LOCAL INFLUENCES IN CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN DESIGN WITH
REFERENCE TO A SOCIAL NETWORK SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL INFLUENCES IN CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN DESIGN WITH REFERENCE TO A SOCIAL NETWORK SERVICE

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As observed in some social media channels in particular, in the last decade Iranian design has shown a special interest in local sources and influences as inspiration. Especially in fashion design, but also in jewelry design and fashion accessories design we come across designs and patterns influenced by Iranian poetry, miniatures, tiles, calligraphy, architecture, and local material culture. The increasing use of local sources and influences in the design of products used in daily life deserves a closer look in terms of the motivations of designers and the implications of this trend for contemporary design in Iran. This study explores the motivations for which and the ways in which local sources and influences are utilized in contemporary Iranian design in reference to Instagram, a social network service.

The field study conducted comprises two studies. The first study analyzes the images of 82 locally influenced designs by 40 Iranian designers identified by the researcher on Instagram. The second study analyzes the interviews conducted by the researcher in Tehran and Tabriz with 12 designers whose designs have been identified as locally influenced. The study reveals that local sources and influences utilized by the designers analyzed in this study range from poetry, to miniature, to ceramics, to calligraphy, to Iranian architecture, and to local material culture. Finally, the study draws attention to the connection between the modern and contemporary art in Iran, especially the *Saqqakhaneh* Movement of the 1960s-70s with its "modern-traditional" approach, and the works of contemporary Iranian designers utilizing local sources and influences as inspiration.

ÖZ

BİR SOSYAL AĞ HİZMETİNE REFERANSLA ÇAĞDAŞ İRAN TASARIMINDA YEREL ETKİLER

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Özellikle bazı sosyal medya kanallarından izlediğimiz kadarıyla, geçtiğimiz dönemde İran tasarımında yerel kaynaklara ve etkilere özel bir ilginin oluştuğunu görüyoruz. Özellikle moda tasarımında, ancak mücevher tasarımı ve moda aksesuarları tasarımında da, İran şiirinden, minyatürlerinden, duvar çinilerinden, hat sanatından, mimarisinden ve yerel maddi kültürden etkilenen tasarım ve desenlerle karşılaşıyoruz. Günlük hayatta kullanılan ürünlerin tasarımında yerel kaynakların ve etkilerin artan kullanımı, tasarımcıların motivasyonlarını ve çağdaş İran tasarımı bağlamında bu eğilimin ne anlama geldiğini anlamak açısından ayrıntılı bir incelemeyi hak ediyor. Bu çalışmanın amacı, çağdaş İran tasarımında kullanılan yerel kaynakların ve etkilerin kullanım nedenlerini ve biçimlerini bir sosyal ağ hizmeti olan Instagram'a referansla araştırmaktır.

Gerçekleştirilen alan çalışması iki alt çalışma içeriyor. İlk çalışma, araştırmacı tarafından Instagram'da tespit edilen 40 İranlı tasarımcının yerel kaynaklardan etkilenen 82 tasarımını görselleri üzerinden analiz ediyor. İkinci çalışma, tasarımlarında yerel kaynaklardan etkilenen 12 tasarımcı ile araştırmacının Tahran ve Tebriz'de gerçekleştirdiği görüşmeleri analiz ediyor. Araştırma sonuçları, çalışmalara katılan İranlı tasarımcıların şiirler, minyatürler, seramikler, hat sanatı, İran mimarisi ve yerel maddi kültür gibi çok çeşitli yerel kaynaklardan yararlandığını ortaya koyuyor. Çalışma, ayrıca, modern ve çağdaş İran sanatıyla, özellikle de 1960 ve 70'lerin "modern-geleneksel" *Saqqakhaneh* Akımı ile yerel kaynaklardan etkilenen çağdaş İran tasarımcılarının işleri arasındaki bağlantıya dikkat çekiyor.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tasarımda yerel etkiler, çağdaş İran tasarımı, İran el sanatları, modern İran sanatı, çağdaş İran sanatı, Saqqakhaneh Akımı, yerel maddi kültür, Farsça yazı, Fars kitap sanatları.

Dedicated to my family and my dear Aras Anari.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There are various studies focusing on the influence or the impact of local sources of inspiration on Iranian arts, particularly, on contemporary Iranian painting, sculpture and visual arts. However, the literature on contemporary Iranian design and designers is rather limited and dominated by graphic arts and architecture rather than industrial or product design. Some studies in Turkey (Kaygan, 2006) and the Middle East (Binhalail, 2014) focus on similar issues, but there are certainly significant regional, cultural and political differences.

Against the background of globalization of capital and increasing interaction among, and movement of, goods and people, Iran has been experiencing a series of political, social, economic and cultural challenges in the last decades. Art, culture and everyday life have been influenced by the impact of these challenges resulting in a state which can be described both as a self-imposed and an externally forced isolation. In contrast to the values of the Western design culture and consumption economy, the values of the 1979 Islamic Revolution have promoted the pursuit of a religious and modest life style. 'The hidden' everyday life of Iranian people, on the other hand, has started to surface and gain visibility, although in a restricted way, through the increasing use of Internet in the early 2000s. In recent years, the social media channels like Facebook and Instagram were started to be used by the Iranian artists and designers, which made it possible to have a glimpse of the works of contemporary Iranian designers struggling to make themselves known locally and globally.

As observed in some social media channels in particular, in the last decade Iranian design has shown special interest in the local sources and influences as inspiration. Especially in fashion design, but also in jewelry design and fashion accessories

1

design, we come across designs and patterns inspired by Iranian poetry, miniatures, tiles, calligraphy, architecture, and local material culture. The increasing use of local sources and influences as inspiration in the design of products used in daily life deserves a closer look in terms of the motivations of designers and the implications of this trend for contemporary design in Iran.

1.2 Research Goal and Key Questions

The aim of this study is to explore the motivations for which, and the ways in which local sources and influences as inspiration are utilized in contemporary Iranian design as represented in the social network service Instagram. In this study, Instagram was used as a resource for gathering examples due to the high number of its users in Iran. According to the statistics of Iran's Ministry of Youth and Sports, 67.4% of the Iranian youth use the Internet; Instagram has been installed on more than 8 million devices in Iran (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2014). Iranian designers and artisans prefer Instagram mainly because unlike Facebook, the application has intelligent filtering, and access to Instagram is easy and free of charge. Unlike Facebook, Instagram is not completely filtered in Iran except some specific topics and accounts identified as sensitive.

Based on the research goal, this study aims at answering the following key research questions:

- What are the local sources and influences that contemporary Iranian designers use in their designs?
- What are the motivations of contemporary Iranian designers for using these local sources and influences in their designs?
- What are the strategies, procedures or methods through which these local sources and influences are utilized in design process by the designers?
- What are the challenges and problems that designers encounter during the design process in relation to utilizing local sources and influences?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter introduces the research topic, and clarifies the research goal and the key research questions. The second chapter investigates the related literature based on the keywords identified. In this chapter, Iran's history and cultural background are explained briefly. Following this, the pioneers and prominent representatives of modern and contemporary art in Iran are discussed in reference to the impact of the local sources as inspiration.

The third chapter reports and discusses the field study, which comprises two studies. The first study analyzes the images of 82 locally influenced designs by 40 designers identified by the researcher on Instagram. The second study analyzes the interviews conducted by the researcher in Tehran and Tabriz (Iran) with 12 designers whose designs have been identified as locally influenced. This chapter also clarifies the limitations of the field study conducted.

The last chapter, Conclusion, revisits the research questions and discusses the implications of the literature review and the field study findings; the chapter concludes with the recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to determine the scope of the study the following keywords were identified and explored in Persian as well as in English sources: Local sources as inspiration, local influences as inspiration, design inspiration, Iranian design, history of Iran, Iranian crafts, Iranian arts, contemporary artists, contemporary designers, social media and Instagram. Analyzing the designers' works in terms of the local sources and influences, and the motivations behind their use also requires to examine similar works in Iranian art in particular. Therefore, the literature review also includes the biographies of modern and contemporary Iranian designers and artists whose works were identified as locally influenced.

2.1 Iran: A Historical Background

Iran's history is mainly divided into two main timelines which are pre-Islamic and Islamic. Pre-Islamic Iran, also known as Persia, was ruled by five main Monarchies which were Medes, Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and finally the Sasanian Empire (224-651 A.D.) who lost the war to the Arab raiders and the country began to adopt Islam as the main religion. In his book, *History of Iran Before Islam*, Khosravi (2012) mentions that during Achaemenidera era, Persia was one of the wealthiest countries. This made Persia a great place of art works and architecture. The remains of *Takht-e Jamshid* (Persepolis, "the City of the Persians") is a sign of the art of Achaemenid Empire.

After Islam, the region was ruled by different caliphates and dynasties including Umayyad, Abbasid, Samanid, Ghaznavids, Seljuq, Khwarazmian, Ilkhanate, Safavid, Afsharid, Zand, Qajar, Pahlavi, and finally, the Islamic Republic of Iran. During Umayyad and Abbasid periods Iran adopted the religion of Islam for the most part. This change in religion and script played a crucial role in the upcoming centuries for Iranian arts and crafts. During the Seljuq era, pottery and calligraphy were the main

art types, as they were mastered in eastern Persia. During the Khwarazmian period (1077-1231) the Mogul invasion destroyed the Khwarezmid capital Samarkand where thousands of art pieces were kept. During the Safavid period, beginning in the early 16th century Iran became a Shia nation and invested on arts and crafts including architecture, calligraphy, tiling, and carpets. During the Qajar period (1785-1925), photography was introduced into Iran. In addition to that, they used mirrors in their designs more often (Zarinkoob, 2004).

Iran began to modernize and westernize during the Pahlavi era (1925-1979). The country began to prosper economically. More students were sent abroad to study, and as they returned to Iran, new influences in architecture, art and design emerged. This caused a shift in Iran's design identity from an Islam-oriented design to a more national and modern design (Nahavandi & Bomati, 2014).

After the 1979 revolution, Iran became an Islamic republic. This also marks the beginning of a new era in which Iran is not ruled by a monarch. Immediately after the revolution the country began an eight-year war with Iraq. During that period, the arts mostly focused on the themes of patriotism and Shia identity (Yousefpanah, 2007). During the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the society began to open-up, which has had a great impact on designers as they have experienced more freedom to circulate their works.

Similar to other countries in the region, Iran has a diversified ethnical and cultural mixture. Iran's main ethnic groups are Fars, Azari (Turk), Kurd, Arab, Baluch, Turkman, Lor, Ghashgahyi, etc. (Asatrian, 2011). This ethnic and cultural diversity made Iran's art and design vary in different geographical locations. The design of carpet weaved in Tabriz where Azari people live, for instance, is different from the ones weaved in Kashan where Fars people live.

2.2 Iranian Crafts

Handicrafts comprise a range of arts and crafts made by local materials and by hand, and they are directly related to the artists' or craftspersons' creativity and skills. Main features of handicrafts can be listed as follows (RahbariHadi & Bigham, 2011):

- Manufacturing of main parts mainly done by hand and hand tools
- Effective presence of a human being in creation, formation and production, and in diversifying design during production
- Providing most of the raw materials from local suppliers
- Having a cultural significance (local folklore, traditional and local designs)
- Resulting in unique products
- Having less need for investment compared to other industries
- Having more added value compared to other industries
- Flexibility of practicing in different areas and by different groups (in cities or villages, or by nomads)
- Transfer of experiences and know-how from chest to chest or from master to apprentice

According to a UNESCO report prepared in 2010, Iran has a wide range of traditional crafts, however, neither the government nor the private sector take necessary measures to utilize or sustain them:

> The diversity in material, function, and type of handicrafts has few international parallels. The ICHHTO [1] has 15 registered categories of traditional crafts and 243 registered sub-fields within these categories. The 2008 UNESCO Award of Excellence for Handicrafts was granted to 45 handicraft products in Iran. Nevertheless, the quality of traditional crafts has been declining in the last few decades, as social transformations have undermined general awareness of their value. Craft producers' marketing capacities are low, and without significant governmental and private sector collaboration, many of Iran's endangered craft skills are likely to decay and disappear quickly (UNESCO, 2010.pagenum).

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[1] The Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization

2.3 Modern and Contemporary Iranian Artists

Contemporary art as a term is vague and open to discussion. Explaining the term "contemporary" in a general sense is quite difficult. The definition of contemporary art in a dictionary is "the art of the late 20th and early 21st century" (dictionary.com, n.d.). In the literature, contemporary art refers to something newly arrived, being different from the existing arts, and something the reader or viewer comes across for the first time. Likewise, contemporary artist is someone who is not similar to the previous ones. According to Ziaian, if something is regarded as contemporary, it belongs to the future (Ziaian, 2014). Furthermore, the terms modern and contemporary are also used inaccurately and sometimes interchangeably. In the context of this study, the term "contemporary" covers the late 20th and 21st century; the term modern art/artist refers to the works created roughly during the 1960s and 70s; the artists of this period were painters, sculptors and graphic artists in particular. In the field study section, the "contemporary" designers/artists, the researcher refers to, are the ones who were mainly born after 1971, and who produce works such as garments, jewelry and furniture. The term art mainly refers to works such as paintings, sculptures and graphic arts whereas the term design refers to works such as fashion designs and accessories, jewelry, and furniture.

Iranian modern and contemporary art flourished considerably especially in painting, sculpture and graphic arts during the 1960s-70s, and the works produced in this period inspired the succeeding generations of artists and designers. Iran's modern movement in modern contemporary art was created by activities such as establishing a faculty of fine arts at University of Tehran (1940), opening galleries like Iran Hall (1964), Khooroos Jangi journal (1949), the establishment of Tehran Biennial (1958), sending graduates of fine arts faculty to European countries, their alignment with modern art movements such as Impressionism, Cubism and Expressionism, and their return to Iran and their activities in painting and visual arts (Moareknejad, 2006).

In the field of visual arts, the tendency and change towards modernism became more intense by the opening of the Faculty of Fine Arts at University of Tehran (Mojabi & et al., 1997). Teaching method in the faculty was based on the models and templates

from Paris fine arts schools (Beaux Arts), Impressionism and Post-impressionism (Pakbaz 2014).

The first group of students who graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts at University of Tehran were sent to Europe to make them familiar with and understand modern art works. By their return to homeland, they began to disperse their ideas, which were gathered from Europe. Familiarity with modern art works created the idea of getting free of traditional constraints among new generation artists (Pakbaz, 2015). Interests and opinions of students who were sent to Europe leaned towards Cubism and Expressionism.

The first generation of modernist artists in Iranian painting had been influenced by Impressionism besides Cubism. The paintings of Iranian Impressionists attracted more attention; their subjects were related to people's daily lives and had some clues of reality within them; among those artists we can name Ahmad Esfandiari and Abdollah Amery. The wave of modernism became more intense among the second generation of artists. There were several reasons behind it such as group exhibitions, biennials, and the establishment of art galleries.

Iran's modern art which was founded and created by pioneers like Jalil Ziyapour, Hossein Kazemi, Javad Hamidi, Ahmad Esfandiari, Mohammad Javadi Pour, Shokouh Rezaei, Marcos Grigorian, Mohsen Vaziri Moghadam, Abdollah Ameri, Houshang Pezeshknia and Bahman Mohasses was continued by the second generation of modernist artists. Although combining Western art movements with Iranian visual elements was heterogeneous, next generations' efforts during Tehran biennials created *Saqqakhaneh* and *Naghashi-Khat* movements (Moareknejad, 2006).

The Saqqakhaneh Movement is the most influential artistic movement of that period. Parviz Tanavoli, Jazeh Tabatabai, Bahman Mohassess and Hossein Zenderoudi are among the most influential artists of that movement (Abeddoust & Kazempour, 2010). The Saqqakhaneh style was initially emerged in the works of artists, both in painting and sculpture, who integrated local elements from votive Shi'ite art into

their works. Karim Emami **(**1930-2005), a writer, translator and journalist, used the term Saqqakhaneh for the first time for the artistic works synthesizing Western contemporary art with the Iranian folklore, cultural heritage and mythical motifs. Pierre Restany defines the origin of the term Saqqakhaneh as follows:

> Saqqakhaneh gets its name from the fountain-stops decorated with popular illuminations or with verses from the Koran, where passersby can quench their thirst, gives writing the sacredness of an existential quotidian magic. (Restany, 2010)

Saqqakhaneh was gradually used to refer to various forms of "modern-traditional" Iranian painting and sculpture using traditional decorative elements (Keshmirshekan, 2009).

Exploring the works of these influential artists of modern and contemporary art in Iran is essential to understand the works produced by the later generations. The artists studied in the following sections are not necessarily Saqqakhaneh Movement artists in a strict sense; they are the most influential artists whose works share affinities with the Saqqakhaneh style, and who were active artistically and exhibited artworks during the 1960s and 70s.

Figure 1 "Standing Heech II" by Parviz Tanavoli, 2007, bronze, size: 90×46×35 cm. Accessed 03.04.2017 from
https://www.artsy.net/artwork/parviz-tanavoli-standing-heech-ii

Parviz Tanavoli. Born in Tehran in 1937, Parviz Tanavoli is an Iranian sculptor, painter, scholar and art collector. His most famous work is the collection *Heech (هیچ nothing)* (Fig. 1). He is a founding member of the Saqqakhaneh Movement (artsy, n.d.; Coustou, 2015). His research and books are among the important sources on Iranian folk art and culture. "Persian Flatweaves", "Lion Rugs: The Lion in the Art and Culture of Iran", and "Locks from Iran" are some of his books.

Nasser Ovissi. Born in Tehran in 1934, Ovissi studied law and political science at the University of Tehran, and studied fine arts in Rome (about-artist, n.d.). He is an innovative Iranian artist whose works are a fusion of folklore and traditional arts. He combines Western techniques and elements with Iranian culture. Actually, he is a post-modern artist who uses traditional and modern inspiration sources to create his works. Beauty, pleasure and peace are the most important parts of his works. Unrealistic and unusual colors, birds, flowers, musical instruments, fish and especially horses are characteristic features of his works. His works have close relationship with miniature and boards of old books (Mojabi, 2016). The characteristic features of Ovissi's works are figures of women inspired by the Iranian lady sun, *Khurshid Khanum* (خورشید خانم), moving horses and vivid colors (Iranian Students' News Agency, 2016) (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 "Lady Sun" by Nasser Ovissi, n.d., work on canvas, size not specified. Accessed 03.04.2017 from http://galleryovissi.com/work-on-canvas/

11

Faramarz Pilaram. He was born in Tehran in 1937, and died in 1983. Pilaram was one of the founders of Saqqakhaneh Movement. He studied fine arts in high school and learned traditional miniature painting from the famous artist Mahmoud Farschian and continued his studies at the School of Decorative Arts (Afshar, 2005; Faslnameh Honar, 1984). Use of stamps (originally used as signature), decorative elements and calligraphic forms characterize his works (Fig. 3). He is one of the pioneers of calligraphic painting. He also employed calligraphy in his sculptures inspired by the *Nastaliq* script, the predominant style in Persian calligraphy (Fig. 4) (Kashefi, 1988). His distinct way of using calligraphy to create rhythmic repetition deconstructs the traditional formalism and results in alternative visual elements (Fouladvand, 2008).

Figure 3 *"Mosques of Isfahan"* by Faramarz Pilaram, 1962, ink, watercolor, gold and silver paint on paper, size: 116.2 × 88.3 cm. Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection gift of Abby Weed Grey. Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://goo.gl/PaSv46 (artsy.net)

Figure 4 "Pilaram with his calligraphic sculpture at Elm-o-Sanʾat faculty", n.d. Accessed 03/04/2017 from http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/pilaram-faramarz

Mohsen Vaziri Moghaddam. Born in 1943, Vaziri studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tehran for three years. His works experiment with calligraphic forms as abstract compositions; we both see well-defined shapes and intense colors, and vague silhouettes and pastel colors in his works (Vaziri Moghaddam Mohsen, n.d.) (Fig. 5, 6).

Figure 5 "Calligraphy" by M. Vaziri, 1997, colored ink, size: 23.4 x 32.4 cm. Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://goo.gl/2oDM8R (http://www.mvaziri.com/)

13

Figure 6 "Sand painting" by M. Vaziri, 1963, sand and color on canvas, size: 100 x 125cm. Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://goo.gl/gtczx7 (http://www.mvaziri.com/)

Jazeh Tabatabai. He was born in 1930 and died in 2008 in Tehran. He is an Iranian painter, sculptor and poet. He was one of the pioneers of the Saqqakhaneh Movement. Folklore, traditional and decorative elements were his tendencies. In addition, he is well-known for his sculptures assembled with reused metal parts (Fig. 8). Mousavivand (2012) highlights the specific symbols and signs that were abundantly used in Tabatabai's work: Lion and the sun, horses, chickens and humans are the most repeated symbols in his works. These symbols are in use since ancient times and convey sublime meanings. The lion refers to power and bravery, but in his works he blends the lion and the sun with a feminine face. Also, the horses which refer to decency, speed and authenticity, are not in a warfare mood in his works (Fig. 7) (Mousavivand, 2012).

Figure 7 A painting by Jazeh Tabatabai, n.d., acrylic on canvas, size 99.5 x 80 cm. Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://goo.gl/JdhzEP (http://www.artnet.com/)

Figure 8 "Lion and Sun" by Jazeh Tabatabai, n.d., reused metal, size not specified (Hamedi et al., 2008).

Hossein Zenderoudi. Charles Hossein Zenderoudi was born in 1937 in Tehran. He is an Iranian painter and sculptor. He is especially known as a pioneer of Saqqakhaneh Movement. He uses calligraphy in his paintings, and applies numbers and letters in repetition with sharp and bright colors (Fig. 9, 10) (Restany, 2010).

15

Figure 9 "Tchaar-bagh" by Hossein Zenderoudi, 1981, oil, acrylic on canvas, size: - 85 x 76 cm. Accessed 03.04.2017 from http://www.zenderoudi.com/english/TCHAAR%20BAGH.html

Talinn Grigor and Hamid Keshmirshekan use the term "contemporary Iranian art" for the works of artists after the Islamic revolution, which is interwoven with eight years' war of Iran and Iraq (Keshmirshekan, 2013) (Grigor, 2014). Contemporary Iranian art mostly has referred to fine arts like painting and movies since the revolution of 1979 and it has been rarely used for products and tangible designs.

Figure 10 "The Hand", by Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, 1960-6, paper collage with ink, watercolor, gold and silver paint, size: 70 x 50 cm. Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://greyartgallery.nyu.edu/artworks/the-hand-2/

2.4 Contemporary Iranian Designers in reference to Locally Influenced Designs

Contemporary design in this section refers to the works of Iranian designers who were born after 1970. These works are identified as influenced by local sources and mainly categorized as fashion design, jewelry and accessories design, and furniture design. The sources influenced by in these works are diverse. At the first attempt, calligraphy, nature and folkloric symbols seem to be the most apparent sources of influence. In the following sections the biographies and works of some of these designers are presented.

Nima Behnoud. Born in Tehran in 1976, Nima Behnoud is a fashion designer who lived in Iran until 1994 and then moved to San Francisco for studying. From an early age, he was interested in arts and crafts. In the 1980s together with his friends, he bought second hand garments and jeans from the black market, and cut, draw, and alter them by using spray paints, studs, stitches, and pins. Then they wore them for parties to show off their works. (Fashion Institute of Technology; State University of New York, n.d.).

In 1994, when he moved to San Francisco, he started working in an advertising company as the photo shoot art director. He moved to New York in 1999. Nima attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. In one of his courses, when asked to write something about his life on a t-shirt, he wrote a Persian quote. By that time, he had restarted his old hobby, printing graphic works on t-shirts, and wore them to the parties as he used to do back in Tehran. In 2004, he and the production team got together and released the first series of Nimany branded T-shirts. The business grew continuously and new products in four categories were added: jewelry and accessories, scarves, belts, and clothing (Figure 11). Many famous people such as Heidi Klum, Nicky Hilton, Jim Carrey and Kevin Spacey started to use Nimany branded products (Toosi, 2006).

Figure 11 Some of Nimany's products, Nimany. Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://www.nimany.com/

Amirhossein Rahimiyegane. He is a contemporary Iranian designer whose works include accessories design and product design. He is a graphic designer and his works are produced under the brand of Lige. The characteristic features of his works are the use of calligraphy and iconography (Fig. 12, 13) (Behtarinha, 2015).

Figure 12 Calligraphic comb by RahimiYegane, A. H.. n.d., brass, 6x14cm. [@Liqeism]. (25.12.2016). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/-lVsBXTW7J/

18

Figure 13 Achaemenid solder clips by RahimiYegane, A. H.. n.d., brass, size not specified. [@Liqeism]. (23.01.2016). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://instagram.com/p/BA4nP04TW7T/

Danial Zirak. Born in 1982, he has studied graphic design (Golestan gallery, n.d.). He is one of the contemporary accessories designers whose works are influenced by Iranian cultural heritage and mythical motifs. Danial Zirak defines himself as a Saqqakhaneh Movement artist in his Instagram account's biography part (Fig. 14) (Zirak, n.d.).

Figure 14 "Shahr-e farang" (raree-show) Necklace, by Zirak D. n.d., size not specified. [@Danialzirak]. (25.07.2017). Accessed 03.09.2017 from https://instagram.com/p/BW9jaNEjxYG/

Afsane Rahimian. Born in 1963, she graduated from Cavendish College in London. She is the founder of Sondos brand which mainly designs and produces *manteaux*, a long and loose overcoat (Fig. 15). Her success is attributed to her adapting the rich Iranian culture to the contemporary needs and taste of Iranian and Islamic life (Classic magazine, 2014). The characteristic features of Rahimian's works are the use of traditional designs and influenced from the abstract and formal elements available in the *glim* and *gabbeh* (coarsely woven Iranian tribal rugs) designs together with modern and new forms and cut (Eftekhari, n.d.).

Figure 15 *A manteaux* with handmade antique fabric by Rahimian A., n.d. [@Sondos_Afsaneh_Rahimian]. (21.02.2017). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://instagram.com/p/BQyO8hrgkb0/

Maryam Bayat. She is one of the contemporary designers with an art and design degree. Her works include overdying old carpets, patchworks, rugs and kilims (Fig. 16). Her works exemplify a design approach based on reuse. The base material used in her works, carpet, is one of the deeply rooted Iranian crafts (Bayat Nomad, n.d.).

2.5 Instagram as a Business Platform for Contemporary Designers in Iran

Instagram as a social network service has an important role in many people's lives today. Instagram has many features but the most important one that leads people to use it is that they can freely share their experiences, photos, ideas and works through it. At first, it was for private use, but slowly, famous brands and celebrities started using Instagram.

Since Instagram provides an easy way of sharing photos with people all around the world free of charge, brands, artists, designers and craftsmen started sharing their products, works and ideas on Instagram. Iranians are not an exception to this trend. Instagram has made their rarely publicized lives, arts, etc. visible and accessible. Iranian designers also started using Instagram as a platform for introducing their works to the general public as well as the local customers. Through Instagram they present their works with fewer limitations. The Iranian designers mentioned in the previous section are some of the designers who represent themselves in social media.

Online shopping is growing fast and many e-commerce websites and platforms are providing a space for that. Websites like Amazon and Asus have many features such

as viewing the product from different angles, and direct payment and distance sales contract provide safety for customers. Instagram doesn't provide any of these features for shoppers. Nonetheless, many users are interested in shopping through Instagram. Visiting specific websites requires to know the full address of the site, which is not easily or readily available.

Studies on the use of Instagram in Iran are limited; however, there are some studies concerning the use of Instagram in other countries in the region. Wally (2014) interviewed Emirati female entrepreneurs about the reasons for their choosing Instagram as a marketing tool and concluded that its being user-friendly and the easiest platform for advertising are the main reasons. Other reasons include its being inexpensive, having an engaging audience, having a social prestige, being free of regulation and being similar to catalogs or magazines (Latiff & Safiee, 2015).

Although Instagram was launched as a photo-sharing medium and there were not any specialized features for businesses, some users started utilizing it for business. There are various kinds of businesses using it; some are already well-known businesses which do not sell any product directly from Instagram, whereas some others are home-based businesses which occasionally sell products through Instagram. Instagram's limited features require both seller and shopper to use another platform to communicate and manage the process of order and delivery. According to a study about Instagram (Latiff & Safiee, 2015), depending on the sellers' preference, the parties communicate through WhatsApp, e-mail or the company's website for order and delivery. In the Iranian context, the process is similar. However, in comparison to other countries, e-commerce websites are rarely used in Iran.

CHAPTER 3

FIELD STUDY

This chapter covers the methodology proposed for the study, data collection, analysis and findings, and the limitations of the study. The field study comprises two studies. The first study is concerned with the compilation of images from Instagram concerning the contemporary Iranian designs which utilize local sources and influences, and analyzes the images of 82 locally influenced designs by 40 Iranian designers together with the original sources of influence involved such as poems, miniature paintings, typography and architecture. The second study analyzes the interviews conducted by the researcher in Tehran and Tabriz with 12 contemporary Iranian designers whose designs have been identified as locally inspired and influenced.

3.1 Methodology

As clarified earlier, the aim of the study is to explore the motivations for which, and the ways in which local influences and sources are utilized in contemporary Iranian design as represented in the social network service Instagram. The study aims at answering the following key questions:

- What are the local sources and influences that contemporary Iranian designers use in their designs?
- What are the motivations of contemporary Iranian designers for using these local sources and influences in their designs?
- What are the strategies, procedures or methods through which these local sources and influences are utilized in design process by the designers?
- What are the challenges and problems that designers encounter during the design process in relation to utilizing local sources and influences?

In accordance with the aim and the research questions stated, two consecutive studies were planned. The first study involves the compilation and analysis of locally influenced and inspired designs by Iranian designers shared on Instagram, and aims at revealing the types, categories and qualities of locally influenced and inspired designs in reference to a sufficient number of designs analyzed. The second study is based on the knowledge gained through the first study. The designers whose works were analyzed by the researcher in the first study were contacted for face to face interviews to further explore the subjective meaning ascribed to the local influences and sources by the designers themselves, their motivations for utilizing these sources, and the strategies they employ to utilize these sources.

3.2 Study 1: Visual Data Collection and Analysis

Since the main methodology of this research is qualitative analysis, content analysis can be conducted. As Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins discussed, qualitative interpretations can be made based on what content analysis gives us (Lutz & Collins, 1993). "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (Krippendorf, 1980).

In order to conduct a content analysis, four steps should be executed. As Gillian Rose discussed, these steps are mandatory for a reliable research based on qualitative visual data. However, the validity and replicability of the analysis relies on the ability to fulfill the requirements of each step (Rose, 2001).

1. Finding images

In order to make a more accurate content analysis, one must choose the pictures relevant to the main question. However, to make sure that the selected pictures are related to the question one does not need to examine every relevant picture (Rose, 2001). As Krippendorf (1980) and Weber (1990) discussed, there are four main sampling strategies for selecting the images, which are random, stratified, systematic and cluster. In this research, the researcher has chosen stratified sampling among these four sampling strategies.

2. Devising the categories for coding

After selecting the images and creating a sample pool, devising categories for coding is needed (Rose, 2001). Coding and devising categories could be based on the main question. This would make interpretation more tangible and easier to get to (Lutz & Collins, 1993). Moreover, the categories must have three main characteristics as Rose (2001) discussed:

- exhaustive: every aspect of the images with which the research is concerned must be covered by one category;
- exclusive: categories must not overlap;
- enlightening: as Slater (1998) says, the categories must produce "a breakdown of imagery that will be analytically interesting and coherent".

In addition, the researcher should remember that there should be some components or parts which would let the researcher show the analytical importance of chosen images (Rose, 2001).

3. Coding the images

Coding must be in a way that another researcher with the same main question and the same sample would go through the same coding, if asked to do so. This means coding should be unambiguous, which makes coding replicable (Rose, 2001). The researcher should carefully go through images for each set of codes. This means that for a single code each image must be examined and then the codes must be given to that picture.

4. Analyzing the results

The final step is to count the numbers of each code. During this step the results of coding would be in hand and the researcher can begin the process of interpreting the data.

3.2.1 Visual Data Collection on Instagram

Instagram is a photo-sharing application and service with 700 million users according to the company's statement (Instagram-press, 2017). There is no official statistics about the number of Instagram users in Iran; it has become popular in Iran due to the restrictions in other social media channels. The researcher is also an Instagram user; local designs and products she encountered on Instagram, and the contemporary urban lifestyle in Iran publicized on Instagram have led the researcher to conduct this study.

Figure 17 shows the first image that led the researcher to the designers on Instagram. The search page of Instagram suggests different accounts by presenting one of the shared images. The researcher came across with an image from The Tehran Times which is an account sharing photos of everyday life in Tehran (Figure 18). Araz Fazaeli, the founder and editor in chief of The Tehran Times describes the aim of the magazine as follows:

> From its inception in 2012, The Tehran Times has continuously sought to frame Iran's thriving street fashion, lifestyle and pop culture from Tehran's bleeding edge. We look for Iranians all over the world to tell their artistic stories and capture the spirit of a new generation on the rise. Fashion is first and foremost a statement of cultural and personal expression. Our mission is to showcase the elegance and grace of the way the people of Iran express themselves, by depicting one of the oft-ignored aspects of Iranian life: fashion and art (Fazaeli A. , 2013).

One of the categories in The Tehran Times is fashion styling; it also shares the bloggers' photos like the one in Figure 19, and tags the blogger and the pages of brands that the person wears as shown in Figure 19. The pages may be visited by tapping on the tags. After opening the page of an account, one may review the suggestions for related accounts (Fig. 20).

The very first attempt started with getting to know The Tehran Times and Nimany, and their Instagram account. As fully described in the literature review, Nimany is a clothing brand that is pioneer of using calligraphy in fashion design. After exploring Nimany and The Tehran Times, and through following them on Instagram, it was

possible to find brands and art galleries from The Tehran Times and the suggestions made by Instagram.

Based on the researcher's observations, shops that sell art works and designed products are called galleries. They gather different products from designers. Galleries have an essential role for presenting products; designers at their workshops have less chance to find the end customers. The galleries are standing between customers and designers. In this research, Instagram pages of galleries played an important role due to the limited search facility with keywords in Instagram. Hashtags are used for this purpose, but since they list the images based on their posting date and since there is nothing like search by relevancy, they are worthless as it is possible for everyone to tag and put any hashtag under any photos.
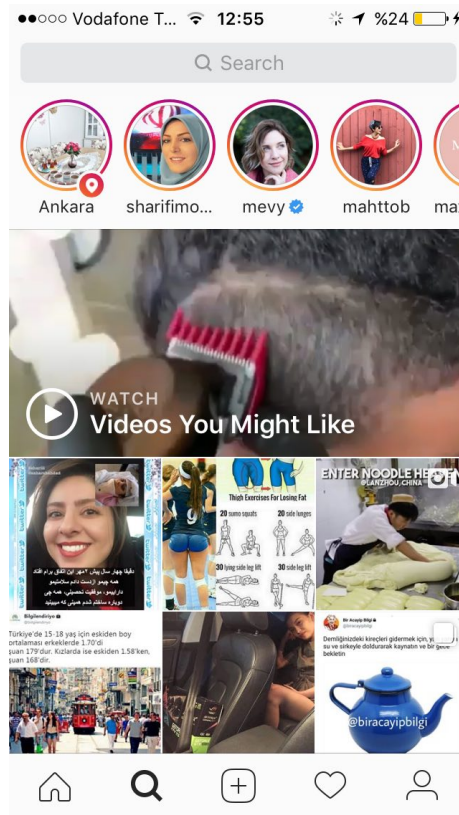
Figure 17 A screenshot of the search page on Instagram from https://www.instagram.com/
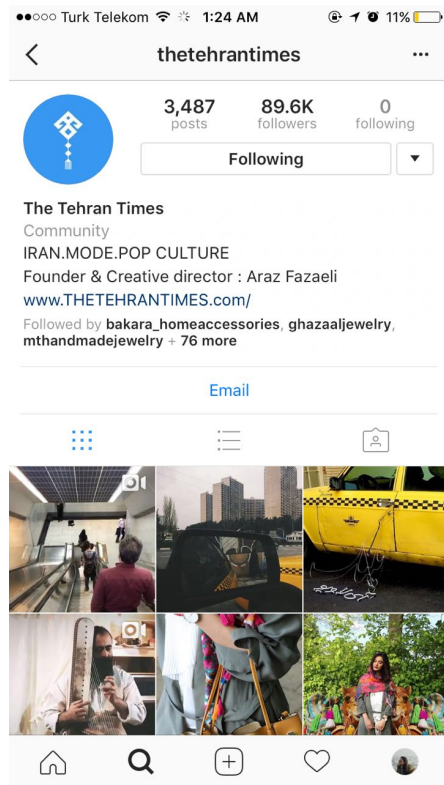
Figure 18 The first page of The Tehran Times account**.** [@Thetehrantimes] from

http://instagram.com/thetehrantimes
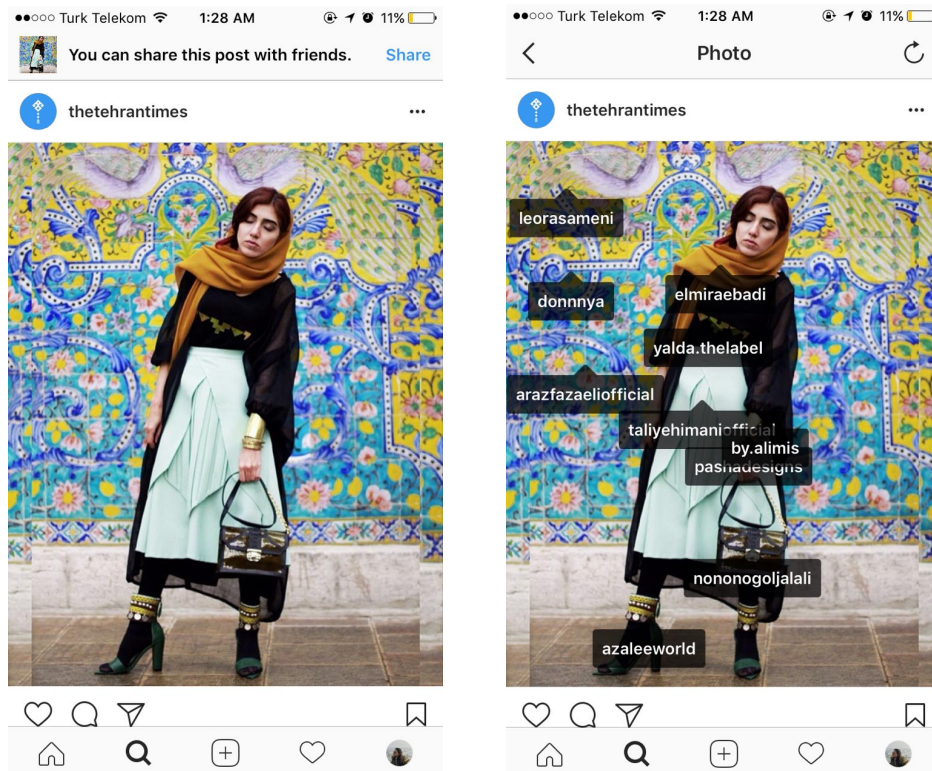
Figure 19 (Left figure) A posted image by an account. (Right figure) A posted image's tagging by Fazeli A..

[@Thetehrantimes]. (03.04.2016). Accessed 15.04.2017 from https://instagram.com/p/BDwDEd-k3LM/
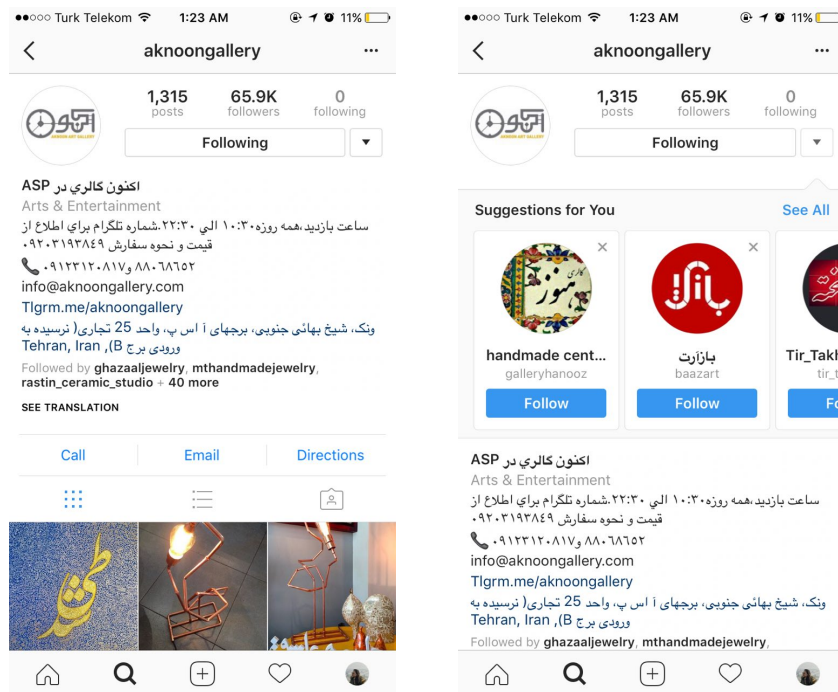
Figure 20 (Left figure) The first page of an art gallery account on Instagram. (Right figure) Suggested accounts on the first page of an art gallery account on Instagram. [@Aknoongallery]. n.d. from http://instagram.com/aknoongallery

Since there were too many Instagram pages and brands, and there was a wide range of product categories from several design disciplines, choosing the images based on local influences and inspiration sources was one of the major challenges.

Firstly, the designs were selected based on their being inspired and influenced by local sources and/or their sharing an affinity with an identifiable original source as perceived by the researcher. In other words, selecting an account or brand, or a product for this study was based on the researcher's background and experience. There may certainly be designs influenced by local sources whose "traces" are not easily or readily noticeable, or "recognizing" some sources may require an expertise or background that the researcher does not have. Therefore, the designs with qualities or features *clearly* matching with local sources and influences were selected.

Secondly, when choosing the samples, diverse types of local influences and inspiration sources such as calligraphy, literary works, book illustrations, local architectural heritage, and Persian motifs were included. Designers also used various

techniques such as collage for combining different types of inspiration sources (miniature with calligraphy, etc.) and/or for altering these sources. For example, the scarf in Figure 21 includes a single letter calligraphy and verses from a poetry book. The potential sources and influences identified in the early phases of data collection are given in Table 1.

Thirdly, the designs which belong to different product categories from various design fields (Table 2) were included in the selection: jewelry (earrings, rings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.), functional products (table clock, knife, table, couch, etc.), decorative products (mirrors, frames, cushions), and garments and fashion accessories (shoes, bags, fabrics, scarves, T-shirts, tops, *manteaux*, etc.).

Lastly, some designers had a wide range of products or local inspiration sources, some do not. Therefore, the number of works chosen from each designer varied. In some cases, one work was considered sufficient to represent the designer's approach; in some other cases, three or four works were included from a designer to better cover the scope of the designer's work. The final compilation included 82 designs by 40 designers (Appendix E). The samples were compiled over an eleven-month period between January and November 2016 before conducting the interviews in Study 2.

Figure 21 Scarf *Sorayya* by Behnoud N., n.d., silk, size not specified. [@Nimany]. (24.04.2014). Accessed 03.02.2016 from https://instagram.com/p/nKGfqBGt_S/

All the images were captured from Instagram by screenshots. The Instagram accounts of some brands were already followed by the researcher. While searching through the accounts of design galleries in Instagram, different brands were noticed. Then, the images of products by these designer brands were collected.

Table 1 The list of potential local sources and influences identified in the early phases of data collection

Painting
Miniature
Portrait
Product
Postage stamp
Banknote
Stamp seal (Tughra)
Script
Calligraphic style/ Handwriting style
Number
Letter
Word
Proper name
Slogan/Motto
Poem
Motifs
Symbols
Carpet motifs
Architecture
Decorative tile (*Kashi Kari*)
Architectural elements
Photographs
Portrait
Landscape
Historical elements
Ancient civilizations
Folklore
Myth
Fairy tale

Table 2 The list of design fields

Design Fields
Fashion design
Jewelry design
Fashion accessories design
Product Design

3.2.2 Analysis of the Visual Data Compiled from Instagram

The next step was categorizing the visual material. Firstly, all the selected images were printed out in color (10x10 cm) and coded based on Table 3. Each sample were given a unique code; for example, the design in Figure 22 was coded as (IR-A-N-04); "IR" stands for Iran, country of production; "A" stands for Accessories; "N" stands for Necklace; and "04" stands for the order in that product category. Each image were coded as described, and information about the designer and/or brand, and a short description of the design and the source of influence were written down on the back of each printout for future reference (Fig. 23).

Table 3 Codes for country of production and products

Country of production
IR: Iran
US: USA
EU: Europe
Products
A: Accessories
E: Earing
R: Ring
B: Bracelet
N: Necklace
O: Other
P: Products
D: Decorative products
F: Functional products
C: Carpet
O: Other
G: Garments
S: Shoes
F: Fabric, scarf
T: T-shirt, top
M: *Manteaux* (overcoat)
B: Bag, clutch
O: Other

Figure 22 The front side of a printed image together with its code
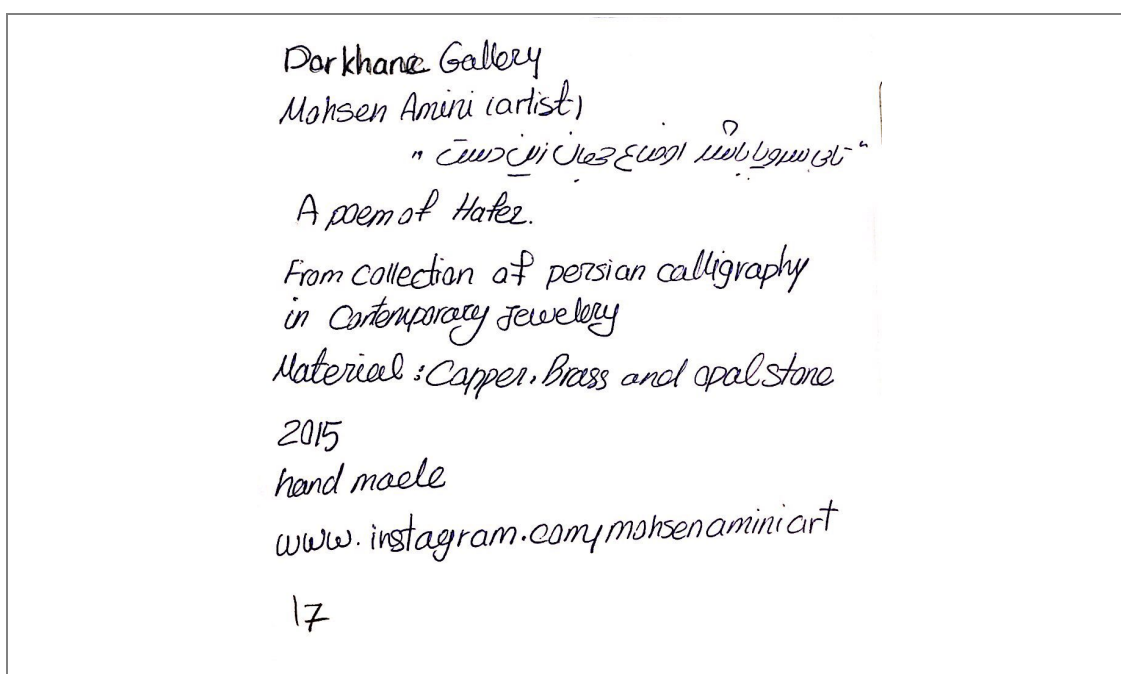
Figure 23 The back side of a printed image

After coding all the samples, they were analyzed carefully, and regardless of the brand or product category they belong to, they were grouped based on the type of influence or inspiration source on a large sheet (Figure 26). Some samples were

placed under more than one group since different types of sources were involved in them. The final categories of influences or inspiration sources were as follows: Persian script (single letters, sentences or slogans, verses, numerals), architecture, nature, ancient history, symbols, folklore, materials and techniques, local arts and skills, and re-use or repurposing (Table 4).

Table 4 The final list of local sources and influences after the analysis of visual data

Local Sources and Influences
Persian script (calligraphic style / handwriting style) 　　Single letters 　　Sentences or slogans 　　Verses 　　Numerals
Architecture
Nature
Ancient History
Symbols
Folklore
Materials and techniques
Local arts and skills
Re-use or Repurposing
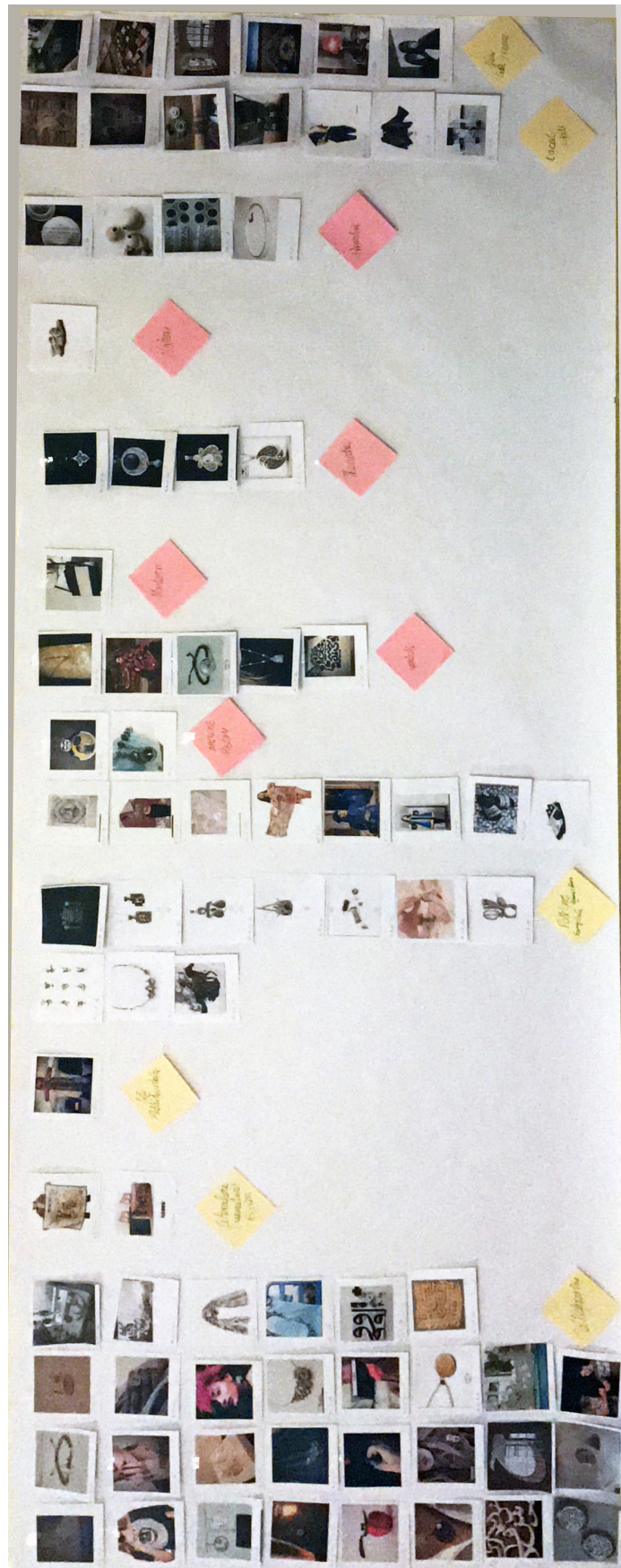
Figure 24 The analysis sheet used for grouping the visual data (92x260 cm)

3.2.3 Findings of Study 1

In the selected samples, there is a wide range of local sources and influences. While some samples "modernize" the source or influence, some others are quite different and only remind the source. In some designs we see a combination of sources; for example, a designer gets help from local craftspeople and also utilizes calligraphy in his/her design. In another example we see a combination of folk culture and a local technique. Among the samples the number of jewelry and accessories are high, and various sources and influences are utilized. In the following sections the resulting categories of local influences and sources together with their subcategories are explained and some samples are described in more detail for exemplifying a particular influence or inspiration source.

3.2.3.1 Persian Script

Persian script was borrowed from Arabic, and it is intertwined with religious beliefs. Script is one of the important values of Islam; it has a spiritual and religious place in public's eye (ElAraby, 1996). Figure 25 shows a food prepared for votive and distributed to people, especially the poor. As the votive is related with the religious beliefs, it has a spiritual value. Writing the Prophet Muhammad's and other Imams' names like her holiness *Fatemeh* on the food is directly related to its spiritual value.

Figure 25 "Ya Fatemeh" script on food [@Rahimiyegane]. (10.11.2016). Accessed 03.07.2017 from https://goo.gl/9kmG3y

Calligraphy is written on paper, leaf, skin or any flat surface with specific writing tools and calligraphy ink. The samples in the "script" category challenge these conventions by using it in unusual places. As it was mentioned in the literature review, and especially in Hossein Zenderoudi's (one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Iran) works, separated from its spiritual meaning and place, Persian calligraphy has been used in art works with bright colors, and utilized for its formal and figurative qualities.

Persian script has some differences from Latin script and it has its own properties. Persian is written from right to left and the letters "join" together in accordance with a sophisticated set of rules. Some letters such as "R"(ر) never join the next letter, and only join the previous letter (that is, the letter on the right of "R") as in the following example: (بهترین *behtarin*, best). Some letters such as letter "D" (د) have "firm" forms and never change their form when they join another letter as in the following examples: (ناردین Nardin) and (سهند Sahand). The letter "H" is one of the few letters in the Persian alphabet taking four different forms in writing. In the following section, we are going to explain the different forms the letter "H" takes in Persian:

- The first form letter "H" takes is (ﻫ). This form of "H" is used when it comes as the first letter of a word and the extended line on the left side of it makes it possible to join it to the next letter.
- The second form letter "H" takes is (ﻬ) which has extended lines on both sides for "sticking" it to the previous and next letters.
- The third form of "H" is (ﻪ). The extended line is on the right side of the letter and it sticks from the right side. This form of "H" is used when it comes at the end of a word.
- The last form of "H" is (ه) which also looks like number 5 (۵) and is used at the end of any word.

There is also a difference between calligraphy and handwriting or "scribbling". In Figure 26, the pattern on the red carpet shows the way the artist experimented with

the Persian script in a way which is quite different than a classic example provided in Fig. 27.

Figure 26 "Light**"** felt by Soraya M. n.d, size: 200x150 cm. [@Mirmolasoraya]. (22.12.2016). Accessed 03.04.3017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BOVSfEhFqP1/?taken-by=mirmolasoraya
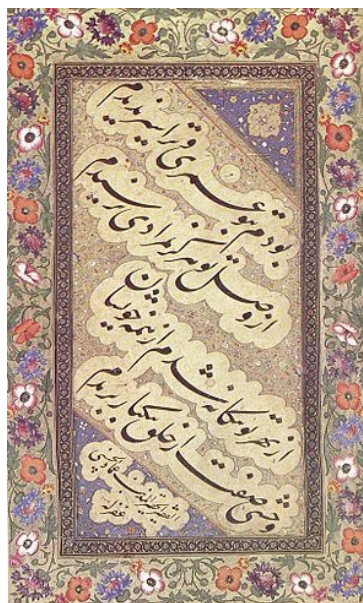
Figure 27 A classic example of calligraphy by Miremad from Atlas-e khat (Fazaeli H. , 1983)

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, within the Saqqakhaneh Movement during the 1960s and 70s, artists such as Faramarz Pilaram utilized calligraphy for making sculptures and metal structures. Figure 28 is a necklace designed by Mohesen Amini; similarly, he utilized calligraphy for designing this work. The

38

necklace reminds the works by the pioneers of this method such as Pilaram's work shown in Figure 4.

Figure 28 Calligraphic necklace [از این سپس منو مستی و وضع بی خبری] by Amini M. brass, 2011, [@MohsenAminiart]. (07.09.2015). Accessed 06.03.2016 from https://goo.gl/hAe9yg

3.2.3.1.1 Single Letters

Letters are utilized frequently in the designs analyzed. A single letter such as "H" (Fig. 30, 31) or "B" (Fig. 32) may be used without any particular meaning, or may refer to someone or something, or may have a special connotation. It is a sensitive issue because it is mainly used in spells or for coding. "Abjad" is a famous coding system in relation to the Arabic alphabet. Each letter is assigned a numerical value so that by adding the value of each letter in each word, sentences or specific codes may be written. In this way, recalling is eased and it can be kept as a secret. Through this capability, spells are created.

Figure 29 Decorative letters by Shoolizadeh F. [@Farhadhandmades]. (24.05.2016). Accessed 03.07.2017 from https://instagram.com/p/BFyT6hzhDwi/

Figure 30 Persian calligraphic "H", the "medusa" rings by Behnoud N.. n.d. [@Nimany]. (24.07.2017). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BIOswFCBEsz/?taken-by=nimany
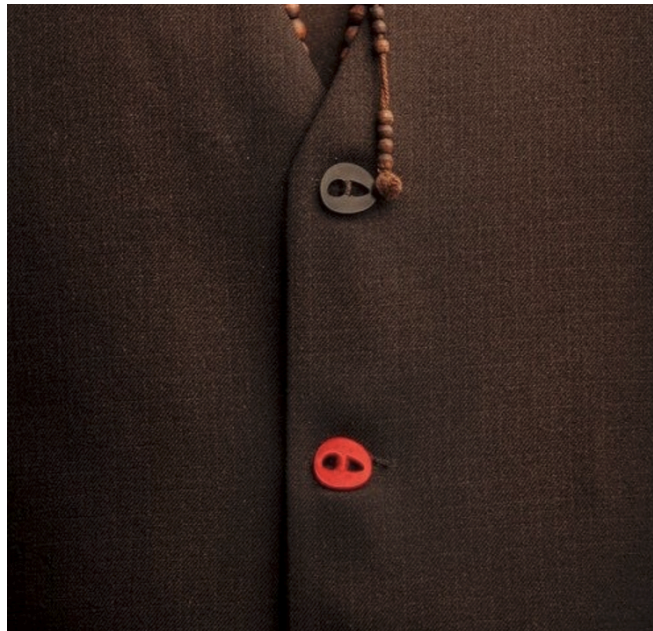
Figure 31 "H" button by Rahimiyeganeh A. H.. n.d. plastic, size 1x1 cm. [@Rahimiyegane]. (15.12.2016). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/-ZW0-ETW-L/?taken-by=liqeism
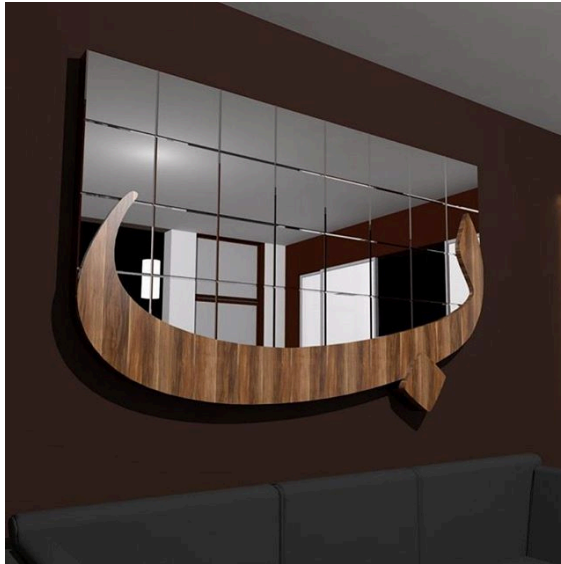
Figure 32 Digital model of a calligraphic "B" mirror by Ashrafpour A.. n.d., size not specified.
[@namaadartdesign]. (18.05.2016). Accessed 03.07.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BDGJKgRAmK_/

3.2.3.1.2 Sentences or Slogans

Sentences or slogans designers used in their works seem quite significant because they can directly draw attention to a specific topic or issue. Figure 33 shows a felt rug with a sentence woven in it: "I'm glad that I live; خوشحالم که زندگی می کنم". Contrary to the conventions of Persian it is written from left to right.

Figure 33 Felt rug "I'm glad that I live; خوشحالم که زندگی می کنم" by Soraya M.. n.d., size: 200x200cm.
[@Mirmolasoraya]. (18.09.2013). Accessed 03.04.2017 from
https://www.instagram.com/p/eYImSMBZuW/?taken-by=mirmolasoraya

41

The slogan (به تو چه : BE TO CHE! : none of your business) in the form of an earring in Figure 34 on the ear of a bald head of a woman may refer to the situation in Iran where women are not allowed to show their hair.

Figure 34 Earing "It's none of your business: به تو چه " by RahimiYeganeh A. H.. n.d., brass, size 2x3 cm. [@Liqeism]. (22.11.2015). Accessed 03.03.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/-ZUpJiTW5W/?taken-by=liqeism

3.2.3.1.3 Verses

Verses are the most commonly used material under the category of Persian script. In sight, it looks similar to slogans or sentences in appearance, but the meaning of the verse is valuable and didactic.

Figure 35 shows a poem by Houshang Ebtehaj, a famous contemporary poet. The designer preferred to use handwriting style for this verse. In another example (Fig. 36), the designer uses a verse by Rumi. He is a famous poet (1207 to 1273) whose works have mystic meanings. Based on the visual data analysis, it can be said that designers prefer to use calligraphy instead of handwriting when they try emphasize the respect to the poet, writer or concept, as we see in this example.

Figure 35 Clutch by Abbasi F.. n.d.. [@Ferfereh_rangi]. (12.01.2017). Accessed 03.04.2017 from
https://www.instagram.com/p/BPKGPQ0g2oV/?taken-by=ferfereh_rangi

Figure 36 Handmade calligraphic necklace by Amini M.. 2015, copper and brass and opal Stone, size not
specified. [@mohsenaminiart]. (04.05.2016). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BChg2s-
yn4rTPgfSRf-YN9iWwbZR_p4l90rX5E0/?taken-by=mohsenaminiart

3.2.3.1.4 Numerals

In Persian ۰۱۲۳۴۵۶۷۸۹ (0123456789) are the written forms of numbers. Even
though the names for them are different, the written forms are same with Arabic. In a
few cases, the meaning of numbers used on products are clear such as the one in
Figure 37 which was designed for the 39th birthday of the designer. As mentioned
earlier, numbers may carry special meaning and be used in spells. In the following

43

examples, on the other hand, the designers did not mention anything about the meaning of them, or the way that they arrange the numbers in these works (Fig. 37, 38, 39).

Figure 37 39 (۳۹), fork and spoon by RahimiYeganeh A. H.. n.d.. [@Rahimiyegane]. (09.07.2016). Accessed 03.07.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BHozpuQhr7dNkvIYcW703T8gMxrDYYi4CTRV2o0/?taken-by=rahimiyegane

Figure 38 Felt by Soraya M. 2012 size not specified. [@Mirmolasoraya]. (14.09.2014). Accessed 03.07.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/s7S8IxBZgw/?taken-by=mirmolasoraya

Figure 39 Numbers T-shirt "Never Still. Magic Square" by Behnoud N.. n.d.. [@Nimany]. (06.05.2015). Accessed 03.04.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/z4zya0mt_8/?taken-by=nimany

3.2.3.2 Architecture

This category includes the products that have sources related to architecture. In the first example (Fig. 40), we can see the necklace that inspired by a monument in Tehran, the Azadi (*freedom*) Tower originally known as the Shahyad (*King's Memorial*) Tower (Fig. 41). The form of the necklace is somewhat different than the tower, but the link to its source of inspiration is rather obvious like the other examples in this category.

Figure 40 A necklace "Tehran's landmark, Azadi tower (Shahyad)" by RahimiYeganeh A. H.. n.d.. size not specified. [@Rahimiyegane]. (10.06.2017). accessed 03.07.2017 from https://goo.gl/xQUAN4

45

Figure 41 Azadi (Shahyad) tower by Emamifar M. n.d. from
http://makanbin.net/cache/fd9ae94d/av8318937283add15d1ba.jpeg

Another source of influence is tiles used in connection with architecture. In Figure 42 there is an example where the designer was inspired by tiles used in a historical building. The exact source or the building were not mentioned under the Instagram post, but the general form, color, and even the thin white line that repeats six times from top to bottom of the *manteaux*, signify the source.

Figure 42 *Manteaux* by Jafariye S.- Desar by Sara n.d. [@desarbysara]. (26.11.2015) Accessed 06.06.2017 from
https://www.instagram.com/p/-jMf_SmFIT/

3.2.3.3 Nature

Since nature has similar qualities all around the world, gathering samples under this category and accepting them as local influences was challenging. Certainly, there may be various products inspired by local nature, but detecting them and accepting them as a local source were not possible. Therefore, this section covers the examples whose designers directly mentioned or shared the source of influence or inspiration. In Figure 43 the designer mentioned that she was inspired by mine stones. In another example the designer was inspired by the *Lut* desert (Fig. 44); she mentioned that it is one of the natural wonders of her country and she used the texture of it.

Figure 43 Ceramic "Golden Glaze Collection" by Soraya L.. n.d. size not specified. [@Lalehsoraya]. (27.12.2014). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/xHoCBUzhxi/

Figure 44 Shoes desert "Kavir e Lut collection" by Hooshyar R. [@lafemme.studio]. (27.05.2017). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BSIb67mhoUv/

3.2.3.4 Ancient History

In this category designers used various sources related to ancient history such as portraits of kings in the history of Iran or that era's clothing style, stamps, etc. Since the Achaemenid Empire (*Hakhamaneshian)* was the first empire of Iran, Iranians has given a special importance to this era, and we can see many examples directly inspired by it. In figure 45 designer inspired by Achaemenid era and it looks like bas-reliefs in *Persepolis*. Qajar dynasty is another popular era, due to their influence in arts as described earlier in the literature review. In figure 46 the design, colors and patterns reminds the *Qaba,* which is a long garment open in front and worn by men, and generally clothing style of Qajar dynasty (Vogelsang-Eastwood, 2001).

Figure 45 Clips by Rahimiyeganeh A. H.. brass, size not specified. [@Liqeism]. (23.01.2016). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BRKl8MRgLmY/?taken-by=liqeism

3.2.3.5 Symbols

In this category there are samples that can also be classified under other categories.
A symbol can include anything; for example, Figure 40 is also included under this
category since the Azadi Tower is accepted as a symbol and its significance is
beyond a physical structure. While some designers are using the symbols directly
and in an obvious manner in their designs, others prefer to use symbols and sources
indirectly. In Figure 47, the designer is inspired by the "tree of life". This symbol is
traditionally used in Iranian rugs.

3.2.3.6 Folklore

This category includes samples that inspired by folk art, folk culture and fairytales. In Figure 48 the designer was inspired by a famous fairytale character *Ashimashi* bird. Another example is a raree-show sculpture (Fig. 49) inspired by an old raree-show (Fig. 50). These two examples remind us of the Saqqakhaneh movement and Parviz Tanavoli's sculptures.

Figure 48 A bird necklace by Nasseri Gh.. n.d. size not specified [@ghazaaljewelry]. (23.06.2016). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BG-7UF0F0hB/

Figure 49 Sculpture, "Shahre Farang" (a travelling peep box) by Zirak D.. n.d. size not specified. [@Danialzirak]. (20.02.2017). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BQvAifdjVMz/

Figure 50 Children looking through a peep box, "Shahre Farang", by unknown photographer, 1958. (27.05.2011). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://mailsarchive.wordpress.com/2011/05/27/old_tehran_pic/tehran-e-ghadim-22/

Next example is a pair of shoes (Fig. 51) inspired by the burqa of the southern Iranian ethnicity in Hormozgan province. (MirHoseini, 2015)(Fig. 52). The designer utilized this local source on a different place; burqa is used on women's faces but the designer utilized it on a shoe.

Figure 51 Shoes by Hooshyar R. n.d [@lafemme.studio]. (15.02.2017). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BQiw_wXAiFu/

Figure 52 A woman wearing her *burqa* by Rezvani A. (03.2013). Accessed 06.06.2017 from http://rasekhoon.net/article/show/874323

3.2.3.7 Materials and Techniques

Since the material and its origin has an important role in designing a product, the samples and their captions under the Instagram posts were reviewed carefully, and a list of materials utilized was drafted (Table 6).

Table 5 Materials utilized in the samples in Study 1

Materials
Metal
Gold
Silver
Brass
Stone
Gemstone
Pearl
Artificial stone
Fabric
Silk
Cotton
Leather
Plastic
Wood
Ceramic
Glaze

This category also contains some common samples with other categories. As seen in Figure 53, the designer utilized an ancient Persian technique of inlaying, "Khatam" (Figure 54). In this category samples are mainly from jewelry and accessories.

Figure 53 Ring, "Khatam" by Metal Hammer (Chakosh felezi). n.d. [@Torse.chakoshfelezi]. (11.09.2015). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://goo.gl/G6rd7N

Figure 54 A box decorated with an ancient Persian technique of inlaying, *Khatam,* (02.10.2016). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.kojaro.com/2016/9/30/122303/khatamsazi/

3.2.3.8 Local Arts and Skills

This category has some overlap with other categories; some samples in this category, for example, could also be classified under "Materials and Techniques". Figure 60 shows an example where the designer redesigned a pair of local shoes for men. She bought the shoes from local craftsmen, put embroidery on them and modernized them for burgher women. Two other design samples are classified under local arts and skills where the designer recruited the local (rural) craftswomen (or just housewives) who know passementerie, embroidery, etc. (Fig. 55, 56). The designer was inspired by the local technique to design her products then she got help from those women.

Figure 55 Handmade passementerie made by *Qeshm* craftswomen by Nattaj S. 2016 [@Sanaznatajofficial] (05.05.2017) Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BRQASY7lSle/

Figure 56 "*Ahmad Shah*" A set of handmade accessories made by *Baluchestan* craftwomen by Mogise M. n.d., size not specified. [@mimaccessories]. (14.05.2016). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://instagram.com/p/BC8PAu5gjeO/

3.2.3.9 Re-use/ Repurposing

In re-use, already existing products, which may have lost their function, are brought back to utilization in different forms. In this category, there are old carpets which are overdyed or patch worked (Fig. 57), and an old Samovar (Fig. 58), and a musical instrument (Fig. 59), which are nostalgic and upcycled to lighting and chair.

Figure 57 Overdyed carpet by Bayat M. for Bayat Nomad company. n.d., size not specified. [@maryambayatdesigns]. (05.07.2014). Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/qEg7-jmRa2/

Figure 58 Samovar lighting by Rahimiyeganeh A. H. n.d. size and material not specified. [@Rahimiyegane]. (18.03.2017) accessed 06.06.2017 from https://goo.gl/AD7sA1

Figure 59 *Tonbak* chair and table by RahimiYeganeh A. H. n.d. size not specified. [@Rahimiyegane].
(04.05.2017) Accessed 06.06.2017 from https://goo.gl/M8wKA7

Also mentioned earlier under the "local arts and skills" category, another example is the re-use of a traditional product, *Giveh* or *Givah*, a kind of shoe worn in a local province in a rural area by some touches or redesigning.

Figure 60 Embroidery on local shoes, *papich* by Asgari Sh. N.d. [@Shabnamasgariii]. (01.09.2016). Accessed
06.06.2017 from https://www.instagram.com/p/BIjwqfJDV9F/

3.3 Study 2: Interviews with Designers in Tehran and Tabriz

This section covers the interviews conducted with the local designers. The interviewees were selected from the designers who lived in Tehran and Tabriz, and who were active in Instagram. Then they were contacted and 12 of them accepted to be interviewed.

3.3.1 Methodological Approach

As stated earlier, the aim of the study is to explore the motivations for, and the ways in which local sources and influences are utilized by contemporary Iranian designers. In order do so, 12 one-on-one interviews were conducted with Iranian designers practicing in various design fields; 11 interviews were conducted face to face, and one interview was conducted through Skype.

As the data gathered in interviews are considered mostly qualitative, constructive epistemology has been considered as the most appropriate one. This approach suggests that the researcher should search for several findings rather than one single fact (Gray, 2004). Qualitative research can be described as "an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". Based on the considerations in the Creswell's study (2014), the characteristics of the qualitative research conducted in this study can be described as follows:

- Natural setting: The interviews were mostly conducted in the interviewees' workplaces, art studios, offices, and workshops where they felt comfortable and were not out of their comfort zone. As Gray mentions (2009), natural setting in qualitative research lets the researcher go deeper and find out the reasons of current happenings.

- Researcher as a key instrument: During this study, the researcher herself conducted the interviews and took pictures of the products when the interviewees gave permission. The interviews were semi-structured and the

questions were prepared previously, but there were changes in the flow during the process. This is in line with the way in which Creswell describes data collection by the researcher through observing behavior and interviewing people (Creswell, 2014).

- Multiple sources of data: For this research, the initial source of data was the visual material compiled through Instagram. Then the researcher conducted interviews with the designers in their natural settings to collect another set of data from the interviewees.

- Participants' meaning: The interviewees are considered as the participants in this study. All the participants were contemporary designers based in Iran. The data gathered from them allowed the researcher to include their subjectivity, which was crucial for the accuracy and correctness of the researcher's findings (Flick, 2009).

- Emergent design: In some of the interviews, the interviewee changed the flow of the interview as she/he made some comments which were not thought about prior to the interviews. The researcher let the flow divert to gather data that seemed important to the participant.

- Reflexivity: The researcher's background is in line with the scope of this study, as she grew up and studied industrial design in Iran. Moreover, she worked as a designer for a company and was a freelance designer of leather products. The researcher was in touch with the atmosphere of Iranian designers before the study was conducted. In addition, knowing the language reduced the barrier of communication with the designers, although most of the participants had sufficient English proficiency. Having the same or similar study background with the participants was helpful for creating trust with them. Both King (2004) and Creswell (2014) mention that the background of the researcher may change the findings, knowledge and the process. Therefore, the researcher's viewpoint must be clear during the study (King, 2004), (Creswell, 2014).

3.3.2 Participants

The interviewees were chosen among the designers who had an Instagram account and who sold their products directly or indirectly through Instagram. Some of the designers were already followed by the researcher, and the rest of them were found through their "followings" or the suggestions provided by Instagram. Among thousands of accounts, the ones with more followers were chosen. The number of followers was important as a sign of the reputability of that Instagram account among other Instagram users. In total, there were 40 accounts that were listed and each was coded by a number from 001 to 040. In order to conduct an interview, the contact information was gathered from the account's bio part on Instagram. If the information was not accessible through the bio part, a direct message via Instagram was sent and their telephone number was requested. The accounts with the least number of followers were called first so as to gain experience. Out of 40 designers, 12 of them accepted the interview request, but they usually kept the call short and asked the researcher to call them back, or they asked the researcher to send them more information about the study as a text message via Telegram. However, in order to create a more formal atmosphere for the study, instead of just sending the text message by Telegram, their e-mail addresses were asked and a brief information about the study and the topic was sent to their e-mail accounts. Usually, the interview was held about one week after the first call. Five of the twelve interviewees requested to hold the interview in their home offices, another five in their showrooms or workshops, and two in other locations. Before starting the interviews, they were asked to read and sign the consent form (Appendix B). The interviews were voice-recorded by a smartphone.

3.3.3 Analysis of the Interviews

All 12 recorded voice files were transcribed verbatim in Farsi and saved digitally as a MS word file, and each interview was saved based on the interviewees' code. Each line of the interview transcription was given a line number together with the designer's code. For example, in the line number "25365", 25 stands for the designer code and 365 is the line number in that specific interview.

Each interview transcription was read from the digital file and the parts related to the research questions, or the sections that were considered important for the study were underlined. Then, all the transcriptions were printed on A4 paper, and they were all read again, and the themes and topics were noted down. Then all the highlighted parts, the excerpts from the interviews, ranging from one line to a paragraph were cut, and as shown in Figure 61 thematically arranged on a large sheet. After several iterations, groupings under suitable topics, and the topics themselves were finalized.

Figure 61 Analysis of interviews (92X320cm)

3.3.4 Findings of Study 2

In this section, to find the answers to the key questions, the information provided by the interviewees were categorized based on their significance and relation to the questions. Based on these categorization, the information was arranged and in each section the details and examples from each interview were provided to clarify their contribution to the discussion.

3.3.4.1 Instagram

Instagram as a social media, was utilized as a means of communication to find the designers, as mentioned previously in Chapter 1. This service was crucial for the designers as a medium and as a sales point, and for the researcher to get in touch with them. Therefore, this social network service should be examined in more detail.

3.3.4.1.1 Its Benefits as a Platform

According to the interviews with the designers, the future of Instagram is not predictable; few years ago, Facebook was popular in Iran and a large number of people were using it but today it is not like that anymore. Therefore, they believe that Instagram is trending now and they utilize it, but they are waiting for a day that it will be replaced with another application or social media channel. Wally (2014) explains the opinion of his research's participants about the future of promotion tools of business development, seven out of nine participants expect that a new application will replace the Instagram.

The role of Instagram in Iranian designer's work is an incontestable fact. As mentioned earlier, the designers in this study were chosen from the Instagram. Moreover, the information such as telephone numbers was taken from there. The interviewees' reasons for using Instagram varied, but almost all were like-minded. High number of users, free availability, simplicity, and connecting to others all around the world by hashtags were the main reasons that the designers were using Instagram for. Besides these, Instagram made it possible for designers to protect their intellectual property rights and to use it as an online portfolio. The role of Instagram

in providing evidence is due to its date feature. Each post has a date and it cannot be changed. Therefore, thanks to Instagram, a designer can prove that her design or product was made available to the public before the one which violated her rights.

3.3.4.1.2 A Platform for Free Advertisement

Using Instagram as a platform for advertisement is undeniable since many of them get known through it. Some participants indicated that advertisement was costly and had some limitations; for example, advertisement in professional journals was accessed by a limited audience. One participant (014) expressed her opinion as follows: "Publishing advertisement in design and architecture journals costs 5.000 Euro. So if you want to advertise monthly it is extremely high cost and it does not have economic rationality." However, in Instagram, it is free to present the products and there is not any limitation in presentation. In addition, unlike the professional journals, the Instagram users are diverse.

3.3.4.1.3 Providing Date of Reference for Intellectual Property Rights

According to the interviewees, the participants' intellectual property rights are not well established in Iran. Designers could not get their rights easily. Some participants use Instagram's date of posting as a proof of the date of making a design available to the public. For example, one designer stated her experience as follows:

> "Someone copied my works; he almost stole my idea and produced almost the same product. I have created all these products and produced them before anyone else. You can check the date on my Instagram photos." (Designer 025)

The designer reposted the original post which included her products to prove the ownership to her customers and followers.

3.3.4.1.4 A Platform for Designers' Portfolios

Personal website is costly for them and also one has to know the full address of the website to check it. For example, one designer (006) defined it as follows: "I must

have a website since in international exhibitions they ask my website, it is professional. Nonetheless, it is not common in Iran. Few people check websites, but *Instagram* is linked to my website. Everybody could go to my website by clicking on bio part of my Instagram account."

3.3.4.2 Designers' Motivations

For understanding the key topic of the study, the interviews were analyzed in detail. And more answers for this section were gathered. Mainly the term or the main content was obvious in the context of interviews, but some of them such as nationalism were comprehended from the content. Designers' motivations are listed in table 7. And the frequency is the number of designers out of 12 designers.

Table 6 List of motivations for utilizing local sources and influences in design

Motivation for utilizing local sources and influences	Frequency
Providing employment (especially for local women)	*****
Using local sources as a trend to grow fast in the local market	****
Bringing back an old art or craft (transferred from mother to daughter) to life	****
Promoting local arts and crafts by combining modern and traditional	***
"Culture making" (consuming "nationally" produced products)	**
Using it as an alternative to copying Western style	**
Being born and grown up in Iran (national identity)	**
Designing products especially for Iranian people	**
Opening up Iranian design identity to the world	*

As shown in Table 7, nine main motivations for using local sources and influences were provided by the interviewees. Some participants mentioned more than one reason for utilizing local sources. Based on the interviews, creating and providing jobs especially for women came in the first rank, but opening up Iranian identity to the world was mentioned only once during the interviews.

The term national (*milli* in Persian) was repeated under different topics and at different times during the interviews. Sometimes the participants referred to this

topic without using exactly the word national. For instance, designer 014 explained why he used local sources as follows: "I am an Iranian, I grew up in this culture and I know the details better than any foreigner. I cannot imitate (follow) a design based on Japanese art. I can make something similar but it will not have the spirit of that." Another designer (001) indicated that designing in Iran for Iranians distinguished her from others.

Five out of twelve interviewees mentioned that they utilized the local influences and sources as a must although they accepted it as an advantage; they believe that otherwise they cannot distinguish themselves from other designers.

3.3.4.3 Searching for and Documenting the Sources and Influences

During the interviews designers were asked about their strategies and methods for searching, documenting, and transforming the sources and influences. There were two types of responses. A group of designers explained that they did not search directly for sources, while others mentioned that they searched or studied them.

The first group of designers described that due to their educational background and past experience, they were professional now, and they believed that when they started designing they did not need to do research a lot. For example, one of the designers explained that she studied Iranian history and art from the second year of middle school and she was familiar with these issues. Another designer explained that he had used to read a lot and when he wanted to design he remembered them.

The second group mentioned that they sought for sources all the time and documented them by taking notes, photographs, or stored them as digital sources in their computers. As shown in Table 8 designers searched for influences through various activities including reading books and journals; researching about art and design, travelling, searching internet, and visiting exhibitions, etc.

Table 7 List of activities through which designers sought for influences

Activities through which designers sought for influences	Frequency
Reading books [history, mythology, poetry, literature] and journals [fashion, architecture]	*****
Researching about art and design [modern art, other designers' works, photography]	*****
Researching about local arts [local glaze technique in ceramics, calligraphy, miniature, painting]	*****
Travelling	****
Searching Internet (Pinterest, Instagram, Etsy, etc.)	****
Researching about ancient history and arts [Pre-Islam, Seljuq Dynasty, Qajar Dynasty, etc.]	***
Researching about local culture (modern culture, folklore, fairytale, lullaby, poetry)	***
Researching about eastern wisdom and mysticism	***
Researching about primitive art	*
Visiting exhibitions	*
Researching about national symbols or elements	*

3.3.4.4 Limitations Concerning Locally Available Materials and Production Processes

Designers' approaches to using local materials were diverse. While some of them believed that for designing an Iranian product they had to use local materials some others thought that it was not important.

One of the designers expressed her approach as follows: "All the materials for embroidery used to be locally produced, but nowadays some of them are imported and I don't have any other choice." On the other hand, another designer pointed out

that the design she does makes it a local product, there is no such thing that materials make a product local.

One of the fashion designers emphasized the limited access to materials as follows:

> Access to high quality leather for my fashion accessories is really difficult. I believe that the salesmen do not supply me the leather I want. They think that since I am a woman they can sell me low quality products. They do not believe that my work is professional.

Another problem about the materials is the quality of local materials. Two ceramic designers complained about the poor quality of the local glaze for ceramics and continued as follows: "There is not any standardization for them; even if there is any, none of the factories adhere to them. Each time after baking the ceramics, we come across new colors, so we can't take any orders." The designer cannot take orders from customers since she is not sure about the end product's quality and color. Therefore, they are preferring to retail.

Importing is another way of providing raw materials, but it is also costly because of high customs taxes, and famous online shopping websites usually do not have services for Iran.

The limited diversity of materials available locally restricts designers. Two shoe designers import the shoe soles from Turkey. One fashion designer mentioned that she imports the scarves from Turkey because of the higher quality and diverse color choices there. One designer of decorative products who uses wood and metal mentioned that he could not find quality materials in the size he wanted so he had to wait for import timber. Another accessories designer mentioned that many years ago threads had been made locally, but now almost half of them were imported.

Plating metals with silver or gold requires tanks full of silver or gold, which is a high cost process. Due to that finding tanks in bigger sizes are impossible, so the product designer explained that they cut the product in smaller parts and plate them

separately and then weld them together. This process limits the designer from designing in bigger sizes or in one piece.

3.3.4.5 Local Crafts and Craftsmen

Designers utilized the local wealth in different aspects. While some of the designers learned and practiced the method and the process they used, the others' role was of an entrepreneur and they provided employment for local people. The first group utilized it for their designs; sometimes they produced themselves, and sometimes they got help from the rural craftspeople. The other group started with conducting a workshop in that urban area and got help from local people.

3.3.4.5.1 Quality of Local Human Resources

According to the participants the local craftsmen and craftswomen are not professional enough; keeping them motivated requires additional effort, time and money. For example, one designer (014) needs to travel many times to these local provinces to motivate them by offering them extra money as a gift or convince them to continue knitting. According to designer 008 "It is difficult to convince local craftsmen who have been practicing the same way for generations to make new models and designs". Designers, depending on their field, use different strategies to show the local artisans the feasibility of the designs they develop. One of the designers took shoe making classes to make the first pair of shoes to show the craftsmen the feasibility of each design. In another example, the designer held vocational classes taught by instructors from a foreign country for craftsmen to help them develop their skills and motivation.

3.3.4.6 Lack of effective Protection of Intellectual Property Rights

Several designers mentioned the professional ethics and intellectual property rights. Lack of effective regulations and legal procedures for protecting intellectual property rights, and copying being perceived as a less risky alternative are some of the problems that designers face.

One participant (001) described someone's attitude towards her own works in one of her exhibitions as follows: "He came to my showroom and admired my works. But suddenly he said that he also wanted to produce those works."

According to two participants, (023, 014) few designers are motivated and eager to spend time for presenting new designs. They believe that those designers who copy from similar product photos and websites are unaware that perhaps somebody else could also notice these sources. They insisted that designers were afraid of performing by their own abilities. According to them, copying from a foreign designer is not reasonable since they design according to their own cultural assets; designers in Iran should focus more on Iranian resources and look for new points inside Iran.

3.3.4.7 Lack of Design Awareness and Culture

According to some designers there is a lack of design awareness and culture among the general public in Iran. A designer (030) stated that people enjoyed the copied works as much as they did the original ones, and they didn't search for the original one.

3.3.4.8 Lack of Governmental Support

One of the designers stated that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran cared less about fashion than other industries: "Although Fajr fashion festivals have been organized for five years, none of them are worthwhile. Promoting the fashion industry and making it known to everybody is the responsibility of the ministry." The designer added that governmental support promised more limitations than support.

3.3.4.9 Limited Opportunities for Growing and Achieving Fame

Due to the weak international connections, the highest fame is confined to Iran and sales rarely happen internationally. One of the interviewee (014) stated that if he

were in Turkey he would have been well-known by now. However, in Iran, he had to spend more effort to prove and defend himself and he had to deal with unnecessary mental stress.

3.3.4.10 Market and Trade Restrictions

One of the designers (001) stated that since tourists and people all around the world were looking for local products in countries such as Iran, contemporary designs were not acknowledged: "No one knows me, and there is not any brand associated with my works, and that would make it not valuable enough for purchasing."

Another designer believes that being well-known in the world as an Iranian designer is impossible: "Getting interviewed by famous journals is difficult and Instagram is the only way to present ourselves to the world."

3.3.4.11 Quality of Local Production Techniques

One designer stated that local sources have not been studied well: "We have lots of sources, materials, skills and techniques, but we do not study on them to develop them further. In other developed countries, many studies have been conducted on techniques (needle works) and lots of books are available. But in Iran we start from scratch each time."

3.3.4.12 Economic and Financial Considerations

The number and quality of assets for starting and continuing a business is very important. One designer (025) mentioned that he did not have the necessary support for developing his business: "I have waited for seven years to stand in the position where I am now. But if I had a fund (material capital), my business would have developed faster."

Another designer (006) expressed his perspective as follows: "Since designers' education have a different focus, most of them are not aware of the importance of

finance". After working for her business for three years, another designer (001) relized that she did an amateur start: "Since I did not have initial investment, I started with my pocket money, and I could not manage my revenues. Actually I didn't invest in a planned way, I couldn't gain what I intended. Now I want to get a loan and start again professionally". Economic problems vary. Sometimes they directly depend on the designer as mentioned above, and sometimes the general economic problems of the country affect the situation. For example, the same designer (001) also mentioned that high temperature furnaces were expensive, and not everybody could provide them. In her opinion, workshops and companies -in big cities- should provide designers with them so that they can try different designs.

3.4 Discussion on Study 1 and Study 2

Modern and contemporary artists, and contemporary designers focused upon in this study belong to two different generations in Iran. As described previously in the literature review, the modern and contemporary artists included in this study are the group of artists who were born around 1930-1940; their works were mainly sculpture, painting, graphic works, calligraphy; and they were among the founders of the Saqqakhaneh Movement. Contemporary designers in this study, on the other hand, are the group of designers who were born after 1970; they design products rather than art works such as carpets, decorative products, jewelry, garments, shoes and bags; and this study focuses on the ones who utilize local influences and sources in their works.

After analyzing and categorizing the visual data in Study 1 some similarities were noticed between the works of Iranian modern artists and the contemporary designers. Later, during the interviews conducted with the designers some designers mentioned this issue while some others did not. Influences and sources were categorized several times in this study. Folk art, fairy tales, myths, Iranian culture, literature, poetry, calligraphy, paintings, symbols and signs are the sources and influences that used both in the works of contemporary artists and contemporary designers. As studied earlier in the literature review, the works of modern and contemporary artists who were the pioneers of Saqqakhaneh Movement were influenced by local sources, and

they strived to adapt the Western contemporary art to Iranian taste and culture, which characterized the movement as "traditional-modern". In Figure 62, Region A represents the local influences and sources, and Region B the modern and contemporary art as practiced in the West. Region AB is the intersection of these two regions and it is where Saqqakhaneh Movement is located.
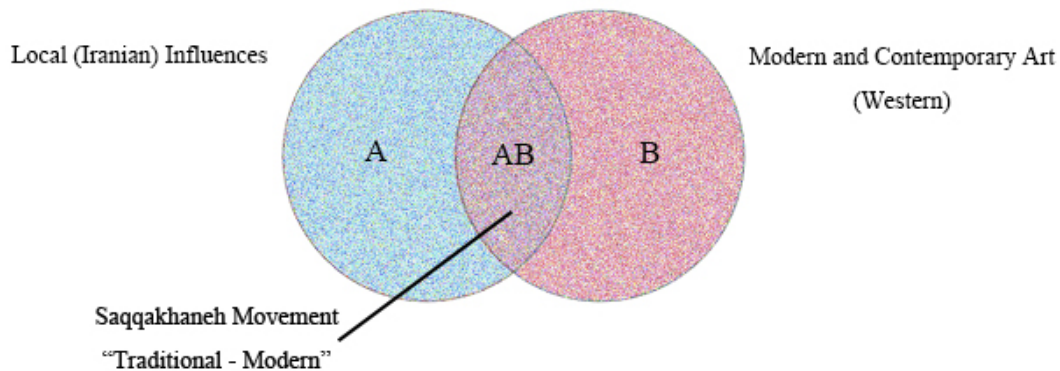
Figure 62 Characterizing Saqqakhaneh Movement as "traditional-modern" and as located at the intersection of local (Iranian) influences, and modern and contemporary art as practiced in the West

Figure 63 has a similar rationale with the previous diagram and it represents "contemporary Iranian design influenced by local sources" as located at the intersection of local influences and contemporary Iranian design. During the interviews, some designers mentioned that they searched the local sources, and some others cited Saqqakhaneh movement, a locally inspired art movement, directly as an influence. All the examples included in this study are located in A'C region.
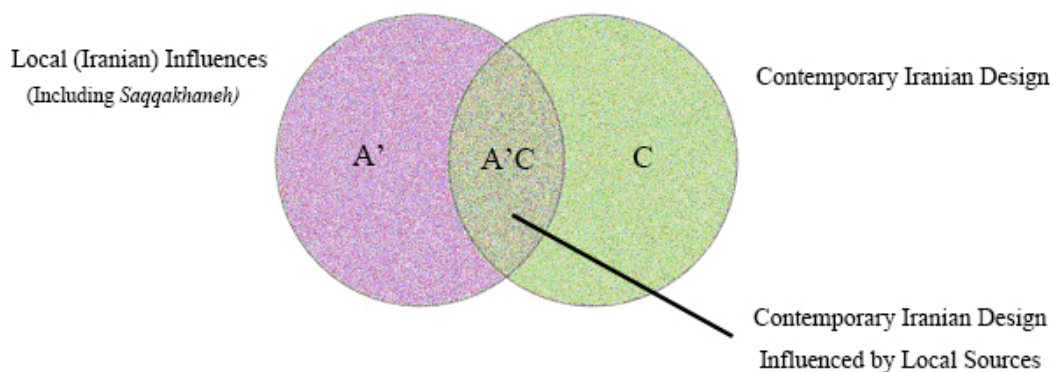
Figure 63 Characterizing "contemporary Iranian design influenced by local sources" as located at the intersection of local (Iranian) influences and contemporary Iranian design

Categorizing the designers is impossible; they may get influenced by different sources at different times in their career. For example, designer 032 was inspired by different contemporary artists and Saqqakhaneh Movement artists at the beginning of his career, but after gaining experience, he started searching the local sources directly and actively including travelling and exploring new places, local people, and local nature. Another designer (009) mentioned that he studied Parviz Tanavoli's books and studies, even though his works did not show any direct similarity to Tanavoli's works. He believes that studying pioneers of contemporary art and design guides him, and he learns the ways in which the local sources can be utilized.

Another important issue that draws attention is the intense use of the letter "H" (H:ﻩ) in designers' works. Reflecting back on the visual data, the interviews, and the literature review on the pioneers of contemporary art such as Zenderoudi and Tanavoli and their utilizing the letter 'H', we can identify two reasons: Designers being influenced by the pioneers' works (for example, Tanavoli's *Heech* collection), and the "capacity" of this particular letter as explained in the section "Persian Script". Nima Behnoud and Amirhossein RahimiYeganeh are two designers who use letter "H" frequently and in different contexts. In an interview Nima Behnoud states that the "H" he refers to is the "H" of همه‌چیز, (*Hame chiz*, everything). For Amirhossein RahimiYeganeh's works, we observe that he uses this letter in different forms in different products. The "capacity" or the potential this letter has such as the holes and the different forms it can take in writing may be the reason why designers such as him utilize it in their designs.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier this study aimed to explore and classify local sources and influences in the works of contemporary Iranian designers. Considering the aim of the study, there are a few methodological issues that need to be re-visited. Firstly, the literature review did not only look at the works by contemporary Iranian designers, but also at the background of influences and sources of modern and contemporary Iranian artists who were mostly born in the 1930s and 1940s. The lack of literature on local sources and influences in contemporary Iranian design made this indirect exploration necessary, and it turned out be an insightful detour. Secondly, the field study explored the local influences in contemporary Iranian design through the visual analysis of 82 designs published on Instagram by 40 designers, and one-to-one interviews conducted with 12 designers residing in Tehran and Tabriz. In selecting the designs published on Instagram, the researcher looked for contemporary designers with higher number of followers; it was thought that the number of followers might indicate the commercial and social interest in these works. However, the interviews conducted with the designers later implied that the number of followers on Instagram might be manipulated by various technical means. In addition, some designers stated that although their works were well known and commercially successful in the market they did not pay much attention to their presence in Instagram. Thirdly, since 12 designers interviewed were chosen from the 40 designers whose works were analyzed in the first study, the researcher had the advantage of exploring and analyzing the works of designers in detail prior to conducting the interviews. Fourthly, the interviewees of this study constitutes only a small portion of contemporary Iranian designers, as they mainly focus on Saqqakhaneh and local influences. Therefore, this study constitutes an initial first step towards analyzing the contemporary Iranian design. In order to study it more extensively one should include artists and designers who benefit from other sources and influences.

4.1 Revisiting the Key Research Questions

What are the local sources and influences that contemporary Iranian designers use in their designs? Since there is a lack of literature on contemporary Iranian design, for exploring this question, modern and contemporary art and their sources were studied. The second step was the visual analysis of 82 designs by 40 designers in terms of the local sources and influences utilized. The categories of local sources and influences revealed by the analysis of visual data included Persian script (single letters, sentences or slogans, verses, numerals), architecture, nature, ancient history, symbols, folklore, materials and techniques, local arts and skills, and re-use or repurposing (Table 4).

Even though some designers' works had shown similarities with the works of Iranian modern artists, only three designers mentioned them directly as their source of inspiration. One designer indicated that he was influenced not much by the works themselves, but by the way in which designers explored and utilized the local material culture in their works. The designer also inspected the works and read the books by the artists of that period and developed an awareness of, and an interest in, the local products and symbols involved; he started collecting samples and developed products based on his research.

Almost all the designers interviewed mentioned that utilizing calligraphy in design was getting out of trend slowly, and getting inspiration from fairytales and folklore were trending on together with traditional and ancient symbols, and signs.

Based on the literature review, the analysis of the visual data and the interviews, we can distinguish three types of influences, both direct and indirect, local and non-local in the works of contemporary Iranian designers analyzed in this study:

- Local sources and influences utilized directly
- Saqqakhaneh Movement utilized as a local influence
- Contemporary art and design in general

What are the motivations of contemporary Iranian designers for using these local sources and influences in their designs? The literature review helped to find initial answers to this question, and implied that national identity and promoting Iranian design might be among the expected answers. The interviews were another step towards finding the answers. Motivations of designers for using local sources included providing employment to local people, using local sources as a trend to grow fast in the local market, reviving an old art or craft, promoting local arts and crafts by combining modern and traditional, consuming nationally produced products, using local influences as an alternative to copying Western style, being born and grown up in Iran, designing products especially for Iranian people, and opening up Iranian design identity to the world (Table 7).

Here it should be noted that some designers tried to utilize less explored aspects of Iranian material culture and human resources. They tried to integrate local craftsmen and craftswomen into design process, and as an alternative to copying from Western examples, they intended to contribute to the formation of a contemporary Iranian design identity based on local knowledge and skills. The designers' overall efforts aimed at contributing to the formation of a contemporary Iranian design as having a distinct identity. Furthermore, the designers envisioned their designs both as having a local character and as part of the world contemporary design (Fig. 64).
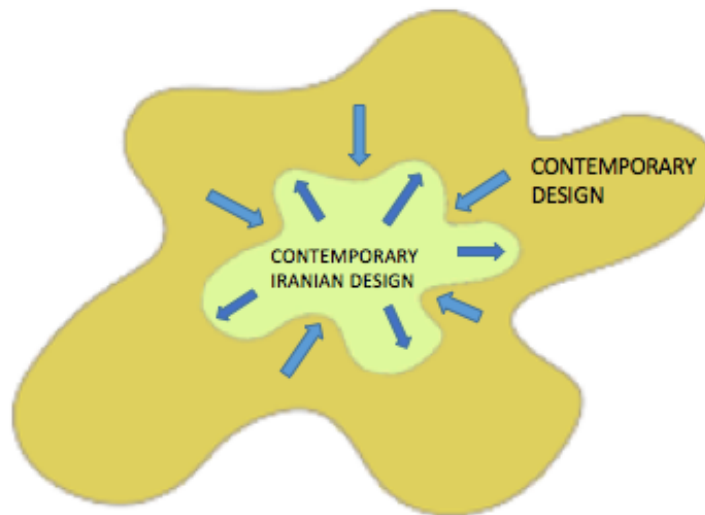
Figure 64 Contemporary Iranian design envisioned as part of the world contemporary design

What are the strategies, procedures or methods through which these local sources and influences are utilized in design process by designers? The visual data analysis in Study 1 indicated that designers utilized strategies and techniques such as collage, combining or mixing sources and altering size or scale. Furthermore, during the interviews, five out of 12 designers mentioned that they prepared mood boards and gathered all the details, sources, photographs, etc. on that board. The interviews further revealed the major activities through which the designers sought for local influences, which included reading books and professional journals; researching about art and design, local arts, ancient history and arts, and local culture; travelling; searching Internet sources such as Pinterest, Instagram and Etsy; visiting exhibitions, etc.

What are the challenges and problems that designers encounter during the design process in relation to utilizing local sources and influences?
The interviews revealed many challenges and limitations concerning the design process in relation to utilizing local sources and influences including low quality and diversity of locally available materials, poor quality of local production techniques, poor quality of human resources, lack of effective protection of intellectual property rights, limited opportunities for growing and achieving fame, market and trade

78

restrictions, lack of governmental support, financial limitations, and lack of design awareness and culture among the general public in Iran.

The role of Instagram in young Iranian designers' career seems important. Even though some were satisfied with it and some others were not, all of them agreed that Instagram helped them connect with costumers in the local and international markets and with other designers easily and freely.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

This study constitutes the first study on local sources and influences in contemporary Iranian design. To the best of our knowledge, no systematic research was conducted on this topic previously. Although the researcher had difficulties in finding direct literature on the topic, some studies had been conducted regarding the local influences in contemporary Iranian arts. Since this study focused on design, the mentioned factors made it challenging to examine the topic. Furthermore, it was difficult to reach out young designers (most of whom were born after 1970s); professionally, they are not organized well, and the main channels they use to display their designs are social media, workshops and art galleries.

Inaccessibility to consulting experts was one of the important limitations of this study. Interdisciplinary character of the topic required more than one consultant including an industrial design expert, a specialist in Iranian arts and crafts, a fashion design expert, etc. Due to the distance between Ankara and Tehran, and the tight time schedule, consulting experts was not possible. Study 1 (assessing and analyzing the selected designs in terms of local influences), in particular, involves subjective aspects and limited with the researcher's background and perspective. Involvement of local experts from related fields might have resulted in different categories and insights in Study 1.

For studying contemporary design extensively and accurately, more designers from diverse fields are required to be interviewed; in this study the range of designers and design fields were narrowed by choosing the designers from Instagram. This

narrower scope had an advantage of studying Instagram and social media which is an important part of today's workstyle along with other questions.

4.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Contemporary Iranian design in relation to local influences and sources was studied for the first time. This topic can be studied and further explored with more designers from different regions. The notion "Iranian design" can be studied in reference to the sources and influences utilized. This study suggests that Iranian designers do utilize a wide variety of local sources and influences as inspiration; an archive or a museum which brings together the products and their sources of inspiration would be a unique contribution to contemporary Iranian design and design history in Iran.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM (Persian)

Middle East Technical University Faculty of Architecture Department of Industrial Design

فرم اطلاعات و رضایت آگاهانه برای شرکت کنندگان

موضوع پایان نامه: منابع الهام گیری در طراحی معاصر ایرانی

اینجانب ناردین سید صابونچی دانشجوی کارشناسی ارشد دانشگاه میدل ایست تکنیکال آنکارا در ترکیه هستم. من در حال پژوهش بر روی منابع الهام گیری در طراحی معاصر ایرانی که بوسیله طراحان در شبکه اجتماعی اینستاگرام به اشتراک گذاشته می شوند هستم. دامنه تحقیق را زمینه های مختلفی شامل طراحی مد، طراحی جواهر و طراحی محصول پوشش می دهد.

این مصاحبه حدود یک ساعت به طول خواهد انجامید و در حین مصاحبه صدای شما برای سرعت بخشیدن به جمع آوری دقیق و سریع نظرات شما ضبط خواهد شد. و صداهای ضبط شده و موارد به دست آمده در مصاحبه فقط برای آنالیز و شرح در پایان نامه، ارائه کنفرانس، مقالات علمی و سخنرانی ها استفاده خواهد شد. و فقط من دسترسی به صداهای ضبط شده مصاحبه خواهم داشت. پایان نامه من به صورت الکترونیکی ثبت خواهد شد و در اینترنت انتشار خواهد یافت، بنابراین در موتورهای جستجوگر قابل دسترس خواهد بود. هویت شما به عنوان فرد مصاحبه شونده کاملا محرمانه باقی خواهد ماند.

هیچ خطری برای مشارکت در این مصاحبه شما را تهدید نمیکند و همچنین شرکت در این مصاحبه هیچ مزایایی برای شما نخواهد داشت. بنده جهت انجام این پژوهش نیاز به یاری شما دارم و متعهد می گردم که در اجرای پژوهش، اخلاق پژوهش را حفظ نمایم.

مشارکت شما اختیاری بوده و شما می توانید از پاسخ به هر سوالی که مایل هستید خودداری کنید و یا در زمان دلخواه بدون نیاز به توضیح علت مصاحبه را قطع نمایید.
درصورت تمایل در پایان تحقیق، نتایج پژوهش برای شما ارسال می شود.

اینجانب تایید می کنم که متن بالا را خوانده و اطلاعات ذکر شده را متوجه شده ام و مایل به شرکت در این مصاحبه هستم.

نام و نام خوانوادگی: _____

تاریخ: _____   امضا: _____

درصورت داشتن هرگونه سوال در مورد روند مصاحبه و تحقیق قبل و یا بعد از مصاحبه با پژوهشگر و یا استاد راهنما تماس حاصل فرمایید.

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APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM (English)

Middle East Technical University Faculty of Architecture Department of Industrial Design

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title of Research Project: Sources of Inspiration in Contemporary Iranian Design

My name is Nardin Seyedsabounchi. I am a Master of Science student at Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. I have been conducting a research project on sources of inspiration in contemporary Iranian design shared by their designers through the social networking service Instagram. The scope of research covers various areas of design including fashion design, jewelry design and product design.

The interview will take about an hour. I will audio record the session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. The audio recordings and the material produced during the interview will be used only for analysis and for illustration in the thesis, conference presentations, academic papers and lectures. Only I will have access to the original audio recordings. My thesis will be submitted electronically and published on the internet, so it will be available in internet search engines. Your identity as a participant will be kept strictly confidential.

There are no anticipated risks to your participation and there are no direct benefits to you for taking part in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided above. I am willing to participate in this interview.

Name and Surname: _____

_____   _____
Signature   Date

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact the researcher or the thesis supervisor:

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Persian)

سوالات مصاحبه:

۱.امکان داره به صورت خلاصه در مورد تحصیلات و سابقه ی حرفه ایتان توضیح بدهید؟

۱.۱.چطور این مهارت طراحی (جواهر/فشن/کفش/محصول) را به دست آوردید؟

۱.۲.چطور به این موضوع علاقه مند شدید؟

۲.شما چطور طراحی های خودتان را کاراکتریزه/توصیف می کنید؟

۱.۲.مشخصه طراحی های شما چیست؟

۳.از چه منابع هایی در طراحی هایتان الهام می گیرید؟ (محلی / ملی/ بین المللی)

۳.۱.چه مشخصه هایی این منابع را محلی و مللی و ... می کند؟

۳.۲.از چه زمانی از این منابع استفاده می کنید؟

۳.۳.آیا فقط از این منابع استفاده می کنید؟

۳.۴.چه چیزی باعث علاقه شما به این موضوع شد؟

۴.انگیزه شما برای استفاده از این منابع الهام گیری درطراحی هایتان چیست؟

۵.از چه ابزاری و به چه روش هایی این منابع های الهام گیری را گرداوری می کنید؟
(موزه/ کتاب خانه/عکس ها/گالری/نمایشگاه ها/ گردش علمی/ تحقیقات میدانی/اینترنت/و...)

۶.چطور و به چه روشی این منابع الهام گیری را بایگانی/ داکیومنت می کنید؟
آیا عکاسی با اسکچ و یا دانلود(پینترست/ اینستاگرام/رسانه های اجتماعی) می کنید؟

۷.چگونه این الهام گیری را به محصول مشخصی انتقال می دهید؟

۷.۱.آیا از متود خاصی استفاده می کنید؟ (کلاژ/کراپ/تغییر مقیاس)

۷.۲.چگونه انتخاب می کنید که از کدام منبع و متریال ویا استراتژی استفاده خواهید کرد؟ آیا از قبل تعیین می کنید یا در حین تولید؟

۷.۳.در صورت پیش تولید چگونه بین نمونه ها ارزیابی می کنید؟

۸. محصولاتتان چگونه تولید می کنید؟

۸.۱.از چه متریال هایی استفاده می کنید؟

۸.۲.مواد خام را از کجا تهیه می کنید؟ (منبع اصلی مواد)

۸.۳.ماتریال، متود، دانش و مهارت محلی، که در پروسه طراحی و تولید استفاده می کنید چیست؟

۸.۴.آیا از صنعتگران محلی استفاده می کنید؟

۹.با چه مشکلات و چالش هایی که در طول پروسه طراحی و تولید روبرو می شوید؟

۱.۹.در چه زمینه ای شما و کارهای شما را محدود می کند؟

۲.۹.چگونه با این محدودیت ها کنار می آیید؟(محدودیت های مالی/کمبود تقاضا)

۱۰.جوانب مثبت و منفی کار کردن به عنوان یک طراح در ایران چیست؟

۱۱.چگونه طراحی و محصولات خود را در بازار ارایه می کنید؟ (به صورت انلاین/افلاین/شوروم/گالری)

۱۲.چرا از اینستاگرام استفاده می کنید؟

۱.۱۲.آیا از این طریق محصولاتی رو هم به فروش می رسانید؟

آیا مبحثی یا موضوعی هستش که فکر می کنید در این مصاحبه پوشش ندادیم؟

آیا چیزی هستش که بخواهید اضافه کنید؟

پیوست خاتمه:

ممنونم که وقت تان رو در اختیار من قرار دادید. درصورتی که مایل باشید مطلبی را اضافه کنید و یا هر چیزی مربوط به این تحقیق پرسید یا درخواست کنید می توانید با من و یا استاد راهنمایم از طریق تلفن و یا ایمیل ارتباط برقرار کنید.

پس از تحلیل اطلاعاتی که در مصاحبه دریافت کردم پیش نویسی حاضر خواهم کرد که در صورت تمایل خوشحال می شم که برای شما هم بفرستم.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (English)

Interview questions:

1) Would you mention about your educational and professional background briefly? How did you gain these (fashion, jewelry, product) design skills?

2) How would you characterize your designs?

3) What are the sources of inspiration you use in your designs?

4) What are the motivations for choosing these sources of inspiration in your designs?

5) How do you compile these sources of inspiration?

   (Museums, libraries, photographs, galleries, field research, field trip, Internet, etc.)

   6) How do you document these sources of inspiration?

   Do you take photographs, do you sketch, download or do you surf *Pinterest, Instagram* or another media?

7) How do you transfer your source of inspiration to the specific product?

   Do you utilize a specific method? (Scaling, cropping, collage, etc.)

   How do you choose which sources, materials or strategies you are going to use?

   How do you evaluate alternative designs you created?

8) What are the difficulties or challenges you face during the whole design process?

   To what extend these restrict you and your works?

   How do you cope with these limitations? (Financial constraints, lack of demand, etc.)

9) What are the pros and cons of working as a designer in Iran?

10) How do you market your designs (online and/or offline, showroom)?

11) Why do you use *Instagram*?

Is there anything important that we didn't cover during the interview?

Is there anything you would like to add?

CLOSING KEY:

Thank you for your time. If you want to add or ask something related to this study
you can reach my thesis supervisor or me from our e-mail or telephone.

I'll be analyzing the information you gave me and I'll prepare a draft report in next
months. I'll be happy to send you a copy to review at that time, if you are interested.

Date:	
Place:	
Voice/video record no:	
Duration of interview:	
Company name:	
Name Surname:	
Gender and age:	
Education:	
Years active:	
Method:	
Materials:	
E-mail:	
Address:	

DESIGNS ANALYZED IN STUDY 1

The images show all the designs analyzed in Study 1. Each image has a unique code. The code on the bottom left is based on the coding in Table 3; the code on the bottom right includes the designer's field of design (F for fashion design, FA for fashion accessories design, J for jewelry design, P for product design), the designer's number in that field of design, and the product number of that designer.
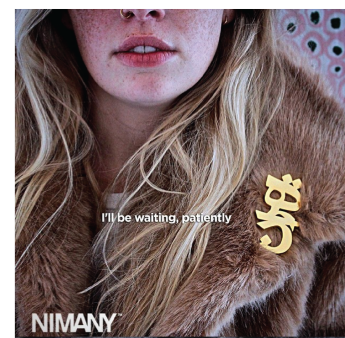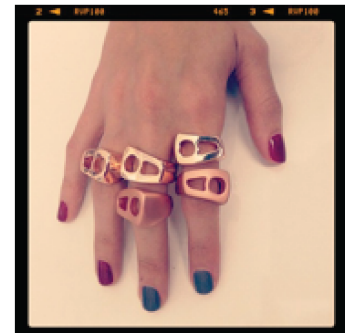

US-G-B-01   F01/01

US-G-F-01   F01/02

US-A-O-01   F01/03

US-G-F-02   F01/04

US-G-T-01   F01/05

US-A-R-01   F01/06

IR-G-O-01   F02/01

IR-G-M-01   F02/02

IR-G-M-02   F02/03

IR-G-M-03 F02/04

IR-G-O-02 F03/01

IR-G-T-02 F03/02

IR-G-M-04 F04/01

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IR-G-F-03 F06/01

IR-G-M-06 F07/01

IR-G-M-07 F08/01

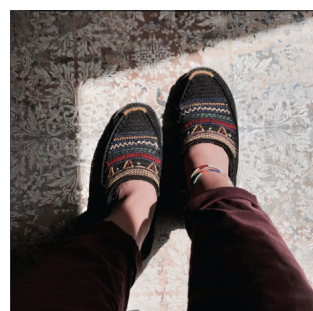IR-G-O-03 F09/01

IR-G-O-04 F10/01

IR-G-M-07 F11/01

IR-G-S-01 FA01/01

IR-G-S-02 FA01/02

IR-G-S-03 FA02/01

IR-G-S-04 FA03/01

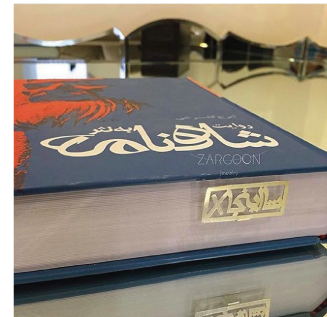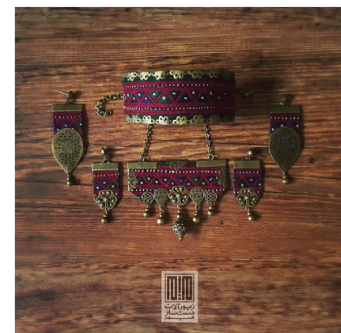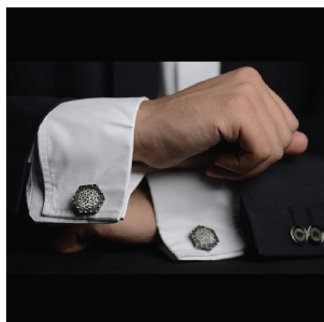| IR-G-F-04 FA04/01 | IR-G-F-05 FA04/02 | IR-G-F-06 FA04/03 |
IR-G-S-05 FA04/04	IR-G-S-06 FA04/05	IR-G-F-07 FA04/06
IR-G-B-02 FA05/01	IR-A-N-01 J01/01	IR-P-F-01 J01/02
IR-A-N-02 J02/01	IR-A-N-03 J02/02	IR-A-N-05 J02/03
IR-A-R-02 J02/04	IR-A-N-06 J03/01	IR-A-O-02 J04/01

IR-A-O-03   J05/01

IR-A-N-07   J06/01

IR-A-O-04   J07/01

IR-A-N-04   J08/01

IR-A-N-07   J08/02

IR-A-N-08   J08/03
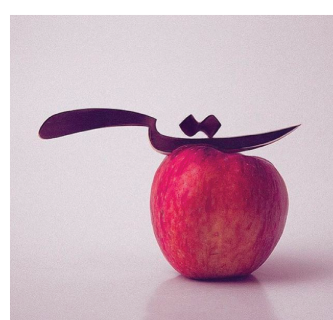

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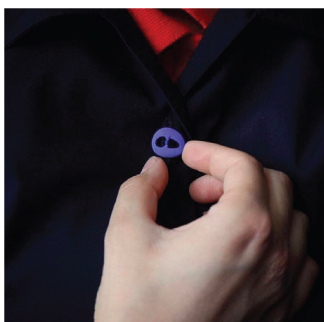

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IR-A-O-05   J09/04

IR-P-F-08   J09/05

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IR-P-F-07   J09/07

IR-P-O-01   J09/08

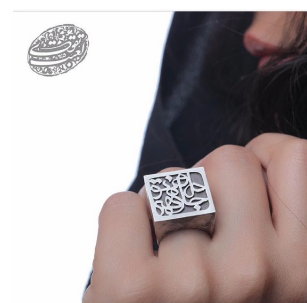IR-A-B-01   J10/01

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IR-A-E-02	J11/01
IR-P-D-04	J12/01
IR-A-R-04	J12/02
IR-A-R-05	J13/01
IR-A-N-10	J14/01
IR-A-R-06	J15/01
IR-P-F-02	P01/01
IR-P-F-03	P01/02
IR-P-F-04	P01/03
IR-P-D-01	P01/04
IR-P-D-02	P02/01
IR-P-F-09	P03/01
IR-P-F-10	P04/01

IR-P-F-11   P04/02

IR-P-D-05   P05/01

IR-P-D-06   P05/02

IR-P-F-07   P05/03

IR-P-C-01   P06/01

IR-P-C-02   P06/02

IR-P-C-03   P06/03

IR-P-C-04   P07/01

IR-P-C-05   P08/01

IR-G-T-03   P09/01

IR-P-D-07   P09/02

IR-G-T-04   P09/03

IR-G-F-08   P09/04