

Sustainable Braided Beach Resort Wear for Sri Lanka: Natural Fabrics and Eco-Friendly Dyeing Innovations

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Abstract— This study explores the innovative transformation of food waste into a sustainable resource for textile design, while simultaneously revitalizing traditional craft practices. Discarded coffee grounds, red cabbage leaves, marigold petals, avocado pits, and tea leaves were repurposed as natural dyes and applied to biodegradable fabrics such as cotton, silk, and rayon. The research centred on developing the Braided Resort Wear Collection, inspired by the Lime Butterfly (*Papilio demoleus*), marking a significant achievement in aligning the brand's creative vision with environmental responsibility.

An online customer survey involving over 100 participants was conducted to evaluate consumer awareness and interest in sustainable fashion, natural dye applications, and garments incorporating traditional craftsmanship. Findings indicated strong receptiveness toward eco-conscious clothing that blends environmental innovation with cultural authenticity.

Dyeing trials examined colour uptake, fastness, and pH sensitivity, revealing excellent performance on natural fibres, though results were less effective on synthetic blends. Collaboration with local women artisans enriched the project, as their skills in eco-dyeing, hand-braiding, and Beeralu lace-making enhanced both the technical quality of the garments and the preservation of Sri Lanka's textile heritage. This engagement also contributed to their economic empowerment and professional development.

To showcase the design potential of these sustainably dyed textiles, a six-piece Bohemian-inspired resort wear capsule, Flutter Weave, was created. The project embodies the principles of SDG 12—Responsible Consumption and Production—by demonstrating how waste valorization, responsible material sourcing, and artisan-led production can merge environmental stewardship with cultural richness. This design approach not only captures the aesthetic appeal and versatility of natural dyes but also lays a foundation for future innovations that promote sustainability within contemporary fashion and textile industries.

Keywords: Sustainable clothing, natural dye, Braided resort wear, Bohemian style

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I. INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is often celebrated for its creativity and trend setting, but behind the glamour lies a major environmental challenge. Conventional textile dyeing, especially with synthetic, petrochemical-based dyes, consumes huge amounts of water and releases harmful chemicals into rivers and soil. In Sri Lanka and many other countries, untreated dye wastes from small-scale dye houses often flow directly into local waterways, affecting aquatic life, agriculture, and community health (Ali et al, 2019; Natarajan et al., 2021).

One promising solution is the use of natural dyes made from food waste. Everyday organic discards such as coffee grounds, tea leaves, red cabbage leaves, marigold petals, and avocado pits can be repurposed into safe, biodegradable dyes. These waste-derived dyes not only reduce chemical pollution but also keep organic matter out of landfills, helping to cut methane emissions and promote a more circular fashion system (Samanta & Agarwal, 2009; Salvatore et al., 2020).

This approach also opens the door for community-based production. In Sri Lanka, *Beeralu* lace-making, a delicate hand-braiding craft introduced during the Portuguese colonial period, is a unique cultural heritage skill that has been declining due to mass production and lack of demand. By integrating *Beeralu* lace into contemporary eco-dyed garments, there is an opportunity to revive this tradition and create sustainable income streams for rural women. This type of home-based work allows artisans to balance earning opportunities with family responsibilities, while keeping traditional skills alive for future generations (Perera, 2017; Ranasinghe & Jayawardena, 2022).

This research focuses on combining food waste-based eco-dyeing and heritage craft revival to create sustainable, small-scale fashion products. It examines the dyeing potential of selected food waste sources on natural fabrics, works alongside local women artisans to produce *Beeralu* lace, and applies these materials to a premium Bohemian-inspired resort wear capsule collection. By linking environmental responsibility with

cultural preservation, this study aims to show that fashion can be both beautiful and responsible, contributing to cleaner production reaching the sustainable goals.

A. Braided Silhouette Trend – 2025/26

Braiding formed the core of the collection's design, serving both decorative and structural roles while embodying interconnectedness, tradition, and the values of slow craftsmanship. It introduced tactile richness, visual depth, and an artisanal Boho Luxe character. Popular braiding styles—such as the Basic Three-Strand, Four- and Five-Strand, Square, Fishtail, Basketweave, and Herringbone—were skillfully applied to infuse garments with movement, texture, and a refined handcrafted identity.

The collection embraces the artistry of braiding, blending bohemian luxury with contemporary refinement. Braided silhouettes sculpt garments to enhance the body's natural lines, supported by structural drapery and twisted layers for contrast and movement. Knotted elegance replaces mechanical closures, offering functional beauty, while handcrafted braids and organic weaving celebrate slow craftsmanship and tactile authenticity. Rope detailing draws on coastal inspirations, balancing strength with softness, and flowing braids add graceful motion. Tactile textures, from fringes to layered threads, enrich surfaces, while fringe extensions complement braiding with dynamic rhythm. The boho luxe braiding approach uses refined fabrics, clean finishes, and subtle metallics to appeal to an upscale audience. Each element—whether draped, twisted, or freely hanging—reinforces a sense of personal freedom, nature-inspired aesthetics, and timeless resort elegance.

B. The Brand “Flutter Weave” positioning in the market

Flutter Weave is a premium, bohemian-inspired resort wear brand crafted for the refined tastes and values of empowered women. The Bohemian aesthetic celebrates freedom, nature, craftsmanship, and individuality. It is not just a style; it is a philosophy rooted in handmade processes, earthy materials, and multicultural influences. The techniques employed in this collection reflect the soul of Boho Luxe, aligning with slow fashion and meaningful adornment. More than a fashion label, “Flutter Weave” is a research-driven creative platform exploring sustainable textile innovations, particularly the use of natural dyes extracted from food waste. The brand's vision is to seamlessly merge environmental responsibility with cultural preservation, producing garments that are as ecologically meaningful as they are aesthetically captivating. Its design philosophy is anchored in four core pillars:

- Artisanal Identity – Showcasing handcrafted braiding techniques inspired by bohemian aesthetics and nature motifs such as butterflies, reflecting individuality and craftsmanship.

- Sustainability – Commitment to eco-friendly materials and ethical production practices to meet the growing demand for responsible fashion.

- Women's Empowerment – Celebrating femininity, freedom, and strength, with designs that instill confidence and self-expression.

- Exclusivity & Cultural Relevance – Offering limited-edition monthly collections inspired by Sri Lankan beach culture, ensuring uniqueness and emotional connection.

II. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The Sri Lankan fashion market offers limited availability of braided dresses, particularly those reflecting the bohemian aesthetic favored by upper-class women and female tourists aged 30–35. This scarcity reveals a clear market gap, where demand for stylish, relaxed, and artisanal resort wear remains largely unmet—representing both a creative and commercial opportunity for local designers and retailers.

At the same time, the global fashion industry is a major contributor to environmental degradation, with Sri Lanka facing its own challenges of overproduction, inefficient resource use, and minimal recycling or upcycling infrastructure. To address this, the project integrates sustainable practices, including zero-waste pattern cutting, natural dyeing, and eco-friendly material sourcing—aligning with global goals for environmental stewardship and responsible consumption.

Additionally, the country's garment sector faces socioeconomic strain due to the global economic downturn, leading to factory closures, reduced output, and significant job losses, especially among women. By emphasizing artisanal braiding techniques, the project creates skill-based employment opportunities that empower women, preserve traditional craftsmanship, and strengthen the resilience of the local fashion economy.

III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

A. Aim

To design and develop the sustainable *Braiding* resort wear collection for Sri Lankan women aged 30–35, utilizing pigments extracted from food waste for textile dyeing, and combining eco-friendly production methods with traditional *Beeralu* lace craftsmanship to promote responsible fashion, minimize waste, and empower local women artisans.

B. Objectives

To achieve the main aim of the research, the following sub-objectives were established:

- Natural Dye Experimentation: Investigate and extract dyes from selected food waste sources, including coffee grounds, tea leaves, red cabbage leaves, marigold petals, and avocado pits. Apply these dyes to natural fabrics such as cotton, silk, rayon, and linen,

and evaluate the resulting samples for colour fastness under natural sunlight.

- Braiding and Beeralu Lace Techniques: Explore and experiment with various braiding methods and Beeralu lace applications using natural fabric types, integrating artisanal craftsmanship into the design process.
- Concept and Design Development: Create concepts and design directions for a braided resort wear collection, drawing inspiration from the research findings and aesthetic themes.
- Product Development and Performance Analysis: Develop the final fashion collection, conduct live modelling sessions, and assess the performance, visual appeal, and wearability of the garments.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the design development and consumer alignment of a braided beach resort wear collection under the brand name "Flutter Weave." It specifically targets Sri Lankan upper-class women and international female tourists aged 30–35 who favor a bohemian-inspired, sustainable fashion aesthetic. The research aims to examine consumer preferences, expectations, and perceptions related to the proposed collection, with a focus on the integration of braided textile techniques and environmentally responsible fashion practices through the online survey.

V. METHODOLOGY

The online survey, completed by 117 participants, was used to identify the scale consumer awareness and interest in sustainable fashion, natural dyes, and garments that incorporate traditional craft. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with five women artisans and two textile professionals provided qualitative insights into the feasibility, appeal, and potential scaling of eco-dyed craft-based products.

Five types of readily available food waste; coffee grounds, tea leaves, red cabbage leaves, marigold petals, and avocado pits were collected from household and local community sources. After cleaning and preparing the materials, dyes were extracted using aqueous methods. Food extracted dye applications were tested with 100% natural fabrics like, cotton, silk, rayon, and linen and synthetic fiber mix fabrics like, polyester. Feasibility studies were tested for colour fastness for natural sunlight, and pH sensitivity to evaluate the suitability.

The traditional *Beeralu* lace-making techniques were investigated through several site visits to see artisans in southern Sri Lanka. The dyed fibers/fabrics and commissioned *Beeralu* lace were combined to assess both aesthetic potential and practical wearability in premium sustainable fashion.

A. Range planning through concepts and design developments

The collection embodies the duality of freedom and rootedness, inspired by the Lime Butterfly (*papilio demoleus*)—a symbol of transformation, lightness, and continuity. Colour palettes, along with visual and tactile

textures, were developed from this inspiration and brought to life through natural dye applications, *Beeralu* lace, and braiding techniques.

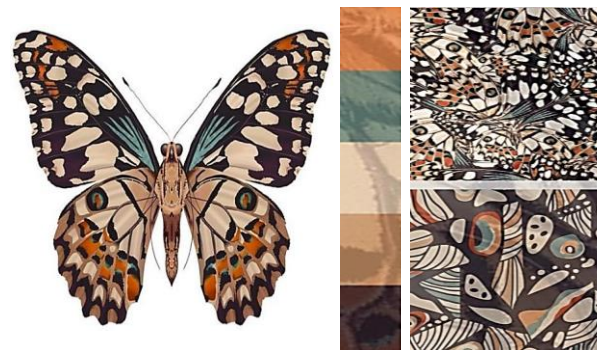


Figure 1: Lime Butterfly (*papilio demoleus*) (a), Selected colour code (b), and developed textural effects (c)

While following several concepts and design developments, fashion range for six final designs for braided beach resort wear collection was designed as shown in figure 2 and 3.



Figure 2: Final six front looks of the designed fashion range (1-6)

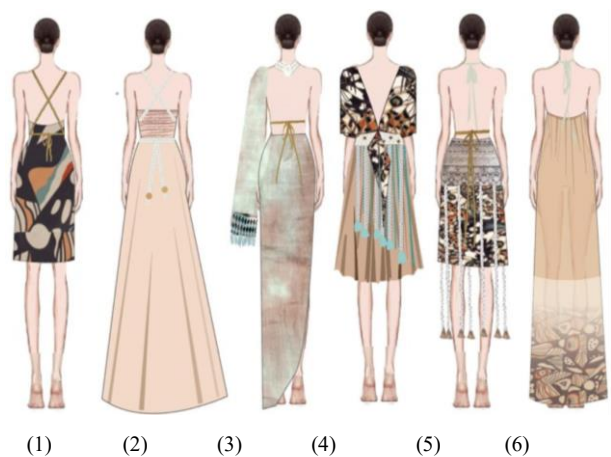


Figure 3: Final six back looks of the designed fashion range (1-6)

All six designs are developed with natural dying with food waste on 100% natural fabrics, sublimation printing with polyester mix cotton, braided fabric and *Beeralu* lace developments with natural cotton yarns.

B. Product development with final garment preparation.

Final materials and pattern plates were prepared based on the technical drawings developed for all six designs. Figure 4 shows the developed set of technical drawings for look (e) and (f).

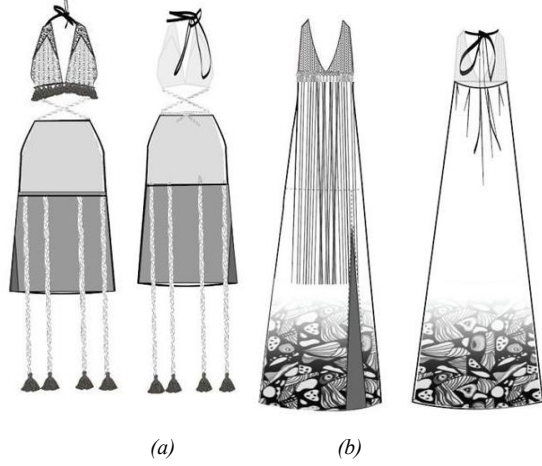


Figure 4: Front & back view of the technical drawings: (a) look 5, (b) look 6.

Based on technical drawing all tech of technical specifications sheets were developed for all six designs including, material and accessory selections, operation breakdown, and care labeling setting information. Finally developed six fashions out fits with live modeling shown in figure 5.



Figure 5: Photographs of live modeling for six design outfits. (Looks 1-6).

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Social, Cultural, and Environmental Impact

The collection goes with eco-dyeing concepts, learning how their lace could be naturally colored using food waste pigments and then integrated into high-value garments. the research applied a circular design approach using only biodegradable food waste sources; coffee grounds, tea leaves, red cabbage, marigold petals, and avocado pits; to create a low-carbon, chemical-free dyeing system This directly supports United Nations SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production by turning waste into value while preventing chemical pollution.

B. Dyeability of Food Waste–Based Pigments

Small-scale, resource-conscious trials were conducted to reflect realistic artisan production rather than lab-controlled conditions. Cotton, silk, rayon, linen, and polyester blends were tested to compare pigment uptake across natural and synthetic fibers. The natural dyes visual colours intensity was analysis with pantone colour code are shown in Table I.

Table 1: Natural dye colour intensity with pantone colour code

Color Name	Pantone Code	Natural Dye Source
Gold Earth	15-1234 TCX	Coffee extract
Teal Stencil	18-4018 TCX	Red cabbage + baking powder (alkaline)
Orange Peel	16-1359 TCX	Avocado pits
Autumn Blonde	12-0813 TCX	Tea extract

The process involved gentle pre-washing, safe mordanting (alum or vinegar), and extraction by boiling, simmering, or steeping depending on pigment stability. For example, red cabbage required cooler extraction to preserve anthocyanins, while marigold needed longer simmering for carotenoids. Colour intensity, Level of colour evenness, and Colour fastness with natural sun light were tested.

Table 2 shows the natural dye application with different fabric types. Results showed cotton and silk achieved the richest colours due to their hydrophilic and protein-binding properties. Linen and rayon produced softer hues, while polyester blends absorbed minimal colour. These findings highlight that food waste–based dyes perform best on natural fibers, making them ideal for sustainable fashion lines targeting eco-conscious consumers.

Table 2: Possibility of natural dye application with different fabric types

Fabric Type	Natural Dye Sources				
	Coffee (Gold Earth)	Red Cabbage (Teal)	Tea (Autumn Blonde)	Marigold (Orange Peel)	Avocado (Soft Pink)
Cotton	Excellent	Moderate	Good	Excellent	Good
Linen	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Moderate
Silk	Excellent	Good	Good	Moderate	Excellent
Rayon	Good	Moderate	Excellent	Good	Good

Polyester Blend	Poor	Poor	Poor	Moderate	Poor
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The Table 3 shown the side-by-side evaluation considered pH sensitivity, colour fastness, and eco-friendliness for each dye source.

Table 3: Properties of the Natural Dye with Experimental Results.

Natural Dye	Coffee	Red Cabbage	Tea	Marigold	Avocado Pits
pH Sensitivity with different pH levels	Low/colour remained relatively stable	Very High/producing significant colour shifts	Moderate / slight variations in hue	Low/consistent colour tone regardless of pH changes	Moderate / showing noticeable but not drastic colour variations
Colour / Colour Fastness	Earthy browns / High	Moderate	Subtle earthy golds / Good	Bright orange hues / Excellent	Soft pinks / Good

Based on the test finding results derived analysis as below,

- Marigold petals stood out for excellent colour retention, producing vibrant oranges that held up well after multiple washes.
- Red cabbage was highly pH-reactive, shifting dramatically from magenta to teal with water acidity making them ideal for artistic textiles but less suited to long-term even colour.
- Coffee grounds and tea leaves produced stable earthy browns and golds with a vintage appeal, fading gracefully over time.
- Avocado pits yielded subtle pinks and beiges, better for occasional wear or pastel-focused collections due to moderate fade in sunlight or friction.

C. Aesthetic Evaluation via Photoshoot

To evaluate the collection's visual impact and market readiness, a professional photoshoot was conducted. This process allowed for a thorough assessment of the garments' aesthetic appeal, fit, and overall presentation, while also testing their branding and promotional potential within the ethical luxury segment. The shoot served as the final stage in evaluating both the technical performance of the natural dyes and the market-ready allure of the designs.

The resulting images revealed the richness and authenticity that only natural dyes can achieve. Marigold oranges glowed in natural light, avocado pinks radiated delicate warmth, and coffee browns grounded the collection with earthy elegance.

The distinguishing features of the final six looks (Figure 5) are described below.

- **Look 1** (Fig.5(1)) – Cotton dress with *Beeralu* lace in front application and sublimation print of developed print design on silk.

- **Look 2** (Fig.5(2)) – Eco-dyed cotton dress in soft orange from avocado pits, with hand-braided shoulder cords for structure and texture. *Beeralu* lace used to decorated the front.
- **Look 3** (Fig.5(3)) – Sarong and scarf dyed with coffee grounds, tea leaves, and marigold flowers, evoking Sri Lanka's golden-brown landscapes. hand-braided fabrics and *Beeralu* lace used to decorate the design.
- **Look 4** (Fig.5(4)) – Linen skirt and top with braiding and sublimation print accents. Braiding decorations were used to add the movement.
- **Look 5** (Fig.5(5)) – Halter neck blouse, skirt, and wide belt with *Beeralu* lace, fringe, and a mint-to-lavender gradient from red cabbage dye.
- **Look 6** (Fig.5(6)) – Sleeveless long dress with silk sublimation print, harmonized with eco-dyed cotton elements.

Collectively, the photoshoot demonstrated a balance of strength, elegance, and sustainable craftsmanship, celebrating natural beauty through organic forms.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

The successful completion of the braided resort wear collection, inspired by the Lime Butterfly (*papilio demoleus*), represents a pivotal accomplishment in harmonizing the brand's visionary ethos with the nuanced preferences of its target clientele.

This collection embodies the quintessential bohemian spirit—manifested through meticulously crafted patterns, and an inherent sense of freedom and individuality each element thoughtfully drawn from the delicate aesthetics and symbolism of the butterfly's wings.

By integrating eclectic cultural references and artistic motifs, the designs transcend mere fashion, creating a visually captivating and culturally resonant narrative that honors both heritage and innovation. The collection articulates a profound celebration of individuality and a harmonious connection to the natural world, emblematic of the Lime Butterfly's transformative journey. Moreover, this project not only fulfills its creative and conceptual objectives but also foregrounds the brand's steadfast dedication to sustainability. The use of braided construction techniques and commitment to minimizing material waste exemplify an environmentally conscious methodology, aligning with contemporary imperatives for ethical and sustainable fashion production. Through this, the collection affirms its role in advancing responsible luxury, offering garments that are both aesthetically compelling and environmentally mindful.

B. Recommendations

Market Testing with Target Audience

Before launching the full braided resort wear collection, targeted market testing should be conducted among Sri Lankan upper-class women and female

tourists. Direct feedback on fit, comfort, fabric selection, and design details will help ensure the collection meets the lifestyle needs and preferences of these customers. The results of this testing can be used to refine the designs for greater appeal and wearability.

Storytelling in Marketing

Marketing strategies should highlight the collection's inspiration from the lime butterfly, braided craftsmanship, and sustainable eco-dye techniques. Narratives about Sri Lankan artisanal heritage, the symbolic meaning of the butterfly, and the eco-conscious dyeing process can create emotional connections and enhance the collection's distinct value for customers seeking meaningful fashion.

Collaboration with Local Artisans and Influencers

The authenticity and reach of the collection can be strengthened through collaboration with Sri Lankan artisans skilled in traditional braiding and eco-dyeing, alongside local fashion influencers who appreciate bohemian and sustainable aesthetics. These partnerships will increase brand credibility, enrich cultural value, and expand visibility within the target market.

Strong Online and Resort Presence

An engaging online platform should be developed to showcase the collection's craftsmanship, eco-friendly processes, and bohemian elegance. High-quality visuals and storytelling that reflect the Sri Lankan coastal lifestyle will appeal to both local buyers and international tourists. Collaborations with resort boutiques can also provide direct access to visitors seeking exclusive resort wear.

Limited Edition and Customization Options

Offering limited edition pieces and customization options—such as personalized braiding patterns or eco-dye colours inspired by local nature—can enhance exclusivity and personal connection. This approach will appeal to upper-class customers who value unique and meaningful wardrobe pieces.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

The project aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by demonstrating how waste valorization, responsible consumption, and artisan-led fashion can integrate environmental stewardship with cultural heritage. It also showcases the potential of natural dyes while providing a foundation for future innovation in sustainable fashion and textile practices.

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