



# CLOTHES BRAND LABEL: THE CASE OF GHANA

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**Abstract:** This paper sought to look at the state of brand labels in the Ghanaian clothes and fashion related articles among dressmakers and tailors that help boost patronage of made in Ghana clothing and fashion articles. Tourists all over the world have collected souvenir from the sites they visit and they are proud to show the authenticity of these souvenirs. One aspect of showing off the authenticity of such clothes and fashion articles is the brand labels that appear on them. This work is situated within the qualitative research approach with interview, observation and field trip to secure data for the findings. The descriptive design approach with the narrative analysis method were used to analyse the data. It was clear from the findings that few graphic designers have looked at the design and production of brand labels for tailors and dressmakers in the local dressmaking business. The researcher recommends among others that Ghana National Tailors and Dressmakers Association educates members of the association on the need for a brand label.

**Index Terms - Brand, dress, fashion, label, proprietor**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Clothing has been an integral part of the cultures of people globally since the age of Adam (Danso, Adom, Eshun & Adamtey, 2019). The production of local dresses would not stop with any of the Ghanaian generation though foreign cultures have influenced the style of Ghanaian clothing today. Each of us, at one point in the day, week, month or year become consumer of clothes and clothing provides a unique consumption experience for consumers (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009 as cited in Petrescu, Bran, Ioan & Rădulescu, 2016). This, notwithstanding, cannot be said of clothing brand labels sewn into clothes to advertise brands in Ghana. A brand label usually is a small piece of fabric featuring a company or personal details, most commonly found in clothing labels but also used for many other products (Wovenlabelhk, 2020).

Labels are all about expressing a unique identity and making a product stand out in the crowd. Brand labels are great for companies wanting to express their brand identity. Standard label sizes usually vary from 20mm-70mm, depending on one's needs (Wovenlabel, 2020). Most clothes and fashion articles produced and consumed in Ghana by local dressmakers do not come with any form of brand labels and those that come with brand labels, do not meet the elements and principles of design. Detail including something simple like a logo or some wording, or you may want to have more information on there; website details, a tagline, simple washing instructions or more (Wovenlabelhk, 2020).

Brand labels give one's product a clear identity that defines it from other available products on the market. The identity of a brand is the most important thing to consider when designing a product. A brand identity is what convinces a consumer that a product is the one they want. The best way to visually express one's brand identity is with brand labels. Therefore, without brand labels, products tend to look amateur and unprofessional. Deciding to use custom brand labels is a great benefit to one's brand because they help product stand out from the crowd and make a product easily identifiable (Wovenlabel, 2020).

Global brands like Adidas, Nike, Gucci, M&S, etc have permeated and managed its retail presence throughout the globe including Africa and Ghana as a whole. Though these successful global brands do not have their wholesale and retail outlets in Ghana, their brand continue to be popular among the youth and the fashionista consumer base. The pride at which these global brands are patronised in Ghana signifies the satisfaction the consumers of these global brands attach to the quality of their various products. For example; the Adidas brand goes way back; the first set of footwear ever made by the company was made available to the general public in 1949 and still continue to be recognised in the sports industry (Henry, 2018). Marks & Spencer (M&S) established in 1884 is the UK's most authentic brand (M&S, 2017) has not relented in penetrating the fashion world today including Ghana. It is of much pride the researchers chanced the TABONO clothing brand of Ghana in the their bid to support the government of Ghana went into the production of nose mask (3ply general) which is popular among students in Ghana as their product meets all the acceptable standards. In this regard, the researchers are hopeful Ghanaians will be comfortable to patronise other products of (TABONO) a local clothing brand that has surfaced at the right time in Ghana.

A cursory look at dressmaking shops in some parts of the central region covering the Effutu Municipality, Agona Swedru Municipality and Kasoa (under the Awutu Senya East Municipal) showed an appalling twenty-seven of the sampled thirty proprietors translating into 90% of the dressmaking shops do not have such important marketing tool to boost their businesses. The local small-scale businesses such as dressmaking which are dotted all over Ghana have not been well represented and revamped to satisfy tourists who love to wear dresses and shirts made from African print clothes. Dressmakers fall under the Ghana National Tailors and Dressmakers Association (GNTDA) formed and registered in October 1979, GNTDA is set up in ten out of the sixteen regions before Ghana increased its regions in 2019 (Kpentey, 2019), plus Tema as a separate region. In total GNTDA has over 400 zonal branches all over Ghana and more than 40,000 members (GNTDA, 2020). Surprisingly, the Ghana National Tailors/ Dressmakers Association has not come up with a syllabus for the traditional apprentices neither has the association consulted with the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) Apprentice Training Board nor the Ghana Education Service (GES) to develop common syllabus and text books for the traditional Apprenticeship System (Acquaah-Harrison, 1997). The story of a working syllabus for apprentices in Ghana has since not been achieved.

Labelling is a form of communication between two parties. A label to function correctly, requires knowledge from both sides, must be comprehensible, recognizable, believable and sometimes to be checked and approved by an independent party, (Laitala & Klepp, 2013 as cited in Petrescu, Bran, Ioan & Rădulescu, 2016). Label has the functions to inform, educate, influence, protect and help consumers in their decision-making processes. Label is usually available to consumers at the time of information, evaluation and decision process, making label reading behaviour relevant for marketers. While food label has received more attention all over the world today, the case of clothing label is very low among Ghanaians (Laitala & Klepp, 2013 as cited in Petrescu, Bran, Ioan & Rădulescu, 2016). The Ghana Food and Drug Authority (FDA) has stepped up public education and watch of food and drugs which does not meet the standard for human consumption but that for clothing label is scarce in Ghana. Within the academic literature, there has been some research work done including the perception of Ghanaian consumers of textiles and clothing labels (Fianu & Harrison-Arthur, 2009). At the international level, reading behaviour related to care, size and ecological or ethical label aspects have been investigated (Petrescu, Bran, Ioan & Rădulescu, 2016).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Addressing this critical gap, this research paper adopted the descriptive design approach and the narrative analysis method was used to analyse the data. This was situated within the qualitative method to make room to source for answers for the demands of this paper considering the scope of work it contains. The purposive sampling technique was employed as the researcher worked with only proprietors who were willing to work with him. This research spun a period of ten weeks using interviews, observations and field visits to collect data. These methods were employed due to time constraint on the part of the proprietors meeting deadlines and their educational levels. A total of thirty dressmaking proprietors were sampled for the research. The sample size was made up of twenty-two females representing 73.33% and the remaining eight participants representing 26.67% were males. The research was taken in 3 cities viz Kasoa, Agona Swedru and Winneba in the Central Region of Ghana. The choice of these three cities within the Central Region was that they have high population of dwellers and have a sort of cosmopolitan mixed living due to their nearness to the capital city of Ghana, Accra. Twenty-six of the sample representing 86.67% have formal education while the remaining four representing 13.33% have no formal education. Thirteen of the sample interviewed representing 43.33% work spun over two decades while seven of the sample representing 23.33% have worked as dressmakers within a period of not less than six years. The samples were

selected based on a three-category theme; low level, middle level and high level of the proprietors' business capacities. At each of the above mentioned levels, the researcher collected ten proprietors each for the study.

Ghana has gradually been able to bring itself to be recognised by the world in governance, security, trade, education, among others. The Ghanaian tourism industry saw a boost in the number of visitors to the country in 2019. Visitors from all walks of life thronged to Ghana at the 2019 Year of Return. The number of tourists that visited Ghana was a grand breakthrough for boosting the Ghanaian economy by a controversial \$1.9 billion that was pumped into the Ghanaian economy (Simons, 2019). The Year of Return, Ghana 2019 is an initiative of the government of Ghana that was intended to encourage Africans in diaspora to come to Africa (specifically Ghana) to settle and invest in the continent. It was formally launched by President Nana Akufo-Addo in September 2018 in Washington, D.C. as a programme for Africans in the diaspora to unite with Africans. The year 2019 was symbolic as it commemorated 400 years since the first enslaved Africans touched down in Jamestown, Virginia in the United States (GhanaWeb, 2020).

Though various governments have tried their bid to aid trade and encouraged the production of consumer goods than importing basic needs of the Ghanaian, Ghanaians are slow at patronising made in Ghana goods. In recent times all over the world, clothing and fashion articles are able to penetrate the nooks and crannies of the world by the investment the producers put into their brand names. Design is an important tool to boost sales and control the whole management of the company (Cheng, Keinänen & Salo, 2012 as cited in Suhonen, 2013). The citizenry has as well been encouraged to patronise the locally produced goods but much more has to be done in this regard. A typical Ghanaian business look up to foreign patronage to rake in more foreign exchange to boost the economy considering exchange rates of foreign currencies. Foreign companies operating in Ghana have done their bid by providing well designed and appropriate labels for the goods they produce in Ghana. The local dressmaker has not bothered themselves with clothes brand labels to sell their products beyond Ghana to rake in more foreign exchange.

The subject is current as private labels, also known as house brands or no-name brands, are common within departmental stores and other retailers. They create extra value both in economic value creation and in marketing and image value (Raatikainen, 2008). It is disappointing to pick up clothing and fashion articles locally produced in Ghana without a brand label let alone to talk of a care label for such fashion articles by the "big" local fashion labels. Globalisation has created a continuously changing business environment in terms of customers and markets requirements (Fleaca & Purcarea, 2014 as cited in Petrescu, Bran, Ioan & Rădulescu, 2016). This practice by dressmakers and fashion article producers though is an attempt to draw customers attention to get dress and fashion articles are not enough. Due to the variety of festivals all year round within the central region of Ghana, international tourists flood the region and they love to wear locally made dresses. The question fashion lovers are left with is how to find, to buy, reorder particular clothes or maintain a dress one buys because it does not come with even a brand label. This concern will as well be a bother to any first-time visitor to Ghana.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fortunately, the tailors and dressmakers have come under one umbrella as an association (Ghana National Tailors and Dressmakers Association) to see to the supervision and support of the members of their association as well as bring some sanity and standardisation in their businesses. The percentages show clearly that more females still dominate the dressmaking business in Ghana. It was evident that Ghanaian male patronage of locally made dresses was on the low side since they preferred to just grab a pair of imported pants or shirts from the store. Five out of the sampled dressmaking proprietors representing 16.67% could make dresses for both sexes but then only two of this number representing 40% of this sample are actually making dresses for both females and males as of the time of the research. Some of the association's mandate is the provision of practical training to over 600,000 apprentices per year, of which 6,000 apprentices participate in proficiency tests at intermediate level every year, set fees for apprenticeship, payment of local taxes, periodic checks by the association's task force to ensure apprentice rights are not violated, etc. but the issue of labels to advertise their brand and clothes care labels have still not been looked at after over 2 decades these category of such an invaluable businesses have existed. This will be very difficult for the association to break through and get large local and international clients to patronise their products. A typical female

Ghanaian will love to wear her kaba<sup>1</sup> and a slit (sleet) made from print fabric and men wear a large fabric wrapped around especially during special event (Richard, 2016). Ghanaian heads of states and their spouses have worn the traditional dresses during state functions. It is on record and library media tapes that the prime minister and first president of Ghana; Kwame Nkrumah<sup>2</sup> of the first republic wore a locally made dress in 1957 during his inauguration and through to the present fourth republic, has seen heads of states taken their oaths clad in Ghanaian fabrics. Ghanaian woven fabrics has been gifted to official and private visitors to Ghana (Elias, 1957). Collections of cloth and smock which are official dress of Ghanaians the researcher has and counted from producers and sellers do not have a brand label sewn into them. This does not suggest that the Ghanaian presidential oath and inauguration ceremony dress worn is statutory “What a president-elect wears during the inauguration has remained non-statutory” (Essel, 2019). Non withstanding such a dress “code” among elected presidents of Ghana, ceremonial president-elect, Edward Akufo Addo wore Eurocentric suit during his inauguration on August 31, 1970, as the first president of the second republic after the overthrow of Nkrumah (Essel, 2019).

Three (3) local dressmaking shops representing 10% of the total sample the researcher interacted with who had brand labels lacked design quality because the brand labels design principles were not adhered to which is an obvious sign of doubt of the quality of their products. The proportion of their brand labels sewn into their products were out of place in relation to the product size and the quality of the design is far below standard as the principles and elements of design was not observed and thirdly the quality of production and materials are inappropriate. It is about time, the tailors and dressmaker’s association of Ghana insisted that dressmakers produce brand labels for their businesses within the short possible time to salvage their image and their businesses. This will go a long way to contribute to the governments’ efforts to encourage small scale businesses to thrive in Ghana and to better the lot of the Ghanaian economy. The maiden Year of Return festival in Ghana saw the boom for local dresses, art and fashion articles patronage on the rise.

When the researcher sought to find out why the proprietors of such businesses did not have brand labels sewn into the dresses they make, nineteen of the sample representing 63.33% did not see the need for a brand label sewn into the dresses they make since they are able to reach new customers on daily bases by word of mouth as it was evident in the stock pile of fabrics to be made into dresses and the number of dresses that were under production. These categories of proprietors rather complained that they are often overwhelmed with work and they did not see the need to advertise their businesses though they have a sign post that often direct customers to their shops. Nine of the sampled representing 30% saw the need for a brand label sewn into the dresses they make but had no idea of how and where to procure such labels. The proprietors in such categories made it clear that they know such a move will incur an extra cost which was cool for them to pass on to their customers. “A brand label will separate me from the amateur dressmaker” one proprietor said. Twenty-three of the total sampled representing 76.67% however said if a unit price of such brand label was insignificant to add up to the cost, they were willing to try it. “Most customers do not come back for their clothes because they cannot even afford a modest price tag” twenty-four of the total sampled representing 80% added. Seventeen of the total sampled representing 56.67% of the proprietors lamented that clients prefer to buy imported already made or used clothes which turn to be cheap but of a poor quality.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the discussions of findings, it is evident that the Ghanaian graphic designer has not contributed much to the dressmaking business in Ghana though they produce the various signages and other related design products for this category of small-scale business owners in Ghana. It is time stakeholders in the Ghanaian educational system geared art and design education towards a practical overhaul of enhancing the face of dressmaking business in Ghana and promoting the dressmaking trade. Graphic designers dotted in Ghana should take up this challenge to immediately change the story. Though a handful of Ghanaian artists are today venturing into the embroidery business, they could source the production of such brand labels to be sewn into dresses from outside the country if it is cheaper and convenient to do so. Obviously, a unit price should be insignificant that a wayside local dressmaker can afford just like her/his ability to afford a signage.

<sup>1</sup> Ghanaian term used for the top half of the common traditional attire the Kaba and Slit; which comprises of the long wrap skirt called the slit (sleet) and the matching blouse the Kaba. An African equivalent of the Western tailored Top and Skirt.

<sup>2</sup> The first Prime Minister and President of Ghana, having led the Gold Coast to independence from Britain in 1957.

Obviously, any visitor to Ghana who loves dresses made in Ghana will definitely look out for such cloth brand label when buying and reordering. The government of Ghana in her attempt to encourage dressmakers in Ghana to produce standard clothing certified some local brand labels in the production of nose mask and this attempt definitely makes it trustworthy in procuring nose mask from such local brands and also makes it easy to order and reorder from some of these local brands that have been certified to produce nose mask in Ghana today. Furthermore, bloggers could as well look at this direction to contribute to a booming economic gain for the proprietors. Web designer could as well look at this direction. It is of time GNTDA educated and enforced the rule that tailors and dressmakers acquire and use brand label for their wares. This approach by the association will be their show of readiness to feed the recent appetite of Ghanaians' patronage of made in Ghana goods and services.

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