

## **Pakistani-American Designer Leaving Mark on Ethnic Chic**

*A Pakistani-American fashion designer's unique style of branding captures customers' imagination...and their business.*

September 5, 2006 (FPRC) -- Aruba and Cozumel are not just vacation hotspots anymore. A Pakistani-American designer is betting they will be among the hottest designer tunics this year.

"Our branding adds extra zing to our collection," explains Safia Ahmed, owner of Zarmina.com.

The getaway theme tunics are designed for breezy comfort and are embellished with exotic turquoise and gold embroidery.

"Our clients get a Caribbean vacation feel when they put on a Cozumel or an Aruba," says Ahmed. "These tops are great because they provide comfortable elegance."

Another design is the Mojave, an earth tone piece with amber-colored stonework. Its inspiration is Southwestern and Native American. The Moonstone is an ivory piece embroidered with aqua stone work.

"'Nature chic' is trendy and the Mojave and Moonstone cater to that market," adds Fawad Ahmed, Safia's husband.

Safia began retailing her designs 7 years ago in Karachi, Pakistan. After immigrating to America in 2004, she took her products online to capitalize on the ethnic fashion fad of the past three summers. Her imported kurtas (tunic tops) fit the bill perfectly. But it wasn't smooth sailing early on.

"When we started online in 2004, we realized quality alone could not set us apart," explains Ahmed. "We had to capture the customer's imagination. So my husband and I sat down with our outfits and brainstormed names that defined their essence. We launched the new concept with Zarmina.com in mid 2006."

Sales have never been better since the name game began. Although branding is quite common in traditional western fashion, only a handful of ethnic chic retailers take advantage of it. One benefit of branding is clear for merchants: a designer premium. Zarmina tunics range from a modest \$69 up to \$109.

"Branding appeals especially to our American clients," explains Safia. "It adds a department store touch which is attractive to them."

Safia Ahmed has also spiced up her salwar kameez collection with catchy monikers. The Vaneeza, named after the first Pakistani supermodel, and the regally embroidered Empress, are two of her favorite creations.

"It's not just Pakistani or Indian clothing any more. We have a thriving customer base of western women," adds Ahmed.

So will the name well eventually run dry?

“The key is to have fun with it,” Ahmed says with a smile. “We’re limited only by our imagination.”

About Zarmina.com:

Safia Ahmed’s silk designer tunic tops and salwar kameez are produced exclusively in Karachi, Pakistan, by her family owned company, Zarmina International, Inc. and marketed in American and abroad by her company, Zarmina Fashions, Inc.

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