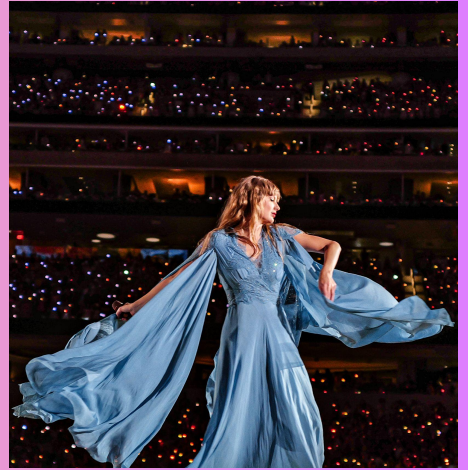


Taylor Swift's Eras Tour: Exploring Design Inspiration Within Online Spheres of Celebrity and Fandom

Costume Society of America Symposium 2024

Mona Jahani, MFA
Assistant Professor of Costume Design
Southeastern Louisiana University



Taylor Swift The Eras Tour The Folklore Set Era, Los Angeles CA, photo by Paolo Villanueva

Hi all, thank you so much for having me, my name is Mona Jahani and I am the assistant professor of costume design at Southeastern Louisiana University. I'm so glad to be here today discussing my research on Taylor Swift's Era Tour: exploring design inspiration within online spheres of celebrity and fandom



Purpose

- With the start of Taylor Swift's Eras Tour in March 2023, I saw a number of fans in online spaces making their own outfits to and posting about the journey in learning a sewing/crafting skill for the first time
- I hoped to better understand the inspirational power of this cultural event on the attitudes of young people towards sewing/crafting skills



Garment designed and created by Sam Sanchez from the Philippines

The inspiration for this project came first from my personal experience in seeing a number of Taylor Swift fans online posting about making their own outfits and exploring a sewing or crafting skill for the first time. I saw more and more posts, especially on TikTok as the Eras Tour began, and some fans began re-creating specific outfits that Taylor was wearing onstage. What was specifically interesting to me was what seemed to be this wave of young people who had expressed having little to no previous sewing experience or education taking on these creative projects and learning sewing/crafting skills mostly through the online community. As an educator I wanted to better understand the inspirational power of the Eras Tour specifically, and if there was then a desire for these individuals to further their sewing/crafting education.



Methods

- Identifying potential participants via posts on online platforms
 - TikTok
 - Instagram
- Contacting potential participants directly
- Qualtrics Survey
 - Prior sewing/crafting experience
 - Resources utilized
 - Influence of social media
 - **Attitudes towards dress culture**
 - **Desire to continue their skills**



Garment designed and created by Sonia Roshni

To start I began by submitting my project proposal to my university's International Review Board, and after being approved came the process of identifying potential participants. I selected potential participants by identifying Instagram and TikTok users who posted pictures and/or videos with hashtags indicating that they had created a costume or outfit to attend a concert date for Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour.

Potential participants were contacted via direct message on the online platform they had posted on, they were provided information about the study and then asked if they would be willing to participate. Due to the specific nature of wanting to survey individuals who had some sort of DIY element to their costume, I decided to contact potential participants directly, as opposing to sharing the link to the survey openly and encouraging widespread sharing of my posts.

The survey was conducted on Qualtrics and was completely anonymized. There were a total of 24 questions focused on number of topics, but mostly notably being the attitudes of participants towards dress culture as a result of the project, and their desire to continue their sewing/crafting skills. After completing the survey participants had the option to submit photos of their work for use in this presentation on a voluntary basis.

Current Results- Participants

- 55 participants so far
 - 56% had no, very basic, or beginner level sewing experience
 - 61% had no formal sewing education
- Goals
 - 34% to recreate an existing costume
 - 34% to create a costume inspired by Taylor Swift
 - 16% to re-interpret an existing costume
 - 10% to create a mashup of Taylor's Eras



Garment created by Becca Foster



Taylor Swift The Eras Tour
Midnights Era Set, Los Angeles
CA, photo by Paolo Villanueva

Onto the current results- 180 individuals were asked to participate, of those 81 of them agreed to participate, and so far 55 individuals have completed the survey.

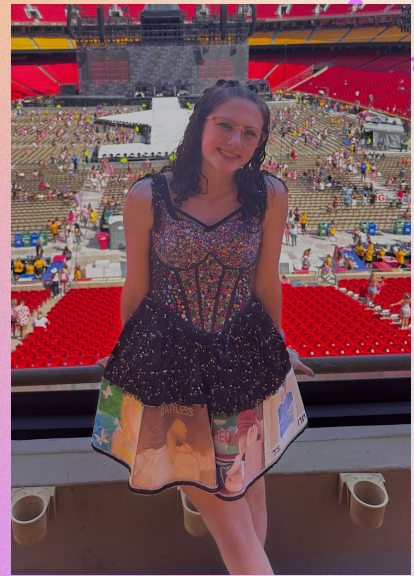
Of those 55, 56% said they had no, very basic, or beginner levels of sewing experience. 61% said they had no formal sewing education of any kind, while 21% had some level of high school home ec or equivalent, 10% had some sort of college sewing education, and 9% had sewing and/or crafting courses provided by a community center or equivalent

When asked about the primary goal of their project, 34% said they wanted to recreate an existing Taylor Swift outfit or costume, 34% said they wanted to design their own costume inspired by Taylor, and 16% said they wanted to re-interpret an existing costume. Of those who selected another primary goal, 10% provided a fill in answer indicating they were inspired by the Eras nature of Taylor's music and wanted to create a mashup of sorts to represent that in their outfit.

Results- Inspiration

- 27% seeing other on social media
- 18% sense of community among attendees
- 18% iconic nature of Taylor's outfits/fashion
- 9% "the event of the summer"
- 9% showing dedication as a fan
- 9% appreciation/embodiment of the art
- 5% the eras of the music
- 5% love for a specific album

"I hadn't really seen what is essentially cosplay done for an artist like this before and wanted to be a part of it"



Garment designed and created by Makenzy

When asked "What specifically about Taylor Swift and/or The Eras Tour inspired you to create a costume?" participants were able to provide an open ended answer- those typed results were then categorized into the following topic categories based on recurring themes-

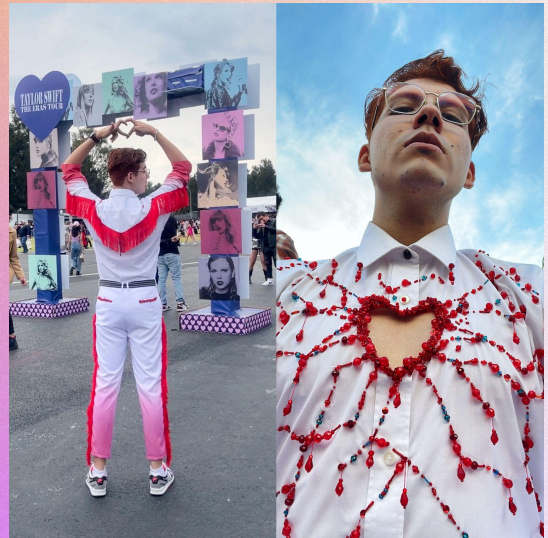
27% indicated that they were inspired by seeing other fans on social media creating their own outfits, 18% mentioned wanting to be a part of the community among other concert goers who were planning elaborate outfits. 18% mentioned being inspired by the iconic nature of Taylor Swift's concert outfits or fashion sense, specifically some stated they wanted to match with her while at the concert. 9% talked about the Eras Tour as the "event of the summer" or as an otherwise momentous occasion for them, and that they wanted to heighten the experience of attending through their attire. 9% talked about dressing up as a way to show their dedication as a fan,

When asked about direct inspiration for their outfits- 65% of participants said they were inspired by a previous outfit worn by Taylor in some way.

I also wanted to highlight a specific quote from one of the participants that was particularly insightful in the scope of this project, they said- "I hadn't really seen what is essentially cosplay done for an artist like this before and wanted to be a part of it"

Results- Construction

- Construction methods
 - 47% fully constructed
 - 29% partially constructed
 - 24% purchased items customized
- Resources used
 - 3% books
 - 16% mentorship
 - 17% sewing patterns
 - 35% Youtube tutorials
 - 47% TikTok Videos



Garment designed and created by @adanulisesorlando

In asking about the construction process of the project 47% of participants said they fully constructed their outfit, meaning fully build all the components, 29% said they partially constructed their outfit, meaning they may have purchased some components and made the others, and 24% said they purchased all the clothing items but then customized it themselves.

Of the resources used to help complete the project, the majority used some online components- with 47% citing TikTok videos and 35% citing YouTube videos. 17% used paper sewing patterns, 16% utilized the mentorship of a more experienced sewer/craft, and 3% used books

Results- Social Media

- 80% indicated social media played a role in deciding to make a costume
 - 72% were influenced by fans online
 - 69% posted process photos/videos online
 - 98% received positive feedback regarding their project



Garment designed and created by Michelle Voris (@colormemichelle)

When asked about the role of social media, 80% indicated that social media played a role in their decision to make a costume at all. 72% were influenced by fans online to create their costume. 69% of participants posted the process of making their costume online through photos or videos via social media. In terms of feedback, 98% said they received positive feedback either online or in person, with only 1 individual saying they had mixed feedback as a result.

Results- Dressing Up

- 57% had not dressed up for a concert before the Eras Tour
 - 16% had but only for Taylor Swift
- 94% said they would dress up again for future concerts
- 82% had a more positive experience because they dressed up



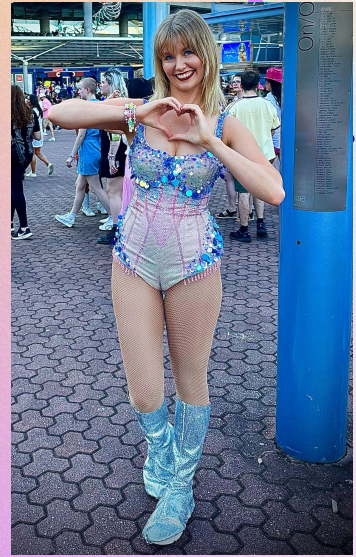
Photo provided by participant who wished to remain anonymous

When asked about the act of dressing up for the concert- 57% indicated that they had not dressed up for a concert before the Eras tour, another 16% said they had dressed up before but only for a previous Taylor Swift concert. When asked if they would dress up again in the future, 94% said they would in some capacity- either for a specific artist, a select few artists, or indiscriminately. When asked if their perception of the concert changed as a result of dressing up, 82% said they had a more positive time because they dressed up



Results- Dress Culture

- 32% greater respect for the amount of work/maker
- 12% increased self confidence
- 10% greater appreciation for the art
- 10% a sense of community
- 7% greater sense of joy



Garment created by Lauren Oliver

When asked “How has your perception of fashion/dress culture changed as a result of completing this project?” participants were able to provide an open ended answer- those typed results were then categorized into the following topic categories based on recurring themes-

32% mentioned that they had a greater respect for the time/effort that goes into this kind of work, some specifically mentioned how surprised they were about the magnitude that the project took on, and many talked about how impressed they are with those who make clothing. 12% talked about having a greater sense of self confidence in some way, some in their body image and others in their skills. 10% mentioned having a greater appreciation for the artistry of fashion and dress, 10% talked about having a greater sense of community as a result of their project, and 7% expressed an increased sense of joy in fashion/dress as a result.

When asked about secondary goals 34% indicated they had a personal goal of feeling more accomplished, 7% said they wanted to improve their skills, 29% said they wanted to share their work on social media, and 7% said all of the above



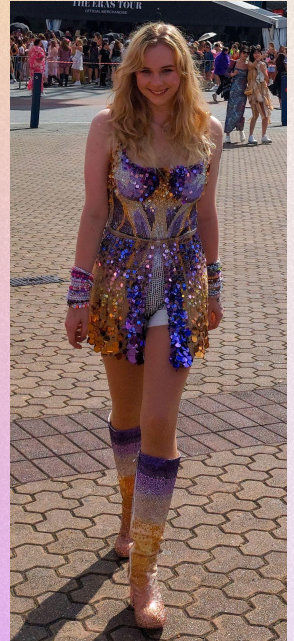
Results- Future Learning

- 92% indicated they want to continue furthering their sewing/crafting skills

"Yes - would love to improve my sewing techniques and be able to start drafting patterns by myself."

"Definitely! My costume was hand sewn and glued and i would love to learn how to use a sewing machine to make future projects faster, it was a positive experience and the reaction from other fans at the concert made the whole process worth it."

"Yes, I further pursued some sewing classes and have since started my own small business where I take commission orders for others!"



Garment created by Cassie Johanson

When asked if they have a desire to continue furthering their sewing/crafting skills as a result of this project, 92% said they did. This was posed as an open ended question, and participants were able to describe their opinions. I've included several excerpts that were of particular interest here- One person said

"Yes - would love to improve my sewing techniques and be able to start drafting patterns by myself."

Another responded-

"Definitely! My costume was hand sewn and glued and i would love to learn how to use a sewing machine to make future projects faster, it was a positive experience and the reaction from other fans at the concert made the whole process worth it."

And this last response was really exciting for me-

"Yes, I further pursued some sewing classes and have since started my own small business where I take commission orders for others!"

“I decided to make my costume before it was a big thing on social media. I think Taylor Swift inspired many people to make the outfits and then from there fans inspired other fans. It really was a fun experience going to a concert where everyone is dressed from their favorite era.”

When asked for any other comments they wanted to share, one participant gave a very insightful answer that was of particular interest to this research-

“I decided to make my costume before it was a big thing on social media. I think Taylor Swift inspired many people to make the outfits and then from there fans inspired other fans. It really was a fun experience going to a concert where everyone is dressed from their favorite era.”



Limitations & Next Steps

- Limitations
 - Social media bias from online participant pool
- Next Steps
 - Continued data collection
 - Exploring where to take the data results next



Garments designed and created by Kathryn Prazak

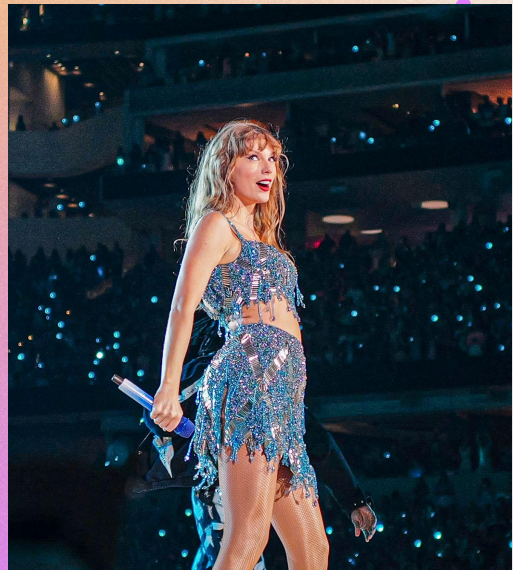
Having looked at the current results, I did want to mention a recognized limitation of this study. I was very interested from the start on the role of online fandom spaces on this seemingly newfound interest for some in exploring sewing/crafting skills, however it's entirely possible that because the pool of potential participants is pulled from those who have posted their work online, the connected and influence of social media may be overstated by some amount.

As I continue this project I would like to continue collecting data, with the continuation of the Eras Tour to international dates there is a continually growing pool of potential participants to contact. However, beyond the data collection phase, I am personally a bit unsure on how to further the project and where to take my results next. Being unfamiliar with the world of journals and article publications, I would be interested in exploring that next.



Thank you!

Mona Jahani, MFA
Assistant Professor of Costume Design
Southeastern Louisiana University
mona.jahani@selu.edu
<https://www.monajahani.com/>



Taylor Swift The Eras Tour 1989 Era Set, Los Angeles
CA, photo by Paolo Villanueva

For now, this is the current status of this research. Thank you so much for your time, I welcome any questions, and especially any suggestions or comments moving forward. Thanks again!