

## Comparison of Design Preferences in the Hawaiian Shirt and Current Market

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**Abstract:** The Hawaiian shirt, also known as the Aloha shirt, is a short-sleeved, colorful shirt with traditional Polynesian designs (e.g., hibiscus, fish) originating in Hawai'i. The shirt was selected for study because it is a unique garment that originated in the Hawaiian Islands in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and marketed as a tourist product but was eventually adopted as appropriate residential clothing by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, however with different aesthetic details. Today, it is assumed by Hawaiian Island residents that tourists demonstrate poor taste when selecting a Hawaiian shirt. The purposes of this study are to examine the validity of the assumption that tourist taste and resident taste in Hawaiian shirts are different and to investigate the current Hawaiian shirt market change. For this study, 555 questionnaires were obtained from tourists and residents, and 10 Hawaiian shirt retailers/wholesalers participated in in-depth interviews. The results indicated that differences do exist between tourists' and residents' preferences for print designs and colorway. The market change of Hawaiian shirts was also recognizable in that an increasing number of tourists select Hawaiian shirts similar to resident customers, as part of their routine lives rather than as holiday or vacation garments. Other differences in Hawaiian shirt shopping behavior included the findings that tourists consider fabrication less important than resident customers who consider fabrication more (i.e., cotton 100%). By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study contributes to the fashion design and marketing field as well as help manufacturers and retailers with their merchandise and distribution plans.

**Key words:** design preferences, Hawaiian shirt, tourists, residents, market

### 1. Introduction

The Hawaiian shirt, also known as the Aloha shirt, is a short-sleeved, colorful, collared shirt with traditional Polynesian designs (e.g., hibiscus, fish, kapa, tiki, and pineapples) originating in Hawai'i (Fig. 1). Hawaiian shirts have become a very popular "fashion item" as many celebrities have worn them, and the shirt has often been featured in mass media (i.e., movies, tv series, etc.) expressing people's personalities and/or implying the sequence of stories. For tourists, the Hawaiian shirt is relaxed, vacation and casual attire whereas the shirt may be used for business and formal attire for residents in Hawai'i<sup>a)</sup>. Many designs of Hawaiian shirts are created based on a story behind it, and people can communicate the aloha spirit with the designs (Rath, 2015). In recent years, a number of fashion designers have been inspired by the Hawaiian shirt. For example, Prada featured Hawaiian shirts on runways in Milan for Spring/Summer 2014 collection (Rath, 2015). In Paris

Fashion Week Menswear Spring/Summer 2018, Balenciaga, Dries van Noten, Paul Smith, and Louis Vuitton introduced chic and luxurious Hawaiian shirts (Tess, 2017). Throughout its history, the Hawaiian shirt has demonstrated innovation and novelty in product design.

Recently, there has been a transition in silhouette and design of Hawaiian shirts to attract younger generations and new customers; Hawaiian shirts were re-styled with fitted and slim silhouettes and somewhat non-traditional patterns and designs motifs (Fig. 1). Bahng et al. (2016) indicated that designing innovative products with high quality features and characteristics is one of the most important capabilities of Hawai'i apparel manufacturers (HAM). If there is a limitation in new product development, it may be a critical barrier for HAM's internationalization (Bahng et al., 2016).

Although Hawaiian shirts are integrated with and often dominant in the business, leisure, and special occasion dress of Hawaiian Island residents, a significant element in the common wisdom among residents of Hawai'i ("locals") is that tourists are easily distinguished by and identifiable in terms of the choices they make in

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<sup>a)</sup> The correct spelling of Hawai'i includes the diacritical mark known as the 'okina after the first i, however it is not included in the word Hawaiian. Additionally, it is common practice to use the term Hawai'i when referring to goods and products so as not to confuse with the ethnic identity Hawaiian, even if the sentence structure is grammatically incorrect in standard English.



**Fig. 1.** Left – Two examples of a typical Hawaiian shirt. The shirt in the left features iconic scenes associated with the Hawaiian Islands (University of Hawai‘i, 2018), while the shirt on the right features geometric designs reminiscent of Polynesian tattoo (Kai, 2018).

selecting Hawaiian shirts (Morgado, 2003, 2005). The purposes of this study are to examine the validity of the assumption that tourist taste and resident taste in Hawaiian shirts are different and to investigate the current market change of the Hawaiian shirt.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. History of the Hawaiian shirt

The Hawaiian shirt finds its beginnings in the immigrant tailors of Hawai‘i who moved to the Land of Aloha to work in the growing plantations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the early mid-1930s a new type of shirt was worn by men. The shirts were constructed with a loose, straight silhouette and straight hemline, as opposed to the tailored, fitted shirts with curved hemline common at the time. In addition, the shirts were worn untucked, rather than tucked into the pants. They were originally made from fabrics imported from Asia and by the late 1930s were made from upholstery fabric with large flora and fauna designs. The tropical motif was quickly adopted into fabrics more appropriate for a tropical climate and sold in a growing tourist and military market who sought souvenirs from their travels. (cf. Arthur, 2000; Brown & Arthur, 2008).

Though the shirt was highly sought by visitors, it was eschewed by the residents of Hawai‘i who viewed it as tourist-garb. Residents refused to adopt the shirt willingly, and only wore it out of necessity during World War II when shipments to the Islands were curtailed and residents needed something to wear. After the war ended the shirt quickly disappeared from the local wardrobe and became the domain of tourists. City ordinances and private businesses banned the shirt for employees citing it as inappropriate attire for a professional environment (cf. Arthur, 2000; Morgado, 2003).

It was not until the 1960s that things began to change when lob-

bing groups for the local manufacturing industry began to make headway with the local government to relax dress codes and support the local business environment. During this time a twist on the expected Hawaiian shirt appeared—some new shirts were constructed with the fashion side of the fabric facing the wrong way—towards the body. These “reverse shirts” were adopted by the resident population (Arthur, 2000; Morgado, 2003). Over time, resident preferences in shirts not only encompassed the reverse shirts but shirts with softer, muted colors. Eventually, Hawaiian shirts became more and more common among residents and today they are a staple of the local wardrobe; the appropriate business wear for men in Hawai‘i is now the reverse shirt. However, according to local wisdom, there is a distinct difference between Hawaiian shirts worn by tourists and those worn by residents. Hence, it is assumed that the style of local shirts—reverse or traditional—is a market of identity: local versus tourist.

In 2017, a total of 9.38 million tourists visited Hawai‘i spending \$16.78 billion and generating \$1.98 billion tax revenue (Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, 2018). Detailed studies of tourists’ spending patterns are an on-going aspect of research sponsored by Hawai‘i’s Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. Although these annual reports typically reveal that tourists’ expenditures on fashion goods are exceeded only by their expenditures on accommodations, no published studies address tourists’ preferences for fashion goods in general. However, several market researchers have examined aspects of tourists’ and/or locals’ preferences for Hawaiian shirts or the print goods from which the shirts are constructed, or have otherwise addressed issues related to characteristics of those textiles.

Morgado and Hyllegard (1997) found that manufacturers believed the nationality of the visitor affected their preferences, which was supported in later research (Hyllegard & Morgado, 2001). Among specific findings were that mainland US visitors preferred a kapa-style print while visitors from Korea preferred a floral print resembling a typical English cottage garden, and visitors from China preferred a tropical floral print. Their sample as a whole exhibited a statistically significant preference for the color blue across nationalities, and a moderate dislike for the color yellow and the color black, regardless of nationality, but that Koreans exhibited a stronger preference for red than did other national groups. Relative to this finding, it should be noted that the researchers controlled responses for color preference by limiting the choices to a pattern consisting of a single color (i.e., red, blue, green, yellow, violet, or black) plus white.

No known research has continued to examine the preferences in Hawaiian shirts motives in recent years, and moreover, no known research has specifically examined if, and to what extent, people

actually assume that tourists' preferences in Hawaiian shirt print characteristics are different from those of locals. Nor have any studies attempted to identify and compare resident and non-resident preferences for the design characteristics that typify the textiles in which Hawaiian shirts are fabricated.

### 2.2. Tourist market in Hawai'i

Our framework for this study comes research on tourism. Tourists are often maligned for their perceived behaviors. Dean MacCannell's groundbreaking work on tourist semiotics in 1976 reconstituted tourism as a subject worthy of scholarly interest and appreciation. The central idea in his re-visioning, framed on a basic premise of structuralism, is that ferocious denigration of tourists is an attempt to convince oneself that one is not a tourist, and that the inauthentic objects, sights, and experiences sought out by tourists establish the conditions through which the authenticity of counterpart objects and sights can be assessed. While MacCannell's thesis effectively reframed the ways scholars approach tourist culture, it had little effect on popular conceptions of tourist behaviors and sensibilities.

In her classic work *Purity and Danger* (1970) anthropologist Mary Douglas argued that the key to understanding cultural systems lies in the examination of marginal elements -- the aberrant forms that defy a culture's standardized values and assumptions. She called such forms "dirt" or "matter out of place" and proposed that cultures deal with it by labeling. Informed by Culler's essays (1988) we linked Douglas' argument to MacCannell's thesis to propose that we consider the genre *tourist* as a form of dirt, in that it represents people out of place -- out of their place and intruding on ours. As such, the tourist serves as a convenient receptacle for other forms of dirt, rubbish and trash, and aberrant appearance modes can be construed as another of those forms. Characteristics of dress assessed as trashy, tasteless or shoddy, and needing attachment to a generalized other, might conveniently be appended to the tourist, against whom locals can compare their own good taste and judgment in matters of dress.

We also invoke Structuralism in our analysis. Structuralism uses semiotics [e.g., sign systems composed of a signifier (the object or symbol) and the signified (the meaning it communicates)]. Structuralism focuses on how meaning is created and posits that binary opposition produces meaning (e.g., Jakobson & Halle, 1956; Saussure, 1916/1966). Morgado and Reilly (2012) utilized this framework to understand the meanings generated by the Hawaiian shirt and argued that three binary oppositions are created by the shirt: them versus us, difference versus same, and culture versus commerce.

Our framework suggests that the actual clothing and appearance

preferences of tourists, outsiders, non-residents, or other categories of people who do not qualify as local may have little to do with local perceptions regarding others' aesthetic choices. Rather, assumptions regarding tourists' abilities to select attractive Hawaiian printed shirts may be based on the categorical assignment of others to groups that consist of either us, or them.

There are two key points to learn from the history of the Hawaiian shirt that are important in understanding the transition of the Hawaiian shirt from tourist commodity to local staple that provide a framework for understanding local design and identity.

1. *Opposition*. When the shirt was reimagined as a reverse shirt it became a marker of local identity. The reverse shirt is said to have been inspired by the few locals who had worn Hawaiian shirts. The shirts—worn in the sun and washed repeatedly—began to fade. A faded shirt indicated a person who lived in the Islands—a complete contrast to the bright, vibrant colored shirts sold in Waikiki to tourists. The creation of the reverse shirt was a way to bypass the time-consuming process of sunning and fading a shirt (Fig. 2).

2. *Rebrand as local identity*. As the reverse shirt was adopted by residents, it became to adopt a new significance; it represented local identity. The local industry advocated for its adoption as part of their desire to expand market share. The local government assisted by proclaiming Fridays Aloha Friday and encouraging everyone to wear local garment; this coincided with the rise in ethnic-identity and ethnic-interest in the 1970s (Fig. 2).

We posed the following questions to investigate the validity of both assumptions: that people believe there is a difference between residents' and tourists' tastes, and that the aesthetic preferences of residents and non-residents differ from each other:

Do people, in general, believe that tourists prefer Hawaiian shirt prints different from their own preferences?

Are tourists' actual preferences for Hawaiian shirt prints, colors, and fashion side/reverse side print different from residents' pref-

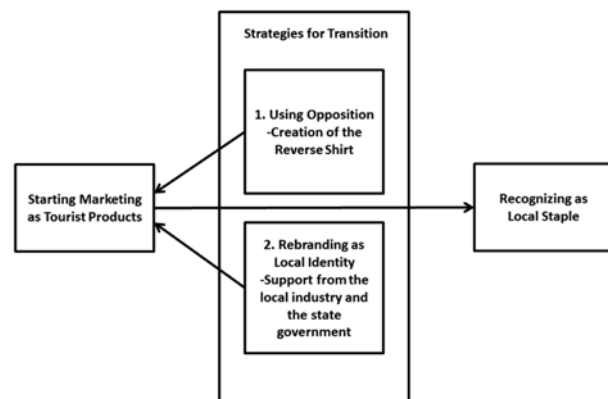


Fig. 2. Transition of the Hawaiian shirt from tourist commodity to local staple.

erences?

How has the Hawaiian shirt market changed in the recent decade?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Design preferences of tourist vs. residents: Survey

To examine the design preferences of tourists vs. residents, data were collected via survey methodology using an instrument designed by the researchers. The instrument consisted of a series of posters containing variations on seven Hawaiian textile prints and a pencil and paper questionnaire on demographics to be completed by participants. Six of the prints represented those visible in current Hawaiian shirt inventories in the local marketplace, and were selected to represent an assortment of Hawai‘i manufacturing companies and an assortment of iconic Hawai‘i imagery: hibiscus, kapa, tiki, hula dancers, tropical fish, and the state bird (nene goose) and state flag. The seventh print was drawn from the second-hand market and represented something of a retro or kitsch aesthetic, with a geometric and daisy-like floral motif. These prints were selected by the researchers because they represent different iconic styles of prints found on Hawaiian shirt. The assumption was that these designs represent iconic styles found in the market. Researches then showed these selections to a panel of academics who are familiar with Hawaiian shirts and iconography to confirm their assumptions. Recall, the purpose of this research is not to determine what motifs tourists and residents prefer, but if differ-

ence between the two groups exists (Fig. 3).

Each print was digitally scanned and, in addition to the original color scheme, was manipulated using photoshop to create a black and white image and to create color variations in neutral colors, saturated primary colors, and muted primary colors. The reverse of each print, or “wrong” side was also scanned. The instruments were pre-tested on a sample of visiting academicians and adjustments were made to facilitate handling the posters, stabilizing the language used to elicit responses, and assuring specificity in the demographic data.

Permission from local governing authorities was obtained to enable research assistants to collect data in high-traffic locations that were selected to maximize resident and tourist response. Data were collected from an intercept sample of residents and an intercept sample of tourists at shopping venues and beaches mostly frequented by tourists, and shopping venues and beaches mostly frequented by Hawai‘i residents.

#### 3.2. Current market research: Interviews

For current market research for the Hawaiian shirt, a qualitative research design with interview method was used. The qualitative method was adopted over quantitative methods for this objective because qualitative methods can provide robust, detailed, thoughtful data to analyze to understand a phenomenon (i.e., Market change; Creswell, 2003).

The researchers employed a convenience sampling method by initiating contact with owners of retailers or wholesalers who are



Fig. 3. Seven prints represented or long time good sold in the Hawaiian shirt market in Hawai‘i: from the left top to right – hibiscus, kapa, tiki, kitsch (or retro): from the left bottom to right – hula dancers, fish, and the state bird (nene goose).



**Table 2.** Percentage and (*N*), preferred motif by tourists and residents

Print	Motif	Overall % and ( <i>N</i> ) of participants selecting this print	Of those who preferred this print, % and ( <i>N</i> ) of tourists	Of those who preferred this print, % and ( <i>N</i> ) of residents
1	Hibiscus	32.1% ( <i>N</i> =178)	26.6% ( <i>N</i> =64)	36.3% ( <i>N</i> =114)
2	Kapa	21.1% ( <i>N</i> =117)	23.2% ( <i>N</i> =56)	19.4% ( <i>N</i> =61)
3	Tiki	12.0% ( <i>N</i> =67)	15.8% ( <i>N</i> =38)	9.2% ( <i>N</i> =29)
4	Floral	9.0% ( <i>N</i> =50)	7.9% ( <i>N</i> =19)	9.9% ( <i>N</i> =31)
5	Hula	9.9% ( <i>N</i> =55)	9.5% ( <i>N</i> =23)	10.2% ( <i>N</i> =32)
6	Fish	9.9% ( <i>N</i> =55)	14.9% ( <i>N</i> =36)	6.0% ( <i>N</i> =19)
7	Flag	4.0% ( <i>N</i> =22)	1.7% ( <i>N</i> =4)	5.8% ( <i>N</i> =18)
None	None	2.0% ( <i>N</i> =11)	0.4% ( <i>N</i> =1)	3.2% ( <i>N</i> =10)
Total		100.0% ( <i>N</i> = 555)	100.0% ( <i>N</i> =241)	100.0% ( <i>N</i> =314)

prefer Hawaiian shirt prints different from their own preferences participants were asked to identify a print they preferred for themselves and a print they believed a tourist would prefer. Eighty-five percent (85%, *N*=472) selected a print for a tourist that was different from what they selected for themselves.

To examine if there is an actual difference between tourists and residents in preference for Hawaiian shirt motifs, the researchers examined motifs which were selected by residents as compared with those selected by tourists. Both tourists and residents first preferred the hibiscus (26.6% compared to 36.3% respectively) followed by kapa (23.2%, 19.4%). The third preferred motif for tourists was tiki (15.8%) which was the fifth preferred motif for residents (9.2%). The fish was the fourth preferred motif for tourists (14.9%) while it was the sixth preferred for residents (6.0%). On the other hand, the hula motif was the third preferred motif for residents (10.2%) while it was the fifth preferred one for tourists (9.5%). For residents, the floral motif was fourth preferred (9.9%) which was the sixth preferred motif for tourists (7.9%). The flag motif was the least preferred by both tourists and residents (Table 2).

Additionally, the flag motif was preferred by residents more than four times more often than it was preferred by tourists (*N* = 4 and *N* = 18, respectively). This may be due to the aesthetics and local history of the flag motif, which contains local iconography—the state flag, fish, and bird—but also because the arrangement of the motif is smaller, more organized, and more conservative than the other motifs. Participants selected other motifs relatively equally. Thus, it is not that tourists selected something different from residents, but that residents demonstrated a preference that was not evident among the tourist sample.

*Selection of color* To examine preferences for color, the researchers examined which of three color palettes were preferred by tourists as compared with those preferred by residents. After participants had identified their preferred motif, they were shown that motif in three color ways—neutral hues, muted primary colors,

and saturated primary colors. Overall, 46.1% (*N*=256) of participants preferred neutral colors, and 41.5% of tourists and almost 50% of residents selected neutral hues as their preferred colorway of the Hawaiian shirts. About twenty-seven percent (*N*=148) preferred saturated primary colors, and 31.5% of tourists and only 23% of residents selected this color way. Lastly, 18.6% (*N*=103) preferred muted, with 20% (*N*=48) of tourists and 17.5% (*N*=55) of residents. Although the most preferred color way was neutral hues for both tourists and residents, more residents (49.7%) preferred neutral colors than tourists (41.5%). On the contrary, 31.5% of tourists selected saturated primary colorway while only 23% of residents preferred this color. Lastly, tourists and residents were relatively equally divided in their preference for muted primary color (20% compared to 17.5%, respectively), rather than neutral and saturated primary. Earlier studies (e.g., Loui/Singer and Associates, 1984) suggested that tourists tend to identify brilliant, saturated colors with Hawai'i and it may be that tourists in our study continue to be influenced by the assumption that Hawaiian prints are defined by color intensity (Table 3).

*Selection of reverse/fashion side* To examine if residential status relates to preference for either the fashion or the reverse side of fabric, the researchers showed participants two images of their preferred motif—fashion side out and the reverse side out. The participants who preferred a reverse print side (*N*=183) were composed of residents 63% (*N*=116) and 37% (*N*=67) were tourists. However, when the tourist component was examined further, a difference between west coast and east coast tourists was found. Tourists from the U.S. west coast preferred the reverse print (68%, *N*=32), whereas tourists from the U.S. east coast preferred the fashion side (31%, *N*=13). This difference may be due to the proximity of the west coast to Hawai'i making it more convenient for people living in Washington, Oregon, and California to visit the Islands and/or to be familiar with Island life. People from the west coast may be more familiar with the strong local fashion for reverse

**Table 3.** Percentage (N), preferred colorway by tourists and residents

Colorway	Overall % (N) selecting this print	Of those who preferred this colorway, % (N) tourists	Of those who preferred this colorway, % (N) residents
Neutral	46.1% (N=256)	41.5% (N=100)	49.7% (N=156)
Saturated primary	26.7% (N=148)	31.5% (N=76)	23.0% (N=72)
Muted primary	18.6% (N=103)	20.0% (N=48)	17.5% (N=55)
None	8.6% (N=48)	7.0% (N= 17)	9.8% (N=31)
Total	100.0% (N=555)	100.0% (N=241)	100.0% (N=314)

**Table 4.** *t*-test for design preferences: tourists vs. residents

Types of designs	Tourists (N=241)		Residents (N=314)		<i>t</i> -value
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	
Print design preferences	3.10	(1.85)	2.61	(1.98)	1.98*
Colorway preferences	1.67	(0.88)	1.47	(0.90)	2.66**
Fashion/reverse side preferences	1.29	(0.61)	1.30	(0.60)	-0.29

Notes: \*\**p*<.01, \**p*<.05

prints that was dominant among Island businessmen from the 1970s through the mid-1990s.

*Significance of differences in design preferences: tourists vs. residents* Lastly, differences in design preferences between tourists and residents were examined using *t*-test (Table 4). The results showed that tourists’ print design preferences significantly differ from that of residents (*t*=1.98, *p*<.05). The preferences in colorway of Hawaiian shirts were also significantly different between tourists and residents (*t*=2.66, *p*<.01). However, there was no significant difference in fashion/reverse side preferences between tourists and residents.

**4.2. Current market change of the Hawaiian shirt**

Among 10 interviewees, seven interviewees who had more than 10 years of experience agreed that there were noticeable changes in customers’ demand and taste as well as shopping behavior of the Hawaiian shirt and dress, in the past decade. Interviewee A indicated as follows:

I’ve been selling Hawaiian shirts and dresses for more than 20 years. I began my career as a sales associate then once owned four stores about 10 years ago. Now I’m running one store in a major shopping mall in Waikiki where there are so many tourist customers and a small number of residents. When compared to a decade ago, I see big differences in tourists’ shopping.

Due to the development of technology, especially mobile technology, customers became even savvier with using tons of useful and non-useful information. Eight interviewees out of 10 indicated that current customers, especially younger customers, are not likely

to listen to sales associates’ opinions or suggestions, and they are more dependent on the online information from blogs, websites, and SNS, etc. Interviewee B addressed:

Most younger customers don’t ask questions to us in the store. They rather look at their cell phones probably they search amazon or compare prices or take pictures of the shirts and send them to their families or friends who they are going to give a gift to. Certainly, they are more independent when picking out shirts than before.

The six interviewees who owned/managed retail stores in Waikiki area reported that their store customers contained approximately 90% tourists and 10% residents. Interviewee C asserted that the tourists’ ratio by the country may be Japanese 50%, the North America 25%, Europe 15%, China 5% and Korea 5%. Interviewees D and F indicated that non-Waikiki stores may have about 50% tourists and 50% resident customers. Seven out of 10 interviewees agreed that many tourists still prefer vivid and bright colored and recognizable big patterned Hawaiian shirts to wear as relaxing vacation attires while most of residents select a neutral or tone-down color with small patterned designs to wear as a business or formal wear. Interviewee E indicated:

I can still see tourists are more interested in up-beat and vivid colored, big patterned Hawaiian shirts that local residents wouldn’t want to wear. I think almost all visitors in Hawaii get Aloha shirts for himself or a gift. Many times, tourists are like they want to get different styles from the styles local people like.

However, recently an increasing number of tourists select Hawaiian shirts as residents do in order for them to wear not only in Hawai’i but also when they go back to their country in their routine lives. Six interviewees asserted that the tourist customers more consider practicality and even current fashion trend when they select Hawaiian shirts and dresses than they did a decade ago. Interviewee A stated as follows:

Some tourists still get a Hawaiian shirt that looks more like a traditional Aloha shirt that’s colorful, but at the same time I can see tourists’ tastes changed recently. Since about 2010, more visitors picked out a tone-down and small patterned Aloha shirts like local people do. I believe that’s because they are going to wear it not only here in Hawaii but in their countries in summer like their

casual shirts.

Five interviewees addressed that tourists consider color and design first and then price when they make purchase decision of Hawaiian shirts. Tourists may not even care about what the shirt's fabrication is (e.g., cotton, rayon, or blended). On the contrary, residents most consider fabrication because they prefer cotton 100% than rayon or blended fabrics. The interviewee H asserted:

Local customers are likely to get a Hawaiian shirt they can wear for long because they wear it very often a year round in Hawai'i.

Local people think cotton is more durable and higher quality than rayon or other synthetic fabrics.

All interviewees stated that overall the designs of Hawaiian shirts and dresses (i.e., mu'u mu'u) have been changed in recent years. More of Hawaiian shirt designs have been modernized as routine business dress shirts both for tourists and residents. The interviewees F indicated:

Women's dress like mu'u designs have changed drastically since a decade ago. The designs of most Hawaiian dresses are modernized and much simpler compared to the traditional Hawaiian dresses that look like long skirts, shirring, laced shoulder and neck, and bright colored and big flora patterned designs.

All interviewees agreed that the product development of Hawaiian shirts has been going well by developing modernized and contemporary textile designs with using new materials (e.g., modal fabric, dobby rayon fabric, natural shell buttons, etc.) as they see almost all tourists who visit Hawai'i purchase Hawaiian shirts and/or dresses for themselves or as a gift no matter how many times they visit Hawai'i.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that people—whether resident or tourist—do believe that tourists' preferences are different from their own. Eighty-five percent of respondents—whether resident or tourist—believed a tourist would wear something other than what the subject indicated that he or she would wear. This research does not examine whether or not the assumption of difference was accompanied by judgments regarding the relative aesthetic value of the actual and imagined preferences, and this question could be an avenue for further research. Hence, people, even if they are a tourist, do not consider their taste to be that of a tourist; thereby supporting MacCannell's (1976) assertion that people try to convince themselves that they are not tourists whether or not they in fact are.

We also assumed that the local assumption that tourists' taste was different from that of residents was likely a false stereotype—that the popularity of Hawaiian shirts in world-wide fashion markets had likely obliterated the difference between tourist taste and

local preferences, and that the high visibility of Hawaiian shirts in global fashion markets and their current popularity among consumers across national and international boundaries had modified both locals' and others' judgments regarding the shirt's aesthetic qualities. However, our study indicated that aesthetic differences do exist between local and non-local preferences for certain design motifs (i.e., print design, colorway). Residents were more apt to prefer the hibiscus, floral, and flag motifs, whereas tourists were more apt to prefer the fish design. The results also identified differences in preferences for color. Residents preferred neutrals more than did tourists. Thus, this research supports prior studies where a difference between tourists' and residents' preferences for Hawaiian shirts was assumed by residents (Morgado, 2003, 2005) but this research confirms it. However, results from interviews found that manufactures and sellers observed that tourist preferences are changing as they are looking for more streamline and modern fits.

With the constant development of designs, Hawaiian shirts have evolved and become a classic fashion item. As Bahng et al. (2016) indicated, one of the Hawai'i apparel manufacturer's barriers to expansion and internationalization is the limit of product development and lack of innovative design with high quality. In order to keep expanding the Hawaiian shirt/dress market, focusing on the development of innovative, modernized, fashionable, and trendy designs and use of new materials are critical. Designers should consider how classic Hawaiian motifs can be adapted to align with contemporary trends in fit, design, and lifestyle. We suggest that designers and developers use current fit preferences to capture the trend-seeking market; traditional Hawaiian shirts were made with a boxy cut and loose fit, however the current trends in men's shirts is for a fitted silhouette. We also recommend that designers utilize innovative textiles in their products, such as moisture-wicking and elastane blends for comfort and stretch, and sustainable manufacturing methods to capture the eco-friendly consumer. For example, pineapple and bamboo fibers would be ideal for product development—they are sustainable as well as associated with Hawaiian culture and history.

The results give credence to the theoretical framework that suggests that categorical assignments to one or another groups designated as us – them appear to apply in situations revolving around dress and appearance concerns. Furthermore, the study provides current market change of Hawaiian shirts and some evidence to support the validity of the popular assumption that tourists' aesthetic preferences are – on some design dimensions – different (if not aesthetically inferior) to those of locals.

This study is one of few academic research studies that examined the Hawaiian shirt regarding the design preferences of tourists



vs. residents, and current market change. This study contributed to two areas (i.e., fashion design, fashion marketing) by providing findings from both surveys of consumers and in-depth interviews of practitioners. These findings can be also utilized by manufacturers and retailers in their product development and overall merchandise and distribution plans for tourists and resident customers. For example, both tourists' and residents' favorite print designs were hibiscus and kappa. The next preferable designs for tourists were tiki and fish which were rated much lower for residents. Manufacturers/retailers may wish to allot the most of their assortment budget for developing/purchasing the two print designs – hibiscus and kappa, and then more of the budget for tiki and fish design items may be allotted for tourist market than residents. In addition, the findings from the interviews revealed that residents preferred cotton fabrics to any other synthetic fabrics and much less care about print designs and colors than tourists do. The marketing and merchandising strategies suggested in this section may benefit retailers' initial inventory selections because the initial retail buying is one of the most difficult tasks for retailers (Bahng & Kincade, 2014).

The findings should be read in light of the limitations of this study, and these may be improved upon in future research. The prints selected for the study, though coming directly from the marketplace and selected to represent an array of motifs, stylistic renditions and colors, were not consistent in terms of design characteristics. Efforts were made to control for hue and intensity, but line, space, and size of motif were varied among the prints. Furthermore, most prints were selected from the Hawaiian shirt inventory of a relatively upscale retailer and did not represent every nuanced motif. (However, it is unlikely that any study could possibly have represented the entire spectrum of styles and fabrications of Hawaiian shirts available.) Future research could improve upon this by hiring an artist to render similar motifs in a variety of style, color, and size variations, and different motifs using a consistent style of execution. In addition, because this study focused on the comparison between tourists and residents conducting survey regardless of the countries where tourists are from, the tourist sample may not represent the general tourist population who visit Hawai'i. Last but not least, different preferences among different nationalities and demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, etc) could be investigated in future studies.

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