted from it, thereby creating the inspiration for the creation of symbolic signs and marks.

It is hard to define the story, as the identity of a certain (even national) area is not an unchangeable fact passively handed down from generation to generation “but is rather a series of interconnected trends occasionally going in different directions. For this reason each generation must decide which of these it will accept, and build on them further”[5]. In the Bohinj region, several authentic underlying topics can be found which are suitable for a presentational heritage story to serve as a basis for the formation of symbolic signs of an affiliated clothing image; however, the chosen story must also be linked to the orientation of the tourism destination.

When designing, the inspiration was sought in historical and contemporary clothing image and heritage stories, in elements that people from Bohinj (representatives of the community) recognize as their own cultural heritage. Since Bohinj is advertised as an area with rich biodiversity, a symbolic would be in the form of a flower, precisely as a Bohinj bouquet as a beautiful present from the mountains. These flowers are not only linked to the previous tradition, but also occur in everyday life as a popular motif in the tourist’s signposts, paintings on the chests and gifts, and as an often used embroidery motif.

2.2. Designing the affiliated clothing of Bohinj

The design process with the primary objective to define the clothing image which expresses the identity of Bohinj has been inspired with the creative thinking design method. This approach understands design as a process, a way of cooperation where the designer collaborates in an interdisciplinary team and the design itself conforms to the understanding and vision of the people who will use the designed apparel [6].

The decision that the key affiliated garments would be made by knitting techniques is closely connected to the historic clothing customs of people from Bohinj, as hand-knitted pieces were essential in both the male and the female wardrobe.

The conceptual sketches of the affiliated clothing and the idea of the clothing image, with a cardigan as the central piece of the newly designed clothing image, were presented to the tourism representatives first and afterwards also to the workers. Some of them had some doubts about what the business look would be like with a cardigan instead of a jacket. However, the majority were positive about the knitted cardigan, especially in terms of the comfort of wearing it. The knitwear with the
motif of the Bohinj bouquet was recognised as the basic garment of the newly designed clothing image, which was agreed by the potential wearers. The knitwear were made from the blend of 55% cotton and 45% acrylic with good applicable properties and an easy care. The colour were speckled grey, burgundy red and beige, which formed the basis of the emerging clothing image. The chosen production technique of fancy double knitting has the great advantage in double-sided knit fabric with the motif on the reverse or ‘wrong’ side of the knitting being a mirror image in an inverted colour combination. The motif of the Bohinj bouquet first need to be transformed into a form and format suitable for knitting machine. The final production parameters were configured by knitting trial samples and corrections, so that a satisfactory appearance and size of the motif was achieved.

Figure 1: Simulation of knit fabric with the motif of the Bohinj bouquet

The complete design pattern for the women’s cardigan derives from knitted sample. A fitting model was chosen for the cardigans as it is suitable for different figures and also simple to make. The edges of the knitwear were finished with a wavy border. Three sample versions of cardigans with the same motif in different colour combinations were made. Based on the knitted cardigan, sample materials for other garments were also chosen. These matched the style of the cardigans and rounded up the whole clothing image. The knitted motifs and chosen materials in various colour combinations were again presented to the future wearers. Their first choices were: a speckled grey and burgundy red combination for the cardigan; a burgundy red checked cotton fabric for the blouse; a beige cotton pique jersey fabric for T-shirts; and a dark blue thin denim with elastane for the skirt.

The same knitting technique was also used for a belt, scarf and hat. The motif positioning was transferred from the cardigans, except that the number of repetitions was changed. The destination logo Bohinj was subsequently added to the series of products, and it was discretely positioned on the cardigan sleeve, scarf edge and cap cuff. The design and motif positioning of the men’s cardigans followed the concept of the women’s – in the same colour combination of speckled grey and burgundy red. The men’s cardigans were made in a smooth knitting technique and the motif is much less prominent than on the womens’ cardigans, as the Bohinj bouquet only appears into the striped pattern on the chest and collar.

Beside cardigans, other sample models of garments from the collection were made according to the selected sketches. Two versions of the skirt (in wide and straight cut), two women’s blouses (in plain and checked fabric) were made and men’s and women’s T-shirts made of jersey material. In the final phase of the design process the sample models and possible combinations of the individual pieces were presented to the wearers of the affiliated garments.

The final clothing image was decided by the tourism representatives in consultation with the designer. In choosing individual garments the suggestions of staff have been considered (the possibility of wearing the tops with jeans, the skirt model, colour combinations). After the tourist representatives confirmed the idea, the chosen clothing pieces officially became the affiliated clothing.
with the identity of Bohinj region.

The presentation of the newly designed affiliated image was made as a fashion show at the opening ceremony of the International Wild Flower Festival in Bohinj, which is visited by many locals and tourists each year. The presentation of the affiliated clothing was highlighted in the invitation to the opening ceremony, and promoted in an article in the local newspaper, where the story of the Bohinj bouquet was also depicted. Announcing the fashion show of the affiliated clothing, the host told the story of the Bohinj bouquet, associating it with the clothing and emphasizing that “people in Bohinj will finally also be dressed according to the identity of Bohinj”.

Figure 2: Affiliated clothing of Bohinj region

The core of the collection, which in various combinations form the women’s affiliated clothing image of Bohinj region, are cardigans in grey, burgundy red and beige with the motif of the Bohinj bouquet. This appears over the whole surface and as a detail in a striped pattern which is complemented by tiny patterning in red-beige. To mark the affiliation the composition also includes the destination logo. The edges of the cardigan are finished with a knitted border and it has metal buttons.

Figure 3: Knitted belt, which is worn as an accessory tied over the blouse
The same technique with a modified motif is also used for the belt, which is worn as an accessory tied over the blouse or T-shirt. The cardigan is complemented by a checked cotton blouse with a white collar, cuffs and edge piping for buttoning up. The belonging skirt is made of lightweight denim, the narrow cut and has the lowered waist belt with two darts on each side below the stomach line. The skirt is knee-length, and the bottom edge is folded outwards and highlighted by a checked waist belt. An alternative to the skirt is a pair of dark trousers visually imitating jeans. Individuals may choose the trousers themselves.

The knitted women’s and men’s cardigans, and a scarf and hat in the same style are also sold in the souvenir shop. The items are sold in gift packages made of felt, to which a compact brochure is tied describing the story of the Bohinj bouquet.

3. Conclusion
The newly designed affiliated clothing should express the character of the area stylistically and visually. Thanks to the carefully-studied planning and its association with the story, the clothing complies with the guidelines of the tourist destination, encompassing the elements of not only the previous clothing practices and forms, but also current clothing fashions, and through subtly included affiliation signs it also enables locals and visitors alike to identify the clothing as coming from Bohinj region.

Engaging the future wearers of the affiliated clothing in the process of design is also an important function in the design of the affiliated clothing image, as they were thereby included in the decision-making process. This ensured a personal relationship between the users and the end-products, through which identification with the affiliated clothing image was achieved, and the clothing was also more effective promoted further. The individual pieces, the cardigans especially, are understood as a part of their own creation.

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