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The Saudi Arabian bride shopping experience

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The Saudi Arabian bride shopping experience

by

Wijdan Tawfiq

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Apparel, Merchandising, and Design

Program of Study Committee:
Mary Lynn Damhorst, Co-major Professor
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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2019

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ABSTRACT

In Saudi Arabia, a wedding is a significant occasion requiring extensive preparation. However, researchers have not yet explored how bride-to-be consumption patterns might be shaped in a tradition-oriented culture like Saudi Arabia. Prior literature illustrates that planning a wedding in Western societies is a personal, deeply emotional experience in which tradition and cultural values are strongly emphasized (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; McEnally, 2002; Thomas & Peters, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepared for the wedding process – including the multiple social events planned around their weddings as well as their new lives after the wedding.

Qualitative data were collected via one to three semi-structured interviews with 14 Saudi brides-to-be who were engaged to be married. Both narrative inquiry and grounded theory were used for the analysis stage. The narrative inquiry focused on individual perspectives and how themes were integrated within a personal experience. Summary across all the participants' stories presented a larger picture of the content of the stories and the use of the new purchases during the transition process. The grounded theory approach involved discovery of emergent themes within the data. For grounded theory, data were analyzed using constant comparison processes and revealed three major overarching themes: (1) Readiness for the new life after marriage, (2) New purchase reflection of the bride-to-be's struggle between individuality and culturally conforming bride, and (3) Others' influence on bride-to-be's purchase decisions. Several social psychological theories and concepts fit the data well and facilitated understanding of the phenomenon studied. Two conceptual models were developed to (1) illustrate how theories fit with grounded themes and (2) map the process of the Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience as

they prepare for the wedding and their lives after the wedding and shape new identities during the transition process.

Findings revealed that the Saudi bride-to-be's shopping experience to prepare for multiple marriage celebrations and life after marriage is a complex and demanding process. During their transition into marriage, they engaged in an identity construction process that involved making changes in their appearance to feel and reflect the symbolic differences between single and married life. In managing this evolving identity, participants were largely focused on the cultural and ideal bridal appearance within Saudi culture. When making decisions on what to wear and how to present herself in marriage celebrations and life after marriage, a bride-to-be navigated and negotiated among many factors. These factors included social forces and marriage traditions, reflected appraisal from significant others, her individuality, and her new identity construction. The consumption of many new products facilitates transition into marriage but also may lead to conflicts with self and others about symbolic meanings of products and celebration practices.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The wedding, often viewed as “every girl’s dream” and special day when she will be at her most beautiful, is tied to special rituals bringing families and friends together to mark and celebrate a rite of passage from one stage of life to another (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004). As in many cultures, the wedding is a major occasion in Saudi Arabia; the bride not only shops to prepare for her wedding day but prepares for several social events prior to her wedding and for her new life after the wedding (Al-Jeraisy, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Saud85, 2013; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a).

Marriage in Saudi Arabia is considered a key to a healthy culture and the only permissible intimate relationship between a man and a woman (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Doumato, 2010; Long, 2005). The cultural importance of marriage and the wedding itself allows for a boasting occasion in which Saudi people spend freely and extravagantly to reflect the success and respectability of the family (Al-Jeraisy, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997). The Saudi wedding celebration is a process that entails multiple social events, starting from the time the bride and groom first meet and continuing until the wedding day (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.). The events include *Shofa*, *Fatiha*, *Melka*, *Shabkah*, *Ghomrah*, and the wedding; all will be further discussed in the literature review chapter under “The Saudi Wedding Process” subheading.

Brides are unique consumers who invest a great deal of time and money into the wedding process. The wedding industry has witnessed dramatic growth in the West (Boden, 2001; Carter & Duncan, 2017; Howard, 2006; Wallace, 2004), and Saudi weddings have mirrored this growth trend. While Saudi per capita yearly income is only equivalent to US \$25,000 (Taha, 2013), the Strategic Business Information Database (2000) reported that the average cost for a wedding and

wedding preparations in Saudi Arabia is at minimum US \$40,000 and could exceed US \$100,000 for high-income Saudis. These statistics confirm the value of weddings in Saudi Arabia and how they are a social showcase and celebration of family.

Significance of the Study

Several research studies conducted in Western cultures have focused on wedding rituals and consumption patterns (Boden, 2001; Carter & Duncan, 2017; Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; McEnally, 2002; Otnes, Lowrey, & Shrum, 1997; Thomas & Peters, 2011; Weiss, 2008). Work in this area has provided baseline information on consumer behavior of the bride within the Western context of wedding shopping and wedding planning. Additionally, studies emphasized the significance of tradition and cultural values in wedding events (Carter & Duncan, 2017; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004).

However, little is known about Saudi culture wedding rituals and their impact on consumption patterns. Limited studies have examined Saudi female consumer satisfaction and shopping intentions (Al-Maghrabi, 2010; Al-Mousa, 2005; Khatib, 2016; Omar, 2014), but the Saudi bride as consumer has not yet been examined. Within Arabic language research literature, a few studies provide accounts of the characteristics of brides' traditional costumes worn in the western region of Saudi Arabia (Ashour, 2005; Iskandarani, 2006). Ashour (2005) used the western Saudi traditional bridal costumes as inspiration to design clothes for contemporary brides. Prior work has suggested that the bride gives extra attention to her dress choices to present an image of the "ideal woman," not only for her wedding day but during all social and family events she attends before and after the wedding (Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). However, researchers have not explored the unique experiences of the Saudi bride during the wedding

preparation. Therefore, a focus on shopping experiences of Saudi brides-to-be gives valuable insights into the consumption patterns for weddings in a culture outside of the Western context.

Prior literature illustrates the uniqueness of the Western bridal consumer process when planning for a wedding and the numerous factors that influence purchases for the wedding. Previous studies about weddings in Western cultures show that planning a wedding is a personal, deeply emotional experience, in which cultural meanings and values are strongly emphasized (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011). The role of others in wedding planning, most importantly the family's role, is significant (Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011; Weiss, 2008). Nelson and Deshpande (2004) found that cultural values and norms were a significant influence on wedding celebrations.

Because culture is an important aspect of understanding the bridal consumer and studies have not yet explored how wedding preparation might differ in a culture like Saudi Arabia, more research is needed. Thus, this present study was warranted to explore and examine the Saudi woman's bridal purchase experience during her wedding preparation period.

Prior literature in Western cultures showed that cultural meaning and values are strongly emphasized in wedding planning (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011; Weiss, 2008). Specific and crucial influences on wedding consumption patterns are family expectations (Carter & Duncan, 2017; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004). In addition, Boden (2001) found that media plays a major role in Western weddings by articulating a "superbride" image that shapes expectations and planning for the wedding. Of interest in this study, therefore, was the influence of culture

norms, familial expectations, and the media, including social media, in the Saudi bridal shopping experience. All of these influences are shaped by cultural context.

Purpose Statement

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepared for the wedding process – including the multiple social events planned around their weddings as well as their new lives after the wedding. Specifically, this study aimed to understand: (a) the factors that influence bride-to-be choices and consumption patterns during shopping and preparation for their weddings; (b) the role culture, family, and social interactions play in the process; (c) the influence that Saudi marketplaces, media, and social media have on the brides-to-be from the perspective of bride as consumer; and (d) the deep meanings reflected in the shopping process and purchases made during the wedding preparation process.

Research Questions and Approach

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What do Saudi brides-to-be shop for during the engagement period? What is the importance or significance of different products in relation to their wedding celebrations and life after the wedding?
2. What factors influence the purchase choices of Saudi brides-to-be when shopping and preparing for the wedding and after the wedding?
 - 2a. From a Saudi bride's perspective, how does culture and family influence the wedding preparation experience?
 - 2b. How do Saudi marketplaces, media, and social media influence bride-to-be choices when shopping and preparing for the wedding process?

To answer these questions, qualitative inquiry was conducted through the use of in-depth interviews with Saudi brides-to-be. The researcher drew from two qualitative approaches, narrative inquiry and grounded theory, to provide a holistic understanding of the topic (Annells, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Frost et al., 2011).

The grounded theory approach provided systematic data analysis and theoretical explanations of the findings (Creswell, 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Narrative inquiry helped the researcher construct a point of view based on participants' stories and how they construct meaning from their experiences individually and as part of a social group (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam, 2002). The researcher examined brides' stories to learn more about the wedding and post-wedding preparation experience. The data were collected through three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each of 14 Saudi women, who at the time of data collection were engaged to be married.

This study focused on the timespan after the *Melka* (engagement party) until after the wedding (see Figure 1 for timeline). The time intervals in Figure 1 are an estimated time in weeks between the marriage events in Saudi Arabia according to common practice (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017). To understand how brides-to-be plan for their future marriage celebration and their new lives after the wedding, women in the sample had held their *Melka* and had scheduled their weddings within six months of the first interview date.

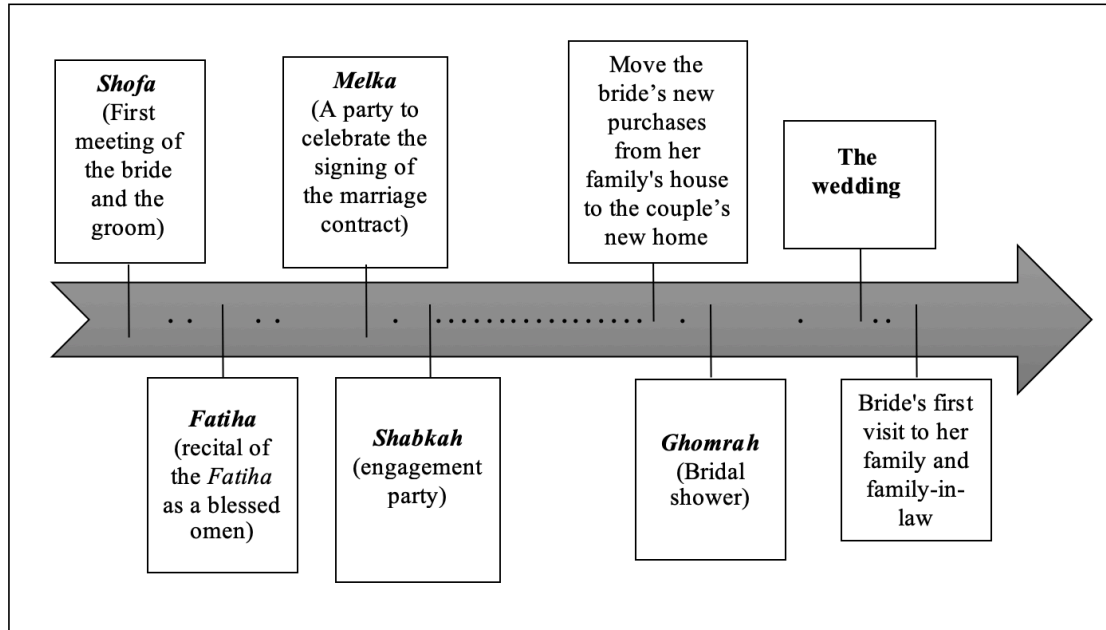


Figure 1. Saudi Wedding Process Timeline (dots between events signify the usual intervals in terms of weeks between each event)

Limitations

Some limitations exist due to the interview method and scope of the sample. The variation in times between the interviews conducted with each participant may have caused inconsistency in contacts with each participant during their transition through the wedding process stages. The interview process itself shapes the data in ways that are different from a questionnaire or other approaches to data collection, such as the influence of the interviewer on the participants. In contrast, collecting data via a questionnaire might have encouraged participants to share more highly personal matters due to the anonymity of a questionnaire and lack of or limited direct connection between researcher and the participants. However, a questionnaire might overlook deeply emotional and cultural experiences and leave out the in-depth meanings and the detailed picture of a Saudi bride's wedding purchase experiences.

The researcher is a native Saudi, which could blind her to deep meanings behind some practices due to her familiarity with the culture. However, her cultural familiarity can also provide the researcher insights and understanding that might have taken outsiders years to develop. Issues of researcher subjectivity are described in more detail within the methods chapter. Additionally, more limitations and directions for future research are discussed further in the conclusion chapter.

Definitions of Terms

This study includes topics and discipline-specific terms as well as concepts and ideas unique to the Arabic language and Saudi Arabian culture that may not have clear translations into English. Arabic words are italicized below, and their meanings are interpreted with denotation and connotation as necessary. Terms are defined as follows:

Culture: Hamilton (1987) described culture as the ability to adapt to surrounding environments by creating shared meanings and values. Other scholars describe culture as a cognitive map acquired and transmitted by symbols among members of a specific group, resulting in mutual beliefs, values, and behaviors within that group (Spradley, 1980; White, 1969).

Wedding ritual: Wedding rituals are complex events leading to the societal or group acceptance of marriage or union between two people. The events include a series of social actions performed according to tradition, religion, and culture (Bell, 1953; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002). According to Bell (1953) and Leeds-Hurwitz (2002), ritual incorporates a variety of codes, each with its own special meaning (e.g., liturgy, music, food, clothing, and objects).

Consumption Patterns: Patterns indicated by the nature and amount of the different products, services, or ideas that individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of to

satisfy needs and desires (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Consumption is more than the exchanging of products or services; it is an ongoing process of decision-making (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009).

Identity: A person's sense or perception of who she or he is can be based on three sources: individual self-descriptions, roles, and group memberships. An individual has multiple identities which together create the self (Fiske, 2014; Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin 2010; Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). A specific identity will be activated based on the social situation an individual is in, resulting in employment of certain behavior patterns for different social situations (Burke, 1991). Identity is not fixed; rather, it is constructed and reconstructed based on diverse realities an individual faces every day (Gergen, 1991).

Symbolic Consumption: Symbolic consumption involves acquisition, use, and disposal of products for personal and social meanings in addition to functional meaning. Symbolic consumption involves communication and construction of consumer identity (Noble & Walker, 1997; Levy, 1959; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005).

Islamic faith: A religion guided by the belief, acceptance, and understanding of the statement: “There is no God, but *Allah*, and the Prophet Muhammad was his last messenger” (Nasr, 2003).

Hijaz: A region located on the western coast of Saudi Arabia, bordered on the west by the Red Sea with three main cities: Makkah, Medina, and Jeddah (Ochsenwald, 2012; Rahim, n.d.; Yamani, 2004).

Celebrations before the wedding

Figure 1 (p. 5) illustrates the customary Saudi marriage process and celebration timeline.

Shofa: A small celebration in which only close relatives from both the groom and bride’s sides attend to celebrate the first meeting of the bride and the groom. The groom usually brings a

jewelry gift with him, but not the wedding rings (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Rahim, n.d.).

Fatiha: A small celebration held after both the groom and bride give their marriage approval. Some extended relatives attend and recite the first chapter of the Quran “*surah Al-Fatiha*” as a blessed omen for the couple’s new life.

Melka: A party to celebrate the signing of the Islamic marriage contract, hosted by the bride’s family. The Islamic marriage contract must be officiated by a licensed Muslim clergy and witnessed by the families of the bride and groom (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Rahim, n.d.).

Shabkah: In Arabic, literally meaning a connection or joining of two things together. In marriages, it is an engagement party usually held a few days after the *Melka*. It is also hosted by the bride’s family, and guests outside of the immediate family are invited (Rahim, n.d.).

Dabash: Refers to the bride’s purchases and new clothes which will be displayed elegantly. The bride’s family traditionally moves the *dabash* to the couple’s house, which will also be decorated and prepared by both families.

Ghomrah: A Saudi bridal shower that occurs a few days before the wedding, during which henna designs are drawn on the bride’s hands and feet (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.).

At the *ghomrah* party, the bride wears one of the traditional bridal costumes with a face cover as one of the main pieces to conceal the bride’s beauty until the wedding day and to symbolize modesty, shyness, and purity (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017). The traditional bridal costumes, defined below, are not purchased by the bride-to-be but are rented from one of the few clothing rental families who reside in the region (Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017). Rentals are typically expensive, ranging from \$300 to \$800 per night, because

the garments are handmade using expensive materials and crafted by skilled individuals (Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017).

Al-mentur: A traditional pink bridal costume consisting of five pieces: A plain under-vest with decorations only on the neckline; loose pants with embroidery around the ankles; an ankle-length, long-sleeved gown decorated with gold embroidered floral motifs; a tiara with an extremely long material train attached; and a jewelry and pearl face cover (Iskandarani, 2006). *Al-mentur* is traditionally worn at the *ghomrah* party before the wedding (Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017).

Al-medini: A traditional bridal costume from Medina, consisting of seven pieces. Under the main garment is a vest and pants, and an ankle-length, heavily decorated gown is worn on top as the outer or main layer. On the head, a light rectangular cotton fabric is worn that resembles a folded scarf with a special Medina flower sewn inside, topped by a tiara with two sides hanging down over the face and a long fabric train attached to the back of the tiara. Moreover, a heavily embroidered bib, including real diamonds, is stuffed with cotton and wrapped around the neck. Finally, the face covering is a sheer silk fabric with pearls embroidered with the phrase “In the name of Allah.” *Al-medini* is traditionally worn during the afternoon on the wedding day before wearing the actual wedding gown (Iskandarani, 2006; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2016).

Al-mahaf: A traditional pink bridal costume made up of pants, a vest, an ankle-length gown, and a head covering. *Al-mahaf* has no face cover because it is traditionally worn after the wedding when the groom’s family invites the bride’s family for the first time after the wedding. A long bib consisting of five small pieces, decorated with gold thread embroidery, is also wrapped around the neck (Iskandarani, 2006).

Al-zabun: A traditional white costume worn by the bride the morning after the wedding. *Al-zabun* includes a white cotton vest and white satin pants decorated with gold embroidery around the ankles. Worn over this is a white satin, lightly embroidered, short sleeve dress with a princess seam that opens to the front. An ankle-length over-gown made of white chiffon has more gold embroidery. The embroidery may include floral or geometric motifs. Lastly, the head covering includes a hidden triangle piece of cotton which is covered by a chiffon scarf with embroidered edges (Iskandarani, 2006).

Al-musskak: A traditional pink bridal costume including an under garment, pants, and vest worn over the main garment with long wide sleeves decorated in the same golden floral motif embroidery as the pants and vest. The *al-musskak* has a unique, mid-chest neck piece made of woven gold thread. The head covering that serves as a train is much shorter, only reaching down to the mid-back. *Al-musskak* is traditionally worn at the first party the bride attends after her wedding.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Saudi Arabia, weddings are significant events when the bride and groom enter into their new life together and begin to build their family, not only because marriage is a sacred relationship ruled by tradition and Islamic law, but also because it is seen as the key to a healthy culture in Saudi society (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Doumato, 2010; Long, 2005). This, in turn, makes weddings a major occasion, one that is culturally charged by competition and boasting (Al-Jeraisy, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997). The importance of weddings in Saudi culture obliges Saudi people to spend lavishly on the marriage celebration and wedding day. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the shopping experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for multiple social events planned around their weddings and their new lives after the wedding.

The chapter is organized into four major sections. The first section provides an overview of the meaning of culture. Section two contains a brief introduction to Saudi Arabian culture, specifically the changes in the country and the Saudi female consumer. Section three explores marriage in Islam generally, and Saudi Arabia specifically. In section four, bridal culture in other countries and related consumer behavior are reviewed. Finally, proposed theoretical frameworks guiding this study are presented, and a summary of existing work concludes this chapter.

Definition of Culture

Culture is a macroscopic term that has been defined to include a wide variety of aspects of life. Hamilton (1987) explained that culture is the ability to adapt to our environments by creating shared meanings and values. Linton (1936) defined culture as social heredity, which results in individuals adapting to their places in society. Culture has also been described as a cognitive map that guides human behavior; the map is acquired and transmitted among groups,

which results in sharing of mutual beliefs, values, and behaviors among particular groups (Segalman,1978; Spradley, 1980; White, 1969). Spradley (1980) defined culture as an “acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior” (p. 22). Linton (1936) described culture as the non-biological way humans share knowledge, communicate, and learn in order to adapt their individual or group behavior. Similarly, Hoebel (1958) explained that culture, in an anthropological sense, encompasses all the learned behaviors and non-biological characteristics of people within their society.

Moreover, culture can be divided into three components: technology, social structure, and ideology (Hamilton, 1987; White, 1969). Physical objects, their uses, processes and systems to produce them, and the organization of objects fall under technology. Social structure includes relationships, behavioral norms, and socialization patterns within the community. Ideology consists of attitudes, beliefs, and how people define what is good and bad (Hamilton, 1987). The foundation of culture is technology, which relates culture to nature (Hamilton, 1987). Hamilton (1987) suggested that change usually begins with technology, which then influences social structures to adapt, finally affecting ideology. On the contrary, Harris (1980) asserted that ordering of those influences is symbiotic and not so linear, which means a change in one will usually result in a change in the others.

Moreover, according to Hoebel (1958), culture is always nonmaterial because it requires integrated behavior patterns. What Hamilton (1987) considered technology, Hoebel (1958) would have called “products of cultural behavior” (p. 8). Lastly, Linton (1936) explained that culture preserves the past and shapes the future. Therefore, it is important to analyze how culture in Saudi Arabia influences and shapes the bride-to-be wedding preparation and purchase of goods for that rite of passage.

Background of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, covering 80 percent of the Arabian Peninsula, was established as a country in 1932 (Long, 2005). In 2016, the population of Saudi Arabia was 31 million people; most of them are Arab and Muslim (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2013; “Saudi Arabia Population,” 2016). The Saudi Arabian region is considered the birthplace of Islam in the seventh century, and since then it has been the religious center for all Muslims (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Long, 2005; Yamani, 2004). In addition, the Saudi law system is based on the rules of Islam (Long, 2005). Thus, Saudi Arabian culture is tied to the Islamic faith in every aspect of life, including marriage, wedding celebrations, and dress (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Al-Munajjed 1997; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Long, 2005; Nasr, 2003).

Islamic Faith

The Islamic faith is based on the belief that “there is no God but *Allah*, and the Prophet Muhammad was his last messenger” (Nasr, 2003). The Quran and the Hadith, noting the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, constitute the guiding principles for Muslims and are integrated into every facet of life, including marriage (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Long, 2005). Islam shapes marriage through instructions given in the Quran and the Hadith. For example: (a) Women have the right to refuse a proposed marriage, (b) a man must pay a dowry (“bride price”) at the time of the wedding, (c) and husbands are responsible to pay for all their wives’ basic needs.

Based on Islamic teachings, the Saudi government also enforces restrictions pertaining to women, such as gender segregation, wearing the veil in public, and limited travel without a male guardian or escort (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Doumato, 1992; Gorney; 2016; Long, 2005). In Saudi

Arabia, unrelated males and females are segregated in schools, mosques, work places, and social events (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Doumato, 1992; Goodwin, 2003).

Culture

In Saudi Arabia, religion, family honor, and government are entangled (Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Gorney, 2016; Teitelbaum, 2008). Family is a very important structural unit in Saudi society, and familial relationships and ties are strong (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Gorney 2016; Long, 2005; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Teitelbaum, 2008). This closeness makes family events, such as weddings, significant occasions for which Saudi women pay great attention to dress (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). Such events give a woman the opportunity not only to present herself through dress but represent her family as well (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b). According to Gorney (2016), people in Saudi society observe others around them, making assumptions about their family standards and passing judgment based on the way family members look. Thus, many women are interested in wearing the newest fashions and are willing to spend large sums of money for family occasions (Al-Munajjed, 1997).

Due to the strength of the familial unit, men and women must obtain family approval when hoping to get married (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Bin Manie, 1985; Perez, 2013; Rahim, n.d.). Marriage in Saudi Arabia is not just an individual decision, but a family one; each family investigates *all* of the other family members, not just the prospective bride and groom (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Bin Manie, 1985; Goodwin, 2003; Rahim, n.d.). The bride and groom's families must each give approval for the marriage to proceed, and marriage is typically arranged (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017).

Culture in Hijaz Region

The Hijaz region is located on the western coast of Saudi Arabia, bordered on the west by the Red Sea with three main cities: Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah (Ochsenwald, 2012; Rahim, n.d.; Yamani, 2004). The Hijaz region is named after *al Hijaz*, meaning “barrier,” because the Sarawat mountain range creates a wall around the region (Yamani, 2004). The area of Hijaz is prominent due to the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Ka’ba, toward which all Muslims pray, is located in Mecca. This city is also the location in which the Prophet Muhammad was born and raised; Medina is where he was buried under his mosque (Long, 2005; Ochsenwald, 2012; Yamani, 2004). Also, Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca is mandatory for all adult Muslims once in their lifetime, providing they have physical and financial capability for undertaking the journey (Nasr, 2003). It is for these reasons that Muslims from around the world have made the pilgrimage to this region, and in some cases have immigrated to the region. This immigration has made the culture of the Hijaz essentially a “melting pot” of Muslim cultures. Thus, the Hijaz region has a unique mixture of cultures that makes it different from the rest of the country (Long, 2005; Rahim, n.d.; Yamani, 2004).

Compared to other regions in Saudi Arabia, Hijazi cultural standards are relaxed and lenient in regard to gender segregation and female honor (Gorney, 2016; Teitelbaum, 2008). Jeddah is considered the least conservative city in the country; there Saudi women test and push the traditional boundaries (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Gorney, 2016; Teitelbaum, 2008). Unlike other regions in the country, the Hijaz does not have tribal marriages (Teitelbaum, 2008). In other regions of the country, tribes try to preserve the purity of blood lines by marrying within the tribe (Teitelbaum, 2008). The history of immigration to the Hijaz region has made its people more open to intermarriage across tribal and international groups.

Changes in Saudi Arabia

Since the discovery of oil in 1938, economic growth along with Western influence has led to changes in Saudi Arabia (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Long, 2005). One large influence stemmed from foreign workers entering the country to work at oil companies. These workers brought their families, customs, and traditions, which in turn have influenced Saudi households and introduced many new products (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Long, 2005; Yamani, 2004). Moreover, the increase in Saudi incomes has allowed for expanding consumer product acquisition and has shifted the Saudi lifestyle toward a more consumerist attitude (Assad, 2008). However, with the recent drop in oil prices, the economy of Saudi Arabia has slowed, reflected in the government's reduction of subsidies of water and electricity costs, cuts from public wages, and imposition of value-added taxes (Al-Omran & Stancati, 2016; El-Katiri, 2016; The General Authority of Zakat and Tax, 2018). Hence, if cheap oil continues, it is expected that Saudi economic growth will continue to slow in the coming years (Al-Omran & Stancati, 2016; El-Katiri, 2016), which might affect Saudi consumption patterns, including that of brides-to-be.

Another considerable shift in Saudi Arabia has occurred in the areas of female education and representation in the workforce (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Pharaon, 2004). Women in Saudi Arabia have gained increased access to education over the last four decades (Al-Faisal, 2005; Prokop, 2005). Even though the first university for women in Saudi Arabia was not opened until 1979 (Hamdan, 2005), 54% of college-aged women enrolled in higher education in 2013, and women exceeded men in graduation rates (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). Among women enrolled in higher education, 23.2% are granted scholarships to study abroad (Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). Studying abroad has provided Saudi women with expanded opportunities to

experience new cultures and explore different consumer lifestyles and fashions. These combined trends may influence women to push for changes back home (Gorney, 2016).

With female education opportunity increasing, Saudi women are now becoming more involved in work outside of the home (Barakati & Ariani, 2010; Pharaon, 2004). The number of Saudi female workers increased from only 3-5% of the total workforce in 2005 (Al-Bakr, 2005), to 18% by 2012 (The World Bank, 2013) and reached 40% by 2015 (Sadha, 2015). Unlike the past when Saudi women were only employed in the traditionally acceptable fields of health care and education (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Doumato, 1992; Gorney, 2016; Prokop, 2005), they are now integrating into positions in media, banking, law, and retail (Barakati & Ariani, 2010; Gorney, 2016; Khashoggi, 2014). In addition, Al-Rawi (2013) reported that the percentage of Saudi businesswomen in 2013 increased by 23% from the year before, and 4% of private firms were owned by Saudi women. Due to this increased access to the job market, Saudi women have become increasingly economically independent. All of these changes in the country has led the Saudi government to loosen several laws restricting rights for women. For example, Saudi women gained the right for the first time to vote in municipal elections in 2011 and to drive in 2018 (Smith-Spark, 2018).

Media Influence

In addition to education, travel, and work experience, researchers have explored media influence on Saudi women, particularly in relation to their adoption of Westernized dress. The introduction of media—including television, the Internet, and movies—into Saudi Arabia has been identified as a significant influence on the culture and dress of the region (Goodwin, 2003; Yamani, 2004). Yamani (2004) proposed that, starting in the 1950s, Egyptian films based on Western lifestyles diffused Western views on fashion into Saudi lives, especially among the elite.

Tawfiq and Ogle (2013a) found that Saudi women used the mass media as sources to shape ideas about new trends and fashions. Omasha (2003) studied the effect of advertising on Saudi consumer behavior in Jeddah city, and found that female consumers are susceptible to influence by the media, especially with the increase of TV programs and channels that expose Saudi women to many advertisements and new products. Moreover, the rapidly growing use of social media all over the world affects Saudi consumers, who are greatly influenced by social media as well (Khatib, 2016; Omar, 2014).

Researchers in the West have found that media has a great influence over local customs, especially with regard to wedding celebration and wedding ritual (Boden, 2001; Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; Otnes & Pleck, 2003; Otnes et al., 1997). The forms of mass media available today may have exposed Saudi brides-to-be to many new ideas and products to purchase during wedding preparation and to possibilities for presentation of the new identity as bride.

Saudi Consumers

Alongside economic independence, Saudi women's purchasing power is increasing. Assad (2008) used secondary data from Global Market Information, World Bank, and Saudi Ministry of Planning between the years of 1990 and 2004 to analyze Saudi Arabian consumerism. She provided evidence that education and female employment have increased female power in family purchase decisions. She also presented statistical information that showed newly adopted spending habits of upper-middle and upper-class Saudis on many luxury items, particularly for special occasions like weddings. Additionally, the increases in the number of luxury shopping centers in the country have made shopping a social activity (Assad, 2008). Thus, Saudi consumers are more likely to shop for pleasure (hedonic) rather than focus primarily on practical (utilitarian) purposes.

Some studies to date have focused on Saudi female consumers. For instance, Al-Mousa (2005) found that the level of Saudi female consumer satisfaction with ready-to-wear clothing available in Saudi marketplaces decreased as their income level increased, and women showed more interest in customization as income rose. As a result, this increase in dissatisfaction might have led some Saudi female consumers to look elsewhere, such as online and social media outlets for more variety.

Other studies of Saudi female consumers' online shopping have shown evidence that subjective norms, i.e., perceptions of others' attitudes and willingness to conform to others' expectations, affect Saudi female consumers (Al-Maghrabi, 2010; Al-Maghrabi, Dennis, & Halliday, 2011). Al-Maghrabi et al. (2011) found that Saudi female consumers under 35 are more influenced by others' opinions in comparison to female consumers who are above age 35. According to Salam (2013), the average age of women in Saudi Arabia's first marriage is 24, which means Saudi brides are within the age range most influenced by subjective norms. The role of others' influences on Saudi brides' choices while shopping is of interest in the present study of Saudi brides' experiences as consumers.

Social media is another influencer of Saudi consumers. Two studies looked at the use of social media marketing in Saudi Arabia and effects on consumers (Khatib, 2016; Omar, 2014). According to the Ministry of Culture and Information (2014), Saudi Arabia has one of the highest usage rates for digital media, with 57% of the adult citizen population being active users. Moreover, using social media as an e-business tool is successful within Saudi Arabia due to the social conservativeness of the culture (Omar, 2014). Omar (2014) found that Saudi consumers consider social media a reliable source of advertising and are persuaded by ads on social media. Trust is important for Saudi consumers, as Saudi consumers trust their friends and families more

than companies (Khatib, 2016; Omar, 2014).

Khatib (2016) studied the effect of social media's influence on Saudi consumers during their decision-making process. A sample of 310 respondents was almost evenly composed of males and females, with most respondents ages 20 to 34 and married (Khatib, 2016). Khatib (2016) found that social media influenced all parts of the decision-making process from information acquisition to post-purchase evaluation as well as attitudes and opinions. This research is particularly relevant to the present study because I investigated the consumption patterns of respondents within the age range studied by Khatib.

Marriage in Islam and Saudi Culture

Islam encourages marriage; the Prophet Muhammad, who is the example for all Muslims, told men to marry if they can and asked women to accept proposals if a man's manner and beliefs are good (Khan, 1994). Because the Saudi Arabian culture is tied to the Islamic religion, marriage is considered a sacred relationship and is the only sanctioned intimate relationship between males and females (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Doumato, 2010).

While Islam is the foundation for Muslim marriage, Saudi Arabian culture also plays a role. In Islam, the man has to pay a dowry (i.e., a set amount of money as a gift for his bride) to show that he is responsible, ready to support a family, and committed to show his love (Al-Khateeb, 2008). Islam also requires that a woman meet her prospective husband at least once before the wedding (Al-Jaziri, 2010; Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017). However, there is much variation in how arranged marriages ensue in Saudi Arabia. In some cases, bridal couples do not meet one another prior to the wedding; in other instances, they may meet several times (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Bin Manie, 1985).

Marital Roles

Islam shapes marital roles and rules in Saudi Arabia as well. Within Islam, several rights are outlined for husbands and wives; for example, both parties are responsible for living together with cordiality and respect (Bullock, 2003). Both wives and husbands are required to groom themselves for each other, as well as maintain mutual sexual satisfaction (Al-Jehani, 2005; Bullock, 2003). However, there are higher expectations for wives to always dress and look beautiful and presentable for their husbands, including wearing clothing that is appealing to their husbands (Al-Jehani, 2005; Bullock, 2003). Within Islam rules, the wife is also responsible for creating a healthy and peaceful home in addition to properly raising children (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bullock, 2003; Syed, 2004). She has to respect her husband and not leave the home without his permission. Husbands, on the other hand, should be devoted only to their wives by helping with the housework and should not hinder their wives from working or studying (Al-Jehani, 2005; Bullock, 2003). In addition to the initial dowry, the husband is responsible for being the financial provider for his wife by paying for her food, clothing, and home (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Syed, 2004).

However, with substantial changes in the culture, perceptions of marital roles have also changed (Al-Jehani, 2005; Al-Khateeb, 2008; Goodwin, 2003; Syed, 2004). The freedoms gained by Saudi women in education and work have caused a shift in traditional Saudi households' marital roles (Al-Jehani, 2005; Maki, 2004). Now, many women and men are both going to work or school outside of the home (Doumato, 2003), which has led to Saudi women working a "double shift" of holding a job outside the home and caring for family within the home (Long, 2005; Maki, 2004). Understanding these expectations of a wife's multi-faceted

roles might aid in understanding Saudi brides' ways of thinking during the preparation period before the wedding.

The Saudi Wedding Process

Marriage in Saudi Arabia is typically arranged, involving a process like a “dance” between the two joining families (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Rahim, n.d.). First, the groom's family investigates the prospective bride and her family. If the groom's family believes all is well, the groom and his father approach the father-of-the-bride and the bride-to-be to formally propose (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Rahim, n.d.). Lastly, the bride's family will investigate the groom's family, and then respond to the proposal offer (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Bin Manie, 1985; Rahim, n.d.). Most families in the Hijaz hold a small celebration called *Shofa*, and only close relatives from both the groom's and bride's sides attend to celebrate the first meeting of the bride and the groom. The groom usually brings a gift of jewelry with him, but not the engagement ring (Rahim, n.d.). *Shofa* was part of traditional marriages, but in modern Hijazi marriages the groom and the bride may have already met before *Shofa* due to the relaxed rules around gender segregation in the region (Rahim, n.d.; Teitelbaum, 2008). In some cases, the prospective couple are from the same extended family, and in other cases they have met while they were traveling or studying abroad (Rahim, n.d.).

After the groom and the bride are introduced to each other and both families agree to the marriage, the preparation for the wedding and all the associated celebrations and events begin. Wedding events and celebrations in Saudi Arabia have become showcases and boasting occasions, for which families and the groom spend excessively (Al-Jeraisy, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Rahim, n.d.). The second event after the *Shofa* is *the Fatiha*, which is a small celebration

held after both the groom and bride give their marriage approval. This event is named after surah Al-Fatiha from the Quran, because some extended relatives attend and recite surah Al-Fatiha as a blessed omen for the couple's new life (Rahim, n.d.). The third event is the engagement party, *Melka*, which is hosted by the bride's family. *Melka* is when an Islamic marriage contract will be written and witnessed by the families of the bride and groom (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Bajnaid & Elyas, 2017; Rahim, n.d.). In the Hijaz region, the ritual of signing the marriage contract is usually performed in one of two places: in a holy mosque (in Mecca or Medina), as a way to bring blessing to the new couple's life, or at the home of the bride's family (Rahim, n.d.).

Some brides' families host an extra engagement party a few days after the *Melka* called the *Shabkah*. *Shabkah* in Arabic literally means a connection or joining of two things together, which confirms the new couple joining in marriage and allows for more guests to witness the marriage (Rahim, n.d.). The celebrations after the marriage contract is signed are typically held in a large, luxury "wedding hall." The groom will bring the dowry with the engagement ring and bridal jewelry in an ornately decorated silver cart or golden box to show his respect for his bride (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.). The average dowry for Saudi women was between \$10,000 and \$13,000 in the early 2000s until 2015 (Alkhalaf, 2015; Qusti 2003). After the *Shabkah* party, the bride will still live in her parents' house, even though the groom and bride are now legally considered husband and wife (Rahim, n.d.).

During the engagement period, the groom and bride prepare for their wedding day and their new life during marriage. During the engagement period, the bride, groom, and their families only have a limited time to accomplish everything before the wedding. The groom is required to pay most of the wedding costs, as well as prepare the newlyweds' new house with furniture and appliances (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Qusti, 2003). The bride will use her dowry to

beautify herself for her husband through purchasing new clothes, cosmetics, and related products to replace her existing items (Al-Khateeb, 2008; Saud85, 2013; Qusti, 2003). Tawfiq and Ogle (2013a, 2013b) found that a newly married bride gives extra attention to her attire to present the ideal woman she wants to be, not only for her husband but also for her in-laws. According to Tawfiq and Ogle (2013b), both Saudi wives and husbands emphasized the importance of the Islamic obligation of a wife to groom herself for her husband's enjoyment and to dress in a way that shows her beauty, especially for their intimate times together.

The *Ghomrah* party, a customary Saudi bridal shower, is the third party to be held. It occurs a few days before the wedding, during which the bride's body and hair are prepared and cleansed using elaborate spa treatments, including many perfumes, conditioning oils, etc. In addition, henna designs are drawn on her hands and feet (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.). In the Hijaz, *Ghomrah* is considered one of the most important stages in the wedding process (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017). The bride will wear the traditional bridal costume, while her sisters and other female relatives sing songs and celebrating in lavish fashion (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.). Guests are expected to bring some valuable gifts to give to the bride, usually gold jewelry (Rahim, n.d.). There are five popular traditional bridal costumes that are worn in the Hijazi *Ghomrah*: *Al-mentur*, *al-medini*, *al-mahaf*, *al-zabun*, and *al-musskak* (Iskandarani, 2006; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017). All of the traditional bridal costumes include several pieces embroidered with gold thread and pearls; for example, some of these pieces are: the under-vest, pants, head crown or head cover, face cover, and an ankle-length robe with very long and wide sleeves (Iskandarani, 2006; Rahim, n.d.; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2016). One of the main pieces is the face cover containing gold coins and pearls; its purpose is to

conceal the bride's beauty until the wedding day. The face cover also symbolises modesty, shyness, and purity (Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017).

It is customary to get an agreement between the groom's family and the bride's family to select a specific day to move all of the bride's new purchases from her family's house to the couple's new home (Qusti, 2003). This day is another important event prior to the wedding and is hosted by the groom's family. Traditionally, the bride's new purchases and new clothes (*dabash*) will be displayed elegantly, and the entire house of the couple will be decorated and prepared by both families to make it ready for the new couple.

Finally, the wedding ceremony itself is the most important day when not only family, but all extended relatives and friends, attend. The wedding is segregated by gender, but both groups have access to lavish food, drinks, live bands, and other luxuries (Qusti, 2003). During the ceremony, a singer performs during the wedding procession and throughout the night (Rahim, n.d). Guests will dance the whole night and will create a circle around the bride, holding hands, and dance around the bride to show their support through celebrating her marriage (Rahim, n.d). Traditionally, in the Hijaz region, the celebration of marriage continues even after the wedding, as many families will hold a party for the newlywed daughter and daughter-in-law in her first visit to her family and new family-in-law following the wedding (Iskandarani, 2006).

The timeline in Figure 1 (p. 5) demonstrates the order and timing of the marriage process and celebrations. However, it is important to note that with the changing Saudi society, marriages are not always arranged. As a result, this may alter what marriage celebrations are included and cancellation of some marriage events.

Bridal Culture in Other Countries and Related Consumer Behavior

Prior literature shows the uniqueness of the bridal consumer process when planning for a wedding and the numerous factors that influence the bride. In Western cultures, planning a wedding is a personal, deeply emotional experience, in which cultural meaning and values are strongly emphasized (Boden, 2001; Carter & Duncan, 2017; Dobscha, & Foxman, 1998; Leeds-Hurwitz; McEnally, 2002; Nelson, & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011). The role of others, particularly the family, in wedding planning is often significant (Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011; Weiss, 2008). Twenty-first century weddings in Britain are not dominated by tradition and cultural norms, but many couples freely choose to inevitably draw on tradition, causing weddings to remain structured around given, set traditional practices (Carter & Duncan, 2017). Nelson and Deshpande (2004) found that cultural values and norms are significant aspects of wedding celebrations. Brides are unique consumers who invest a great deal of time and money into the wedding process (Boden, 2001).

In Korean culture, weddings are female-oriented rituals (Park, 1997). Park studied the consumption patterns of wedding rituals for Korean couples married over three years during the 1990s. Using mixed methods, qualitative in-depth interviews of five couples were followed by a quantitative questionnaire with 307 respondents (162 men, 145 women). Park focused on the values and needs of consumers and their wedding-related expenditures. Results showed that consumption for the wedding items and wedding expenditures holds more hedonic value than utilitarian. Furthermore, there were significant differences in class and gender for wedding consumption patterns. On average, women spent more than men, and social class influenced demands and values when purchasing wedding items. In many families, it is the mother and

other female relatives of the bride, sometimes working with wedding planners, who make purchases of dress and wedding celebration arrangements.

Based on the studies discussed, it is evident that weddings are special occasions marked by unique consumption patterns that tend to be bride-centered. Because culture is an important aspect of understanding the bridal consumer and studies have not yet explored how wedding consumption patterns might differ in a culture like Saudi Arabia, research of Saudi bride-to-be consumption patterns is warranted. Thus, this present study explored the Saudi woman's bridal experience during her wedding preparation period.

Theoretical Framework

According to traditional grounded theory, research should not begin with a preconceived theory in mind (Glaser, 1978; Heath, & Cowley, 2004). However, reviewing existing theories that are related to the area of investigation without restricting the incoming data to testing these theories does not violate the grounded theory approach (Morse, 1994; Strauss, & Corbin, 1994). Therefore, theories reviewed in this section were not tested, but rather used as a framework that could possibly help with interpretation of the data. The researcher did not firmly hold only to the theories listed below during the data collection and analysis process. Care was taken to avoid becoming biased by any theory. It was also realized that although these existing theories provided a possible explanation for this study's results, they are based on Western ideologies which might have limitations when applied to other cultures. Applicability of the theories to Saudi culture was carefully examined.

Several social psychological theories and concepts provided a rich foundation and framework possibly useful to interpret how Saudi brides-to-be shape their new identity through

consumption. None of the theories completely explained the data; however, in combination multiple theories helped to illuminate the complex phenomenon under study.

Useful theories included: Symbolic interaction theory, concepts from Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, social identity theory with a focus on Gergen's (1991, 2011) notion of "multiphrenia," Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self, social identity theory from Tajfel and Turner (1979), and social capital theory from Bourdieu (1986). Together, these theories and concepts helped the researcher to understand Saudi bride-to-be shopping experiences as they prepared for their weddings and factors that influenced them within contemporary Saudi society.

The conceptual model in Figure 2 was created by the researcher to summarize the previously existing theories that might be useful for data interpretation. The relationship between the self and the group is a strong focus of the study and serves as the core of the model created.

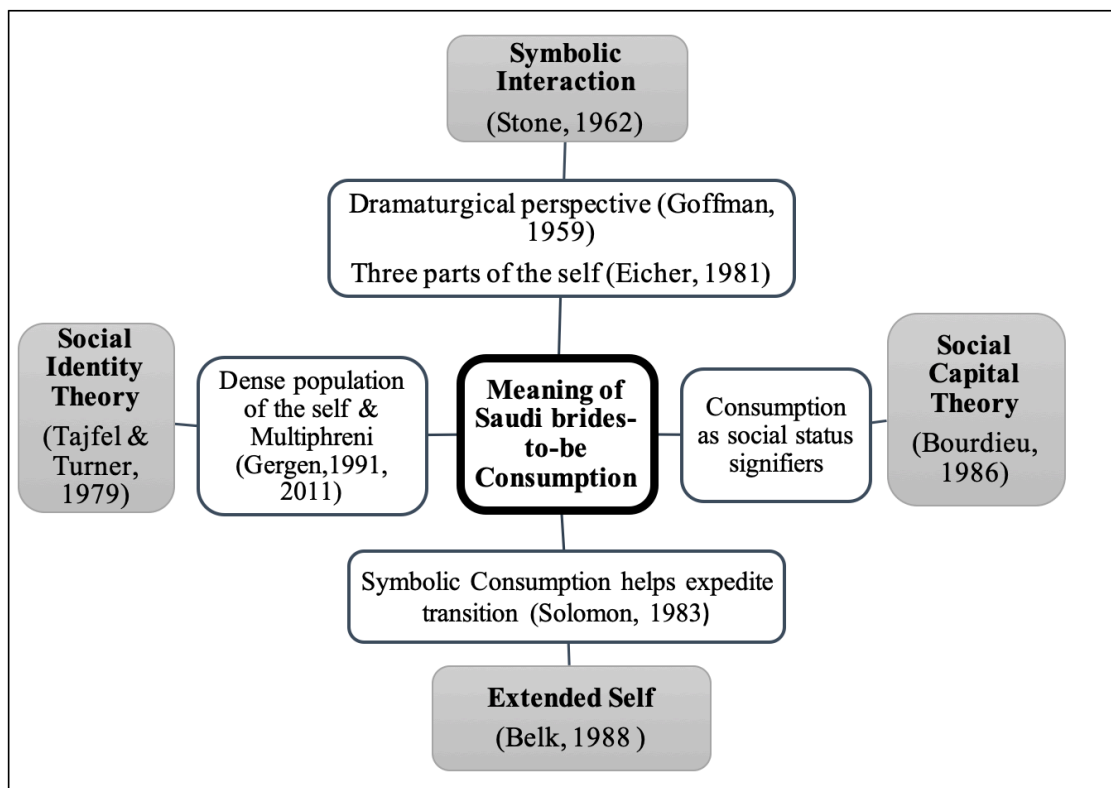


Figure 2. Conceptual Map of Relationships Among Potentially Relevant Theories

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction theory, initially developed by Mead (1934), is a grand theory of social psychology (Charon, 1985) which encompasses many micro theories and theoretical concepts. The main principle of symbolic interaction is that humans act based on their interpretation of the meanings they apply to the world around them, including objects, events, and behaviors (Blumer, 1969). These meanings are constructed by social interaction between and among human individuals and become shared meanings (Blumer, 1969). People use the interpreted meanings as symbols to communicate with each other. Using symbols, individuals position and develop the self they desire and present themselves to the world around them (Goffman, 1959). Stone (1962) explained that appearance is a symbolic instrument to express one's identity.

Hence, symbolic interactionists view the meanings that are produced through social interaction as a way people present themselves and understand others. According to these meanings, individuals manipulate their appearance to convey their desired identities in social contexts (Stone, 1962; Goffman, 1959). Individual appearances hold meanings that provide information about identities and self-perceptions (Charon, 1985). Others act toward people based on these meanings, sometimes giving feedback about appearance that influences the wearer's future appearance decisions. Thus, individuals take the role of "other" in order to construct their own selves by imagining how others see and evaluate themselves. Cooley (1902) referred to this process as the "looking glass self," in which individuals use others as mirrors to reflect the self. Individuals think of themselves based on the perceived reviews that others provide, using self-reflection to imagine future reactions or evaluations, which then guide choices for behaviors (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Stone, 1962). Cooley (1902) called this process "reflected

appraisal,” which can be especially important and influential when the feedback is given by a significant other (Stone, 1962).

Within the symbolic interaction framework, a Saudi bride-to-be shops before her wedding for products that have socially symbolic meanings. According to Goffman (1959), appearance management is the act of contemplating one’s appearance to convey a message to be observed by others. Thus, the bride-to-be might enlist the meaning of products to imagine how she could manage her appearance in order to influence how others perceive her and to help place her into her new social role as wife and a member of both her family and her husband’s family. Products that elicit the most desirable personal images as future wife are more likely to be purchased, given the financial resources available. Of particular interest in regard to the shopping experience of Saudi brides-to-be is how significant others, such as the bride’s friends, family, and fiancé, influence the bride-to-be purchase decisions during the engagement period. Whether these influences conform to or conflict with personal preferences of the bride-to-be is also of interest.

Dramaturgical perspective. Erving Goffman (1959) developed the dramaturgical perspective as an extension of symbolic interaction theory. He likened social interaction in everyday life to a staged drama with a frontstage and backstage, and viewed individuals as social actors. These actors or individuals perform based on their social situations and send messages that are observed by others within the context of social situations. The performance by actors to influence others is called a “front” and could include managing one’s appearance or behaviors to construct different “selves” within different social interactions or contexts (Goffman, 1959, p. 22).

According to Goffman (1959), social interactions can be in two different types of social settings: “front region” and “back region;” individuals interact with different audiences in these two regions. In the front region (frontstage), individuals perform a certain way to a certain audience through the use of appearance (dress) and manner (behavior) (Goffman, 1959). In the back region (backstage), actors are more relaxed because they have a more private audience. This contrasts from the front region, where actors must be more careful and controlled in their dress and behavior for a more public audience (Goffman, 1959).

Impression management is a technique used by actors when they change their performances (appearance or behavior) according to their audience and social situation to foster a positive review (Goffman, 1959). In addition, Goffman (1959) explained that if there is any reaction from the audience, the meaning of the reaction as reflected upon by the actor influences the actor’s future performance choices. From the dramaturgical perspective, consumption of products allows actors to dress the part so that their performance is believable by their audience. Saudi bride-to-be appearance products might be used as part of her “front” when she performs as a wife, attempting to present a socially acceptable self.

Similarly, Eicher (1981) suggested that individuals attempt to present different aspects of the self to various audiences, using artifacts such as dress. Eicher (1981) elaborated on Stone’s theory of appearance and the self, asserting that there are three “conscious parts of the self that relate to dress” (p. 40): (a) the public self, (b) the intimate self, and (c) the secret self. The public self includes presentation of information about general aspects of the self, such as gender and occupation, to the most public audience (Eicher, 1981, p. 40). For example, a bride-to-be’s public self would be presented at the various celebrations and the wedding. The concept of public self is related to Goffman’s notion of the front region, where the bride-to-be presents

herself to the public audience. The Saudi wedding events audiences typically include the couple's extended and immediate family members, in-laws, friends and co-workers.

When discussing the topic of "front region" and "back region" within the context of Saudi Arabia, the multiple stages of the frontal region for Saudi women must also be recognized. As noted, in any public place outside of the home within mixed-gender situations, Saudi women are required by law to wear a veil that completely covers the head and body (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). The customary veil in Saudi Arabia is a full-body cover consisting of three pieces: an ankle-length black robe that covers all of the woman's body except for the hands, feet, and head (*Abaya*), a head-scarf that covers the head and hair, and an optional *Niqab* that covers the entire face with an opening for the eyes only (Doumato, 2003; Long, 2005). In this most public stage of the frontal region, Saudi women cannot fully appear. Only their gender and limited aspects of shape (height, some hint of weight, posture) are expressed; age and other personal characteristics of appearance and facial expression are completely hidden. Thus, the most public self is actually semi-public; when Saudi women are outside of the home in the presence of men who are not next of kin, women must be completely masked. The second stage of the frontal region would be when women are only with women. Women are free to wear what they wish at any gender-segregated event, such as some wedding celebrations (Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). Therefore, Saudi women have fewer restrictions when they present their public self to female family members and friends. The focus of the present study was to understand how a bride-to-be prepares for front region audiences at wedding celebrations and back region interactions with her future husband.

Within the front region, individuals enact performances to present idealized selves before others, which Goffman (1959) called idealization. The idealized performances tend to

incorporate and exemplify accredited society values (Goffman, 1959). Audiences in the front region often have an idealized idea of what should be performed in a given situation and expect actors to perform according to that ideal (Goffman, 1959). Leeds-Hurwitz (2002) described wedding events as public display performed in front of a crowd of friends and relatives. The bride and the groom devote considerable attention to plan this important and life-changing performance. Wedding events have a culturally prescribed meaning, and the bride often will try to perform her idealized self so that people who are attending the wedding celebration interpret the given meaning appropriately (Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; Goffman, 1959). Similarly, in Saudi weddings, a bride may try to impress her guests during the wedding celebrations by performing within cultural expectations. Thus, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective and concept of idealization might provide additional insight for this study into the different influences that affect the bride-to-be's purchase choices.

Smith-Lovin (2007) suggested that when there are people from varied groups in the audience, the actor is more likely to occupy multiple identities at one time. Using self-verification, individuals seek to have their self-meanings confirmed by multiple others (Robinson, 2007; Swann & Read, 1981). Thus, the Saudi bride-to-be has to juggle and negotiate multiple identities (bride, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, friend, etc.) when acting in the front region for her diverse audience. In the back region, fewer identities are occupied, as less control is needed with a private and less-demanding, exclusive audience. In order for the Saudi bride-to-be to have self-verification in the front region, she may use the "looking glass self" and adjust her appearance based on reflected appraisal that she constructs through memory and presumptions during back region preparation for her front stage performance. She may adopt a more conventional presentation of self to appeal to the commonly held, stereotypical

expectations likely to be shared by many across the diverse audience. Stereotypical expectations for ritual dress are likely to be shared across many people in a collective, conformity-oriented society. Adherence to tradition lends a clear and safe approach in ritual situations such as weddings.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory could further explain Saudi bride-to-be shopping experiences. Identity is a person's sense of who she or he is, which can be based on three sources: individual self-descriptions, one's roles, and group memberships (Owens et al., 2010; Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012). Identity reflects people's positions in society and their social roles (Stone, 1962), so an individual has multiple identities which together create the self (Fiske, 2014; Oyserman et al., 2012). Tajfel and Turner (1979) first introduced social identity theory, which connects the individual to social structures and groups as a way to understand intergroup behavior. When individuals join a group, they experience a collective identity with which they form their identities in regard to the group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) used social identity theory to understand how individuals assign others and themselves to groups and how this shapes their interactions.

Gergen (1991, 2011) explained that individuals are exposed to many influences (such as communication, technology, travel) in postmodern society. Individuals experience and incorporate these diverse, sometimes contradictory, influences resulting in a "dense population of the self" in which many possible selves might conflict with the core or essential self. Complicated and ever-changing individual, group, and societal influences may lead to individuals feeling "multiphrenia" or uncertainty about who they are. Gergen (2011) proposed that identity is constantly reconstructed in response to the changing realities individuals face. The

way individuals develop their identities in postmodern society is complex and heavily influenced by the larger collectivity of possibly incompatible voices.

Thus, the concept of dense population of the self or “saturation of self” (Gergen, 2011) can aid in understanding how brides-to-be use dress to form and show their identities within the social and cultural context of Saudi Arabia. When brides-to-be make decisions about purchases to present their identities, they may experience multiphrenia due to the numerous influences, such as marital role, parental role, work role, and education achievements, that may be in part incompatible. This could lead to negotiation among their identities and the society, culture, and others’ voices, using the collective to help shape the identity they wish to present.

Similarly, identity control theory explains how people present their identities in the context of social structure (Burke, 1991). Individuals have multiple identities, of which specific ones will be activated based on the structure of the specific social situation they are in, resulting in employment of certain behavior patterns for different social situations (Burke, 1991). Individuals seek to have their self-meanings confirmed by others (i.e., self-verification) and therefore adopt strategies to control identity (Robinson, 2007; Swann & Read, 1981).

Burke (2004) explained that to verify identity, control of resources that have shared meanings with others could be used. Within his definition of resources, Burke (2004) included anything that enables and creates interaction, whether actively present or potentially useable, such as dress. The Saudi bride-to-be will be transitioning from her identity as an unmarried, engaged woman to identify as a wife. She still has many of her pre-existing identities to maintain, such as daughter or sister, but has the addition of her wife identity. The bride-to-be will attempt to have her new identity verified by others through her control of resources, such as her

purchases. Moreover, she might have to negotiate her identity by choosing purchases that have shared meanings that will highlight her new identity.

One way that individuals attempt to control their identities is through self-verification (Swann & Read, 1981), which is a process in which individuals look to others for validation of their self-perceptions. To confirm their identities, individuals will assess the reactions of others in social interactions (Swann & Read, 1981). Self-verification influences relationships, especially those that are to be long-lasting and highly committed, such as marriage (Cast & Cantwell, 2007; Kast, 2012; Stets & Burke, 2005). Swann and Read's (1981) notion of self-verification is similar to the validation of self in symbolic interactions (Stone, 1962). The validation of self within symbolic interactions focuses on the process of identity establishment when individuals reflect on others to validate their own identity (Stone, 1962). To do so, individuals try to present their self in a way that confirms other's conceptions of their own social role (Stone, 1962). The self-validation process is determined socially because it is not only about who we think we are but also about whether others validate who we think we are (Stone, 1962).

Additionally, "possible selves" may guide future behaviors of individuals to achieve their ideal selves within the surrounding context (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are socially created, using past selves to foster a future self that is desirable. Possible selves can influence decision making, because an individual may imagine their possible self in relation to an item they are purchasing and how it will affect or enable their future possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The Saudi bride-to-be will adopt a new role of wife when she is married. In addition, she will gain membership to her in-law's group, where she will have the new roles of daughter-in-law and sister-in-law. The bride-to-be may pursue some level of self-verification because she

could want her pre-existing view of self to be confirmed by her family, future husband, and her soon-to-be in-laws. Thus, this process goes beyond the wedding day and can take place throughout the marriage celebrations and shopping experience for her life after marriage. As mentioned above, past research showed that self-verification by a spouse is important for a successful marriage (Cast & Cantwell, 2007; Kast, 2012; Stets & Burke, 2005). Therefore, a Saudi bride-to-be may be inclined to make purchases that will create the future self that is desired as a bride and newlywed. Her possible new selves might be constructed based on her larger social context, whether she is preparing for a specific wedding occasion or for her married life. The bride-to-be is able to make purchase decisions that elicit others to verify herself in the present and future.

Symbolic Consumption

Symbolic consumption, initially proposed by Levy (1959), was developed from symbolic interactionism and established the relationship between goods and their symbolic value. The process focuses on how people consume products for personal and social meanings in addition to their functional meaning (Noble & Walker, 1997; Levy, 1959; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005). The meaning of a product is culturally constituted (McCracken, 1988b). Interpretive consumer research found that consumption of symbolic products is a way of communicating and constructing consumers' identity (Belk, 1988; Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1988b; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005). In particular, prior research investigating symbolic consumption during major life transitions found that symbolic consumption helps explore the liminal experience and construction of new identity (Jennings & O'Malley, 2003; Noble & Walker, 1997; Ogle, Tyner, & Schofield Tomschin, 2013; Rydahl & Mikkelsen, 2011; Solomon, 1983; The Voice Group, 2010; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Although some studies showed that symbolic consumption may

help individuals to overcome the ambiguity of role change (Noble & Walker, 1997; Rydahl & Mikkelsen, 2011; Schouten, 1991), other studies discussed the possibility of ambivalence and uncertainty of transitional consumption (Ogle et al., 2013; The Voice Group, 2010).

Sørensen and Thomsen (2005) further examined symbolic consumption in identity construction and proposed an analytical framework. The framework explained how an object's meaning is established either through single value (communication) or experience value (emotional), and each value can be located in either a private or common domain. The single value involves using the symbolic meaning of an object to communicate aspects about the self to others (Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1988b). In contrast, the experiential value of an object occurs when the object meaning emotionally affects consumers and changes how they feel about themselves (Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005). Both the single and experiential values of the products reside in either a common or a private domain (Richins, 1994). A common symbolic value is a mutual understanding of an object's meaning shared within a society or culture (Richins, 1994; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005). Private domain symbolic value is the individual interpretation of an object's meaning, which might be established by one's history with that object (Richins, 1994; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005). However, private meaning often is strongly intertwined with the common meaning (Richins, 1994). Finally, in the symbolic consumption process, single and experiential values as well as common and private domains all overlap. When consumers make choices between objects, they consider all values and domains of meanings to decide which object is most symbolically harmonious with their goals, feelings and self-definition (Belk, 1988; Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1988b; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005).

Overall, the relationship between symbolic consumption and identity construction can contribute to the understanding of meanings of numerous products the Saudi bride-to-be

consumes and how the products' meanings help with the liminal experience and constructing a new identity.

Extended Self. Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self may further provide insight into the way Saudi brides-to-be purchase items to express themselves. How consumers decide to purchase products goes beyond the product's functionality to what the product means and what it signifies about the consumer in relation to cultural values (Belk, 1988; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Solomon & Rabolt, 2009; Wattanasuwan, 2005). Wattanasuwan (2005) explained that by living in a social environment that fosters a consumer culture, people create themselves through consumption. The "extended self" concept can be used to bridge the resources used to verify one's identity (identity control theory) with the symbolic meanings of these resources. The concept of an "extended self" explains how consumers may consider objects and possessions, as well as acquired experiences, as part of the self and sources of personal identity. Items, such as clothing, can be used to represent an individual's personal identity (Belk, 1988). Further, purchasing items for a special occasion might influence how individuals see themselves and how others see them in those occasions (Ames, 1980; Belk, 1988). Rites of passage like marriage also can influence individuals to discard some of their possessions that no longer represent their new ideal self-image (Belk, 1988). The items people own are an expression of their selves and represent different stages in an individual's life (Belk, 1988). Self-extension can include not only the individual, but also representations or reflections of a group, such as the bride's family and the larger society (Belk, 1988; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

Wedding rituals have culturally prescribed meanings; to communicate these meanings, certain types of products and consumption are required (Dobscha & Foxman, 1998). For example, culture is the contextual frame in which individuals form their identity through dress

(Davis, 1992; Roach-Higgins & Ellen, 1995). A Saudi bride-to-be's consumer choices, in part, create her new role and identity by expressing herself through her new possessions and resources, such as dresses, cosmetics, and jewelry. Further, the bride-to-be could discard and repurchase items to show her change in identity during the special occasion (marriage) when she transitions from an unmarried woman to a married woman.

Solomon (1983) adopted symbolic interactionism to describe how products' social meanings are used by consumers to guide their performance of social roles. The consumption of possessions might help expedite an individual's transition to a new identity. Marriage is one of the significant transitions from one phase of life to another (van Gennep, 2011). Solomon (1983) explained that products have symbolic meanings that surpass the functionality of products. Buying new products that change appearance to fit new role expectations connects the individual with her new social role and identity. Using new products may indicate the successful transition to a new role (Jennings & O'Malley, 2003; Noble & Walker, 1997; Ogle, et al., 2013; Rydahl & Mikkelsen, 2011; Solomon, 1983; The Voice Group, 2010). Schouten (1991) found that appearance change is a physical symbol of transition that can help people to feel comfortable with their new social roles. Solomon (1983) claimed that individuals employ products, such as dress, to assist them in orchestrating their transitions into new roles. Further, the lack of role knowledge might lead to more reliance on material products until clear understanding of the role is achieved (Solomon, 1983). Both Belk (1988) and Solomon (1983) explained that behavior can be guided by the symbolic role of products, thus creating social context and reality.

A Saudi bride-to-be will adopt a new social role and will transition to a new identity as wife, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law. The bride-to-be may consume and purchase products that help her through this transition. As Dobscha and Foxman (1998) stated, in a wedding there

are many products with symbolic meanings such as the Western white wedding gown. In Saudi culture, certain types of products are required for the bride-to-be to purchase before the wedding: new clothes for the bride for her new life as a married woman, the white wedding gown, the traditional bridal costumes, cosmetics products, and jewelry (Iskandarani, 2006; Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017; Saud85, 2013; Qusti, 2003). Therefore, as Solomon (1983) explained, adopting new products might assist Saudi brides-to-be to fit new social roles and identity expectations during the marriage celebrations and life after the wedding. Appropriate product choices may indicate the successful transition to a new role from an unmarried woman to married woman. Furthermore, in Saudi Arabia, the Islamic teaching of a wife to groom herself for her husband's enjoyment and to dress in a way that shows her beauty is emphasized (Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a; 2013b). Therefore, a bride-to-be shapes her transition to wife by employing products to beautify herself for her husband.

Social and Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's (1986) work on social capital also can provide insight into the ways in which Saudi brides-to-be make purchases that reflect the social status of their family and family-in-law. Bourdieu (1984) explained that people's tastes and consumption are social status signifiers, which identify members of higher social classes and distinguish them from classes below them. Social capital is "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Social capital of purchases made in the Saudi cultural context by a bride-to-be may reflect her own family's social standing as well as that of the husband's family. This distinguishes the bride-to-be as a member of a particular social class group. As reflected in the boasting components of various wedding

celebrations and the intense involvement in purchase and display of purchases by the bride, expression of social capital may be a key driver of purchase decisions on the part of Saudi brides-to-be.

Moreover, Bourdieu also discussed the concept of cultural capital. While social capital includes particular members such as family, in-laws, friends, and groups, cultural capital comprises individual assets which are socially shaped such as education, occupation, skills, and tastes (Bourdieu, 1984). Within cultural capital, Bourdieu (1984) developed the concept of “habitus,” which refers to the way individuals view the world around them based on the social group they inhabit, both at the cultural and social levels (including family, friends, etc). The Saudi social structure is defined and maintained by both social and cultural capital. In this sense, Saudi brides-to-be make individual purchase decisions that reflect their unique selves shaped by the extended collectivity in which they live and the cultural capital they have accrued.

In sum, many symbols represent a bride’s new identities (Eicher & Ling, 2005). In ritualized social events such as weddings and funerals, high expectations are applied to consumption (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Eicher and Ling (2005) suggested that during wedding rites, dress is used as a symbol of a bride’s transfer from one social identity (unmarried woman) to a new one (wife). Saudi brides-to-be could reach a confirmation of their new identity during their wedding preparations through acquisition and consumption of consumer items that are offered in the Saudi marketplace. When a bride-to-be makes particular choices while buying products, this may be a conscious strategy for a successful transition from her roles as a single woman and daughter to her new social roles as a wife and daughter-in-law. How brides-to-be use different products they shop for before the wedding could shape notions of self or identity for self and others. A Saudi woman’s sense of self is transformed as she celebrates her multiple pre-

wedding events and her final wedding ceremony. Consumption is a way to confirm the individual's position in society, as her social and cultural capital expand while she takes on the role of wife.

Gaps in the Literature

The literature reviewed within this paper indicates that marriage celebrations are considered major and significant occasions, during which Saudi people consume extravagantly (Al-Jeraisy, 2008; Al-Munajjed, 1997; Doumato, 2010; Long, 2005). Prior work about Saudi women found that in such events, Saudi women focus on their appearance and use dress to represent themselves and their families (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). This is especially true of newly married brides, who pay great attention to their appearance in front of their husband and in-laws (Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a, 2013b; Saud85, 2013). Further, the modicum of work that has considered this topic emphasized the importance of a wife to show her beauty to her husband through clothes, cosmetics, and related products (Saud85, 2013; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b; Al-Jehani, 2005; Bullock, 2003). To date, however, researchers have not explored the shopping experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for multiple social events planned around their weddings and their new lives after the weddings.

Much of the previous work on the topic of weddings has been conducted in Western and Korean cultures; these studies found that weddings are expressive consumption experiences in which cultural values are strongly emphasized (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011; Park, 1997). Researchers in other cultures have also found that media affect the consumption patterns that relate to wedding celebrations and rituals (Baldizzone & Baldizzone, 2001; Boden, 2001; Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; Otnes & Pleck, 2003;

Otnes et al., 1997). Moreover, past research has examined media influence over Saudi consumers and found that female consumers are greatly influenced by the media, particularly social media (Assad, 2008; Khatib, 2016; Omar, 2014). Saudi consumers consider social media to be a reliable source of advertising because it is usually reviewed by friends and families who make it more influential (Khatib, 2016; Omar, 2014). Of interest in this study is how these forms of mass media may have exposed Saudi brides-to-be to new ideas and products to purchase and possibilities for presentation of a new identity as a bride. Also, because Saudi culture integrates the Islamic faith into every aspect of life, the influence of religion and cultural tradition will also be considered (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Long, 2005; Nasr, 2003). Thus, this work will examine how Saudi brides-to-be may be influenced by Saudi culture and the mass media.

The present work will give insight into the ways in which others (i.e., family and friends) may contribute to and influence the wedding preparation experience for Saudi brides-to-be. Although prior work has suggested that family plays a significant role in Western wedding planning (Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; McEnally, 2002; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011; Weiss, 2008), researchers have not explored the role of others in Saudi culture, particularly in relation to the bride-to-be. Additionally, the literature has a gap related to the relationship between product choice and the bride-to-be sense of self as a form of symbolic consumption.

Therefore, the present work addresses existing gaps in the literature by conducting an interpretive, qualitative approach that allows for meanings to emerge from the Saudi brides-to-be themselves. This study sought to answer the following general research questions:

1. What do Saudi brides-to-be shop for during the engagement period? What is the importance or significance of these different products in relation to their weddings and life after the wedding?
2. What factors influence the purchase choices of Saudi brides-to-be when shopping and preparing for the wedding and after the wedding?
 - 2a. From a Saudi bride's perspective, how does the culture and family influence the wedding preparation experience for Saudi brides-to-be?
 - 2b. How do Saudi marketplaces, media, and social media influence brides-to-be choices when shopping and preparing for the wedding process?

Additionally, the following questions were investigated based on the related theories discussed above:

1. How does the bride-to-be manage her self-presentation through her purchases and displays of products during her wedding preparation?
2. How do the symbolic and social meanings assigned to products influence the bride-to-be purchase decisions during her wedding preparation period?
3. How does the bride-to-be use her purchases to present herself to different audiences (e.g., family, friends, husband, in-laws) and negotiate her multiple identities?
4. In the post-modern era, how does a bride-to-be negotiate between conflicting influences (religion, culture, family, media, travel, Westernization, etc.) which could lead to multiphrenia?
5. How does the bride-to-be use her new purchases as a way to shape and transition to her new identity?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Qualitative inquiry was used to explore the shopping experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for multiple social events planned around their weddings and their new lives after the weddings. In order to gain deeper insight from Saudi brides-to-be experiences while shopping and preparing for marriage celebrations, the researcher drew from two qualitative approaches: grounded theory and narrative inquiry. Borrowing from multiple qualitative approaches provided a more holistic understanding of the data (Annells, 2006; Frost et al., 2011). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Saudi women who are engaged to be married to investigate factors influencing their purchase choices and consumption patterns.

Grounded theory with constant comparison data analysis approaches were utilized. The grounded theory approach focuses on generating understanding and discovering common meanings of an experience from the perspective of individuals who have lived it (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Creswell, 2013). Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory approach involves connecting themes from the data regarding the phenomenon of interest in order to create a substantive theory or theoretical explanation of the viewpoints of the participants (Creswell, 2013). The constant comparison process, part of grounded theory analysis, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) affords a systematic approach to analyzing the data categories of meanings that emerge across the participants (Creswell, 2013). The grounded theory, constant comparison method of analysis facilitates creation of models and theoretical explanations of the findings (Charmaz, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Narrative inquiry aims for individual participants' stories to be heard and organized to help understand how the individuals make sense of their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants' stories are situated within a particular situation

and within a wider cultural context (Riessman, 2008). In this study, the particular situation is bridal pre-wedding preparation in the Saudi cultural context. I carefully examined each participant's evaluation and decision making while shopping for her wedding and the influencing factors in her surroundings and social sphere.

Moreover, the participants' unique stories helped the researcher understand how the participants make sense of their experiences and particular events (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Riessman, 2008). The researcher spent time with participants to uncover their stories via three in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained how narrative inquiry allows the researcher to have access to three aspects about the participants' experience, including "internal conditions" (i.e., emotions), "external conditions" (i.e., surrounding environment), and the "temporality" (i.e., past, present, and future) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Therefore, narrative inquiry provided a fuller understanding of Saudi brides-to-be, including internal and external conditions that influence their shopping experiences and preparations for their weddings. Application of the two qualitative approaches allowed the researcher to examine the actual experiences of participants and gain insight into the cultural context of the experience that shape meanings for individuals (Annells, 2006; Frost et al., 2011; Riessman, 2008).

Data Collection

Sample

Fourteen Saudi women, who at the time of data collection were engaged to be married for the first time and living in three metropolitan cities in the Western region of Saudi Arabia (i.e., Jeddah, Makkah, and Medina), were interviewed. Women in the sample had been engaged between three and 18 months and had their weddings scheduled within seven days to three

months of the first interview date. Only six participants planned to move to live in a different city after getting married. Their ages ranged from 21 to 30 years, and most of them shared a middle-class or upper middle-class lifestyle. All of the participants had some form of post-secondary education: six obtained bachelor's degrees, two obtained associates degrees, one held a medical degree, and five had finished their second and third years in college. Five of the participants were not working, three worked outside of the home in white-collar positions (i.e., human resources, pediatrics), two were entrepreneurs, and five were college students. All of the participants had received a monetary dowry from the groom between \$6,666 and \$13,333 USD (see Table 1).

A purposeful, non-probability sample was the goal of this qualitative study; the findings from such a sample are not generalizable but facilitated understanding of deeper meanings of pre-marriage consumption in the western region of Saudi Arabia (Baker et al., 1992; Creswell, 2013; Marshall, 1996). Purposive sampling is suitable to gain access to representative individuals and their activities that relate to the research topic (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Marshall, 1996; Maxwell, 1998). To access the essence of the lived purchase experiences of engaged Saudi women, participants were purposefully sampled to include only women who: (a) had scheduled their weddings within six months of the interview date, (b) resided in one of the three cities in the Western region (i.e., Jeddah, Makkah, or Medina), (d) were between the ages of 18 to 30, (e) had never been married, and (f) had never previously met the researcher.

The sample only included women who had scheduled their weddings within six months of the interview date to ensure that they were actively involved in their pre-wedding shopping. Moreover, the sample was exclusive to the cities listed above, which have previously been found to share similar wedding rituals that may vary by region across Saudi Arabia (Long, 2005; Yamani, 2004). These three cities are considered the original urban societies of Saudi Arabia and

are unique in their wedding practices because of historic multiculturalism, as pilgrims from many cultures visit these cities every year for religious purposes (Long, 2005; Rahim, n.d.; Teitelbaum, 2008; Yamani, 2004). The choice to focus only on the ages of 18 to 30 was made because the average age of a Saudi woman's first marriage is 24 ("Age at First Marriage," 2007; Salam, 2013). It is common cultural belief that women spend less time and money on second weddings. Therefore, participation was limited to women who had not been married previously.

Table 1. *Background Information of Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	City of Residence	Time Between Wedding and First Interview	Length of Engagement	Occupation	Highest Level of Education	Dowry	Moving After the Wedding
Abrar	24	Medina	2 weeks	7 months	Not working	A.S.	\$9,333	Yes
Atlal	24	Jeddah	1 month	3 months	Not working	B.S.	\$13,333	Yes
Balques	23	Jeddah	3 months	18 months	Student	HS	\$13,333	No
Batool	21	Jeddah	1 month	9 months	Student	HS	\$13,333	Yes
Baylassan	27	Jeddah	10 days	9 months	Not working	B.S.	\$6,666	No
Eithar	23	Jeddah	3 months	8 months	Student	HS	\$6,666	No
Fayha	23	Medina	9 days	12 months	Not working	A.S.	\$6,600	Yes
Nalah	24	Medina	1 month	5 months	Not working	B.S.	\$12,000	No
Norah	24	Jeddah	1 month	12 months	Entrepreneur	B.S.	\$9,333	Yes
Rania	30	Jeddah	2 months	13 months	HR Manager	B.S.	\$6,600	No
Raseel	28	Jeddah	1 week	8 months	Pediatric	M.D.	\$10,666	No
Reetal	21	Jeddah	2 months	4 months	Student	HS	\$8,000	No
Suad	26	Mecca	2 months	6 months	Entrepreneur	B.S.	\$8,000	No
Yasmeen	22	Jeddah	2 months	5 months	Student	HS	\$8,000	Yes

Note. B.S.= Bachelor's degree, A.S. = Associate of Science degree, M.D. = Medical degree, and HS= High school diploma.

Using snowball sampling techniques, a list of 35 possible participants were identified through 11 key informants who live in Saudi Arabia and have knowledge of engaged women within their friend and/or family circles. The key informants were from different families and friend circles to ensure family variation among the participants. Maxwell (2013) explained that researchers must be culturally appropriate when investigating a topic to establish trust with the participant. As a cultural insider, the researcher is aware of common practice in Saudi Arabia,

where a woman must have mutual acquaintance with another Saudi woman to be able to enter the private sphere and interview her. If a researcher does not approach a potential participant this way, she will be denied access into the other person's private life. Therefore, the researcher gathered a sample with Saudi cultural regulations in mind; trust was established through connections set up by key informants in order to gain access to the sample.

To help participants feel comfortable with discussing the research topic, it is important to have a level of trust and relationship between the researcher and the participant (Esterberg, 2002; Ganga, & Scott, 2006; McCracken, 1988a; Seidman, 2013). Due to this cultural consideration, the researcher and participants shared a mutual friend or relative; however, the researcher had never met the participants before the first interview to avoid bias due to researcher assumptions about participants and to minimize responses participants believe are desired by the researcher (Ganga, & Scott, 2006; McCracken, 1988a; Saldaña, 2011; Seidman, 2013).

After the key informants identified 39 potential participants and alerted them to upcoming contact by the researcher, the researcher contacted potential participants via email and phone depending on the potential participant's preference. The researcher sent potential participants an informational letter translated into Arabic that described the study, type of participation required, and an informed consent form (See Appendix A). Individuals who were interested in participating were contacted via phone to schedule the first interview.

Sampling was conducted until saturation was achieved (Annells, 2006), i.e., when participants said similar things and no new ideas or insights were introduced. At recognition of the saturation point, the researcher stopped recruiting participants (Esterberg, 2002; Gasson, 2004; Gibson & Brown, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To ensure that saturation was achieved, the first phase of the data analysis began during the data collection process (Elo et al., 2014;

Esterberg, 2002). Preliminary coding procedure was applied to the first four interviews. This was accomplished by identifying the core categories and continuing data collection until further code identification was no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The decision to quit sampling was made after the researcher completed the initial analysis and discussed the evidence of saturation of responses with the dissertation advisors.

Recruitment process. Although all the potential participants had a mutual friend or relative with the researcher, the response rate was low (35%). This low response rate was due in part to some individuals refusing to participate and some getting married before scheduling the interview. Thirteen potential participants declined participation in the study. This denial may be due to a cultural factor in that a woman might not want to be interviewed for research if they do not share a very close mutual relative or friend with the researcher. Some potential participants declined participation in the study because they were uncomfortable with video interviews, and they said they would have participated if it was only a voice call.

One participant withdrew from the study after two interviews were conducted because her wedding was canceled, so all the audio records for her interview were deleted. Another 18-year-old participant's data were deleted after conducting two interviews because her older sister, who did all the wedding shopping instead of the bride herself, was answering the interview questions. Due to the physical similarity between the two sisters, the researcher did not realize until later in the second interview that the bride-to-be's older sister was the one who was being interviewed. The bride-to-be was still a student in high school and said she was not ready to do the wedding shopping preparation; hence, the older sister took over the wedding preparation for her. For the rest of the potential participants, the researcher was not able to schedule an interview

with them because they had been postponing the time of the interview due to their busyness with the wedding preparation, and eventually their wedding days passed.

Interview Procedures

The data were collected through three in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 14 participants and were conducted before the wedding to understand how brides-to-be planned for their future marriage celebrations and their new lives after the wedding. The three interviews allowed thorough and progressive exploration of the topic, including potential social, familial, and personal influences surrounding the purchase choices of Saudi brides-to-be when shopping and preparing for their weddings. The three-stage interview allowed for verification of participant statements and for correction or elaborations of ideas and explanations of meanings and experiences. However, there were some missing data from three participants who had time to schedule only one or two interviews before their wedding date. Their incomplete data was included in the analysis so that the richness of their responses, although limited, would not be lost. Major findings were never based only on their limited interviews alone.

All interviews were conducted via one of the participant's preferred webcam applications, such as Skype and FaceTime. Today, technology provides various webcam tools to extend the reach of studies and defy geographic boundaries (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Salmons, 2014). Conducting synchronous interviews via webcam tools that include both verbal and video components is an appropriate alternative to the in-person interview (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Salmons, 2014). However, researchers need to consider participants' knowledge of using the web conferencing technology. The ages of the women in this study were within the age group that is more likely to know how to use web conferencing

technology. To ensure that participants were familiar with the webcam application used for the interview, it was the participants' choice to decide which webcam application to use.

Interviews were scheduled at a time that was most convenient for the participants. Participants were invited to show some of the products they purchased during their wedding preparation to refer to during the interviews. When allowed by the participant, photos of products were sent to the researcher and were described within the results. Before conducting any interview, verbal consent was obtained from each participant. Additionally, at the beginning of each interview, participants were informed about how the interview would be audio recorded and not videotaped. During the interview, the researcher took notes about purchases that were discussed. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Total minute duration of each participants' interviews ranged from 33 to 274 minutes (see Table 2).

To guide the topics of discussion during the two interviews, semi-structured, open-ended questions were asked. The open-ended questions were worded generally, with follow-up probing questions to avoid leading and influencing the participants' responses, encouraging them to express their opinions using their own words (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013). The researcher's questions guided the participant to talk in-depth on topics relevant to the present study. The first interview focused on: (a) how the participant makes purchase decisions during her wedding preparation, (b) what the participant purchased during her engagement period and details about the actual purchase experiences, and (c) what the significance and meanings were behind the purchased items for the participant. (See Appendix C for interview protocol).

At the end of the first interview, the researcher asked participants to audio record notes, if possible, the next time they went shopping. The researcher sent the participants some general points to include in their audio recorded notes, such as where the participant goes to shop, who

accompanies her, type of store visited, and what was purchased. Only four participants were able to record notes during their shopping trips. However, the second interview was scheduled shortly after participants went shopping for wedding purchases and focused on a detailed story of the latest shopping trips. The times between their shopping trip and the second interview ranged from one hour to one week. Questions during the second interview were about (a) where the participant goes to shop, (b) who accompanied the participant, (c) type of stores the participant visited, (d) what the participant purchased, and (e) how the participant made purchase decisions.

Table 2. *Interview Information*

Pseudonym	Number of Interviews	Total Minutes Transcribed	Time Between Shopping Trip and Second Interview	Time Between First and Second Interview	Time Between Second and Third Interview
Abrar	3	151	1 hour	3 days	7 days
Atlal	3	239	1 hour	10 days	4 days
Balques	3	159	2 days	18 days	3 days
Batool	1	33	N/A	N/A	N/A
Baylassan	3	165	3 days	1 days	5 days
Eithar	3	152	1 day	61 days	2 days
Fayha	3	137	1 day	4 days	1 days
Nalah	3	274	1 day	9 days	15 days
Norah	3	235	1 day	17 days	1 day
Rania	3	225	2 hours	28 days	17 days
Raseel	2	50	3 hours	7 days	N/A
Reetal	2	100	1 hour	4 days	N/A
Suad	3	141	1 week	21 days	37 days
Yasmeen	3	178	1 hour	15 days	4 days

Finally, the third interview was a follow-up and supplement to the first two interviews. It consisted of broad open-ended, grand tour questions about bride-to-be shopping experiences and meanings of purchases and process. And because at this point the researcher had established deep rapport and trust with the participants, clarification and follow-up questions were asked after the researcher reviewed the first two interviews.

Translation and data processing. The interview schedule and the informed consent form were created in English first, then translated into Arabic. After conducting interviews in Arabic, the researcher translated the interview transcripts back into English before the data analysis. The researcher is a native Arabic speaker who is also fluent in English. Additionally, another fluent Arabic and English speaker reviewed the translation in a back-translation process for the interview schedule, the consent form, and the interview transcripts. After the translation was finished, data were organized by bringing together all of the information obtained from the interviews and the audio recorded notes in a qualitative analysis software, NVivo. All the data collected were stored in a password-protected computer. Using NVivo software helped manage the information and made searching for themes and coded content and comparing between and within coded content easier (Creswell, 2013).

Pilot study. In order to prepare the researcher for data collection, it is strongly recommended to conduct a pilot study to allow for revision of the approach and techniques used (Seidman, 2013; van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). The pilot study allowed for adjustments to be made for the actual study and gave the researcher insight into the sample population (Maxwell, 2013). Further, the interview schedule translation process from English to Arabic was tested and edited as needed.

Therefore, before conducting the actual study, a pilot study was conducted with one recently married woman from the Western region of Saudi Arabia who lives in Ames, Iowa, USA. This pilot study served as a test of the interview questions and translations only. All three interviews were conducted with the pilot study interviewee, and changes were made before conducting the actual study interviews.

The researcher asked the pilot study interviewee for feedback on the interview questions and used her feedback to reword, add, and remove some questions. For example, initially the researcher planned to ask participants how they make their purchase decisions about all products, items, and garments they bought or were planning to buy for their wedding preparation. However, while conducting the pilot interview, it became clear that there might be too many items and that it was impractical to ask about everything. Consequently, the researcher reworded the interview questions to be about general categories participants shop for, such as evening dress, makeup, lingerie, etc. In addition, the researcher added an Arabic term that is unique in Saudi Arabian culture (*dabash*), which refers to all the bride-to-be new purchases and new clothes for her new life after the wedding. Finally, the researcher added more probing questions about whether a participant felt that she wanted to challenge the norms and refused in any small or larger way to follow customs and traditions that brides-to-be usually follow. The data from the pilot study were not transcribed nor included in the actual study's sample and data analysis, because the pilot study interviewee did not meet the sample criteria as she is already married and not engaged.

Honorarium. Glesne (2006) explained the benefit of an honorarium to encourage participants' commitments and help build a sense of mutual identification. As a way to thank participants for volunteering their time for three interviews, the researcher offered to give each participant a \$30 gift card. In accordance with Saudi customs, the gift card was sent via email before conducting the first interview to establish cultural expectations of trust. It might be perceived negatively if the researcher waited until the last interview to give the card. If the participants decide to withdraw from participation, they may keep the gift card. However, only three participants accepted the offer.

Data Analysis

Data from this study were analyzed inductively, producing descriptive stories of the participants from narrative inquiry and applying constant comparison theme development from grounded theory (see Figure 3) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Wells, 2011). Braun and Clarke (2006) described the inductive analysis process as coding the data as if the researcher has not previously had theoretical interest in the topic, so the researcher will not try to fit the data “into a pre-existing coding frame” (p. 83). Since the introduction of grounded theory in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, there has been a discussion about the induction process of theory generation in qualitative research (Heath & Cowley, 2004). Glaser (1978) suggested that to be totally inductive and maintain sensitivity to data, a researcher should not begin the research with preconceived theory in mind. On the other hand, Morse (1994) argued that it is not possible to start a study without any influence from past knowledge and experience, which may stimulate the theory generated from qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, to acquire balance, pre-existing theories should not be an agenda and rigidly used for sorting the data; neither should a researcher begin the project blindly without reviewing any existing theories (Heath & Cowley, 2004; Morse, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When existing theories are appropriate to the area of investigation, they might be used to elaborate, modify, or expand understanding according to incoming data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Existing theories can be used to formulate loosely held hypotheses that guide some exploration of the data but should never limit the researcher to seeing other patterns in the data and should be abandoned if there is no relationship to the data. Therefore, the researcher reviewed pre-existing theories but did not restrict herself to them during the data analysis process. In addition and in congruence with the inductive process, patterns in the data at times

elicited recognition of relationships to existing theory that had not originally been reviewed prior to the study.

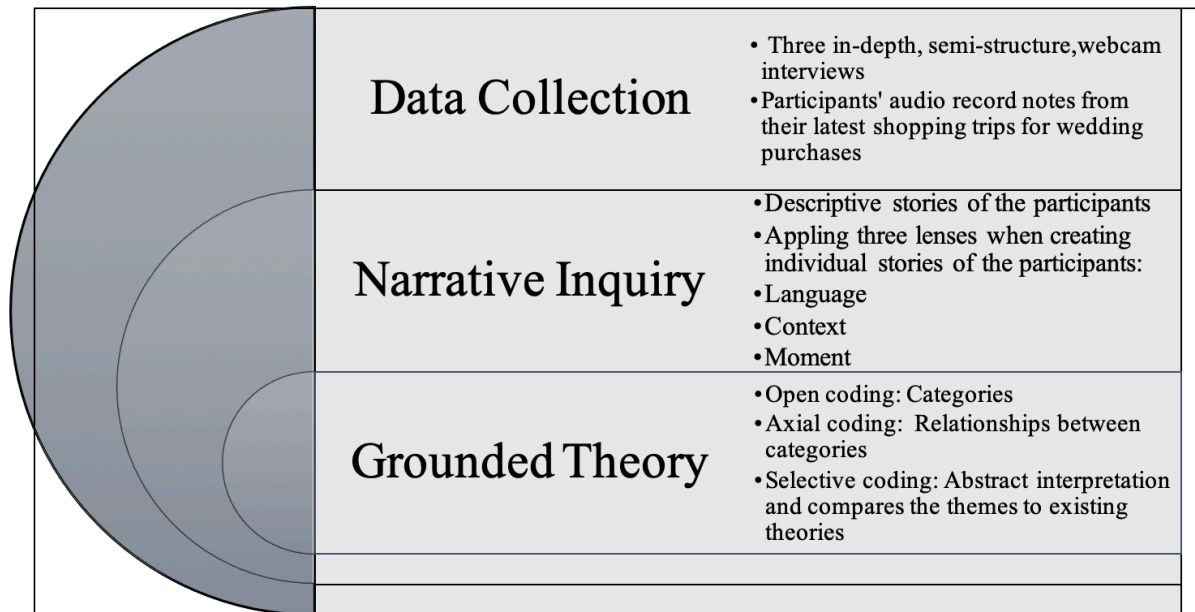


Figure 3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

To start the data analysis process, the verbatim transcripts of the interviews and voice notes from participants' shopping trips were read several times to give the researcher an overall impression of the data. The multiple tours of the data facilitated extraction of specific stories from the data about each participant as an individual. These stories distilled and organized details about each participant and introduced their background and demographics before focusing and dividing the data into smaller, cross-participant segments in the coding process (Phoenix, 2013). Using third person accounts in the form of stories, the researcher aimed to show how participants experience their world from their perspective (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Wells, 2011). Before comparing themes across stories, each individual participant's story of their experience was examined as a whole (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Wells, 2011). After individual story constructions, a summary across all the participants' stories was used to create a larger story and contextualize the participants' experiences and interactions (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016; Phoenix, 2013; Wells, 2011). This summary presented the core categories that make up the content of the stories and a synthesis of the information obtained from all the interviews.

McCormack (2000a; 2000b) applied three lenses to analysis of narrative data in order to consider each part of the story and see it from different angles: language, context, and moment. Each lens reveals a different aspect of insight. In the end they combined to one final individual participant's story to show a rounded perception of the story's message. Within the lens of language, the researcher focused on the words participants used and what they tell and how they tell it (McCormack, 2000a; 2000b). Looking at the data through the language lens helps the researcher to see the emotional meaning, particularly phrases or keywords, which help to reveal the significance of what is being said (McCormack, 2000a; 2000b). For example, to apply the language lens, the researcher spotted when a participant talked about herself as a second-person, using the word "you" when she was reflecting on her own experience. The use of "you" in this way is often considered a sign of feeling conflict or uncertainty.

The lens of context examines the context in which participants' experiences take place and are influenced (McCormack, 2000a; 2000b). The lens of context was applied by considering how participants' surroundings and position in the family influenced their shopping experience. The lens of moments focuses on when participants recall significant moments or turning points which lead participants to tell what happened before and after the relevant moment (McCormack, 2000a; 2000b). The lens of moments informs the researcher about how any extraordinary events in the story may be related to the study topic. Within the data, each marriage celebration was used as a significant moment to capture the lens moments.

Moreover, the researcher attempted to balance between verbatim quotations and narrative, explanatory text (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Blending verbatim quotations with the

narrative text in written outputs from a study is used “as evidence; as explanation; as illustration; to deepen understanding; to give participants a voice, and to enhance readability” (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006, p. 11). Lincoln and Guba (2003) considered the domination of the researcher’s voice as a problem of objectivity in qualitative research. To minimize domination of the researcher’s voice, a poem constructed from a participant’s words was constructed for each participant before proceeding with full narrative analysis. The participants’ stories were presented in poems using only verbatim quotations sequentially arranged by the researcher to further give participants a voice and be faithful to the essence of the text (see Appendix D) (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006; Furman, Lietz, & Langer, 2006; Willis, 2002).

Poetic structures are used in qualitative research to present evocative insights into the data and help develop a deep understanding of the participants’ lived experience (Cahnmann, 2003; Furman et al., 2006; Willis, 2002). The researcher was inspired by the possibility of presenting participants’ stories in poems to allow readers to hear the participants tell their own story. Additionally, poems are slow and tell a story in pulses which “evoke an immediacy and vividness in the represented experience for the reader” (Willis, 2002, p. 14). Therefore, before writing participants’ stories using third person accounts, the researcher formulated the poetic form using only verbatim quotations. The poetic presentation process guided the narrative analysis and was useful during the coding guide development because it told a story in pulses.

In the second phase of the data analysis, the grounded theory technique of constant comparison was used to unravel key meanings within the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After reading the interview transcriptions, the data were divided into meaningful fragments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, these fragments from multiple interviews were compared and integrated to develop key concepts.

The grounded theory process consists of three phases of coding: open, axial, and selective coding (Creswell, 2013; Gasson, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding is the initial coding that identifies categories and patterns across the data in the early stages of data collection. In this phase, the researcher interacted with the data by familiarizing herself with the different segments of the data to identify anything that could be meaningful. Also, the researcher wrote memos to highlight connections between concepts (Merriam, 2002). An initial coding guide was made using open coding after the first few interviews, and sampling was continued until “saturation” was reached, meaning that no new concepts were emerging in the data (Gasson, 2004; Gibson & Brown, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To recognize that saturation of the data was achieved, the researcher started the open coding phase during the data collection after the first four interviews were completed (Elo et al., 2014). The concurrent data collection and analysis permitted the researcher to rethink what information to seek next and allow for adjustment of interview questions to sharpen the focus of the study (Baker et al., 1992; Gasson, 2004).

Next, axial coding was used to find relationships between categories and the interaction among coded elements, which help define the core of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding requires a systematic approach and brings open coding to a higher level of analysis that relates data to categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Some categories underwent axial coding before other codes had been developed and before all data had been coded. In this level of coding, the researcher looked across different participant cases in order to find connections within the data. Taxonomies and flow charts of categories and themes were prepared to capture the interrelationships.

During the third phase, selective coding, the researcher attempted to explain patterns and relationships. This stage of analysis provided a more abstract interpretation of the bridal shopping and preparation experience, while also allowing the researcher to compare and contrast the general themes within the data from the participants' viewpoints as well as in relation to existing theory (Gasson, 2004). Within inductive analysis, the researcher avoided using literature and theories to tightly frame the data analysis during the initial coding (Gasson, 2004; Luca, 2009). However, in the final level of analysis, the researcher compared the themes to existing theories to build a theoretical explanation of the findings. The researcher was planning on generating a new framework based on the study's findings if existing theories did not provide an explanation. The goal of grounded theory is to construct a substantive theory in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013; Gasson, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Luca, 2009). In some cases, a new theory may not be created, but previous theories will be used to deepen understanding of the data. The researcher also used the findings to create models (Charmaz, 2006) to visually represent the relationships between the themes. The researcher used the themes that have emerged to create models and theoretical explanations for the studied phenomenon (Gasson, 2004).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness must be considered through all phases of the research: planning the study, data collection, analysis, and reporting the analyzed data (Elo et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, to increase trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis, the researcher considered the most appropriate ways to choose a sample and collect data. Based on this consideration, the sample was purposefully selected to include only engaged women who had their weddings scheduled within the next six months. This

increased study credibility as the women were actively shopping and preparing for their weddings, allowing the researcher to obtain information about the participants' "real world" preparation for their weddings. The data were collected with three in-depth interviews, allowing for rich data and meanings to be collected by listening to participants talk about their experience and encouraging and giving time for participants to reflect on their experiences.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four components of trustworthiness: credibility, consistency/dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the researcher strived to address all four components to establish trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility. Credibility occurs when the findings are convincing and when the true picture of the phenomenon under the investigation are presented. As part of "prolonged engagement," Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend building trust and developing a relationship with the participants. The researcher attempted to do so by only recruiting participants with whom she has a mutual acquaintance and by conducting three in-depth interviews. This allowed a relationship to be developed with the participants, and they felt more comfortable disclosing information by the time of the third interview.

To further establish trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher used two strategies: triangulation and peer review (Annells, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Triangulation is a widely used technique to strengthen qualitative research design and overcome the limitations of using a single method (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Morgan, in press). However, Morgan (in press) argued that the term triangulation has been overused, and in some cases it has been used inappropriately. The original purpose of triangulation is using mixed methods to complete and

not merely to supplement each other (Morgan, in press). In order to effectively use triangulation for validity issues, a study should compare both methods' results to test whether the two results are convergent, complementary, or divergent (Morgan, in press).

The term triangulation is applicable when two types of qualitative approaches are used to analyze the data (Annells, 2006), when the data are collected through two or more stages such as follow-up interviews, or when multiple theories are used to examine and interpret the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Regardless what we call it, to increase the credibility of this study, the researcher used three stages of data collections, two qualitative approaches for data analysis, and multiple theoretical perspectives for data interpretation. This provided the researcher with a more comprehensive understanding of the data, decreasing the chance for misinterpretations (Annells, 2006; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Finally, peer review was used throughout the coding and analysis phases to discuss the data and methods and to negotiate and come to a consensus when disagreements arose (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). First, the researcher started coding the transcripts and created an initial coding guide. Once the first 28% of the transcripts had been coded, the researcher sent the initial coding guide with coded transcripts to the dissertation advisors to check whether the researcher's initial guide was suitable with the data. Throughout the coding process, the researcher met with her advisors to develop the coding guide, explore meanings, and negotiate themes identified until mutual understanding was achieved.

After creating and refining the coding guide (See Appendix F), one audit coder, who is a native of Saudi culture and a qualitative researcher (earned her Ph.D. at Colorado State University and is currently a professor at Northern Borders University in Saudi Arabia), used the coding guide to independently code 28% of raw transcripts. Then, the disagreements between the

researcher and the audit coder were negotiated until agreement was achieved. Disagreements between the researcher and the audit coder were discussed with the dissertation advisors. Interrater reliability was calculated by dividing the total number of agreements by the total number of decisions made during the coding process by the researcher and the audit coder. Peer review of successive portions of the transcripts proceeded, and agreement levels increased as the peer audit coder and researcher socialized each other to depth of theme meanings. The interrater reliability for 28% of the data before negotiation was 96%. Level of agreement is considered acceptable if it meets or exceeds 80%, as recommended by Creswell (2007) and Saldaña (2013).

Consistency/dependability. Consistency/dependability occurs when results are consistent and the study could be repeated (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). For the study to have dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend an external auditor who is not involved in the research process to examine the research study. However, because of cost and time constraints, the dissertation advisors served as auditors, though not completely independent from the study. The researcher addressed the dependability issue by reporting, in detail, the research design and the data collection to enable a future investigator to repeat the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

Transferability. Transferability involves providing enough detail and description so that others can apply the findings to other contexts (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It could be considered inappropriate to apply the findings of a qualitative study to other situations because the findings are specific to a small number of individuals (Shenton, 2004). However, one way to achieve transferability is to provide a thick description, so the conclusions of the study could be evaluated and transferred to other times, settings, situations, and people when appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, to establish transferability, the

researcher provided sufficient information to transfer the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In this study, detailed information was given about sampling criteria, description of the participants, data collection methods, length of interviews, and the period of time between each interview. The narrative analysis details help to make the context of the Saudi brides-to-be clear for making comparisons.

Confirmability. Confirmability is present when a researcher presents all the details and data that support their interpretations of the findings to demonstrate that findings emerge from the researcher's own positionality or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve confirmability, "another researcher should be able to examine the data and confirm, modify, or reject the first researcher's interpretations" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 80). To establish confirmability, reflexivity was used (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher used journaling to keep track of her thoughts throughout the data collection and analysis processes, allowing for self-criticism and reflexivity to help minimize reactivity (Elo et al., 2014; Luca, 2009; Maxwell, 2013; Willig, 2008). Journaling highlights the researcher's position through self-explanation of biases, preexisting assumptions, and worldview (Dibley, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher kept a writing journal in order to reflect on interviews. It was used to describe the social setting, the researcher's feelings before and after the interview, how the interview progressed, what went well, and what needed improvement. This journaling enabled the researcher to make sense of each participant's story and set a roadmap for future interviews and similar research. As an insider, the researcher also used journaling to acknowledge situations during the interviews that she could relate to, such as challenging the wedding norms and resisting traditional situations. By continuing journaling throughout the data collection and

analysis processes, the researcher was able to separate her experiences from the experiences of the participants.

Issues of Researcher Subjectivity

When using a grounded theory approach and narrative inquiry, the researcher's point of view, past experiences, identity, expectations, and values can influence the interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2013; Dibley, 2011; Luca, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). According to Willig (2008), the constant comparison process interprets the data from the participants' points of view but will be influenced by the researcher's world view. The data itself can be shaped by researcher-participant interaction. By acknowledging and reflecting on biases and assumptions, the researcher is able to see how they may affect the findings. Additionally, within the narrative inquiry, the role of the researcher is essential in acquiring and representing that story (Dibley, 2011; McCormack, 2000b). Therefore, the researcher will attempt to make any potential biases transparent throughout the research process.

My background as a married Saudi Arabian woman, who has studied in the United States for nine years with three short visits back to Saudi Arabia (in 2009, 2015, and 2016), has given me a slight "manufacture distance" (McCracken, 1988a). As explained by McCracken (1988a), this means that an insider has developed a slightly blinded familiarity with her culture to some degree. As I have spent so much time removed from my culture, I have been able to establish distance and have been exposed to other cultures' wedding rituals, therefore, decreasing my bias as an insider and increasing my ability to reflect as an outsider on my culture. Further, while I am familiar with the traditional wedding rituals in Saudi Arabia, I did not experience the traditional shopping or all the events personally, increasing my distance from the phenomenon under study. Despite being born and married in the culture which I am studying, I opted to skip the traditional

marriage experience due to my young age at marriage, school time conflicts, and geographic distance from my fiancé. I chose to save money and focus on school rather than go through this shopping rite of passage, lending me some unfamiliarity with the experience of the process. However, I have become very interested in understanding why women choose to go through the traditional experience.

I was born and raised in the western region of Saudi Arabia in the cities of Medina and Jeddah, two of the three cities in this study. I attended some friends' and relatives' celebrations prior to their weddings where the brides' purchases and new clothes were displayed elegantly in the couple's new home. This unique celebration made me wonder about what the brides' experiences were during wedding preparation and how they made decisions about what to purchase. Despite some unfamiliarity with the actual experience, my personal familiarity with the culture might be an advantage to the study. McCracken (1988a) explained that when qualitative researchers are working in their own cultures, they can make the long interview do powerful work: "It is by drawing on their understanding of how they themselves see and experience the world that they can supplement and interpret the data they generate in the long interview" (p. 12).

While earning a master's degree at Colorado State University, I studied how married Saudi women presented themselves in the private sphere through dress and how their husbands influenced their dress. While conducting this research, I realized how influential husbands are on their wives. This caused me to ponder when it is that a woman starts to be heavily influenced by her husband or fiancé. Thus, I wondered if engaged women are as influenced by their fiancés during their engagement period shopping experiences and wedding preparation as they are when married to their husbands.

As a past fashion designer, my research interests are driven by women's desires to convey their identities through dress. Having had personal communication with Saudi customers purchasing clothing, I have heard of many outside influences on women's purchases. Due to the amount of money and time put into wedding preparations in Saudi Arabia, I am particularly interested in how engaged women choose items to prepare for their new lives as married women.

In general, having lived in two different countries and have friends from different backgrounds, my perspective and worldview have broadened. Further, I have had the opportunity to be exposed to the diversity of those who share my language, culture, and faith. Overall, these factors have shaped my views and may influence the way I understand the data. While I am slightly distanced from my native culture, I still may overlook minute details that others completely removed from the culture may find significant. However, my understanding of the language allowed me to pick up on linguistic and cultural nuances that participants may express. Being in the United States and attending American weddings made me realize how different wedding traditions are in different cultures. Exposure to valued traditions in the U.S. allowed me to compare them to what is considered valuable in Saudi culture. This may influence how I interpret the data but may also open my eyes to see differences of which I may not have otherwise been aware.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for the wedding process, involving multiple social events, and their lives after the wedding. To accomplish this purpose, 14 Saudi brides-to-be were interviewed. In order to develop an in-depth understanding of their experiences, the results in this chapter are presented in two qualitative approaches: narrative inquiry and grounded theory. First, drawing from narrative inquiry, a short story of each participant is presented to introduce them and represent their backgrounds, experiences, and personalities. This is followed by summary across all the participants' stories, which included photos provided by participants as examples of some purchases. Finally, taking a grounded theory approach, I provide discussion of emergent themes from participants' interviews with theoretical interpretation of these themes.

Narrative Inquiry: Participants' Stories

Narrative stories in qualitative research include what people tell about themselves and their lives; the researcher retells these stories in sequential and temporal ordering (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008). To avoid presenting only a detached analysis of fractured portions of the data, individual stories from each participant are reported first (Charmaz, 2006). Iborra (2007) suggested that providing a coherent story about each participant through narrative allows the researcher to examine unique complexities of the processes related to changes during rites of passage and ritualized transitions such as marriage.

From participants' interviews, the researcher generated a description of their shopping trips, their marriage celebrations, and meanings reflected in the shopping process and purchases made. The researcher reorganized the story to represent the richness and uniqueness of each participant using McCormack's (2000a; 2000b) three lens method focusing on language, context,

and moment. Summary across all the participants' stories was developed to present a larger picture of the content of the stories.

Abrar

Abrar is a 24-year-old bride to be, who currently resides in Medina but plans on living in a rural town with her husband after marriage. She quit her job at a community center office after getting engaged because she felt she needed ample time to prepare for her marriage. She described her shopping trips as “a race against time.” It took her about a month with daily shopping trips and sometimes twice a day “running from store to store” to finish her wedding preparation purchases. To save time, her shopping strategy was to visit only the stores that she previously shopped at and trusted. When asked about her budget, she left it open and “went on a shopping spree.” Although she had a shopping list, she did not restrict herself in terms of amounts and cost. Only a few months into her engagement she had already spent double the amount of her dowry. Abrar summarized her shopping experience as “very pleasant and delightful.” Also, she further added that, “I enjoyed every moment, even when I was tired and stressed out.”

To start, I asked about her *shofa*” or first meeting with her fiancé. Like all the other participants I interviewed, Abrar expressed that “the *shofa* was stressful” because, “It was the first time meeting a guy who I have never seen before.” She was concerned whether “he would like me or not.” Similar to other participants, Abrar was uncertain about what would be considered appropriate to wear on the *shofa* day. Therefore, she sought out her family’s advice. In her case she specifically solicited her father’s view because he “viewed the dress from a man’s perspective.” Abrar valued her parents’ and older siblings’ advice and considers her family more knowledgeable than her. On her *fatiha* day, Abrar wore what her father thought was the most

appropriate dress even though she “was not fully convinced” with her father’s choice; she followed her father’s advice because of her strong belief that the daughter’s purchases “are representing her parents and the house she came from.”

Abrar divulged the significance of her new purchases in relation to her wedding and life after the wedding. She particularly valued items that symbolize the intimate relationship with her future husband. Among her purchases her favorite item is “the bedding set because I will share it with my husband.” Moreover, she purchased “about 100 lingerie pieces to wear a new one every day.” When asked why, she replied:

I never bought these as a single woman. There will be a husband who sees what I wear and comments on it. I just wear pajamas at home now, but I need to dress nicely for my husband at home after I am married.

She paid extra attention to the honeymoon lingerie because she wanted “them be memorable for our first few nights together.” Thinking about her role as a wife frightens Abrar because “It is a huge responsibility.” However, she relies on her new purchases to manage her appearance “to feel like a good wife” and “dress up for my husband.” Abrar thought it is rude “to ask my husband to take me shopping a short period after our wedding.” To do so would indicate that she was not “fully prepared.” In addition to the husband, “everyone will be examining what I wear and will scrutinize me.” Therefore, Abrar wanted “to look like a newlywed.” Her conception of a newlywed woman was that she should “dress up everywhere” she goes and dress differently from how she “dressed as I did as a single.” By managing her appearance and “dressing nicely,” the newlywed woman is exerting sufficient effort in preparing for her new life, leading to her feeling “confident and satisfied with myself” and avoiding feeling “incomplete ...sad...unsure of myself.”

When talking about marriage celebrations, Abrar held strong opinion about marriage traditions. She thought that “marriage traditions are very nice, and we should keep them.” She disapproved of replacing the *ghomrah* with “a meaningless bachelorette party” because: “It is not us.” However, when talking about transporting her new purchases (*dabash*) to her new home event, she seemed undecided as to whether she approved or disapproved it: “I hate the nosiness during this *dabash* transporting event, but I like that they are pampering the bride.” She disapproved that: “Some guests are overly nosey and want to see everything the bride-to-be purchased,” which made Abrar feel threatened by others’ judgement of her purchase choices. Nevertheless, she enjoyed that the bride “goes to her house like a queen with everything set up for her.” In the end, the distance between Madina and the rural town where she would move saved Abrar from displaying her *dabash*. Abrar also held strong opinion about the bride image on the wedding day. She favored the traditional image of “white puffy gown” and considered it the look of a “real bride!”

Atlal

Atlal is a 24-year-old bride to be who has lived in three different cities in Saudi Arabia. She noticed cultural differences between these cities. She currently resides in Jeddah but will move out of the country with her husband after marriage. Atlal started her wedding preparation journey with much procrastination and underestimation of how long it actually takes to prepare for a marriage and wedding. Unlike other participants, she did not “put too much effort” into choosing what to wear in her *shofa* because she considered it “simply as a meeting and nothing more.” She shopped for her *shofa* dress only two days before her *shofa*: “My sister was more excited than I was.”

While shopping for her wedding preparations, Atlal made some of her purchase decisions based on social media trends: “I like to explore and look at all fashionistas’ social media accounts to browse different dress styles.” Among all participants, Atlal was the only one who sent me detailed voice notes about two of her shopping trips. Although Atlal thought that “It’s easier to shop” when stores display the clothing by “color categories and matching accessories,” she was afraid to go over her budget because the stores “entice you with their window displays to buy things not on your list.” Throughout her approximately 60 shopping trips, she described her overall experience: “The experience completely drained my energy physically and psychologically.” Atlal felt exhausted psychologically because she experienced two different phases: rebellion and conformity.

In the first phase, reflected in her first interview, Atlal had a rebellious persona. She resisted her family’s influence and denied the social expectations: “These rules were created by people and are meant to be broken.” In the beginning of her shopping journey, she just wanted to use her dowry only to fulfill her “shopping wish list.” When her sister suggested she buy clothing based on her fiancé’s liking, Atlal refused:

I am not buying anything for him... Who is he? I just met him... while I'm shopping, I was only thinking of myself. I really don't think about how I want my husband to think of me.

However, in the second and third interviews, she shifted to more influence by the social norm. It remains somewhat unclear what triggered this shift, but the change would continue well to the end of her entire experience. Atlal transitioned into a conformity phase in which she morphed into a different character and made lots of compromises: “I surrendered myself to her [her sister].” Atlal faced many conflicts and uncertainty, but afterwards decided to accept the social norms and sought her family’s guidance: “I felt like my sister had saved me.” Moreover,

as she spent more time with her fiancé she felt that she was “falling in love with him,” and stated that she wanted “him to like me, and I want to look attractive to him.” She realized the importance of her appearance in helping her transition into marriage: “The physical attraction is the first step toward accomplishing the emotional compatibility.” For example, Atlal hesitated shopping for lingerie, but later on chose lingerie as her favorite item. “When I tried it on I was intrigued by it... I felt I am hot and feminine.”

In her last interview, as the wedding date quickly approached, Atlal felt overwhelmed, unprepared, and nervous. She wished she could skip the transition phase:

I wish I had a time machine that would move me to three months after the wedding.

Because I think I'll have settled down three months after the wedding and adjusted to my new life. I'm a little nervous about that, so I wish I could skip this stage.

Moving to another country added extra stress, so she reached out to her relatives who lived there to learn about the culture because she wanted to meet the social expectations there: “I don't want people to look at me like I'm a weirdo.” Atlal recognized that her appearance “reflects your character, background, family, and upbringing” and did not want to “hurt your family’s reputation” by dressing “below the expectations.”

Between resisting and accepting the social norm, Atlal refused to follow some customs and traditions that brides-to-be usually follow. For example, she disapproved of the event of transporting the new purchases (*dabash*) to the bride’s new home prior to the wedding: “It is a silly and unnecessary custom.” She believed that her *dabash* was a “personal issue and better left hidden” because “some people may jinx you, give you the evil eye, or criticize” her purchases. Her fear of judgment and criticism lead Atlal to cancel the *ghomrah* party: “I felt holding another event would be overwhelming.” When it came to the wedding rings, however, Atlal approved of

the norm: “The groom is supposed to buy the wedding rings.” She was upset because her fiancé gave her money to buy her own wedding ring instead of buying her one. She refused this arrangement and asked him to bring the wedding ring on the wedding day. She was so adamant about the ring tradition that she stated: “I will kill him if he forgets.” She thought this perhaps because wedding rings hold a strong symbolic meaning for the couple getting married and for the marriage itself.

When talking about the wedding day, Atlal wanted “to have a small wedding with only close friends and relatives” to avoid “sharp criticism.” However, her family believed that “a bigger event would bring more happiness.” Atlal also wanted a simple wedding gown, but her family convinced her “to choose a ball gown style” because “people aren't thrilled about a wedding dress unless it's ball gown style.” In Saudi tradition, “the bride arrives very late at night” and is “expected to be idle and not dance or move a lot...everyone stares at [her].” To balance between the norms and her family’s wishes and her wishes, Atlal agreed to have a large wedding to allow her entire family “to live the happiness with me.” However, she planned to hold her wedding during the day time instead of the night and divide her wedding into two parts:

From 3:00-7:00 p.m. I will act traditionally, wear the wedding ball gown, be ushered in slowly. After 7:00 pm it will be my night! I will change my dress, dance with my friends.

Balques

Balques, 23 years old, resided in Jeddah and belonged to a well-known tribe. Being the oldest daughter and first to get married made Balques feel like she was “the victim,” as her parents “didn’t want to do anything wrong and followed with the strict tradition closely.” Because she was the first to get married, she started her wedding preparation journey with much confusion and uncertainty: “I am at a loss as to what I should buy.” Although, her mother

provided her guidance and accompanied Balques in “every shopping trip,” Balques saw herself “as an independent wife-to-be” and wanted to make her own purchase decisions. She had “endless conflicts” with her mother about “the level of modesty” of the garments purchased. From her mother’s perspective “it is inappropriate to purchase revealing clothing” in the beginning of the marriage. One time while trying to purchase revealing clothing behind her mother’s back, at the checkout lane her mother made her return them. Balques feels the conflict between herself and her mother is due to the generational age difference. She wished she had elder sisters closer to her age to advise her during her wedding preparation journey. As a substitute to an older sister, Balques sought her “best friend’s advice” when making purchase decisions that are most important to her such as the wedding dress.

Her deep connection to her tribal marriage traditions added extra challenges that Balques had to face during her wedding preparation. In her tribe’s tradition the bride-to-be is not allowed to meet her fiancé before the wedding, which increased her uncertainty about what to purchase: “I don’t know him and I don’t know what he likes.” Her predicament put her in the situation that she was blindly making decisions about how to appropriately present herself in front of her future husband. She feared that dressing modestly would be translated by the groom that he is “a stranger.” On the other hand, dressing too revealing would make her seem indecent and risky. Moreover, Balques felt unprepared to make any purchase decisions about intimate relationship clothing: “I postponed purchasing lingerie until after the marriage.”

To overcome the feeling of uncertainty, Balques devotedly tried to convince her family to allow her to contact her fiancé; “I just wanted to know him.” However, her family refused, and even when “I texted my fiancé behind my parents’ and brother’s backs,” she got no reply. She was afraid that if she texted him repeatedly “he would misunderstand me and think I’m pushing

the boundaries.” In the end, Balques gave up and felt that her “hands were tied.” Because unlike other participants who spent time with their fiancées prior to their wedding, Balques was one step behind in the transition phase. Typically engaged couples are allowed to freely meet one another. However, Balques comes from a very tradition-oriented tribe, so communication between them was prohibited. She attempted to communicate with her fiancé via texting but was met with rejection by her fiancé. Additionally, although other participants, like Nalah and Reetal, come from similar tribes, Balques’s family and in-laws were the only ones that held on to this old-fashioned tradition.

While shopping for her wedding preparation, Balques valued purchasing something unique. When in Turkey, on family vacation, she purchased as many items as possible because “the clothes were different than what was available in the Saudi markets.” She purposely avoided purchasing popular styles that “invaded the markets and are overused.” She used social media to keep up with “the latest trends and styles on Instagram.” To show her uniqueness, she purchased an expensive diamond watch that she felt was her favorite item among all her purchases. Moreover, she purchased a collection of strongly scented perfumes to wear as a newlywed because she “want[ed] people to recognize my scent before I even walk into a room.”

Balques described her overall shopping experience as “a physical and mental challenge,” yet it was “the most enjoyable and exciting time.” After coming back from a shopping trip, she tried her new purchases again at home and shed tears that were a mix of “nervousness, excitement, and fear.” She believed that her new items symbolized “moving into a new life and taking on a new role.”

Balques believed that “my dress is a reflection of who I am,” so she sorted her shopping list based on the audiences and social settings. Upon purchasing clothing for large occasions as a

newlywed, she chose clothing according to the norm: “I should dress fancy” and “must wear gold.” The gold symbolizes that the bride has invested in her dowry and did not “waste her dowry on meaningless things.” Another important audience Balques took into consideration was her in-laws, who live in the countryside. She made her purchases based on the social expectations there to avoid “standing out” or being “disgraceful and inappropriate.” Balques acknowledged that by dressing in a way that respected her in-laws’ culture and traditions, she would gain their love and acceptance and, consequently, her husband’s love. Balques avoided the ready-to-wear traditional dresses and instead “purchased a few items of fabric to take to the seamstress” to balance between blending in with her in-laws’ tradition and her desire to be unique. Finally, the least important audiences to Balques were her friends and family, because she felt comfortable around them and thus felt there was no need to make special purchases to impress them.

The wedding dress was of special importance to Balques. When shopping for her wedding dress, she conceptualized “a royal look” and avoided making rash decisions. Even after finding “what I imagined my dream gown would look like,” she did not buy it because she “was afraid that two weeks later a new style will arrive.” Her patience paid off and, after much scrutiny, she finally purchased a wedding gown from the new arrivals section. Balques also followed two Instagram accounts related to Saudi weddings to “be in the loop of the top trends in Saudi weddings.”

Balques recognized that her pre-wedding events were customs of Hijazi culture, and throughout her three interviews, she continually compared her marriage celebrations with her non-tribal friends’ celebrations. First, she did not have a *shofa*. Then at her *melka* she wore a t-shirt and jeans because neither her fiancé nor her in-laws attended. She thought “why would I

need to dress up or look pretty?” Unlike her friends, who had already known and met their future husbands before the wedding day, Balques anticipated that her wedding day “will be a nerve-wrecking day.” Her greatest concern about the wedding day was “what will he think about me... will he like my appearance... how would he react?” Even though, Balques desired to look “as fancy as possible,” she refrained from wearing heavy makeup because it was going to be the first time her husband sees her, and she wanted to look “as natural as possible.”

In her third interview, while talking about her preparation for the wedding day, Balques suddenly expressed her disappointment about another tribal tradition, which dictates that a bride is not allowed to walk down the aisle or see her guests. She will be restricted to the bride’s room and will only be allowed to see immediate family members and the groom. Balques disapproved of this old tradition and believed that “someone has to break the tradition and let the old ways go.” She was willing to be the first bride from her tribe to walk down the aisle, even if it meant risking being “verbally attacked by the entire tribe.” Her only setback was her mother’s lack of support because her mother did not want her “to take the full blow of breaking the tradition.” Balques felt that it is impossible “to live in the moment” if she did not walk down the aisle. In an effort to respect her mother’s wish and still satisfy her own happiness, Balques planned a large post-wedding event in a wedding hall: “I am considering it as my wedding day.” She wanted to present herself as a bride to her non-tribal guests during her post-wedding event and planned for “every detail to be fancy” and unique, representing her tastes. Balques did not invite any of her non-tribal friends to her wedding because she did not want them to think she was “closed-minded” and did not want to go through the trouble of explaining Hijazi traditions to them.

Batool

Batool, 21, currently resides in Jeddah, but plans on moving to a different town with her husband after the wedding. Batool's narrative covered a limited part of her shopping experience because she only had time to schedule one interview before her wedding day. She was able to finish her wedding preparation shopping quickly because she relied on her mother's and three older married sisters' experiences. She made daily shopping trips "for about three weeks" and followed her mother's guidance throughout her shopping.

When talking about shopping for her wedding preparation, Batool did not show much excitement and interest. This may have been because she disapproved of the norm of purchasing everything new and wanted to take her old clothes to her new house: "I do not understand why I need to buy new ones if I already have them." Regardless, she was aware that the bride-to-be's new purchases represent the "family honor." However, Batool felt that the "culture overestimates the importance of the *dabash*."

Similar to other participants, Batool put lots of thought in deciding what to wear on her *shofa* day. She strictly followed the norm and the Islamic rules of modesty, stating that "there are Islamic rules about what I should show of my body and what I should cover." After choosing her *shofa* dress, she confirmed its appropriateness with her mother. Because Batool valued showing her "raw beauty" and wanted to avoid being fake, she did not want to buy something new for the *shofa* "just to impress the groom." She preferred to wear something from her wardrobe that represented her personality and her favorite style to show her fiancé "the normal me."

For her other marriage celebrations, Batool did not dress like other brides. She valued the simplicity of her appearance, so she wore "a very simple" dress instead of a fancy one for her *melka*. She also considered the *ghomrah* as an outdated event and unimportant to celebrate

nowadays. Finally, Batool mentioned that her wedding dress was her favorite purchase because “it is every girl’s dream to wear the white gown.”

Baylassan

Baylassan, 27 years old, currently resides in Jeddah. Throughout her wedding preparation shopping, she considered her mother as her “reliable source” and sought her approval in “every single” purchase decision. She felt her decisions were clear because her mother and aunt “walked me through it step by step.” Baylassan strongly valued her family’s guidance and opinion as it made her feel “happy and important...confident and prepared for my new life.”

Baylassan sorted her shopping list by different clothing categories and set a budget for each category. However, she spent more on lingerie because she considered it to be the most important category, as it will be used on a daily basis with her husband. Another category Baylassan considered important was makeup because it helps her “look beautiful for my husband.” Moreover, because Baylassan thinks it is inappropriate for a non-married woman to wear heavy makeup, she is planning to use makeup to mark her marital status by wearing “heavier makeup.”

The shopping and wedding preparation were very stressful for Baylassan to the extent that her skin broke out. As a result, she had to get a chemical peel treatment to cure her symptoms. After two months of starting her shopping journey, Baylassan reached her limit and “was bored and exhausted from the many shopping trips I made in a short time.” She refused to go shopping with her mother for evening dresses even though she knew that she will be wearing them in large occasions with more audience and “need[s] to choose my evening dresses carefully.”

The decision process about what to wear on the *shofa* day meeting, which customarily took place in her parents' home, was very hard and lengthy. She “tried almost every piece in my [her] closet,” and negotiated the appropriateness of many outfits with her mother and aunt before they finally agreed on “the one.” Although, her mother and aunt encouraged her to “show a little [of her body] and not be fully covered,” she refused. Her level of modesty at her *shofa* was higher than that of other participants, and she preferred to wear a headscarf because she thought it was “too early to show my hair at our first meeting.” This might have been because her fear of rejection was intense. Traditionally gifts from the groom-to-be on the *shofa* day are used “instead of words” to symbolize his interest in the bride-to-be and his commitment to proceed with the marriage. She was relieved when her fiancé gave her a gift just before she gestured to leave.

On her *fatiha* day, she did not feel the need to buy a new garment because the most important audience for her was her in-laws, and they had never seen her in that dress. However, she bought a red fancy dress especially for the *melka* occasion, because it was the first time she met her fiancé after signing the marriage contract: “Making us officially engaged! I wanted to look my best.” When making her purchase decision she hesitated about the red color and thought it “might be too much for the *melka* because we still do not know each other well.” However, she changed her mind after her sister and mother told her that: “men like the red color on women.” She wanted to impress him and make it a memorable event, from which he will forever remember the dress she wore. Her *shabkah* dress was the most meaningful for her because it was her “first time feeling like a real bride and loved every detail: the ball gown, the tiara, the flower bouquet, and the ushering.” To insure her *shabkah* dress was unique, she avoided purchasing from ready-to-wear bridal stores and instead designed her own gown to be customized.

In addition to the traditional marriage celebrations, which Baylassan considered “the official celebrations,” her friends threw her an “unofficial” bachelorette party celebration. She called it “unofficial” because it is new to Saudi culture and only young adults are allowed to attend. That day, she felt free. “I was able to be myself and act as crazy as I wanted because no mothers or older women were in attendance.”

Baylassan respected her family traditions and avoided breaking them even if it went against her wishes, because she believed that she is not “only presenting myself, I will be presenting my family as well.” However, Baylassan disapproved of the event of transporting the new purchases (*dabash*) to the bride’s new home. She felt uncomfortable displaying her *dabash* to all the guests attending this event and did not want them to take pictures of her *dabash* to put on their social media: “I don’t think it is their right to take a picture of my things.” In order to protect her privacy, she wrapped her *dabash* in a way to be concealed: “For example, they will see dress bags but not the dress itself.” Moreover, Baylassan wished to cancel the post-wedding celebration that her mother wanted to hold to welcome Baylassan after her honeymoon. From Baylassan’s perspective the post-wedding celebration is unnecessary and only adds financial burden to both newlyweds’ families. On the other hand, she viewed the pre-wedding celebration rites to “play a large and important role in preparing the bride for her life.”

Baylassan understood the cultural meaning of her new purchases and believed that the purpose of her shopping is to represent her appearance in the best way to “show that I am a good wife and am ready to fulfill this role,” and “to show that I care about and love my husband.” Additionally, she wanted to meet social expectations for newlywed’s appearance to avoid being judged. Baylassan especially shopped for clothing to wear in front of her in-laws “to look acceptable and be accepted as a member of their family.”

When planning for her big day, Baylassan wanted to learn from her experience in the *shabkah*, so she asked her relatives and close friends to evaluate her appearance on the *shabkah* day and told them: “Do not sugarcoat and tell me the truth because, if anything about my appearance needed improvement, then I can fix it for my wedding.” She felt happy and confident when she heard “that they confirmed my choices...I knew I made the right decision.”

She started shopping for her wedding dress directly after her *shabkah* to make sure she had enough time and avoid rushing her purchase decision. Baylassan was so emotional when talking about her wedding gown. Her emotions highlighted her awareness of the separation stage: “I am leaving my parents’ house and will live with another man...I am saying goodbye to my single woman life and sisterhood while fighting [the transition].”

Eithar

Eithar, 23 years old, from Jeddah felt that her shopping experience was meaningful because she viewed her new purchases as a pathway to her new life. She considered her new purchases as tools that help her:

Move on and accept my new identity...take some stress out,...be more confident about myself,...[and] feel well prepared and ready for a new journey.

She started her journey with the preparation for her *shofa*. Eithar is the youngest daughter, and all her sisters are married and live out of town, so she reached out to her friend when deciding what to wear in her *shofa*. She wanted her dress to show her real self: “to represent me, my personality, my favorite style.” After narrowing her choices, Eithar asked her brother for his opinion in order to get a male perspective.

She experienced more stress than most of the participants on her *shofa* day because the two families decided to combine three marriage events into one day (the groom’s family visit,

the *shofa*, and the *fatiha*) due to the long close friendship between the two families. Eithar wished she had not combined these marriage events, because she believed that the multiple marriage celebrations play a major role in rite of passage and make her feel supported by all her relatives who attended. Although most of the participants felt stress and pressure from displaying their new purchases in the event of transporting the new purchases (*dabash*) to their new home, Eithar valued this event. She viewed the idea of having all her new purchases organized for her by her family as a way for “both families to share the happiness of the new couple” and for her to “feel pampered... like a queen.”

When starting her shopping, Eithar faced a dilemma in trying to balance between her and her mother’s choices. Being the youngest daughter made Eithar feel “there is a large gap between me and my mother.” Although her mother offered her guidance, Eithar preferred shopping with her friend because she understands “the youth’s fashion” more than her mother does. She expressed that she was more productive while shopping with her friend. When her mother accompanied her on a shopping trip, Eithar prepared her mother by showing her pictures of current fashions to avoid a lengthy negotiation at the mall.

Nevertheless, Eithar valued her family’s opinion and sought their approval after making any purchases, because their “comments made me feel so confident and I knew I made very good purchase decisions.” She thought shopping for her wedding preparation would be “so exhausting and scary” if she did it without her family guidance and support. On one shopping trip, Eithar was frustrated because she disagreed with her mother about her gold jewelry purchase. However, her family’s approval of her purchases was very important to her. She took pictures of both of their choices, then asked all her siblings and her father to vote and made her purchases based on everyone's vote. This might be because she considered the gold jewelry one of the most

important items due to the social expectation for “newlywed wives to display their gold jewelry and take pride in it.”

Another dilemma Eithar faced was a high level of ambiguity about her new role as a wife: “I do not understand this new wife thing...I have never had a relationship with a man.” She experienced many feelings of hesitation and uncertainty when making purchase decisions about items related to the intimate relationship, such as lingerie:

It is so hard and confusing for me to purchase the lingerie...some lingerie looks scary...I do not think it should be at that level of lewdness.

She followed her mother’s and older sister’s advice when purchasing items with symbolic meanings for her married life, but she was not easy to convince. After long negotiations and disagreements with her mother and older sister about the white lingerie for the first night after the wedding, she surrendered to their choice. Although she disapproved of their choice, she made her purchase based on their advice because she was afraid to give her husband the wrong impression that: “I am not excited and happy about our marriage.” Eithar believed that her lingerie and the home clothes purchases will help her in her role as a wife and meet her husband’s “emotional and sexual needs.” By dressing up nicely for her husband, she is expressing her love for him and her wish to “fulfill his vision.”

Among her purchases, Eithar chose an English lace fabric dress for “friends, relatives, and in-laws” visits as her favorite. This classic style dress represents a mature and independent woman style, which Eithar wanted to adopt after marriage. Eithar made her clothing purchase decisions based on “the styles that I was not allowed to wear as a single woman, such as revealing, short, and open back styles.” She liked “the freedom to buy whatever I want, not limited to or concerned about what my father will say about my outfit or if my mother will

disapprove of it.” For Eithar, this change in dress style highlighted “the difference between single and married life.” She decided that the change from some colors and styles she used to wear as a single woman will help her “accept other changes in my new married life.”

However, she resisted complete change and preferred to maintain part of her old self as a single woman: “I do not think that to be a good wife I should erase my old identity.” She is afraid to lose a youthful look: “I will not dress like an older woman just because I got married.” Additionally, she is using her old items as a single woman to cope with her transition to marriage life: “. . . having something old in your new environment makes you feel comfortable.”

When shopping for evening and visiting dresses, Eithar made her purchase decisions based on social expectations. She and her fiancé both have large families that will hold multiple post marriage celebrations for them. Eithar recognized the importance of her dress in all of these occasions and wanted to be well prepared for them: “I will be in the spotlight everywhere I go, and my appearance should always be top notch.” By managing her appearance and dressing up, she is representing that she is transitioning well and happily into her new life. To avoid being judged or misrepresenting her family, Eithar also followed her mother’s advice when purchasing her evening and visiting dresses. There will be more people at these events, and she “knows how older people think.”

Eithar’s dilemma of trying to balance between her own and her mother’s choices continued throughout her shopping, even when she was making a decision about the wedding gown. Choosing her wedding gown was a very lengthy process for Eithar. After much searching and browsing in stores and on social media and using her mother’s and sisters’ assistance, she made her decision about a dress style that enhanced her body image. However, Eithar disagreed with her mother about adding a color to the white: “I told her she will destroy my dream wedding

gown if she does not let me add a color to my gown.” Eithar tried to present her uniqueness and wanted her gown “to stick in my guests’ memories; I don’t want to be like other brides.” To reach the level of uniqueness, she was willing “to be the first bride to break the rules” about the white gown. After many attempts and going back-and-forth with her mother, Eithar was able to convince her mother to add a “peach color lining” to her white wedding gown. In her third interview, Eithar talked with excitement when describing how beautiful her wedding gown turned out. She fantasized about her wedding day and imagined what her future husband and the guests would think of her unique wedding gown.

Fayha

Fayha, 23 years old, currently resides in Medina but plans on moving to a different town with her husband after the wedding. Throughout all her interviews, Fayha spoke with excitement and a joyful tone. She started her wedding preparation journey three years before she got engaged, which is unusual in Saudi culture. She acknowledged that it was uncommon timing for a girl to start shopping before even being engaged, but she was “an optimistic person” and was sure she would eventually get married. From other bride-to-be experiences, she learned that limited time and money are the greatest obstacles during wedding preparation. Therefore, Fayha decided to start preparing early to take her time, and save money by shopping “in phases rather than in a short period of time and limited money.”

Fayha sorted her shopping list by different clothing categories based on places and occasions where she would wear her purchases. However, she couldn’t decide if she had enough money for each category. For example, she spent all her budget on “home clothing,” but “couldn’t stop myself” when seeing unique dresses while shopping for other categories. She described how her irresistible feeling to buy similar dresses “was calling me to buy it... I am

weak in front of beautiful things... I cannot control myself.” She rationalized her overspending to herself: “If I buy it and regret buying it, that feels better than regretting not buy it.”

Fayha respected her parents’ opinion when making her purchases decisions: “The way my parents raised me will have an impact on me.” She believed that the way she dresses after marriage will reflect on her parents and “show the standard of the family I belong to.” Therefore, she relied on her mother’s advice during her shopping “about what was appropriate and inappropriate” to buy and to wear. She expressed feeling “guilty” when buying revealing clothes that her parents disapproved of, such as “a short dress or ripped jeans.” Even when her parents did not accompany her on a shopping trip, Fayha resisted her desire to purchase what was in fashion among her peers if it did not meet her parents’ standards of modesty and described her feeling of “something inside me stopping me from buying it.”

Fayha valued all the traditional marriage celebrations because they are a once in a lifetime opportunity that she “wanted to celebrate to the fullest.” She experienced so much enjoyment when she attended to purchasing for her different marriage celebrations. She purchased new dresses and carefully selected her dresses for all of her marriage celebrations. To ensure the uniqueness of her dresses, she ordered some online and customized the others. Moreover, she chose unusual colors for her brides to wear on the *shabkah* day. Fayha is planning on keeping her marriage celebration dresses as a special memory: “I will wear them after my wedding to relive these memorable moments with my husband.”

During her last interview, Fayha’s family was on their way to transport her *dabash* to her new home. She proudly described in detail the process of wrapping her *dabash*. While most of the participants dreaded the event of transporting the *dabash*, Fayha happily embraced this part.

She went above and beyond what other brides' usually do by overly celebrating and delicately and uniquely wrapping her purchases:

Before my father and my brothers moved everything, my female relatives gathered singing and dancing to show our joy...and threw flower pedals and candy on the suitcases.

Fayha was more relaxed than other participants at her first marriage event (*shofa*). It was an easy task for her to choose what to wear to her *shofa*. This might be because she approved of the marriage traditions and followed them carefully. For Fayha, following tradition was the safest approach to avoid criticism and judgment. When choosing her *shabkah*'s dress, she was concerned about how people would react to it because she chose a nontraditional color. However, after hearing positive comments about her *shabkah* dress from her friends and relatives, she expressed feeling a "high level of self-confidence, like I was floating in the air from happiness." Additionally, Fayha restricted herself with the traditional *al-medini* costume on her *ghomrah*. Although "brides now have other options to wear in their *ghomrah*," Fayha held nostalgic memories about the *al-medini* costume and desired to wear it since she was a child. In addition to adhering strictly to traditions, Fayha also extensively respected her in-law's expectations. When shopping, she took their standards of modesty into consideration and selected an entire clothing category exclusively to be worn only in front of her in-laws. As a newlywed, she wanted her dress to portray a "good first impression" for them to know "that my parents have raised me well."

Like all other participants, Fayha viewed the lingerie as "the most important items" because it was a new type of clothing she had never explored or tried before. She recognized that lingerie is linked with the intimate marital relationship. Consequently, when her *dabash* was

transported, she actually used a mannequin to display her first night's sleep wear. She wanted to imagine what it would look like and "for suspense so my fiancé can feel my presence every time he goes to our apartment until the wedding day." The second most important product to Fayha was the makeup because she feels that it is an essential element in starting a new relationship. She plans on wearing makeup daily as a newlywed to enhance her beauty for her husband and to feel happiness of a new beginning.

While Fayha felt that change was important, she struggled with separation stages of transition to her new life. She desired to preserve her old clothes she wore as a single woman, but her mother refused for her to do so. Doing so would have caused her family shame due to misrepresentation of them. For Fayha, giving up (donating them to charity) her old clothes was difficult because "every piece of my clothing has special memory and has a place in my heart." As a result, she kept her old clothes at her parent's home and plans on taking them to her new home after her honeymoon.

A lot of time was spent on searching for the perfect wedding dress, but in the end it was a sudden spur of the moment purchase while on a family trip overseas. The gown she chose was in a window display. She "was glued to" the window because "it was unique and different from all the gowns I had seen in the Saudi market." As with everything else, Fayha also took into consideration the traditional norm when choosing her wedding gown in order to avoid criticism. In describing what she felt when trying on the gown, she expressed she had mixed feelings, "overwhelmingly happy, nervous, and sad." To her, the gown symbolized "the end of the road and the end of my single life."

Nalah

Nalah, 24 years old, currently resides in Medina, but did not like the market place there. She made most of her wedding preparation purchases while traveling and online. She preferred online stores over physical stores for conveniences like saving time, avoiding the long hours of searching and walking, and finding unique items unavailable in local stores.

Her marriage preparation journey started with her *melka*. She skipped the *shofa* because of her fear of rejection. Meeting a man for the first time “to decide if he wants to marry me or not” was too stressful for her. She made an instantaneous decision about her *melka*'s dress by choosing to wear a dress for which she received “a lot of compliments from people.” Nalah intentionally avoided wearing a very fancy dress and heavy makeup in an attempt to show her natural beauty and “not distract my fiancé’ and take attention away from my facial features.” On the other hand, when choosing her *shabkah*'s dress, Nalah customized a unique dress. She spent many hours searching on Instagram for a dress design, shopping for the fabric, and finding a dress maker.

Nalah's persistent desire to be unique was at a higher level compared to all other participants. She recognized that her desire to be unique is “abnormal” because it is to the point where she “would get depressed” and “return or give away” any dress if she saw someone else wearing the same dress. Shopping while traveling and online helped her reach the level of uniqueness that she intended to reach. Another way for Nalah to be unique was purchasing luxury brands within her *dabash*. Although her mother suggested that she buy the knockoff brands, Nalah refused because owning a “well-known luxury item” is a “self-satisfaction” source. Additionally, Nalah chose her luxury brand “shoes and handbag collections” as her favorite items among all the other items she purchased.

While Nalah doesn't agree with all the traditions associated with the marriage in Saudi culture, she knew “it is hard to not follow the tradition that has been set forth.” Thus, she was highly influenced by traditions and social expectations even before she started her shopping journey. She expressed that her decision to accept the marriage proposal was mainly because she felt pressured to do so, because in Saudi society women are expected to get married at a young age. Moreover, similar to other participants, Nalah purchased dresses that fit with her in-laws’ expectations. She considered choosing her dresses “within the social guidelines that have been set” such as dressing modestly and “not see-through, short, or revealing” as way to show respect to her audience.

Throughout her interviews, Nalah heavily emphasized the importance of *dabash* because she lives “in a society that cares a lot about the appearance and other people’s perception of us.” The *dabash* is confirmation that a bride-to-be is well prepared for her marriage: “Everyone is expecting me to look fancy and will be inspecting my whole look.” She was greatly concerned that if her *dabash* did not meet social expectations, it will affect her parent’s reputation, “tarnish their name, or have people think they raised me wrong.” Knowing that her *dabash*’s display will be shown to a broader audience (other than the guests who will attend the event) via “pictures posted on social media,” further increased her anxiety. For example, the implications of not wearing a large, notable gold jewelry item as a newlywed will reflect negatively on her family: “People will say things like my family is stingy and didn’t prepare me well for my new life.” Therefore, she spent half of her dowry on gold jewelry. Furthermore, she views her *dabash* as “rejuvenation” that “psychologically” eases the transition and adjustment to her new life. One of the meaningful new purchases for Nalah was her makeup collection “to enhance her beauty and femininity” for her husband.

During her shopping experience, Nalah saw herself as an independent and mature woman, who can make all her purchase decisions independently and was confident about them. Nalah proudly mentioned how her mother thought she was “the easiest to help shop for the wedding preparation out of my sisters.” Her family’s guidance was restricted to items that hold an important cultural significance, and her family insisted that she buy items such as the first night’s sleeping gown: “I’m not convinced, but I am doing so because my mother insists that I buy it.” However, Nalah rejected her mother and sister’s advice about other “pieces of lingerie that are very revealing, [which] I would not be comfortable wearing.” Moreover, Nalah considered the *ghomrah* party outdated, and when her mother suggested on having one for her, she refused. She disliked the traditional bridal costumes: “The idea of covering my face in the *medini* and walking in on top of stools is just so silly to me.”

Although Nalah made her purchase decisions independently and with limited family guidance, she appreciated her family’s compliments, as they made her “feel more confident in what I bought.” Showing her family her new purchases was a way to “let them in on the celebration and happiness” and not “for their approval or affirmation.” Nalah particularly felt excited when her fiancé complimented her appearance. She “kept a mental list” of these compliments and “purposely bought certain things in colors or styles that he said I looked nice in.” Conversely, Nalah angrily expressed feeling conflicted when her sister criticized one of her honeymoon dresses and considered these types of negative comments to “bring my day down and steal my happiness.”

When it came to time to select her ideal wedding dress, Nalah took to the Internet and social media sites to find the dress she had in mind. However, following the celebrities and trends lead Nalah to set her standards very high. Consequently, she expressed feeling “deeply

jealous” and “depressed” when she could not afford the pricey and luxurious gowns. In deciding which dress to go with, she was self-determined and knew what she wanted. It had to be fancy, unique, and most importantly comfortable to walk in so that she does not trip and fall.

Norah

Norah, 24 years old, currently resides in Jeddah, but will move overseas to join her husband after the wedding. Even though Norah is a Saudi woman, her family and fiancé’s family background is different from that of other participants. Her mother and mother in-law are non-Saudis, and many of her relatives live outside of Saudi Arabia. Thus, during her wedding preparation journey, she was influenced by multiple cultures. Additionally, having access to non-Saudi markets lead to a decrease in her satisfaction with Saudi marketplaces, because she was able to find cheaper and higher quality items online or while traveling to visit relatives abroad. Shopping overseas allowed her to purchase more luxury brand handbags and watches, which she considered as a source of “self-esteem” and a reflection of her “uniqueness.”

Norah did not follow the conventional Saudi sequence of marriage events. She first met her fiancé during one of her family trips overseas. She had an “unplanned *shofa*” when the two families, whose fathers are friends, were having lunch together. Therefore, she did not feel the pressure other participants felt when choosing their dress on their *shofa* day. The only marriage celebration Norah had before the wedding was the engagement party. She thought it was unnecessary to hold a *melka*, *shabkah*, and *ghomrah* due to the inconvenience of travel, as her in-laws live abroad.

After her fiancé asked for her hand in marriage from her father, her mother-in-law hosted an engagement party to officially announce their engagement. Norah comes from a diverse background, so she is influenced by both Saudi and non-Saudi cultures. These influences

sometimes caused dissension and resulted in her feeling “cultural conflicts.” For example, marriage celebrations in her mother-in-laws’ country are not gender segregated, but brides are expected to wear a “modest, long-sleeved, and simple dress.” In an effort to balance between the two cultures when choosing her engagement party dress, Norah wore a fancy yet modest dress. However, her in-laws “still thought I was overdressed for the engagement party.”

Norah also understood the importance of following the social norms when shopping for her wedding preparation to avoid judgments as a newlywed. She talked about two instances when her appearance was unacceptable in Saudi culture. Once she pierced her nose and lip, and another time she wore a colored *abaya* in public and was later criticized about it. Therefore, she was not ready to “start my war against traditions again.” For example, Norah preferred dark colors for her evening dresses, but “got lighter and brighter colors” to avoid a rebuttal of being unhappy with her marriage; she was told that culturally “dark colors represent sad and depressed feelings.” She added that her “bachelorette party” was her favorite marriage celebration. Although this party was adopted from different cultures, she did not fear social judgment because all the guests were friends her age:

. . .without having to worry about being disrespectful or breaking the rules of tradition that elderly people love so much and hold onto very tightly.

Shopping for her wedding preparation was significant to Norah because it was a way to ease her concerns about “coping and adapting to her new life, new partner, and new home.” Norah reflected on the importance of her *dabash* as a tool to help her implement her role as a wife by beautifying herself for her husband. Her plan as a newlywed is to wear makeup and “elegant” home clothes in an effort to look attractive for her husband, which in turn should influence her husband’s “mood.” Additionally, one of her most important purchases was *Musk*

Al-Tahara (a natural perfume safe to use on sensitive areas) because it will help her adjust to the intimate relationship after the wedding.

Another use of her *dabash* was to reflect her “transition from a single lady to a married woman” by purchasing items that “diversified and changed” her appearance. For example, she went from wearing nude lipstick to darker colors, flat to high heels, and buttoned up shirts and cardigans to wearing short and revealing clothing for her husband.

Norah longed for other married female family members to accompany and provide her with guidance and advice while shopping. However, her older sisters were busy, and her mother encouraged her shop alone and be “independent” in preparation for her new life. Norah appreciated when her family gave her feedback about purchases, especially when it came to lingerie. She experienced “feelings of conflict, being overwhelmed, and confusion” when she shopped for the lingerie. She sought her older married sisters’ advice even “when none of them were available” to go shopping with her by texting them “a picture of the lingerie.” Moreover, Norah took into consideration how her husband and in-laws would perceive her dress. As her life partner, she gave her fiancé the right to choose “50% of my *dabash*.” Additionally, she shopped for simpler clothes to wear in front of her in-laws so that they would not perceive her as “showing off.” However, Norah stated that “I want to keep my Saudi culture” and not “completely adopt their culture.”

Norah shared that she has further concerns because she will move to a new, non-Muslim country with different traditions. Consequently, she had to shop for a separate category of clothing to wear in public after moving there with her husband. She worried about “discrimination against Muslim women.” After discussing the matter with her fiancé, she decided to buy turbans instead of scarves to cover her hair and help her “blend in” faster.

Finally, when shopping for her wedding dress, Norah refused to spend excessively on “a dress to wear only for a few hours,” and preferred to “wear a very simple wedding gown.” However, her family does not want her to be underdressed on her wedding day and “believe the bride’s beauty is in her fancy puffy dress.” To ensure that her wedding dress met the level of Saudi expectations, she decided to rent a fancy wedding gown instead of buying one, as “people really do not know if you own the dress or are renting it.”

Rania

Rania, the oldest participant in the study, is 30 years old. She is a resident of Jeddah and plans on living there after the wedding. Unlike other participants, she had a limited budget because her father recently passed away, and she did not want to burden her brothers with extra expenses. In order to avoid overspending, she set a budget for each category rather than set a number of items. Also, being the only daughter in her family, she did not have prior experience with older sisters, so she relied on one of her aunts who has four married daughters.

The *shofa* event was nerve wracking for Rania, possibly due to being slightly older than regular brides-to-be and an only daughter. Like other participants, Rania wanted to be “as natural as possible” to show her fiancé her natural beauty. She experienced mixed emotions ranging from “scared, confused, sad, and happy” when meeting a strange man for the first time without a hijab on. Moreover, a week later at her *fatiha*, Rania was more relaxed because it was a family event in which she was not planning on meeting her fiancé. Consequently, her mom felt she did not need to purchase a new dress. But after trying on several ones in her closet, Rania “looked in the mirror and did not feel like a bride” until wearing a newly purchased one from the store. Rania associated a new dress with starting a new life. Therefore, it was important to her that her dress be new.

The next most important event for Rania was the *melka*, which symbolized an “official engagement.” When choosing a dress for the *melka*, she felt she had fewer restrictions (mainly modesty level), and it had to be impressive and attractive. The dress she ended up choosing was a tight, sleeveless, red one because “red color attracts men... they love red color.” A month later came the *shabka* event, which included her in-laws and a lot more guests; hence, she felt tense. This time around, she chose a less revealing and modest dress. She wanted it to be a color she never wore before and one that would highlight her figure after losing lots of weight. Rania valued uniqueness: “Uniqueness satisfies my ego.” Therefore, she searched Instagram for distinctive dress styles and had her dress customized by a dressmaker. She aspired to have all her dresses and especially her marriage celebrations dresses be unique. She intentionally avoided shopping in well-known brand stores because she was looking for “pieces nobody else has...to draw attention and hear compliments.” Moreover, she was unable to decide which item was her favorite. She rationalized that her favorite item would be the one that was most memorable and generated the most compliments.

Rania considered her *dabash* as a device to help “ease the transition” and accept the separation phase from living in her parents’ home as “the spoiled daughter” to her new role as a wife with “more responsibilities.” Rania shopped for different styles and colors that she was not used to wearing as a single woman in order to distinguish and highlight the difference between her single and married life. For example, although Rania believed that “pink is a feminine color,” she avoided buying light pink because “it is more for little girls.” Also, Rania never wore “revealing, short and open-backed clothing” as a single woman but purchased these styles to wear after the wedding.

During her second interview, Rania explained how her purchases will help in her new role as a wife. She purchased a variety of clothes to keep her husband interested and not “to get bored from wearing the same thing every day.” She desired to purchase “attractive clothes because I wanted to look sexy for my husband.” However, she had conflicted feelings with this new style as she expressed being shy but, at the same time, desired to be attractive. For instance, when shopping for lingerie she hid her purchases from her mother, although she sought her advice on everything else. Rania was reluctant to wear her revealing lingerie and sleepwear purchases and felt “too shy” to try them on even when she was alone. Hence, at her last shopping trip before the wedding, she purchased long cotton pajamas as backup in case she was not ready to wear such revealing sleepwear in the beginning of her marriage.

When shopping for her honeymoon trip clothes, she sought her fiancé’s preference about “what is appropriate to wear in public.” She believed that her public appearance reflects on him as well and wanted to “show him respect by asking his opinion.” Additionally, she asked him about his family’s modesty level before shopping for clothes to wear in front of her in-laws because she wanted “to fit in [with her in -laws] and not stand out.”

Rania approved the event of moving her *dabash* and both families organizing it before she entered her new home: “It is nice to be pampered.” However, she believed that her *dabash* “reflects” her, and displaying it to a large audience puts her at a higher risk of being judged. Therefore, she asked her mother to “reduce the number of guests who are doing the moving for the *dabash* event” and felt “obliged” to wrapped her *dabash* in a way to concealed the items.

Finally, Rania spent a long time looking for a unique wedding gown and took into consideration her mother’s opinion. After searching social media sites and visiting many bridal boutiques, Rania purchased her wedding gown from a boutique that “only offers one piece of

each style.” She felt satisfied “knowing that nobody will have the same dress as me.” This boutique also allowed her to customize part of the dress. Her mother advised her to choose a modest wedding gown “to avoid people’s criticism,” but Raina wanted to follow the latest, unique bridal fashion and trends. She acknowledged that “all mothers have their dream and wishes about their daughter's wedding dress.” Therefore, she compromised with her mother by choosing “a modest design with long sleeves and a slightly deep opening in the back and collar.”

Raseel

Raseel, 28 years old, is a resident of Jeddah and plans on living there after the wedding. Only two interviews were conducted with Raseel because her wedding occurred before the third interview could take place. Raseel spent excessively on her purchases compared to all other participants. Her total expenses, including marriage celebrations and *dabash*, was 400,000 SR (\$106,666 US), while the average was 80,000 SR (\$21,333 US). Also, Raseel did not like the products in the Saudi market place and instead went on a five day “intensive” shopping trip with her mother and younger sister, whom she considered her fashion consultants. Raseel favored simple and modest styles, which often clashed with her family’s opinions and societal expectations.

Raseel’s first event was her *shofa*, where she had to change her dress plans at the last minute. Originally, she had planned on wearing an *abaya* because she didn’t want to appear in front of a stranger without her hijab. However, things took an unexpected turn when her mother-in-law insisted that she dress up. Raseel scrambled to find something modest yet simple to wear in her closet. She ended up choosing a “formal business suit style” including black trousers and a white shirt. Next, at her *fatiha*, a small family celebration, she wore “a dress with high lace neck and long sleeves” even though her mother had chosen a strapless dress for her. Typically, the

bride-to-be would choose a trendy and revealing dress, but in this case Raseel's mother was the one urging her to choose that kind of style. Raseel expressed: "We [Raseel and her fiancé] only met once. I don't know what my mother was thinking."

When shopping for her *melka* dress, the conflict between her mother's fancy bridal style and her simple fashion preferences continued. It took over a month and 30 shopping trips until she found the dress that satisfied both her own and her mother's style ideas: "I got a plain simple dress as I want, and puffy with train as mother wants." Raseel felt that her satisfaction with her dress affects her emotions: "I would be depressed all night." Overall, Raseel did not approve of the "numerous and unnecessary" marriage celebration events and felt they were "only for social courtesy." Therefore, she decided to cancel her *shabkah*, *ghomrah*, and transporting her *dabash* to her new home. For example, her mother was planning for her to wear four "very complicated bridal costumes" on her *ghomrah*, which she felt was overwhelming. On the contrary, she enjoyed the surprise "spa" bachelorette party, because she was laid back, stress free, and "could just be myself. And I didn't need to prepare for it."

Raseel held strong views about moving her *dabash*. She disapproved of the idea of parading her purchases in front of everyone and was adamant and assertive when discussing her opinion of the event. She referred to it as "bullshit" and absolutely refused to allow anyone to move any of her items. Instead, she chose to personally take her items gradually to her new apartment herself. Raseel even believed that buying everything new for her new life is irrational and decided by "social rules that people make." Thus, yet another argument about purchasing only new categories she does not have as a single woman "such as home clothing and lingerie" ensued with her family. Her family insisted she buy new items because they "hold deep meaning in the culture," and not doing so would be considered "disrespecting and crossing the cultural

line.” Therefore, in the end Raseel honored her family’s wishes and purchased new items and clothes for her wedding preparation, especially to manage her appearance when she is with her in-laws; as a new daughter in-law “all the fingers will be pointed at me.”

Raseel’s continual resistance to purchasing a “new wardrobe” was a result of her struggling to accept the changes of the “way of dressing after getting married.” She wanted to maintain her old style as a single woman and continuity with her other roles. “The only new identity to me is the wife, but I will be the same with my friends and family.” She recognized the importance of a wife’s appearance to build the new marital relationship because it symbolizes her “care and love” for her husband. For example, when purchasing the lingerie, she expressed that it is only for her “husband’s happiness” and not for her. Also, she tried to make her decision when purchasing clothing to wear at home with her husband based on his taste. However, she felt “lots of conflict” and “confusion” because the style her fiancé likes does not represent her. For Raseel, it was important for her purchases to represent herself and her simple and classic style. She chose “17 new shoes” as her favorite products because they are “the only thing that shows” and reflects her taste when she is fully covered in public and at work.

When shopping for her wedding gown, Raseel chose a particularly simple modest style and was so excited when she saw a dress that looked exactly how she imagined her wedding gown: “It was like it was made for me.” She was overly attached to the gown but was afraid it would exceed her remaining budget, as she had spent most of it at that point. She waited outside the bridal store until her mother and sister looked at the price tag and assured her the gown was affordable; she then allowed herself to try it on and bought it.

Reetal

Reetal, 21 years old, is a resident of Jeddah and plans on living there after the wedding. Only two interviews were conducted with Reetal because her wedding occurred before the third interview could take place. Reetal preferred to spend her dowry on professional aesthetic services rather than on marriage celebrations. It was more important to her to invest in treatments such as facials, chemical peels, and laser hair removal treatments to help her hide flaws that she was unhappy about. Despite the cultural meaning of these marriage celebrations, Reetal felt that cosmetic technologies are what helped her prepare for the wedding and transition into her new life. She expressed that starting her life happy about her body “with no body hair or acne” will beautify her and make her pleasing to her husband’s eyes. Consequently, she decided to have small intimate family celebration at home and canceled the *ghomrah* party.

During her small marriage celebrations, Reetal exerted extra effort into choosing a dress that compliments her body image and hides her flaws. First, when choosing her *shofa* dress, she took a long time trying on different dresses and “walked around” showing her mother and sister to make sure that the dress “flattered my body from different angles.” She was concerned about wearing “something that makes me look fat.” For her *melka*, she insisted on buying a long-sleeved dress to cover “bad acne on my shoulders.” Although her mother accompanied her when she was shopping for her *melka* dress, Reetal was hesitant and did not make her final decision until sending her sister a picture of the dress to get her approval. Hiding the acne on her shoulders was the key factor when choosing her *shabkah* dress as well, and she expressed feeling unhappy because her *shabkah* dress was strapless.

Similar to other participants, Reetal considered her home clothes, lingerie, and makeup as the most important purchases to help her get ready for her new role as a wife. She explained how

she will use the new purchases to enhance her appearance and “look attractive” for her husband. When he flatters and compliments her, that “means the world” to her. Reetal received compliments from her fiancé about a dress made Reetal emotionally attached to the dress:

Every time I'm wearing this dress, I feel happy, confident, and more beautiful than any other time.

Moreover, she viewed the lingerie purchases as “ice breaking in our new marital relationship.” Reetal believed all her new purchases are for her husband in that what she will wear in public and in front of others will reflect on her husband. After the wedding, her appearance represents a couple’s identity and not only her individual identity, “especially with my in-laws.”

Being responsible for representing the couple’s identity caused Reetal much stress. She described her shopping experience as if she was getting ready for an exam, which she “might pass or fail.” Avoiding people’s judgments was the most challenging part for her. The constant uncertainty made her indecisive about “what should I buy and what I shouldn't buy, how much I should spend, and how many items and garments will I really need.” Wearing very fancy outfits may cause others to see her as “over-prepared and wasting my dowry.” On the other hand, being under-dressed may cause others to see her as a “stingy person who did not prepare well for her wedding.” She sought her mother and sister’s guidance to insure that her purchase decisions meet social expectations. For example, she followed her mother and sister’s advice when purchasing the gold sets because “gold jewelry sets are strongly connected with the marriage and the bride...it has something to do with representing happiness.”

Reetal’s agitation about hiding her flaws continued when choosing her wedding gown. She experienced many conflicts because all wedding gowns are “designed for skinny girls.” All the wedding gowns she tried on made her “look fat.” Therefore, she made a decision to avoid

puffy wedding dresses and instead chose a “mermaid wedding dress style because it makes me look skinnier than I actually am.”

Suad

Suad, 26 years old, is a resident of Mecca and plans on living there after the wedding. Before starting her wedding preparation shopping, Suad studied the subject intensively by asking her married sisters, relatives, and friends about their bridal experiences. She wanted to know how they managed their budgets and what the social expectations of brides were. According to their advice, Suad divided her dowry between different items such as sleepwear, lingerie, gold jewelry, evening clothing, handbags, shoes, perfumes, and casual clothing. However, when it came to the actual shopping trips, Suad preferred to shop alone and show her purchases to her family later on. Suad felt that shopping solo would save her time and be less distracting.

Suad’s first marriage event started when the groom’s mother and sister came to meet her for the first time. Although her family members undervalued this visit, she considered it significant because it would be her in-law’s first and “lifetime” impression of her, which in turn will determine what they will report to her potential fiancé. When deciding what to wear for this first visit, Suad experienced lots of conflict and confusion, even though she knew she had to wear something nice and new. To be on the safe side, she asked her recently engaged friends for their advice, and they suggested she wear “something modest and simple.”

The next big event for Suad was the *shofa* day. She recounted that it was the most stressful event of her life. Like all other participants, she worried about her fiancé’s opinion of her, what to wear, and balancing modesty with appropriateness according to her family’s standards and her own body image. Suad struggled more than other participants because her father had higher restrictions than others, but again she was certain she had to have a new outfit.

For example, although showing her hair is acceptable, her father did not allow her to do so. All in all, she described that day as the “ultimate day of modesty.” Shortly after the *shofa*, the male relatives from both sides scheduled the *melka*, which was a simple marriage celebration held at home. For her *melka* dress, she took to Instagram to search for simple and latest style dresses. Even though Suad wanted a simple look, her family and friends pressured her to dress fancy so that people do not misinterpret her readiness for marriage. She was persuaded and listened to them because they were experienced with marriage celebrations, but afterwards she ended up unhappy with her overall appearance: “I thought my makeup and hair style would complement my dress but it did the opposite... It messed up my entire look.” How Suad wished to dress she made up at her *shabkah* event. It was a larger event to which she wore a “simple dress” and light makeup. She expressed, “I don’t like the idea of looking in a mirror and not recognizing my own reflection. I feel like I achieved my desired look at my *shabkah*.” Lastly, Suad decided to cancel the *ghomrah* party as she felt it was costly and overwhelming.

Moreover, Suad recognized the significance of her appearance as a newlywed but felt a deep connection to her old self. While she valued her new purchases as representation of her new identity as a wife and daughter-in-law, she still wanted to keep her old clothes as representation of her old identity as a sister, daughter, and friend. Suad particularly described how her new purchases will “help me as a wife in attracting my husband--at least in the beginning.”

Suad had partial reservations and resistance toward some parts of the marriage traditions but was open to negotiation with her family because she cared about their reputation. She tried to balance between social expectations and personal style. She respected her family’s views and did not want to upset them. For instance, henna tattoos are a major part of marriage celebrations in Saudi Arabia. However, Suad does not like henna, so she skipped this tradition after checking

with her mother. Likewise, Suad preferred simpler and smaller sizes of gold jewelry that represents femininity and simplicity, while her mother and sister viewed larger pieces as a must. “I did listen to them and instead purchased only two small pieces.” Also, she decided to switch from wearing the traditional *Jalabiya* (traditional one-piece garment, full-length, long sleeves, and loose fit) to wearing alternative modest clothing--“like a long-sleeved shirt and skirt”--in front of her in-laws. What’s more, Suad modified the traditional moving of the *dabash* by downsizing and downplaying the event. She felt that by minimizing the number of guests, she was less likely to be criticized:

I think four people is more than enough to display all of my new purchases. I don’t want a lot of people to see my purchases or to know how much I purchased to just talk about behind my back.

Last but not least, Suad conveyed that the wedding dress was a huge deal and spent a great amount of time shopping for an ideal gown. She believed that her satisfaction with her appearance will reflect her self-confidence and how people will view her. During her extensive search, she was offered her best friend’s wedding gown, which she accepted and made modifications to. Ironically, she helped her friend choose this very same dress a year ago, not knowing she would later be wearing it to her own wedding. Furthermore, Suad disagreed with the *zafah* (ushering) time and the level of extravagance but once more compromised in order to please her family and in-laws.

Yasmeen

Yasmeen is a 22-year-old bride to be, who currently resides in Jeddah, but plans on moving to Mecca with her husband after the wedding. She is a responsible and savvy shopper who knew what she wanted and planned accordingly. She did not want to go over budget and ask

her parents for extra money, because they were already going to cover half of the marriage celebrations costs. Yasmeen dreaded and disliked shopping, so she designated and depended on her mother to do most of the shopping for her. Because her mother visits the United States yearly, she decided to get “most of my wedding preparation stuff from the USA.” They did so, heavily relying on text, picture messages, and phone calls. As for the rest of her shopping, she went to the local malls just to try on a few dresses. Generally, Yasmeen’s shopping experience was a “combination of scared and excited... happiness mixed with stress.”

Yasmeen’s first marriage event was when the groom’s family members met her. She did not put too much thought and planning into the event, as it was a female-only visit. She simply wanted to “look as pretty yet natural as possible.” Her appearance consisted of a short dress with very light makeup and straightened hair. In contrast, on her *shofa* day she was nervous about meeting her potential fiancé for the first time:

Men are more visual than women. I do not remember what he was wearing on the *shofa* day, and he remembered all the details about me. My look on the *shofa* will stick in his memory forever!

When choosing what to wear, she struggled because most of her clothes were not modest enough to wear on the *shofa* day. Therefore, she spent extra time choosing an appropriate outfit with her mother’s help. The goal for her that day was: “I wanted him to see me for who I am and did not try to enhance my beauty in any way.”

After her *shofa*, came the *fatiha*, where Yasmeen was extra careful in choosing what to wear to impress her fiancé. In an effort to find out “what he might like in women’s clothes,” Yasmeen deployed a tactic of following all his social media accounts. She sorted through all the pictures he commented on to get an idea of his likes and dislikes. Then, she chose a *fatiha* dress

similar to the style and colors of dress in the pictures he liked on his social media accounts.

Yassmen felt that her effort paid off, as her fiancé was surprised and impressed with her *fatiha* dress: “I was so happy that I succeeded in discovering his favorite style and color.”

About a month after her *fatiha*, Yasmeen combined her *melka* and *shabkah* occasions in one night. She had to rush her shopping for this occasion: “I had to find a dress, makeup artist, hairstylist, and photographer in these two weeks,” which put her under a lot of pressure due to fear of ruining everything and running out of time. However, her mother and sister were of great help and accompanied her on every shopping trip she made during these two weeks. They advised her to shop at the best bridal boutiques to minimize the searching time: “The first dress I liked I tried on I bought.” Yasmeen canceled the *ghomrah* celebration because of time restrictions (her wedding was scheduled directly after her final exams).

Yasmeen believed that “our appearance reflects who we are.” Hence, she carefully made her purchase decisions to both “reflect who I am as a person and as Yasmeen,” and to meet social expectations. She proclaimed that her new purchases were essential in helping her manage her appearance post-marriage in a way that distinguishes her as newlywed: “A newlywed woman must look her best everywhere she goes because people will be watching what she wears and expect her to dress nicely and look very pretty.” She wanted to avoid being underdressed, which is socially interpreted as poor preparation for a new life: “I do not want anyone to think that I am not ready enough and that I don’t have enough fancy clothes that represent me as a newlywed.” As a sign of respect, some of Yasmeen’s purchases were chosen specifically to wear only in front of her in-laws. In addition to the modesty level, Yasmeen aimed to show respect to her in-laws by avoiding being underdressed, which is socially interpreted as “they don’t fill my eyes” (a

common Arab expression, here implying that the occasions are not important enough for her to dress up).”

Moreover, among her entire purchases, Yasmeen highlighted the clothes that would help her in her role as a wife, such as home clothing and lingerie. She made sure she had enough variety within these two categories to keep her husband interested in her and to “not get bored of me repeating the same clothes over and over again.” To show her fiancé that he is important to her, she asked him about his preference, taste and “what he would like to see his future wife wearing.” During the engagement period, Yasmeen worked diligently to make her fiancé notice and compliment her dress: “I spend time preparing myself every time before my fiancé comes to visit me, and I feel frustrated when he doesn’t notice that.” Nonetheless, she expressed that “his compliments and flattery still make me happy and feel good about myself.”

During her first interview, Yasmeen mentioned that when she was younger, she dreamed of wearing a long, puffy wedding ball gown to her wedding “like a princess in a fairy tale.” However, she changed her mind during her second interview and decided to purchase “a light, flowy dress that’s easy to walk in.” It was not an easy decision for her to make. She experienced some feelings of conflict between choosing a long, puffy wedding ball gown she always dreamt of and a light wedding gown, easy to walk in. After asking her mother, sisters, and friends for their opinions, she made her final decision “to go with something in the middle, not too puffy and not too tight, but flowy.”

Yasmeen valued simplicity and looking natural, so she planned her wedding “to be simple like me.” For example, she wanted to apply very light makeup, so her guests would recognize her: “I do not want to change my look like some brides who wear such heavy makeup to the point that they are unrecognizable.” Also, she preferred classic wedding gowns, makeup,

and hair styles over the trendy styles, which will die in a few years: “I do not want to look at my wedding pictures 10 years from now and be shocked.”

Although Yasmeen confidently discussed her wedding plans during the first and second interviews, she was nervous and scared during her last interview as her wedding day was quickly approaching: “My heart beats quickly when I look at the calendar, and see it is in 39 days.” She was scared of the idea of walking down the aisle and everybody looking at her. This might have been because Yasmeen’s wedding gown, makeup and hair styles were non-traditional, and thus she was afraid of criticism.

Summary across Stories

From participants’ narratives, this summary reflects similarities and differences among participants’ stories, guided by the study research questions:

1. What do Saudi brides-to-be shop for during the engagement period? What is the importance or significance of different products in relation to their weddings and life after the wedding?
2. What factors influence the purchase choices of Saudi brides-to-be when shopping and preparing for the wedding and after the wedding?
 - 2a. From a Saudi bride’s perspective, how do culture and family influence the wedding preparation experience?
 - 2b. How do Saudi marketplaces, media, and social media influence bride-to-be choices when shopping and preparing for the wedding process?

The Importance or Significance of Different Products

During the process of wedding preparation, Saudi brides-to-be spoke of many symbolic new products for which they shop. They sorted these products under various categories as

follows (listed from most to least significant): lingerie and sleepwear, intimate apparel, perfume and personal care items, makeup and beauty items, casual clothing to wear at home, gold and jewelry, honeymoon preparation, formal clothing for visiting, evening wear, handbags and shoes, watches and accessories, body care services, and wrapping and organizing products for the *dabash*. The significant utility of these different products was to facilitate the liminal transition to a new life: “feeling well prepared and ready for a new journey” (Eithar). Much in the spirit of Belk’s (1988) concept of the extended self, the way Saudi brides-to-be decided to purchase products is not about the product’s functionality as much as the product meaning and what it signifies about them in relation to cultural values. They shopped for items to express themselves in several marriage events and to represent the new identity in their life. Participants’ accounts of their new products reflected two significant life changes: to build their new marital relationship and realize the separation from their single life.

Building the marital relationship. All the participants viewed intimate products that help them construct their new marital relationship as the most meaningful products (see Figure 4). For example, first night sleeping gown, lingerie, bedding sets, and *musk al-tahara* (a natural perfume safe to use on sensitive areas). Participants explained how these products represented the expected intimate relationship with their future husband. Eithar described that purchasing these products made her feel ready for her first experience of sexual intimacy: “It is nice to show that I am ready for this kind of relationship.” Participants also spoke about buying clothing that will be worn exclusively for their future husband at home and makeup to help them beautify their appearance for their husband as a way to show their love and caring. Atlal stated that the most meaningful items among her purchases were what help her “look attractive [because] I want to be the wife to please her husband visually by wearing nice clothing, lingerie, and smelling

good.” She considered these items as “the materials that reinforce the emotions.” As Solomon (1983) stated, the participants employed these products to assist them in transitioning into their new role as wife.



Figure 4. Participant’s Lingerie Purchases for the First Night after the Wedding

However, the acquisition of products for intimate interactions was not a comfortable decision for all the participants. Some expressed feelings of conflict and ambiguity when making their purchase decision about intimate products. For example, Eithar, Balquse, and Rania were uncertain when they shopped for lingerie because they have never shopped for this category before. Also, the intense significance of such a symbolic product made it complicated to make the purchase decisions. Rania describe her lingerie shopping trip as: “It is something new... when I wore it for the first time and looked at the mirror, I felt silly.”

Other challenging decisions participants had to make were their dress choices for the *shofa* (first meeting with fiancé) as a starting point of the new relationship. They expressed feeling stressed, uncertain, frightened, and fearful of rejection by the groom-to-be on their *shofa* day. They put lots of thought in deciding their dress choices because they believed their

appearance in this first meeting structured the groom's first and "lifetime" (Suad) impression. Goffman's (1959) concept of idealization applies as the women tried to construct an "idealized" image of the self for their future husband by costuming in a way that corresponds with the cultural meanings associated with the ideal wife. Their planned attempts to present an ideal Saudi wife image to their future husband were frequently reflected in bride-to-be's remarks. In Saudi culture, the ideal Saudi wife must look attractive to the husband by "enhancing her beauty and femininity" (Nalah). Purchases such as makeup, lingerie, and revealing dresses were used to present "hyper-femininity" exclusively for their future husbands (Mupotsa, 2015). These purchases acted as a "mask," which allowed participants to contour the changes associated with their new role as a wife (Tseelon, 2001).

The "idealization" process helped participants reduce their uncertainty when choosing their *shofa* dress (Goffman, 1959). To present an "idealized" version of their *shofa* front, they followed the Islamic rule of modesty and their family's guidance to stay consistent with the norms. However, the level of modesty varied among participants based on their families' guidelines.

On the other hand, some participants challenged the inherent concealing efforts, related to Goffman's concept of mystification, when choosing the idealized *shofa* dress (Goffman, 1959; Tseelon, 2001). Some desired to reflect the "real me" (Baylassan) through dress to avoid being untrue to the self and to the potential husband. They experienced a dilemma between presenting a "mystifying and enchanting self" to their future husband upon first meeting versus presenting their "authentic self" (cf. Tseelon, 2001). Idealization often requires some mystification, presenting a dilemma to brides who wanted to look ideal but not false. Without enhancing their appearance through "mystification," they feared being rejected by the groom-to-be yet did not

want to masquerade in ways that did not express their personal and natural style. They valued dressing simply to show their “raw beauty” (Batool). These few women found a great deal of security in dressing in a way that expressed what they felt was their true or authentic self because they wanted to be accepted as they are:

I tried to look as natural as possible, I did not wear any makeup and wore my hair down naturally without straightening it. I wanted him [her fiancé] to see me for who I am and did not try to enhance my beauty in any way. (Yassmeen)

Realization of the separation stages. Starting with the separation stage, which is the first stage of transition (van Genneep, 2011), the new purchases helped brides-to-be in this study accept the separation stages and move to the liminal stages. The wrapping and the packing process for their new purchases helped them feel ready to leave their parents’ house and accept their new identity (see Figure 5). For example, the packing process made Baylassan realize that

I am moving out to live a new life with my husband...I am saying goodbye to my single woman life.



Figure 5. Participant Bride’s New Purchases Wrapped to be Moved to the Couple’s New Home

Participants also associated the new purchases with their new life. The more shopping trips they made for new items, the more they became aware of their separation stage. In the first phase of interviews, participants did not focus on this stage; during the second and third interviews, the imminent separation from single life and youthfulness became more apparent in their descriptions. However, participants were divided on how much they wanted to change their appearance. Some participants made an effort to highlight the difference visually between single and married life with their new purchases. For example, Norah intentionally purchased a new dress style: “Typically, I tend to wear formal clothing such as buttoned up shirts and cardigans, but for my *dabash* I did a complete turnaround.” Other participants preserved their old style and believed that new products meant a new life. By keeping their old style, they tried to maintain part of their old self as single women and continuity with their other roles. For example, Raseel bought “the exact typical trousers” as resistance toward complete change “because the only new identity to me is the wife, but I will be the same with my friends and family.”

Participants also felt that their new purchases helped them feel “like a bride,” an identity which they associated with being happy. Their main approach to feeling like a bride was dressing fancy. Culturally, wearing fancy clothing is linked to happiness and a newlywed (see Figure 6). Congruent with Goffman (1959), participants managed their appearance by dressing fancy to convey a message of fulfillment of cultural ideals to be observed by others. They shopped for products that have socially symbolic meanings linked to a newlywed’s image. For example, the gold jewelry and perfume purchases were seen as a sign of “happiness.” Reetal considered “her gold jewelry set as strongly connected with the marriage and the bride (see Figure 7). Maybe it has something to do with representing happiness.” Meanwhile, Balques expressed that: “The bride and a newlywed is distinguished by her pleasant smell.”



Figure 6. Participant's Dress in One of Her Seven Marriage Celebrations



Figure 7. Participant's Gold Jewelry Set

The importance of impression management is mostly transparent during the transition into a new role (Goffman, 1959; Solomon, 1983). Congruent with Goffman's (1959) concepts of idealization, participants emphasized the ideal bridal image to achieve full acceptance by the audience who attend their wedding celebration. The Saudi brides-to-be's new purchases were instrumental in helping them perform this idealized image of the bride and newlywed (Goffman, 1959). The traditional Saudi bride and newlywed typically dress regally and different from their old selves as single young women. Therefore, participants attempted to create a culturally expected "front" to their audiences, which incorporates and exemplifies the Saudi culture and norm.

Moreover, feminist theories explained how cultural discourses contribute to the objectification of the female body (Mulvey, 1975; Tyner & Ogle, 2009). Saudi brides-to-be came to understand themselves as objects of scrutiny, which requires attainment of ideal female beauty (Tyner & Ogle, 2009). Thus, brides used dress to manage identity in terms of social appropriateness during large marriage celebrations with more audiences. Atlal recognized that she would be an object of gaze and felt that her concerns and pressure increased in the large marriage celebrations:

Traditionally, brides are expected to be like a vase that sits in view for people to watch...the bride has to be in one place and everyone watches her.

Participants mentioned various meaningful symbolic items that would help them achieve the ideal bridal and newlywed image. Their accounts indicated that the most meaningful symbolic items that represented the transition into the liminal newlywed stage were the wedding dress and wedding ring. The white wedding dress was one of the most meaningful items because it was instrumental in helping them realize the separation stage from singlehood and ignited their

feelings of happiness about the marriage (see Figure 8). All of them talked about an emotional moment during their wedding dress fitting session because it symbolized the end of the single life and a start of married life. For example, Fayha described her emotions when she tried on her wedding dress:

I felt overwhelmingly happy because it will be my dream day when I am ushered in with my white gown. I dreamt and envisioned a certain style, and that's exactly what I found.



Figure 8. Participant's White Wedding Dress

The white wedding dress was viewed by all participants as the true image of a bride; Abrar stated that without it, one will be “a fake bride.” In the United States, the white wedding dress is synonymous with a princess image, and women spend significant time and energy searching for the perfect dress (McEnally, 2002). Although the white wedding gown is a western tradition, it has been adopted by many previous generations in Saudi Arabia so that it has become a common part of the marriage culture (Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2016). This might be

because many participants associate the ideal bride presentation with the white wedding gown in Saudi society. To understand why the white wedding gown was essential to all Saudi brides-to-be, it is essential to first understand the symbolic meanings associated with it. The white wedding gown is synonymous with virginity and purity of the bride (Dobscha & Foxman, 1998; Mupotsa, 2015). Perhaps, for this reason the white wedding gown was the ideal presentation of Saudi brides for many generations (Tawfiq & Marcketti, 2017). One bride-to-be, Eithar, recognized the implications of this symbolism in Saudi Society but rebuffed it slightly by adding color to her wedding gown:

We live in a society where the bride must be a virgin for her first marriage. I do not care if the white symbolizes virginity. We do not have to show that by the dress. Plus, this is too personal; it does not have to be shared with all the guests who are attending the wedding. I want to be the first bride to break the rules about the white dress tradition.

Other participants valued the symbolism of the white wedding gown and viewed it as a sign of happiness, royalty, and a beginning of a new life:

I want something very fancy with a long train, long veil, and a fancy tiara. I want to have a royal look and appearance. I see myself like a queen in my wedding gown. (Balques)

As in any other ritualized events where the cultural symbols are used as a form of communication, the white gown contributed to build the social understanding of what it means to be a bride in wedding rituals (Eicher & Ling, 2005). The white color tends to be a symbol in Saudi culture that makes Saudi brides-to-be more aware of their transition and ideal to strive for (Noble & Walker, 1997). The “puffy” and ballgown style lends an ethereal, princess quality to the bride that makes her appear perfect and beyond ordinary; this perfection reflects the essential nature of the transition of Saudi young women, to become a married woman. The tradition gives

them some guidance on how they should look on their wedding day (see Blumhagen, 1979). Thus, the white wedding gown was an essential tool to present the ideal bride image, which marked their transition from single to married woman identity (Mupotsa, 2015).

Participants also acknowledged that the wedding ring holds a special social symbolic meaning (see Figure 9). Particularly in Saudi culture, the wedding ring is traditionally purchased by the groom as a symbol of love, respect, and commitment. All but two participants were gifted the wedding ring on the *melka* day. The two participants who did not receive a ring at *melka*, Atlal and Balques, believed that the wedding ring when it was not gifted by the groom reflected less engagement by the groom in the wedding process. They expressed frustration when their fiancée gave them money, in addition to the dowry, to purchase their own wedding ring. Both Atlal and Balques experienced much conflict and hesitation when making the purchase decision for their wedding rings. Balques expressed that “I had conflicts within myself to the point that I wanted to cry when I was purchasing my wedding ring.” The groom-to-be avoidance of making the wedding ring purchase decision might be perceived as negligent and showing less commitment to the marriage. The gifts’ meaning goes beyond the items gifted to symbolize the relationship between giver and receiver (Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995; McCracken, 1988b). Thus, the wedding rings reflected the emerging relationship, which will be discussed further under the sub-theme of “symbolic meanings of gifts during the transition.”

Overall, the new purchases allowed the brides to accept their new life and helped them navigate through the transition. All participants completely agreed that their new purchases were a major component in adopting their new identity as wife. There was very little variation in symbolic consumption across the participants. The exceptions were the process of acquiring the wedding ring and maintaining their old self by preserving their old dress style.



Figure 9. Participant's Wedding Ring

Factors Influencing the Purchase Choices of Saudi Brides-to-Be

When shopping and preparing for the wedding and for life after the wedding, the most common factors all participants spoke of were family influences, in-laws' expectations, tradition and culture, marketplaces, media, and social media influences. Throughout participants' entire marriage journey, there was evidence that they used what Cooley (1902) called "the looking glass self" by viewing the value and the significance of their purchases through the eyes and impressions of others, particularly their family, their new husband, and in-laws.

Family influence. During the process of the entire marriage journey, starting from the first shopping trip to planning the wedding, brides-to-be continually sought their families' guidance to insure they met social expectations. They considered their family to be more knowledgeable and experienced than themselves. Relying on their families' guidance helped them reduce feelings of uncertainty and helped them feel somewhat safe from other people's judgments.

However, level of influence of the family varied. The majority of participants heavily depended on their families' guidance in every purchase decision and reported having their mother or older sister accompany them in all their shopping trips. On the other hand, others

wanted to experience independence by making their purchase decisions on their own. For example, Atlal, Balquse, Raseel, Nalah, and Eithar resisted some of their family's influence and wanted to make their purchase decisions independently. However, they made compromises to balance between what they wanted and what their family wanted because of their understanding that the bride-to-be's new purchases represent the "family honor" (Batool). Even the more independent participants like Nalah did not want to "tarnish their [the family's] name, or have people think they raised me wrong."

Brides-to-be in this study named various family members – including their mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, fathers, and brothers – who helped them make purchase decisions throughout their shopping journey. Although participants mostly depended on their mother's guidance, some felt that the generational gap drove a wedge between them and thus preferred someone closer in age such as an older sister or cousin. In contrast to the other participants, when purchasing *shofa* and *fatiha* dresses, Abrar and Eithar solicited their father's and brother's advice in order to get a male person's viewpoint.

In-laws' expectations. The second major source of influence on brides-to-be in this study during their marriage preparation journey was their in-laws. All participants had a separate category within their shopping list for specific dresses to wear in front of their in-laws. They sought approval from their new in-laws to ensure that their outfits conformed with their in-law's customs. By doing so, brides-to-be aimed for acceptance into the new family. As expressed by Baylassan: ". . . to look acceptable and be accepted as a member of their family" helped with the transition. Participants also acknowledged that they used dress to pursue some self-verification because they wanted membership in their in-law's group to be confirmed by their in-laws.

Some participants viewed their confirmation of membership to their in-law's group as a way to cope with the life transition and new roles. For example, Balques explained how showing respect to her in-laws' culture and traditions through her dress would lead to an "easier life after the wedding." Baylassan added that gaining her in-laws' acceptance and love would in turn cultivate her husband's acceptance and love. Therefore, when shopping for their marriage celebration and post wedding, participants wanted to manage their appearances to elicit their in-laws' positive reviews. However, at that point participants were not yet well acquainted with their in-laws, so they chose dress that was socially acceptable. Fayha described how she shopped for clothes to wear in front of her in-laws:

I'm not sure what their standards of modesty are...I don't want to disrespect them by wearing revealing clothes, so I am buying conservative, modest clothes.

Tradition and culture. As participants described the factors that influenced their purchase decisions for their wedding and post wedding, they frequently made reference to the Saudi tradition and culture. In regard to the marriage, a "tradition that has been set forth" (Nalah), some examples included: buying everything new for their new life, the ball gown style and white color of the wedding day dress, the gold jewelry set, the fancy newlywed dress, the *ghomrah* party, and the event of transferring the *dabash* to the new couple's home by their family. Brides-to-be in this study differed on how they perceived the marriage tradition. While most participants approved of the norms that brides-to-be usually follow and adhered to the wedding traditions, others challenged the norms and refused to follow some marriage traditions.

Participants who adhered to Saudi marriage traditions fell into two groups. The first group liked the Saudi marriage traditions and believed that they: "play a large and important role in preparing the bride for her life" (Baylassan). Participants expressed that they purchased what

was socially expected to use as a “front” in the marriage celebrations. These participants willingly and happily respected all the cultural norms and marriage traditions. Abrar criticized brides-to-be who replaced the traditional *ghomrah* party with the foreign bachelorette party:

Why do we need to replace it with a meaningless party? What is this bachelorette party for?

The second group viewed adherence to marriage traditions as a safe approach to avoid criticism and judgment. Suad stated that there are “a lot of items that culturally we hear that a bride should have or should wear, and if you don’t, you’ll be judged negatively.” In this case, traditions and culture were sources of tension for some brides-to-be because they struggled between what they wanted and what the culture and tradition rules are. Although they disapproved with parts of the marriage traditions, they followed them anyway to avoid tarnishing their families’ reputations. Atlal recognized the traditional importance of modesty and reluctantly covered the slightly deep opening in her *shabkah* dress to comply for the sake of her family. She explained:

When you know the way that you dress will affect your family, you do not want to hurt your family’s reputation.

Finally, a few participants resisted some Saudi traditions and were willing to push the boundaries and pay the price of facing criticism and judgment. They believed that “some stupid tradition is okay to ignore” (Raseel) and “it is nice to do something different and new for our culture” (Norah). For example, four brides-to-be held a bachelorette party with their friends, and Eithar broke the tradition of the white wedding gown, slightly.

Moreover, many participants also showed a degree of rejection of the traditional event of moving the bride’s new purchases from her family's house to the couple’s new home. The

groom's family hosts this event, and the bride's family moves all her new purchases (*dabash*), which will be displayed elegantly in view of all the guests from both sides of the family (see Figure 5). Participants expressed their stress and nervousness with this event. Their main reasons for their frustration and refusal were their fear of judgment and violation of their privacy. Some participants, such as Raseel canceled the event completely, while others tried to protect their privacy by wrapping their *dabash* in a way in which contents were concealed.

The variations in perception of the Saudi marriage tradition and norms among participants possibly indicates the evolving Saudi cultural context and societal changes. The resistance to some marriage traditions might be a sign of emerging cultural change. For instance, the white wedding gown was adopted by many generations in Saudi Arabia until it became a common part of the Saudi marriage tradition. Traditional events may evolve overtime. For example, not all participants celebrated all the marriage traditional events, and some introduced a new one. This newly adopted marriage tradition seems to be where brides-to-be can present another aspect of themselves with close friends, which Eicher (1981) called a situation of presenting the "intimate self." Unlike the other marriage celebrations, the bachelorette party's emphasis is on the bride-to-be's private self and friendships, which may indicate a shift toward more independent and individualistic selves for women in Saudi culture (see Santos, Varnum, & Grossmann, 2017).

Saudi marketplaces, media, and social media influence. As participants talked about their shopping experiences while preparing for the wedding and their lives after the wedding, they frequently referenced the outlets available to them in the contemporary Saudi marketplace. At the center of these discussions was their desire to construct a unique appearance, as a bride and newlywed. Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with Saudi marketplaces and

preferred to shop online, outside the country, or at local boutiques which hand make unique items that are not mass produced. For participants, dresses available in the Saudi markets did not have the uniqueness level they wished for. Balques likened shopping for a dress in Saudi markets with shopping for “uniformed outfits, [all the stores] are offering the same styles and similar colors.” Participants viewed the unique appearance as an expression of their personality and a conduit for enhanced self-esteem.

In an effort to create a unique appearance, almost all participants spoke about the role of mass media. Notably, social media sites such as Instagram were a reliable source for images of trendier and unique fashions. They might follow famous fashionistas and makeup artists to help them decide many purchases choices:

There are many fashionistas’ accounts where I got ideas on how to match colors, pieces, and accessories. One of the fashionistas is great at matching colors that you always think they’re unmatched, and her look is so unique” (Abrar).

While many participants acknowledged the social media influence, only a few of them pointed to other media influences. For instance, western movies were viewed as external sources of structural social changes in the marriage celebration that had introduced a new change such as the bachelorette party.

Important to note is that participants were greatly influenced by social media because it is a network of receiving and sending data. Some participants felt more pressure to purchase more items to meet social expectations that expand on social media. Pictures of themselves or their new purchases that they or their friends and relatives posted on their social media accounts were displayed to a wider audience. This made the participants’ fear judgments and criticisms from

more people. Nalah was concerned about her *dabash* presentation in the event of transporting it to her new home because this presentation:

is not exclusive for the guests who attend the *dabash*, but many more people can observe the *dabash* through pictures posted on social media.

In sum, when shopping for the wedding and for life after the wedding, all participants were influenced by their families, in-laws, tradition and culture, marketplaces, and social media. However, there were variations among participants in the level of these influences. The most notable variation was the perception of the Saudi marriage tradition and norms among participants, which might be an indication of change in the Saudi society.

Grounded Theory: Emergent Themes

In the second phase of the data analysis, the interviews were coded using the grounded theory technique of constant comparison. As participants spoke about their shopping experience prior to the wedding, their accounts crystallized around three key themes: (a) readiness for the new life after marriage, (b) new purchases portray aspects of bride-to-be's individuality, and (c) other's influence on bride-to-be's purchase decisions. Each of these major themes were split into sub-themes (see Figure 10).

Each theme was found in the data across many of the participants. In comparison to the narrative analysis, emphasis is put on themes emerging from many of the participants rather than on unique, individual stories.

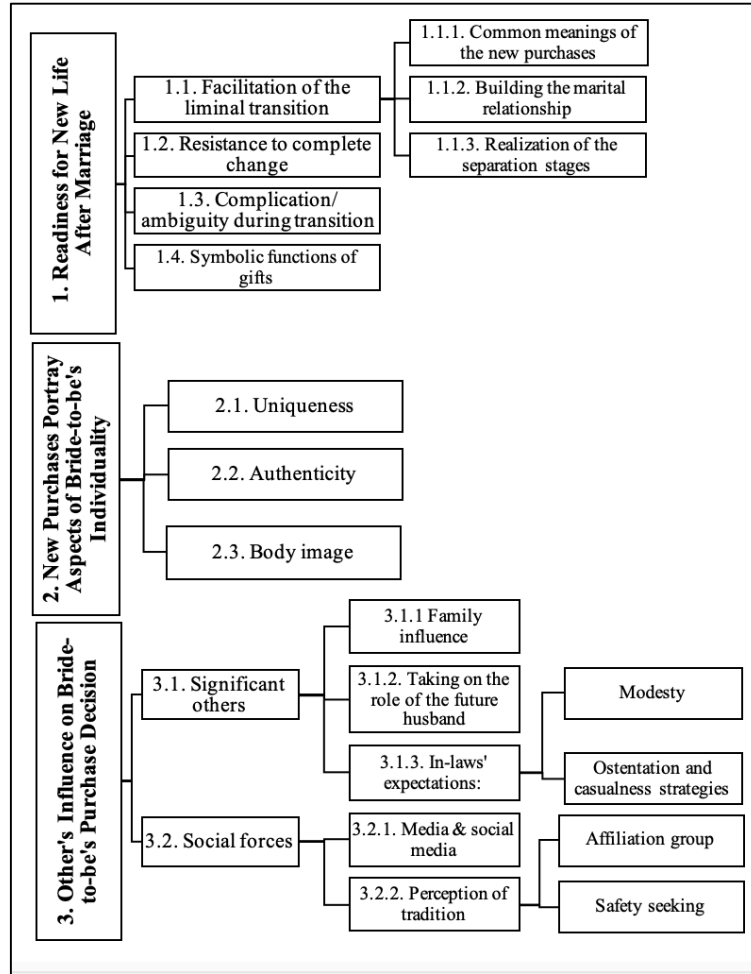


Figure 10. Taxonomy of Themes and Sub-themes

Readiness for The New Life After Marriage

Throughout their accounts, Saudi bride-to-be symbolic consumption reflected liminal experiences during transition to married life. They spoke of using their new purchases to embody their readiness for the new life after marriage, and their consumption practices were tightly linked with their new identities. In doing so, they referenced various products that have socially symbolic meanings, corresponding to the symbolic interactionist perspective (Stone, 1962; Goffman, 1959). That is, the products were symbolic because participants used the generalized understanding of meanings of products to communicate their new identity, such as to distinguish

between single and married life. The symbolic meaning of the new products aided the participant's ability to manage and change their appearance in order to announce her new identities, which may facilitate the successful transition to her new role (Solomon, 1983). In the following section, four emergent sub-themes of symbolic consumption during transition to marriage were found in the data: (a) facilitation of the liminal transition to new life, (b) resistance to complete change, (c) complication and ambiguity during transition, and (d) symbolic functions of gifts during the transition to marriage.

Facilitating the liminal transition to new life. The sub-theme captured the notion that consumption of new products may help with coping and adjusting during the transition to a new life role (Solomon, 1983). The majority of the participants expressed that their new purchases were chosen to enable them to adopt the new identity of wife. Some participants indicated feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982) as they imagined how well they would perform during the transition into marriage using the items they purchased. Abrar stated: “I will feel more confidence knowing I bought everything I need; I’ll feel prepared and ready.” Similarly, Belk (1988) proposed that extending the self through possessions can enable the individual to do things one would otherwise not be capable of doing. For example, Yasmeen thought she would feel “unready ...and apathetic about my new journey” if she had not purchased new fancy dresses as part of her wedding preparation.

Within this sub theme, three supporting minor themes emerged that focused on the role the bride-to-be new purchases play to facilitate transition into marriage. The themes were: Common meanings of the new purchases, building the marital relationship, and realization of the separation stages.

Common meanings of the new purchases. Participants' new purchases signify obvious symbolic consumption because they were a tool to confirm their new identity during their wedding celebrations. Thomsen and Sørensen's (2005) symbolic consumption framework was adapted to explain how participants see themselves according to a generalized understanding of a product's meanings. Within the data, the consumption of new products acts as a "common signal" source that helped to materialize the generalized understanding of bridal image (Thomsen & Sørensen, 2005). In the ritualized social marriage event of *shabkah*, participants described transformational feelings when wearing the bridal gowns: "It was my first time feeling like a real bride and loved every detail: the ball gown, the tiara, the flower bouquet, and the ushering" (Baylassan). The symbolic meanings of participants' new purchases enable them to send desired signals to others in their surroundings or to conjure a certain sense of self (Belk, 1988; Goffman, 1959). The clearest and most central example of this attributed symbolic meaning was the connection of the new bride's image with dressing fancy: "that means I'm happy in my new life" (Eithar). The gold jewelry and perfume purchases were also seen as a sign of "happiness [that] strongly connected the marriage and the bride" (Reetal). Marriage is so fundamental to Muslim and Saudi culture that marriage represents the "manifest destiny" for women; the young single woman is socialized to believe that she will achieve true happiness by fulfilling this destiny. Purchases of symbolic clothing and accoutrements therefore symbolize this essential achievement.

The theme corresponds with the "common experience" in Sørensen and Thomsen's framework that explains how acquiring new products during role transition provides an individual with a shared experience. The commonly shared meaning of bridal products made them experience a new sense of self as a bride because the symbolic meanings are easily

understood and recognized by self and others.

New purchases also frequently were viewed as a sign of transition to a new status:

. . . it is a starting point of a new life. I couldn't wear something old. (Suad)

In some cases, brides-to-be approached their new role by acquiring new products regardless of whether the new items were the same or different style from what they wear as a single woman. Abrar got rid of all her old clothes:

I prefer to buy everything new because it is a new life! I do not want to keep wearing my old clothes after I am married.

Wearing their old clothes contradicted the idea of a new life. The new dresses Raina purchased to wear on her *shofa* and *fatiha* day meant a new life and becoming a bride:

I want to feel the bride feeling. I want to wear something new, even though I have a lot of outfits in my closet I could have worn. . . When my *fatiha* was scheduled, I tried on many outfits I have in my closet, but I did not feel like a bride. I tried a short dress, then I looked in the mirror, and I did not feel like a bride either. So, I got a new red dress and tried it on, and the minute I put on I felt like a bride!

Because the *shofa* and *fatiha* are important events and rites of passage, Raina felt that her old dresses no longer represented her desired self-image (see Belk, 1988).

In other cases, not only one new dress was sought after by participants, but also a new style to truly feel the transformation. It is not only the idea of buying something new, but the new purchases must represent the difference between single and married life. Participants identified assorted changes in their dress to look different as married women. They described their new purchases for married life as "more dressy, more feminine, more tight fitting clothing" (Atlal)

and “heavier makeup” (Baylassan). Norah also took extra effort to make enough change in her appearance to project the symbolic difference between single and married life:

Within my *dabash* I diversified and changed my regular style to reflect my transition from a single lady to a married woman... Typically, I tend to wear formal clothing such as buttoned up shirts and cardigans, but with my *dabash* I did a complete turnaround. I don't like wearing low cut tops that show my cleavage, but I changed my regular style [to low cut necklines].

For these participants leaving an old role and successfully transiting to a new one is marked symbolically by disposing old possessions and acquiring new ones (Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005; Noble & Walker, 1997). The new dresses in this case represent a different stage in an individual's life (Belk, 1988). Prior research that investigated liminal transition found that transcending from one role to another is reflected symbolically through consumption behavior and acquisition of new products (Jennings & O'Malley, 2003; Noble & Walker, 1997; Ogle et al., 2013; The Voice Group, 2010). Van Genneep (2011), who defined the three stages of rites of passage, explained that during the pre-liminal stage, individuals strip out of their old roles as a first step toward the new role. As Saudi brides-to-be transition into a new role (wife), they leave their previous role behind (single woman). To separate from their old selves, most participants disposed of their old clothes and purchased new ones.

At a most basic level, participants described how they proactively selected products to successfully plan “unforgettable moments” (Atlal) such as the wedding night and honeymoon. Many brides-to-be viewed these two events as the most important events, perhaps because they are the official beginning of the incorporation phase (van Genneep, 2011). In addition, these two events involve the beginning of intimate interactions between the couple and the beginning of

uniting as a couple. This led to participants' strong feelings towards perfume, clothing, and makeup they purchased for these two events.

What I wear at the wedding and the honeymoon are memorable and special. Thus, when I went to shop for them, I carefully selected them because I want to save them for good memories. I will wear them after my wedding to relive these memorable moments with my husband. (Fayha)

The products' meanings are derived from participants' emotion in these situations which Sørensen and Thomsen (2005, p. 573) termed as "experiential value." From participants' point-of view, the wedding night and the honeymoon products are of most importance because of the situations in which the products would be used (Charon, 1985).

Building the marital relationship. Another prevalent meaning of the pre-wedding consumption was to contribute to building the new marital relationship. All participants emphasized the purposeful management of their appearances to confirm their impending role as wife and build a marital relationship through two ways. First, dressing up represented "care and love [for the husband]" (Raseel). As noted in the literature review, Saudi culture is influenced by the Islamic faith, which encourages wives to be presentable to their husbands in a way which shows her beauty (Al-Jehani, 2005; Bullock, 2003; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b). Therefore, Saudi men expect their wives to be groomed and attractive. Second, symbolic products such as lingerie prepared participants for the first-time intimate relationship with their future husband. When asked about the most important categories on their shopping list, almost all participants agreed that it was clothes that will be worn exclusively for the husband during private, intimate interactions.

As participants explained, the importance of appearance was mainly because of their transition into a new relationship. Dress was used to communicate their positive emotions to their husbands: “love,” “care,” “joy,” and “happiness.” Many participants described how some special appearance practices (e.g., applying makeup and perfume, and changing their clothes), would help them fulfill their new wife role. Brides-to-be addressed at length the importance of the wife’s dress for the husbands’ enjoyment. They used phrases such as “dressing nicely for him” (Nalah), “look beautiful for my husband” (Baylassan), and “please her husband visually” (Yasmeen). Participants acknowledged that their new purchases are not “the main sources to build the marriage relationship” (Atlal), but “the wife’s appearance is the physical part that symbolizes the emotional part” (Raseel). “Satisfying their husbands’ eyes” filled them with a sense of success in fulfilling their new wife roles. Similarly, prior research found that Saudi wives emphasized the use of the dress to show their beauty to their husband (Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b). Therefore, a bride-to-be shapes her transition to wife by employing products to beautify herself for her husband. Interestingly, Norah noted that appearance is more important and meaningful during the first few months of marriage, when spouses are in a stage of establishing a new relationship:

I am planning to wake up before my husband to apply light makeup. I want him to see me looking beautiful. I will only do that for a few months after the wedding, but then I think we will get used to each other. Afterwards, I will not wake up before him to apply makeup. He can see how my natural face looks like when I just wake up. I meant that until we get used to each other, I want to look as beautiful as I can for him because this is what people first notice about each other. Appearance matters in the beginning, but then

after a while we see the inner characteristics and do not care that much about the appearance.

Saudi women visually objectify themselves exclusively to their husband with an emphasis on appearance in the early phase of the marriage and courtship celebrations (see Tyner & Ogle, 2009). Women might regard themselves as objects of men's desire by manipulating their appearance to conform to the cultural ideals of female beauty as a way to gain empowerment in the marital relationship (Tyner & Ogle, 2009). The new bride is expected to attend to appearance to continue the mystification of the husband that his bride is an ideal beauty and a prize that he has earned. The appearance manipulation to maintain an idealized image of herself for the husband as a special audience indicates her success as a wife. This also reflects well on the new husband's success as a man if he has acquired a beautiful new bride. After the incorporation phase within the post-liminal rites (van Gennep, 2011), the wife might feel less need to objectify herself for the husband's visual satisfaction. As the marriage progresses, the emphasis on exacting beauty may fade somewhat as day-to-day compatibility and successful attention to household and family needs becomes more demanding and of ultimate importance. From a dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959), during this liminal transition, participants manage their appearance for the husband as a special audience in addition to the more public audience in the marriage celebrations. Therefore, the new purchases were used to manipulate others' impressions of the new bride for two frontal region audiences: diverse family and friends and the husband. In the early phase of the marriage, mystification is used to present an idealized image of the wife, but after the incorporation phase the wife moves her husband toward more of a backstage and intimate audience for which less appearance management is needed. Noble and

Walker (1997) suggested that after the completion of the liminal transition, there will be less need for symbolic items that mark the new role.

The second way participants managed their appearances to define their new wife role was through products that symbolize intimate relationships. Because all participants had never had an intimate relationship, they thought symbolic products such as lingerie would “prepare” them (Rania) and “take some stress out” (Eithar) of the forthcoming first experience of sexual intimacy. Due to participants’ unfamiliarity with this type of relationship, they relied on social meanings inherent in intimate products in order to perform their wife role (Solomon, 1983). Change in appearance is a symbol of transition that helps to make people feel more comfortable with their new social roles (Schouten, 1991).

Central to discussions about these types of products was to satiate their husbands’ emotional and sexual desires and show their excitement and readiness in “an indirect way” (Abrar). Rania explained how lingerie would give her husband the green light to proceed with the intimate relationship:

During the engagement there are restrictions in the way I dress, but after marriage all these restrictions are removed... I am showing my husband that those restrictions no longer exist. Lingerie is one way I show him that.

Another product a few participants mentioned that symbolized the intimate relationship was *Musk Al Tahara* (an organic perfume that is safe to use on sensitive areas). Applying this perfume would help with

. . . emitting a good scent, especially after ending the menstrual cycle. It is important for the wife to smell good for her husband. (Atlal)

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the husband is the audience for whom the bride-to-be attempts to perform special appearance practices. Previous research suggested that during transition into marriage, an "impression management" is crucial and may have an enduring and fundamental effect on the subsequent marital relationship (Cornelius & Sullivan, 2009; Rapoport, 1965). During the formation of a new relationship, many participants defined their new role as a wife in terms of appearance and impression management. Consumption of new products that are charged with intimate symbolic meaning enables brides-to-be to approach their new role and communicate their emotions to their husband (Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005).

Realization of the separation stage. Another way participants' new purchases facilitated the liminal transition was through assuaging the separation stage (van Genneep, 2011). The new purchases helped brides-to-be accept the fact that they were starting the liminal stage. The process of wrapping and packing their new purchases helped them feel ready to leave their parents' house. For example, Rania expressed that it helped her through the separation stage to accept her new identity:

The *dabash* is actually helping me count down to the big day and makes me aware of how soon this is happening [her role as a wife]. As I wrap my *dabash* and prepare my belongings, I realize that means I'm moving and leaving my parents' house and going to a new house. I will have more responsibilities as a wife, which means I'm not the spoiled daughter anymore.

The purchases convinced the brides that their lives would change and helped them navigate through the transition. The more shopping trips they made for new items, the more they became aware of their separation stage from single life and youthfulness: The shopping "helped set in the reality that I'm getting married, like an alarm of preparation constantly going off" (Atlal).

Participants also described particularly meaningful items that touched them deeply around the end of the separation stage and the start of the liminal newlywed stage. The most commonly mentioned item was the wedding dress. All of them talked about an emotional moment during their wedding dress fitting session because it symbolized the end of the single life and a start of married life. Fayha was in tears describing her mixed emotions when she tried on her wedding dress:

This white wedding gown is a sign of the end of the road and the end of my single life... I will leave my family to go live with my husband...I do not know if they were tears of joy or sadness because I'm leaving my parents' home.

When transcending from one role to another, symbolic detachment from the prior role has a large influence on a person's adaptation of the future role (Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005; Noble & Walker, 1997). When a new identity is developing, dispossessing old possessions that symbolize the former self aids the process of leaving the past behind and adopting the new role (Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995).

Resisting complete change. The second subtheme reflected another aspect of participants' readiness for their new life. The resistance of complete change theme revealed that some of the Saudi brides-to-be wished to maintain a sense of continuity with their single woman self (cf. Ogle et al., 2013). Numerous participants felt the need to purchase everything new in preparation for their new life or adopted a new dress style to feel the symbolic difference between single and married life. Within this subtheme, some participants in contrast wished to preserve their old clothing or the old style they used to wear as singles. Their coping role transition strategy was to resist purchasing everything new, as is traditionally common in Saudi

culture. Eithar felt that “having something old in your new environment makes you feel comfortable.” Like Eithar, Suad refused to discard all of her old clothing as a single woman:

I know that this is the representation of a new life, and I am going to purchase new items, but I’m also going to keep my old items and take them with me.

By keeping some of their old clothing, participants tried to maintain balance between part of their old self as a single woman and new identity as a married woman. Raseel explained how she balanced between maintaining her old self and her desire to purchase new products as a married woman to please her husband with “a middle-ground identity” (The Voice Group, 2010, p. 375). Raseel stated:

I know my fiancé will love these pieces, but they are not me. I wanted to impress my fiancé, but in the same time I wanted to wear something that represents my taste and is comfortable to me. I never understood those people who change their way of dressing after getting married. For example, I like classic style, and I will continue wearing that after getting married. I’m not going to change completely just because I’m getting married. Yes, I will add some categories that I didn’t have before, such as home clothing and lingerie, but everything else will stay the same. Because the only new identity to me is the wife, but I will be the same with my friends and family. I will wear things based on his taste at home, but out of the home it is up to me.

Moreover, when making purchase decisions, Saudi brides-to-be faced some challenges negotiating the bridge between conflicting aspects of the old and the new identities (cf. The Voice Group, 2010). The main conflict when combining new and ideal identities was the fear of losing a youthful look:

I disagree with some brides who change their styles completely after getting married and start dressing like older women. I am still young and will not dress like an older woman just because I got married. (Eithar)

Abandoning the old self was not yet completely acceptable to some participants. Finding a middle-ground identity during the liminal transition expedited the acceptance of the new role (The Voice Group, 2010). This explained why some participants preserved their old style to maintain part of their old self as single women and continuity with their other new roles. These participants confirmed Noble and Walker's (1997) observation that easing into a major life transition may include clinging to some possessions that symbolize one's past in addition to items that represented the new role.

Complication and ambiguity during transition. Participants repeatedly expressed the complicated, complex, and confusing process of what to wear and purchase for all marriage events and post marriage life. They referenced the instability and ambiguity they experienced during their transition period (Noble & Walker, 1997; van Gennepe, 2011). For example, Atlal wished to skip this "frightening" transition phase:

I wish I had a time machine that would move me from now to three months after the wedding. Because I think I'll have settled down three months after the wedding and will be adjusted to my new life.

The most challenging and confusing decision all participants mentioned was their dress choices for the *shofa* (first meeting with her fiancé) as a starting point of their new relationship. This first meeting is a public experience, fraught with dread on the part of the bride about whether she will be "acceptable" and attractive to her fiancé. The engagement could end after this introduction. This made brides-to-be feel stressed, uncertain, frightened, and fearful of rejection

by the groom-to-be on their *shofa* day. When making decisions about their *shofa*'s dress, participants "continually over-think what impression you will have on him" (Suad). Yasmeen described the strong feelings she felt on her *shofa*:

It was the first time meeting my fiancé. It was a weird feeling entering the room to meet a stranger who might be my future husband. I felt my heart beating very fast and that the world was so small. I needed a bigger world to hold my feelings in.

To reduce their uncertainty, they used cultural meanings and "common symbols" associated with various dress forms to construct a desired image of the self (see Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005).

The common symbols of dress were frequently predicated upon the concept of modesty, as guided by the principles of Islamic faith, to represent shyness and respect. For example, the long skirted and long sleeved dresses symbolized modesty and shyness. In Baylassan's case the headscarf symbolized a higher level of modesty and shyness because she went above the expectation level.

Participants also experienced complexity and ambiguity when making their purchase decisions: "I am at a loss as to what I should buy" (Balques). They were concerned whether their new purchases would correspond with their new role:

I don't know how I should dress after the wedding. I don't know if my purchases I'm making now are actually going to be used after the wedding. I'm confused on how I should be prepared for life after the wedding...I'm just confused and hope I am making good purchasing decisions. (Atlal).

In other instances, the complication increased when purchasing items that symbolize intimate interactions. While purchasing symbolic products may facilitate role transitions for some participants, it may also complicate the transition for others. For instance, participants had

never shopped for lingerie before, which caused some participants to have a degree of rejection toward it: “Some lingerie is scary... it shouldn’t be at that level of lewdness” (Eitahr). The intense significance of such a symbolic product made it complicated to make the purchase decision. Rania described her lingerie shopping trip as: “It is something new... when I wore it for the first time and looked at the mirror, I felt silly.” Symbolic consumption during liminal periods does not always play a positive role; transitional consumption may be complex and ambiguous, causing some individuals to feel ambivalence, confusion, and frustration (Ogle et al., 2013; The Voice Group, 2010).

Kleine, Kleine, and Allen (1995) found that individuals have various relationships with different possessions or items based on whether these items are coherent with how individuals perceive themselves. When shopping for new symbolic items, brides-to-be perceived items as "me" or "not me" (Kleine et al., 1995). Some participants viewed the lingerie as not them, which made their shopping experience complicated and ambiguous.

Symbolic functions of gifts during the transition to marriage. In characterizing the symbolic consumption and readiness for the new life after marriage, several participants valued the gifts from their fiancé. Although these gifts are not part of the bride-to-be purchases, they play a major role in the transition process. Gifts from grooms-to-be were seen as a sign of “care and love” (Nalah), which helped participants accept their new identity as a wife and the identity of their fiancé as worthy husband. The wedding rings were the most treasured gifts by all the participants. This is perhaps due to the special social and symbolic meaning of the wedding rings. In Saudi culture, wedding rings are traditionally purchased by the groom as a symbol of love, respect, and commitment. Like the participants in Carter and Duncan’s (2017) sample, the participants in this study viewed the traditional practices, including giving wedding rings, as a

way to socially display their new relationship. Moreover, Kleine et al. (1995) found that the most meaningful (most favorite) gifts were the ones that symbolized the relationship between giver and receiver. In this study, participants generally viewed gifts from the groom as a gesture of love because the rings symbolized the emerging relationship. The social display of their emerging relationship was important to brides-to-be. Balques felt happy when her friends noticed her wedding ring: “They all commented on my wedding ring. It made me feel happy, of course!”

In his analysis of “exchange ritual,” McCracken (1988b) proposed that during traditional celebrations such as weddings, the cultural meaning of the gifts are significant. During the exchange ritual, the cultural meanings are passed along to the recipient in a certain context (time and place). Congruent with McCracken (1988b), participants were receiving actual gifts from the groom in addition to gifts with cultural meaning and integrated this meaning into their new life. The time and place in which the gifts were given was an essential part of the exchange ritual. For example, Atlal was not gifted a wedding ring on her *shabkah* day, and she expressed frustration when her fiancée gave her money, in addition to the dowry, to purchase her own wedding ring:

He gave me money for the *shabkah* gold set rather than buying me one because he wanted me to choose one to my liking. One thing that shocked me was that on the day of the *shabkah*, he did not bring the wedding ring. He assumed I would buy it with the jewelry set money. I thought it was a universal understanding that the groom buys the wedding ring. The groom is supposed to buy the wedding ring. He said he would buy and bring it to the wedding. It is his task now; I will kill him if he forgets.

New Purchases Portray Aspects of Bride-to-be’s Individuality

The second overarching theme that emerged from the data highlights the ways in which participants new purchases portrayed aspects of their individuality. Participants’ dress choice and

purchase decisions during their transition into marriage often reflected their desired self-image and personal tastes or preferences. These behaviors seemed to bolster their self-esteem and positive feelings about themselves. In activating their individuality, participants ascribed an idiosyncratic meaning to a product and used this product to communicate something about the self (Belk, 1988; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005; McCracken, 1988b). When participants talked about how they wanted to be perceived during their marriage celebrations and life after marriage, they identified three idiosyncratic, symbolic meanings: uniqueness, authenticity, and positive body image.

Expressing some aspects of individuality through the new purchases might be especially important during transition into marriage because the majority of the pre-marriage purchases express collectivist belonging to their family and their new-in-law groups as married woman (will be discussed in more detail within the last overarching theme). It is as if the bride is attempting to erase her unmarried self-identity by purchasing new clothing and products to help her leave her prior self behind and inhabit her new identity of married self. Moreover, the previous theme of common meanings of the new purchases focused on the Saudi bride-to-be consumption of various less unique items that have culturally shared symbolic meanings as a way to construct their new identity as a conventional wife. However, some participants did attempt to incorporate some unique aspects to their appearance to help reflect an individualistic sense of self (Belk, 1988).

Uniqueness. In their analysis of the ways in which Saudi women present the self through private sphere dress, Tawfiq and Ogle (2013a) found that unique appearance was viewed as an expression of the participants' originality, personality, creativity, and enhancement of self-esteem. Similarly, some participants in this study put emphasis on producing a unique

appearance as a bride and newlywed. Baylassan designed her *shabkah* dress herself: “So I knew no other bride wore the same design. I wanted to have a very unique dress. I want to stand out and do not want to look like the other brides.” Eithar also desired to have a unique wedding gown by “adding the peach color to the lining of my gown. I want my dress to stick in my guests’ memories, I don’t want to be like other brides.”

Moreover, the products offered in Saudi marketplaces do not always mesh with participants’ selfhood that they wish to present. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with mass merchandise in the Saudi marketplace. They frequently mentioned the limited styles and variety available in the Saudi market as incongruent with the unique self-image they wished to portray as a newlywed with their new purchases. Alternatively, they shopped outside the country, online, or at local boutiques which created handmade dresses unlike that of others:

I often feel that shopping at the markets, there isn’t much selection, and they are all offering us the same styles, so it is hard to stand out. I feel like everyone is dressed the same -- much like uniformed outfits. I like that my dress is a reflection of who I am, and that’s why I want it to be different and unique. If there’s a dress or style that is everywhere, I will purposely avoid it and not purchase it. (Balques)

Other participants constructed a distinctive appearance through luxury brand purchases: “Everyone from my family and friends knows me by my Moschino handbags...They show that I am elegant and unique. I am crazy about the Moschino brand” (Norah). The assembly of a unique appearance was not only to foster a positive impression in the eyes of others, but also to foster a positive feeling about the self during the marriage transition:

As a newlywed I want to feel unique. It feels good that I have a piece nobody else has.
(Rania)

Suad, like Rania, considered the unique appearance important because it made her feel “more confident about my look [which] will show and reflect how people view me.” Kleine et al. (1995) found that the relationship between a specific person and a specific object of possession could strengthen when the object reflects unique self-orientation or "me-ness." Like participants in this study, their participants felt more confident, appreciative, and enjoyed their own image when wearing a distinctive piece that reflects an autonomous, "me-ness" self.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, as participants shop for new, unique apparel, they engage in what Goffman (1959) called “impression management.” By managing their appearance, participants attempted to construct a distinctive visual self-image to influence the perceptions of others. A desirable self-image was seen as achieved when participants’ new purchases were unique in a way that reflected their individuality, which in turn produced positive feelings of confidence.

The positive feelings induced by a unique visual outcome could be explained further by Belk’s (1988) extended self. Saudi brides-to-be use possessions, such as dress, to distinguish themselves as individuals apart from others and express an individual sense of being. As previously noted, participants’ unique appearances helped them define an individualistic sense of self (Belk, 1988).

Authenticity. Authenticity refers to conceptualized commitment to self-values that are personally meaningful to the individual (Erickson, 1995; Vannini & Franzese, 2008). An aspect of participants’ individuality expression is related to attempts to look natural and authentic, particularly for the groom-to-be (i.e., Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). At various marriage events, participants felt a sense of security when they wore a dress that expressed their authentic or essential self because they wanted to be accepted as themselves, even in the new roles they were

taking on. Mostly within their discussions of choosing their *shofa* dress, participants used dress to reflect “personal style” (Eitahr) and avoided looking “untrue” (Abrar). They valued dressing simply to show their “raw beauty” (Batool) and did not enhance their appearance in ways that contradicted the “real me” (Baylassan).

Many participants considered wearing heavy makeup during their marriage celebrations as “fake beauty” (Yassmeen) which limited their capacity to express the authentic self. Additionally, they viewed the heavy makeup as masquerading that moved them away from their authentic self (Tseëlon, 2001). The avoidance of a particular consumption choice could be a vital part of the symbolic projecting of one’s self (Wattanasuwan, 2005). Within her narrative, Yassmeen described the process of choosing her *shofa* dress:

I tried to look as natural as possible, I did not wear any makeup and wore my hair down naturally without straightening it. I wanted him [her fiancé] to see me for who I am and did not try to enhance my beauty in any way.

From the impression management perspective authenticity is referred to as feeling “unreal” when one violated a commitment to a particular self image (Goffman, 1967, p. 135). This violation was apparent in Suad’s narrative when she felt dissatisfaction with her appearance at her *melka*. Her family and friends pressured her to wear heavy makeup, which Suad felt was a misrepresentation of her true self. However, she achieved her desired look at her next marriage celebration (*shabkah*) by avoiding heavy makeup:

I wore lighter makeup for the *shabkah*. I told the makeup artist that I didn’t want anything heavy...I wanted to look like myself. I didn’t want to look unnatural. I don’t like the idea of looking in a mirror and not recognizing my own reflection.

In other instances, participants spoke about shopping for life after the wedding. They achieved their authentic presentation by purchasing dresses that reflected their personalities and incorporated their “favorite style” (Batoool). Eithar explained how she made her purchase decision about a dress for her life after the wedding:

I wanted my dress to represent my personality and my favorite style. I did not want to wear a style I have never worn before...I would be lying, and it would not be me. I wanted to be myself and wear as I always wear and like to wear.

Participants viewed different appearances as representative of their authentic self when dressing in accordance with personal values and interests (cf. Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005). The young women in the study used products to match the person they desire to be and present before others. Wearing their favorite style or resisting heavy makeup were ways of achieving a desired, authentic self and avoiding their fear of projecting an image of someone other than the self (Patrick, MacInnis, & Folkes, 2002). Presenting their authentic self through dress at various marriage events and in life after the wedding stimulated a positive feeling for many of the Saudi brides-to-be because it made them feel accepted as they are. According to self-verification theory (Swann & Read, 1981), the Saudi bride-to-be wanted her pre-existing view of self to be confirmed by her future husband. Self-verification was evident when participants chose their *shofa* dress to present their authentic self. An authentic self-presentation reflects an important part of one's personality which is highly valued (Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005). Therefore, participants were inclined to make purchases that corresponded with their favorite style to create an authentic self presentation after the wedding.

Body Image. As participants described how their new purchases reflected their individuality, they referenced body image issues. Saudi brides-to-be chose dress for different

marriage celebrations to create a positive body image. They achieved this by choosing garments that accentuated parts of their body they are happy about and concealed parts they are unhappy about: “I made sure the dress I purchased compliments my body. It had to go well with my body shape, length, and skin tone” (Fayha).

Participants felt that wearing certain types of clothing gave them the capacity to present their body in a certain manner (i.e., Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013a). For instance, Abrar chose a tight-fitting dress for her *shabkah* to show her body figure: “I want to show my body shape.” Norah also felt great satisfaction with her bra purchases because they highlighted her body image: “I am 100% satisfied with my bra purchases because they outlined my figure greatly.”

Other participants spoke of the ways in which they chose a dress to conceal what they regarded as a flaw in their body. Dress during transition was used to achieve an ideal self (The Voice Group, 2010). By carefully selecting dresses that compliments their body, they are narrowing the gap between their current self and the ideal self (Schouten, 1991). To achieve an ideal body image, Balques avoided the ball style wedding gown because it “makes me look shorter, and I am already short.” Reetal also struggled during her shopping trip for evening dresses:

I experienced so many conflicts because all the evening dresses are designed for skinny girls. How about the regular girls? I don't want to say overweight because I do not consider myself overweight. I'm just average weight. I saw a lot of evening dresses I like and bought them, but after I went home and tried them and looked in the mirror, I returned them all because they make me look fat. They made my body shape look funny. It took me so long to make a decision about the evening dresses I got.

The body is viewed as strongly connected to identity and as an aspect of the extended self (Belk, 1988). As an extension of the self, Saudi brides-to-be carefully made their purchase decisions to manage their appearance while flaunting a positive body image. They evaluated whether their dress choices during marriage celebrations and their new life contributed to achieving a hoped-for self-image or avoiding a feared-self (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Patrick, MacInnis, & Folkes, 2002). Research on body-related symbolic consumption during transitional life phases has indicated that appearance management plays a major role in shaping meanings of the self and new identity (Belk, 1988; Ogle et al., 2013; Schouten, 1991; The Voice Group 2010).

Other's Influence on Bride-to-be's Purchase Decisions

While the previous overarching theme demonstrates how pre-wedding purchases reflected the unique individualism of some of the brides-to-be, the third theme demonstrates how their purchases reflected who they are in relation to others. All participants' accounts showed evidence that there were multiple outside influences that shaped their purchase decisions. It appeared that the Saudi brides-to-be relied heavily upon many social meanings inherent in products to guide them during their shopping.

Participants mentioned specific and generalized others (Mead, 1934) in their lives as looking glasses (Cooley, 1902) to guide them through this transition process. When shopping and preparing for the wedding and for life after the wedding, all participants viewed themselves through the eyes and impressions of others such as their family, future husband, and soon to be in-laws. Within a broader sense of generalized others, participants spoke of the effect of the tradition and culture, media, and social media influences.

Significant Others. As mentioned within the narrative section, shopping for their new life after marriage was challenging and stressful for many participants. Therefore, Saudi brides-to-be attempted to overcome challenges and stress by adopting the role of their significant others (Mead, 1934). They took on the role of the other to perceive and evaluate themselves and their purchases through the eyes of their family, future husband, and future in-laws. Both imagined and lived feedback (i.e., reflected appraisals) from these significant others were major influences, which guided Saudi brides-to-be purchase decisions and appearance in different marriage celebrations (Mead, 1934; Stone, 1962). In turn, these reflected appraisals influenced Saudi brides-to-be self-feelings (Cooley, 1902).

Many participants spoke about the essential role of others' feedback in their purchase and dress choice decisions. The participants used both positive and negative feedback from family, future husband, soon to be in-laws, and some friends to evaluate their purchases and their appearance. For example, Fayha's interviews reflected association of positive reviews she received from others with increased self-esteem and satisfaction:

I received positive comments about every detail of my appearance. I felt a high level of self-confidence. You can't imagine how I felt. It was like I was floating in the air from happiness.

In contrast, negative feedback decreased participants' self-confidence and sometimes caused feelings of conflict about their choices, as Eithar stated: “. . . if they don't like what I buy, I might end up not wearing it.” Even the few independent brides-to-be who were less influenced by others still appreciated positive reviews and were affected by the negative ones. One such bride-to-be, Nalah, commented on negative feedback she received from her sisters about an item within her new purchases:

I felt conflicted and upset that they did not like it. These types of comments bring me down. Getting comments like that, especially now that I'm a bride-to-be, bring my day down and steal my happiness.

Family influence. Central to discussions about significant others' role in shaping Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience was family influence. Throughout the entire marriage journey, the young women continually sought their families' guidance to reduce feelings of uncertainty and to help them feel safe from other people's judgments. All participants have never been married before, so they considered their family to be more knowledgeable and experienced in shopping for marriage, especially when purchasing products for the first time such as lingerie:

I do not think I should shop for the lingerie alone. I need some guidance. There are so many parts of married life that are unknown and unexplored for me. (Eithar)

As Solomon (1983) proposed, the more knowledge individuals have about the new role, the more secure and supported they feel during their transition. Older married family members' feedback was considered a valuable source to gain knowledge about the new role and, in general, was strongly appreciated by the participants. Thomsen and Sørensen (2005) explained that during a liminal transition, individuals sometimes felt a sense of security when following their mother's footsteps in symbolic consumption (i.e., used the brand or product their mother used). Similarly, Saudi brides-to-be felt more confidence and readiness for their new life when guided by other married women in their family:

My mother's and aunt's advice about dress colors and styles made me feel so happy and important. They are experienced in how the bride should look. Their support is what makes me feel confident and prepared for my new life. (Baylassan)

Mothers' feedback on new purchases was the most solicited and trusted by all Saudi brides-to-be in the sample. Throughout their marriage preparation journey, most participants' mothers accompanied them in the majority of their shopping trips. However, in some cases, feedback from fathers and brothers was needed to provide a male's viewpoint about marriage celebration dress. For example, Abrar was mostly interested in knowing her father's opinion about her *shofah* and *fatiha* dress because:

It was hard for me and my mother to think like a man, but my father knows best what is and isn't appropriate to wear on a day like that. I knew my father viewed it from a man's perspective. I know it will make a difference on how my fiancé will view me.

In other cases, a few participants felt that the generational gap drove a wedge between them and their mothers when making purchase decisions. Thus, they preferred shopping with someone closer in age such as an older sister or cousin. In the absence of a sister, friends' feedback was solicited for a youth perspective. For example, Reetal, with only her mother, could not decide on her *melka* dress:

My sister was asleep and did not come with me when I went shopping for my *melka* dress. So I went shopping only with my mother. I took a picture of it and called my sister, and I woke her up and sent her the dress picture. When my sister approved of my choice, I bought it. My mother has somewhat old-fashioned taste, and I trust my sister's opinion more because she's closer in age to me and knows more about youth fashion.

The dissension, due to the generational gap, caused some Saudi brides-to-be to experience some conflict with their family when making decisions about their new purchases. Although many participants trusted their family's guidance and feedback during their shopping, a few of them held differing views regarding a bride's and newlywed's dress appropriateness.

Debates between participants and their family were usually about violation of certain norms regarding appearance, such as wearing a dress that was “too immodest” (Abrar), “not fancy enough for the occasion” (Raseel), and “adding color to the wedding dress in addition to white” (Eithar).

Furthermore, the disagreements incited a sense of tension for them while trying to balance between their individuality and their family’s guidance. This tension might be because participants experienced what Gergen (1991; 2011) has referred to as “social saturation,” in which they were exposed to numerous significant and generalized others; “voices” representing diverse and often incompatible perspectives. Following sub-themes will discuss these diverse societal influences.

All participants acknowledged that their appearance during their marriage celebrations and as a newlywed after the wedding reflects their “background, family, and upbringing” (Atal). In accordance with social capital theory, Saudi brides-to-be new purchases reflected the social status of their families (Bourdieu, 1986). They realized that their new purchases represented not only their individualistic selves, but also their family. The participants recognized that the violation of dress norms may “hurt [their] family’s reputation” (Nalah).

Wattanasuwan (2005) indicated that a certain object may signify the owner's social status and affiliation to a social group. This made even the more independent participants, who preferred to make their purchase decisions on their own, end up appeasing their family. For instance, Raseel, one of the most independent participants, explained the process of choosing her *melka* dress:

They tried to convince me with many other dresses, but I resisted. I continued fighting to the end until I found the dress I liked. However, I care about my mother, and I tried to

meet her in the middle. I got a plain simple dress, as I wanted, and puffy with a train as mother wanted. My mother understands the culture and the traditions, and she will tell me if I am crossing the line.

Within Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective, participants' marriage celebrations are considered the "front region" where they perform within social expectations to present idealized selves to generalized audiences. Family influences and negotiations took place in the "back region," to help participants appear consistent with culturally prescribed meaning, so guests in wedding celebrations (front region) interpreted the given meaning appropriately (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002). That explained why the entire family took part when choosing a marriage celebration dress: "I will be wearing it in front of a lot of guests, and I will be under the spotlight" (Norah). Although several participants talked about lengthy negotiations in the back region when resisting some of their family's guidance, they inevitably made compromises in the end to avoid misrepresenting their family.

Taking on the role of the future husband. When shopping for their marriage celebrations and new life, participants considered their future husband as the second most influential significant other. Within the first overarching theme, participants described how their new purchases would help them construct a new marital relationship by beautifying their appearance for their future husbands as an expression of love and care. All participants spoke of "role-taking" to imagine how their future husbands would regard them (Mead, 1934). Change in identity may occur through the process of taking the role of the other, particularly the role of the partner (Burke & Cast, 1997). Norah clearly stated this role-taking of her future husband: "I would give him 50% from my *dabash* to choose. He is my life partner."

Saudi brides-to-be used real and imagined feedback given by their fiancés to evaluate their appearance in different marriage and post wedding celebrations (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Stone, 1962). For example, when shopping for her *fatiha* dress, Yasmeen followed all her fiancé's social media accounts to find out his taste:

I searched his social media accounts: his comments, pictures he liked, accounts he follows, etc. Then I tried to figure out his personality and assumed what he might like in women's clothes. He was surprised when he saw me! He told me that's exactly what he imagined me wearing! I was so happy that I succeeded in discovering his favorite style and color.

In a prior study of marital dyads and Saudi women's presentation of self through dress, Tawfiq and Ogle (2013b) found that Saudi wives felt a sense of pride when dressing up to please their husbands. Interestingly, all participants in the present study showed that gleaning the husband's attention and the desire to satisfy him visually started at an early stage during the engagement period, even before marriage (cf. Oh & Damhorst, 2009). They persistently pursued validation from their fiancé when making dress choices to elicit positive reviews (Stone, 1962). Several participants expressed feelings of joy and satisfaction with their femininity when receiving a compliment from their fiancé about their dress:

I found myself trying to show my femininity more. There is a man in my life now who will flatter and compliment me every time I dress nicely. It means the world to me when my fiancé compliments me...because my fiancé likes the dress I wore in the *shofa*; every time I'm wearing this dress I feel happy, confident, and more beautiful than any other time. (Reetal)

A few participants sought their future husbands' approval about what constituted appropriate when they were shopping for public sphere dress (i.e., Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b). As noted within the literature review, Saudis believe that the wife's appearance reflects her husband's character (e.g., religious values, social class) (Al-Munajjed, 1997; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b). Thus, participants viewed their dress in public as presentation of the couple's identity rather than individual identity (Rapoport, 1965). Atlal asked for her fiancé's guidelines for public dress because "what I wear in public reflects him, not just me. I will not allow myself to wear something in public that he disapproves of."

Part of the Saudi bride-to-be new identity construction consisted of incorporating aspects of their fiancés' identities into their own identity, which facilitated the transition into new life as wife (see Burke & Cast, 1997). One pillar of couple identity (i.e., seeing oneself as part of a couple) is vital to the self-representations of a couple's relationship (Bertoni, Parise, & Iafate, 2012; Burke & Cast, 1997; Rapoport, 1965). In this vein, Reetal spoke about all her new purchases as a reflection of her future husband: "When I go out, people will not say this is Reetal, they will say this is Khalid's wife."

However, not all the participants took into consideration their fiancés' preferences when making their shopping decisions in the beginning of the transition stage. Nalah and Atlal resisted dressing for their fiancés at first, but after prolonged interaction with their fiancés, their perspective changed. Receiving some feedback from their fiancés about appearance stimulated the "reflected appraisals," which Nalah described in her second interview:

The ironic thing is that I criticized my friend when she would be shopping for things based on her husband's taste. I would think to myself: "Why does it matter what the

husband thinks?” And now, I laugh at myself because it feels good when he compliments my clothes, and it makes me want to wear more of the things that he loves.

In-laws' expectations. During the process of developing their new identity as married women, Saudi brides-to-be reflected on their future in-laws as another influential significant other. They formed their identities in regard to the new group they are joining by attempting to present the self in a way that conforms with their in-law's customs and expectations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, all participants had a separate category within their shopping list for specific dress to wear in front of their new in-laws. They viewed their in-laws' confirmation of membership in their group as validation of their new identity (Stone, 1962). Gaining this confirmation made brides-to-be feel a sense of belonging and acceptance in their in-laws' family. Baylassan explained how she used dress to pursue some self-verification and gain membership into her in-law's group:

As a single woman I do not have in-laws to worry about. But afterwards I have to impress them, and I have to work hard to look acceptable and be accepted as a member of their family. I have to see what is acceptable in their family and consider that in my choice of clothes, makeup, etc. I want to fit in with them and look like them. I know it is just clothing, but especially in the beginning of my marriage, they still don't know me well.

Many participants frequently spoke about the essential role of dress to fit in and express respect toward their in-laws. They relied on socially common meanings to ensure that they do not cross boundaries within Saudi culture, such as purchasing modest and casual dress to be worn in front of their new family. In Saudi Arabian culture wearing clothing that is too revealing

of the body symbolizes disrespect and rebelliousness, and dressing ostentatiously symbolizes standoffishness or being distant from their audience.

Other participants relied on their fiancé to inform them about the preferred modesty level within his family because they were not familiar with their in-laws' dress expectations in the beginning of the relationship:

The groom should inform the bride about his family's expectations beforehand, instead of after when she has already spent all of the money on the items. It is the groom's duty to explain the expectations. If the fiancé has preference for how revealing she should be around others, he should inform her so she does not purchase the wrong things.

(Baylassan)

Half of the participants considered showing respect and conformity with their in-law's customs through their dress as a shortcut to their husband's heart. In Saudi Arabia a wife gaining in-laws' acceptance and love will in turn encourage husband's acceptance and love, which could ease their transition into marriage:

I want to blend in and get their approval and gain acceptance, because if they love and approve of me, then my husband will be more comfortable around me sooner. (Balques)

Conversely, dressing provocatively may make them stand out, which in turn might create tension and complicate the couple's transition. As Rassel noted: "I will be marrying a man who has a family, and I do not want to disrespect him or his family by wearing dress that crosses any cultural line."

Modesty. The first kind of dress participants identified as a means to achieve fitting in with the new family was modest dress. Saudi brides-to-be associated revealing dress with being rude and rebellious, so they avoided revealing items, such as a "short dress" (Abrar), "low cut

necklines” (Suad), and “ripped jeans” (Fayha). Suad considered revealing dress in terms of “impression management”:

If I wore something too revealing and short they would think I was rebellious and dressed inappropriately. I did not want to give his family the wrong impression about me.

Generally, these examples of inappropriate dress were perceived as indecent to wear in front of both male and female in-laws. However, the father in-laws were the most frequently mentioned audience that brides-to-be wanted to dress extra modest in front of:

I have to make sure that what I’m wearing and how I’m looking is appropriate in front of my father-in-law. I do have a few categories in my list, for specific items that I’ll wear in front of my father-in-law. These items are modest; not see-through, short, or revealing.

(Nalah)

Ostentation and casualness strategies. In addition to dressing modestly to express respect, a few participants used casual dress to build a sense of belonging and bridge the gap between themselves and their in-laws. Except for the wedding ceremony, the women felt that dressing ostentatiously (too fancy) may make it difficult to blend in with their in-laws because it would be interpreted as if they were dressing up for strangers, which “creates a distance barrier between me and my new family” (Nalah). Rania added that:

I don’t want to dress up. I want to dress casually. My in-laws are supposed to be my second family, and we don’t dress up amongst family. We wear casual and comfortable clothes.

The participants’ perception of overdressing is related to Eicher’s (1981) concept of “public self” presentation to a generalized audience. The public self presentation to their in-laws might give a wrong message that they were “strangers.” Therefore, to accelerate their integration

into their in-laws' family after the wedding, participants dressed to present what Eicher (1981) called the "intimate self," which is only presented to socially close audiences.

Social Forces. In addition to identifying specific others in guiding brides-to-be during their shopping, all participants spoke about the influences of the media and cultural traditions, as a part of "generalized others" (Mead, 1934). However, there were variations in the level of influence by the media, social media, and tradition among participants. They were driven by unique mixes of multiple influences or pulls from their significant others, generalized others, and their individuality. These sometimes conflicting sources of influence create the "multiphrenia" of postmodern times (Gergen, 2011).

Media and social media. As participants talked about their shopping experiences, they frequently referred to media and social media as major influencers when it comes to dress choices. To "stay in the loop of the top trends in Saudi weddings and marriage celebrations" (Balques), they utilized social media to assemble a "trendy" appearance to present to their audience in the marriage celebration. Consistent with Khatib's (2016) findings, participants were influenced by social media during the "information seeking stage" of the decision-making process.

Dressing based on fashion trends in Saudi Arabia helped participants present an "idealized" image of the bride and newlywed (Goffman, 1959). As noted in the "summary across stories" section (p. 117), the traditional Saudi bride and newlywed typically dressed fancy and regally to distinguish themselves from others and to confirm their transition. Therefore, social media sites such as Instagram were reliable sources for participants to collect information about this ideal bride image. Some followed famous fashionistas and makeup artists to help them make

many purchases choices. For example, Rania searched for “2017 bridal fashions and trends on Instagram, Pinterest” before customizing her wedding gown.

Other participants, who valued portraying aspects of their individuality, used social media to construct a unique appearance. Some participants purchased dresses for their new life after the wedding from entrepreneurs on social media and avoided mass produced dresses in the Saudi market place:

Instagram has lots of entrepreneurs who want to sell their unique products that you don't find in stores. They advertised their products by celebrities. I like to be unique and wear things you don't find everywhere. (Fayha).

Another aspect of social media that participants were greatly influenced by was that social media is a network of receiving and sending data. This made some participants express feeling more pressure to purchase items to meet social expectation. Pictures of themselves or their new purchases that they or their friends and relatives posted on social media accounts were displayed to a wider audience. Participants determined what was socially acceptable from pictures and comments to likes on their new purchases. Therefore, participants expressed their fear of judgments and criticisms from a wide array of people. Nalah was concerned about her *dabash* presentation in the event of transporting it to her new home because this presentation:

... is not exclusive for the guests who attend the *dabash*, but many more people can observe the *dabash* through pictures posted on social media...all your friends and family on social media are waiting for pictures of the celebrations. This makes you care more because the audience is broader.

This fear of judgment and criticism lead participants to engage in efforts at “mystification,” particularly for the wide and diverse audience on social media (Goffman, 1959).

They carefully navigated through what is socially accepted and expected from Saudi brides to present an "idealized" version of themselves through pictures posted on personal, friends' and family's social media accounts.

While many participants acknowledged the social media influence, only a few of them pointed to other media influences. For instance, western movies were viewed as an external source of structural social changes in marriage celebrations. One such innovation that had been introduced was the bachelorette party, which will be discussed further within the next sub-theme of "the perception of tradition."

Perception of Tradition. In addition to the media and social media, brides-to-be emphasized the role of norms, culture, and tradition on their purchase decisions and dress choices. In Western societies today, where individualism is more prevalent, traditions still play a major role in weddings (Carter & Duncan, 2017). Participants in this study believed that Saudi marriage traditions, "[had] been set forth" (Nalah) in various ways. Differences in participants' beliefs might occur because the meanings they associated with marriage traditions differed from the common cultural meanings. Wattanasuwan (2005) explained that the symbolic meaning of an item or event is not deterministic and unidirectional, and each individual may ascribe at least a slightly different, sometimes inconsistent, cultural meaning to an item or event.

Participants thought about Saudi marriage traditions in three different ways. Some approved of the marriage traditions, the majority disapproved of some the traditions but adhered to them, and a few challenged the norms and refused to follow some marriage traditions. Kleine et al. (1995) explained how individuals may attach the self to their possessions through two modes: affiliation or autonomy. Among the brides-to-be, participants who approved of tradition

wanted their purchases and appearance to reflect affiliation, while others sought different levels of autonomy.

Within the affiliation-seeking group, participants approved the Saudi marriage traditions and willingly and happily followed all of them. However, most of the participants favored only some of the marriage traditions while questioning some others; nevertheless, they viewed adherence to traditions as a safe approach to avoid criticism and judgment. Only a few Saudi brides-to-be were willing to push the boundaries by breaking the traditional rules and risk facing criticisms and judgments for their autonomy. These participants switched between avoiding criticism and accepting autonomy. For instance, Raseel held a firm disapproval of some traditional marriage events and dresses worn in these events, then accommodated her mother to avoid criticism when she made compromises regarding the ball style *melka* dress.

According to Kleine et al. (1995), individuals can fall into both “affiliation” and “autonomy” modes simultaneously. Some participants tended to seek affiliation and prioritized the expectations of the generalized other. On the other hand, participants who tended to seek autonomy gave priority to establishing a personal and unique identity when making their decisions about purchases and marriage celebrations (cf. Triandis, 1989). Participants in the middle tried to balance between affiliation and autonomy. In short, all participants were engaged in both modes, but some of them emphasized affiliation over autonomy, which might be due to the uncertainty they were experiencing during this transitional life stage (Solomon, 1983).

Affiliation group. Participants seeking affiliation believed that the Saudi marriage traditions: “play a large and important role in preparing the bride for her life” (Baylassan). By purchasing what meets social expectations, brides-to-be were crafting a “front” to present to different audiences in their marriage celebrations (Goffman, 1959). Dress was used as “a social-

body service” to portray their outer appearance to confirm to their role in society (Crawley, 1965, p. 141). As noted, an essential part of the bride’s dress, that most brides-to-be followed, was being regal and different from their old single self to confirm their new role in society. Carter and Duncan (2017) found that adherence to marriage traditions is a way of proclaiming the marriage to the audience. Baylassan acknowledged the importance of her dress as a newlywed to meet social expectations:

People expect for a newlywed wife to look the best she can. Every place I go after the wedding, people will look at me from head to toe, from how I wear my hair, to the shoes I’m wearing, to the jewelry I have on.

The brides-to-be in this study more often sought affiliation and valued the Saudi marriage traditions, so they resisted adopting new Western marriage practices such as the bachelorette party. Abrar criticized brides to be who replaced the traditional *ghomrah* party with the foreign bachelorette party: “Why do we need to replace it with a meaningless party? What is this bachelorette party for?” Moreover, most participants in the affiliation group viewed the family event of transferring the *dabash* to the new couple’s home positively:

I think it is a very nice tradition that allows both families to share the happiness of the new couple in their new home, and it allows the bride to feel pampered. I like the idea of having all my stuff organized for me in my new house without me making any effort, like a queen. (Fayha)

Safety seeking. Despite their disapproval of some marriage traditions, many participants adhered to traditions for their family’s sake and reputation. These participants held some aspects of an autonomy perspective but tended to seek affiliation and held to the expectations of the generalized other (Kleine et al., 1995; Mead, 1934; Triandis, 1989). This adherence was often

associated with a broader observation that Saudi society was a collectivist, highly “judgmental” culture, in which dress was viewed as a constituent of one’s identity. Reetal, for example, expressed her fear of judgments:

People in our culture make the bride and the newlywed feel like she is taking a test, and she might pass or fail. If I am not dressed very well, people will judge me and will say that I am not well prepared for my wedding and wasted my dowry, or that I was stingy. Seriously, it is like an exam you need to prepare for to pass it. I feel that I'm doing all of this just because it is the tradition, even if I do not understand why.

Therefore, for some participants, traditions and culture were sources of tension because they struggled among what they wanted, what the culture expected, and what tradition prescribed. As noted before, because of the generation gap, young Saudi brides-to-be at times defined meanings of items differently than did older people in their family who were keepers of traditions. Although the young women disapproved of parts of the marriage traditions, they deliberately followed them to avoid negative comments and to preserve their families’ reputation. For instance, Atlal viewed the slightly deep opening in her *shabkah* dress as “fashionable” but reluctantly covered it in reverence for her family who valued modesty as part of Saudi traditions. Similarly, a group of Generation Y women in the USA was found to lean more towards conservative wedding dresses to please family members such as a father or grandmother (McEnally, 2002).

Similar to Atlal, Balques felt she was “the victim” of her tribal traditions, which she fully complied with to safeguard her family’s reputation in front of their tribe:

If it was only my far relatives that would criticize me, then I would probably break the traditional ruling. I'm a bit of a rebellious girl. But because my close family and parents would also be harmed if I broke the rule, I don't want to hurt them.

Another instance in which brides-to-be ascribed meaning inconsistent with a more traditional cultural meaning of a symbolic item was related to colors (see Blumhagen, 1979).

Norah's favorite color is black, but she avoided purchasing black dresses to wear as a newlywed:

If I wear dark colors as a newlywed, people will think I am not happy with my marriage.

I do not see it this way. I think dark colors are fancy, not depressing. Black is the king of the colors, but if I wear it as a newlywed, they will think I am sad or depressed.

Therefore, I picked bright and light colors for the evening dresses.

Moreover, participants in this group viewed the family event of transferring the *dabash* to the new couple's home negatively. They expressed their nervousness and stress because of their fear of judgment. To manage this fear of judgement, some participants disguised their *dabash* with intricate wrappings so that contents were hidden.

Only a few Saudi brides-to-be favored autonomy and pushed the boundaries; they consequently were willing to face social judgment. These few participants were more independent, so they resisted part of the Saudi marriage traditions which contradicted their personal values (Triandis, 1989; Santos et al., 2017). They believed that "some stupid tradition is okay to ignore" (Raseel).

Unlike the affiliation-seeking participants who were against the idea of the bachelorette party, four brides-to-be held a bachelorette party with their friends. They viewed the bachelorette party as a private celebration with an individualistic emphasis during which they could act and

dress freely without being criticized by others. Goffman (1959) might qualify this as “backstage” celebration. Raseel describe it as her favorite party, and Norah added:

The bride-to-be can be herself with close friends who are her age . . . without having to worry about being disrespectful or breaking the rules of tradition that older people love so much and hold onto very tightly.

Participants applied idiosyncratic meaning to this party because they felt safe presenting their “intimate self,” which is the closest to their authentic self with less masquerading (Eicher, 1981; Tseñlon, 2001). In another instance, Eithar broke the tradition of the pure white wedding gown to add an idiosyncratic, colorful style feature to the hem, regardless of being advised against doing so.

Moreover, Rassel disapproved of the “numerous and unnecessary” marriage celebration events and felt they were “only for social courtesy.” Therefore, she decided to cancel her *shabkah*, *ghomrah*, and transporting of her *dabash* to her new home. She and a few others in this group challenged this traditional event by canceling it because they viewed it as violation of their “secret self” which would be revealed to a broader audience in the *dabash* (Eicher, 1981):

This event is a bullshit. What’s the purpose of people gathering to see what I purchased? The groom’s family wanted to host the event, but I strongly disagreed and refused and told them that if they decide to do it anyway, I’m not going to move not even one piece of my purchases there. I never understood this event. They said it’s a way of pampering the bride. (Rassel)

In sum, Saudi brides-to-be negotiated different marriage traditions by navigating between affiliation and autonomy modes (Kleine et al., 1995). The variations in attitudes of the brides-to-be toward the Saudi marriage traditions and norms possibly indicates the evolving Saudi cultural

context and societal changes. As noted in recent years, Saudi Arabia is rapidly evolving, with specific emphasis on women's roles (Gorney, 2016; Khashoggi, 2014; Smith-Spark, 2018). Consequently, this momentum drove some Saudi brides-to-be toward a more individualistic adherence to the norms than may have been common in previous decades.

Summary

In this chapter, the participants' narratives were first analyzed as a whole story for each individual, then broken down categorically by theme in a grounded theory approach, and supported by sample photos. The researcher explained the data and discussed the themes and subthemes using theoretical interpretation. Taken together, this process reinforced and enhanced the holistic understanding of Saudi brides-to-be shopping experience before the wedding. Results suggest that consumption during the process of wedding preparation made the liminal transition feel explicit and real. Shopping for wedding celebrations and life after the wedding facilitated the transition from single to married life. Participants viewed their new purchases as a tool to construct their new identity and as a method of appearance management, which helped them adapt to their new life. Participants balanced social meaning and personal values to present an acceptable self-presentation to multiple audiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Weddings are among transitional events that induce a period of liminality and involve consumption of new products to shape a new self. Findings of this study revealed that the Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience to prepare for multiple marriage celebrations and life after the wedding is a complex and demanding process. In this chapter, two conceptual models were developed to demonstrate an overall view of Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience and highlight the major findings from the narrative and grounded theory analyses. This is followed by a discussion of the major findings based on several theoretical perspectives. Finally, the chapter concludes with comparison between grounded theory and narrative approaches.

Conceptual Models

Two framework models were developed to conceptualize overall views of Saudi bride-to-be shopping experiences as they prepare for the wedding and their lives after the wedding. The first model illustrates connections among themes and theories in the grounded theory analysis (see Figure 11); the second model focused on this study's findings and mapped the process of the transition into marriage to explain patterns in the narrative analysis (see Figure 12).

Although previous existing theories facilitated data interpretation, using any of them solely did not provide a satisfying explanation of the whole data. Instead, each theory was a building element that interpreted parts of the data; together, the multiple theories resulted in creating an overall view of the Saudi brides' consumption meanings during transition into marriage. The theory applications consolidated into an understanding of young women's preparation for the wedding and life after the wedding in Saudi culture.

First Model

The first model demonstrates the connections among emergent themes and the areas where theoretical interpretation is most likely applicable. This framework provides a coherent picture of essential meanings Saudi brides-to-be use to construct their new identity through symbolic consumption. Several theoretical perspectives were explored to explain the Saudi brides-to-be purchase meanings during this liminal identity-formation stage. The theoretical interpretation places the Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience within the broader consumer experience of identity formation and expression.

A bride-to-be's shopping experience was not unidimensional, but rather a multidimensional process, which is illustrated in three overlapping areas among the themes (see Figure 11). The symbolic meanings of participants' purchases were related to their individuality, the transition into marriage and new identity construction, and others' influences and social forces. These three factors together were used to shape meanings of the self through the consumption of certain products to communicate to others; their core or essential self and their new identity are both guided by socially and culturally shared meanings. The process of constructing the new identity through the new purchases was not sequential, but rather an iterative, dynamic process in which participants go back and forth among the influence of all factors.

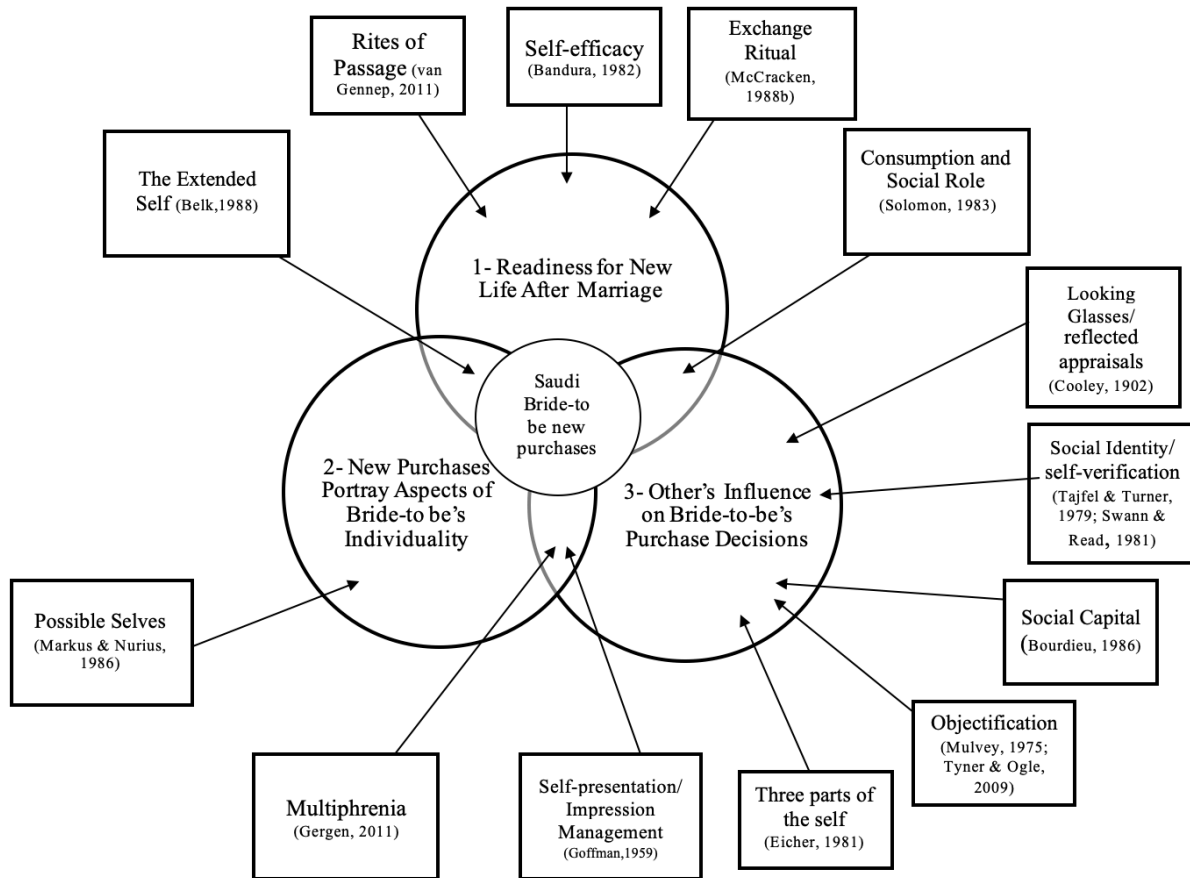


Figure 11. Relationship Among the Themes and Theories

Theoretical interpretation of the first theme. Within the first theme “readiness for the new life after marriage,” five theories provided an explanation of how Saudi brides-to-be symbolic consumption helped prepare them for their new life: Rites of passage (van Genneep, 2011), the extended self (Belk, 1988), consumption for social roles (Solomon, 1983), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), and exchange ritual (McCracken, 1988b). Van Genneep (2011) defined three stages of rites of passage: separation from the old state, liminal transition from one status to the next, and incorporation of the new status, which is also known as “aggregation.” As suggested by Noble and Walker (1997), in the last stage there will be less need for symbolic items that mark the new role. Similarly, participants in this study recognized that less appearance

management is needed after the incorporation of the new status. For instance, some participants noted that appearance is more important and meaningful during the first few months of marriage, when spouses are establishing a new relationship. The participants expected that as the marriage progresses, the emphasis on presenting an idealized self-image diminishes overtime, which indicates they have reached the final incorporation stage. They estimated that the “stressful” transition time may take a few months after the wedding.

Before the final incorporation stage is reached, brides-to-be go through a period of liminality which prompts consumption of new products to shape a new self. The liminal period is characterized by ambiguity, instability, and identity suspending (van Gennep, 2011). Symbolic consumption theory related to rites of passage has suggested that possessions might be used to cope with and expedite the transition through the liminal period (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983). From the extended self-perspective, participants viewed their possessions as parts of themselves. Therefore, disposing old possessions and acquiring new ones was an attempt to detach from the unmarried self-identity and replace it with a new identity of married self.

Moreover, the participants employed the symbolic meanings of the new products to manage and change their appearance in order to announce their new identities, which may indicate the successful transition to their new role (Solomon, 1983). The generalized understanding of a product’s “common meanings” (Thomsen & Sørensen, 2005) alter appearance into something recognizable and meaningful within Saudi culture. Some examples of this attributed symbolic meaning were the connection between: new bride’s image with dressing fancy, new dresses and styles for enacting a new life, and wife’s appearance connected with her positive emotions (e.g., love and care) for her husband.

The symbolic meanings of the new purchases helped participants acquire greater “self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1982) by bolstering their belief in their ability to succeed in performing during the transition into marriage, using the carefully selected items they purchased. All the participants emphasized symbolic items that facilitate the establishment of the new marital relationship (e.g., lingerie symbolizes intimate interactions; other items enhanced beauty). Another symbolic item that symbolized the emerging relationship was the wedding ring, congruent with McCracken’s (1988b) gifts exchange ritual theory. The significance of the wedding ring stems from its cultural meaning as a symbol of love, respect, and commitment given by the groom to the bride.

Theoretical interpretation of the third theme. The way participants viewed the symbolic meanings of their new purchases as transition facilitation into marriage overlapped within the third theme “other’s influence on bride-to-be purchase decisions.” The Saudi brides-to-be relied upon common social meanings inherent in products to guide them during their shopping. During the liminal period, individuals experience ambiguity and uncertainty (van Gennep, 2011), therefore, participants invoked specific and generalized others as “looking glasses” to tell them how to appear and dress throughout this liminal transition (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). As Saudi brides-to-be decided on new purchases and how to appear for certain marriage and social events, they countlessly reflected upon imagined and “real” appraisals from significant others. To decide how to manage appearance, brides-to-be attempted to take the role of others (i.e., imagined others’ opinions) in order to verify and communicate their new identity effectively (Stone, 1962).

Findings of this study supported Goffman’s (1959, p. 253) proposal that identities are “collaboratively manufactured” through interactions with their family, future husbands, and soon

to be in laws. All participants acknowledged that their appearance during their marriage celebrations and as a newlywed after the wedding reflects their family's social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In addition, feedback from significant others to evaluate their purchases and their appearance was valued. Family and friends serve as a sort of team to help the bride-to-be prepare for marriage ceremonies and life when married. In addition, positive feedback from the future husband increased bride-to-be self-esteem and satisfaction with purchases and appearance, helping the bride become successful in her new role (cf. Oh & Damhorst, 2009). Moreover, reflected appraisals from in-laws regarding participants' appearance and new purchases provided a source of self-verification. In accordance with the social identity and self-verification theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Swann & Read, 1981), dress was used to express respect and a sense of belonging to the in-laws' family by dressing in a way that conforms with their customs.

Theoretical interpretation in the overlap area between the themes. Solomon's (1983) consumption and social role theory is most applicable in the area between the first theme "readiness for the new life after marriage" and third theme "other's influence on bride-to-be purchase decisions." Solomon's theory helped explain how the reflected appraisal and feedback from others decreased participants' uncertainty and provided them with more knowledge about how they should dress and appear during their transition to their new role.

In the other overlapping area, the dramaturgical perspective and presentation of self process (Goffman, 1959) fits in between the third theme "other's influence on bride-to-be purchase decisions," and the second theme "new purchases portray aspects of bride-to-be individuality." Goffman's discussion of social interaction in everyday life as a staged drama and individuals as actors is relevant to this study because getting married is one of the human

transitional events that demands considerable self-presentation. Many concepts within the dramaturgical perspective can help explain Saudi brides-to-be's dress choices and consumption patterns, especially in relation to the process of impression management, idealization, and mystification.

Saudi brides-to-be used dress to present the self in an appropriate and acceptable way within specific events and situations. Dress was instrumental in helping them alter appearance and create a "front" for different audiences (Goffman, 1959). Many participants felt that during this liminal transition, their appearance was constantly being judged, as a proxy for whether they were successful on the whole in their transition phase. Thus, they engaged in a consumption process to present an idealized physical self before others, which incorporated and exemplified Saudi cultural values.

Participants felt the need to manage their appearance to manipulate two audiences' impressions: the diverse public audience at the marriage celebrations and the husband as a special audience. For the public audience, the participants wanted to present an ideal cultural bride and newlywed image, which involves dressing regally and different from their old selves as single young women. Congruent with feminist objectification theory (Mulvey, 1975; Tyner & Ogle, 2009), participants became objects of gaze in their marriage celebrations. They attained objectification by dressing regally and beautifully to convince their audience of their conformity with the ideal bride image. Brides-to-be realized that they were becoming the center of attention and facing close scrutiny. They tried to control their audiences' impression through "mystification" by concealing parts of themselves and only presenting an "idealized" version of the front that was consistent with the norms (Eicher, 1981; Goffman, 1959). In an attempt to convince their audience of their conformity with the ideal bride image, brides-to-be used the

white wedding ballgown as a transforming costume and heavy make-up as a mask (see Tseëlon, 2001). This socially legitimized their transition into their new role and identity (Goffman, 1959; Tseëlon, 2001).

The second audience for which participants crafted a “front” was the husband. By costuming themselves in a way that corresponds with cultural meanings, brides-to-be constructed an "idealized" image of the bride of their future husband. This establishes the bride as a beautiful prize that enhances the image of the groom as successful in acquiring a desirable bride. Once married, the ideal Saudi wife strives to look attractive to the husband by presenting an aspect of the secret self (Eicher, 1981) via purchases such as makeup, lingerie, and revealing dress that enhance beauty, femininity, and sexual attractiveness. Their conformation to cultural norms of beauty by objectifying themselves through purchases enables participants to gain empowerment within their new role as wife (cf. Tyner & Ogle, 2009). Participants regard themselves as objects of their husband’s desire by manipulating their appearance to conform to the ideal Saudi cultural wife image as a way to indicate her successful transition from single woman to wife.

The dramaturgical perspective and self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) was placed in the overlap area between the third theme “other’s influence on bride-to-be’s purchase decisions,” and the second theme “new purchases portray aspects of bride-to-be individuality” because some brides-to-be challenged the concept of mystification to express their individuality. These women realized that heavy makeup and changing their dress style after marriage contradicts their “authentic self.” For some contemporary Saudi women, self-presentation through dress posed a dilemma of sorts because the idiosyncratic symbolic meanings of a certain dress or style conflicted with the social cultural symbolic meanings. The data from accounts of some brides-to-be showed that presenting uniqueness through their wedding dress was more valuable than

presenting a cultural idealized image of the bride with the regal white wedding gown. This dilemma might be because brides-to-be experienced a “dense population of the self” or “multiphrenia,” due to having various influencers that are often in conflict (Gergen, 2011). Participants perceived the Saudi marriage traditions in various ways due to the expanded possibilities for self-presentation offered by family guidance, in-laws expectations, and youth fashion presented by their peers, media, and social media. Therefore, participants felt uncertain, torn, and tense while trying to navigate and negotiate between all of these influencers. They struggled to balance between what they considered the essential or authentic self, the tradition and culture norm, and what their family desired.

Theoretical interpretation of the second theme. Finally, for the second theme “new purchases portray aspects of bride-to-be individuality,” the Markus and Nurius (1986) concept of “possible selves” explained how Saudi brides-to-be self-knowledge reflected their individuality and determined the presentation of the self. Brides-to-be evaluated whether their dress choices represented the possible future self during marriage celebrations and their new life. They dressed in a hoped-for self-image to avoid the feared self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Brides-to-be expressed the fear of losing three aspects of themselves: their youthful image, unique style, and authentic look. By dressing in accordance to traditional expectations they felt they were becoming old, outdated, and disingenuous to one’s essential self. Throughout their accounts, participants spoke of using dress to construct a unique, authentic, and positive body image as a reflection of their desired self. As proposed by Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 957), some aspects of the self are “chronically accessible” and represent a “core” self.

Second Model

The second model is a conceptual framework to illustrate the transitional process reflected in the narrative analysis, which shows participants' stories as they transition into marriage (see Figure 12). The model was guided by van Gennep's (2011) conceptualization of rites of passage and Noble and Walker's (1997) model of symbolic consumption during transition. This model places the Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience within the broader consumer experience of identity-related consumption, particularly in the transitional phase. The upper level in the model starts with van Gennep's first stages of rites of passage (the separation). The liminal stage, in the middle of the model, is distinguished by role ambiguity, which results in an emphasis on symbolic consumption during this stage. The model finally ends with the incorporation stages at the lower level of the model. The model incorporates a funnel metaphor, because the wide opening on the top represents the numerous influences the single women were exposed to. These numerous pulls lead to diverse possible selves the brides-to-be desired to be during their transition. The narrow opening in the bottom funnel represents the new married woman self after navigating and negotiating through all of the influences.

Initially during the separation stage, brides-to-be realize (or have learned about) the need of symbolic consumption (new clothing and objects) to allow themselves to abandon their prior unmarried self-identity and inhabit their new identity of married self (see Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983). Next, the cultural symbolic meaning of the new clothing and objects shaped brides-to-be purchases decisions, which helps them construct a new identity.

However, the transition from the first and second stage was not always straightforward and transparent, as sometimes brides-to-be experienced ambiguity and complications. Ambiguity may cause uncertainty and resistance to complete detachment from the prior unmarried self-

identity. Abandoning the old self was not completely acceptable to some participants, so they attempted to find a “middle-ground identity” during the liminal transition to expedite the acceptance of the new role (The Voice Group, 2010). Whether they abandoned the form of dress that reflected their single woman self or attempted to maintain consistency with their single woman self, participants used this sense of self to manage their new identity and make decisions about self-presentation through dress.

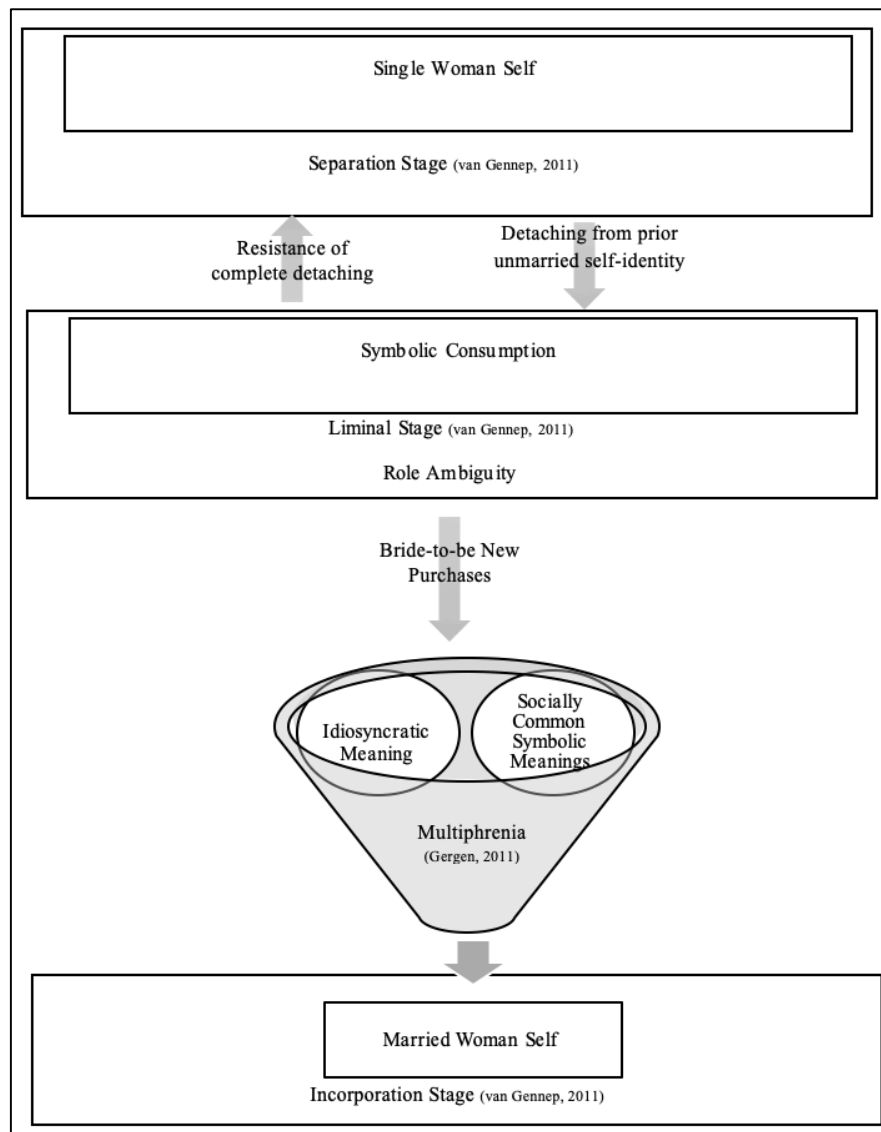


Figure 12. The Transitional Process Explicating Identity Construction Through Dress and Consumption.

The ambiguity surrounding the liminal period caused a gap between how participants perceived their actual and ideal selves, creating what Noble and Walker (1997) call “self-concept discrepancy.” To narrow this gap and reduce the uncertainty during the liminal stage, the brides-to-be used symbolic consumption and made purchases according to the symbolic meanings of clothing and objects.

Results from both grounded theory and narrative analysis elucidated that the meanings of Saudi bride-to-be new purchases are related to: (a) how the new purchases can be a symbolic extension of self in a way that allows the bride-to-be to feel more confident with her new role and incorporate that role into her identity, (b) how a bride-to-be distinguishes between various aspects of the self and presents each aspect with different dress and products, (c) how the symbolic meaning of new purchases are viewed by the bride-to-be as appropriate and coherent with the new social role, which allows her to present her married woman self to others, and (d) how others shape a bride-to-be’s thoughts about what constituted an appropriate presentation of herself as bride and newlywed.

Not all the participants had a clear understanding of the new purchases’ common social meanings, which was another reason for resistance of complete detaching from the prior unmarried self-identity. Findings of this study are consistent with van Gennepe’s (2011) description of a liminal transition in life as an ambiguous and unstable period. While consumption can facilitate role transitions, sometimes it can make transition a complicated, ambivalent, and confusing process. The ambivalence was mainly associated with the self-presentation using new purchases (Goffman, 1959). Participants felt uncertain and confused about making their purchase decisions; more specifically, their concerns were mainly about (a) what kind of impression their purchase would give to others and (b) how to bridge between

conflicting aspects of their old and new identities. This ambivalence made some of the participants challenge the idea of disposing of all of their old possessions and wished to preserve to some extent their old clothing or the old style they used to wear as singles.

Another ambivalence and complication brides-to-be faced was how the new symbolic items aligned with the concept of "me-ness" or "not me-ness" (Kleine et al., 1995). This ambivalence was demonstrated in the last part of the model. The funnel contains a reflective process when brides-to-be negotiated between idiosyncratic meanings and socially common meanings of the new purchases. In doing so, brides-to-be carefully selected between different dresses and products based on their own sense of self while their new identity was constructed. For example, lingerie symbolized the intimate marital relationship, but was seen as lewdness by a few participants, perhaps reflecting their discomfort with an unknown and, before marriage, forbidden aspect of intimacy. Similarly, participants negotiated between two meanings when making their decision on whether to hold a *ghomrah* party (socially common meaning) versus a bachelorette party (idiosyncratic meaning). The few participants who held a bachelorette party expressed that they presented and enjoyed their "intimate self" with friends, which is closest to their authentic self or "me-ness" before marriage.

Before reaching the married woman self in the final stage, brides-to-be experienced a "dense population of the self" or "multiphrenia" due to having a variety of influencers (Gergen, 2011). Participants felt hesitation and wavered on how their appearance may have been perceived by others. Participants may feel uncertain as they navigate and negotiate between their individuality, significant others, and cultural traditions. Saudi marriage traditions were sources of tension for some brides-to-be because they struggled between what they wanted and what the traditional rules prescribe. Many participants showed a degree of rejection toward some of the

traditional events and dress because these contradicted their desire to hold onto their unique and authentic self (e.g., makeup contradicts raw beauty and authenticity, and the uniform white wedding gown masks the unique self). The data provided evidence that within contemporary Saudi culture, conventional notions about what is considered “authentic self” versus “idealized self” as manifested through dress is changing and evolving.

Major Findings

Findings revealed that the Saudi bride-to-be shopping experience to prepare for multiple marriage celebrations and life after marriage is a complex and demanding process. Young women engaged in a complex identity re-construction processes to construct an appropriate new identity by making changes in their appearance to feel and reflect the symbolic differences between single and married life. In managing this identity in transition flux, participants were largely focused on the cultural and ideal bridal appearance, which in turn, are influenced by the traditions and norms of the Saudi marriage process.

Participants’ accounts revolved around the notion that their new purchases were instrumental in helping them go through the liminal transition and adopt aspects of the desired self or idealized identity. Findings demonstrated that the identity constructing process through the use of new purchases was multilayered and reflected the multidimensional nature of the self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). When making their decision of what to wear and how to present herself in marriage celebrations and life after marriage, a bride-to-be navigated and negotiated between many factors including social forces and marriage traditions, reflected appraisal from significant others, her individuality, and her new identity construction. The ways in which a bride-to-be manages her appearances were not produced through social forces or through individual perspectives alone but were the product of both social and individual influences

together (cf. Kleine et al., 1995). This finding is similar to a prior work based upon western women, suggesting that many couples plan their weddings to reflect an image of “individualized conformity” rather than distinct uniqueness (Carter & Duncan, 2017).

In particular, results showed the use of dress as substantial part of self-presentation during transition into marriage in multiple facets: (a) detaching from the old single woman self, (b) maintaining a sense of continuity with the single woman self, (c) confirming the new identity by following Saudi marriage traditions, and (d) portraying a sense of individuality and authenticity of the self. Taking these multiple facets together, some participants struggled to balance them all.

When making decisions on what to purchase, Saudi brides-to-be expressed several challenges and conflicts. First, symbolic consumption did not always complete the transition to a new role or completely redefine the self for the participants. Although participants acknowledged that the consumption of many new products facilitated transition into marriage (i.e., Schouten, 1991; Sørensen & Thomsen, 2005; Noble & Walker, 1997), this consumption may have also led to conflicts about symbolic meanings of products. Some participants had a degree of rejection towards purchasing what new brides are socially expected to purchase because they were confused about the symbolic meanings. Examples of items participants had most difficulty with related to intimate interactions (lingerie), the unauthentic self (makeup products), and affiliation (uniform white wedding gown).

Moreover, findings revealed that Saudi brides-to-be had to negotiate to bridge between conflicting aspects of the old and new identities. During periods of liminality, it is difficult to manage a coherent sense of self because of the ambiguity and instability one might experience (Ogle et al., 2013; The Voice Group, 2010; van Gennep, 2011). Some participants used their new

purchases to highlight the visible differences between single and married life, while other participants preserved their single life dress and style to maintain part of their old self in the new marriage. Prior to their marriage, they pondered their desired new self as married women and the feared-self they might become as married women (i.e., losing their youthful looks). These findings of the feared self were similar to those mentioned by other researchers regarding women's use of dress to construct different forms of the self (Guy & Banim, 2000; Ogle et al., 2013). This fear caused some participants to reject complete abandonment of the form of dress that represented the single woman self.

In constructing a desired new self-image, participants emphasized reflecting upon imagined and real appraisals from future husbands as a significant audience (Goffman, 1959). This finding extends prior works suggesting that wives come to see their bodies through the eyes of their husbands (Oh & Damhorst, 2009; Tawfiq & Ogle, 2013b) by finding how early in the marriage process husbands' influence their wives' appearance, self-assessments, and self-personalization of themselves.

In sum, findings provided ample support for what Gergen (2011) referred to as "saturation of self" or "multiphrenia." Participants experienced a dense population of the self in which they had to consider numerous influencers from significant and generalized others. The "voices" of these influencers may be, in part, incompatible, which leads Saudi brides-to-be to become uncertain of how to present various aspects of the self: their old self, new role, and individuality within consideration of opinions and expectations of significant others and the traditions that still have a strong hold on Saudi society. Although the majority of Saudi brides desired to maintain norms regarding appearance in Saudi marriage traditions, some challenged the norms and refused to follow all of the old ways of doing things. This resistance might be a

sign of emerging Saudi cultural change particularly in women's roles in today's Saudi culture, which is heading into a new era with a new outlook (see Al-Rawi, 2013; Khashoggi, 2014; Smith-Spark, 2018). Young Saudi women are increasing their educations and have taken on professional and work identities that they do not necessarily abandon upon marriage. They are aware of and part of a global youth generation that puts more emphasis on individuality and rights of women.

Comparison Between both Approaches

The combination of narrative and grounded theory qualitative approaches helped the researcher better understand the participants' stories and develop deeper insights regarding their shopping experiences during the liminal transition. The purpose of this section is to examine the similarities and differences between the narrative and grounded theory results.

During the analysis stage, the grounded theory analysis occurred simultaneously when the participants' individual narratives were explored and written. The researcher moved back and forth between writing participants' narratives and the constant comparison process of finding emergent themes in the stories. Findings from the grounded theory provided meaningful direction to the narrative approach, and participants' stories enhanced the coding guide development. However, before parsing the data in the search for themes, each participant's entire story was told in temporal order starting with her first meeting with the future husband until the final plan of the wedding day. These stories served as a unique profile that displayed participants' individuality and presented their feelings and experiences during their preparation for each marriage event. Thus, the bride-to-be transitional process into marriage and how participants moved from the separation to the liminal stage (van Gennep, 2011) was profoundly reflected in the individual stories.

The second part of the narrative result reported a summary across all the participants' stories. This summary closely resembled the themes and sub-themes that emerged within the grounded theory analysis because summary across stories highlighted the common thematic elements across participants. Grounded theory reflected the entire data from all the Saudi brides-to-be, using the constant comparison process to code the data. Therefore, both approaches explored how participants used new purchases to manage their appearances during the liminal transition by presenting diverse aspects of the desired selves or the idealized identity.

The differences between the two approaches were due to the different foci of each approach during data analysis. Within the narrative analysis, the researcher retold the participants' story according to the marriage events sequence. From these stories, the researcher considered the ways participants prepared for different marriage events and the unique complications each faced. The narrative approach focused on individual perspectives and how themes were integrated within a personal experience. On the other hand, the grounded theory approach provided a richer discussion of the emergent themes that could be understood within the framework of several social psychological theories as sensitizing concepts. In contrast to the narrative results summary, in which only larger themes and theoretical perspectives were summarized, the grounded theory analysis elaborated more on the development of a wide array of themes and how they were shared or not shared among participants.

For the most part, the narrative approach provided a broad picture of participants' individual perspectives and highlighted variations among participants' backgrounds and experiences during their transition into marriage. These expressive stories generated from the individual participants interviews indicated the process they went through during preparation for marriage and its celebrations. Meanwhile, the grounded theory approach aimed for theoretical

explanation of the study's findings and provided a meaningful guide to the narrative findings. In sum, integrated findings from both approaches explicated the way a Saudi bride-to-be navigated and negotiated between different factors (i.e., her new identity construction, individuality, reflected appraisal from significant others, social forces and marriage traditions) when making her decision about what to wear and how to present herself in marriage celebrations and life after marriage. The two approaches varied most in that the narrative approach emphasizes consideration of unique stories of each woman in a wholistic picture, while the grounded theory approach focuses more on summarizing across the participants and seeking theoretical understanding.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Marriage represents a complex transition for women, a transition which demands negotiation of the emerging wife's identity and role. In comparison to weddings in more individualistic cultures (Carter & Duncan, 2017; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; Mupotsa, 2015; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004), findings from this study showed that in collectivistic cultures such as Saudi Arabia, wedding rituals and consumption for those rituals hold deep cultural meanings and values. In this chapter, a summary of the study is provided, followed by implications and significance of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with limitations and suggestions for future research.

Summary

The present study aimed to explore the experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for the wedding process and their lives after the wedding. Qualitative data were collected via in-depth interviews conducted with 14 Saudi brides-to-be who had their weddings scheduled within a time frame of seven days to three months after the initial interview. Three interviews were conducted with 11 of the women, and three participants had time to schedule only one to two interviews before their scheduled wedding date. The interviews were arranged to ensure that the women were actively involved in their pre-wedding shopping. All participants shared a middle or upper middle-class lifestyle, had some form of post-secondary education, and received a monetary dowry from the groom valued between \$6,666 and \$13,333 USD.

Participants' descriptive stories were analyzed inductively using both narrative inquiry methods and grounded theory thematic analysis and interpretation. Together, these two qualitative approaches developed deep insights into participants' shopping experiences. To avoid presenting only a detached analysis of fractured portions of the data, information collected was

first reviewed independently for each participant to tell her entire story in a sequential and temporal ordering which displayed participants' individuality. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants when quoted to protect their identities. Then, a summary across all the participants' stories was developed to present a larger picture and reflect similarities and differences across stories. The categories within the summary across all the participants' stories were defined based on the research questions about the importance of different products Saudi brides-to-be purchase along with the factors influencing those purchase choices.

For the grounded theory analysis, (Creswell, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), fragments from five participants' interviews were first coded to develop key concepts and categories through the process of open coding. These categories were used to develop a coding guide of major categories which was applied to all of the data. Axial coding was used to find relationships among the categories, resulting in larger themes. In the last steps of the analysis, selective coding provided more abstract interpretation in relation to existing theory and development of models.

Grounded theory analysis revealed three overall themes related to the Saudi bride-to-be's shopping experience during their transition into marriage: (a) readiness for the new life after marriage, (b) impacts of bride-to-be's individuality, and (c) others' influence on the bride-to-be's purchase decisions.

The combined analyses from both approaches ultimately resulted in the development of two visual models illustrating: the relationships among emergent themes and the liminal, transitional process to marriage from singlehood. Theoretical interpretations of the new identity construction through dress and consumption were incorporated in the models (see Figure 11 & 12).

Several existing theories were useful in explaining results. Symbolic consumption theory related to rites of passage (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983; van Gennep, 2011) provided valuable perspective in understanding Saudi brides-to-be consumption of many new products to shape a new self and cope with and expedite the transition through the liminal identity period. Second, symbolic interaction theory illuminated how social interaction with specific and generalized others influenced the way Saudi brides appear and dress during this liminal transition in order to verify and communicate their new identity effectively (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Stone, 1962). Moreover, concepts within Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective provided the means by which to interpret Saudi brides-to-be dress choices and consumption patterns to present their married woman self, especially in terms of the process of impression management, idealization, and mystification. Lastly, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Swann & Read, 1981) helped explain the way social conformity in dress provided participants with a source of self-verification.

A Saudi bride-to-be's consumption of new products facilitates her transition into marriage. To construct an appropriate new identity, Saudi brides-to-be engaged in a complex identity construction process as they prepared for and experienced the traditional celebrations leading up to the marriage. In managing this identity construction process, participants were largely influenced by their family, which in turn, are influenced by Saudi cultural traditions. However, as was evident in the data, participants varied in their views on Saudi marriage traditions, with some participants holding strongly to traditional cultural practices while others leaned towards adopting a newer, slightly westernized approach, giving more preference to individuality than conformity. The variation in attitudes about traditions lends support for the proposition that in a postmodern context characterized by exposure to many varied influencers,

brides tend to feel a “multiphrenia” or uncertainty about self-presentation (Gergen, 2011). In addition to complexity from the liminal transition and the construction of the new identity, feeling of “multiphrenia” renders participants’ shopping and consumption into a more complex experience.

Implications and Significance

This research adds to the existing literature and knowledge related to symbolic consumption and appearance management during liminal transition, as well as the use of dress in relation to expression and construction of identity. The majority of studies on consumption during liminal transition have not explored transition to marriage and married life, but rather focused on pregnancy and adolescence (Jennings & O’Malley, 2003; Noble & Walker, 1997; Ogle et al., 2013; Rydahl & Mikkelsen, 2011; The Voice Group, 2010). Thus, the present study helps to fill a gap in the literature regarding bride-to-be’s consumption during the liminal transition in a collectivistic culture. Although many researchers explored western bridal consumption patterns for the wedding day (Boden, 2001; Carter & Duncan, 2017; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002; Mupotsa, 2015; Nelson & Deshpande, 2004; Thomas & Peters, 2011), little to no research has explored bride-to-be’s consumption in a collectivistic culture such as Saudi Arabia.

Carter and Duncan (2017) examined how 15 couples gave meaning to their weddings in an individualistic culture but did not consider their participants as consumers in liminal transition, nor did they consider how this life transition would have shaped the symbolic consumption practices and identity construction processes. Moreover, Boden’s (2001) work on the role of media in articulating a “superbride” image and its influence in wedding consumption focused only on media’s influence and consumption for the wedding day. However, it did not explore others’ influences or the use of dress to construct a new identity for life after the

wedding. Thus, this study contributes to the existing literature on consumption in liminal situations and the negotiation of change in identity through dress consumption.

This study has implications for both the apparel industry and scholarship of the social psychology of appearance management. Consumption is a way to confirm and shape the individual's position in society. Thus, understanding Saudi bride-to-be consumption patterns during the engagement period extends academic research in symbolic consumption by bringing a cultural perspective to consumption as part of identity formation during liminal transition in society. A Saudi bride tries to shape meaning of the self through the collection and consumption of products as she deals with the transition to her new roles. This process of consumption tells us much about Saudi culture and how young women today adjust and conform to the tradition of purchasing to prepare for marriage celebrations and married life.

Data from this study were used to develop two models conceptualizing theoretical application to the analysis of identity construction during liminal transition through dress and consumption. The two models were developed to build comprehensive and theoretical understanding of the overall data. The first model organized themes and theories explaining meanings of the Saudi brides-to-be purchases by demonstrating the connections among emergent themes and integrating relevant theories into a larger picture.

The second model conceptualized the process of brides' identity transition during the different rites of passage stages. This model places the Saudi brides-to-be consumption within the broader consumer experience of identity formation during role transition. It also offers a theoretical framework for scholars to adopt when exploring symbolic consumption during other rites of passage in different cultures. The researcher drew on previous theory to develop deep understanding; it is clear that a combination of multiple theories, rather than a single theory, is

required to reach understanding of the complex phenomenon of bride-to-be consumption in Saudi Arabia.

Due to the lack of research about consumption during liminal transition in collectivistic cultures, this research gives valuable insights into the consumption patterns for weddings in a culture outside of the western context. This will be valuable in industry at an international level as it offers ways of learning how consumers think in diverse parts of the world where monetary resources and consumer capital in the global economy are growing. Moreover, understanding Saudi bride-to-be consumption patterns particularly has real implications for Saudi marketers. With Saudi Arabia moving forward into a new era of progressive changes, the present research is well-timed to understand how women's changing role in Saudi Arabian culture may lead to changes in consumption patterns that are influential on consumption patterns in general in the country.

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study is that the data were collected in Arabic before being translated into English. Though great care was taken to enhance accuracy, the translation process from Arabic to English may impact interpretations and meanings of data. Another shortcoming of this study pertains to the time of the interviews. Time between the three interviews with individual participants varied depending on time and availability of the participant. The researcher's lack of time control may cause some inconsistencies across responses about purchasing practices and meanings.

Third, using webcam applications to conduct the interviews might add distance between the interviewer and participant that could shape findings due to the lack of direct, in-person contact. Although, research has shown that conducting synchronous interviews via webcam is a

viable and appropriate data collection method for qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016; Salmons, 2014), webcam interviews cannot completely replicate face-to-face interaction. Consequently, using a webcam medium caused a slight loss in personal contact and energy during the interview. The researcher did not personally see participants' purchases, but rather, relied on the participants' shared photos and videos. To provide more in-depth understanding of the bride-to-be as a consumer, future researchers may engage in participant observation by accompanying the participant on shopping trips to observe real-life shopping experiences for wedding purchases in addition to interviewing.

The interview process has a large impact on the data. Using different data collection methods such as a survey or questionnaire may have resulted in gaining information from more individuals. Also, some personal private information might be easier to share in an anonymous questionnaire than in a face-to-face interview. Additionally, because this study was framed within qualitative methodology, future research could expand the conclusions by providing quantitative data that would be useful in the development of marketing strategies. Interview responses from a small sample cannot be quantified nor mathematically interpreted, limiting or eliminating possibility to measure incidence of responses. However, there are advantages of using interviews to collect data. First, they provide a detailed description of the participants' attitudes, feelings, and behaviors, which allows deeper analysis. Second, interviews encourage participants to expand on their responses and allow researchers to ask follow-up questions to explain why a particular response was given. Questionnaires do not allow for probing of reasoning behind responses.

Moreover, the sample was limited to one region in Saudi Arabia, and all participants were from a middle or upper-middle class family. Consequently, findings yielded understanding about

bride-to-be shopping experiences with narrow population characteristics. Further research could explore the consumption practice of Saudi brides who reside in different areas of the country and/or who have different socio-economic statuses. Because issues related to social capital of the family emerged as salient for the middle class participants in the present study, it would be interesting to explore how lower class and elite status Saudi women shop for their wedding preparations and life after the wedding. Additionally, in future work, it would be valuable to make comparisons of symbolic consumption during liminal transitions, comparing collectivist and individualistic cultures.

Additionally, in future work it would be valuable to explore Saudi women's symbolic consumption and identity construction through dress as they go through different types of rites of passage such as adolescence, entering college, first-time employment, pregnancy, widowhood, and divorce. Of interest would be whether the role of significant others in shaping symbolic consumption and the negotiation of identity during these different transitions are similar to that described by participants who were transitioning into marriage in the present sample. Comparisons showing similarities between different rite of passages would increase understanding of the process of liminal transition and the importance of symbolic consumption for many types of identity construction.

Findings of this study revealed a degree of rejection towards purchasing what new brides are socially expected to purchase, and there were variations in perception of the Saudi marriage tradition and norms among participants. All participants in this study had some form of post-secondary education and were aware of the traditional culture influences on their consumption patterns and purchases decisions. Is that because all participants were young and educated? It remains to be seen if this resistance applies with less educated or different generations.

Recently, Saudi Arabia has been going through an identity crisis during which many traditional social norms are being challenged, including courtship and marriage. The biggest changes are related to women's issues such as Saudi women gaining more education, participating in the workforce, gaining independent financial power, and being part of decision-making in the country. Thus, future research may focus on how all these social changes influence Saudi women's behavior as consumers and their self-presentation through dress. To reach broader conclusions, additional research is needed to address how these variables affect the consumption patterns in general and during the rite of passage. Understanding these changes in Saudi consumer's behavior will be helpful for the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Investment as Saudi Arabia moves closer to being part of the globalized economy.

Finally, this study revealed that some Saudi brides-to-be were dissatisfied with the products available in the Saudi marketplace, consistent with Al-Mousa's (2005) findings. Her findings showed that as Saudi female consumer income level increases, their satisfaction decreases. Therefore, with Saudi women gaining more financial power, more research is needed to address differences related to economic resources and Saudi women's shopping experiences and satisfaction. This would be an important topic for retailers in Saudi Arabia to explore to meet consumers' needs.

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APPENDIX A:
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Sent via email

DATE

Dear [insert name of potential participant]:

My name is Wijdan Tawfiq, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Apparel, Merchandising, and Design at Iowa State University. The purpose of this letter is to tell you about a research study entitled, “The Saudi Arabian Bride Shopping Experience” I am conducting this study for my PhD dissertation. I have chosen to invite you to participate in this study based upon a recommendation from [insert name of key informant].

The goal of this research is to learn how Saudi brides-to-be prepare for multiple social events planned around their wedding celebrations and their new lives afterwards. I am specifically interested in exploring what factors influence bride-to-be choices during shopping and preparing for wedding celebrations. Also, I am interested in understanding how the role of culture, family and social interactions influences this process. As a Saudi bride-to-be, your shopping experiences will add understanding to my study. What I learn from this research will provide understanding about Saudi bride shopping experience; very little is known about this topic.

If you are interested in participating in this study and consent to do so, you will be invited to partake in three webcam or voice interviews at a time of your choosing. Each interview will last about 90 to 180 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Additionally, you will be asked to record audio notes during one of your shopping trips for your wedding purchases if possible. In your recorded audio notes, you may include: where you went shopping, who accompanied you, type of store you visited, and what you purchased. I – a female, Saudi researcher – will conduct interviews with you. Topics of discussion during your interviews will include:

- a) how you make purchase decisions during your wedding preparation;
- b) what you purchased when preparing for the wedding and married life; and
- c) what the significance and meaning are behind the items you purchased.

To your interview appointment, you will be asked to share some of the products you purchased during your wedding preparation or send me photos of the purchases to guide the interviews. With your consent, photos of products may be stored and used by the researcher and may possibly be used in the study. However, we will not share any photos that could potentially identify you.

If you decide to participate in this research, please know that any information you share will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be assigned to the audio-recordings of your interview and your interview transcript. Reports of findings will be shared with other researchers and may

include comments from your interview. However, no identifying information will be included that would link you to your comments. In addition, your participation is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from participation at any point in the study.

There are no known risks to participating in this project. Also, you will receive a \$30 gift card via mail before conducting the first interview. If you decide to withdraw from participation, you may keep the gift card.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email by [insert date] or you can reach me at 055-435-4358. I will call you to arrange for your participation in an interview. If you have any further questions regarding the specifics of this research project, please let me know.

If you have questions about human research participants' rights, please contact the IRB Administrator, (001) 515- 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (001) 515- 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, 2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202, Ames, IA 50014.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration about your participation in this research.

Sincerely,

Wijdan Tawfiq

APPENDIX B:
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Consent Form for: **The Saudi Arabian Bride Shopping Experience**

This form describes a research project. It has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Research studies include only people who choose to take part—your participation is completely voluntary. Please discuss any questions you have about the study or about this form with the project staff before deciding to participate.

Who is conducting this study?

This study is being conducted by Wijdan Tawfiq PhD candidate; Department of Apparel, Events, and Hospitality Management at Iowa State University.

Why am I invited to participate in this study?

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a Saudi bride-to-be with a scheduled wedding date within the next six months. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for multiple social events planned around their weddings and to prepare for their new lives after the wedding. Specifically, this study aims to understand: (a) the factors that influence their choices and consumption pattern during shopping and preparation for their weddings; (b) the role culture, family, and social interactions play in this process; (c) the influence of Saudi marketplaces from the perspective of bride-as-consumer.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in three 90 to 180 minute webcam or voice interviews at a time of your choice. You will also be asked to audio record note on one of your shopping trips for your wedding purchases if possible. Finally, in order to participate, you will be asked to verbally consent before the first interview.

During the interviews you will be asked questions about:

- Demographic information, which includes questions about your age, occupation, level of education, how long you have been engaged, current and future (after the wedding) city of residency and, your wedding budget, and gifts you received for your dowry.
- How you make purchase decisions during your wedding preparation.
- What you purchased during your engagement period when preparing for the wedding and marriage life.
- What the significance and meaning are behind the items you purchased for yourself.

Your audio recorded notes will be about:

- Where you went shopping

- Who accompanied you
- What type of store you visited
- What you purchased
- How you made purchase decision

Interviews will be audio-recorded and destroyed once the research is complete. You will be asked to share some of the products you purchased during your wedding preparation or send me photos of the purchases to guide the interviews. With your permission, the researcher will store photos of products and will be used by the researcher and might be described within the results if relevant. The purpose of the stored photos is to show an example of products purchased during wedding preparation in Saudi Arabia to an audience that is unfamiliar with Saudi culture.

What are the possible risks or discomforts of my participation?

There should be little to no risk or discomfort related to your participation in this research. The only exception could be a personal emotional response to a question.

What are the possible benefits of my participation?

In this study will be receiving a \$30 gift card via mail before conducting the first interview. If you decide to withdraw from participation, you may keep the gift card. Also, we hope that this research will benefit society by understanding Saudi bride-to-be's experiences as they prepare for multiple social events planned around their weddings. This could also lead to greater understanding of the factors that influence Saudi bride-to-be choices during shopping and preparing for the weddings.

How will the information I provide be used?

The information you provide will be transcribed, reviewed, and coded by the research team and used to complete research for a doctoral dissertation, potential conference presentations, and publication. Your name and identity will not be linked with your responses in any way.

What measures will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data or to protect my privacy?

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable laws and regulations. Records will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the ISU Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies with human subjects) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken:

- Recordings of your interview will not be shared with external parties.
- All recordings of interviews will be destroyed after written transcripts are made.
- Photographs that could potentially identify you will not be shared in publications or presentations.
- Interview transcripts and the key code for your pseudonym will be kept in a password

protected file.

- Files will be destroyed upon completion of research.
- Transcripts will not include names or specific institution information. Participants will be referred to in general terms such as “*participant’s pseudonym* (30 years old) from Jeddah”
- Transcripts will only be shared with supervising faculties and one other researcher for review.

Will I incur any costs from participating or will I be compensated?

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

What are my rights as a human research participant?

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You may keep the \$30 gift card if you decide to withdraw from participation at any time. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions *about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury*, please contact the IRB Administrator, (001) 515- 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (001) 515-294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, 2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202, Ames, IA 50014.

Whom can I call if I have questions about the study?

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information, please contact Wijdan Tawfiq at email wtawfiq@iastate.edu, or by a local phone number 055-435-4358. You also can contact supervisors Dr. Eulanda Sanders, via email at sanderse@iastate.edu or Dr. Mary Lynn Damhorst via email at mldmhrst@iastate.edu.

Consent and Authorization Provisions

In the beginning of the first interview you will be asked to consent verbally.

APPENDIX C:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

First Interview

In this study, I am interested in exploring the experiences of Saudi brides-to-be as they prepare for multiple social events planned around their weddings and to prepare for their new lives post-marriage. I would like to begin by thanking you for volunteering your time for three interviews.

The questions that I ask may not address everything that you would like to discuss, so please feel free to add any information from any facet of your experience that you find pertinent. Also, if there are questions that you would prefer not to answer, please let me know.

General information:

- Age:
- Occupation:
- What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
- Do you work outside the home?
- When did you get engaged? How long have you been engaged?
- In what city do you currently live? Will you move after getting married? Where?
- What gifts did you get for your dowry? (let me know I if this is too personal)
- What is your wedding budget?
- Is your dowry part of your wedding budget or your parents? (let me know if this is too personal)
- When will your wedding be?
- Did you give your fiancé any gifts?

Discussion of Shopping Plan:

- When did you begin to shop for you wedding preparation?
- How many pre-wedding events/celebrations did you have so far? How many are you planning to have? When?
 - Can you tell me about events/celebrations you have so far?
 - How did you prepare for these events/celebrations?
 - What did you wear?
 - How did you make a decision about you purchases, and what to wear?
 - What is the significance of the bride dress choices at these events?
 - Are you planning to have *ghomrah* party? If yes, have you decided what to wear?
 - If yes, what? Why do you decided to wear this specific dress/costume?
 - Who influences your decisions on what to wear during *ghomrah* party?
 - If no, why aren't you planning to have *ghomrah* party?
 - who influences your decisions to have or not to have *ghomrah* party?
 - What other events/celebrations you are planning to have?
- Can you tell me about your shopping for the past wedding events/celebrations?
 - How many shopping trips for your wedding preparation have you made so far?
- How many items at this points have you purchased? Can you give me a general idea of the categories (evening dress, makeup, lingerie, etc.)?
- What kinds of products, items, and/or garments did you purchase/are planning to purchase?
 - Can you tell me about products, items, and/or garments you purchased/are planning to purchase for you wedding preparation?

- What kinds of things do you do to manage your shopping for you wedding preparation (such as making lists, asking for help from older relatives, mother, or friends)?
- How do you sort these items from more important to less important?
- What are your favorite products, items, and/or garments you purchased and why?

Purchase Decisions:

Ask the following questions about all categories the bride-to-be talked about in the first part:

- Why did you purchase this certain product, item, or garment for you wedding preparation?
- How did you make the decision to purchase certain products, items, and/or garments?
- What was your reasoning behind purchasing this specific products, items, and/or garments for your wedding preparation? Is there something special about it? What is it?
- How did the color, size, fit, style, design of this certain product, item, or garment affect your purchase decision?
- What were the key factors in shaping your purchase decision?
- What did you experience when deciding to purchase it?
 - In making the purchase, did you experience any feelings of conflict or, was it a clear choice? Why?
- Why was it important for you to purchase this certain product, item, or garment?
- What was the strongest influence in your purchase decisions?
- Where did you purchase this certain product, item, or garment (online, mall, traditional store, did you travel far)?
- How important is it to you that your products are luxury brands? Why?

- How does it represent you as a bride?
- When and where will you use/wear this certain product, item, or garment?
 - For what types of occasions are you planning to use/wear this certain product/item? Why?
- How do you want people or your husband to view you when they see this product, item, or garment? What do you want people to say about it?
- How pleased/satisfied are you with this product, item, or garment? Why?
 - What would make you more pleased?
- Will you have your purchases and new clothes displayed when they are transported to your new home prior to your wedding?
- Will this certain product, item, or garment be displayed at this event?
- How do you feel about this day?

Significance and Meaning of Items Purchased:

- How do you feel about each product, item, and/or garment you purchased/are planning to purchase for your wedding preparation?
- How important is each product, item, and/or garment you purchased/are planning to purchase for your wedding preparation to you? Why?
- What aspects of the products, items, and/or garments do you think will influence other's perceptions of you and the meanings they attribute to the products, items, and/or garments?
- How have your purchases of certain items influenced your identity?

- What are the different messages about the self that you want present through each product, item, and/or garment you purchased/are planning to purchase for your wedding preparation to you?
- Since you were engaged, what have you tried to express or communicate about yourself through the products, items, and/or garments you purchased/are planning to purchase (dress, shoes, jewelry, etc.)?
- Will the way you dress before you are married be different than the way you will dress after?
 - If yes, how is it different?
 - Why or why not?
- How do these products, items, and/or garments' messages compare with what you tried to express or communicate with your products, items, and/or garments before you were engaged?
- How do you see your role as a wife? What is the most important part of being a wife?
- How does your fiancé see your role as a wife?
- What kind of products, items, and/or garments' you purchased/are planning to purchase to help you in your role as a wife?

Actual wedding gown:

Have you made a decision about your wedding gown?

- **If yes**, ask the following questions:
 - How did you make your decision about your wedding gown?

- How did the color, size, fit, style, design of the wedding gown affects your decision?
- What did you experience when deciding to purchase this wedding gown? Did you experience any feelings of conflict or, was it a clear choice? Why?
- What was the strongest influence in your purchase decisions for your wedding gown?
- Where did you purchase your wedding gown (online, mall, traditional store, did you travel far)?
- How do you want people or your husband to view you when they see you in your wedding gown? What do you want people to say about it?
- How pleased/satisfied are you with your wedding gown? Why?
- What would make you more pleased?
- **If no**, when/ where are you planning to shopping for your wedding gown?
 - What is your dream wedding dress? What is your bridal style?

Other Influences:

- Describe what or who influences your purchase decisions during your wedding preparation?
 - People: friends, sisters, fiancé, mother, etc.
 - Social forces: norms, culture, tradition
 - Media: TV, movies, Internet, magazines, social media
 - Retail environment/stores
- Who do you ask for advice or opinions when shopping for your wedding? Why?
- How has your fiancé influenced your purchase decisions? Could you give some specifics or examples of his influence?

- How do other important people in your life influence your purchase decisions? Could you give some specifics or examples of their influence?
- How have people (fiancé, friends, family) responded to certain products, items, and/or garments? How have these responses made you feel? Why?
 - What types of comments do they make? How do those make you feel (comfortable, feminine, self-confident, etc.)?
- How much influence do others (fiancé, and family) have on your choice in what you purchase during your wedding preparation?
- How much influence do you feel others (fiancé, and family) *should* have on your choice in what to purchase for your wedding preparation? Why?
 - Are your purchase decisions based on personal taste or family's/fiancé's taste?
 - Do you feel your purchase decisions are more based on social expectation or personal taste?
 - Does your fiancé/family ask to look at your purchases, shop with you, approve your purchases, etc. How do you feel about it?
 - In planning what to purchase for your wedding preparation, how important is it to please yourself versus pleasing others? How do you balance that?

The Influence of Others' Weddings:

- Have you attended other people's weddings recently? What seems to be popular?
- What do you see as the dominant wedding trend/pattern in Saudi Arabia?
- What do you think influences wedding trends (market, media, Western influence, etc.)?
 - How do feel about current wedding trends? What do you like? What don't you like? Why?

- Are you planning to incorporate some of these wedding trends? Which ones?
Why/why not?
- Do you prefer to have a unique wedding or do you try to blend in with trends? Why?

Second Interview

The researcher asked the bride-to-be to audio record notes when they go shopping for her wedding purchase next time if possible. The researcher sent the participants some general points they may include in their audio record note such as where the participant went to shop, who accompanies her, type of store visited, and what was purchased. Then this interview was scheduled shortly after the bride-to-be went shopping for wedding purchases.

- Can you tell me the story of your latest shopping trip?
- Where did you go to shop? And why?
 - Is there anything special about this place?
 - Would you have preferred to shop in other places (stores, locations, etc.)? Why or why not?
- What were you looking for? have you find it?
- Was there something you wanted to purchase but could not find? What was it? Did you purchase something in its place?
- Did you shop using a list or stop when something catches your eye?
- Did you go alone or with someone else?
 - If unaccompanied, ask why?
 - Who accompanied you? What is the relationship (friend, family member, fiancé)?
 - Why did you shop with this person particularly?

- Did the accompanying person help you select a purchase?
- What type of store did you visit? What products do they sell?
 - Approximately How many (number) stores did you enter? And why?
- What did you purchase?
- How did you make your purchase decisions?
- What do you think of the available selection in the marketplace?
- What is your favorite product, item, or garment you purchased on the last shopping trip?
- For what occasions you will wear it/use it?
- Why did you choose to purchase this one for such an occasion(s)? What aspects (fabric, color, print, style, etc.) of the product, item, or garment make it suitable for this occasion?
- How do you think others will perceive you when you wear it/use it?
 - Are there differences between how your family and your in-laws perceive you? Is this in line with how you want to be perceived? Why?
- Is there anything you want to add?

Third Interview (follow-up)

The third interview consisted of broad open-ended, grand tour questions to follow-up and supplement the first two interviews.

- Can you please tell me about your shopping experience during your wedding preparation in general?
- Can you tell me about events/celebrations you had so far? How prepared you think you were? And why?
- Do you have any tips and recommendations for other brides-to-be about their shopping for their wedding?

Probing questions:

- Can you remember a particular time ...?
- Can you tell me what happened?
- “Can you tell me why that particular time stands out?”

Also clarification question was asked in this interview after the researcher looked briefly to the first two interviews.

APPENDIX D:
PARTICIPANTS' STORIES: POETIC FORMS

Abrar:

I quit my job after getting engaged
I wanted free time to prepare for my marriage
I made numerous shopping trips
I was in a race against time
It took me about a month with daily shopping trips
Sometimes I went shopping twice a day
I was running from store to store, trying to get everything I need
I only visited the stores that I previously liked
I did not risk wasting time exploring new stores

I left my budget open and went on a shopping spree
I've spent double the amount of my dowry
My shopping experience was a very pleasant and delightful
I enjoyed every moment, even when I was tired and stressed out

The makeup and perfumes are very important parts
Less important items are the evening wear, hand bags, and accessories
I started with the less important items, so I do not end up canceling them
My favorite is the bedding set because I will share it with my husband

The *shofa* was stressful
I didn't know if he would like me or not
It was the first time meeting a guy who I have never seen before
I was not sure what to wear
I was looking for something modest
I do not like it when the groom's family came on the *shofa* day
It makes the bride nervous and uncomfortable

My sisters told me to get a new dress for the *melka*, but I did not want to
I want to feel that I am getting used to my fiancé
Less concerned about what to wear in front of him
I wanted to feel we are getting one step closer

Gifts express our love for each other
It shows how much he cares about me
I got my fiancé gifts to show how I feel about him
The bride is usually shy to express her feelings

I purchased about 100 lingerie pieces to wear a new one every day

I never buy these as a single woman
 There will be a husband who sees what I wear and comments on it
 I want to smell and look nice for my husband all the time

I paid extra attention to the lingerie I will wear in the honeymoon
 I want them to be memorable for our first few nights together
 I chose it slightly modest
 I will not show more than what I will be comfortable showing the first night
 I do not need to spice things up at the beginning

I want to look like a newlywed
 Newlywed should dress fancier than everyone else
 I must dress up everywhere I go
 I do not want to wear something people saw me wear before
 I want to look different after marriage
 I don't like to dress as I did when single

I will be under the microscope, everyone examining what I wear
 Everyone scrutinizes me
 Brides-to-be feel pressure to meet everyone's standards
 I do not want them to think I am not well prepared
 I want to keep up with expectations

When I dress nicely
 I feel confident and satisfied with myself
 If I did not buy all the bridal items, I would feel incomplete
 I would feel sad... unsure of myself
 I want to dress up for my husband
 To feel like a good wife

I never thought about the wife role
 It is frightening...It is a huge responsibility
 I cannot depend on my mother like I do right now

I prefer to buy everything new because it is a new life!
 I do not want to ask my fiancé to take me shopping after a short period from our wedding
 When my husband sees my *dabash*
 He would see that I did well and I am fully prepared

Bride-to-be should evaluate the traditions
 The marriage traditions are very nice, and we should keep them
 But not stick with all of the marriage traditions

Why do we need to replace the *ghomrah* with a meaningless party?
 I do not like the bachelorette party at all
 It is not us

It is too strange

I will live in a different town
My in-laws will not be there to display my *dabash*
The distance saved me from displaying all my stuff!

Some guests at this event are overly noseey
They want to see everything the bride-to-be purchased
They will start commenting why she got this and why she did not get that
I hate the nosiness during this *dabash* transporting event
But I like that they are pampering the bride
She goes to her house like a queen with everything set up for her

My parents and all my sisters will transport my *dabash*
I do not want to go with them
I want to see my new home after the wedding with my husband
I will not feel the same level of joy if I have seen it before

The parents should influence their daughter's choice in her wedding preparation
My parents and siblings were involved in every single detail
They know better than me
The daughter's purchases are representing her parents and the house she came from

My father viewed the dress from a man's perspective
My father thought that the dress was the most appropriate one
My mother and my siblings agreed with my father
I was not fully convinced, but I did not have a choice but to agree
I do not want to cause problems on a happy day

The bride image is associated with a white puffy gown
I always dreamed of wearing one
I will only wear it once in my life
I want people to say I look like a real bride!
I did not want to have a simple dress for my wedding
If the bride was wearing a simple dress, she will be a fake bride

Atlal:

I currently live in Jeddah
I lived in three different cities during my lifetime
I will move to [another country] after the wedding

For the *shofa*, I wasn't just unprepared
I was unaware of the seriousness and reality of the prospect of being married
Two days before the *shofa* I realized I didn't have anything appropriate to wear
I didn't worry much, because I wasn't sure if it would work out

I considered it simply as a meeting and nothing more
 My sister helped me look for an appropriate dress
 She was more excited than I was
 I gave her a hard time

I spent lots of time on Pinterest
 I like to explore and look at every account
 I like to look at different dress styles
 It helps me decide what to buy

I like how they display the clothing
 The different color categories and matching accessories
 It's easier to shop this way
 [Stores] entice you with their window displays to buy things not on your list

I spent this month on shopping daily
 Approximately, I made 60 shopping trips
 I roamed the mall until my head started to spin
 Dragging myself in the mall
 With all my heavy purchases
 The experience completely drained my energy physically and psychologically

They were on my wish list for a while
 I couldn't afford it before
 Now with the dowry, I can
 The advantage of getting married is to fulfill your shopping dreams
 It's a way of pampering yourself
 It gives me great pleasure

I don't want to be portrayed as how people think a bride should be
 We don't have to follow the traditions
 They are not god-sent laws that we must follow
 These rules were created by people and meant to be broken

I was resisting my family influence in the beginning
 I was denying the influence of social expectations
 I was hesitant about buying lingerie when my eldest married sister suggested
 I was against the idea, but I liked what my sister chose

I quit insisting on my way and told them to do what they wanted
 I cannot just decide everything based on what I prefer
 I'm confused on how I should be prepared for life after the wedding
 I hope I made good purchasing decisions

I think the family should guide the bride-to-be throughout her shopping journey
 She has no experience

I asked my sister to lead me
 I surrendered myself to her
 She educated me on how a married woman should dress
 She told me I should have dressy and feminine clothing
 If I had shopped alone, I would've bought all boyish clothes
 I felt like my sister had saved me
 As a single woman, people don't judge what you wear as harshly
 The expectations are higher [for married women]
 The bride's closet should include fancy and elegant clothing

My sister told me to buy clothing based on what I think my fiancé will like
 I told her: "No! I am not buying anything for him"
 After a while ... I think I'm falling in love with him
 I'm trying to purchase something based on his liking
 I want him to like me, and I want to look attractive to him
 I wish he will be overjoyed and see me as the most beautiful woman in the world

I want to be the wife to please her husband visually
 Wife will be rewarded if she makes efforts to look more beautiful and desirable for her husband
 When I dress nicely and look good, it means I respect and appreciate myself
 This in turn will make my husband respect and appreciate me
 They [clothes] are not the main sources to build the marriage relationship
 They are simply materials that reinforce the emotions
 The physical attraction is the first step toward accomplishing emotional compatibility

My favorite was lingerie
 When I tried it on, I was intrigued by it
 I felt I am hot and feminine...It felt good

The wedding day is quickly approaching, and I do not feel ready
 I feel overwhelmed
 I wish I had a time machine that would move me to three months after the wedding
 I'll have settled down and adjusted to my new life
 I'm a little nervous...I wish I could skip this stage

I will be moving to another country
 I wasn't aware of the kinds of clothes they wear
 I will be completely learning new things after the wedding

My cousin lives there
 She said that they wear *jalabiya* everywhere
 I don't understand or know how to shop for *jalabiya*
 My aunts heard that I wasn't going to buy *jalabiya*
 She said please do not embarrass us
 She said people here will talk, and it will reflect badly on us
 You do not want to hurt your family's reputation

Your appearance reflects your character, your background, your family, your upbringing

I don't want to dress below the expectations
I don't want people to look at me like I'm a weirdo
I don't want to be the talk of the town

Since I will be moving out of the country
I found it to be a great excuse for not letting my family move my *dabash*
I won't have to worry about fancy wrapping and display for people's viewing
It is a silly and unnecessary custom on *dabash* day
I disapprove of this custom
I will just put everything in regular moving boxes

You never know what is in the guests' hearts and how they are thinking of you
Some people may jinx you (evil eyes)
These things should be for the bride's pleasure
Not for others to watch and criticize
I think this is a personal issue and better left hidden

I did not care whether I had a ghomrah or not
I am only doing it for my mother
I am already stressed out with all the marriage preparations and moving to another country
I felt holding another event would be overwhelming

My fiancé and his family are not familiar with [Saudi] marriage traditions
He gave us money for the *shabkah* gold set rather than buying me one
One thing that shocked me was that he did not bring wedding rings
I thought the wedding rings was a universal understanding
The groom is supposed to buy the wedding rings
He said he would buy and bring them to the wedding
I will kill him if he forgets

I wanted to have a small wedding with only close friends and relatives
Include only people close to you, and you don't have to worry about sharp criticism
However, no one agreed with me
They argued that a bigger event would bring more happiness
They claimed that the wedding is for the bride
I feel it is for the guests to have fun more than the bride

I realize it's not just about me
My entire family has to be there to live the happiness with me
Everyone else is moving to a new stage of life like me
My parents are saying goodbye to their daughter
whom they raised all of these years
My sisters are saying goodbye to their sister
whom they shared everything with

My in-laws are embracing a new daughter-in-law
So I agreed to have a large wedding

Brides are expected to be like a vase that sits in view for people to watch
She is expected to be idle and not dance or move a lot
I don't want to be a statute that everyone stares at
The idea of ushering the bride is very uncomfortable for me
The idea of walking slowly until I reach the stage is frightening
I want to run as quickly as possible

Here people aren't thrilled about a wedding dress unless it's a ball gown style
I want to be able to dance and move around freely
I want my dress to be simple
My cousin said I'd be lost amongst the guests.
My cousin persuaded and convinced me to choose a ball gown style

Culturally, the bride arrives very late at night
What is the point of holding the wedding late at night?
Why don't we hold them during the day when everyone is energetic?
I will set my wedding time during the day
I want to enjoy my wedding day

From 3:00-7:00 pm I will act traditionally
Wear the wedding ball gown... be ushered in slowly
After 7:00 pm it will be my night!
I will change my dress, dance with my friends

Balques:

I currently live in Jeddah
I am connected deeply to a tribal culture and their traditions
My parents... followed the strict tradition closely
I'm the oldest daughter and first girl to be married
I am the victim
Maybe with my younger sisters they will loosen up

I've never seen it done in my family
I didn't know how to act or what to wear
I was very shy and didn't celebrate or dance
I couldn't decide on what I like
I got overwhelmed and distracted
I had conflicts within myself to the point that I wanted to cry

The traditions and culture determine our behaviors in marriage
My hands were tied and there was no chance to meet my fiancé
Even during the *melka*, I had not met him

We could have at least talked on the phone or texted
 I just wanted to know him
 I persisted with my family and tried to get them to understand my situation
 They didn't want to agree
 I texted my fiancé
 Behind my parents and brother's backs
 He didn't reply back

I did not prepare or buy anything specifically for the *melka*
 It was held in my home and was a very small gathering
 I was wearing a t-shirt and jeans
 I knew my groom wasn't going to be there
 So I figured, "Why would I need to dress up or look pretty?"

I haven't talked to or met my fiancé
 I don't know him, and I don't know what he likes
 I am buying items that aren't too provocative or too audacious
 Trying to be in the balance between modest and revealing
 I don't want him to think that I'm being too bold or going too far in my clothing
 I don't want to be too modest in front of him, as if he were a stranger

I am at a loss as to what I should buy
 I don't feel like I can purchase any items
 I postponed purchasing lingerie until after the marriage

My mother viewed me as her daughter
 She has to come with me on every shopping trip
 We ended up with endless conflicts
 I was starting to see myself as an independent wife-to-be
 We differ on the level of modesty

It is because of age or generation difference
 If I had elder sisters, I would have asked them for advice
 They would have been closer to my age and know more about my likes and dislikes
 They would know more about today's fashion

I asked my best friend advice
 We've known each other for a long time
 She knows my taste

I went with my family to Turkey
 The clothes were different than what was available in the Saudi markets
 I tried to purchase as many items as I could
 I feel like everyone is dressed the same
 I want it to be different and unique

My dress is a reflection of who I am

I want to have a collection of middle eastern perfumes
 It's known that the bride is recognized by her perfume
 I want people to recognize my scent... before I even walk into a room
 I love watches, and they are my favorite accessory
 All of my friends and relatives know that I love watches

This is a once in a lifetime event you shouldn't skimp on
 I am moving into a new life and taking on a new role
 I have to purchase all new items
 I have to prepare for my new life
 The more items I purchase
 The more it becomes real in my mind

It was a physical and mental challenge
 I feel the most enjoyable and excitable times
 After coming back from a long shopping trip
 I will try them all on again at home and cry
 The tears ...are a mix of nervousness, excitement, and fear
 I can't truly describe the feeling, but it is positive, not negative

The clothes I wear at a home are the next important
 It is important to look good for my husband all the time
 The least important is the casual wear for friends or family
 They are close to me and know me

When I'm among large crowds, I should dress fancy
 People will judge me based on my dress
 Even I will judge a newlywed woman on her wear
 The newlywed bride must wear gold
 The gold symbolizes that the bride has invested in her dowry

My in-laws live in the countryside
 I will not push the boundary of social expectation
 I want to blend in and get their approval and gain acceptance
 The more I respect their culture and traditions
 The easier my life will be
 My husband will be more comfortable around me

I started looking for traditional style dresses
 The ready-to-wear dresses are hard to find
 I purchased a few pieces of fabric to take to the seamstress

You can get a million ideas for your wedding from social media
 I browse the latest trends and styles on Instagram

I'll always be in the loop of the top trends in Saudi weddings

I want something very fancy with a long train, long veil, and a fancy tiara
 There is one that I couldn't stop thinking about
 This is what I imagined my dream gown looking like
 I was afraid that two weeks later a new style will arrive
 Two weeks later I will regret buying the dress

I am glad I waited
 There were a few new dresses displayed in the window
 I saw a wedding gown display, and I was in awe (open mouthed)
 I walked around it and looked at it from all angles and examined it closely
 The more I examined it, the more I loved it

It will be a nerve-wrecking day
 My *shofa* and my wedding are happening on the same day
 My greatest concern is what will he think about me
 Will he like my appearance... how would he react?

On my melka day... my fiancé came to visit
 We did not meet face to face
 Knowing that we were in the same place at the same time made me feel nervous
 I try not to think a lot about our face to face meeting
 His presence brought about mixed feelings. . . I tried to escape

I don't want the makeup to change me
 I still want my face to look like my actual face
 I want my future husband to see me as natural as possible

The wedding day is not for me
 My tribe's tradition is that the bride does not see her guests at her wedding ceremony
 I will only stay in the bride's room
 The only people that will see me are my groom and my family

All of the tribes that originate from the Bedouins have these traditions
 Over time a lot of them have let these traditions go
 My tribe still holds tight to these traditions
 I know of only one other bride who was ushered down the aisle
 She was verbally attacked by the entire tribe
 It means she has no manners

Eventually, someone has to break the tradition and let the old ways go
 I would do it
 I'm a bit of a rebellious girl
 I would take the risk to be against the entire tribe
 Let them say that I'm a bad bride, or shameless

But I can't stand against my mother

All of my friends are different from me
They all are ushered into their weddings and see their guests
They will have different feelings than what I will feel on my wedding day
On their wedding day they will be able to live in the moment
They already know and met their future husband

I will have a large celebration after the wedding
I am considering it as my wedding day
I would have a regular and smaller sized *zwarah* (post-wedding party)
If my mother swore on the Quran that she would let go of the old tradition

I didn't invite any of my friends to my wedding
They will think it closed-minded of me to not walk down the aisle
This tradition is weird for them and doesn't make sense
I don't want to go through the trouble and explain this tradition to them
I will only invite them to my *zwarah* (post-wedding party)

I want my wedding to be as fancy as possible
I want every detail to be fancy
I prefer to have a unique wedding
Not a copy-paste from other weddings
My *zwarah* (post-wedding party) will be the celebration that represents my taste
I am representing myself and my entire Bedouin tribe to Hijazi guests

Batool:

I do not think the *dabash* is important at all
Our culture overestimates the importance of the *dabash*
If it was up to me, I would only buy the wedding and the *shabkah* gown
I do not know why I have to buy new things
I think the *dabash* is just overemphasized
It is like a family honor

In our culture brides-to-be should dress modestly
I show only my face, hair, hand, and a little part above my ankle
I tried on multiple outfits and showed my mother
I wanted the groom to see the normal me
A dress that represent my personality and my favorite style
What I usually wear, and how I look in everyday dress

My dress at the *melka* was very simple
I do not think it [the *ghomrah*] is an important event nowadays

I have three older married sisters

So my mother knows how to do the *dabash* shopping very well
 She told me what I would need for my new life
 My mother helped me with everything

My wedding dress is my favorite garment
 It is a glamorous thing and I cannot wait to wear it
 It is every girl's dream to wear the white gown
Baylassan:

My mother undoubtedly is my reliable source for everything
 I did not purchase anything without her approval
 I relate to my aunt a lot because of the closeness in age
 I do not have experience
 My purchase decisions were clear choices
 My mother and aunt walked me through it step by step

I took into consideration what my family will think
 I will be representing my family

My mother actually purchased them for me
 I do not want to go shopping any more
 I was bored and exhausted from the many shopping trips
 I have been very stressed
 My skin broke out
 I went to the dermatologist and got a chemical peel treatment
 I reached the point where I do not even want to hear the word shopping
 It was so nice to take a break from shopping

As a newlywed, people will be noticing what I will wear
 People expect a newlywed wife to look the best she can
 People will look at me from head to toe
 People will judge me and will say that I am not well prepared for my wedding

I need to choose my dresses carefully
 They should be fancy enough to represent a newlywed
 Not like any old married woman

I will look well put together in front of my in-laws
 I have to impress them
 To look acceptable and be accepted as a member of their family
 To be top notch
 I need to pay attention to every detail
 I don't want to dress in a way that disrespects them
 I want to fit in with them

I want to look good for my husband

Dressing nicely shows that I care about and love him
 To look beautiful for my husband
 The lingerie and underwear are the most important category
 I will use them the most on a daily basis

The makeup will be different
 As a single woman, I wear very light makeup
 As a married woman, I will wear heavier makeup

For the *shofa* occasion
 It was a very hard decision
 I was going to meet a strange man
 I did not make this decision alone
 My mother and aunt helped me
 I tried almost every piece in my closet

I wanted to wear a long sleeve and fully cover myself
 It was too early to show my hair on our first meeting
 What if he does not like me or I do not like him?
 We all negotiated many outfits until we agreed on the one

Gifts are used on the *shofa* day instead of words
 He bought me a watch
 So that meant he liked me

I did not buy my *fatiha* dress especially for this occasion
 I do not think I needed to buy a new dress for every occasion
 My in-laws never before saw me in this dress

The *melka* was another important event
 We signed the marriage contract
 Making us officially engaged!
 I wanted to look my best
 I bought a fancy red dress especially for the *melka* occasion
 My sister pointed at the red dress
 I thought red is a very strong color
 It might be too much for the *melka*
 We still do not know each other well
 I can easily grab his attention by wearing red
 My fiancé will forever remember me in this dress

The purpose was to impress him, and I did!
 My fiancé told me that it is very nice, and he loved the color on me!
 I was so happy hearing him confirming my choice

The *shabkah* was the first large celebration

I wanted to look very unique
I designed my *shabkah* dress myself
Everything was as I wished for and more

I wore a bridal style pink ball gown
It was my first time feeling like a real bride
The ball gown, the tiara, the flower bouquet, and the ushering
I love all these details

We will hold the *ghomrah* party in two days
My mother wants me to wear the Indian bridal costume
My younger cousins and sisters want me to wear the Turkish bridal costume
I wanted to please both sides

There was one unofficial celebration
My friend threw me a bachelorette party
Only younger women attended
The mothers were not invited

My in-laws are planning a large event when transporting my *dabash*
Traditionally the bride can't go
I disagree with the way it is traditionally done
Why should everyone else except the bride get to go?

I will decorate [the purchases] in a way in which the items are partially concealed
They will see dress bags but not the dress itself
They take pictures to put on social media
I don't think it's their right to take a picture of my things
I do not want everyone to see what I purchased

Some of the traditions... put a lot of burden on both families
I feel that after the wedding, there is no need to celebrate anymore
My mother wants to hold another celebration
She said: "No, what would your in-laws say about us?"
"Are we not happy with our daughter?"
I think it is a waste of money
People are afraid of changing these traditions
If one person decides to cancel it, more people would be okay cancelling it
I would be the person to cancel it

The wedding is the most important day
I do not want to repeat my mistakes from the *shabkah* again
I asked everyone close to me how I looked on *shabkah*
I told them do not sugarcoat and tell me the truth
I was so happy to hear that they confirmed my choices
I knew I made the right decision

I went and put on my wedding gown and showed all my family
 I want them to approve my choice
 It turned out to be a very emotional moment for everyone
 Everyone was in tears
 I don't know if they were tears of joy or tears of sadness
 I am moving out to live a new life with my husband
 I am saying goodbye to my single woman life and sisterhood fun times

They all told me the wedding dress looks absolutely amazing!
 I feel extremely happy and confident.
 I can't wait to see my husband's reaction when he sees me on our wedding day

Eithar:

There are three events before the official engagement day
 We combined all the three events into one day
 His mother has been a very close friend to my mother
 I felt so much pressure
 I felt like my brain stopped working
 It took a while to digest and visualize

All marriage events are important
 I wished all my relatives were there
 I feel safe when everyone is around me
 My aunts, grandmothers, and my cousins

I was not sure what to wear
 All of my sisters are married and live out of town
 My friend helped me prepare for it
 She understands me more than I understand myself
 I trust her taste
 We have known each other since middle school
 Her family is conservative like my family

I wanted to impress him
 I asked my brother for his opinion
 He is a man and would know how a man thinks
 I took my brother's advice into consideration
 I tried to combine all of the advice with my taste and personality

I wanted to be myself
 As naturally as possible
 I wanted my dress to represent me
 I did not want to wear a style I have never worn before
 I would be lying, and it would not be me

My mother is the kind of mother who cares about her daughters
 She always asks to see what we buy and helps us choose
 If I buy any outfit that she disapproves of
 She will make me hate it and never wear it again

I am the youngest daughter
 I feel there is a large gap between me and my mother
 I like her taste for the classic pieces
 She does not understand the current fashion
 We always have a long negotiation

My friend accompanied me
 It was so fun to shop with someone my age
 I crossed out more stuff on my shopping list

I avoided buying fabric designs with Disney princesses or teddy bears
 They are very cute, and I really wanted to buy them
 I do not think these are appropriate for married women
 I was afraid to give my husband the wrong impression

I made my decision based on the styles
 I wanted to feel the change in my life
 This might help me accept other changes in my new married life
 I decided to go out away from my usual

I bought all the styles that I was not allowed to wear as a single woman
 Revealing, short, and open back styles
 I like that I have the freedom to buy whatever
 Not limited to or concern about what my father will say
 Or if my mother will disapprove of it

I started buying the visiting garments first
 My fiancé and I both have a large family
 All the relatives invite us for dinner
 I want to be prepared for all of these dinner invitations
 I will be the guest of honor at all of these dinners
 I will be in the spotlight
 My appearance should always be top notch

A newlywed should be a little bit overdressed
 This is how she shows her happiness
 That she transitioned well to her new life
 I am a newlywed who is happy in my life

My purchases will help me move on and accept my new identity

It helps a bride-to-be to imagine this new life
 The *dabash* helps take some stress out
 The *dabash* helps me be more confident about myself
 Feeling well prepared and ready for a new journey
 I have never been a wife before
 I have never had a relationship with a man

It is one way to express my love to him
 I want to fulfill his vision
 I want him to see me as the most beautiful woman in the world
 The wife should meet her husband's emotional and sexual needs
 The way I dress for him will help me with that

There will be more people at these dinner events
 I followed my mother's advice and suggestions
 She knows how older people think
 Her comments made me feel so confident
 I knew I made very good purchase decisions

I disagreed with my mother about the gold jewelry
 I took a picture of all of the gold jewelry pieces
 We let all my siblings and my father vote
 Everyone agreed with me
 My mother gave up and let me buy what I wanted

It is very important for the bride and newlywed wives to wear gold jewelry
 People expect newlywed wives to display their gold jewelry
 The gold jewelry is the capital and wealth of the women

Having something old in your new environment makes you feel comfortable
 It will help me adjust with my new life
 It reminds me of my days as a single woman
 Helps me relax and bring me happy memories

The most important part of my role as a wife is to maintain my old self
 I do not think that to be a good wife I should erase my old identity
 I will just add the wife role to my identity
 I disagree with some brides who change their styles completely
 I will change some of my style to dress fancier
 I am still young and will not dress like an older woman

It is so hard and confusing for me to purchase the lingerie
 I could not imagine myself wearing anything too revealing
 Some lingerie looks scary
 It is like being naked
 I will never wear something like that

How? Why? What is it supposed to cover?
I do not think it should be at that level of lewdness

Many parts of married life are unknown and unexplored for me
I do not understand this new wife thing
I do not think I should shop for the lingerie alone
I need some guidance
I will listen to my mother and sister on this one
My husband might think I am not excited and happy about our marriage
I do not want to give my husband the wrong impression

I like the idea of having all my stuff organized for me in my new house
It allows both families to share the happiness of the new couple
It allows the bride to feel pampered
Without me making any effort, like a queen

I took so long, more than three months
Browsing wedding gowns on Instagram
I shared these pictures with my mother and sisters
I started eliminating some of them
I wanted the dress to compliment my body

I want my dress to stick in my guests' memories
I want them to remember my wedding dress forever
I don't want to be like other brides
All the brides' dresses look alike
I insisted on adding the peach color to the lining of my gown

It was not easy to convince my mother
She had a problem with adding a color with the white
She tried to convince to change my mind
She said for over a hundred years all the brides wear a white gown

I want to be the first bride to break the rules and the white dress tradition
She said I am crazy
I told her I am fine with being crazy
I told her she will destroy my dream wedding gown
After many days of negotiation...she said yes. The minute she agreed
Oh, I was so happy
I cannot wait to try it on

Fayha

I started my wedding preparation before I got engaged
It is not common, but I am an optimistic person
I started preparing early and saved time and money

Shop in phases rather than in a short period of time and limited money

I experienced feelings of conflict
 I decided I have enough ...then decided to buy more
 I had spent all the budget for home and clothing
 Then I found something very unique
 I am weak in front of beautiful things
 I cannot control myself
 I couldn't stop myself from getting it
 It was calling me to buy it
 If I buy it and regret buying it, feels better than regretting not buying it

It is our first meeting, and I want to dress modestly
 I looked for something modest but that also showed part of my body
 I brought the dress especially for this event
 My mother went shopping with me and advised me
 I'm hoping he is impressed and likes what he sees

It's a once in a lifetime opportunity
 I wanted others to share my happiness
 Hold all possible events and celebrations
 We were ushered repeatedly at different occasions, and I enjoyed it each time
 I wanted to celebrate to the fullest
 Happy moments meant to be shared with as many people as possible

I had nine suitcases, three clothing racks
 Five boxes and baskets for my makeup, personal care products
 kitchen accessories, shoes, and prayer clothes
 It was a joyous moment
 My male relatives waited outside to load all my stuff in the pickup truck
 The women gathered singing and dancing and showed our joy

The wedding celebrations are memorable and special
 I carefully selected my dresses
 I chose the tiffany color because no one had worn it before
 I want to save them for good memories
 I will wear them after my wedding to relive these memorable moments

Alhamduillah (Thank Allah), all my dresses were liked
 They were amazed by my appearance
 I received positive comments about every detail of my appearance
 I felt a high level of self-confidence
 I knew that I made the right decisions
 Do not receive a single criticism
 I was floating in the air from happiness

Anyone from Medina has to wear *Al-medini* costume
 Now brides have other options to wear in their *ghomrah*
 I didn't want to miss out on wearing *Al-medini* costume
Al-medini ushering of the bride (on a two step stool) is special
 I remember seeing my cousins being ushered and desired to have one too

My mother was the main influence
 I trust her opinion
 My father's opinion also matters to me
 He thinks ripped jeans are embarrassing
 Out of respect for my father I did not purchase any
 I felt guilty about buying them
 Even if they're not there to watch what I'm purchasing
 There's something inside me stopping me

The way my parents raised me will have an impact on me
 There will always be my parents' influence over me
 The way we dress shows the standard of the family we belong to
 People will say: "How do her parents let her wear that?"

The most important item was the lingerie
 As a single woman I've never worn lingerie
 All other garments I've worn as single
 It was exciting to shop for something new
 I even displayed my first night wedding sleepwear on a dress form
 For suspense and so my fiancé can feel my presence
 Every time he goes to our apartment until the wedding day

My favorite product is my makeup collection
 I spend more money on makeup than any other products
 When I see makeup, I can't control myself
 I will wear make-up every day
 To feel the change and live the happiness
 It's a new life
 I want him to see me on the top of my beauty (best) every day

I prepared a suitcase with my old clothing
 Every piece of my clothing has special memory and has a place in my heart
 I wanted to take it after the wedding
 My mom said, "No, just give it to charity."
 My mother thinks it's shameful
 I am afraid she will donate it to charity while I'm on my honeymoon

I can't believe a bride-to-be will change her wardrobe 100%
 The only exception is the husband
 The wife will dress differently in front of him

I will be a daughter-in-law
 I need to pay attention to what I will wear in front of my in-laws
 I need to be very careful and chose my dress wisely
 I need to be respectful
 I don't want to disrespect them by wearing revealing clothes
 I still don't know which level of modesty they prefer
 I want them to have a good first impression about me
 I want my in-laws to know that my parents have raised me well
 After marriage, I should be mature and show that by the way I dress

I went to Turkey and found a wedding gown that caught my attention
 I had chosen a different style from the beginning
 I ran into an eye-catching gown that I was glued to
 I dreamt and envisioned a certain style, and that's exactly what I found
 I felt like it was unique and different from all the gowns I had seen

I don't want people to criticize me
 I know I cannot please everyone
 The safest approach is to wear a less revealing gown

It was unforgettable moment!
 Happy because it will be my dream day
 I felt overwhelmingly happy, nervous, and sad
 This white wedding gown is a sign of the end of the road
 I am moving from one stage of life to another
 I am not coming back to my parents' home after I wear it
 I will leave my family to go live with my husband
 We had mixed feelings
 I do not know if it were tears of joy or sadness

Nalah

I prefer to shop online
 It's more convenient and comfortable for me
 It allows me to be in the comfort of my own home
 Everything at my fingertips

In Medina they don't have all the brands that I like
 Shopping online is the only way I can get those items
 I stopped shopping at the malls and physical stores
 I avoid wearing any trends that I've seen repeated in stores
 Get sick of seeing the same style
 All of the items look the same... have similar apparel and style
 I found myself shopping at stores that no one else would shop from

I don't know why I try so hard to be unique
 If I see someone else wearing the same shirt that I have
 I would return it or give it away
 I would get depressed
 It would be like wearing a uniform
 Nobody else does this...I am abnormal

Most of the luxury stores do not have retail stores in Medina
 My mom suggested that I buy the knockoffs
 If I can't afford the real thing, I do not want it
 They have higher quality items
 ASOS has a very unique, elegant apparel style
 I was so happy with my decision to purchase them
 I was so excited!
 I like to have a somewhat unique aspect to my collection

I'm against the idea of the *shofa*
 Before we were officially engaged
 Didn't want my potential groom to see
 Why would I allow a guy to come look at me
 I am not good at knowing whether he liked me or not
 Men care about a woman's appearance more than anything else

On the *melka* day, I wanted to look as natural as possible
 I chose something simple
 To not distract my fiancé and take attention away from my facial features
 I picked this particular dress because I got a lot of compliments
 It didn't take me long to decide to wear this dress

Two weeks after the *melka*, I held my *shabkah*
 The first thing that I purchased was my dress
 I chose one I saw on Instagram
 I chose a fabric and got a customized dress that was made for me
 I wanted to look very beautiful and wear a fancy design

Living in a society that cares a lot about other people's perception of us
 I think our decisions are influenced highly by society
 It is hard to not follow the tradition that has been set forth
 I didn't know if I was ready to be married at this point in my life
 I wanted to get a job and start my career before being a wife
 We live in a society that pressures women to get married at a young age

The entire process of the wedding shopping is influenced by other people
 A big part of that preparation (*dabash*) is to display
 People will observe what has been bought
 More people can observe the *dabash* through pictures posted on social media

This makes you care more because the audience is more broad

The amount of the purchases can be exaggerated
 A bride-to-be can be judged for how prepared she is
 How well she shopped for her life after the wedding
 It is not only the new bride but of her family as well
 My actions affect my parent's reputation
 I don't want to tarnish their name

The bride is the center of attention for the first couple of months
 I will be under a microscope and inspected by those around me
 What I'm wearing, how my makeup looks
 The newlywed's appearance has to be grander
 Her appearance must look better than everyone else's

The gold pieces and sets are very important
 Choosing the large sets are a must
 Half of my dowry was spent on gold jewelry
 Not wearing gold impacts my reputation
 My family will get talked about badly
 Like my family is stingy and didn't prepare me well

I have to consider my audience
 I want to look nice in front of my in-laws
 I have to make sure what I'm wearing is appropriate
 Wear something within the social guidelines
 Modest; not see-through, short, or revealing
 This isn't to please others, this is to respect others

I have to make my purchases based on my personal preferences
 I really based my choices on myself, my style
 My opinion is the only one that matters to me
 It's my wedding, my purchases, and my decisions
 I really didn't listen to what my sisters or mom were advising
 I was the easiest to help shop in my wedding preparation out of all my sisters
 I know what I want; it makes my shopping experience a lot easier

I listened to them for part of my *dabash* purchases
 The first night traditional wear
 I'm not convinced
 Why does it have to be white?
 Why does it have to be long?
 Why do I have to follow it?
 My mother is the one who insists that I do this
 I've come around to saying okay to doing it--for her

The lingerie, because I have never purchased before
 I asked my married sister and mom
 They have the experience in this, and I do not
 There are some pieces of lingerie that are very revealing
 I would not be comfortable wearing it
 So the lingerie I have chosen to buy is long

My mother really wanted me to have a *ghomrah*
 She said that I would look so good in the *medini* costume
 I cannot imagine myself wearing the traditional bridal costume
 All of the traditional bridal costumes look weird
 I feel if I wore the costume it would not be sincere

I show my family everything that I purchase
 I will not call it influence, I'll call it--sharing
 I'm not showing them to ask for their approval or affirmation
 Sharing these items with my family lets them in on the celebration and happiness

Their compliments make me feel happy
 It feels good when they compliment me
 It makes me like the item more
 It makes me more excited to wear it
 These responses make me feel more confident in what I bought
 I would keep a mental list of the compliments that he gave me

If they were to criticize the item
 Give me negative comments about my purchases
 I don't listen and ignore comments that are questioning my purchases
 I won't regret the item I purchased
 I will feel more conflicted and upset that they don't like it
 It also leads me to keep the item all the more
 I feel that those kinds of comments should just be kept to themselves
 Getting comments like that bring my day down and steal my happiness

Without makeup on I feel dull and plain...pale and tired looking
 I will be wearing makeup exclusively for my husband
 So that he doesn't feel he is faced with a careless and pale looking woman.
 I think every female should use makeup to enhance her beauty and femininity

It is very important for the bride to use only brand new things
 Psychologically it can make it easier to adjust to her new life
 Maybe it will prepare her better to be a wife
 After the transition period, I can relax and loosen up with what I wear

Every girl has her ideal wedding
 I've dreamt about this day for a long time

I designed my dress
 The fabric was very unique
 Looking more elegant, more fancy, and looking more like the princess style

There is some influence from the media
 I first browsed wedding gown styles on Instagram
 I had an idea of what I already wanted
 It is very important that my wedding gown is comfortable
 Walking in the wedding gown, being mobile, is more important
 I ended up combining two styles that I really liked on Instagram

The media has a negative influence on me
 The celebrity weddings will cause you to become depressed or deeply jealous
 Longing to have more...to do at my own wedding
 I know that I should be content with what I have for my wedding, but we are human

Norah

I have access to different shops other than the Saudi ones
 The quality and prices are much better
 In the Saudi marketplace they over exaggerate the price
 It's cheaper to get it online even for the same brand

I am fascinated by handbags and watches
 They show that I am elegant and unique
 I am always the most elegant person at every gathering
 Uniqueness is a good thing
 I feel more confident, and I like my look
 I feel good when everyone around me compliments my bag

It is important for me to buy luxury brands for handbags and watches
 I am the only one who buys Moschino handbags in the family
 I am crazy about the Moschino brand
 I am extremely in love with the Versace brand
 This Versace watch is my favorite product

We broke the traditional Saudi engagement sequence of events
 The *shofa* was unplanned
 We all met each other coincidentally
 My fiancé liked me and wants to marry me
 I believe it was love at first sight

My mother-in-law held the engagement party at her house
 That was the only celebration I had
 It was a mixed gender, family party
 I was looking for something modest

My friends are planning to hold a bachelorette party
 It is not part of our culture
 Now it has been adopted by Saudi culture
 I think it is nice to do something different and new
 We do not have to stick to the traditions all the time
 The bride-to-be can be herself with close friends who are her age
 No older people are allowed
 Without having to worry about breaking the rules of tradition

I like it when they [her sisters] go shopping with me
 All my older sisters are married and busy
 My mother said that she does not want to interfere with my *dabash*
 She told me that I should be independent and only ask her if I need help
 When they say positive things, I feel so happy

Their culture was different than ours
 I felt awkward explaining Saudi culture to my fiancé
 I felt cultural conflicts between my culture and my fiancé's culture

He doesn't understand a lot of marriage aspects from Saudi culture
 My fiancé doesn't understand the importance of the *dabash*
 He thought the bride only needed to shop for the wedding day
 He said that is so weird
 He never heard of such a thing called *dabash*

I prefer our way
 I prefer to be ready in advance and not wait until after the wedding
 A bride will have enough to be concerned with
 Trying to cope and adapt to her new life, new partner, and new home

When I shop for my *dabash* I took into consideration how others will perceive me
 I try to wear simpler clothes with them
 I do not want their perception of me to be that I am showing off

I come from a very different background
 My judgment for what's simple and what's fancy may differ from theirs
 I want to respect my in-laws and my husband's culture
 Without completely adopting their culture
 I still want to keep my Saudi culture

I tried to be in the middle between Saudi culture and my in-laws' culture
 I wanted to wear something that showed respect to their culture
 My engagement party dress was fancy, but long and long-sleeved
 My in-laws still thought I was overdressed for the engagement party
 I told them this is how Saudi brides usually look

Choosing the turban or the scarf to cover my hair
 I heard there might be discrimination against Muslim women
 So I decided I will only get the turbans
 They may think it is just for style and not religious
 Turbans fall somewhere between satisfying people and satisfying God
 I don't want to stand out
 I thought the turban would help me more than the scarf to blend in

I mostly experienced feelings of conflict when I shopped for the lingerie
 I got so overwhelmed and confused
 I've never bought lingerie
 I do not know anything about lingerie
 I had to go with one of my older married sisters
 They understand lingerie better than I do

I am not totally satisfied with the lingerie I got
 I even regret buying some of them
 I felt some lingerie pieces are not me and do not represent my taste or style
 I think I should first get to know him better

I have suffered from norms, culture, and tradition
 Do not reopen old wounds
 I always like to do things that are unaccepted in Saudi culture
 I pierced my nose and my lip
 I was the talk of the town for so long
 They judged and criticized me to my face and behind my back
 I had to hide for a while until they forgot about my piercing
 Before colored *abaya* became popular, I decided to buy a colored *abaya*

I must be careful not to get out of the norm
 Start my war against traditions again
 They will judge me if I am underdressed, especially as a newlywed

I experienced some feelings of conflict because of the colors
 I like dark colors
 It is not appropriate for the newlywed to wear darker colors
 People will think I am not happy with my marriage
 I got lighter and brighter colors
 Brighter colors represent happiness

As a married woman, I want to have a new look
 With my *dabash* I did a complete turnaround
 I diversified and changed my regular style
 To reflect my transition from a single lady to a married woman
 I did buy darker lipstick colors for the first time in my life

Now I plan to wear high heels more regularly

I have never worn dark lipstick colors before
Men like the red lipstick
There is connection between men and shades of red
He immediately commented, he said "I love the red on you."

I would give him 50% from my *dabash* to choose
He is my life partner
The wife should dress up for her husband and look beautiful for him
Appearance matters in the beginning

Husbands comment and pay attention to what the wife wears
I have to wear attractive clothing
Men are visually attracted
Husband's rights to see his wife nicely dressed for him
I am planning to wake up before my husband to apply makeup

I want him to see me looking beautiful
I want to look as beautiful as I can for him
It will also influence my husband's mood
When my husband is satisfied that makes me happy
It will help me in my role as a wife
Musk Al-Tahara is especially important for all married women
It is safe to use on sensitive areas

For the wedding dress I asked my mother for advice
I will be wearing it in front of a lot of guests
I will be under the spotlight
I would wear a very simple wedding gown
They said no to the simple wedding gown
They believe the bride's beauty is in her fancy puffy dress
In Saudi Arabia, all brides must wear very fancy wedding gowns

All the wedding gowns are so costly
It goes up to 30,000 SR (\$8,000 USD)
I do not want to spend a lot of money
I will only wear it once in my life...only for few hours
I am hesitating between buying one or renting one
I am leaning towards renting more than buying
The people really do not know if you own the dress or are renting it

Rania

My father passed away, and I don't want to ask my brothers to pay
I know my brothers have their own responsibility

I wrote each category I need to shop
 I set the amount I want to spend on each one
 I did not exceed this amount

I am an only daughter
 I've never seen the marriage preparation with a sister
 I asked my aunt who helped her daughters with their shopping preparations
 I followed all of their advice
 My mother influenced my decision
 I trust my mother's taste
 She knows better what is appropriate for a bride to wear

For my *shofa* I tried to be as natural as possible
 I was looking for something that showed my body size
 I did not purchase it for my *shofa*, I had it before
 I wore my hair down

I had many mixed emotions on my *shofa* day
 I felt scared, confused, sad, and happy
 It was a weird feeling
 I remember shaking and standing by the door
 The idea of meeting a stranger was scary
 It was my first time sitting with a stranger without my hijab on

I did not see my fiancé on the *fatiha* day
 We already met at the *shofa*, and that was enough
 He should have to wait until the *melka* to see me again
 I want to wear something new
 I have a lot of outfits in my closet I could have worn
 But I did not feel like a bride
 I purchased it especially for the *fatiha* occasion
 The minute I put it on, I felt like a bride!

We are officially engaged
 I wanted our first time together after *melka* to be special
 I think it is the most important day
 I wanted to look as pretty as I can be
 I wanted to look hot
 I wanted my fiancé to say, "Ooh, my future wife looks gorgeous"

There are a lot of restrictions on what she should wear at the *shofa*
 The *melka* is the first day the bride has the freedom to present herself by her look
 I was wearing a red dress
 The red color attracts men in general
 They call it "the love color"
 I immediately made my decision

I was so happy because he really liked my dress
His compliment about my dress was enough

For my *shabkha* dress, I wanted to have a modest dress
I did not want the dress to be revealing
I still feel shy to wear revealing clothing
in front of my fiancé and all the guests, especially my in-laws

I looked through social media for the latest styles
My mother and my aunt went shopping with me
I wanted to wear a new color I have never worn before
I usually wear darker colors

They all told me, “You look like a queen in the dress”
It made me feel so happy
I can’t even describe how happy I was
I can’t explain to you how it feels
I was so pleased to hear compliments

Uniqueness satisfies my ego
The bride will have better and unique items
I don’t know why; to feel different
As a newlywed I want to feel unique
It feels good that I have a piece nobody else has

Brides like to draw attention and hear compliments
It will make me happy!
It is hard to decide, as I did not wear them yet
After I wear my new clothes, they will be connected to certain memories
That will determine which of them will become my favorite

In the end the bride’s *dabash* reflects her
The *dabash* will help in preparing me for this new role
Every new product I buy means a new life
All of these materials help me accept the fact that I’m getting married
It is actually helping me count down to the big day
Makes me aware of how soon this is happening
It will ease the transition
Moving it to my new house is a new phase
I realize that means I’m moving and leaving my parents’ house
I’m not the spoiled daughter anymore
I will have more responsibilities as a wife

I purchased different styles than when I was single
I want people to see the difference in my style as a married woman
Pink is a feminine color

I avoided buying the light pink
 It is cold and unattractive
 It is more for little girls

As a single lady, I am shy about wearing revealing clothes
 As a married woman, I want to wear revealing
 It is more acceptable for a married woman to wear revealing clothes
 I will have more freedom to wear whatever I want without being judged

Home clothing is the most important category
 I got much home clothing
 I wanted to have as much variety as possible
 As a newlywed, I should not repeat my clothes
 I don't want for my husband to get bored from seeing me in the same outfits

During the engagement there are restrictions in the way I dress
 After marriage all these restrictions are removed
 I am not single anymore
 I wanted to buy attractive clothes
 I want him to view me as sexy and to please his eye
 It is important because it represents the intimate relationship
 I want to tempt my husband
 I do not want him to see any other female in the world but me!

I have experienced feelings of conflict and hesitated
 I did have some conflict with the lingerie
 I was reluctant as to whether I'd be shy to wear these clothes
 I have never worn before
 My mom asked me to show her
 I said no it is not covering anything
 I hid my home clothes purchases from my mother
 I even have some pieces that I couldn't try on
 I felt too shy to try on such very revealing lingerie

I noticed that all the sleepwear I have is short
 I don't know how I'm going to wear the other revealing sleepwear and lingerie
 I feel they barely cover any part of my body
 I need some long cotton pajamas
 With these new pajamas, I feel safe that I have backup

I liked the idea of someone organizing my stuff
 It is nice to be pampered
 I asked my mother to reduce the number of guests who are going on the dabash night
 I will not display everything
 Everything else will be wrapped and covered
 All my dresses will be inside the dress bags

I asked my fiancé what he wanted me to wear in public
 I show him respect by asking his opinion from the beginning
 I did not want to wait until I am on my honeymoon to know his preference
 Wear something he doesn't approve and ruin my honeymoon

He is from a tribal family
 I want to wear something acceptable within his family
 His family are conservative and do not wear revealing or short clothes
 I will choose very modest [clothes]
 I want to fit in and not stand out

I want my wedding to be the best, and my husband to be amazed by my look
 I searched on the internet for the 2017 bridal fashion and trends
 I visited all the bridal stores/boutiques to see their new collections
 I was looking for inspiration to design my wedding gown
 Each gown in this boutique is unique
 They only sell one piece of each style
 It was satisfying knowing that nobody will have the same dress as me
 Allow you to customize part of the dress
 It was a very unique dress

All mothers have their dream and wishes about their daughter's wedding dress
 My mother told me that it has to be modest to avoid people's criticism
 You know this is the day when all the lights and eyes are on the bride
 My mother wants what is best for me
 I compromised with my mother
 I will try to meet my mother half way to make us both satisfied
 I chose a long sleeve one but with a slightly revealing back and collar opening.
 I try to balance between what I like and what my mother likes

Raseel

In Jeddah, it takes me so long until I find something I like
 To shop for my *dabash*, I traveled to Dubai
 It has a variety of options that I can choose from
 It was intensive shopping, morning to night
 I did not stick with the list
 I liked the idea of just buying what I liked as I walked
 My mother and my younger sister helped me
 I care about my mother, and I try to meet her in the middle

I did not get a chance to prepare for the *shofa*
 There was no time to think about what to wear
 I was planning to just wear my *abaya*
 His mother said he has the right to see his future wife without the *abaya*

I did not have time to make a decision
 I grabbed the first modest outfit I saw in my closet
 I wore a formal outfit: black trousers with a white shirt

My *fatiha* was a very small party
 I went shopping with my mother looking for an appropriate dress
 I wanted something modest
 My mother picked an evening dress that was strapless
 I told her no way I will meet him with a strapless dress
 We only met once, I don't know what my mother was thinking
 I chose a dress with high lace neck and long sleeves
 It is between what my mother wants and what I want
 It is covered and modest, and yet it has sheer lace in the sleeves and the neck
 I want them to see me as simple and pretty

Oh, for the *melka* dress I had to fight my family so hard
 For about a month we were going shopping every day
 We visited all bridal stores and boutiques in Jeddah
 They wanted me to wear something bride-like
 Very fancy, puffy, embroidered, and expensive dress
 I wanted a very simple, plain, light evening dress
 I want them to see me as I am
 Simple and does not like to wear complicated things

They tried to convince me with many other dresses, but I resisted
 I continued fighting to the end
 It was more important for me to please myself
 If I wore something I don't like, I would be depressed all night
 I finally found a dress I like
 I got a plain simple dress, as I want, and puffy with train, as mother wants

I don't feel there is need for this *ghomrah* party
 I feel all of those marriage celebration events are only for social courtesy
 If it's up to me, I would cancel all of those events
 Two celebrations are enough
 I have more stuff to worry about than those unnecessary celebrations

One of my friends surprised me with a spa bridal shower
 It was so fun
 I enjoyed it
 I could just be myself
 I didn't need to prepare for it
 We did massage, facial, and wore different masks
 We were wearing our robes and slippers

I will not display any of my new purchases

This event is bullshit
 What's the purpose of people gathering to see what I purchased?
 How this event traditionally happens, they don't let the bride attend
 I strongly disagreed and refused
 I'm not going to move not even one piece of my purchases there
 Why the pressure?
 Why move everything in one night?
 My fiancé gave me the key for our new apartment
 I could move them gradually

Our society thinks, every bride-to-be needs a new wardrobe
 This entire dabash idea is a waste of money
 I think this is just social rules people made up
 I am very stubborn, and I do not care how others respond
 I do not care if they do not approve
 It is not their business
 If it's up to me, I would only buy what I don't have
 Categories...such as the home clothing and lingerie

My mother said it is not appropriate to just get married with my old stuff
 My mother and sisters would not insist about buying all of these items
 I don't understand why I can't take my old stuff
 My mother understands the culture and the traditions
 She will tell me if I am crossing the line
 Without her I would not know if I am crossing the line
 I do not want to disrespect either him or his family by crossing any cultural line
 Some stupid tradition is okay to ignore
 Some hold deep meaning in the culture, and I do not want to accidentally ignore

I never understood those people who change their way of dressing after getting married
 I like classic style, and I will continue wearing that after getting married
 I'm not going to change completely just because I'm getting married
 Everything else will stay the same
 The only new identity to me is wife
 I do not think it will help me in my role as a wife

After I get married, I have to dress nicely when I am home with my husband
 I cannot just be in my pajamas all the time.
 Men pay attention to the woman's appearance
 I want to look pretty for my husband
 Dressing nicely represents my care and love for him
 It shows how hard the wife is working to build the new marital relationship
 The wife's appearance is the physical part that symbolizes the emotional part
 All the woman buy lingerie for their husband's happiness; not for themselves
 I want to make my husband happy by wearing the lingerie

As a wife I will not dress the same way I was dressing in my parents' home
 I know he likes tight fitting, revealing clothes
 I wanted to impress my fiancé
 It was not a clear choice at all
 I felt so much conflict
 I was so confused
 I know my fiancé will love these pieces, but they are not me
 I wanted to wear something that represents my taste
 I found some pieces that are kind of between both my taste and his taste

My favorite products are my shoes collection
 I got around 17 shoes
 I am obsessed with shoes
 I shopped for my shoes, until I felt satisfied
 When I go outside, I wear my abaya
 The only thing that shows is my shoes
 You can only see my shoes

I went shopping for my wedding gown
 I had a certain style on my mind
 I was looking for a lace, long sleeve, off shoulder wedding gown
 I am a simple modest person, and I want my dress to represent this simplicity and modesty
 I want everyone in my wedding to see this
 When I found the dress, I knew it was the one
 I liked it and stuck with it
 It was like it was made for me
 I was afraid to ask how much it is or to look at the price tag
 I told my mother and sister to look at the price tag
 Before I tried it on and fell in love with it.

Reetal

I was going shopping weekly for about two months
 I made a shopping list to keep myself on track and not overspend
 I do not want to spend the dowry all in events and celebrations
 I used the money to get the laser hair removal sessions
 To get chemical peel acne treatment
 I want him to see me beautiful from the beginning of our life together
 With no body hair or acne

Must ask for other people's opinion before I make any purchase decision
 I trust my sister's opinion more
 She's closer in age to me and knows more about youth fashion

It was important for me to look beautiful on my *shofa* day
 Dress to show my femininity

The dress I wore flattered my body
 Men are observant, and the first thing they notice in a girl is their body shape
 I tested that with my mother and sister
 I walked around and showed them how it looks on me from different angles

The *melka* was so small and short
 After we signed the marriage contract, my fiancé gave me the wedding ring
 I wore a simple evening dress and wore some makeup
 When I went shopping for my *melka* dress
 I took a picture of it and called my sister and sent her the dress picture
 When my sister approved of my choice, I bought it

The key factor was for the dress to be long and to have long sleeves
 I have very bad acne on my shoulders, and I do not like to show it
 I did not want to wear something that makes me look fat

I did not find a long-sleeved dress for my *shabkah*
 I went shopping with my mother and my sister
 I got one strapless
 I was not totally satisfied with it
 I hate it because it shows the acne on my shoulder
 I tried to cover it with makeup, but it didn't cover it completely

I will not dress the same as married women
 Give more attention to my clothes than when I am a single woman
 The most important categories
 The home clothes and the lingerie
 My favorite is the makeup

I want him to see me wearing elegant, nice clothes
 I want to look beautiful for him
 I want him to be attracted to me
 Show my femininity more
 I will exclusively wear for him
 I think it is preparing both of us to our new life together
 Like ice breaking in our new marital relationship

I want my fiancé to flatter me and compliment me and my dress
 It made me want to dress up all the time
 I will feel confident, and I will love that outfit more
 I would like to wear it more often

Not only the home clothes and the lingerie
 All the dabash I get for my husband
 People will not say this is Reetal, they will say this is Khalid's wife
 Especially with in my in-laws

Everyone in my in-laws wants to meet the new daughter-in-law
I want to look good

The wedding preparation purchases
So stressful for the bride-to-be
It is like an exam you need to study for to pass
People will be watching me to see if I pass or fail
If I am wearing something very fancy, they will say I am over prepared and wasted my dowry
If I don't over dress, they would say I am a stingy person who did not prepare well for her wedding
I don't know what I should buy and what I shouldn't buy
How much I should spend, and how many items and garments will I really need

I ask my sister's and my mother's opinion before I do anything
I trust them
I feel safe when I ask them before I make any decision
They have lived longer and learned a lot in this life
They will tell me if I'm doing something wrong
They will prevent me from crossing the line
They will tell me if I am going too far and doing something unacceptable

The bride will not be a bride without wearing a lot of gold
This is how people will distinguish the newlywed
Gold jewelry sets are strongly connected with marriage and the bride
It has something to do with representing happiness

It was not a clear choice at all
It took me so long to making a decision
I experienced so many conflicts
I do not want to wear a puffy wedding dress
I do not think puffy wedding gown styles look good on me
They make me look fat

All the evening dresses are designed for skinny girls
How about the regular girls?
I'm just average weight
I saw a lot of evening dresses I like
They made my body shape look funny
I made my decision about the style I want
The mermaid style makes me look skinnier than I actually am

Suad

It was nice but exhausting
I enjoyed it, but it was overwhelming
To learn about the social expectations

What a bride is supposed to buy and look like
 I did a lot of research looking at what other brides were purchasing
 I asked my sisters, relatives, and friends who have been married

I relied on my two elder sisters a lot
 They helped me tremendously
 They had more shopping experience than me
 I wanted my family's input because they have experience and love me
 I took their advice because they know what life after marriage is like
 Only want to set me up for success following my wedding

I prefer to shop alone
 I don't like anyone to distract while shopping
 I have a limited scheduled time
 When I shop with someone, it takes longer
 I like to take my time and make decisions carefully
 Then heard their input and comments

It began when the groom's mother and sister came to visit us
 Everyone in my family downplayed the first visit
 They thought it was only a prospect and nothing else
 They didn't think it was as important as the *shofa* day
 The groom's family usually tells the groom everything about the potential bride
 I just felt I had to wear something new for this event
 I couldn't wear something old
 After all, it is the starting point of a new life

I went shopping to buy something nice and appropriate to wear
 I got a midi skirt, a nice top, and heels
 I usually feel nervous when I choose what to wear for an important occasion
 This first meeting is the most important one
 His family would be getting their first and lifetime impression of me
 I did not want to give his family the wrong impression about me

I did experience some feelings of conflict
 I was not sure if it was fitting for the occasion
 I couldn't decide between long and short sleeves
 I texted all my friends who recently got married and asked them
 They advised me to wear something modest and simple
 My friends told me "don't mess around"
 Too revealing and short--they'd think I was rebellious and dress inappropriately

The *shofa* day was the most stressful time
 It was a nerve-racking day
 It was the first time meeting a strange man
 What should I wear? How should I sit and walk?

Who could potentially become my future husband
 I worry whether you will like him and vice versa
 Continually over think what impression I will have of him

Surely the whole family had a say in what I wore
 That day was the ultimate day of modesty
 My father laid down the rules and restrictions
 My mother and sisters sorted what I had in my closet
 I began trying on the different suggested pieces
 They all agreed on the turquoise shirt I wore, as it met all the criteria
 And even a scarf on my head
 It complimented my body and skin tone and was modest

Although showing the hair is allowed on this day, my father insisted I cover it
 I felt the occasion called for buying a new outfit
 Initially, I wanted to wear something new
 I purchased a beige shirt, but didn't end up wearing it
 It went against my father's rules because it was $\frac{3}{4}$ -sleeves
 My father made it clear that only my hands could show

The *melka* is when the marriage contract is written
 Usually only close friends and family attend this event
 The bride-to-be is expected to dress up
 It's the first time the couple meets as husband and wife
 I searched Instagram for the latest styles
 I went to the mall to look for similar styles
 I didn't like any of the dresses at the specialty shops
 They were all too fancy
 I liked non-ball gowns
 I spotted a dress that my sister and I agreed on

What I wanted wasn't how it turned out
 I wanted something very simple: dress, hair, and makeup
 Nothing extravagant or over-the-top
 I didn't want my face to look unnatural
 But everyone kept telling me, "No, you are a bride!"
 "You have to go all out and have a full blast bridal makeup and lavish hairstyle"
 I did not like my hairstyle
 It makes my hair feel superficial, and it just isn't me
 I thought my makeup and hair style would complement my dress
 But it did the opposite
 It messed up my entire look

In the end I didn't do what I wanted to do, and instead did what people wanted me to do
 They didn't force me, but I listened to them
 I didn't know what to do; I have no experience in getting married

I listened because they've been married and been through this
 My friends didn't want people to talk and say things like I was unprepared
 It would also look bad to the parents-in-law, saying things like "I don't care"
 In my actual wedding, I'm not going to listen to them
 I'm going to have light makeup and not be lavish
 I'm the bride, and I'm going to do what I want

The *shabkah*, on the other hand, is a larger event
 I wanted to hold mine at home, but ended up having it at a hall
 It took me more than a week to shop for this event
 I went everyday--looking for a dress, shoes, tiara, flower bouquet, and party favors
 I wore a simple dress
 I didn't go through a long process of deciding what to wear, like the *melka*
 I found a dress that I liked and my sisters also approved of

I also wore lighter makeup for the *shabkah*
 I wanted to look like a bride, unique, and not like a regular guest
 But I still wanted to look like myself
 I wanted to look like a bride, but I didn't want to be unnatural
 I don't like the idea of looking in a mirror and not recognizing my own reflection
 I feel like I achieved my desired look at my *shabkah*

I don't want to add the *ghomrah* to that too
 The wedding and the *dabash* are enough for me
 I've had enough occasions
 I'm exhausted from all the planning and events
 It would also incur more costs
 It's too much to think about

The bride has to only get new clothes and get rid of all the old clothes
 I know that this is the representation of a new life
 I should have new clothes as a newlywed
 All the attention and focus will be on me
 With everyone concerned with what I am wearing and how I look

But I'm also going to keep my old items and take them with me
 When I'm with my family, or friends, I will wear my old clothes
 The clothes and lingerie that I wear in front of my husband will be all new
 I never had to dress in front of my husband or in front of my father-in-law
 I'm going to buy all new clothing for this

The bride should dress up for her husband
 The wife should be attractive to her husband both physically and emotionally
 Using products that compliment her body, and dress and smell and look appropriate
 Will only help me as a wife in looking and attracting my husband

There are a lot of items, that culturally we hear that a bride should have or should wear
 If you don't, you'll be judged negatively
 Says that I was unprepared or that my family didn't care
 I didn't want my in-laws to talk badly about my family
 I felt pressure and caved in

In the end, I want to purchase stuff that I like and I want
 I can't say that I don't care about what people say about me
 But I do want my clothes and style to be reflective of me
 I don't want to wear or buy items just to please other people
 If purchasing something will bother close people like my family
 It is not worth upsetting my mother over it

The bridal henna design is a cultural and social must
 I did not like the orange henna color
 I'll have enough colors on me on my wedding day already
 I want to be simple and not have too many designs on me
 I asked my fiancé if it mattered to him
 He said no, so I decided to forgo this social expectation

I usually like and wear simple styles
 I don't like complicated styles
 I prefer simple, smaller pieces of gold accessories
 My mother always criticizes my gold
 She says gold has to look fancy and large, not small and simple
 My sister and mom told me that gold is the most important thing
 My mother and siblings were telling me to buy bigger pieces
 I did listen to them and only purchased my two favorite pieces

The social expectation was how a bride should dress in front of her in-laws
 I have to dress modestly in front of my in-laws
 I have to be respectful of my father-in-law
 Everyone told me that a *jalabiya* was a social expectation
Jalabiyas do not look good on me, as I am short
 I want to meet social expectations but while wearing something I feel comfortable in
 I understand the idea of wearing a *jalabiya* in front of in-laws for its modesty
 Wearing alternative modest clothing which is not a *jalabiya*
 Like a long-sleeved shirt and skirt

There will be a dinner and party just for all of my new clothes and items
 Bring everything into my new home
 My family will take all of my new purchases elegantly wrapped
 My in-laws will be the hosts of my new home
 My family will be the guests coming to unwrap everything
 I just wanted it to be my sisters and mom, not my aunts or other family
 For my in-law side, I told my fiancé I just wanted his mom and sister to be there

I think four people is more than enough to display all of my new purchases
 I don't want a lot of people to see my purchases
 To know how much I purchased to just talk about behind my back
 I feel with all the newlywed items, they are just all for display and show

Like any other girl I had an ideal wedding gown in mind
 I want to be the prettiest and look like a bride
 I want to stand out and be unique among the guests
 I spent an entire month looking for one at the malls, shopping centers, Instagram
 If I am confident about my look, it will show and affect how people view me

My first choice was to rent one
 Because I didn't want to be stuck with it afterwards
 While searching for a rental place, a wedding dress was offered to me
 My best friend got married one year before
 She also gave me all of the accessories like the tiara, veil, and jewelry
 When she was preparing for her wedding, I went shopping with her
 Who would've known I'd be choosing things I'd later wear
 It was a tube top, but I could change this by adding sleeves
 I believe that long sleeves make the dress elegant
 It gives an elegant princess image

Weddings traditionally start later in the night
 And go into the early morning
 I think we should change this tradition and start weddings earlier
 I don't want to be exhausted
 I want to enjoy my day
 I talked to my sister-in-law about having the *zafah* early
 My in-laws refuse to do so

I don't want to seem too picky or controlling towards my in-laws
 I'm really just catering to my in-laws and my family's wishes
 Our families were persistent on having a huge celebration
 They are the ones who want to hold a lavish wedding
 Their wishes are so important to us
 We decided on having a large wedding celebration
 I guess my fiancé and I view happiness and celebrations differently
 We would've just had a really small ceremony
 We would be happier with a small, intimate gathering

Yasmeen

It is known that the bride-to-be uses her dowry to prepare for the wedding
 When I received the dowry, I first divided it between the categories
 I want to be wise from the beginning and budget
 To avoid having my parents give me the money

They are already paying for all the celebration costs

I have no time for shopping

I have a lot of school work

I hate shopping

I do not like walking around the malls looking for something

I prefer to search online before I go and identify the stores that sell the items

My mother got me most of my wedding preparation stuff from the USA

My mother goes to the USA every year

She knows the brands' prices

Compared to here, all the brands are cheaper there

Before she traveled, we sat together and wrote a list with all the items I need for my *dabash*

We made the decision together on the phone

My mother was sending me a picture of items and asking me which I prefer

My mother is with me for every shopping trip

Sometimes she went to buy me things I need for my *dabash* alone

I went with my older, married sister

She guided me throughout this last shopping trip

It is a very enjoyable experience

I have a combination of scared and excited feelings

It is happiness mixed with stress!

The closer my wedding is approaching, the more scared [I am]

When only the groom's female family members came to see me

I tried to look as pretty yet natural as possible

I wore a short dress with very light makeup, and I straightened my hair

The second event is when the groom himself came to meet me

It was the first time meeting my fiancé

It was a weird feeling entering the room to meet a stranger

It just felt weird

I do not know if I should call it love, but it felt like it

I felt my heart beating very fast and that the world was so small

I needed a bigger world to hold my feelings in

It was a hard task to pick what to wear

Men are more visual than women

He remembered all the details about me

My look at the *shofa* will stick in his memory forever!

My mother helped me make my decision

She took several outfits out from my closet

She explained to me that I have to look modest without hiding any of my body features

We are not officially engaged yet
 It is just a first meeting, and we may or may not proceed with the marriage
 We decided to go with pants and shirt to be modest
 She also advised me not to wear any makeup
 I tried to look as natural as possible
 I did not wear any makeup and wore my hair down naturally without straightening it
 I wanted him to see me for who I am and did not try to enhance my beauty in any way

After the *shofa*, we followed each other on all the social media accounts
 When I was shopping for my *fatiha* dress
 I searched his social media accounts
 I tried to figure out his personality and assumed what he might like in women's clothes
 He was surprised when he saw me!
 He told me that's exactly what he imagined me wearing!
 I was so happy that I succeeded in discovering his favorite style and color without asking him

I had my *melka* and *shabkah* on the same day
 I combined these two occasions together
 Usually people hold these two occasions on two separate days
 They hold the *melka* first and give them a few weeks to know each other
 During the photography session on my *shabkah* day, I was so nervous and felt weird
 It was the first time we meet alone after signing the marriage contract

The *shabkah* was scheduled during dead week before my final exams
 I was so stressed and thought I will fail everything and run out of time
 I was under a lot of pressure
 It was too much for me
 My mother and sister helped me with the shopping
 They pick me up every day after my classes and went shopping
 I did not have time to search
 I went shopping at one of the best bridal boutiques
 The first dress I liked I tried on and bought
 I still enjoyed every moment while preparing for my *shabkah*

The most important category for me was the clothes I will wear at home
 The home clothing and the lingerie will be used on a daily basis
 I will be spending most of my time at home with my husband
 I got a variety of styles and colors for my home clothes
 I got pants, dresses, shorts, skirts, and many tops and shirts
 I want my husband to see me with new clothes every day
 I want to dress in a way that there is variety in style and color
 I want to change my outfits often and do not want to repeat the same outfit
 I don't want him to get bored of me repeating the same clothes over and over again

Men are visual and don't like to see the same things over and over
 If I dress nicely for when he comes home, he will see himself as important

The purchases I have made will help me look nice and be able to renew my look for him
 Every piece I bought like the perfume, body care products, and the way I style my hair
 It is not about certain products, but about my look in general

Like any other girl, I like to hear my fiancé compliment me
 I spend time preparing myself every time before my fiancé comes to visit me
 I feel frustrated when he doesn't notice that
 His compliments and flattery still make me happy and feel good about myself
 I think it is important for me and any bride-to-be to know her fiancé's taste
 Ask him about what he would like to see his future wife wearing
 It will make him feel important

A newlywed woman must look her best everywhere she goes
 I have to give extra attention to my look and appearance
 I will be under the spotlight
 If I am wearing nice clothes, that means I have shopped well for my wedding preparation
 I do not want to go shopping shortly after my wedding like I was not well prepared
 I do not want anyone to think that I am not ready enough
 I don't have enough fancy clothes that represent me as a newlywed

We all have to respect social norms and culture
 Our appearance reflects who we are
 Our appearance always affects our first impressions
 I want the clothes to reflect who I am as a person and as Yasmeen
 The way I dress or look is how people will judge me and my family
 The clothes that I wear reflect me and my family and the way my parents raised me

I never wear anything that's considered culturally inappropriate
 I want to show that I know how to take care of myself and know
 How to choose the color and style appropriate for different occasions?
 I must take into consideration who will be there
 I will make sure I am extra modest
 If I know this gathering will have older people
 Wearing revealing or short clothing would be viewed as disrespectful

The second most important category for my *dabash* was the visiting clothes
 When I go visit friends, relatives, and in-laws
 I have specific outfits that I will wear when I am with my in-laws
 With my in-laws especially, I need to dress very nicely and modestly as well
 I want those outfits to show that I respect them
 If I am underdressed for the occasion, people might think they don't fill my eyes
 (a common Arab expression, here implying that the occasions are not important enough for her
 to dress up for)
 I don't want to wear something very simple that would show I don't care
 If I am overdressed for the occasion, they might think I am self-centered
 I want to make sure my dress is appropriate for the occasion

It isn't over- or under-dressed

I have always dreamed about my wedding gown since I was young
 I dreamed to have a long, puffy ball gown
 Like a princess in a fairy tale
 My shabkah dress was a long, puffy ball gown
 I was very uncomfortable walking in it, and it felt very heavy
 I made the decision to not have a long, puffy ball gown for my wedding
 I do not care if this is the expectation
 I just want a light, flowy dress that's easy to walk in

I did experience some feelings of conflict
 My conflict was about if I should stick with my dream ball gown style dress
 Or just chose a tight, light-weight style wedding gown
 I decided to go with something in the middle, not too puffy and not too tight

I want my look on my wedding day to be natural and classic
 I want my wedding to be like me and to present my tastes
 I like simplicity and to look natural
 I want my wedding to be simple like me

I do not want to look at my wedding pictures 10 years from now and be shocked
 My mother's generation follows fashion trends at the time for their wedding gowns
 Now these trends have died
 I also want all the people to recognize me
 I do not want to change my look
 Like some brides who wear such heavy makeup to the point that they are unrecognizable

I saw a very nice light flowy bridal gown
 I took the picture to a dressmaker, and she said she can make one like it for me
 I went to get the fabric with my mother
 I took pictures of a few fabric choices and sent it to my friends and sisters
 I then chose the fabric that most of them complimented

Time flies by rather quickly
 It feels as though my *shofa* was yesterday
 My heart beats quickly when I look at the calendar and see it [the wedding] is in 39 days
 It is scary
 I am more scared of the wedding day itself
 The idea of walking down the aisle and everybody looking at me scares me

APPENDIX E:
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
2420 Lincoln Way, Suite 202
Ames, Iowa 50014
515 294-4566

Date: 4/12/2017

To: Wijdan Tawfiq
[Redacted]

CC: Dr. Eulanda Sanders
31 MacKay
Dr. Mary Lynn Damhorst
1068 LeBaron Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: The Saudi Arabian Bride Shopping Experience

IRB ID: 17-088

Approval Date: 4/11/2017

Date for Continuing Review: 4/10/2019

Submission Type: New

Review Type: Expedited

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- **Use only the approved study materials** in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.
- **Retain signed informed consent documents for 3 years after the close of the study**, when documented consent is required.
- **Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes** to the study by submitting a Modification Form for Non-Exempt Research or Amendment for Personnel Changes form, as necessary.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences** involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) **any other unanticipated problems involving risks** to subjects or others.
- **Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses**, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- **Complete a new continuing review form** at least three to four weeks prior to the **date for continuing review** as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Please be aware that IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. **Approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 202 Kingland, to officially close the project.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

APPENDIX F:
CODING GUIDE

1. Readiness for the new life after marriage
 - 1.1. Facilitation of the liminal transition to new life
 - 1.1.1. Common meanings of the new purchases
 - 1.1.2. Building the marital relationship
 - 1.1.3. Realization of the separation stages
 - 1.2. Resistance to complete change
 - 1.3. Complication and ambiguity during transition
 - 1.4. Symbolic functions of gifts during the transition to marriage
2. New purchases portray aspects of bride-to-be's individuality
 - 2.1. Uniqueness
 - 2.2. Authenticity
 - 2.3. Body Image
3. Other's influence on bride-to-be's purchase decisions
 - 3.1. Significant Others
 - 3.1.1. Family influence
 - 3.1.1.1. Family Guidance
 - 3.1.1.2. Background/ Social class
 - 3.1.2. Taking on the role of the future husband
 - 3.1.3. In-laws' expectations
 - 3.1.3.1. Modesty
 - 3.1.3.2. Ostentation and casualness strategies
 - 3.2. Social Forces
 - 3.2.1. Media and social media
 - 3.2.2. Perception of Tradition
 - 3.2.2.1. Affiliation group: Willingly and happily followed all the marriage traditions
 - 3.2.2.2. Safety seeking: Adherence to the traditions to avoid criticism and judgment, but sometime, they push the boundaries by breaking the traditional rules