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Traditional Maltese Costumes: The Importance of Local Cultural Heritage in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus

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Abstract

Fashion and Textiles is a vocational subject offered to students in Maltese secondary schools. The curriculum of this subject covers a wide range of interesting topics, including fashion history. This topic is important as students can learn about the history of costumes from 3000 BC to date. However, this part of the syllabus fails to cover anything that is related to the local cultural heritage, with specific reference to Maltese traditional costumes. This gap in the syllabus must be addressed urgently as Maltese students must embody ethnic appreciation and pride.

This study explored the importance of the local cultural heritage in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus through the possible incorporation of the topic of traditional Maltese costumes. Through secondary research, it analysed local traditional garments that were worn by women and men and highlighted their legacy from a historical and educational point of view, emphasising that this is an important element of the Maltese cultural identity.

Through semi-structured interviews with experts in the field, this dissertation discussed the participants' first-hand experiences with traditional Maltese costumes as well as their perspectives on the possible inclusion of the topic in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. The interviewees supported this addition and suggested several strategies and resources for delivering lessons on the topic.

This research study proposes a few assessment criteria as part of learning outcomes derived from the Fashion and Textiles syllabus, suggesting ways through which traditional Maltese costumes could be incorporated as a topic. The recommendations were based on the findings from primary and secondary research of this study, following the constructivist approach used in teaching and learning. Each learning outcome is accompanied by a detailed description of the aspects to be taught, examples of resources to be used, and activities that could be organised when teaching the topic, all aiming to enhance the delivery of the lessons and students' learning experience while ensuring a well-rounded understanding of traditional Maltese costumes.

Dedication

To my beloved mum, Marica.

Your strength and compassion inspire me every day, and this achievement would not have been possible without you.

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Keywords

Fashion and Textiles; Education; Traditional Costumes; Cultural Heritage

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Fashion and Textiles in Malta

Fashion and Textiles is an optional subject offered to students in Maltese secondary schools from Year 9 to Year 11. Students can choose to follow the SEC (Secondary Education Certificate) or AVC (Applied Vocational Certificate) syllabus. Lessons are delivered in Fashion and Textiles studios which are fully equipped with all essential tools, materials, and equipment needed during the lessons. In fact, each topic is delivered through hands-on activities in which students can interact with materials according to the topic being covered. A variety of topics are covered, namely fashion drawing, traditional and digital pattern drafting, basic and creative sewing techniques, experimenting with different fabrics, and sustainability in the fashion industry, amongst others (MATSEC Examinations Board, 2024).

1.2 Clothing

Wearing clothes is a unique characteristic that only humans possess (History of Clothing, n.d.) Subconsciously, we give a lot of importance to clothing (Fowles, 1974). For instance, when we are invited to attend an event, the initial question that comes into people's heads is probably "*What should I wear"?*

1.2.1 The Origins of Clothing

Unfortunately, archaeological evidence of clothing artefacts is limited as garments deteriorate over time. Instead, cave paintings, documentation (Monet, 2023), and carved figures (Das, 2022) serve as evidence of the initial use of clothing (Monet, 2023).

1.2.1.1 Primitive Coverings

The first kind of clothing was introduced by the Neanderthals, who lived approximately between 200,000 B.C. and 30,000 B.C. The first body coverings were made of natural elements. Being hunters, they created tools made of stone to hunt hairy mammals.

Neanderthal people discovered how skin and fur could keep their bodies warm and dry. Moreover, records show that vegetation, such as grass and leaves, were also used to protect themselves. These coverings were mostly draped or tied (Das, 2022).

1.2.1.2 The Introduction of Textiles

Later, humans discovered woven fibres, which brought along several advantages when compared to the previous coverings. Das (2022) pointed out that humans eventually created sharper, more effective tools, which allowed them to join pieces of coverings together. In fact, it is thought that the tunic was the first constructed piece of clothing. It consisted of two pieces bound together, with holes for the arms and the head.

When humans started wearing garments made of textiles, their clothing choices were restricted due to the limited availability of materials. Monet (2023) discussed how the environment, technological advancements, and location dictated the type of garments worn. For instance, in places where sheep were bred, ample wool was produced, and linen was the predominant woven fabric where flax was cultivated. When the production and distribution of textiles improved, wool and linen became more popular than leather and fur as they were more comfortable, functional, and adaptable to the weather.

1.2.2 Clothing as a Means of Communication

Clothing in itself is a non-verbal means of communication, or as Fowles (1974) referred to it, “a signal system” (p. 344). Garments perform a diverse range of communication purposes (Rosenfeld & Plax, 2006) which we are continuously informed by (Fowles, 1974). When putting on clothes, people are formulating a message to society, which is constantly conveyed and received (Fowles, 1974).

Lurie (1981) explained how, from the beginning of time, when encountering each other in public spaces, people have been automatically conveying their gender, age and social class through their outfits. This often functions as a first impression of the person, communicating insights or, contrastingly, providing misinformation about the person’s characteristics to those surrounding them. Fowles (1974) discussed how the communication of clothing “helps to

determine how we mesh with one another and how our cultures work" (p. 344). As discussed in the next chapter, clothing served as a communicator in Malta and has always been a strong determinator of culture and identity.

1.2.3 Considerations for Selecting Clothing

What individuals decide to put on is dictated by several aspects, such as personal style and expression, as well as sustainability attributes. More relevant to this research study, the choice of clothing also depends on one's social status, occupation, and cultural and religious identities, all of which are discussed below.

1.2.3.1 Social Status and Occupation

Crane (2000) noted that clothing has always been a strong marker of social status. Social status is the one's position within a society or social group (Eicher & Evenson, 2015). This was especially apparent in past centuries, in which apparel, even if the variation was minor, was the key identifier of people in public places (Crane, 2000). As Crane (2000) stated, clothing also indicated the person's occupation as they were all characterised by specific attire. Lurie (1981) highlighted that, until 1700, European governments had laws that dictated what could be worn by whom, "but as class barriers weakened and wealth could be more easily and rapidly converted into gentility, the system by which colour and shape indicated social status began to break down" (p. 115). Fowles (1974) stated that from around the 1800s, social classes have become less clearly stratified. Society has slowly been shifting into a mass society, in which clothes are becoming similar, therefore, showing that more people are becoming part of the middle class. This is still relevant to this day.

1.2.3.2 Cultural and Religious Identities

Cultural and religious identities hold great significance amongst societies and, therefore, tend to influence how people dress. In fact, it is often encouraged, and sometimes even demanded to wear such clothing (Eicher & Evenson, 2015). In some cultures, distinct attire is worn for traditional rituals and events. Traditional dress can send a message through styles, colours, and patterns (Birtles, 2022). Some societies still wear their traditional costumes as part of

their everyday attire, whereas other communities reserve them for special occasions and festivities.

1.3 The Textile Industry in Malta

The local textile industry was intertwined with the country's cultural heritage, particularly evident in the handcrafting of traditional Maltese costumes. Historically, folk garments were made of cotton, silk, and wool (Bonavia, 2012). Linen was also grown in Malta; however, its popularity was replaced by cotton (Vella, 1966). The cotton and wool industries in Malta thrived for years as country folk worked directly in them, from sowing cotton seeds or shearing the fleece of sheep to weaving the fabric (Bonavia, 2012). The cotton industry was so strong in Malta that it was also exported to several other countries. Despite that silk was widely used by the local country folk for Sunday best clothing, the silk industry was not successful in Malta (Zammit, 2005).

1.4 Traditional Maltese Costumes

The early modern Maltese society was practically divided into two: outwardly oriented foreigners, mostly Italian-speaking, living in the harbour areas and Maltese-speaking, inward-looking peasants residing in the countryside all around the Maltese islands, who lived a slower lifestyle revolving around agriculture (Gambin, 2012). Gambin (2012) stated that towards the end of the 18th century, "rural folk started being adopted as a model of ethnic authenticity to be recommended against the corrupt influences which came from outside through the city" (p. 9). This is why travellers who visited Malta were particularly interested in the lifestyle and the clothing of Maltese peasants, hence why they appear in old drawings and paintings, making traditional Maltese costumes the clothing pieces that were worn by Maltese peasants (Gambin, 2012).

1.5 Reasons for this Study

Upon analysing the Fashion and Textiles syllabus as part of the Master in Teaching and Learning course, the researcher observed a gap. While fashion history is covered in Year 10 through which students learn about the history of costumes from 3000 BC to date, the

syllabus fails to cover anything related to the local cultural heritage, specifically traditional Maltese costumes. The researcher recognised that this gap must be addressed very urgently as it will allow Maltese students who study this subject to embody ethnic appreciation and pride. Hence, it was decided that this research study will focus on this topic. Through this study, the researcher aimed to propose ways to broaden the Fashion and Textiles students' knowledge of traditional Maltese attire, thereby enhancing their knowledge of the local culture.

1.6 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this study, which were based on the research question "Why is it important that Fashion and Textiles students learn about traditional Maltese costumes?" were as follows:

- To conduct a literature review about traditional Maltese costumes, their legacy, and their relation to cultural identity.
- To investigate if and how traditional costumes are being taught in the local and foreign educational scenarios.
- To explore the perspectives of experts in the field, through semi-structured interviews, on how traditional Maltese costumes should be taught to Fashion and Textiles students.
- To suggest assessment criteria (learning outcomes) focusing on traditional Maltese costumes to be incorporated as part of the Maltese Fashion and Textiles syllabus (MATSEC Examinations Board, 2024).

1.7 Study Overview

This study was divided into six chapters to provide a structured overview of the research progression. Chapter 1 introduced the topic and outlined the aims and objectives of the study. In Chapter 2, an extensive literature review explored the existing knowledge about traditional Maltese costumes and their integration into various educational scenarios. Chapter 3 discussed the methodology employed, ethical considerations, the research participants, and the interview questions asked. In Chapter 4, the results of the primary research were analysed and discussed. Chapter 5 highlighted the proposed assessment criteria through which

traditional Maltese costumes could be incorporated into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Finally, Chapter 6 summarised the key findings and provided some recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter was dedicated to reporting on findings from secondary sources gathered through desktop research. This chapter is divided into two major sections: *A. Traditional Costumes* and *B. Traditional Costumes in Education*. Section A focuses on various aspects, such as costume cultural identity, the local culture, the textile industry in Malta, the various traditional Maltese garments, globalisation, and the legacy of the local traditional costumes. Moreover, Section B gives an overview of the syllabi structure in local secondary schools, Fashion and Textiles in Malta in terms of the syllabus and assessment, ideal pedagogical approaches, the importance of traditional costumes in education, and lastly, an overview of a few local and foreign case studies whereby traditional costumes are being taught.

Section A: Traditional Costumes

2.2 Costume Cultural Identity

Humans everywhere around the world put on clothes for several reasons. However, attire and its significance to the wearers still varies from one society to another (Eicher & Evenson, 2015).

2.2.1 Society

According to Eicher & Evenson (2015), a society is "a group of individuals who interact with one another based on the sharing of many beliefs and ways of behaviour" (p. 33). Society is formed by people who live together and have the same knowledge of their own "structural patterns, the system of organising their families, and their political, economic, and religious structures" (p. 33). Each society is unique and has emancipated when faced with challenges, hence they all have specific beliefs and practices to survive and adapt (Eicher & Evenson, 2015).

2.2.2 Culture

Culture, as defined by Eicher & Evenson (2015), is “the human-made material items and patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour shared by members of a group who regularly interact with one another” (p. 31). Culture is essentially how people learn to act, think, and feel from their first moment of life.

Eicher & Evenson (2015) highlighted that culture can be divided into two: material and nonmaterial culture. Material culture includes everything tangible, such as buildings, household items, and dress, whereas nonmaterial culture includes specific ideologies, symbolism, expectations, and standards of a group of people who share the same experiences. Nonmaterial culture is subject to change throughout generations as people are exposed to new encounters. Despite being separate, the two concepts are still very much interrelated. People create material items as a result of their nonmaterial culture – how they think things should be made, look, and function. According to Martínez, et al. (2019), material and nonmaterial culture distinguishes one group from another.

2.2.3 Cultural Identity

Martínez, et al. (2019) stated that ‘identity’ is derived from the word *identical* which refers to similarity. Identity serves as an important factor when people position themselves within a group in society and allows them to establish relationships. Such groups share past experiences which are rooted within themselves and influence and shape their lifestyles. Cultural identity and heritage should not be things of the past but should be present now and continue to develop in the future.

Martínez, et al. (2019) noted that traditional costumes are one of the most important factors when it comes to the preservation of identity in societal groups. In fact, Clopot (2016) pointed out that, in research, costumes, heritage, and ethnic identity are frequently linked. According to Eicher & Evenson (2015), the word *traditional* refers to “cultural practices or items” (p. 45), including dress. It is also related to ethnicity, which refers to the “heritage of a group of people with a common cultural background” (p. 46).

2.2.4 The Maltese Cultural Identity

The Maltese culture has several historical, geographical, and social factors that make its identity distinct and unique. Malta has an incredibly rich history, with influences from diverse civilisations that have left an impact on the local citizens (Geodiode, 2023). In fact, an expert in Maltese folklore, Lanfranco (2004) stated that different civilisations left traits of various aspects in Malta, such as their products, commerce, superstitions, and traditions, amongst others. If analysed, it could be noticed that, when mixed into one, these create Malta and its people's identity as we know it today.

Over the centuries, the Maltese language has evolved into a linguistic amalgamation of Italian, Arabic, and English influences. Until 2007, Malta used its own currency, the Maltese Lira (Geodiode, 2023). The Roman Catholic religion plays an important part in the Maltese population's lifestyle and cultural celebrations, such as the village *festa*. Maltese people enthusiastically participate in other cultural celebrations, namely carnival festivities, musical festivals, and heritage events, all of which reflect a sense of Maltese cultural pride (VisitMalta, 2021).

2.3 Traditional Maltese Costumes

Azzopardi (2007) quoted a Maltese proverb stating "*L-ilbies jagħmel in-nies*" (p. 51), which translates to "clothes make the man". Clothing served as a communicator, even in Malta. In fact, Gambin (2012) stated that "a single glance was enough to distinguish between persons of different social backgrounds since their clothes gave them away immediately" (p. 9). According to Bonavia (2012), "Costumes gave country folk an identity with distinct cultural traditions" (p. 37). The costumes themselves possess authenticity because of the entire manufacturing process that was done by the wearers themselves. Azzopardi (2007) discussed that, in Malta, characteristics like nationality, race, job, and social class were easily identified through clothing. However, as society evolved, these identifying characteristics have disappeared.

Lanfranco (2004) stated that, even within a small island, in each category of clothing, one can find variations in the garments' characteristics. Moreover, Maltese clothing evolved

throughout the times due to various factors. Local peasants owned different garments dedicated to different needs, such as to stay at home, to wear to work, for special occasions, and to wear in different seasons, like light clothing for summer and warm garments for winter. Interestingly, some people were known to never change their clothes. Moreover, the clothing of people who lived in the countryside was different to that of those living in the northern harbours of the island, simply because the latter were more in contact with European people coming and going. This was mostly evident in the clothing of women, whereby women living in the cities started wearing clothes similar to those in Europe, while the country folk women were still more similar to the Arabs. Meanwhile, men's garments were similar to Sicilian clothing (Lanfranco, 2004).

2.3.1 Evidence of Traditional Maltese Costumes

Azzopardi (2007) remarked that, around 400 years ago, the clothing of Maltese and Gozitan people living in rural areas was quite distinctive, even though they are both a part of the Maltese islands. Lanfranco (2004) stated that this struck many travellers who documented their stay in Malta. Thanks to this evidence, researchers can get a clear idea of what Maltese people looked like and what their lifestyle was. All travellers had various perspectives and prejudices on the lifestyle and habits of the Maltese, however, the aspect of poverty was always mentioned, which particularly resulted in clothing being quite cheap looking. Lanfranco (2004) stated that one must give importance to the "information about the garments that they had seen with their own eyes" (p. 10), or in other words, the evidence, such as paintings and garment pieces, rather than the travellers' personal theories on the Maltese society. Although lithographs give us a clear image of how Maltese peasants' clothing was, they were depicted as nice and clean. In fact, it was only when photos started being taken around the last two decades of the 19th century that one could truly see the bad state and unhygienic habits resulting from the poverty that Maltese peasants lived in (Lanfranco, 2004).

Studying folk costumes enhances the understanding of historical lifestyles (Bonavia, 2012). When comparing the styles and fabric of traditional Maltese costumes to those in countries like France and Italy, it is evident that Malta was influenced by them (Cremona & Baluci, 1998). Bonavia (2012) stated that actual surviving costumes, which can be found at Heritage Malta's

National Textile and Costume Collection and other private collections, works of art, and literature are all essential when it comes to understanding what Maltese country folk wore, and how fibres were turned into cloth. Moreover, lithographs serve as evidence that helps researchers discover what tools were used in the crafting of textiles, as well as how they were produced. Moreover, Cremona & Baluci (1998) emphasised that dating a garment is more difficult than one may think, as the date is only identified "by comparing fabrics, type of stitching, seams, and linings" (p. 7).

2.3.2 The Fabrics of Traditional Maltese Costumes

Peasants made their clothes at home and used the cheapest fibres available to them, which were cotton and wool (Gambin, 2012). According to Bonavia (2012), the garments were simple, functional, and durable – all of which were important characteristics due to the nature of the rural people's work. The most common fabrics used were neutral-coloured, specifically white, beige, and brown, however, blue, yellow, and red were also widely found in such costumes. To decorate their costumes, peasants used different stripe-patterned fabrics woven together which resulted in different combinations. As for weaves, plain and twill were used, depending on the amount of strength the fabric needed for the garment.

The garments were passed down from one generation to the next (Gambin, 2012). Azzopardi (2007) stated that this was unless the person had contracted an infectious disease, which in this case, clothes were thrown away to avoid contamination. The garments were often repaired and patched, which gave them a tattered look. According to Gambin (2012), this makes peasant costumes more difficult to find today, making them more valuable and fascinating. Bonavia (2012) stated that Maltese rural people were unaware of, let alone kept up, with the latest fashion trends. However, some elements of the garments were still quite fashionable. Contrastingly, people in the higher classes wore expensive clothes made of fine materials but were all still locally produced (Cremona & Baluci, 1998).

2.3.3 The Textile Industry in Malta

Bonavia (2012) discussed how traditional Maltese costumes were all manufactured manually utilising natural fibres. Local handcrafts like ginning, bowing, spinning, and dyeing were used

to manufacture the yarns. In fact, around the year 1860, there were almost 9,000 Maltese and Gozitan workers who spun and weaved fabric, and another 200 who worked as beaters and dyers. Women made up 96% of the workforce as men were generally only involved in the final stages of the process (Vella, 2012). It was only in the last century that certain handcrafts disappeared from the local scenario and were replaced by advanced technology (Bonavia, 2012).

2.3.3.1 Linen (Għażel)

According to Vella (1966), at some point, linen was grown, spun into fabric, and worn in Malta. However, at some point, this was replaced with the planting of cotton, which revolutionised the local textile industry.

2.3.3.2 Cotton (Qoton)

Vella (1966) stated that "cotton is a staple fibre that grows around the seeds of the genus cotton plant *Gossypium*". Three species were cultivated in Malta: one with reddish fibres, another with white fibres tinged with yellow, and a third with brown fibres. The latter was the most valuable and sought-after.

Vella (2012) stated that farmers used to sow cotton seeds in spring, specifically from April to May by which the best seeds from the previous season are chosen and then combined with fine salt or left to sit overnight to enhance ease of handling. Considering that the plant is harvested between August and November, it needed favourable terrain to endure the harsh summer months and ultimately yield valuable fluffy fibre. This type of terrain is characterised by levelled and thick soil. At times, cotton plants were kept from one season to another, for as long as five years. One must point out that cotton farming was more popular amongst farmers who worked in the western half of the island (Bonavia, 2012).

Bonavia (2012) described that, after being harvested, the cotton bolls were taken to women whose job was to separate the fibre from the seeds using a ginning machine. This can be seen in Figures 1, 2, and 3. They were sometimes sold, and this was done by weight. The machine "consisted of a wooden stool with a pair of small rollers held within a wooden frame" (p. 25)

through which the cotton was manually passed and the seeds were separated from the fibres, falling on two different sides of the machine.

Figure 1: Ħallieġa – Ginning Machine, Inv. ETHN/W/343 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 2: Vincenzo Fenech, 'Woman ginning cotton' (late 18th – early 19th century), watercolour, Mrs Gibson Craig Album. NMSA Inv. 16441-2 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 3: Frank Cassar, 'Cotton gin' (20th century), clay, Folklore Museum, Gozo. Inv. ETHN/CER/68 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Bonavia (2012) described cotton cleaning as a complex and labour-intensive task. After cleaning, the cotton was put outside to air dry and then, as depicted in Figures 4 and 5, teased with a bow, which the process is called *bowing*. This process was done by "pluck[ing] the string of the bow among the cotton fibres with a wooden hammer" (p. 27). As seen in Figure 6, another method of freeing both cotton and wool fibres from tangles is carding, for which a hackle is used. The tool, depicted in Figure 7, consists of two wooden boards that have small metal teeth on their surface and are held with two handles. The fibres are put on one of the surfaces and are "worked by pulling it gently apart with the teeth of the other" (p. 27), repeating the process until the fibres are free from tangles.

Figure 4: Pietro Paolo Caruana, 'Bowing cotton' (1793-1852), lithograph in album dedicated to Lady Ponsomby. NMSA Inv. 30873-4 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 5: Ch' de Brocktorff, 'Manner of preparing the cotton for spinning' (1775/85-1850), watercolour in Beaufoy Album, Courtesy of NLM. (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 6: Vincenzo Fenech, 'Woman combing the cotton', watercolour in Costumes Malta 1833 (Libr. Ms. 1165), Courtesy of NLM. (Gambin, et al., 2012)

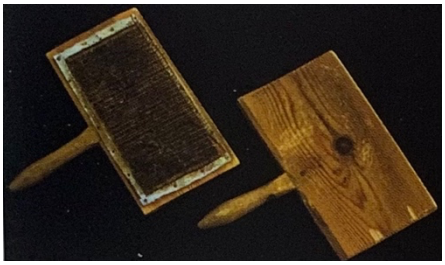

Figure 7: Moxt – Hackles, Alda Bugeja Collection (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Bonavia (2012) continued stating that, as seen in Figure 8, the fibres were then spun by "pulling fibres from the hunk of carded cotton which is then twisted between the fingers" (p. 27) by which they lock into each other, producing a long strand of yarn, which can be seen in Figure 9. This process was done with the aid of a drop spindle, depicted in Figure 10. The spinning process was mostly done by women inside or on the doorstep of their houses, or sometimes in the fields as seen in Figure 11. Another tool utilised for spinning was the spinning wheel, depicted in Figure 12, which required the use of both hands.

Figure 8: Vincenzo Fenech, 'Woman spinning cotton', watercolour in Costumes Malta 1833 (Libr. Ms. 1165), Courtesy of NLM (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 9: Different coloured threads, Inv. ETHN/WIC/7 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

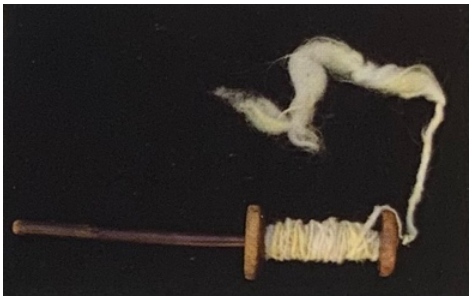

Figure 10: Magħżel – Drop spindle, Alda Bugeja Collection (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 11: Anonymous 19th-century artist – Three female spinners, NMFA (Gambin, et al., 2012)

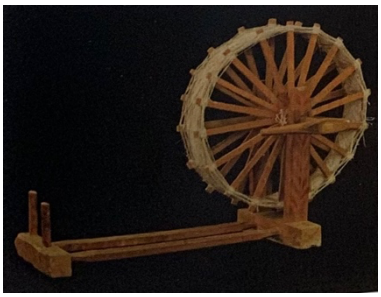

Figure 12: Raddiena tal-Għażil – Spinning Wheel, Inv. ETHN/W/35 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

As Bonavia (2012) explained, after that, the weaving process is done using a loom, which resembles a horizontal frame, as seen in Figure 13, with the yarns interlaced. "The warp yarns are stretched vertically side by side on the loom" (p. 29), while "the weft yarns pass over and under the warp forming a plain weave" (p. 29). The cloth was woven by repeatedly throwing the shuttle from one hand to the other. Figure 14 depicts women using the loom.

Figure 13: Magna tal-Insiġ tan-Newl – Weaving Loom, Inv. ETHN/W/95 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 14: Weaving in a typical domestic setting (Gambin, et al., 2012)

The natural hues of cotton, as well as wool, can be seen depicted in several paintings. However, other colours, like red and blue, were added to the yarns through the dyeing process, which was done by both men and women. This was a fairly time-consuming method, and researchers have limited information about it. Table 1 illustrates the colours used for peasant costumes and their dye sources (Bonavia, 2012).

Blue (indigo)	Indigo plant (*indigoferas*)
Brown	Pomegranate fruit with skin
Red	Red liquid of the spikes of the Maltese plant *Cynomorum Coccineum Linn* (*Għerq il-Ġeneral/Għerq Sinjur*)
Red	Dried bodies of the insect kermes

Table 1: Colours and Dye Sources Used for Peasant Costumes (Bonavia, 2012)

According to Vella (1966), the cotton plant was introduced in Malta by the Arabs in the 9th century. Maltese cotton was of pure quality. This was an important factor in the local economy over several centuries, and through it, many country people earned their living (Vella, 2012). In fact, Bonavia (2012) stated that most of the rural population depended on it for income. There were different jobs created in various parts of the supply chain. Being directly involved in the industry allowed peasants to have easy access to cotton, and even wool. Every household in both Malta and Gozo had a loom, and villages like Għarb and Żebbuġ were particularly well-known for weaving. According to Vella (1966), apart from clothing and underwear, cotton was used to make several other articles, such as bed and table linen, mats, scarves, ties, and stockings, amongst others. Several rural women worked as cotton weavers (Bonavia, 2012) because there was high demand for this fabric in Greece, Italy, France, and Spain, where it was exported (Vella, 1966). Unfortunately, it was not uncommon for

businesspeople to sometimes exploit the system by failing to compensate the workers adequately (Bonavia, 2012). The cultivation of cotton persisted well into the 20th century (Bonavia, 2012), but it vanished when India, Syria, and Egypt started producing cotton on a large scale, and Malta, being a small country, could not compete with them (Vella, 1966). According to Bonavia (2012), the local cotton industry saw a slight resurgence in Gozo in the 1950s until the 1960s.

2.3.3.3 Wool (Suf)

Bonavia (2012) stated that "wool is obtained by shearing the fleece from the live sheep once every year" (p. 25). The fleece is then sorted out by hand by a specific worker. After that, it is cleaned and washed to remove any impurities. Other particles were removed manually using purposefully made forceps and small shears. The wool was often washed in rainwater and left to air dry on a rubble wall. The cleaning process resulted in tangled fibres, therefore, like cotton, the tangles were removed by combing through the fibres using a pair of hackles to ensure that the spinning process was easier.

Vella (2012) stated that, despite having excellent thermal insulating properties, wool has not been used in the manufacturing of clothing as much as cotton was, due to the discomfort it creates when in contact with the skin, except for when it is crafted into a very fine weave. In fact, it was only used to produce warm clothing like outerwear (Bonavia, 2012). Wool was mostly popular in the production of house furnishings (Vella, 2012), such as for the filling of pillows and mattresses (Bonavia, 2012).

2.3.3.4 Silk (Ħarir)

According to Zammit (2005), Maltese peasants attempted to establish the silk industry multiple times, but each attempt failed. The aim of this was to decrease the large amounts of silk that were bought and imported from foreign countries. This took place in the period when the importance of the local cotton industry was decreasing. Despite the enthusiasm of the country folk and the efforts of the British authorities, the silk industry ultimately failed several times. This failure was primarily due to a lack of fortune and necessary financial resources.

2.4 Traditional Maltese Garments

2.4.1 Women

In the case of women's attire, paintings were the main component used to determine what was worn. However, through their writings, it is evident that women's wear struck travellers more than men's since they covered themselves almost completely, which made them look mysterious (Bonavia, 2012). In fact, whenever a woman wore something slightly more revealing than the norm, she was quickly criticised by people (Lanfranco, 2004). The main garments were the *ċulqana*, *għonnella*, *geżwira, qmis*, *maktur*, *sidrija*, *ġakketta*, and *borsa*. Footwear was rarely worn (Bonavia, 2012).

2.4.1.1 Ċulqana

The *ċulqana* was a garment that was worn by women on the head (Bonavia, 2012). This was also known as the *ċurqana* or *xirfija* (Lanfranco, 2004). It was rectangular-shaped, usually made from twill-weaved cotton fabric (Bonavia, 2012). The garment was mostly whiteish but sometimes was dyed brown, blue, black, green (Lanfranco, 2004) or even yellow. Sometimes the garment had a flower design (Bonavia, 2012) or, as seen in Figure 15, it had white spots all over, particularly towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (De Piro & Cremona, 1998; Lanfranco, 2004). According to Bonavia (2012), others had a different-coloured stripe along the hemline.

Figure 15: Edward Caruana Dingli – Vegetable seller wearing dotted blue ċulqana (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Bonavia (2012) stated that the construction of the *ċulqana* required "four lengths of cotton fabric, which were then joined together like a skirt and had the gatherings on the side of the face" (p. 34). The *ċulqana's* vertical edges extended to the knees, but the back only reached the waistline area. As seen in Figure 16, women sometimes wore it over a handkerchief, which was tied under the chin. Researchers think that the reason for the white handkerchief was to prevent the *ċulqana* from making direct contact with the hair since its fabric was more expensive than that of the handkerchief. Since the white fabric was thinner, it was easier to keep clean as it could be washed often and dried quickly. The *ċulqana* was used long before the well-known *għonnella*. Figures 17 and 18 are photographs showing women wearing the *ċulqana*.

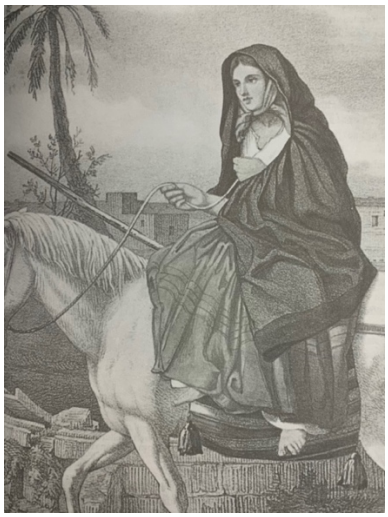

Figure 16: Michele Bellanti (National Library of Malta), woman going to work (Zammit, 2005)

Figure 17: A working woman wearing the ċulqana (Dickens Library) (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Figure 18: Women selling capers and other items wearing the ċulqana. C. 1900 (Dickens Library) (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

According to Zammit (2005), Figures 19 and 20 depict two women wearing the *ċulqana*. However, one can observe that the country woman from Malta is more conservative than the Gozitan woman as she is covering herself using the garment. The two women have similarities, such as the handkerchief underneath the *ċuqlana* and are both carrying items onto their heads. Lanfranco (2004) stated that this practice led them to have a very elegant walk.

Figure 19: Sebastiano Ittar before 1780-1847 – A Maltese peasant wearing a rare example of a light coloured ċulqana and a blue pleated skirt (geżwira) (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Figure 20: Sebastiano Ittar before 1780-1847 – A Woman of Gozo – The Maltese influence is evident but there were some differences in dress and custom between the two islands (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

2.4.1.2 Għonnella

The *għonnella* or *faldetta* was a very particular headdress and shawl which was only worn in Malta (Debono, 2012). Lanfranco (2004) stated that the word '*għonnella'* is derived from the word *gonnella* in Italian, meaning 'skirt'. In fact, until the mid-19th century, the word *għonnella* referred to a 'skirt', then until the 20th century the meaning evolved into the *għonnella* we know today. The earliest visual record of using the *għonnella* dates to the initial years of the Knights of Saint John in Malta (Debono, 2012).

Debono (2012) pointed out that "travellers and historians equally commented on similarities between the *għonnella* and oriental fashion dress, Sicilian, Spanish, and Southern European costume". According to Lanfranco (2004), although the *ċulqana* was used way before the *għonnella*, it did not evolve from the *ċulqana*. Instead, both garments were a result of the Arabic influence. However, considering that the Arabs influenced the whole of Europe, it is said that the *għonnella* was brought to Malta from Sicily.

The garment was made of cotton, or silk fabric, which was worn for special occasions (Azzopardi, 2022; Lanfranco, 2004). De Piro & Cremona (1998) highlighted that, originally, women in the countryside wore white or green *għonnella*, while those in the city wore a black

one. The blue colour was still used for the *ċulqana*. Sewing the *għonnella* required excellent sewing skills and materials of good quality. According to Lanfranco (2004), the hard structure which gave the *għonnella* its extravagant shape was made out of cardboard and "tiny, curved strips of whalebone" (p. 26). Its structure can be clearly seen in Figure 21. *Stamina* is another name for *għonnella*. However, this was usually made of less elaborate cotton or wool fabric and had less of a stiff structure, hence it draped on the head.

Figure 21: Għonnella (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Its striking silhouette was often talked about by travellers, and some remarked that women looked like ghosts when wearing the garment (Debono, 2012). In fact, when looking at them from the back, nothing could be seen, except for a piece of dark fabric that the garment was made of. However, Zammit (2005) stated that one could often clearly see the garments worn beneath "from the front, which were often not very dark" (p. 143). In fact, Lanfranco (2004) stated that it was common for young women to wear coloured clothing underneath the *għonnella*, while older women preferred darker hues, particularly when attending church.

Figure 22: Maltese Ladies wearing għonnella in Strada Tesoreria, Valletta c. 1900. Published by Dickens Library (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Another interesting note that Azzopardi (2022) mentioned is a striking theory saying that the *għonnella* was the eventual result of the habit of young girls pulling up "their outermost skirt over their heads before entering the nearest chapel" (p. 41). It could be that since "they could not afford beautiful lace veils, this practice soon became widespread throughout society, especially in Gozo, and became a fashion of the day" (p. 41). Lanfranco (2004) explains that women in villages mostly wore the *għonnella* or *ċulqana*, while it was sometimes acceptable for women to only wear a *velu* (veil) or *maktur* (handkerchief) in cities. Zammit (2005) stated that the *velu* was often worn at home as well.

Bonavia (2012) stated that, as opposed to common belief, the *għonnella* was not exclusively worn by country folk. However, the *għonnella* is usually considered as Malta's national costume. In fact, every Maltese woman wore the *għonnella*, no matter the social class. Lithographs show that the streets were filled with hundreds of them (Lanfranco, 2004).

Figure 23: A cluster of għenienel (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Lanfranco (2004) explained that when girls started getting a bit older, seamstresses used to sew a customised *għonnella* for them, which was a bit smaller than the regular size. In Lanfranco's book (2004), a lady recounted her first time wearing the *għonnella*, which was made of silk, to the feast of the Immaculate Conception in Qala when she was 15 years old. Girls had a small *għonnella* to play with. Women who came from the poorest families could not afford to have a proper *għonnella*, and in fact, some of them were rather classified as *ċulqana* rather than *għonnella* due to the quality of the fabric. However, they still had cardboard sewn into the fabric. Whenever a family consisted of several women, the garment was often shared, and in some cases, it was also shared with neighbours.

In a story documented by Lanfranco (2004), a woman narrated what she remembers about how her aunt was a popular seamstress in Isla who used to sew the *għonnella*. She stated that she had many employees helping her with the work. She explained that the gathered part and the area that was put on the head were often dirty and full of insects. Women used to take their *għonnella* to the seamstress to clean it, which was done by ripping it open and washing the fabric. Whenever the fabric was too frail, she used to replace it with a new piece. The woman also mentioned that there were *għenienel* for right-handed and left-handed women.

It is thought that the *għonnella* was discarded after the Second World War (Cremona & Baluci, 1998; Lanfranco, 2004). Lanfranco (2004) pointed out that the *għonnella* started being phased out by the upper social class around the mid-19th century as they began adopting continental-style clothing. Interestingly, before World War II, women got married wearing a formal dress and the *għonnella*. The members of M.U.S.E.U.M were the only women who continued wearing the garment after it disappeared from society.

Figure 24: 'Maltese Lady wearing the National Headdress, the Faldetta', from the album 'Malta' (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 25: Women at San Girgor feast (The Malta Independent Nostalgia Series III), 1916 (Zammit, 2005)

2.4.1.3 Geżwira

Azzopardi (2007) described the *geżwira* as a type of skirt or apron. This was worn on a *dublett* (skirt) (Lanfranco, 2004). According to Bonavia (2012), this was done to hide any stains, and mended, or old-looking clothes. As stated in the section about the *għonnella*, the word *għonnella* referred to a skirt, and Lanfranco (2004) states that the *geżwira* was sometimes referred to as "*għonnella ta' fuq*", which translates to the '*għonnella* worn on top'. It is said that the *geżwira* was mostly worn by Gozitan women inside their homes and in the villages, but not in cities (Azzopardi, 2007). Lanfranco (2004) explained that women often wore the garment for occasions that took place inside the home, like baptisms and weddings.

Bonavia (2012) stated that the *geżwira* featured ample gatherings, which was probably done by a professional, thus, to construct it, one needed two lengths of fabric, one used for the front, and one for the back. The gatherings are seen in Figure 26. One side seam of the garment was left open (Bonavia, 2012). The *geżwira* was made of light blue fabric with white stripes (Azzopardi, 2007) at the bottom (Lanfranco, 2004). According to Bonavia (2012), the *geżwira* "was tied at different distances with bows of coloured ribbon" (p. 36). The opening at the side of the garment gave the wearer access to the *borsa* (Lanfranco, 2004). On top of the *geżwira*, country women often wore a *fardal*, which is an 'apron' (Zammit, 2005). The *fardal* can be seen in Figure 27. It is thought that the *geżwira* was woven and sewn from the same cotton that the wearer grew in their own field (Bonavia, 2012).

Figure 26: Gežwira found at the Inquisitor's Palace, National Museum of Ethnography, Birgu, Inv. ETHN/F/102iii (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 27: Pietro Paolo Caruana (from Dr Albert Ganado collection), seller and woman (Zammit, 2005)

Figure 28: Michele Bellanti, 'A Gossip at the Village Cistern', lithograph, PCM (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.4.1.4 Qmis (Shirt) and Maktur (Handkerchief)

According to Bonavia (2012), researchers barely found any literature clearly describing the *qmis* and *maktur* worn by women. In fact, only illustrations depict white shirts as part of the female traditional attire. Yet, lithographs show figures with handkerchiefs around their neck, hence is difficult to describe the features of the *qmis*. However, researchers presume that shirts worn by women were most probably similar to those worn by men. Zammit (2005) stated that the *maktur* was often white and was put on the head and tied underneath the chin. Women wore the maktur on its own, or as stated earlier, it was worn underneath the *għonnella* and the *ċulqana*. Zammit (2005) describes Figure 29, stating that it is likely that these people are attending a feast since one lady's *qmis* is embroidered, and another one is seen wearing an earring.

Figure 29: Michele Bellanti (National Library of Malta), family outing (Zammit, 2005)

2.4.1.5 Sidrija (Waistcoat) and Ġakketta (Jacket)

On top of the white shirts, women wore a *sidrija*, similar to men's (Zammit, 2005) or a *ġakketta*, which was sometimes made of lace (Lanfranco, 2004).

2.4.1.6 Borsa (Bag)

Bonavia (2012) described the *borsa* as a small pocket in which women carried their belongings, such as money and their *muftieħ* (large key). It was flat so that it did not appear in the silhouette. The *borsa* was shaped like a pear or oval and had a vertical slit on the centre front. "The pockets were single or in a pair and were suspended from a ribbon which was tied around their waist" (p. 36) underneath the skirt, specifically on each hip, and "could be

accessed by an opening of around twenty centimetres on the side seam below the waistline of the skirt's fabric" (p. 36).

Figure 30: Pocket PCM (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.4.1.7 Women's Complete Costumes

Figure 31: Ċikka: b' ta' kuljum (in everyday dress) – Female costume consisting of geżwira, dublett ta' taħt, sidrija, ċuqlana, maktur, and qmis (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 32: Lonza: Mbiddla għall-belt (made up for the city) – Female costume consisting of qmis, dublett, dublett ta' taħt, and għonnella (Gambin, et al., 2012)

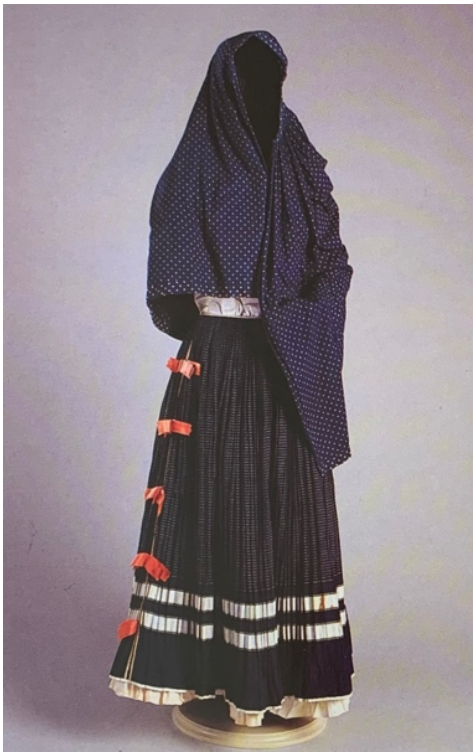

Figure 33: Ċuqlana and geżwira (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

Figure 34: Attributed to Giorgio Pullicino, 'A Maltese Lady of the lower class', watercolour, Mrs Gibson Craig Album, NMFA Inv. 16441-2 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 35: Kelina in Sunday best. Bodice, cotton, 19th century, Inv. ETHN/F/143. Skirt, cotton, 19th century, Inv. ETHN/F/75. Scarf, cotton, historically accurate reproduction by Alda Bugeja, Inv. ETHN/F/918 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.4.2 Men

The basic men's attire consisted of a *qmis*, *sidrija*, *qalziet*, *qalziet ta' taħt*, *kabozza*, *terħa*, *ħorġa, and a milsa*, *kappell*, or *beritta*. They mostly walked around barefooted, or wore a *qorq*, if they were lucky.

2.4.2.1 Qmis (Shirt)

According to Bonavia (2012), the *qmis* was a loose-fitting, shirt made of simple white cotton. It usually featured a v-shaped neckline with lapels, and "had a drop shoulder with gatherings around the neckline and had long wide sleeves" (p. 33) which were often rolled up to the elbow. The *qmis* was fastened with a single row of buttons in the centre front with a stand-up straight collar. Lanfranco (2004) stated that sometimes the *qmis* had silver or gold buttons.

2.4.2.2 Sidrija (Waistcoat)

The *sidrija* was a sleeveless waistcoat which was worn over the *qmis* (Bonavia, 2012) and it often had a baggy fit (Lanfranco, 2004). According to Bonavia (2012), it was one of the most important garments of the attire. The *sidrija* varied in terms of the pattern of the fabric and the sizes of the lapels. It was usually made of striped cotton fabric of various colours, like blue, mustard-yellow, and red. Lanfranco (2004) stated that the ones worn for special occasions used to have round silver or gold buttons. Other waistcoats featured toggle buttons, nicknamed by the Maltese as *tal-lanġasa* as they resembled a pear. Sometimes waistcoats were double-breasted, featuring two rows of buttons (Bonavia, 2012).

2.4.2.3 Qalziet (Trousers)

Bonavia (2012) explained that the trousers were loose-fitting, "extending anywhere from mid-calf to the ankle" (p. 33) and fastened with buttons on the centre front with side pockets. The fabric was cotton with a twill weave. Lanfranco (2004) highlighted that trousers made of white cotton were worn every day, while those made of brownish or reddish cotton were worn on Sundays and other feasts. Bonavia (2012) stated that men used to roll up the hem of the *qalziet*, and the reason for this was probably to prevent the hemline from getting dirty or damaged, which could have easily happened since the roads back then were irregular and dirty.

2.4.2.4 Qalziet ta' Taħt (Underwear)

Bonavia (2012) stated that the *qalziet ta' taħt* was worn under the *qalziet* which, like the *qmis*, was made of simple-woven and cheap cotton fabric. The reason for this was so that it could be washed as much as needed and still be wearable. Interestingly, several illustrations can be seen depicting men wearing trousers with a small part of the *qalziet ta' taħt* showing beneath. This was because, as stated in the previous section, the hem of the *qalziet* was rolled up. This can be seen in Figure 36.

Figure 36: Michele Bellanti (1807-1883) 'A Poultry Deal', lithograph, PCM (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.4.2.5 Kabozza

The *kabozza* was an overcoat with a hood and long sleeves (Bonavia, 2012) and is said to be a result of Arab influence (Lanfranco, 2004). According to Bonavia (2012), the garment closed in the centre front with buttons and its hem reached the calf. It usually had two vertical slit pockets. Parts of it, like the edges and pocket openings, were sometimes decorated with a ribbon or other trimmings. Since it was an outwear garment, the *kabozza* was made of very thick material, particularly a mixture of sheep's wool for the weft yarns, and cotton fibre for the warp yarns.

Figure 37: Kabozza (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

2.4.2.6 Terħa

Bonavia (2012) and Lanfranco (2004) both described the *terħa* as a sash worn by men around the waist instead of a belt. The *terħa* was made of cotton (Bonavia, 2012) of different colours (Zammit, 2005) and was worn daily (Bonavia, 2012). A more formal one, named the *bushakka* (Bonavia, 2012) or *buxakka* (Lanfranco, 2004), was made of silk, making it more expensive, and thus was only used on Sundays and special occasions (Bonavia, 2012). Lanfranco (2004) stated that the *terħa* was around 3 metres long and 20cm wide. This continued being worn by most men living in the countryside until the 1950s.

Figure 38: Terħa found at the Inquisitor's Palace, National Museum of Ethnography, Birgu (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 39: Cotton terħa around the waist (De Piro & Cremona, 1998)

2.4.2.7 Milsa, Kappell (Hat) and Beritta (Cap)

According to Bonavia (2012), the *milsa* looked like a long bag which was worn on the head. The end of it was kept on the front of the shoulder, not at the back. It was often produced out of wool with various colours (Bonavia, 2012), like red, blue, and other bright colours (Zammit, 2005). For example, Zammit (2005) stated that Maltese sailors wore a blue *milsa* which had a white line at the edge. The *milsa* started being phased out around the 19th century, and Maltese sailors started wearing a *kappell tat-ṫibna*, which are straw hats, while other peasants started wearing the *beritta*, which is a type of cap. Zammit (2005) discussed Figure 40 which depicts several boys and men wearing the *beritta*. One could find several variations of the headgear mentioned depending on the year, occasion, social class, materials, and other variables (Lanfranco, 2004).

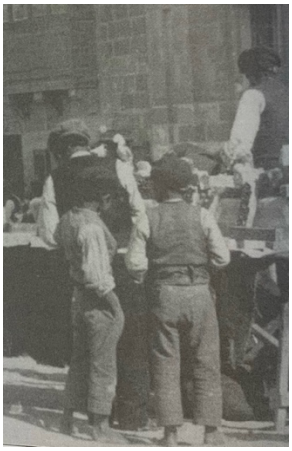

Figure 40: Men at San Girgor feast (The Malta Independent Nostalgia Series III) (Zammit, 2005)

2.4.2.8 Ħorġa

Bonavia (2012) stated that the *ħorġa* was used to carry things like supplies and food. It was a piece of fabric measuring around 3 metres by 1.8 metres and had a vertical opening in the middle, through which items were put and taken out. The *ħorġa* had to be durable, thus it was made of twill-weaved cotton, often striped (Bonavia, 2012) and made of the same fabric as the clothing worn (Zammit, 2005). It also had pockets at the front and the back, in which several items were put (Zammit, 2005). Bonavia (2012) explained that country folk, especially construction workers, carried it over their shoulders. Although not particularly a garment, it automatically became part of the traditional attire since it was frequently carried around by country folk. In fact, the *ħorġa* can be seen in almost every portrait of male country folk or those going to work (Lanfranco, 2004). According to Lanfranco (2004), this was used by men until World War II.

Figure 41: Ħorġa, Inquisitor's Palace, National Museum of Ethnography, Birgu, Inv. ETHN/F/95 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 42: Ħorġa, Inquisitor's Palace, National Museum of Ethnography, Birgu, Inv. ETHN/F/126 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.4.2.9 Qorq (Sandals)

Not everyone wore the *qorq* as they were expensive (Bonavia, 2012) and was considered as something luxurious (Lanfranco, 2004). In fact, Lanfranco (2004) highlighted that the *qorq* or *kork* was rarely worn. Maltese peasants used to walk around barefoot unless they were going to the capital city (Cremona & Baluci, 1998) or attending a feast (Lanfranco, 2004). Lanfranco (2004) stated that researchers found several writings by travellers stating that country folk who needed to go to Valletta to run errands carried their *qorq* in their hands and wore it when they arrived in the city. Walking barefoot remained very common until after the Second World War.

Bonavia (2012) highlighted that the sandals were handcrafted, specifically made of "two oblong pieces of untanned pig's or cow's hide with two ears cut out on each side and punched with holes for the strings. Two strings of the same material passed through these four holes and drawn around the leg of the wearer sometimes crisscrossed" (p. 34). Zammit (2005) described the *qorq* as simply a piece of animal skin underneath the foot which was tied around the foot with one or two straps. When worn, the foot was still completely uncovered, but the sole was protected (Bonavia, 2012).

Figure 43: Qorq, Inquisitor's Palace, National Museum of Ethnography, Birgu, Inv. ETHN/L/2 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.4.2.10 Men's Complete Costumes

Figure 44: Fortun: lest għas-suq (ready for the market) - Male costume consisting of a sidrija, qalziet, ħorġa, terħa, milsa, qmis, and qalziet ta' taħt (Gambin, et al., 2012)

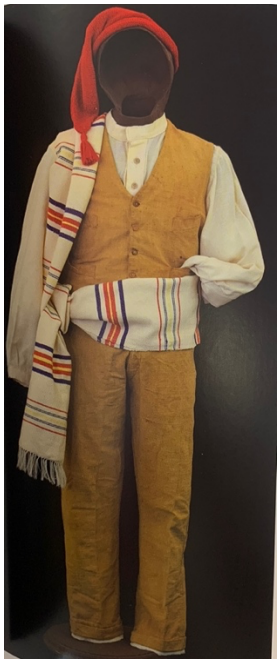

Figure 45: Żużu: il-kaċċatur (the hunter) – Male costume consisting of a sidrija, qalziet, terħa, qmis, ħorġa, qalziet ta' taħt, and milsa (Gambin, et al., 2012)

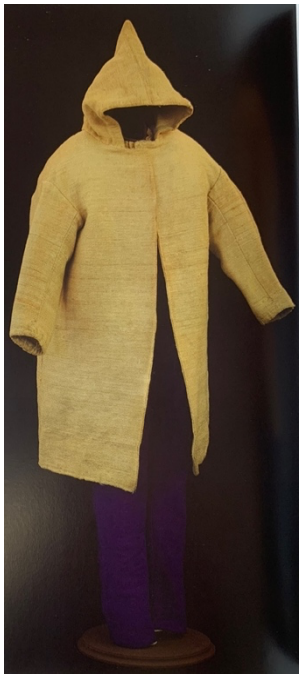

Figure 46: Kalanċ: armat għall-kesħa (clad for the cold) – Male costume consisting of a kabozza, qalziet, qmis, qalziet ta' taħt, and terħa (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 47: Ġamri on feast day. Frock Coat, cotton and silk, late 18th century, Inv. ETHN/F/236. Breeches, cotton, late 18th century, Inv. ETHN/F/227 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 48: Michele Bellanti, 'Pollajuolo – Poulterer', chromolithograph, Souvenir de Malte, 1973, NMFA Inv. 1081-2 (Gambin, et al., 2012)

Figure 49: Francesco Zimelli, 'Paysan Maltois' (2nd half 18th century), engraving in Raccolta di Costumi Maltesi, courtesy of NLM (Gambin, et al., 2012)

2.5 Globalisation as a Factor of the Disappearance of Traditional Maltese Costumes

One may ask why folk attire has been minimised or completely discarded. Traditional costumes have been an identifying feature in society for a long time in many countries. However, as Martínez (2019) stated, this is being lost all over the world due to several factors such as “superior cultural differences and socioeconomic forces” (p. 53).

Globalisation is a complex concept. Eicher & Evenson (2015) defined it as “a process that integrates many separate societies and cultural groups of the world into a unified, socially interacting structure” (p. 34). Despite that there still are physical and language barriers between nations, globalisation is making them more linked. One of the concepts that globalisation brought along with it was the concept of *world dress*, which resulted in people around the world wearing clothing that has originated from different societies, all around the world. Now that the world is more interconnected, clothing styles have become more similar.

Tradition is culturally produced, thus in the process of reconstruction, some things might be kept or eliminated (Potlako, et al., 2011). We cannot stop globalisation, but Martínez (2019) stated that it is important to safeguard the cultural values in this “globalised and standardised industrial world [...] while counterbalancing the elements of time and cost involved in artisanship and hand-worked creation of traditional goods” (p. 53).

2.6 The Legacy of Traditional Maltese Costumes

According to Cremona & Baluci (1998), around the second half of the 20th century, people started seeing more costume museums and exhibitions as they came to realise that fashion in itself is a true art form, and clothes do have their own language. This increased people's awareness of traditional attire.

While a considerable amount of work was done to protect the legacy of traditional Maltese costumes, additional efforts must be undertaken to raise more awareness of this important aspect of the local cultural heritage, especially to the younger generation whose costumes might be strangers to them. The European Union, organisations, and local fashion designers

have a significant responsibility in this aspect. Explored hereunder are some ways that these stakeholders have been preserving and promoting traditional Maltese costumes.

2.7 European Union

2.7.1 TRACtion

According to the University of Malta (2022), an ongoing project, TRACtion (Tradition In Action) is taking place as part of the Creative Europe Programme (CREA). This project is funded by the European Union, reflecting the importance of reviving traditional costumes. The University of Malta, the University of Helsinki, and the Atlantic Technological University St. Angelas in Ireland are participating in this project, aiming to help students understand traditional costumes, by providing them with critical thinking skills, creativity, and other essential knowledge required for innovation in design.

Each country is focusing on their very own traditional costume, to revive, innovate, and digitalise them, while educating participants and followers on the historical, creative, cultural, environmental, and economic aspects of the respective traditional garments (University of Malta, 2022). TRACtion is promoting the cultural heritage of these countries by organising interactive and online workshops, competitions, physical exhibitions, an online exhibition, and publications. The organisers of TRACtion (2023) stated that Malta is focusing on the *għonnella*, highlighting its identifiable features, uses, designs, materials, methods of construction and colours.

Figure 50: TRACtion Project Poster (TRACtion, 2023)

2.8 Organisations

2.8.1 Fondazzjoni Partimonju Malti

According to Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti (n.d.-a), the foundation is a Maltese non-profit organisation that aims to spread awareness of local heritage, both in the Maltese islands and internationally. This is conducted through their museums, organised exhibitions, and publications.

According to Cremona & Baluci (1998), Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti believed that it was necessary to refresh the perspective and awareness of local traditional dress and preserve the costume heritage before time and the fragile nature of fabric caused it to disappear. Thus, in 1998, the foundation organised an exhibition named *Costume in Malta* intending to expose something that was studied very little locally, that is what Maltese people used to wear in the past and throughout the years. Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti (n.d.-b) stated that a range of garments were on display on the day of the exhibition – from lavish costumes to attire worn by the country folk. There were also several paintings on display showing how these garments were worn. Accompanying the exhibition was a reference catalogue that explained each costume. The preparations for the exhibition took around 3 years.

Figure 51: 'Costume in Malta' Exhibition by Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti in 1998 (Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, n.d.-b)

2.8.2 Heritage Malta

Heritage Malta (n.d.-a) stated that it is the national agency which oversees museums, conservation practices, and the local cultural heritage. The agency oversees several important

sites, like palaces, catacombs, Neolithic temples, archaeological sites, and natural landscapes. It aims to preserve the Maltese heritage and make it accessible to everyone.

Said (2012) explained that, in 2012, Heritage Malta collaborated with the Ministry for Gozo and organised an exhibition of country folk costumes as part of the annual event *Lejliet Lapsi – Notte Gozitana*. This exhibition aimed to interpret and disseminate insights regarding the National Collection of traditional costumes and spread knowledge to as many people as possible. Heritage Malta (n.d.-c) highlighted that a catalogue named *Peasant Costumes: Insights into Rural Life and Society* (2012) was published to accompany the exhibition with the same title, giving a deeper explanation of the costumes and the ongoing work that is doing to preserve this textile collection (Heritage Malta, n.d.-b).

Debono (2012) stated that professional textile preservation is crucial to safeguard this important aspect of culture and textile conservators protect them from various factors. In fact, textile preservation is one of the jobs done by Heritage Malta. All textiles are prone to several elements that may lead to their deterioration, particularly "light, fluctuating humidity and temperature, pollution, insects, and rodents" (p. 67). Wear-and-tear is another factor which causes textile deterioration resulting from use and handling, along with improper storage and cleaning.

2.9 Museums

2.9.1 Inquisitor's Palace

Heritage Malta (n.d.-d) stated that the Inquisitor's Palace, overlooked by Heritage Malta, illustrates the past political importance of the building and serves as a National Museum of Ethnography, through which the effects of the Inquisition on the local society and the influence of religion on life in Malta back then are illustrated. Within the same building, one could find a section dedicated to the National Textiles Collection.

2.9.2 Gran Castello Historic House

According to Heritage Malta (n.d.-c), this historic site in Victoria, Gozo, showcases Malta's domestic traditions, crafts, and trades, such as lace-making and weaving. A cotton gin and a spinning wheel are also on display. This site also exhibits the traditional way of life of local rural people inside their homes as well as items related to rural trades and skills, particularly agriculture.

2.10 Fashion Designers

2.10.1 Luke Azzopardi

Preca Taroum (2022) stated that the young local designer Luke Azzopardi has created several designs inspired by the *għonnella*. The designer conducted thorough primary research to present the story of the garment through his publication *L-Għonnella: Deconstructing the Garment* (2022). The book was decorated with authentic photographs of the *għonnella* from the past and studio-produced photographs of several versions of a reimagined *għonnella* by the designer himself. To add detail to this publication, Azzopardi said that he wanted the book cover to be made of cotton and linen fabric aiming for readers to feel like they are touching the real garment.

Azzopardi (2022) himself posited that "The *għonnella* has recently gone through a renaissance of sorts, and has been, once again, picked up as a symbol of Malteseness" (p. 65). Though, along with it, twisted versions of its true heritage may have been invented such as glamorisation and nostalgic memory – all wiping out the true history with their existence. Though, perhaps subconsciously, the *għonnella* has been an inspiration to artists and fashion designers for a long time, hence why aspects of it can be found in contemporary culture and art.

Figure 52: Reinvented għonnella costume by Luke Azzopardi (Preca Taroum, 2022)

2.10.2 Etienne Schembri

According to Azzopardi (2021), this designer created a modernised version of a white *għonnella* dress which was worn by Miss Universe Maltese representative Anthea Zammit for the 69th edition of the Miss Universe beauty competition in 2021. The outfit was praised by many online.

Figure 53: Għonnella Miss Universe 2021 costume by Etienne Schembri (Schembri, 2021)

Section B: Traditional Costumes in Education

2.11 Syllabi of Subjects in Maltese Secondary Schools

According to the MATSEC Examinations Board (2024), the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) syllabi published by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) follow the curriculum principles highlighted in *The National Curriculum Framework 2012,* which defines what students must know and be capable of achieving by the end of their compulsory education. It aims to help students develop holistically and ensures quality education for all, where students "can obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be future active citizens and to succeed at work in society irrespective" (p. 2) of their differences. The learning outcomes that the syllabi are based on equip students with several cross-curricular themes necessary for the modern lifestyle.

2.12 SEC Fashion and Textiles

As stated in the introduction of this research study, Fashion and Textiles in Malta is offered through two courses: SEC and AVC. However, this section only explores the syllabus and assessment methods related to the SEC syllabus of the subject as Chapter 5 only focuses on assessment criteria designed for the latter.

2.12.1 SEC Syllabus

The latest Fashion and Textiles SEC syllabus (2024) dated 2027, which will be followed by the cohort starting Year 9 in the next scholastic year 2024-25, is based on a total of 13 learning outcomes divided across the three scholastic years: Unit 1 (for Year 9s), Unit 2 (for Year 10s), and Unit 3 (for Year 11s). Each learning outcome is divided into several assessment criteria, specifying their focus on Knowledge (K), Comprehension (C), or Application (A). Each assessment criterion is further broken down into levels 1 (blue boxes), 2 (yellow boxes), and 3 (red boxes), where level 1 represents the least depth and complexity, whereas level 3 encompasses the most profound and complex assessment criteria. One action verb is used in each assessment criterion, reflecting what is expected from the candidates in terms of

knowledge and skills. The content section clearly illustrates the aspects to be covered during the lessons that students are expected to know for the assessment.

2.12.2 Scheme of Assessment

According to the MATSEC Examinations Board (2024), students who choose Fashion and Textiles are assessed through three components: School-Based Assessment (SBA) amounting to 30%; Coursework in the form of a portfolio amounting to 30%; and a controlled assessment making up 40% of the global mark.

The MATSEC Examinations Board (2024) stated that the SBA refers to the assessment of the Application (A) criteria specified in the syllabus. The 30% is divided into 10% each year, meaning Years 9, 10, and 11. This component is assigned to the students by their respective teachers, who also mark it. Like the SBA, the portfolio is based on the Application (A) criteria and divided into 10% of the marks per year. In Units 1 and 2, the student's coursework is based on any two application criteria, while that of Unit 3 is based on one application criterion and a self-evaluation. Lastly, the controlled assessment consists of a two-hour examination which is conducted at the end of Year 11 and includes a series of questions based on different knowledge (K) and comprehension (C) criteria.

2.13 Ideal Pedagogical Approaches

Main (2021) defined the term pedagogy as "the strategy of how educators teach, in practice and theory". Pedagogy varies according to the teacher's principles, resulting in different teaching methods and strategies, which ultimately, influence the students. A suitable and effective pedagogy results in successful subject-related skills and higher-order thinking skill development, to provide a holistic, positive learning experience for the students.

Main (2021) outlined several innovative teaching methods which are crucial for adapting to the different needs of the students, derived from approaches that promote critical thinking and provide engaging and dynamic opportunities for students. These approaches were taken into consideration when designing the assessment criteria and suggesting interactive activities to incorporate into the lessons about traditional Maltese costumes in Chapter 5:

- **Flipped classroom** – students prepare information gathered from resources available at home, such as the Internet. The learners then bring the information to school and share it with the class during engaging and collaborative activities.
- **Gamification** – incorporating games into the lessons boosts the engagement of students through a more interactive and fulfilling learning experience.
- **Experiential learning** – students learn through interaction with aspects related to the topics being covered, after which the students reflect on the experience.
- **Inquiry-based learning** – pupils are encouraged to question and investigate concepts, through which they develop a more in-depth understanding.

(Main, 2021)

Moreover, the UK Department for Education and Skills (2010) highlighted the importance of active student engagement in learning. When learners are actively engaged in lessons, they often exhibit prolonged focus, complete their tasks punctually, remain attentive, and have minimal behavioural issues. Subsequently, they progress faster and believe more in themselves and their capabilities of improving and learning, which results in higher self-esteem. Learners also may encourage their classmates and collaborate with them. Active engagement can be developed by three main aspects, namely a good teacher-student relationship, a pleasant and positive learning environment, as well as clear routines and class rules.

Teaching in Maltese schools is based on the constructivist approach. According to Mcleod (2024), this method focuses on the active role of the learner through which they construct their own knowledge rather than passively receive information from their teachers. This ultimately results in deeper understanding and learning. Arends (1998) as stated by Mcleod (2024), highlights that this approach posits that the most effective way to construct new knowledge is through direct experience. Constructivism is dictated by the amalgamation of prior knowledge and new experiences.

2.14 The Importance of Traditional Costumes in Education

Incorporating traditional costumes in the syllabi is beneficial for students at any academic grade or level, particularly those students specialising in Fashion. According to Al-Shehri & Dabbagh (2021), children are active learners; thus, educators must guide them and help them become informed about their community and its heritage. The study by Al-Shehri & Dabbagh (2021) concluded that late childhood is the best life stage in which children can learn various skills, therefore, it would be best to teach traditional costumes in those ages. They stated that exposing students to knowledge about traditional costumes enhances their cultural identity awareness and strengthens their ethnic pride. The following sub-sections highlight a few reasons why integrating this topic into the syllabus is important for students.

2.14.1 Promotion and Appreciation of Culture

Fashinza (n.d.) stated that each country, region, or ethnic group have their own traditional costumes which have unique historical characteristics. Hence, if one learns about their costumes, they are automatically becoming more informed about their ancestors who wore the attire and practised their cultural traditions, leading to appreciation towards one's culture. Lessons about traditional costumes must be conducted in an interesting and striking manner, to maximise learning. Such lessons would inform students on several aspects related to the specific traditional costumes, such as how they were sewn in terms of techniques and constructions, the types of fabric and colours that were used, and periods in which the garments were worn, amongst others. This promotes local artisans who still use traditional sewing techniques in the creation of sewn items. Learning about the beauty of diverse traditional costumes also promotes acceptance amongst students and creates an inclusive learning environment.

2.14.2 Preservation of Cultural Identity

According to Al-Shehri & Dabbagh (2021), traditional costumes are not worn everywhere daily due to several aspects, such as change and progression of communities. Hence, passing on the appreciation of cultural identity and all aspects that it encompasses is essential for young people to become acquainted with them and ultimately keep the traditions alive.

2.14.3 Identity Formation and Expression

Al-Shehri & Dabbagh (2021) stated that knowledge about one's traditional costumes is essential to enhance one of the aspects of national identity. The identity formation of an individual usually starts to take place in the early years of school. It mostly happens in the educational process and when a child speaks the language. Thus, shared and endured traditions form the foundation of cultural identity. Al-Shehri & Dabbagh (2021) highlighted the need to strengthen the children's sense of belonging through traditional costumes and emphasised that they must be taught about their heritage authentically and innovatively.

2.14.4 Creative Inspiration in Fashion Design

According to Fashinza (n.d.), one must keep in mind that students studying fashion might be prospective fashion designers. Considering that traditional costumes are often a source of inspiration for such designers, one must be knowledgeable about different costumes and their meaning to people. In this case, fashion designers could preserve traditions through the recreation and innovation of modernised costumes using their creative skills, making them more appealing and making people feel more connected to their ancestors.

2.15 Teaching Traditional Costumes

2.15.1 Traditional Maltese Costumes in Local Syllabi

Syllabi from the Maltese primary to the tertiary levels were analysed to discover if traditional Maltese costumes are being taught in local schools, and, if so, which aspects are being covered.

2.15.1.1 Year 3 Social Studies

One of the history learning outcomes in this subject tackles clothing. In S3.2.2., the students are expected to discover and describe the clothing that was worn by Maltese in the past. In addition to this learning outcome, they must understand various factors that influence the clothing that is worn, as well as the concepts of change and continuity in clothing (Department of Social Studies, n.d.).

2.15.1.2 Year 5 Malti, Year 6 Malti, Year 7 Malti Track 1, and SEC Malti

In all these syllabi, the students are expected to speak and present information about the main elements and events that define the local culture and identity. All syllabi list the following elements as examples: food, feasts, handcrafts, the environment, history, and legends. Evidently, 'traditional costumes' are not specifically stated, however, assuming that this list is only given as examples, it could be that students are still permitted to discuss traditional Maltese costumes (Dipartiment tal-Malti, n.d.-a; Dipartiment tal-Malti, n.d.-b; Dipartiment tal-Malti, n.d.-c; MATSEC Examinations Board, 2024).

2.15.1.3 Year 8 Malti Tracks 2 and 3

In these syllabi, the local culture is mentioned in the context of the effects of local cultural diversity in Malta and its culture. The students are also expected to discuss ways of strengthening the aspects that define the Maltese identity. This means that there is no direct reference to local traditional costumes. However, it could be that they are mentioned as one of the aspects of the Maltese identity (Dipartiment tal-Malti, n.d.-d; Dipartiment tal-Malti, n.d.-e).

2.15.1.4 Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fashion – MCAST

In the study unit CAFHN-506-1907: Contextual Studies in Fashion I, students learn about fashion and costume from the perspectives of society and culture. They discover the context and major developments that took place in Western costume and fashion, particularly from prehistory to the end of the 18th century. In addition to theoretical lectures, students visit a local collection of historic costumes to acquire firsthand knowledge about such dress. Students also learn to appreciate the value of historic costumes as a source of inspiration for their future work. The unit description does not specifically mention traditional Maltese costumes. It could be that they are briefly covered during the lectures, but not given much importance, except for the site visit (MCAST, n.d.)

2.15.1.5 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Home Economics, Specialising in Fashion, Textiles, and Interiors – University of Malta

This study unit introduces students to the styles of Western civilisations from ancient times to the present. The social, historical, aesthetic influences, economic, and technological changes are all explored. The lectures cover famous fashion designers from all over the world. Moreover, this study unit also focuses on the history of Maltese costume with the aim of enhancing the awareness of the Maltese national identity, while highlighting different characteristics that are unique to the Maltese costume. For assessment purposes, the students are expected to give a presentation on various Maltese folk garments, emphasising their aesthetics, functions, and potential for revival (University of Malta, n.d.).

2.15.2 Traditional Costumes in Foreign Syllabi

This section lists some examples of how traditional costumes are being taught by different foreign institutions at various education levels.

2.15.2.1 Western Australian International School System

In this school, students and teachers celebrate their cultural heritage by wearing their traditional costumes, which helps them embody ethnic pride (Doan, 2018).

2.15.2.2 Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

In their Bachelor of Science in Costume Design and Fashion Design course, students cover the beginning and evolution of costumes of different states in India as well as the traditional Indian textiles (Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, n.d.).

2.15.2.3 Swami Vivekanand University

In their Master of Arts in Fashion Designing course, students learn about the traditional costumes of Indian males and females, specifically those unique to various ethnic groups. They also analyse the evolution of specific Indian dress in different periods and how Indian costumes are changing today (Swami Vivekanand University, n.d.).

2.15.2.4 University of Calicut

Students following the Bachelor of Science in Costume and Fashion Designing learn about the various traditional Indian textiles and from where they originated. They also cover Indian costumes from different periods throughout history, focusing on fabric, art, headwear, footwear, and others. Moreover, in a separate study unit, students learn about basic hand embroidery, surface design, and other decorative techniques, as well as various traditional Indian techniques (University of Calicut, 2019).

2.15.3 Ready-Made Lesson Plans and Teaching Resources Available Online

This section notes some teaching resources related to traditional costumes available online.

2.15.3.1 Resource no. 1

This lesson entitled *Importance of Traditional Dress* aims to explain to students what traditional dress is, the importance of traditional costumes from different countries, as well as the importance of preserving traditional dress as part of the cultural heritage. As for instructional materials, this lesson requires flashcards with different traditional costumes from cultures together with their meanings and collections of traditional dress. It is unclear whether this lesson is part of a syllabus that is taught in an educational institution (StudentsMirror, n.d.).

2.15.3.2 Resource no. 2

This online resource entitled *Meaning and Importance of Traditional Dresses of Different Tribes* is spread over two lessons. By the end of the lessons, the students will be able to identify various traditional dresses worn in Nigerian tribes, their importance, and their meanings (Alabi, n.d.).

2.15.3.3 Resource no. 3

This worksheet named *Traditional Clothes and their Materials* can be found on the popular website *Twinkl* which offers teaching resources. This resource can be used in the early primary years and aims to help them learn about different styles of clothing around the world. In fact,

it features 6 traditional costumes from around the world and students have to match the material used to make them, teaching children to reflect on how individuals used the available resources to express themselves and develop a strong sense of identity (Twinkl, n.d.-a).

2.15.3.4 Resource no. 4

This resource consists of a presentation that visually represents the traditional costumes of 16 countries around the world. The pictures used are authentic so that students get a clear idea of how these costumes look. This resource is aimed at early primary years students (Twinkl, n.d.-b).

2.16 Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth exploration of the cultural and historical significance of traditional Maltese costumes, merged with the educational aspect. This literature review discussed how traditional costumes are not just garments, but symbols of the country's cultural identity and heritage. The exploration of the Maltese cultural identity led the researcher to explore the various traditional Maltese garments, their characteristics, as well as the local textile industry, which was a powerful industry when traditional garments were originally worn. This chapter brought out the importance of the preservation of the legacy of traditional costumes, by highlighting globalisation as a strong factor in the disappearance of the local traditional costumes and discussing the efforts of various entities to maintain their legacy. Moreover, this chapter explained the Fashion and Textiles syllabus taught in Maltese schools and explored ideal pedagogical approaches to use in the classroom. This chapter also demonstrated the value of incorporating traditional costumes into subject syllabi. Lastly, it analysed some local and foreign scenarios where traditional costumes are being taught. This chapter served as a foundation for understanding what aspects of traditional Maltese costumes can be effectively integrated into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus, and how, with further perspectives on the topic being explored in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the methodology of this research study. The data collection method suitable for this study has been highlighted below, along with the reasons for suitability, and its advantages and disadvantages. Subsequently, the researcher introduced the limitations of the study, the research participants and the interview questions asked, the sampling techniques utilised, the ethical considerations taken, and the data analysis procedures.

3.2 Research Methodology

The researcher recognised the versatility of qualitative research methods and made use of them according to the study's requirements. Matthews & Ross (2010) stated that "Qualitative research methods are primarily concerned with stories and accounts including subjective understandings, feelings, opinions, and beliefs" (p. 142), further demonstrating the soundness of these research methods in this study. These methods were used by the researcher to comprehend the chosen participants' knowledge regarding the subject, as well as their intelligent perspectives as experts in their own fields and any experience relevant to the study's success.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool proven to be particularly advantageous to this study was semi-structured, open-ended interviews. According to Matthews & Ross (2010), "An interview is a particular type of conversation between two or more people" (p. 219). An interview typically consists of an interviewer, who is asking questions, and an interviewee, who answers. The authors highlighted that there must be direct interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Semi-structured interviews are often associated with studies in which "the researcher is interested in people's experiences, behaviour, and understandings" (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 211). Prior to the commencement of the interview, a set of questions is prepared allowing the interviewee to answer the question, yet drives them towards a more elaborate, free-flowing conversation. The questions are referred to during this conversation allowing the interviewer not to deviate, simultaneously providing the researcher with targeted questions and a systematic approach to ensure comprehensive data collection. It was imperative for the researcher to obtain exclusive insights from the experts interviewed, therefore, permitting deviations from the predetermined questions while remaining on the topic was optimal, enabling the collection of unanticipated yet highly relevant data. In fact, Bhat (n.d.) stated that the open-ended nature of the questions "allow[s] and encourage[s] respondents to answer in open-text format to answer based on their complete knowledge, feeling, and understanding", resulting in added-on arguments, as opposed to close-ended questions, which limit the participants to a few options.

3.3.1 Advantages of Interviews

According to Matthews & Ross (2010), semi-structured interviews enhance the research study as the carefully selected research participants, share valuable experiences and emotions. Participants are also given flexibility and the opportunity to discuss certain details in their own way, thereby enhancing the authenticity of the data collected. The researcher prepares certain questions beforehand, to structure the interview, leading to clearer research outcomes. This inherent structure also ensures comprehensive coverage of all relevant aspects.

Sociology Group (2019) stated that by choosing interviews as a data collection tool, the researcher was able to carefully choose the most suitable participants for this study. When interviews were compared to other data collection tools, interviews yielded higher response rates, possibly due to accommodating individuals with limited reading and writing skills, ensuring inclusion and the convenience that interviews provide as they can be conducted at a convenient time and place of the participants choosing.

A face-to-face interview, allows for interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, allowing for the observation of non-verbal communication, cues which can be noted and analysed following the interview (Sociology Group, 2019). Rahman (2013) stated that this can be highly beneficial to the study as it aids in gaining a deeper insight into the respondents' personal opinions and beliefs. Fostering a sense of comfort and engagement, researchers can establish a strong rapport with their respondents possibly leading to more thorough, reliable and insightful responses from the respondents.

3.3.2 Disadvantages of Interviews

Sociology Group (2019) stated that the first challenge the interviewer may face is finding and reaching out to potential participants. It is essential to reassure interviewees about confidentiality and other relevant concerns. The researcher must be approachable, address any questions the respondent may have, and ensure that the interviewee feels comfortable throughout the entire interview process.

The selected participant may opt to decline the study or withdraw from it, potentially leaving the researcher without any data. The researcher must identify the reason for refusal and try to overcome it. Subsequently, the researcher may then encounter challenges in finding another suitable participant for the study. One of the biggest concerns that participants have is the lack of anonymity (Sociology Group, 2019).

Given the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee during an interview, maintaining neutrality is a must to mitigate bias (Sociology Group, 2019). However, during the process biases can still manifest, potentially influencing the outcomes of the study, despite the efforts to keep the biases minimal (Rahman, 2013).

Conducting the interviews can be highly time-consuming (Sociology Group, 2019). In fact, according to Rahman (2013) apart from the actual interview, the researcher must dedicate significant time to craft the interview questions and adequately prepare for each interview. Subsequently, they must code, organise, transcribe and finally comprehensively analyse the responses. Moreover, conducting interviews on a larger scale can incur substantial costs, in

certain cases. The researcher necessitates proficient interviewing skills to maintain engagement and effectively solicit as much information as possible (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Sociology Group (2019) explained that sometimes the respondent's answers may be constrained or inaccurate for various reasons. It could be the case that the participant lies simply to provide the interviewee with a socially desirable answer or embarrassment hindering disclosure of certain details. Participants may also make mistakes when recalling specific information pertinent to the researcher's inquiry. In certain cases, the respondents may fail to discuss aspects that are of interest to or relevant to the researcher (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

3.4 Limitations

Several limitations may affect the study's findings and conclusions, resulting in inaccurate or misleading information which ultimately influences the validity and reliability of the data collected. Due to the scarcity of secondary sources available, the researcher repeatedly cited the few authors who have studied and written about the topic, leading to a limited perspective in the research.

Considering that the interviews involve interaction between the researcher and the interviewees, the participants may feel pressured to provide the researcher with the answers that they think are desired to get the best results, rather than expressing their honest thoughts. Moreover, the interviewer may intentionally or unintentionally ask certain questions to lead the participant to respond in specific ways. Additionally, when conducting the analysis and discussion of results, the researcher may interpret responses to match their beliefs and assumptions or to align with their desired outcomes, resulting in interviewer bias.

Due to time constraints, the interviews conducted may not capture the full, desired depth and level of detail that the researcher desires. The participant may also withhold or limit the extent of information shared. Interviews may end up focusing on specific aspects while leaving others unexplored, hence varying the results. The quality of the interviews may also alter depending

on the researcher's preparation, establishing a good rapport with the interviewees, and interviewing skills.

Response variability may occur for various reasons, namely, participants being unable to articulate thoughts well and having imperfect or biased memories of past events, experiences, or knowledge, sometimes even contradictory. Moreover, it could be that participants provide inconsistent responses due to environmental distractions or not understanding the question accurately. Response variability may make it challenging for the researcher to identify patterns in the result analysis.

3.5 Research Participants

3.5.1 Initial Plan

The researcher's initial plan involved conducting interviews with four participants selected for their expertise in the field of traditional Maltese costumes. The participants included two individuals with firsthand experience sewing or wearing the *għonnella*, an expert actively engaged in researching, preserving, and revitalising local traditional costumes, and finally, a university lecturer or researcher specialising in traditional costumes. Recruitment strategies were to utilise email, word of mouth, or social media to reach potential participants. The semi-structured interviews were anticipated to last between 45 to 60 minutes, conducted separately at mutually convenient locations and times. Participants were to respond to a series of open-ended questions exploring various aspects of traditional Maltese costumes. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from each participant and detailing procedures such as the use of pseudonyms, recording, storage, and the intended use of interview data.

As the researcher faced challenges and significant time constraints in recruiting the intended participants due to the specific criteria outlined in the research proposal which were essential to the validity and reliability of the study's findings, the researcher sought an extension for the proposed dissertation and devised an alternative plan.

3.5.2 Actual Plan

The researcher had initially identified suitable candidates for interviewing as an expert and a researcher. However, encountering difficulties in recruiting participants with experience in sewing or wearing the *għonnella*, a decision was made with the supervisor to adjust the approach. Ultimately, two seamstresses affiliated with the TRACtion project, which involved the deconstruction and sewing of a replica of the *għonnella* were selected and interviewed instead. These participants were still able to provide detailed insights that aligned with the questions that the researcher had prepared.

All participants selected for the study were adults over the age of 18 and citizens of Malta. They were chosen based on the researcher's belief that their firsthand experiences could provide valuable insights not readily available in the existing literature. This approach aimed to enrich the research study with unique perspectives and practical knowledge related to traditional Maltese costumes, enhancing its overall depth and relevance.

3.5.3 Participant 1

Participant 1, historian and antique collector Marquis Nicholas De Piro was recruited via email, due to his expertise in traditional costumes, using contact information provided by another researcher. Before commencing the interview, he expressed a preference not to remain anonymous and requested acknowledgement for his contributions. During the 40-minute interview conducted at his residence, Casa Rocca Piccola, Marquis De Piro showcased his extensive knowledge, particularly in Maltese history, social class, and attire of affluent individuals. However, it became apparent that his expertise predominantly focused on these aspects rather than on traditional Maltese costumes specifically, which were the researcher's primary interest. Nonetheless, he provided valuable insights into Maltese identity during the discussion.

3.5.4 Participant 2

Participant 2, Claire Bonavia, was recruited via email using contact information provided by the same researcher, in her capacity as a conservator at Heritage Malta. The interview, which

lasted 1 hour and 10 minutes, took place at Joanne's Garden, a location chosen for its mutual convenience. Prior to the interview, Claire was given the option to remain anonymous, but she chose to be identified in the study. During the interview, Claire shared detailed insights into the wearing practices and various types, features, and characteristics of traditional costumes. Additionally, she discussed her work in costume preservation, providing valuable information on preservation techniques employed at Heritage Malta.

3.5.5 Participants 3 and 4

Participants 3 and 4, Doreen Schembri and Maryanne Falzon, were recruited via email using contact information provided by the same researcher, as they had both worked on the TRACtion project as seamstresses. The interview with them was conducted jointly at Doreen's residence, chosen for its comfort and convenience for both interviewees. Prior to beginning the interview, both Doreen and Maryanne were given the option to remain anonymous, but they both chose to be identified in the study. During the interview, the seamstresses were questioned extensively about the *għonnella*, including its wearing practices, features, construction techniques, deconstruction process, replica making, and the challenges encountered during the preservation efforts. Their insights provided valuable firsthand knowledge about traditional Maltese costumes and the practical aspects of their creation and conservation.

Each interviewee was asked to provide their opinion regarding the inclusion of traditional Maltese costumes in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus, along with specific aspects they believed should be incorporated. They offered insights into potential activities and resources that could be utilised by educators teaching these topics.

Participant 1	Marquis Nicholas De Piro	Historian and antiques collector
Participant 2	Claire Bonavia	Conservator
Participant 3	Doreen Schembri	Professional seamstress
Participant 4	Maryanne Falzon	Professional seamstress

Table 2: Characteristics of Interview Participants

3.6 Interview Questions

As stated above, the researcher employed semi-structured questions to provide a structured framework for the interview process. These questions were designed to be open-ended, facilitating a natural and fluid exchange between the interviewer and interviewee. This approach aimed to encourage participants to freely articulate their perspectives and recount personal experiences, thereby enhancing the depth and richness of the data collected during the interviews.

To accommodate the participants' varying expertise, the researcher prepared a set of questions tailored to each individual (see Appendices 6, 7, and 8). The researcher derived themes from the literature review that they would have liked to find out more about and customised the questions to suit the specific backgrounds and expertise of each of the participants. The researcher endeavoured to address all sub-topics comprehensively, aiming to explore each aspect thoroughly and gather as much information from the participants. This approach was intended to guarantee comprehensive coverage of all aspects during the interviews, aligning closely with the research questions and objectives. By doing so, the researcher aimed to facilitate a systematic analysis and discussion of the results, thereby enhancing the overall clarity and coherence of the study.

The questions were drafted in a way that allowed the participants to offer authentic insights that the researcher might have not found in the existing literature. Upon contacting the selected participants to schedule the interviews, the draft interview questions underwent a review and revision process to ensure their suitability and relevance to each participant. This process allowed the refinement of questions, making them specifically tailored to the participant's expertise.

The questions were carefully written in a way to minimise potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations during the interview. They were structured in a logical sequence, designed to flow seamlessly from one to the next, thereby ensuring a coherent and fluid conversation during the interview process. The questions were formulated to maximise the amount of information elicited from the participants.

Participants 1 and 2 are both involved in the research of textiles and have extensive knowledge about the history of costumes. For this reason, the researcher prepared similar questions for both interviews, derived from the same themes in the literature review. Meanwhile, participants 3 and 4 were asked the same questions as they have the same occupation and have been involved in the same project. Some questions were strategically designed to guide the interviewee and encourage in-depth responses. The first question of all the interviews was demographic, aiming to get a brief background on the participants' expertise and experience.

3.6.1 Participants 1 and 2

The first section was a general question about the definition and characteristics of local traditional costumes. The researcher then aimed to ask about the traditional costume collection that they work with, the conservation processes, preservation guidelines, and the challenges that they face. Subsequently, participants were asked about their perspectives on factors influencing the phasing out and evolution of costumes, as well as societal views on traditional costumes in both historical and contemporary contexts. Finally, were asked about past and current projects and collaborations, as well as their opinions on how traditional costumes should be incorporated into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus.

3.6.2 Participants 3 and 4

The first section of this interview was about the key features of the *għonnella*. Then, the researcher asked them about the information that they discovered in their involvement in the TRACtion project, such as the key features of the *għonnella*, wearing it and its variations, as well as care practices. They were also asked about the process and techniques used to sew the *għonnella*, societal past and modern perceptions, misconceptions about the *għonnella*, and any related stories that they would like to share. Lastly, the researcher asked the interviewees to share their views on the future of costume preservation in Malta and their thoughts about how traditional costumes should be incorporated into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus.

Upon reviewing the consent form provided, the interviewees opted not to remain anonymous. Accordingly, they were requested to explicitly state their preference by writing, "I do not want to be anonymised", and subsequently sign the form.

A further interview was conducted with the Education Officer for Fashion and Textiles to inquire about the integration of traditional Maltese costumes into the syllabus. Her insights provided a professional perspective from someone actively involved in formulating and updating the Fashion and Textiles curriculum. With her consent, the responses obtained were analysed and triangulated with those from other participants to enrich the study's findings.

3.7 Sampling Technique

Matthews & Ross (2010) stated that the sampling technique used to find and select participants was a purposive technique, meaning that “participants are chosen [intentionally] because of their experience or opinions on the research topic” (p. 225), hence “people are chosen ‘with purpose’” (p. 225) in order to help the researcher explore the research topic in more depth, giving the study more value and richness. The interview participants must have insights or experiences to speak about the subject covered during the interview, otherwise, it would be difficult to hold a conversation.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

During the interviewing process, ethical considerations from the University of Malta Research Code of Practice (2017) were carefully followed and applied to the research, protecting the participants. As the URECA form (Appendix 1) states, this study entailed no risk of harm to the participants and no reward was given to the participants.

Information letters (Appendices 2 and 3) were prepared to describe several aspects related to the research study, such as the purpose of the research, the participants’ involvement in the study, and their rights, amongst others. These were attached to the email sent to the interviewees requesting an interview. Before commencing the interviews, participants were given a consent form (Appendices 4 and 5), which reiterated the information outlined in the information letter. They were asked to sign this form to indicate their informed consent for

participation in the study. Furthermore, participants were specifically instructed to indicate their consent regarding the recording and transcription of the interview by checking a designated box on the consent form. A copy of this consent form was then given to the participants. English and Maltese versions of both the information letter and the consent form were prepared to ensure comprehensive understanding for each participant. These documents were adapted from templates provided by the University of Malta, ensuring clarity and accessibility of information in both languages.

Once the interviews were conducted, the audio recording was saved in MP3 format on a password-protected laptop computer, which can only be accessed by the researcher. A backup copy of the audio files will be saved on a separate external hard drive and a cloud storage service, both password-protected. The audio recording of the interviews was transcribed manually on a Microsoft Word document and was also stored on the laptop computer, external hard drive, and cloud storage service.

3.9 Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted, the audio recordings were organised and labelled with the participant's code, date, and time, to make it easier to identify and access them later. The audio recordings were listened to and manually transcribed verbatim onto a Microsoft Word document, aiming to capture every word said by the participant.

Data analysis took a thematic approach, hence once the interviews were fully transcribed, they were uploaded on NVivo software, which is a tool that facilitates organisation and analysis of data. The transcripts were reviewed and patterns and connections between each interview were identified. Corresponding themes and subthemes were created using the 'Codes' tool on the software. The quotes that were to be used in the discussion were highlighted and dragged into the related theme. This process was repeated for each of the interview transcripts. A total of five core themes were created, each of them having a series of subthemes.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methods employed in this study that were used to investigate the participants' perspectives on the incorporation of traditional Maltese costumes into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Through semi-structured interviews with experts from the fields of textiles and education, the researcher gathered qualitative data related to the topic, which was essential for a deeper understanding of the benefits and ways of teaching the topic as part of Fashion and Textiles. Several ethical considerations and limitations were listed to ensure the study's integrity and validity. Lastly, this chapter explained the thematic analysis conducted for the extraction of key themes from the data gathered. Having outlined the factors that have been considered in the data collection, the next chapter is dedicated to analysing and discussing the gathered data.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the data gathered from the three semi-structured interviews conducted with four experts of different professions related to textiles, the additional interview with the subject's Education Officer, and the literature review's findings in triangulation, ensuring a well-rounded, valid, and credible analysis as well as a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The discussion was accompanied by the researcher's interpretations. It aimed to explore the participants' expertise through their occupation, experience with traditional Maltese costumes, and perspectives on the importance and incorporation of traditional Maltese costumes in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. A total of five themes and several subthemes were extrapolated from the transcripts and literature review namely, 'The Maltese Cultural Identity', 'Traditional Maltese Costumes', 'The *Għonnella*', 'Preserving Traditional Maltese Costumes', and 'Teaching Traditional Maltese Costumes in Fashion and Textiles'. The arguments were supported by quotes from the participants as evidence.

4.2 Demography

The participants were asked some demographic questions at the beginning of each interview. Participant 1 (P1), Marquis Nicholas De Piro, stated that collecting local antiques and costumes is a hobby of his, "partly because Casa Rocca Piccola has gone through the effort to preserve some of Malta's past". Meanwhile, participant 2 (P2), Claire Bonavia "was introduced to traditional clothing through [her] work" as she now works as a conservator with Heritage Malta. She described how she "has always been fascinated by clothes and how people wear them". She also noticed that no one was giving importance to traditional clothing. Thus, during her studies to become a conservator, Bonavia aimed to "document the Maltese costumes that still exist and the importance of cotton that was grown here in Malta". Meanwhile, participants 3 (P3) and 4 (P4), Maryanne Falzon and Doreen Schembri are two seamstresses by profession who have experience in the sewing of a variety of items – from clothing to soft

furnishings – from when they were young girls. Although they previously did not have the necessary skills to sew an *għonnella*, they accepted the challenge of "discover[ing] how [their] ancestors used to sew the garment" and joined their skills to sew it as part of the TRACtion project. They described how it was "not easy" to deconstruct and reconstruct an *għonnella* from scratch.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

4.3.1 The Maltese Cultural Identity

According to De Piro, "Malta has its own identity". He explained that the Maltese language is a "mixture of the eight languages which the knights have brought". Having their own language is part of their cultural identity, as a nation, Maltese people have "pushed [their] identity strongly into the Maltese language", but one must note that it "is not [their] complete identity". Geodiode (2023) also supported this statement by mentioning that different civilisations have impacted the Maltese culture in various ways. De Piro emphasised that local traditional costumes should be brought back to life. Additionally, Schembri and Falzon both commented on traditional costumes being a part of the Maltese cultural heritage. In fact, Falzon stressed that "when a student is learning a subject in Malta, they should learn about the local traditions related to the subject, especially if other foreign traditions are being covered". Moreover, the Education Officer of Fashion and Textiles stated that "traditional Maltese costumes are an important part of the Maltese cultural heritage and studying them would help students appreciate and preserve Malta's unique cultural history and identity". She added that "understanding the historical context of traditional costumes helps students to see fashion's evolution". Bonavia corroborated by noting that learning about traditional Maltese costumes is important because "it is what makes us Maltese".

4.3.2 Traditional Maltese Costumes

4.3.2.1 Records of Traditional Maltese Costumes

Several authors whose work was discussed in the literature review have highlighted that people who travelled to Malta were fascinated by country folk and their lifestyle, so much so that they documented them in drawings and paintings. It was also mentioned that the

authenticity of these costumes is what made them traditional Maltese costumes. Bonavia also explained that the Grand Tour travellers' pictorial images of "country folk as they were going about" showcasing their distinctive lives have been a particularly great help in her studies related to local traditional costumes. Hence, thanks to such important records, it is possible to learn about and teach students about the lifestyle and clothing worn by Maltese people in the past.

4.3.2.2 Giving Importance to Traditional Maltese Costumes

Bonavia highlighted that it was around 1996 when Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti organised an exhibition when Maltese country folk costumes started being given importance. In fact, at first, when preparing for the exhibition, the organisers debated on whether this clothing should be exhibited along with the other artefacts. They stated that these pieces "do not have elaborate embroidery" nor look as beautiful as other clothing. However, after several discussions, they ended up being exhibited. According to Bonavia, who was present throughout the whole process of this exhibition, "the country folk section was well-received" by the public. As stated in the literature review, in 2012, another exhibition named "Peasant Costumes: Insights into Rural Life and Society" was then organised in Gozo. This exclusively featured traditional Maltese costumes and, according to Bonavia, it was praised by the public, proving that "people are giving them more importance".

4.3.2.3 Similarity of Traditional Maltese Costumes to Other Countries' Costumes

De Piro spoke about how traditional Maltese costumes, like the *għonnella*, can be recognised "a mile off as Maltese". Similarly, Gambin (2012) pointed out that in Malta, clothing conveyed certain messages. In fact, based on their clothes, one could recognise people immediately. De Piro stated that one Sardinian traditional costume looks similar to the local *għonnella*. Like the *għonnella*, this costume is not used anymore. De Piro added that he believes Italy is "a big part of the way [Maltese people] looked". In fact, Debono (2012) highlighted the similarity between local and Sicilian, Spanish, and Southern European costumes. Moreover, as Cremona & Baluci (1998) discussed, the style and fabric of French and Italian traditional costumes are similar to local ones. This confirmed that Maltese costumes are a blend of costumes from various countries.

4.3.2.4 Characteristics of Traditional Maltese Costumes

Bonavia described country folk costumes as “very simple”, which was also discussed in her book chapter (2012). However, despite not having luscious adornment, like “elaborate embroidery”, or complicated looks, “they certainly do not lack exceptional sewing features” and “beautiful finishes”. In fact, Bonavia, Schembri, and Falzon have all emphasised how “wise” and “skilful” rural people were while highlighting the importance of appreciating their work. Additionally, while emphasising how wise country folk were, Bonavia pointed out that they “never threw anything away”. This was also discussed by Gambin (2012), who stated that the garments were passed down through the generations. Bonavia gave the example of the men’s trousers stating that “it [often] had a pleat at the back […] and a tab with a buckle” for when the person grows bigger. Bonavia also mentioned that men used to roll up the hem of their trousers to prevent them from getting dirty. This resulted in their “long underpants worn underneath […] being visible”. This fact was also referred to in her work (2012).

4.3.2.5 Textile Industry in Malta

Bonavia highlighted that “cotton was the main fabric used in the making of country folk clothing because it was grown [locally]”, then “women used to make fabric and the final product”. Vella (2012) confirmed this, stating that in the 1860s, 9,000 Maltese people were working in the local textile industry, with only 4% being men. Bonavia (2012) addressed this point, asserting that the practice of rural people manufacturing their clothing makes the costumes authentic. During the interview, Bonavia highlighted that garments worn daily were made of cotton. The fabric was weaved using looms, and everything was handmade.

4.3.2.6 Variations of Traditional Maltese Costumes

Falzon brought up the significance of locality, discussing that traditional clothing persisted in certain localities far longer than in others. She gave a personal example involving herself and Schembri, describing that, although they are of a similar age, Falzon, who is from Sliema, does not recall her mother wearing traditional clothes and has only faint memories of her grandmother, who was from Żurrieq, wearing them. Contrastingly, Schembri, being from Birkirkara, vividly remembers relatives wearing such garments. Moreover, Falzon does not remember women wearing the *għonnella*, but Schembri does.

4.3.2.7 Women's Traditional Maltese Costumes

Bonavia stated that the basic outfit worn by females consisted of a *qmis*, *sidrija* and a *dublett*. Schembri described how she remembers her female relatives wearing "multiple skirts, and the top skirt used to have a slit on either side through which they inserted their hands to access the pouch underneath". She continued to explain that the adjustable pouches were used instead of a handbag or wallet, and they were tied around the waist. Schembri was referring to the *borsa* which was also discussed by Bonavia (2012) as well as Lanfranco (2004). Bonavia stated that "country women also had the *geżwira*" which was "like the wrap-around". Interestingly, she stated that when a lady wanted to hide her tattered clothes when someone went to her house, she wrapped the *geżwira* around her body. In fact, Azzopardi (2007) pointed out that it was not rare to have tattered clothing back then as they were often repaired and patched. Bonavia stated that the *geżwira* "had an opening with ribbons so that it could fit anyone". Heritage Malta's collection of traditional Maltese costumes includes a *geżwira* "which has ribbons made of other repurposed fabrics, not a ribbon made of silk".

Bonavia stated that "women always wore a head covering", which were the *velu* (veil) and the *ċulqana*, which she described as "like a version of the *għonnella*, but without the cardboard and whalebone". This description of the *ċulqana* was also provided by Falzon. Bonavia stated that a headscarf was worn by women "to protect the *għonnella* from hair oils" and dirt. This aspect was also highlighted in the literature review. Bonavia mentioned that the *għonnella* was not a part of the country folk's costume until around 1900. It was "with the turn of the century that the *għonnella* started being worn by everyone – no matter the social class". In fact, in her book chapter Bonavia (2012) stated that the *ċulqana* was used long before the *għonnella*. Interestingly, Falzon mentioned that "the *ċulqana* was worn by poorer people which were from lower social classes". Perhaps, the reason for this was because the *ċulqana* required less work and resources to make. Schembri added that the *ċulqana* "was used by farmers because it was easy to simply put on their head and do their thing and, since it did not have cardboard, it could also be easily washed".

Bonavia stated that country folk "always wore underwear to protect the top layers", which in the women's case, resembled a shirt. Moreover, Falzon narrated that her grandmother used to wear a thin, flannel, white dress underneath her clothes, which served as underwear and

as a night dress. Schembri added that "the white dress used to have a waistline, a few buttons, and some gathering". Women had one with no sleeves for summer and another one with sleeves for the winter. Falzon stated that "they used to wear an apron that covered the whole front of the dress to prevent getting the dress dirty. The aprons were made of torn dresses". The *fardal* (apron) was also mentioned by Zammit (2005).

4.3.2.8 Men's Traditional Maltese Costumes

Bonavia stated that, when analysing pictures from around the 1920s, one could notice that all men wore the same outfit, which included a white *qmis*, *qalziet ta' taħt*, *qalziet*, a black *sidrija*, *terħa* and *ħorġa*. She highlighted those men never wore a *bermuda*. Bonavia also explained that the *milsa*, "which was the headgear worn by men", was knitted. She went on explaning that, with the turn of the 19th century, men started wearing the *beritta* as headgear instead of the *milsa*. Bonavia stated that men also wore long underpants, which, as stated earlier, were often visible from under the trousers. They were "like a pair of leggings". As Bonavia (2012) and Lanfranco (2004) stated, men wore the *kabozza*. This was also referred to by De Piro, stating that he possesses an authentic *kabozza* as part of his private collection. Bonavia stated that all the traditional garments mentioned above are at the Inquisitor's Palace, forming part of the national collection curated and overlooked by Heritage Malta employees. The collection is available for viewing upon request and encompasses both authentic pieces and reproductions. Bonavia added that the *kabozza* "is the only thing in [their] collection that is made of sheep's wool".

4.3.2.9 Footwear

Bonavia mentioned that men wore the *qorq* that had straps made of leather. This was only worn when going to Valletta. This aspect was also discussed by Bonavia (2012) and Lanfranco (2004). Purchasing a *qorq*, was quite expensive, thus not everyone had one. When asked about women's footwear, Bonavia explained that "women did not go to Valletta very often" because they "used to stay in the countryside more than men", so this was the reason why men wore the *qorq* more often than women. She continued saying that it was only "with the turn of the century" that "women started going [to Valletta]". As a matter of fact, throughout her career, she has "never found a woman's shoes". As evidence, one could "look at the

pictorial images, in which people are always depicted barefoot". This reflected the rather simple lifestyle that the country folk used to live.

4.3.2.10 Sunday Best Clothing

According to Bonavia, the Sunday best outfit was clothing of finer quality and better looking than everyday wear. This was worn by country folk on Sundays, the village feast, weddings, and other special occasions. As stated by Bonavia, women's Sunday best outfit generally consisted of a bodice and an *għonnella* made of silk. As stated by Bonavia and Lanfranco, one of the men's garments that were often more formal-looking and made of silk was the *terħa*. Notably, despite leading an uncomplicated lifestyle, country folk always took the opportunity to dress up and present themselves in the finest attire possible during special events. Moreover, Bonavia discussed how it was common for women of lower classes who worked as maids with wealthy families to inherit fine clothing from the lady they worked for. The reason for this was so that "the maid looks nice when she goes to work".

4.3.2.11 Sewing Skills

When discussing the sewing skills that Maltese ancestors had, Bonavia remarked that "the Maltese lost the [sewing] skills", attributing this to the "busy lifestyle" of modern society, and the mindset of today where "everyone just throws everything away". She contrasted this with her grandparents' mindset of "never [throwing] anything away" and using every garment "until it really could not be used anymore". The researcher believes that Fashion and Textiles teachers have the power to foster a love for sewing in their students by setting a good example through passion and dedication. Having sewing skills allows people the freedom to sew anything they want. While society may not revert to sewing every piece of clothing that they wear, individuals can still acquire the skills to create whatever they imagine.

4.3.2.12 The Evolution of Traditional Maltese Costumes

When speaking about the evolution of traditional Maltese costumes, Bonavia noted that local traditional clothing was still used when the British arrived in Malta. "They brought along various influences", and "fabric became cheaper and more widely available in the market". Bonavia added that "in the 1950s, after World War II, Malta started importing more fabric

from foreign countries". Bonavia highlighted that local "people wanted to feel more comfortable" and discussed how most people worked during the war, through which they experienced wearing more comfortable, nicer clothes. In fact, Azzopardi (2007) stated that, as Maltese society evolved, distinct identifying characteristics began to disappear. Martínez, et al. (2019) supported this, suggesting that these identifying features often vanish as a result of a combination of factors, including "superior cultural differences and socioeconomic forces".

4.3.3 The Għonnella

4.3.3.1 Appearance of the Għonnella

Falzon highlighted that wearing the *għonnella* was standard for women when getting out of the house. She explained that "the *għonnella* was worn on the head and had two loops on either side from which it was held". Both Falzon and De Piro stated that the *għenienel* were crafted for both right-handed and left-handed women. This was most likely done for the comfort of every woman. This fact was also highlighted in a story found in Lanfranco's book (2004).

Schembri and Falzon stated that the *għonnella* was sewn using black, white, blue, or green fabric. However, the two seamstresses interviewed "have never encountered *għenienel* in any colour other than black". On the other hand, as stated in the literature review, De Piro & Cremona (1998) stated that white and green *għenienel* were worn in the countryside, while black ones were often worn in the cities. Meanwhile, the blue colour was only used for the *ċulqana*. This means that the specifics about the colour of the *għonnella* are still unclear. They narrated their encounter with a woman from Żurrieq who told them that "she knew someone who got married wearing a white *għonnella*". According to Falzon, the *għonnella* was removed when taking wedding pictures, making photos showing the bride wearing a white *għonnella* scarce or even non-existent. Furthermore, Schembri added that "green and blue *għenienel* were only worn by wealthy people because dyeing the fabric made it more expensive to purchase".

4.3.3.2 Construction of the Għonnella

Falzon and Bonavia stated that, like the other traditional costumes, the fabric used for the *għonnella* was cotton or silk, cotton used for everyday wear and silk for special occasions. This was also confirmed by Lanfranco (2004) and Azzopardi (2007). Schembri mentioned that women usually had four *għenienel*; one made of lighter cotton and another one made of lighter silk for summer, as well as one made of thicker cotton and another one made of thicker silk fabric for winter.

Schembri and Falzon explained that all *għenienel* that they worked on for the TRACtion project were of the same length and width. They narrated that they "only found one *għonnella* which was 5cm longer in length" which they assumed was customised for a taller lady. Schembri stated that various sewing threads were used when sewing the *għonnella* and each of them had specific purposes. For example, those used for gathering and the inside of the garment were completely different. Falzon remarked that "the threads used on the outside were fine, while those used in the gathering were slightly thicker". She stated that the selvedge was not cut off and functioned as embellishment. Strikingly, "they were produced in different colours and no *għonnella* that she has seen was the same as another". Schembri added that the colour of the selvedge varied depending on the manufacturer, and apart from serving as embellishment, the selvedge was kept to retain the fabric strength.

4.3.3.3 Caring for the Għonnella

Schembri stated that the *għonnella* was rarely washed since it had cardboard in its structure. She explained that "sometimes, women placed the gathered part on their heads", which allowed their hands to remain free. However, as Falzon stated, this resulted in "the gathered part [being] often full of dirt and head lice". Schembri described that when women wanted to wash the *għonnella*, "they took it back to the seamstress, who deconstructed the gathering, cleaned and washed the fabric, and reconstructed it". A woman's story which was documented by Lanfranco (2004) confirms this method of cleaning. According to Falzon, they sometimes placed it in the sun to air it out which helped to eliminate odours, moisture, and sometimes bacteria. According to Falzon, the *għonnella* was stored in a large drawer where it fit perfectly.

4.3.3.4 Stories about the Għonnella

Schembri and Falzon shared a few stories they discovered during their involvement in the TRACtion project. Schembri narrated a story of when, "during the plague, women stored their *għenienel* away. When they resumed their outings, one woman wore an *għonnella* which still had bits of dead skin from a patient who had the plague and is said to have resulted in the resurgence of the plague in Malta". A similar story was narrated by Lanfranco (2004) as discussed in the literature review. However, these stories were opposed by Azzopardi (2007), stating that the clothes of a person who had contracted an infectious disease, were always thrown away. Schembri shared another story about how "cardboard was scarce during the war, so women improvised by using hardened goats' skin for the structure of the *għonnella*". These stories were narrated to Falzon and Schembri by a man from Naxxar whose aunt used to sew the *għonnella*. Moreover, Schembri narrated the story of when her "aunt was sick in bed, everyone thought that she was going to die. Her mother, Lieni, made a promise that, if her daughter got better, she would make her wear the *għonnella* for a whole week". Schembri stated that this means that smaller *għenienel* were also sewn for children to wear in such cases. According to Lanfranco's (2004) story, smaller *għenienel* were not only sewn for sick girls but were also used by children to play with. De Piro also spoke about how the *għenienel* were sometimes connected to a *wegħda* (promise) and stated that "a child was going to die, and they dressed her all up as a Maltese girl". Although the researcher does not believe these stories should be incorporated into the syllabus, they find them compelling for discussion among Fashion and Textiles students.

4.3.4 Preserving Traditional Maltese Costumes

4.3.4.1 Preservation and Appreciation of Traditional Maltese Costumes

The four interview participants were asked about the preservation of country folk costumes. Both De Piro and Bonavia believe that there is still more to do when it comes to protecting authentic garments. De Piro spoke about the fact that "country folk costumes have not gotten their right place in museums yet", perhaps suggesting that a costume museum should be opened. As stated in the literature review, there is no museum exclusively dedicated to costumes and textiles in Malta. However, Schembri expressed that she feels that Heritage Malta is doing an excellent job in preserving the traditional Maltese costumes that they

overlook. Falzon pointed out that “while organisations like Heritage Malta are preserving them, there are some people who have garments and do not even know what to do with them”. She continued saying that they are probably stored inadequately, which results in more damage done to them.

Similarly, De Piro commented on how “there are so many treasures in Malta that have been thrown away”. He stated that “it is wonderful to preserve what people thought is unimportant”, which is, in fact, what Casa Rocca Piccola is all about. He recalled that, when in collaboration with Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti he was preparing for the exhibition, he was given a bundle of things in plastic bags which have been in there for years. To his disappointment, they were infested by mice and some “things of great value” had to be thrown away. De Piro emphasised the importance of “throw[ing] nothing away that looks old” as there are still “rare things to be found”, and “sometimes things which are […] humble-looking could be very important”. Bonavia supported this by commenting on how crucial it is not to throw such things away and donating them to organisations so that they “learn from them”. Moreover, De Piro pointed out that “people must be taught how to look after things”. Thus, spreading awareness and appreciation of traditional Maltese costumes must be prioritised.

Schembri stated that exhibitions play an important part in helping people appreciate traditional Maltese costumes, stating that they “want to see and sometimes even touch” the garments on display. De Piro supported this by stating that “[traditional Maltese costumes] must be preserved and shown to the public”. Falzon emphasised that the exhibitions should be open for extended periods to attract the maximum number of visitors. Schembri added that, similar to what was done in the TRACtion project, targeting the younger generation through schools helps to increase interest in the topic and expose them to local country folk dress. Schembri also pointed out how, as part of the project, workshops were organised “through which children could interact with and wear a replica of the *għonnella*”, which, in her opinion, was an excellent idea. Falzon highlighted that people particularly prefer seeing real, actual things, rather than just looking at photos.

4.3.4.2 The Process of Preservation of Traditional Maltese Costumes

Since De Piro and Bonavia both overlook a collection, part of which are traditional Maltese costumes, they were questioned about the process of costume preservation. De Piro, who owns a private collection, does not research and acquire traditional dress professionally but rather does it "by instinct" as he does not have a set of rules to follow. However, he noted that, as an organisation, they are making progress. He brought up the example of the paper that items are wrapped in and explained that he avoids placing historical items in damp rooms, which has been successful until now as "on the whole, most of the costumes and clothes that [they] have are in pretty good condition". When someone donates garments, he asks questions to "try to find everything they possibly know about them". According to De Piro, identifying the historical context of a piece is often not too difficult as most times, the doner indicates who the garment belonged to.

Bonavia described the detailed process of conservation that is done for every item in the national collection. The garments are first checked for insects, then cleaned, analysed, dated, restored, and stored away. They are sometimes exhibited according to exhibition requests. She spoke about how "as professional conservators, [they] are bound to [follow] certain guidelines" throughout the preservation process. They must "document everything with pictures" of the garments, and take note of "the materials, the condition of the item, and what will be done to it" in terms of scientific analysis as well as conservation procedures. The cleaning process must also be followed and documented. Bonavia explained that the preservation process done at Heritage Malta is in line with what is done in foreign countries.

According to Bonavia, when Heritage Malta receives a garment, it is first checked for insects in the quarantine room. Should it be infested by insects, a special treatment is applied to kill them. However, when a garment is mouldy, it is immediately thrown away as mould spreads quickly and damages anything surrounding the infected object. Once it is certain that the garment has no insects, it is taken to the laboratory to be cleaned, which "is normally done with a low-suction vacuum cleaner to remove any dirt". Washing is rarely done as old garments cannot withstand being washed like modern-day clothing as they might shrink, or their dye might fade.

Just like De Piro, Bonavia stated that the employees of Heritage Malta try to gather as much information as possible about the garment, like asking about the person to who the garment belonged, the dates it was worn, or trying to obtain a portrait of the person wearing it. Receiving such information greatly helps to conserve and preserve the garment properly.

However, properly dating a garment also has its own process that comes with challenges. In fact, as Cremona & Baluci (1998) stated, dating a garment is challenging as the identifying characteristics of a garment are sometimes only the fabric, stitching, seams, and linings. According to Bonavia, "fabric can sometimes be unreliable" as one can easily use a piece of old fabric to sew a modern garment, meaning that the conservator must date both the fabric and the construction. In fact, Bonavia stated that sometimes the "fabric does not match the style of the construction", giving the example of when the fabric is from the 1800s, but is made using a sewing machine – making it impossible as this did not exist back then. However, if the construction is handmade, things start to add up, meaning that the garment is likely authentic.

Bonavia explained that scientific analysis helps to recognise natural from synthetic fibres, though it does not particularly help to date a garment since the morphology of fibre remains the same throughout the years. However, she emphasised that the garment itself portrays its history, showing hints like "pieced [up] parts […] to save fabric" while still having a beautiful composition, making it look "like a complete thing". She highlighted how a garment with excellent construction showcases how skilled past seamstresses were, most likely resulting from spending their lives sewing the same garment over and over. Bonavia stated that, apart from scientific analysis, several other sources help in the garment dating process, like pictorial images, other existing garment collections, and publications. Bonavia emphasised the importance of not giving a date when uncertain, rather than writing the incorrect information.

Sometimes, a garment has holes because of insect damage. The conservators patch the hole up by hand stitching a piece of fabric to the original garment. Bonavia emphasised choosing the right fabric with a similar texture to the original fabric. A special dye is then used for the patch to make the colour of the patch as close to the original. Bonavia explained that "matching the paint to the actual garment's colour is not an easy task".

As discussed earlier, the national costume collection is only available for public viewing on request. After restoration procedures, clothes are stored away immediately. A special box made of “conservation grade materials” is made by the conservators themselves to perfectly fit the garment for it to be stored in. Bonavia stated that these materials are used purposefully and undergo a series of tests to ensure that “they do not off-gas and damage the item” inside. Falzon mentioned that the place where old clothing is stored should not be humid to prevent it from disintegrating any further. In fact, as Bonavia (2012) stated, light, temperature, pollution, insects, rodents, improper storing, and cleaning are all additional factors that may result in garment damage.

Bonavia stated that protecting the garments is of utmost importance. Museums “cannot keep the fabric on display for more than 6 months” simply because “[it] was not made to be exhibited”. She described the process of choosing items for an exhibition. When Heritage Malta’s curator receives a request for an exhibition, they “choose items that they think are ideal for that particular theme”. The conservator, then, “decides whether those items are in good condition to be exhibited and whether there is enough time for restoration to take place if needed”. There are also discussions on how the items are to be mounted for the exhibition.

Moreover, when being exhibited, there are certain rules to follow, such as the lux level of lighting to be used. Since “not every item can be exhibited”, oftentimes, a replica is sewn to be “exhibited instead of the original item”. In the exhibition, the item is “labelled as a replica”. Certain clothes cannot be mounted on a mannequin and are exhibited on a flat surface instead. When exhibiting a garment on a mannequin, the conservator creates a mannequin that is tailor-made to the garment.

Bonavia spoke about ethical procedures that conservators follow when doing their jobs. Firstly, when “an old object is visibly old, […] [one] cannot make it look brand new again, and we must respect this”. She explained that “when mounting the item for an exhibition, [one must] also respect the person that used to wear it and is no longer here”, which is done by creating a mannequin that fits the garment measurements. An exhibition can be a powerful method of portraying messages. In fact, Bonavia spoke about the importance of “giv[ing] the correct information to pass on the right message” when organising an exhibition.

Bonavia listed some past exhibitions and projects that Heritage Malta had participated in whereby they lent a variety of artefacts, namely in 'Vocabulary of Maltese Style' by local fashion designer Luke Azzopardi. Moreover, in two music exhibitions by Ruben Zahra, the details of artefacts lent by the agency were projected on a screen during the concert. Heritage Malta exhibit and rotate items in several museums around the Maltese islands, namely the Inquisitor's Palace, Palazzo Falson, the Grandmaster's Palace, the Maritime Museum, and Fort St. Elmo, amongst others. The researcher believes that Fashion and Textiles teachers must keep updated on the latest news on such exhibitions as these are an excellent way of exposing students to costumes and other related artefacts.

4.3.4.3 The Process of Deconstructing and Making of a replica of an Għonnella

Falzon and Schembri explained the lengthy process they went through to deconstruct and make a replica of the *għonnella* for the project. They commented on the fact that it was a must to team up to work on the *għonnella* replica, namely because constructing it was a lengthy process and creating the gathering part of the garment was a challenge. In fact, back then, more than one seamstress worked on each *għonnella*, which makes sense considering the large size of the garment. Falzon and Schembri commented on how it was a lovely experience for them to collaborate on this project as they could discuss certain issues, and how it was a learning experience, despite that they are professional seamstresses. They got to appreciate how skilled past seamstresses were and how much dedication and time was required to sew the *għonnella*.

When Schembri and Falzon researched information about the construction of the *għonnella*, they "barely found anything in existing sources". Falzon named a book from the collection of *Kullana Kulturali volume 75* as it was the main source of information when they were working on the garment. They also reached out to individuals in an effort to find people who had previously sewn the *għonnella*. However, the two seamstresses were only able to locate people who recalled seeing others wear the garment, hence, the information provided by these individuals may not be accurate. The lack of available information forced them to figure out everything on their own, making the construction process somewhat unsystematic and more time-consuming.

The aim of deconstructing the *għonnella* was to analyse and discover all details of its original construction. In fact, every stitch that they carefully unpicked was documented using pictures and dated notes to ensure authenticity when reproducing the *għonnella*, respecting its beauty and originality. Schembri discussed that even the smallest details, like the finger loops, the hand stitching, or the type of needles and sewing thread used, were copied from the original *għonnella*. Schembri noted that every part of the *għonnella* was done purposefully, even something as simple as the different stitches were used for their own purpose and position. They pointed out that, interestingly, even the seams were constructed differently than nowadays.

Moreover, for every section of the *għonnella*, they created a sample. Schembri and Falzon also created the patterns of the cardboard structure and a prototype of the garment which was their first complete *għonnella*. This was done to discover and tackle any issues before sewing the replica. In fact, after sewing the prototype, they realised that the cardboard was not thick enough and made the *għonnella* too flimsy when compared to the original one.

When producing the silk replica of the *għonnella*, Falzon and Schembri faced a challenge. The fabric chosen was too thick when compared to the original fabric that was used back then. The seamstresses found it particularly challenging to gather such a large volume of fabric into just 9 centimetres. They commented on how for this reason, they were not completely satisfied with the result of the silk *għonnella* and, if they were to do it again, they would purchase finer silk fabric. This highlights the importance of choosing the appropriate fabric when sewing or reproducing a garment. Another challenge that Falzon and Schembri encountered was related to the strength of the sewing thread used for gathering as it broke several times while they were pulling to gather the fabric. It was also challenging to find the appropriate material that resembles the whalebone. They stated that considering that the *għonnella* was exclusively sewn by hand, it took longer than if it was sewn using a sewing machine.

4.3.5 Teaching Traditional Maltese Costumes in Fashion & Textiles

The last question of the interviews focused on the incorporation of traditional Maltese costumes in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. As stated in the previous chapter, an additional interview was conducted with the Education Officer (EO) of the subject and was asked a few questions on the same topic.

4.3.5.1 The Importance of Teaching about Traditional Maltese Costumes

De Piro stated that it is of utmost importance that Fashion and Textiles students learn about local traditional clothing as he linked this point to identity. Schembri and Falzon stated that they agree that the topic should be incorporated into the syllabus. In fact, Falzon stated that "since a subject is being taught in Malta, it makes sense to learn about the traditions of the country". She advised that, in the syllabus, there should be less emphasis on foreign history and more focus on local history instead.

Bonavia discussed that traditional costumes "make us Maltese". Additionally, "in [her] opinion, students must be taught about country folk from a young age" as, from her experience working in a museum, she noticed that when children visit the museum, they are often enthusiastic to learn and encourage their relatives to visit as well. According to Falzon, the younger generation perceives the *għonnella* as something precious and a cultural symbol, but only if they are informed about it. She spoke about how when they visited schools to raise awareness as part of the TRACtion project, she noticed that "students and parents were very interested". Schembri noted that "even the workshops [organised as part of the same project] were successful". Schembri pointed out that there is a lack of awareness, especially amongst the younger generation. Falzon added that if such information is not shared and traditional costumes are not shown, no one will know about them, let alone appreciate them, which will lead to everything being lost through the generations. This means that children are the strongest point to target to raise awareness and increase appreciation of traditional Maltese costumes.

Apart from highlighting the importance of traditional Maltese costumes when relating them to the local cultural identity, the EO of the subject also emphasised that "traditional Maltese

costumes offer rich inspiration for contemporary fashion designs", mentioning that analysing "their details and historical importance allows students to incorporate traditional elements into modern designs". Furthermore, the EO highlighted that gaining knowledge about "the fabrics used in traditional Maltese costumes broadens students' understanding of different fabrics and materials, their properties, and their applications in clothing design". She also linked local costumes to performing arts, highlighting that, considering they are often "used in cultural performances and festivals", this would also give students the opportunity to "work in costume design for theatre, dance, and other performing arts, ensuring authenticity and cultural accuracy". Finally, "studying traditional costumes opens up opportunities for academic research, teaching, and writing in fashion history, cultural studies, and textile conservation".

4.3.5.2 Incorporation of Traditional Maltese Costumes in Syllabi and Learning Outcomes

The EO responsible for the subject advised that the topic of traditional Maltese costumes is included in both SEC and AVC syllabi. Additionally, it was discussed that "the current syllabus structure makes it challenging to have a learning outcome solely dedicated to traditional costumes". Hence, she suggested integrating the topic into various learning outcomes, particularly either 'Unit 1 LO3: Fibres and Fabrics' or 'LO4: Properties of Fibres and Fabrics', where "cultural customs are already briefly mentioned". Furthermore, costumes can be referenced "in the Fashion History in Unit 2, and students can also be given the opportunity to draw traditional Maltese costumes during fashion drawing sessions".

4.3.5.3 Aspects Related to Traditional Maltese Costumes to Teach

According to De Piro, students studying Fashion and Textiles should be taught about the social class system in Malta to highlight the differences in clothing of various social classes. This aspect was also supported by Falzon. He also suggested teaching about the fact that local clothing "was a result of influences from different countries". Schembri also highlighted this, stating that students might benefit from learning about the countries that the Maltese were influenced by. Bonavia highlighted the importance of the incorporation of basic vocabulary related to traditional costumes as well as "study[ing] the techniques" utilised in traditional costumes, giving the example of using a loom. She also emphasised the sewing skills and

"recognis[ing] the different textures" of fabrics, as well as knowing what they are used for. Schembri suggested that students should be given a few points as an overview of the costumes, particularly the *għonnella*, giving examples of "from where it originated, for what it was used", and its features. Falzon corroborated and added that other costumes that were worn underneath the *għonnella* should also be covered in the added section in the syllabus. Moreover, Schembri remarked that teachers should give an overview of the clothing worn by rural people and the aspects that outfits worn for special occasions were characterised by. The EO suggested incorporating a "brief history of traditional Maltese costumes", the "different types of traditional Maltese costumes", "designs of traditional Maltese costumes", "sewing processes", "fibres and fabrics used in traditional Maltese costumes", and finally "fabric care and preserving fibres/garments used in traditional Maltese costumes". Bonavia stated that, whether it is at school or at the museum, it is "the educator's or the curator's role to make it enjoyable" and has the power to inspire the student and "stir up some curiosity".

4.3.5.4 Strategies to be used when Teaching about Traditional Maltese Costumes

Bonavia emphasised the importance of pictorial images through which students "can learn to identify a costume". Eventually, students can view actual garments. Falzon mentioned that pictures were particularly helpful when researching the *għonnella*, so she recommended the use of pictorial images while teaching. The researcher considered this important for students to be able to make a connection between the pictorial images and the actual garments. Bonavia suggested that "teachers […] sew reproductions which students can wear", highlighting that "they should be made as similar to the original garment as possible so as not to give the wrong impression". As discussed, incorporating this kind of interaction was successful in the TRACtion project, thus, the researcher believes that it could also be a helpful method for Fashion and Textiles students to familiarise themselves with the costumes. In fact, Bonavia explained that "certain [aspects] must be experienced to be fully understood". During the interview, Schembri expressed her wish to help in this by sewing replicas of local costumes to be used by Fashion and Textiles teachers when teaching the topic, suggesting that they could also be sewn in smaller sizes so that students can wear and interact with them. Falzon suggested that students can sew a few samples, such as "the *għonnella* gathering which was covered during the TRACtion workshop". Schembri recommended teaching the different

stitches used in the construction of the *għonnella* as well as giving a short description of their purposes and uses. Bonavia stated that, through exhibitions, students could "clearly see the story and receive the message better". Another suggestion made by Bonavia was to expose students to "people who make Maltese handmade items", which then allows them to learn the basics of these skills, which were referred to by Bonavia as "life skills". Bonavia stated that experts, like people "who work closely with such clothing", could be invited to the school to explain in detail, making "students feel closer to the [topic]" and highlighting the importance of knowledgeable and experienced people passing on the information.

The subject's EO suggested several effective methods for introducing students to traditional Maltese costumes, namely videos, research from books and other resources, mood boards based on the same research, family interviews, site visits to museums or exhibitions, as well as hands-on workshops through which students can interact with and create an item, like "Maltese lace".

4.3.5.5 Teacher Training Related to Traditional Maltese Costumes

The EO pointed out that teachers must get some kind of training to acquire the skills to teach the topic, like through "a workshop […] organised by individuals who have researched or work with traditional Maltese costumes". Schembri and Falzon agreed that some form of teacher training is required, especially since secondary research "sources are lacking". Schembri stated that she is "willing to be involved in it – research and teach the teachers" about the topic, especially because she could also share some of her experiences of interaction with traditional costumes when she was younger.

4.3.5.6 Teaching Resources Related to Traditional Maltese Costumes

As for teaching resources, De Piro suggested two books: *Costume in Malta: An History of Fabric, Form, and Fashion* by De Piro and Cremona as well as *Ladies of Malta in Extravagant and Spectacular Maltese Lace* by De Piro, if Maltese lace was to be covered. He also suggested looking up some books available at the University of Malta's library. Moreover, Bonavia suggested her thesis as a point of information on traditional costumes. The EO pointed out that "having access to traditional Maltese costumes for students to see and experience in

person would be the ideal resource". However, this might not always be feasible. She suggested "providing a teacher's pack with relevant resources", as well as "making use of published books and publications".

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a comprehensive discussion of the data collected through the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants, the literature review, and the researcher's perspectives, focusing on the importance and possible integration of traditional Maltese costumes in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. This approach facilitated triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the arguments. The primary research allowed the researcher to gain authentic insights from the chosen participants coming directly from their everyday experience as experts in the topic. The findings highlighted the crucial role of traditional Maltese costumes in reinforcing the cultural identity of the students studying the subject and the potential benefits of learning about them. The discussion also explored the aspects related to the topic to be taught and the strategies that teachers could utilise in their teaching to help students understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. The findings of this chapter were crucial for the researcher to develop the assessment criteria and suggest the pedagogical strategies, found in the following chapter, by which the topic could be incorporated and taught as part of the Fashion and Textiles syllabus.

Chapter 5: Strategies for Effective Integration of Traditional Maltese Costumes in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus

5.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrated and discussed a few assessment criteria that were designed as part of learning outcomes that were derived from the SEC Fashion and Textiles syllabus. As explained in the previous chapter, the Education Officer of the subject suggested that this topic be integrated into existing learning outcomes, thus this was implemented. Additionally, considering that the Fashion and Textiles AVC syllabus does not include a learning outcome about fashion history, it was decided to incorporate the topic into the SEC syllabus solely. The template that the assessment criteria are presented in was based on the latest 2027 Fashion and Textiles SEC syllabus (MATSEC Examinations Board, 2024). This provides the reader with a clearer understanding of the syllabus structure and its content. The assessment criteria that were designed from scratch were not given a number. Although all suggestions given by the interview participants were considered, it was impossible for all of them to be included, thus, the best ones were chosen.

Accompanying the assessment criteria, the researcher prepared some possible in-class and out-of-class activities based on the constructivist approach, as well as some reference books for Fashion and Textiles teachers to use when teaching the topic. Moreover, some assessment methods that are in line with the current scheme of assessment were also suggested. In addition to that, this chapter listed a few possible challenges and solutions to guide teachers when preparing and conducting lessons on the topic.

Finally, the researcher contacted three Fashion and Textiles teachers to obtain feedback regarding the designed assessment criteria. The assessment criteria and their descriptions were sent via email to the teachers. However, only one answered the researcher's request to participate due to summer recess. Even though the feedback obtained was limited, the teacher's comments were important to the researcher as she could provide feedback from the perspective of an individual who has first-hand experience with students and teaching the

subject. The teacher's feedback was later taken into consideration, and the assessment criteria were edited accordingly. The tables were accompanied by a short description of the changes done.

5.2 Proposed Assessment Criteria and Content

5.2.1 Learning Outcome 1

This learning outcome, which can be seen in Table 3, is the sole one that does not have any assessment criteria that were developed entirely from scratch. However, amendments to existing criteria were made. These were typed in red and underlined for easier identification.

The purpose of the modifications done to this learning outcome was to incorporate careers from the sector of textile preservation. The original learning outcome contained the term 'fashion industry', which has been replaced with 'fashion world' to encompass the new sector and its associated careers. This change can be observed in the 'Subject Focus' and the title of the learning outcome, as well as the assessment criteria of all levels. Moreover, the sector name, the related careers, and the competencies required were all specified in the content area. The careers that were included were suggested by the Education Officer during the interview.

As per the teacher's suggestions for K-1, 'textile workers' was substituted by 'costume maker/designer', stating that these workers create historically accurate costumes for films, theatre productions, and television shows. Moreover, '/journalist was added after 'fashion history writer'. Lastly, in C-1, it was suggested that the phrase 'historical and cultural knowledge' be written instead of 'historical understanding'.

<table>
<tr><td>Subject Focus</td><td colspan="3">Careers in the fashion world</td></tr>
<tr><td>LO 1.</td><td colspan="3">Demonstrate an understanding of the various careers within the fashion world.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">K-1.</td><td>K-1. List careers available in the fashion world.</td><td>K-1. Match a career to each sector in the fashion world.</td><td>K-1. Describe the different sectors found in the fashion world.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Careers in the fashion industry: e.g. designers, pattern makers, sketching assistants, pattern graders, apparel workers, dressmakers, costume makers/designers, sewing machine operators, marketers, photographers, models, stylists, buyers, merchandise planners, sales personnel, retail managers, customer service manager, quality assurance manager, visual merchandiser, textile conservator, museum curator, textile historian, fashion history writer/journalist.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Sectors and careers found in the fashion industry:
• Design: designers or pattern makers or sketching assistants or pattern graders;
• Manufacture: apparel workers or dressmakers or costume makers/designers or sewing machine operators;
• Marketing and promotion: marketers or photographers or models or stylists;
• Retail: buyers or merchandise planners or sales personnel or retail managers or customer;
service manager or quality assurance manager or visual merchandiser;
• Textile preservation: textile conservator or museum curator or textile historian or fashion history writer/journalist.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">C-1.</td><td>C-1. Identify the competences required within different sectors of the fashion world.</td><td>C-1. Describe the competences in a specific sector of the fashion world.</td><td>C-1. Compare and contrast the different sectors found in the fashion world.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Competences required by various fashion personnel within the fashion world:
• Design: communication; creativity, technological; time management; drawing; visualisation; teamwork; accuracy;
• Manufacture: accuracy; time management; critical thinking; communication; technological; accountability;
• Marketing and promotion: analytical; public speaking; communication; creativity; technological;
• Retail: customer care skills; teamwork; problem-solving skills; business awareness; initiative;
• Preservation: accuracy; attention to detail; teamwork; problem-solving skills; historical and cultural knowledge; technical skills; research skills.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">N.B. For assessment purposes at Level 3, ONE similarity and ONE difference for the given sectors should be provided.</td></tr>
</table>

Table 3: Proposed Assessment Criteria for Learning Outcome 1 after Teacher's Feedback

5.2.2 Learning Outcome 3

As part of Learning Outcome 3, which focuses on the different fibres and fabrics, the researcher decided to include three assessment criteria about the fibres used in traditional Maltese costumes (see Table 4). When covering the types of fibres, students will be able to make a mental connection with the other topic of natural fibres and their properties, noticing that traditional Maltese costumes were crafted and worn at a time when manufactured fibres did not exist. Henceforth, teachers must highlight the importance of fibre properties that were purposefully used as they featured characteristics that were useful to the lifestyle of the country folk. Moreover, students would briefly learn about the textile industries that existed in Malta that have served as the source of income for local country folk for many years.

Furthermore, the assessment criteria of levels 2 and 3 focus on the preservation aspect, which students can relate to the previous topic about careers and sectors. The aspects of appreciation and preservation are discussed in this lesson, where students learn about the importance of appreciating traditional costumes as they make part of the local cultural identity, as well as learn about the factors and processes related to preservation. Teachers must encourage discussions on why traditional costumes are no longer worn in Malta, particularly highlighting the concept of globalisation. Students must discover how to legacy of traditional Maltese costumes is being preserved by various organisations and fashion designers, the current efforts in place, and potential initiatives. Students often generate creative ideas for preservation, which can perhaps be shared with experts. As part of this lesson, the teacher could organise relevant site visits to museums where authentic traditional Maltese costumes are preserved, and students can then report on their experiences using pictures and points. Another idea would be organising informative talks by experts, such as Claire Bonavia, Doreen Schembri, and Maryanne Falzon. These activity ideas allow students to interact with traditional clothing and immerse themselves in the experience.

The teacher did not suggest any changes to be made to this learning outcome. In fact, she stated that it would be very interesting to teach. Moreover, in her opinion, this should be a substitute for assessment criterium K-5, stating that it is obvious that the purposes of textiles are going to be somehow incorporated and taught in Fashion and Textiles lessons.

Subject Focus	Fibres and fabrics		
LO 3.	Demonstrate an understanding of the different fibres and fabrics, and their impact on the environment.		
K.	K. List the different fibres that traditional Maltese costumes are made of.	K. Name the factors that could lead to the fabric of traditional Maltese costumes to deteriorate.	K. Outline the process of how the fabric of traditional Maltese costumes is preserved.
	The fibres that traditional Maltese costumes are made of: Cotton; silk; wool		
	The factors that could harm the fabric of traditional Maltese costumes: Light; fluctuating humidity; fluctuating temperature; pollution; insects; rodents; wear and tear from using and handling; inappropriate storage; inappropriate cleaning.		
	How the fabric of traditional Maltese costumes is preserved: - General (to conserve and preserve the garment properly): Try to gather as much information as possible from the doner (who the garment belonged to, the dates it was worn, a portrait of the person wearing it, etc.); follow certain guidelines all throughout; document everything with pictures and notes all throughout. 1. Checking for insects: Put in the quarantine room and checked for insects; if infested with insects, a special treatment is applied; when a garment is moudly, it is thrown away. 2. Cleaning: Taken to the laboratory for cleaning; cleaned with a low suction vacuum cleaner. 3. Analysing and dating: Analyse the fabrics, stitching, seams, linings, and other hints (pieced up parts to save fabric, etc.). 4. Restoring: Any damage that the fabric has is restored (e.g., restoring insect damage: choose the right texture of fabric, patch up the hole by hand-stitching, paint onto the patched-up hole to make the colour as close to the original). 5. Storing away: Stored in boxes made of conservation grade materials.		

Table 4: Proposed Assessment Criteria for Learning Outcome 3 after Teacher's Feedback

5.2.3 Learning Outcome 6

These assessment criteria seen in Table 5 aim to familiarise the students with the various traditional Maltese garments, their characteristics, distinctions, and uses. Teachers must briefly cover the different social classes, particularly through pictorial images that depict the contrast in their clothing. Students learn to recognise the country folk garments and distinguish them from the clothing of higher social classes. In fact, teachers can enhance these lessons using pictorial images of the garments to help students visualise and understand the differences. Lessons can also include brief discussions on local handcrafts, such as weaving and Maltese lace, supported by several resources such as pictorial images, videos, and even site visits, when possible.

Students must learn all the related terminology and gain insights into the lifestyle of local country folk, appreciating how each garment was purposefully designed for their specific needs. During this lesson, the students are expected to participate in various activities both in and out of class, such as presentations or workshops, to enhance their understanding. A particularly innovative idea would be to use virtual reality to enable students to immerse themselves and visualise the costumes as they were originally worn, through the use of modern software with old photos and videos. During this lesson, it would also be interesting to share with students the stories that were narrated during the interviews conducted in this study. These narratives provide them with an understanding of the perspectives of individuals who interacted with them when they were originally worn.

The only change that the teacher suggested was to substitute the action verb ‘name’ with ‘match’ in the Comprehension criterion level 1, as it would be better for assessment purposes.

<table>
<tr><td>Subject Focus</td><td colspan="3">Costume history and contemporary fashion</td></tr>
<tr><td>LO 6.</td><td colspan="3">Recognise traditional and contemporary fashion.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">K.</td><td>K. Define traditional Maltese costumes.</td><td>K. List the characteristics of traditional Maltese costumes.</td><td>K. Outline the difference between every day and Sunday best traditional Maltese costumes.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Definition of traditional Maltese costumes</u>: Clothing that was worn by peasants who lived a slow lifestyle in the countryside all around the Maltese islands and worked in agriculture.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Characteristics</u>: Simple; functional; durable; made of the cheapest fibres; made of natural fibres; made of a plain weave – all essential due to the nature of the peasants' work.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Difference between every day and Sunday best</u>:
• <u>Every day</u>: Worn on a daily basis (made of cotton or wool; tattered; barefoot)
• <u>Sunday best</u>: Worn on Sundays, feasts, and special occasions (made of cotton or wool or silk; finer; wore a qorq).</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">C.</td><td>C. Match the different traditional Maltese costumes.</td><td>C. Explain what a traditional Maltese costume was used for.</td><td>C. Describe the features of a traditional Maltese costume.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>The different traditional Maltese costumes:</u>
• Women: ċulqana; għonnella; geżwira; qmis; maktur; sidrija; ġakketta; borsa.
• Men: qmis; sidrija; qalziet; qalziet ta' taħt; kabozza; terħa; milsa; kappell; beritta; ħorġa; qorq.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Example of an explanation of the use of a traditional Maltese costume (ħorġa):</u>
Used to carry things like supplies and food; used by men, especially construction workers; carried on their shoulders.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Example of description of the features of a traditional Maltese costume (ħorġa):</u>
It was a piece of fabric measuring around 3 metres by 1.8 metres, had a vertical opening in the middle; durable; made of twill-weaved cotton; often striped; had pockets on the front and the back.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">N.B. For assessment purposes at Level 2 and 3, the use and features of only ONE traditional costume must be explained and described.</td></tr>
</table>

Table 5: Proposed Assessment Criteria for Learning Outcome 6 after Teacher's Feedback

5.2.4 Learning Outcome 7

The assessment criteria illustrated in Table 6 aim to encourage students to amalgamate traditional Maltese costumes with modern fashion, through fashion design. In level 1, students are required to identify features from various local traditional garments and integrate these characteristics into a single sketch of an outfit in level 2. They can create several sketches, however, the best one is chosen for level 3, where they will conduct a presentation. Students are expected to present all sketches, but only the chosen outfit must be explained in detail. This explanation must include the outfit's features, specifying the traditional garment from which these elements were derived. These tasks provide students with the opportunity to refine their sketching skills, enhance their creativity, as well as improve their public speaking abilities. The work compiled as part of these assessment criteria could be added to the students' portfolios and SBA marks.

The teacher's feedback suggested that students create a physical mood board for level 1 on the different features chosen from various traditional Maltese costumes, rather than just identifying them. Moreover, the action verb should match the type of criterium, which is Application, thus 'identify' should not be used. Furthermore, she suggested that in level 2 students create multiple sketches rather than just one. Finally, in level 3, the teacher suggested changing the verb from 'explain' to 'present' since the students are assessed through the presentation.

Subject Focus	Elements and principles of design		
LO 7.	Use the elements and principles of design.		
A.	A. Create a physical mood board with features from different traditional Maltese costumes to include in a design sketch of a modern outfit.	A. Create design sketches of modern outfits using features from different traditional Maltese costumes.	A. Present the modern outfit, highlighting its features in relation to traditional Maltese costumes.
	N.B. For assessment purposes, ONE of the outfits sketched in Level 2 should be described in detail in Level 3.		

Table 6: Proposed Assessment Criteria for Learning Outcome 7 after Teacher's Feedback

5.3 Reference Books

Below is a list of reference books to be used by Fashion and Textiles teachers and students. These contain information by experts as well as several authentic pictures and lithographs that can be an excellent reference point when planning lessons or studying this topic. Ideally, a few of these books are placed in the Fashion and Textiles studios for easy access:

- *Costume in Malta: Exhibition Catalogue* – Cremona & Baluci (1998).
- *Costume in Malta: An History of Fabric, Form & Fashion* – De Piro & Cremona (1998).
- *Drawwiet u Tradizzjonijiet Maltin* – Guido Lanfranco (2004).
- *Kostum Malti u Drapp fl-Istorja ta' Malta* – Vincent Zammit (2005).
- *Peasant Costumes: Insights into Rural Life and Society* – the chapters by Bonavia, Debono, Said, and Vella (2012).
- *Għonnella: Deconstructing the Garment* – Azzopardi (2022).

5.4 Potential Challenges and Proposed Solutions

Naturally, the implementation of this topic in the syllabus may present teachers with certain challenges in the preparation and delivery of lessons. Therefore, the researcher compiled a few solutions to challenges that may arise.

5.4.1 Cultural Respect

Teachers must ensure that the introduction of traditional costumes is handled with respect and sensitivity. To achieve this, they could consult and collaborate with experts in the field to provide them with accurate content. Discussions should always be conducted respectfully, especially when addressing various cultures. Considering that local schools are becoming increasingly multicultural, teachers must allocate a few minutes where foreign students can share their country's traditional costumes. As a homework task before the lesson, they could even be asked to prepare a mood board or short show-and-tell with pictures and short video clips and even bring the actual costume to school. To ensure fairness, Maltese students could also do the same for local costumes, which are then presented throughout the whole lesson while covering the content prepared by the teacher. All students could also conduct family interviews through which they gather first-hand information, which would particularly be

interesting to share with their peers. These activities allow students to learn more about their own cultural heritage and proudly present it to their peers. Meanwhile, they would be exposed to various cultures and traditional costumes, enhancing their awareness and appreciation for cultural diversity.

5.4.2 Cost and Availability of Resources

Upon the introduction of this topic, teachers may need to acquire some resources, such as authentic and replica garments, fabrics, and books, to provide students with an optimal learning experience. However, due to limited financial assets, this can be challenging. Therefore, the researcher recommends that teachers collaborate with organisations that possess these resources. Through this, they can arrange for students to temporarily access these resources either through site visits to the organisation's premises or by having the materials brought to school.

5.4.3 Maintaining Student Interest

As a teacher, maintaining constant student interest and engagement throughout the lessons can sometimes be challenging. The incorporation of interactive activities not only boosts motivation but also sharpens focus on the lesson. Interaction with authentic garments in museums makes the lessons more exciting. Moreover, designing the topic to match the students' interests allows for topic exploration through multiple perspectives, such as history, art, and geography.

5.4.4 Timetable Issues

The latest Fashion and Textiles syllabus contains a broad range of topics; thus, it might be challenging for teachers to find sufficient time within the class schedule to adequately cover the new material. As suggested in the assessment criteria in the above sections, it would be reasonable to integrate it into existing lessons or allocate a few lessons for the topic to ensure thorough coverage and understanding. The key aspects that align with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be prioritised.

5.4.5 Teacher Training

Given that this would be an entirely new topic in the syllabus, it is essential for teachers to participate in a short course to ensure that they can confidently and effectively teach the topic while providing accurate information to the students. The course would be conducted by professionals in the field. It would be ideal to organise a combination of lectures and workshops where teachers can interact with authentic traditional costumes, giving them the opportunity to gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Additionally, this course would include guidelines on how it would be best to teach the topic, such as suggestions for activities, resources, and assessments.

Furthermore, as suggested by the Education Officer, a teacher's pack of notes could be created. This may contain essential information about traditional Maltese costumes which would be taught as part of the syllabus, as well as suggestions for further research and reading. The pack of notes could be compiled by the group of professionals who conduct the short course in collaboration with the Education Officer and Heads of Department of the subject and given to teachers during or after the course.

As part of the workshops, teachers can collaborate to sew replicas of traditional Maltese costumes to be used during lessons, specifically to be analysed and worn by students, allowing them to gain an immersive experience. The sewing sessions could be guided by experts in the area. Although this process may be time-consuming and somewhat challenging, it offers a valuable experience for teachers, making them feel more confident in their teaching of the topic. The collection of replicas can be gradually grown throughout the years.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter proposed several assessment criteria as part of various learning outcomes as well as pedagogical strategies for incorporating traditional Maltese costumes into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Drawing insights from experts and the literature review discussed in the previous chapter, based on the SEC syllabus dated 2027, the assessment criteria were designed in a way that helps students understand various aspects of traditional Maltese costumes, as well as the role that they play in the students' cultural identity. The suggested

activities and resources to be used aim to provide teachers with practical ideas and tools to engage students in the lessons. The researcher also listed some challenges, such as time constraints and resource availability, which were addressed, accompanied by potential solutions to aid educators in overcoming these obstacles. Moreover, the feedback from the Fashion and Textiles teacher offered valuable perspectives on the feasibility of the assessment criteria proposed and strategies suggested, which allowed the researcher to refine the designed criteria.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This dissertation ascertained the research question “Why is it important that Fashion and Textiles students learn about traditional Maltese costumes?”. Through the answers obtained whilst researching this question, the researcher highlighted the historical and cultural significance of local country folk dress and amalgamated it with an educational aspect.

Being that the researcher lacked exposure and experience with traditional Maltese costumes, in-depth secondary research was required. In the first section of the literature review, targeting the first aim of the study, the researcher explored the various traditional Maltese costumes and their legacy. This was done through secondary research, utilising books such as *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture & Society* (Eicher & Evenson, 2015) and *Peasant Costumes: Insights into Rural Life and Society* (Gambin, 2012). Findings show that traditional costumes are one of the most important aspects of cultural identity. Through a historical overview of the past local textile industry and the various traditional Maltese garments, it was discovered that Maltese peasants wore culturally rich and authentic garments. However, these have disappeared, and this study discusses globalisation as one of the causes of this. Despite this, there are several entities which are making efforts to protect and embrace the costumes’ legacy which, through various methods, are raising awareness amongst the local general population about this underappreciated factor of the Maltese cultural identity.

The second section of the literature review tackled the second aim, investigating if and how traditional costumes are being taught in local and foreign educational scenarios. The researcher explained the current framework on which the local secondary school syllabi are based, as well as a description of the latest Fashion and Textiles SEC syllabus and its scheme of assessment. These were crucial to clearly understand how the assessment criteria must be designed. The researcher then identified the constructivist approach as the ideal pedagogical approach to be implemented in the modern classroom, listing various examples of how this

can be taught. Findings show that teaching traditional costumes has several potential benefits for students, such as appreciation of culture and identity formation, confirming the importance of incorporating this aspect into the syllabus. Lastly, the researcher looked up how traditional costumes are being taught, both in local subject syllabi and foreign ones. This was crucial to research as it gave the researcher an approximate idea of what aspects are to be included in the designed learning outcome. Moreover, this chapter allowed the researcher to get a well-rounded background on traditional costumes from a historical and educational perspective, allowing the researcher to design the semi-structured interview questions to be asked to the participants.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation focused on the third aim, exploring the perspectives of experts in the field, through semi-structured interviews, on how traditional Maltese costumes should be taught to Fashion and Textiles students. As stated in the methodology chapter, each interview question was tailored to each respective interviewee, depending on the area of expertise, through which the researcher could learn about the participants' first-hand experiences with traditional costumes. Moreover, the interviewer asked them a few important questions about their views on the incorporation of traditional Maltese costumes in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. These were then analysed and discussed, comparing and contrasting each argument, backing it up by findings from the literature review, and accompanying them with the researcher's perspectives. Consistent with prior literature, the findings indicated that the study participants tend to link traditional costumes to cultural identity. Moreover, the interviewees expressed their fascination towards the various traditional Maltese garments, their construction, and how they were worn by local country folk. The participants pointed out the importance of the preservation of the local traditional dress, emphasising the need for more awareness and appreciation of traditional Maltese costumes by the general public. Lastly, the participants all enthusiastically stated that they agreed with the incorporation of this topic in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Moreover, they suggested several strategies and resources that, from their professional point of view, they think could be utilised in the delivery of lessons on the topic.

Chapter Five targeted aim number four, where the researcher designed assessment criteria as part of various learning outcomes that focus on traditional Maltese costumes to be

incorporated as part of the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. The assessment criteria were presented in tables based on the design of the latest Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Each learning outcome was accompanied by a description of the aspects to be taught for each assessment criterion, as well as resources to be used, points to be mentioned, and activities to be organised to teach the topic. The aim of providing these practical examples, along with a number of potential challenges and proposed solutions, was to facilitate the implementation of this topic in real life. All ideas were formulated from the findings of both secondary and primary research that were compiled in this research study. Finally, feedback was obtained from the Fashion and Textiles teacher allowing the researcher to refine the suggested assessment criteria, making the incorporation of the topic more feasible.

6.2 Recommendations

While this dissertation offers an in-depth exploration of traditional Maltese costumes and their importance in education, further efforts must be implemented for the enhancement of appreciation of this important cultural element.

6.2.1 Practical Implementation Strategies

The researcher recommends that the Education Officer and Heads of the Department of Fashion and Textiles consider incorporating this topic into the syllabus by taking suggestions from this dissertation. If this were to take place, a few teaching resources must be prepared by them to facilitate the incorporation transition and support educators in teaching this topic effectively. The individuals responsible for designing the syllabus should suggest collaboration between the department of the subject and museums or other cultural organisations to enhance the delivery of the topic. Moreover, it is crucial to implement regular feedback methods to assess the effectiveness of the topic in the curriculum based on teachers' and students' input and make necessary adjustments accordingly. Moreover, once incorporated, the department of the subject must advocate for policy changes that recognise the importance of cultural education in Malta.

6.2.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Once implemented in the syllabus, researchers may conduct further research on the topic to investigate the impact of its integration, identifying long-term effects on students' cultural identity and appreciation, as well as knowledge of the traditional Maltese costumes. Its effectiveness could also be compared to similar initiatives in other countries, providing insights into best practices and further improvements. Another research recommendation is the possibility of integration of the topic discussed in earlier school years, such as in primary and middle schools. This could perhaps take a simpler approach, such as from an artistic or scientific point of view. Researchers could also explore in more detail by giving practical examples of how various cultures could be embraced during the lessons on traditional Maltese costumes.

6.2.3 Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Given sufficient financial resources and time, the researcher would have sought to expand the sample size, incorporating a larger and more diverse group of participants, including students, parents, and Fashion and Textiles educators. The researcher could have also taken the project-based approach, by compiling lesson plans and teaching resources to be used when implementing the topic into the syllabus.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: URECA Form – FREC Approval

L-Università ta' Malta

Research Ethics and Data Protection Form

University of Malta staff, students, or anyone else planning to carry out research under the auspices of the University, must complete this form. The UM may also consider requests for ethics and data protection review by External Applicants.

Ahead of completing this online form, please read carefully the University of Malta Research Code of Practice and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures. Any breach of the Research Code of Practice or untruthful replies in this form will be considered a serious disciplinary matter. It is advisable to download a full digital version of the form to familiarise yourself with its contents (https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/resources/umdocuments/). You are also advised to refer to the FAQs (https://www.um.edu.mt/research/ethics/faqs).

Part 1: Applicant and Project Details

Applicant Details

Name: Elisa Ann

Surname: Scerri

Email: [redacted]

Applicant Status: Student

Please indicate if you form part of a Faculty, Institute, School or Centre: * Faculty of Education

Department: * Department of Education Studies

Principal Supervisor's Name: * Dr Lorraine Portelli

Principal Supervisor's Email: * [redacted]

Co-Supervisor's Name:

Study Unit Code: * EDU5001 MTL in Textiles and Fashion (main teaching area) with Home Economics (subsidiary teaching area)

Course Title: *

Student Number: * [redacted]

Project Details

Title of Research Project: * Traditional Maltese Costumes: The Importance of Local Cultural Heritage in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus

Project description, including research question/statement and method, in brief: *

Research question: Why is it important that Fashion and Textiles students learn about traditional Maltese costumes?

Fashion history is important as students are able to learn about the history of costumes from 3000 BC to date. However, this part of the curriculum fails to cover anything that is related to our cultural heritage, with specific reference to Maltese traditional costumes. This gap in the syllabus must be addressed very urgently as Maltese students must embody ethnic appreciation and pride.

The aim of this research is to shed light on the importance of knowledge about traditional Maltese costumes by analysing them, focusing on the features and uses of dress worn by men and women in the past. This will be conducted through historical/bibliographic research and 3 to 4 interviews with experts in the field. I will also explore ways how experts can revive traditional Maltese costumes to fit into modern society. Finally, the research will provide some suggestions on how to include aspects of Maltese traditional costume in the Fashion and Textiles curriculum in order to make students more knowledgeable and aware of our cultural heritage.

Will project involve collection of primary data from human participants? Yes / Unsure

Explain primary data collection from human participants:

a. Salient participant characteristics (e.g. min-max participants, age, sex, other): *

All participants will be over 18 years of age.

- Participant 1: An expert in local traditional costume/heritage (1 interview).
- Participant 2: A University lecturer/researcher who conducted research on traditional costumes (1 interview).
- Participant 3/4: People who used to wear or sew traditional Maltese costumes (1 or 2 interviews).

b. How will they be recruited (e.g. sampled, selected, contacted, etc.): *

Participants will be recruited via purposive sampling:
- Participant 1: This person shall be recruited through an email (provided by a researcher who will forward my request for participation to other colleague researchers) inviting him/her to participate in this study.
- Participant 2: This person shall be contacted through an official email inviting him/her to participate in this study.
- Participant 3/4: These people shall be recruited by word of mouth/social media (e.g., Facebook and Instagram posts) and then contacted by the researcher inviting them to participate in this study.

c. What they will be required to do and for how long: *

The participants are required to meet with the researcher separately at a convenient place and time to participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview which will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. They are required to answer a number of open-ended questions related to traditional Maltese costumes.

d. If inducements/rewards/compensation are offered: *

No reward is going to be given to the participants as they will be contributing to our cultural heritage.

e. How participants/society may benefit: *

This research will shed light on the importance of knowledge about traditional Maltese costumes and give suggestions on how this topic can be introduced in the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Learning about this aspect of the Maltese culture will help students embody ethnic appreciation and pride.

f. Is the participant's identity recorded at any stage of the research (e.g. in consent forms, records, publications): *

The participants may be identifiable as they may be unique when it comes to their job, but the researcher will be using a code e.g., participant 1, to protect their identity. The information will be stored anonymously upon completion of the study and after the results are published. All details about the information to be collected is written in the Data Management Plan attached.

g. The manner in which you will manage and store the data: *

With the participants' informed consents, these interviews will be audio recorded digitally and saved as MP3 format. The recordings will be stored on a password-protected laptop computer, which can be only accessed by myself. A backup copy of the audio files will be saved on a separate external hard drive and a cloud storage service, both password-protected. After the interviews are conducted, the audio recordings will be transcribed manually on a Word document. These will also be stored on the same laptop computer, external hard drive, and cloud storage service. The recordings and transcripts will all be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study and following the publication of results. Throughout the whole process, I will be adhering to the ethical principles and guidelines of the University of Malta.

Will project involve collection of primary data from animals? No

Part 2: Self Assessment and Relevant Details

Human Participants

1. Risk of harm to participants: No / N.A.

2. Physical intervention: No / N.A.

3. Vulnerable participants: No / N.A.

4. Identifiable participants: Yes / Unsure

The participants may be identifiable as they may be unique when it comes to their job, but the researcher will be using a code e.g., participant 1, to protect their identity. The information will be stored anonymously upon completion of the study and after the results are published. All details about the information to be collected is written in the Data Management Plan attached.

5. Special Categories of Personal Data (SCPD): No / N.A.

6. Human tissue/samples: No / N.A.

7. Withheld info assent/consent: No / N.A.

8. 'opt-out' recruitment: No / N.A.

9. Deception in data generation: No / N.A.

10. Incidental findings: No / N.A.

Unpublished secondary data

11. Human: No / N.A.

12. Animal: No / N.A.

13. No written permission: No / N.A.

Animals

14. Live animals, lasting harm: No / N.A.

15. Live animals, harm: No / N.A.

16. Source of dead animals, illegal: No / N.A.

General Considerations

17. Cooperating institution: No / N.A.

18. Risk to researcher/s: No / N.A.

19. Risk to environment: No / N.A.

20. Commercial sensitivity: No / N.A.

Other Potential Risks

21. Other potential risks: No / N.A.

22. Official statement: Do you require an official statement from the F/REC that this submission has abided by the UM's REDP procedures?
No / N.A.

Part 3: Submission

Which F/REC are you submitting to? * Faculty of Education

Attachments:

- Data_Management_Plan.pdf (size: 32.1 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:05)
- Questions_participant_1.pdf (size: 51.4 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Questions_participant_2.pdf (size: 44.4 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Questions_participants_3__4.pdf (size: 51.8 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Consent_Form_participants_1__2.pdf (size: 58.9 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Consent_Form_participants_3__4_English.pdf (size: 67.3 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Consent_Form_participants_3__4_Malti.pdf (size: 66.5 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Information_Letter_participants_1__2.pdf (size: 43.7 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:06)
- Information_Letter_participants_3__4_English.pdf (size: 44.5 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:07)
- Information_Letter_participants_3__4_Malti.pdf (size: 48.6 KB, uploaded on: 02/06/2023 10:49:07)
- Scerri_Elisa_Ann_[redacted]_MTL_Dissertation_Proposal.pdf (size: 508.5 KB, uploaded on: 06/06/2023 09:28:21)
- Highlighted_REDP_Application_Elisa_Ann_Scerri_[redacted].pdf (size: 90.6 KB, uploaded on: 19/06/2023 09:57:32)

- [x] Information and/or recruitment letter*
- [x] Consent forms (adult participants)*
- [ ] Consent forms for legally responsible parents/guardians, in case of minors and/or adults unable to give consent*
- [ ] Assent forms in case of minors and/or adults unable to give consent*
- [x] Data collection tools (interview questions, questionnaire etc.)
- [x] Data Management Plan
- [ ] Data controller permission in case of use of unpublished secondary data
- [ ] Licence/permission to use research tools (e.g. constructs/tests)
- [ ] Any permits required for import or export of materials or data
- [ ] Letter granting institutional approval for access to participants
- [ ] Institutional approval for access to data
- [ ] Letter granting institutional approval from person directly responsible for participants
- [ ] Other

Please feel free to add a cover note or any remarks to F/REC

Declarations: *

- [x] I hereby confirm having read the University of Malta Research Code of Practice and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures.
- [x] I hereby confirm that the answers to the questions above reflect the contents of the research proposal and that the information provided above is truthful.
- [x] I hereby give consent to the University Research Ethics Committee to process my personal data for the purpose of evaluating my request, audit and other matters related to this application. I understand that I have a right of access to my personal data and to obtain the rectification, erasure or restriction of processing in accordance with data protection law and in particular the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679, repealing Directive 95/46/EC) and national legislation that implements and further specifies the relevant provisions of said Regulation.

Applicant Signature: * Elisa Ann Scerri

Date of Submission: * 19/06/2023

If applicable: Date collection start date

Administration

REDP Application ID EDUC-2023-00352

Current Status Approved

If a submitted application needs to be amended, it can be withdrawn, edited, and resubmitted, and it will retain the same reference number. There is no need to submit a new application.

Appendix 2: Participants 1 and 2 Interview Information Letter

22/04/2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Elisa Ann Scerri, and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for MTL in Textiles and Fashion (main teaching area) with Home Economics (subsidiary teaching area). I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled 'Traditional Maltese Costumes: The Importance of Local Cultural Heritage in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus'. This is being supervised by Dr Lorraine Portelli. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to shed light on the importance of knowledge about traditional Maltese costumes by analysing them and their existence. Your participation in this study would help to explore ways how the topic of traditional Maltese costumes can be incorporated into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to meet with the researcher at a convenient place and time to take part in a semi-structured interview and answer some open-ended questions linked to traditional Maltese costumes. This will approximately last between 45 and 60 minutes.

You will be asked to sign a consent form explaining all ethical procedures that will be taken into consideration. The data collected will be treated confidentially and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to it.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you. Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail [redacted] You can also contact my supervisor via email [redacted]

Sincerely,

Elisa Ann Scerri [redacted]

Dr Lorraine Portelli [redacted]

Appendix 3: Participants 3 and 4 Interview Information Letter

22/04/2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Elisa Ann Scerri and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for MTL in Textiles and Fashion (main teaching area) with Home Economics (subsidiary teaching area). I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled 'Traditional Maltese Costumes: The Importance of Local Cultural Heritage in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus'. This is being supervised by Dr Lorraine Portelli. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to shed light on the importance of knowledge about traditional Maltese costumes by analysing them and their existence. Your participation in this study would help to explore ways how the topic of traditional Maltese costumes, particularly the *għonnella,* can be incorporated into the Fashion and Textiles syllabus. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to meet with the researcher at a convenient place and time to take part in a semi-structured interview and answer some open-ended questions linked to traditional Maltese costumes. This will approximately last between 45 and 60 minutes.

You will be asked to sign a consent form explaining all ethical procedures that will be taken into consideration. The data collected will be treated confidentially and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to it.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you. Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail [redacted] You can also contact my supervisor via email [redacted]

Sincerely,

Elisa Ann Scerri [redacted]

Dr Lorraine Portelli [redacted]

Appendix 4: Participants 1 and 2 Interview Consent Form

22/04/2023

Traditional Maltese Costumes:

The Importance of Local Cultural Heritage in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Elisa Ann Scerri. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in a semi-structured interview in which I will answer some open-ended questions linked to traditional Maltese costumes to explore the importance of knowledge about these costumes. I am aware that the interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. I understand that the interview is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
5. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study and following publication of results.
8. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.
9. I am aware that extracts from my interview may be reproduced in these outputs, either in anonymous form, or using a pseudonym [a made-up name or code – e.g., respondent 1].
10. I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.
11. I am aware that, by marking the first-tick box below, I am giving consent for this interview to be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

- MARK ONLY AS APPLICABLE

☐ I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

☐ I do not agree to this interview being audio recorded.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Elisa Ann Scerri [redacted]

Dr Lorraine Portelli [redacted]

Appendix 5: Participants 3 and 4 Interview Consent Form

22/04/2023

Traditional Maltese Costumes:
The Importance of Local Cultural Heritage in the Fashion and Textiles Syllabus

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Elisa Ann Scerri. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in a semi-structured interview in which I will answer some open-ended questions linked to traditional Maltese costumes, specifically the *għonnella*, to explore the importance of knowledge about these costumes. I am aware that the interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. I understand that the interview is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
5. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study and following publication of results.
8. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.
9. I am aware that extracts from my interview may be reproduced in these outputs, either in anonymous form, or using a pseudonym [a made-up name or code – e.g., respondent 1].
10. I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.
11. I am aware that, by marking the first-tick box below, I am giving consent for this interview to be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

- MARK ONLY AS APPLICABLE

☐ I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

☐ I do not agree to this interview being audio recorded.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Elisa Ann Scerri [redacted]

Dr Lorraine Portelli [redacted]

Appendix 6: Participant 1 Interview Questions

1. Could you provide an overview of your expertise and experience in the field of traditional costumes? (qualifications, role, how long you have been involved in this, what experiences you have had). What initially sparked your interest in this subject?
2. How do you define traditional costumes? Are there specific criteria or characteristics that distinguish them from other types of clothing?
3. What kind of dress were worn by Maltese people in the past? Which of these costumes do you have in your collection? Can you describe some of them?
4. Can you describe the process of researching and acquiring traditional dress for your collection? What challenges do you typically face in this process? How do you overcome these challenges?
5. What kind of information do you seek to gather about each traditional piece, such as its origin, historical context, purpose, and cultural significance? What sources do you typically consult? How do you go about gathering this information?
6. How do you validate the authenticity of traditional dress pieces in your collection? Are there any specific methods or resources that you use?
7. How do you preserve and conserve traditional dress in your collection? Are there any specific techniques or guidelines that you follow against deterioration?
8. In your opinion, what are the key factors that contributed to the phasing out, evolution and transformation of the local traditional costumes over time? How do societal changes and influences impact this?
9. What are your thoughts on Maltese people's perception of the local traditional costumes? What do you think about how they are being embraced (or not) or reinterpreted in modern contexts?
10. Are there any past or ongoing projects, collaborations or initiatives related to traditional Maltese costumes that you would like to share?
11. Do you think that it is important for Fashion and Textiles students to learn about traditional costumes? (local, foreign) Why? What aspects related to traditional Maltese costumes do you think should be included in the syllabus? What methods or strategies do you think would be effective for introducing students to traditional Maltese costumes? What resources would you recommend for Fashion and Textiles teachers to use when incorporating traditional Maltese costumes into their teaching?

Appendix 7: Participant 2 Interview Questions

1. Could you provide an overview of your expertise and experience in the field of traditional costumes? (education and qualifications, role, how long you have been in this profession, what experiences you have had). What initially sparked your interest in this subject?
2. How do you define traditional costumes? Are there specific criteria or characteristics that distinguish them from other types of clothing?
3. What kind of dress were worn by Maltese people in the past? Can you describe some of them? What techniques and materials were commonly used in the creation of traditional Maltese costumes?
4. Can you describe the traditional costume collection that you oversee?
5. What is the typical process of conserving a traditional Maltese costume, from initial assessment to final treatment? (what kind of information you seek to gather about each costume to fully understand its meaning and purpose, sources that you typically consult, methodologies that you employ to ensure accuracy and authenticity).
6. How do you preserve the Maltese costumes? What guidelines do you follow to safeguard costumes against deterioration? (conservation techniques and processes, materials or tools used). What happens if you do not follow these guidelines?
7. What are some common challenges or obstacles you encounter when researching and conserving traditional Maltese textiles and garments? How do you overcome these challenges?
8. In your opinion, what are the key factors that contribute to the evolution and transformation of traditional Maltese costumes over time? How do societal changes and influences impact traditional Maltese costumes?
9. What are your thoughts on Maltese people's perception of the local traditional costumes, and how they are being embraced or reinterpreted in modern contexts?
10. Are there any past or ongoing projects, collaborations or initiatives related to traditional Maltese costumes that you would like to share?
11. Do you think that it is important for Fashion and Textiles students to learn about traditional Maltese costumes? Why? What aspects related to traditional Maltese costumes do you think should be included in the syllabus? What methods or strategies do you think would be effective for introducing students to traditional Maltese costumes? What resources would you recommend for Fashion and Textiles teachers when incorporating traditional Maltese costumes into their teaching?

Appendix 8: Participant 3 and 4 Interview Questions

The interview questions for participants 3 and 4 are focused on one traditional Maltese costume: the għonnella.

1. Can you tell me something about yourself? (age, locality, education and qualifications, job, how long you have been sewing for, what experiences you have had, what your involvement was in the TRACtion project, have you had any prior experience with sewing the *għonnella* before working on this project). What initially sparked your interest in sewing?
2. Can you describe the key features or elements of the original *għonnella*? (fabric, materials, design, style, colours, embellishment, etc.).
3. Can you describe the specifics of how the *għonnella* was worn? (e.g., who wore it, places, days, times, occasions). Were there any variations or differences in the design or construction of the *għonnella* depending on such specifics?
4. How was the *għonnella* traditionally cared for before, during, and after wearing it? Were there any special practices associated with its maintenance?
5. Can you describe the process of deconstructing and reconstructing the *għonnella* replica for the project? What challenges did you encounter during this process?
6. Where there any specific techniques or methods used in sewing the *għonnella* replica to ensure accuracy and authenticity?
7. How did you acquire the skills necessary to sew the *għonnella*?
8. How did you research or gather information about the traditional design and construction methods used in sewing the *għonnella*? Did you consult any historical sources or references?
9. Have you encountered any misconceptions about the *għonnella* during your involvement in this project? How do you address these misconceptions?
10. What were society's impressions and attitudes on people wearing the *għonnella* when it was originally worn? How do they compare to the modern's society impressions on the *għonnella*? Do you believe that it is still valued or celebrated?
11. Can you share any stories or anecdotes related to the *għonnella* that you have heard or encountered during your involvement in this project?
12. Looking ahead, how do you envision the future of traditional Maltese costume-making and preservation in Malta? What steps can be taken to ensure that they continue to be appreciated?
13. Do you think that it is important for Fashion and Textiles students to learn about traditional costumes? (local, foreign) Why? What aspects related to traditional costumes do you think should be included in the syllabus? What methods or strategies do you think would be effective for introducing students to traditional costumes? What resources would you recommend for Fashion and Textiles teachers to use when incorporating traditional costumes into their teaching?

Appendix 9: Education Officer Interview Questions

1. Do you think it is important for Fashion and Textiles students to learn about traditional Maltese costumes? Why? How would students benefit from this knowledge?
2. Should traditional Maltese costumes have their own learning outcome in the syllabus, or should they be included as a part of another learning outcome? If so, which one? Why?
3. Do you think traditional Maltese costumes should be included in both SEC and AVC syllabi? Why?
4. What aspects related to traditional Maltese costumes do you think should be included in the syllabus? Could you provide some examples, in terms of K, C, and A criteria?
5. What methods or strategies would be effective for introducing students to traditional Maltese costumes? Could you provide some examples?
6. What challenges do you foresee in integrating traditional Maltese costumes into the syllabus? How could these be addressed?
7. Should teachers receive some training to teach traditional Maltese costumes effectively? What kind of training would you recommend?
8. What resources would you recommend for Fashion and Textiles teachers to use when incorporating traditional Maltese costumes into their teaching? Could you provide some examples?