

# Sustainable design of children's stage clothing for a folklore festival

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**Abstract**-The report presents the artistic design of a capsule collection of stage costumes for preschool children, developed in accordance with the principles of sustainable design. The main emphasis is placed on the integration of folklore ornaments and motifs as an expression of cultural identity. The collection is intended for use during folklore holidays in kindergartens and includes clothing inspired by traditional Bulgarian folk costumes, adapted to the age and physical characteristics of children. The models are designed with versatility and flexibility, allowing them to be worn by different age groups and body types, which contributes to their long-term use and minimizing waste. Sustainability is also reflected in the choice of materials - biodegradable fabrics such as organic cotton, linen, viscose and wool were used. The collection combines tradition, functionality and environmental responsibility, becoming an example of a modern sustainable approach to children's stage costumes.

**Keywords:** sustainable design, capsule collection, folk festivals, stage costume, preschool age.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Our reality is strongly influenced by “fast fashion”, a result of the consumer culture of our society. It is characterized by high productivity, low prices and questionable quality of clothing, while also leading to environmental and social problems. Fast fashion satisfies the needs of the consumer, but leads to environmental pollution, a huge amount of waste and the exploitation of workers in developing countries. All this calls for a more responsible attitude towards fashion, promoting sustainable practices that are aimed at protecting the environment and improving social conditions in the textile industry [1].

Part of the EU's sustainable development strategy is also the preservation of each country's tangible cultural heritage [2]. The Bulgarian people have a rich folklore. The preservation of traditions and national identity can be achieved by organizing folklore festivals in kindergartens. They are a major factor in preserving national identity, identity and culture. Clothing is an important part of people's material culture. Clothing speaks of gender and age, regional family, community, ethnic and religious affiliation, practiced profession, and position in the social hierarchy.

Through the costume, certain forms of behavior are expressed within ethnic groups and outside, between them. It is also an indispensable part of every holiday [3].

The purpose of this development is to design a capsule collection of children's clothing intended for folklore festivals in kindergartens.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sustainable fashion requires the implementation of various strategic approaches aimed at minimizing the negative impact of the fashion industry on the environment and society. Among the main methods for achieving these goals, the following stand out:

- Education and awareness-raising;
- Stimulating conscious consumption;
- Use of sustainable materials.

One of the effective methods consistent with the principles of sustainable fashion is the design and implementation of capsule collections. The term “capsule wardrobe” was revived in the 1970s by Susie Faux, owner of the London boutique “Wardrobe”. She defines a capsule collection as a set of basic, timeless elements – such as skirts, trousers, shirts – that can be enriched with seasonal fashion items. According to her recommendations, a functional women's capsule wardrobe should include at least two pairs of trousers, a dress or skirt, a jacket, a coat, two pairs of shoes and two bags [4].

A capsule wardrobe is characterized by the fact that each element is carefully selected to combine harmoniously in style, purpose, color and pattern. The formulated approach allows for quick and flexible replacement between individual components, while maintaining an aesthetically restrained and elegant appearance.

The Capsule Collection is a compact, balanced and multifunctional fashion line, consisting of a limited number of garments that can be easily combined with each other and with the rest of the wardrobe. Its main focus is on the quality, durability and sustainability of the materials and constructions used. In addition to promoting rational consumption, this concept contributes to reducing textile waste and overcoming overproduction in the fashion industry.

When holding folklore festivals in kindergarten, children wear appropriate stage costumes, which should meet the following requirements:

- **Convenience and functionality** – to ensure freedom of movement through appropriate design solutions and allowances for freedom;
- **Safety** – avoid sharp and potentially dangerous elements; accessories must be securely attached;
- **Adaptation to the child's figure** – clothing must be tailored to the age, size and anatomical features of children, while allowing for easy dressing and undressing;
- **Use of sustainable and skin-friendly materials** – if possible, use natural fabrics suitable for long-term use;
- **Environmental friendliness and easy maintenance** – choose materials that do not harm the environment and allow for easy cleaning;
- **Authenticity and cultural identity** – embroidery, traditional colors and accessories, clothing should reflect the aesthetics of a specific folklore region through characteristic elements such as.

### III TRADITIONAL BULGARIAN CLOTHING FOR CHILDREN

Researchers of traditional Bulgarian clothing distinguish several main types of folk costumes, which are classified according to the upper garment. [5]:

- Three types of **women's costumes** stand out: *two-apron*, *sukmanen* and *sayan*;
- For **men's costumes** – *white* and *black*, depending on the dominant color of the fabrics.

The clothing of children up to about seven years of age mainly consisted of a shirt, girded with an apron. The decoration was simple, with predominantly linear decorative motifs. At the beginning of the 20th century, a gradual transition began from the strictly normative nature of the folk costume – as a marker of gender, age and social status – to greater stylistic freedom. During this period, children's clothing began to resemble the clothing of adults in terms of cut and ornamentation. [5].

Traditional children's costume includes a shirt, a sukman or saya, pants, a belt, an apron, socks and tsarvuli, and outerwear (Fig. 1.).



Fig. 1. Authentic children's costumes

#### 3.1. Structural features of the authentic folk costume for a girl

**The shirt** is a basic component of children's clothing, characteristic of all ethnographic groups on the territory of the Bulgarian lands. According to its construction, it comes in two main types: a tunic-like shirt and a "barchanka" type shirt (Fig. 2.) [6].

It is made mainly from white linen, cotton or hemp fabrics. The color white carries deep symbolism associated with light, purity, innocence and divinity.:

- **The tunic-like shirt** consists of straight, unshaped pieces of fabric. It is ankle-length, with wide sleeves, open at the ends, and is richly decorated with embroidery located on the skirts, bosoms and sleeves.;

- **The "barchanka" type shirt** is distinguished by a more complex cut - with pleats around the neck and sleeves. This type of shirt is extremely richly ornamented, especially on the bosoms, sleeves and back area.

**The sukman** repeats the cut of the shirt (Fig. 3.) [6]. It is short-waisted (in Western Bulgaria), high-waisted (in Central Bulgaria), and made of two parts, joined at the waist, sleeveless (in Eastern Bulgaria). In its upper part it has a deep-cut bosom and is sleeveless, and in its lower part – with wide-cut skirts. It is made of wool, dyed in different colors.

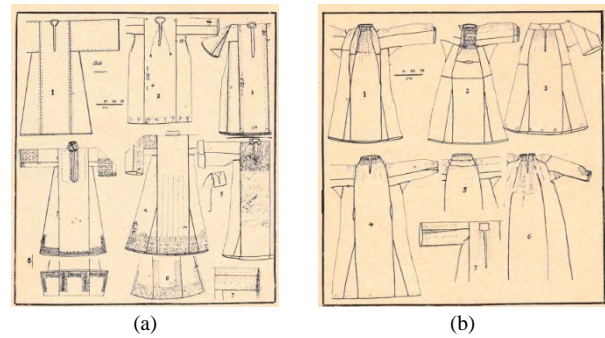


Fig. 2. Women's shirts: (a) Tunic; (b) Burchanka.

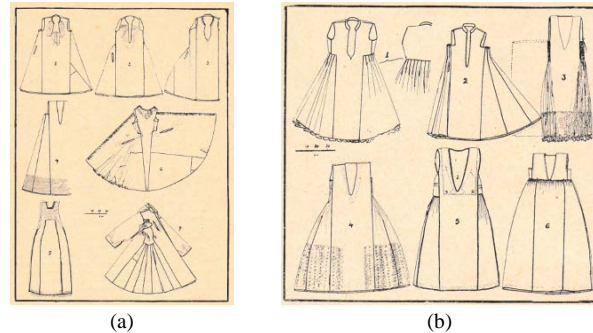


Fig. 3. Authentic sukman constructions

**The saya** is similar in construction to the sukmana, but is open along the middle of the front (Fig. 4.) [6]. The fastening is in the chest area with wire buttons. Summer sayas are made of hemp, linen and cotton, and winter ones of wool. Sayas made of solid white, black, blue or dark green fabric predominate. They are knee-length (a newer version) or ankle-length, with some having short sleeves to the elbow. The decoration is located on the bosom and the opening of the sleeves.

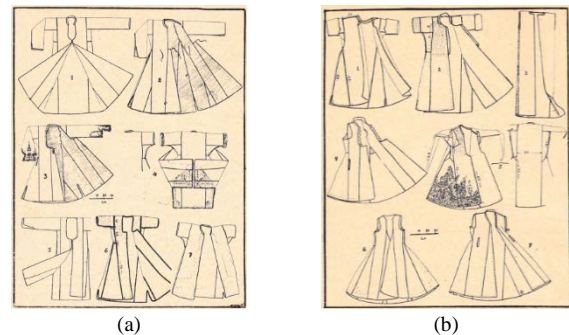


Fig. 4. Constructions of an authentic saya

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted on authentic clothing, an author's capsule collection of children's clothing is offered, meeting the specified requirements for a stage costume..

The collection entitled "**Little Bearers of Tradition**" draws inspiration from Bulgarian folklore and the desire for it to be preserved and passed on to future generations. (Fig. 5.).



Fig. 5. Moodboard

#### 4.1. Artistic and technical characteristics of the capsule collection

The capsule collection (Fig. 6). includes basic elements of traditional Bulgarian clothing, adapted to the children's age group (3–7 years). It includes two types of shirts – a tunic-like and a "barchanka" type shirt, a front and back apron, a sukman, a vest and traditional accessories. The shirt, as a basic and unchanging component of the folk costume, is designed so that it can be worn alone or in combination with the other parts of the ensemble.

The items in the collection are designed to be as close as possible to authentic folk costumes both in terms of the materials used and in terms of constructive and decorative characteristics. The main deviations from the traditional approach are expressed in the following: the ornamental decoration is made by machine embroidery, and the construction and length of the garments are adapted to the age and anatomical features of the children, in order to ensure comfort, freedom of movement and aesthetic integrity.

Fig. 6. presents the elements of the capsule, from which different variants of stage images can be created.



Fig. 6. Elements of the capsule

The capsule collection consists of nine elements adapted to the needs of children's stage performance. The main emphasis is placed on functionality, cultural identity and aesthetic sustainability.

The collection includes two types of shirts:

- **Shirt type "burchanka"** - with a trapezoidal silhouette, with a rich set on the neckline and shoulder area. The sleeves are raglan, single-seam, and the length of the shirt is above the knee line.
- **Tunic-shaped shirt** – with a trapezoidal silhouette. The sleeve is bell-shaped, wide, single-seam, attached. The length is above the knee line.

Both models are made of natural fabrics – cotton, linen or a combination of the two. The embroidery ornaments are

stylized floral or geometric motifs located on the neckline, sleeves and hem, inspired by authentic embroidery.

- **The sukman** is sleeveless, in a trapezoidal silhouette, with a length above the knee. The neckline is oval, richly decorated with floral embroidery and braid. The ornamentation is also positioned along the lower part of the hem. The material is wool or a blend of wool and cotton (50/50), ensuring comfort and good wearability.

The capsule also includes two aprons:

- **Back apron** – rectangular, with a separately tailored attached thin belt. The length is shorter than that of the front apron. It can be made in two versions: with rich pleats or small pleats, allowing adjustment around the waist. Floral embroidery is located in the back area.
- **Front apron** – also rectangular, with a separately tailored belt, with or without a slight gather. It is ornamented with floral embroidery and braid.

Both aprons can be made of wool or satin weave fabric, which gives a satiny, shiny effect. The fabric is a blend of cotton and polyester (50/50), combining durability and aesthetics.

- **The vest** is short, with a length above the waistline, in a straight silhouette. It is decorated with braids in the front. It is made of 100% wool fabric, consistent with the traditional male and female costume.

Additional elements include:

- **Belt with buckles** – a decorative and functional element of high cultural value;
- **A long belt** woven into sheets using traditional technology.

Fig. 7. presents the creative sketches of the models from the collection.



Fig. 7. Creative sketches

Fig. 8 suggests several additional options for combining the elements of the capsule. In this way, scenic images are created that can be used in various folklore performances by children..



Fig. 8. Variants of stage costumes

## V. CONCLUSION

The created capsule collection of stage folklore costumes for children aged 3–7 years is a successful interpretation of traditional Bulgarian clothing, combined with functional and contemporary solutions. The main elements of the collection are designed to be interchangeable and easily

combined with each other, which provides flexibility for use in various folklore performances.

The application of authentic design solutions in the development of the patterns of the products not only contributes to the cultural authenticity of the garments, but also leads to waste-free tailoring and efficient use of materials - an approach that meets the principles of sustainable design. The inclusion of functional elements such as laces, elastics, Velcro and zippers facilitates dressing and provides comfort and freedom of movement, tailored to the peculiarities of the child's figure.

The decorative processing is realized through machine-made embroideries and additional ornaments (buckles, belts, jewelry), which give a finished and authentic look to the products. The collection demonstrates the possibilities of contemporary design to adapt and popularize the traditional costume in the context of children's performing arts.

## V. FUNDING

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