

**AKENTEN APPIAH-MINKA UNIVERSITY OF SKILLS TRAINING AND  
ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**IMPACT OF FABRICS AND NOTIONS SOURCING ON GARMENTS'  
QUALITY: A CASE OF SELECTED FASHION DESIGN CENTRES IN  
GHANA**

**BY**

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**MPHIL FASHION DESIGN AND TEXTILES**

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A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Akenten Appiah-Menka  
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of the requirements for award of the Master of Philosophy  
(Fashion Design and Textiles) Degree.

**NOVEMBER, 2023**

## **DECLARATION**

### **STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I, Phyllis Mensah, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: .....

### **SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of the Project Report as laid down by Akenten Appiah- Minka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development (AAMUSTED).

**NAME: DR. JOSEPHINE NTIRI**

SIGNATURE: .....

DATE: .....

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I say “Ayekoo” and may Jehovah God richly bless you all.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my loving husband Mr. Elison Owusu-Fordjour.

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## ABSTRACT

Quality remains the solution to the market need which keeps the fashion enterprise surviving and possibly expanding in a competitive business environment. Quality is perceived by the fashion consumer in both present and anticipated product performance. Achieving superb quality in the garment construction processes requires well operational plan in all facets, designed through informed decisions premised on the foundation of the right fabrics and notions sourcing. This established the framework for this study with the purpose of seeking to build the competency of the Ghanaian-based fashion designer through the adoption and deployment of fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines. The study objectives included: assessing the fashion designer's competence in sourcing fabrics and notions for garment production, formulating innovative sourcing guidelines that address the fashion designer's problems in fabrics and notions sourcing, and testing the new sourcing guidelines formulated via expository workshop to ascertain the adoption and impact on the quality of constructed garment and to document the innovative guidelines formulated on fabrics and notions sourcing for quality garment construction. The study adopted the qualitative design with a focus on the descriptive case study approach. Interviews, focus group discussions, and observation were deployed to capture data along thematic areas for analysis. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted to select a total of thirty (30) fashion designers with fifteen (15) each from the Ghana National Tailors and Dress Makers Association (GNTDA) branch in Dekyemso in Kumasi and Odumase Zone B in Sunyani respectively. The study revealed that the majority of the sampled fashion designers displayed a high level of competency in garment construction techniques. However, the overwhelming majority representing 81% of the respondents displayed a gross lack of competency to apply sourcing guidelines in selecting the right fabrics and notions for garment construction prior to holding the expository workshop. This finding meant that the respondents were not trained, and also did not experience and practice fabric and notion sourcing during their formal and or informal apprenticeship education and training period. Therefore, an expository workshop was used to facilitate the formulation of fabrics and notions innovative sourcing guidelines. These sourcing guidelines were then deployed by the respondents and the garment constructed thereafter was assessed over a period of time to test the adoption and the impact of the guidelines on the quality of the garments constructed.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Customers increasing demand for quality garments will always have a major impact on apparel manufacturers. Ordinarily, most customers will push for higher value even for a lower price (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). To meet or satisfy customer demand, apparel manufacturers must ensure that all operations needed to be undertaken are carefully planned, with major emphasis based on apparel making which is sourcing the right fabric to construct the chosen garment (Cardigan, 2014). Textiles Today (2013), defines sourcing as the process of choosing how and where to obtain produced items or components. Choosing the material, production, or finished goods vendor with the lowest cost while maintaining the required level of quality and service.

Sourcing fabrics and garment production has never ceased to interrelate in the apparel-making sector globally (Jia, Yin, Chen, & Chen, 2020). It almost seems impossible to make a complete choice of garment without considering how sourcing is undertaken (McNeill & Moore, 2015). It is therefore vital to take a look at where to source, how to source and the method of sourcing. If the primary source of every garment making which is the beginning of fabric and notions choice is not planned well, it can affect the final product negatively. Every aspect of garment-making within a factory finally ends up ensuring quality (Birnbaum, 2005).

The concept of quality has been described as the standard of something as judged against other items of a like kind, the degree of excellence of something (Harvey & Green, 1993; Conole, 2016; Allen-Duck, Robinson & Stewart, 2017). This echoes the fact that garment makers must aim at delivering amazing fashion products to customers (Cardigan, 2014). It involves ensuring quality not with product performance in the early usage but when the product

can stand the test of time, when the long-range goal of the product is fulfilled and thereby achieving its intended purpose (Juran & Gryna, 2001).

In the opinion of Keller (2017), the quality of a product conveys both problems and opportunities. Quality is a problem aspect because of competing products and opportunities because that is what the market is demanding or is buying. Therefore, local garment manufacturers must do everything they can to improve their quality to supersede that of competing ones both from within and foreign if they are to convert the problem of quality into opportunity. Sourcing strategies in the garment construction value chain comes in different diversities and the goal during sourcing is to produce quality garment to satisfy customers at a profit to the manufacturer. Whether a manufacturer sources fabric from his or her domestic market or international market, the primary aim is to accrue a cost advantage and customer satisfaction.

Nelson (2005) posits that international sourcing to achieve cost advantage has come to be the front bearer, leading to a paradigm shift from the siting of garment manufacturing in low-wage countries throughout the world since the nineties. Domestic market sourcing has been preferred increasingly owing to the assumption that the longer the sourcing value chain, the more a significant product of the merchandise bought must be cleared out through discount with relevant impact on revenue.

Martins (2022) has it that the prominence of apparel retailing looks indicative of the sector's shift from a production-driven to a market-driven definition. Adding that further to cost advantage, a major dominating preposition from customers for a solution, cost, convenience communication and overall customer satisfaction is the speed at which the garment is produced. The express or speed demand of the market or the customer also influences the choice of sourcing strategy. Another significant strategy for sourcing is how to source which happens to contribute immensely to the standard in terms of quality in garment manufacturing.

Cardigan (2014), emphasized two main properties to look out for when sourcing for fabrics (textiles) for garments. These properties include functional and aesthetic properties. Functional properties are the main characteristics that affect fabric performance including special construction ideas. Stressing further that all fabric's performance depends on the raw materials used which are the fibres, the role or properties they have and how fabrics are constructed under such fibres. For example, a comparison can be made between natural and artificial fibres to assess their performance level before choosing them for a specific garment. According to Naik and Kumar (2021), cotton fibres are known for their weight compared to synthetic fibres which normally appear lighter. One obviously will not want to source for synthetic if the product of the garment will have weight ability like cotton.

Fabric properties such as abrasion resistance, sheen, wrinkle resistance, absorbency, waterproof and fire proof will have to be considered in sourcing for quality as well. Natural fabrics such as cotton for example are known for their strength especially when wet and very absorbent. Apart from these, it can withstand high temperatures and therefore cannot be affected by alkalis. Unfortunately, despite all the good qualities, it is known to be easily weakened by acids and burns rapidly (Naik & Kumar, 2021). Therefore, sourcing for cotton with good and weak qualities should be taken into consideration. A globally used natural fibre for garment construction like silk as opined by Prendergast (2014), is also known for its durability and softness which are highly required when sourcing for feminine garments because of their curvy nature. It readily drapes well on them. Nevertheless, silk scorches easily, is a poor conductor of heat, burns easily and is very expensive. It is however prudent not to just source for silk because of its physical beauty in appearance but how it can affect the decision to use it.

Linen, one of the oldest natural fibres, can be relatively smooth and straight (Kozłowski, Mackiewicz-Talarczyk, Wielgusz, Praczyk, & Allam, 2020). However, its

inflexible nature will not be conducive with any close-fitting idea in garment design. In the opinion of Hillstrom (2018), artificial fabrics such as rayon, nylon polyester just to mention a few, are known not to have resistance to heat. It is relatively not a good idea to source such a category of fabrics when one intends to make kids' garments. It will have to be given serious thought and consideration. Its synthetic nature makes it extremely difficult to manipulate when constructing garments with it. Despite their limitations, nylon and polyesters are known to be thermoplastic, resilient, elastic and very strong (Hillstrom, 2018). It can be used for a wide variety of apparel that will require such qualities.

All fabrics have their unique qualities and characteristics, therefore, sourcing for them to make garments, should be taken a keen look into if the goal is to produce quality garments. Dogoe (2013) asserted that Africa's clothing business is starting to gain attention in recent years. It is essential to take into account the excess labour that is present in the primary segment due to the low technology. Ghana as a developing country, keeps advancing in the garment industry and must be pushed as high as possible to be able to rub shoulders with the developed countries.

Amid activities such as cutting, laying out, pressing and activities that contribute to making garments, the initial task such as sourcing the right fabric for quality is mostly ignored among some fashion designers. A critical look into most of the garments produced here in Ghana according to Amankwah, Appiah, Frimpong and Kent (2022) displays a strong sense of ignorance by the designers behind them in terms of sourcing. It affects qualities such as performance, drape, finishing and beauty. Most fashion designers in Ghana produce garments directly without making fabric selection a priority. How does Ghana make a name globally if rudimentary activity such as fabric sourcing is not done right thereby affecting our garments in terms of quality.

Biney-Aidoo (2006) indicates that garment manufacturing is one of the “starter industries” for a country’s development. For instance, Bangladesh derives 77% of its foreign exchange from the export of products in the garment sector (Hossian, Kabir & Latifee, 2019). If Ghanaian fashion designers advance their knowledge well in all activities needed to make garments especially sourcing fabric and notions right, they will not just satisfy their local customers, but their products will continue to gain recognition globally and help build the economy in terms of foreign exchange earnings.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Quality is an insatiable market pain in the global fashion market space (Stringer, Payne, & Mortimer, 2022). There is a strong linkage between sourcing and the quality of end products along the fashion value chain (Adikorley, Rothenberg & Guillory, 2017; Pongo, Obinnim, & Zanu, 2019; Amoakoh & Asmah, 2021; Tarigan, Siagian, & Jie, 2021). For instance, Pongo et al., (2019) report that low-quality sourced indigenous textiles coupled with poor constructional techniques led to the rejection of garment products from Ghana, occasioned by its inability to meet international quality standards prescribed under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of the United States of America government then. Many researchers have confirmed the direct and indirect impact of sourcing on garment quality (Sun & Zhao, 2017; Todeschini, Cortimiglia, Callegaro-de-Menezes, & Ghezzi, 2017; Castagna, Duarte & Pinto, 2022; Hur, 2020). Therefore, building the capacity of value chain actors is imperative as an anchor for global fierce competition (Porter, 2015). Unfortunately, the incompetence of some of the Ghanaian fashion designer in developing and deploying strategies for sourcing persists and has been noted by many researchers (Amoakoh & Asmah, 2021; Amegbanu & Mpuangan 2023; Ahorsu & Eyram, 2023). In any case, the rather few studies in the literature on assessing the competency of fashion designers with the view to implement appropriate intervention to bridge the competency gap, have been done in developed economies (Suhartini, Wahyuningsih,

Prihatina & Samani 2021; Zhao & Kim, 2021; Sumo Ji & Cai, 2022; Pal & Jayarathne, 2022). Furthermore, these studies have had their outcomes in proposed guidelines, at the expense of facilitating the deployment of the agreed sourcing guidelines in real professional business practice settings. Therefore, the study sought to assess the impact of fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines on quality in the garment industry and ways of promoting their usage.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Achieving the required constructed garment quality remains the preoccupation of both the fashion designer and the customer. The prime leverage in this quest is believed to be found in sourcing fabrics and notions right (Hur, 2020; Duarte & Pinto, 2022). Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines on garment quality in the garment industry and ways of promoting their usage. The study seeks to explore the level of competency of the Ghanaian fashion designer in sourcing fabrics and notions with the view to facilitating the formulation of sourcing guidelines to improve its sourcing process activity. The purpose is not only to advance the understanding of fabrics and notions sourcing and produce a set of sourcing guidelines. It is also to facilitate the adoption of the formulated sourcing guidelines in real business practice setting. The study envisages to create a learning setting where the Ghanaian fashion designer is guided but has the autonomy to construct their own learning in fabrics and notion sourcing, in order to profit from its impact on constructed garment quality.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess fashion designers' competence in sourcing fabrics and notions for garment production in Ghana.
2. To formulate innovative guidelines that address the fashion designers' problem in fabrics and notions sourcing.

3. To test the formulated innovative guidelines via an expository workshop to ascertain adoption and impact on the quality of constructed garments.
4. To document the innovative guidelines formulated on fabrics and notions sourcing for quality garment construction.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What is the competency level of fashion designers in sourcing fabrics and notions for garment production?
2. What guidelines can be formulated to stem the identified fabrics and notions sourcing problems?
3. To what extent do the formulated innovative sourcing guidelines adopted translate into improving fabrics and notions sourcing and impact the quality of garments constructed?
4. How will the formulated fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines be documented?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study seeks to determine how fabrics and notions sourcing is done presently among fashion designers in Sunyani Municipal and Kumasi Metropolis and its impact on the quality of output. This determination will further set the stage to educate and train fashion designers on the fabric sourcing decision-making process so that they can always arrive at an informed decision in sourcing fabrics and notions for quality garment construction. The study would provide a simple, practical and repeatable means of judiciously sourcing for the right fabrics through an experiential learning approach for garment construction, to improve on existing methods of fabrics and notions sourcing in garment construction by the Ghanaian garment manufactures. The study would provide literature on the level of competency of local designers in sourcing fabric which can be used by policymakers and fashion educators in improving the curriculum for fashion and textiles skill development through both formal and informal

learning frontiers. The study would also enlighten other researchers in the fashion industry relative to the conduct of research work on sourcing and quality in garment construction in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Resource constraints and the rather short span of the study could not allow for a long-term follow-up to comprehensively monitor the extent to which the adopted innovative sourcing guidelines are applied by the fashion designers and their potential impact on garment quality.

However, this limitation notwithstanding, the validity of this study holds. Therefore, the limitation enumerated provides context within which the study's findings can be interpreted and applied.

### **1.8 Delimitations of the Study**

The study is geographically limited to Fashion designers in Sunyani Municipality and Kumasi Metropolis who are members of the Ghana National Tailors and Dress Makers Association (GNTDA). The fashion designers are members of Odumase Zone A in Sunyani and Dekyemso Zone Kumasi respectively. These fashion designers operate their fashion enterprises under similar business models. Contextually, the study focuses on numerous textile fabrics and notions sourced either by fashion designers or their clients to construct garments since that is mostly the trend in their business practice.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into six chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the research topic by presenting the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions. Chapter One also includes, the study's significance, potential limitations and delimitations.

Chapter Two reviews literature related to the study to give context and frame the study within existing knowledge. Also, Chapter Three outlines the methodology that was used for the study. This is the approach used to carry out the research.

Chapter Four presents' data analysis and presentation of results. It interprets the data collected and presents the findings in a structured manner.

Chapter Five presents a discussion on the findings of the study in the context of the literature reviewed.

Chapter Six presents the summary of the research, its conclusions and recommendations based on the findings. Again, this chapter also identifies possible areas for future research, drawing from the insights gathered throughout the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

An extensive knowledge base can facilitate an understanding of fabrics and notions sourcing, and the attempt to improve the adoption of innovative guidelines. In this chapter, related literature is reviewed to provide an overview of the concept of fashion to cover both the domestic and international perspectives. Then, Ghana's narrative of the fashion landscape is discussed and linked to emphasize the garment value chain. A detailed review of the literature on garment construction processes then follows. This review provides a critical discussion on the outlook of the production phase of the value chain, as a basis for infusing appropriate constructional techniques in sourcing fabrics and notions. This is done with the focus on characteristics of both fabrics and notions and their implications on quality. Next, a review of quality assurance system to include all phases of the fashion value chain is done. This is followed by a review of the customer service orientation which informs the need to deliver quality by the sourcing processes.

Finally, sourcing as a concept is reviewed to reflect its practices and relevance in the Ghanaian context, and its implications on sustainability, durability, and aesthetics with strategies to improve sourcing.

#### 2.2 The Concept of Fashion

Early human societies, where clothing and ornamentation were utilized for protection as well as for self-expression and social distinction, can be traced to the origins of fashion (Suhag & Sharma, 2021). The term fashion has to do with expressing what is current in everything, especially clothing and dressing. Sudha and Sheena (2017) asserted that, fashion is a common method of dressing at a certain moment or among a certain group of people, as well as the industry of making and marketing new types of clothing. This endorses the fact that

fashion remains broad and needs a holistic view in conceptualizing it. This means that a dominant style or trend in clothing, accessories, footwear, grooming, or even conduct that is popular and adopted by a sizeable segment of a society during a particular period is referred to as fashion. According to Giddens (2020), it includes not only dress preferences but also how people express themselves and their manner of life.

Mensah (2019) opined that fashion is broadly exposed to such factors as social and economic (way of life, wealth, dressing habits and consumption), protection of environment and health (climatic changes, protection of animals, environment-friendly, material, sport) political and legal environment (international agreements), Multicultural effects (historical and folk costumes, street-styles), Art (applied art, painting and sculpture, theatre, music and literature), technological developments (new fabrics, intelligent textiles, new production and logistics procedures), sexuality ( blurred border between male and female dressing) internet ( presence of the global world).

Aspers and Godart (2013) from a sociological point of view, add that fashion is a social phenomenon that can be associated with any human activities. Activities that involve daily routine ranging from casual to formal dressing, traditional occasions to formal occasions. It is however clear that fashion does not remain only as dressing and stylish but widens its scope. According to Sarpong et al., (2011), accessories and textiles cannot be separated from the concept of fashion. Accessories such as shoes, bags watches may not be dressed but can complement dressing. As well as textiles selected to fit home and office decorations. More so, several emphases can be given to a particular style that is in vogue for a current time. Areas such as clothing, furniture, housing automobiles, food, toys and others but most commonly, it refers to clothes, cosmetics trending and cherished by several people (Rouse,1993; Drew, 1992) as cited by (Sarpong et al., 2011).

The term fashion continues to remain dynamic in every sense, even the periods when technology had not emerged. “Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening” (Chanel, 1915). Another important aspect of fashion that needs to be echoed is fabric selection and application. Cadigan (2014), emphasized the need for all fashion designers to dive deeper into their world of fabrics. Without an in-depth knowledge of fabrics and their impact, fashion designers lose their chances of producing the best to fit in the global market. A well-admired creative work of a garment begins with the right choice of fabric. The clothing in fashion begins with textiles and fabric as bases. The essence of it to fashion designers is to be able to appreciate creativity in the garments they design and produce to make them more expressive for demands. According to a renowned traditional fashion designer, Norteye’s work was popular in the 50s because most of her ‘Kaba’ did not only have a good outline but a significant choice of fabrics, where Kente was blended creatively to attract buyers (Richards, 2015).

In a globalized world, demand for garments by customers comes with diverse prepositions which can be defined in a quality dimension. It is common knowledge that the world of fashion has transcended geographical boundaries and cultural limitations to become a truly global phenomenon. With the advancement of technology and communication, fashion trends and ideas can now travel across continents in a matter of seconds, influencing the style choices of people from all walks of life. The Global Fashion Concept represents a dynamic and ever-evolving approach to fashion that embraces diversity, sustainability, and innovation on a worldwide scale. Today, there are varied key aspects of the Global Fashion Concept which has an impact on the industry and society at large.

One of the most distinctive features of the Global Fashion Concept is its emphasis on diversity in design and representation. Fashion designers from various cultural backgrounds are celebrated and recognized for their unique perspectives, leading to a rich tapestry of styles

that cater to different tastes and sensibilities. Global fashion shows, events, and collaborations frequently feature designers from different countries, promoting a melting pot of creativity. Moreover, the concept also places a strong emphasis on representation. Fashion brands are increasingly embracing inclusivity by featuring models of diverse ethnicities, body shapes, and ages in their campaigns and runway shows. This move towards diverse representation not only celebrates individuality but also allows consumers to see themselves reflected in the world of fashion, breaking down traditional beauty standards and promoting a more positive body image. Furthermore, the Global Fashion Concept acknowledges the environmental and ethical challenges facing the fashion industry. As a result, sustainability has become a driving force behind the global fashion movement. Fashion brands are reevaluating their supply chains, sourcing materials responsibly, and adopting eco-friendly production processes to reduce their carbon footprint. They are also embracing circular fashion models, encouraging recycling, up cycling, and second-hand shopping to extend the lifecycle of garments.

This arises because consumers are becoming more conscious of the environmental impact of their fashion choices. The rise of sustainable fashion movements has led to increased demand for eco-friendly and ethical products. As a result, many brands are incorporating sustainability as a core value, not just a marketing trend, thereby promoting a greener and more responsible fashion industry. The Global Fashion Concept is also fuelled by technological advancements and innovations, revolutionizing the way fashion is created, marketed, and consumed. Digitalization has opened up new avenues for designers to showcase their collections, making fashion accessible to a global audience through live streaming and virtual reality experiences. Augmented reality (AR) and virtual try-on tools have also transformed the online shopping experience, reducing the need for physical try-ons and returns. In addition to digitalization, advancements in materials science have led to the development of sustainable and high-performance fabrics. From lab-grown leather to recycled polyester, innovative

materials are reshaping the fashion landscape, offering cruelty-free alternatives and reducing the industry's reliance on scarce resources. The Global Fashion Concept embodies a paradigm shift in the fashion industry, moving away from traditional norms and embracing diversity, sustainability, and innovation. By promoting diversity in design and representation, fashion has become more inclusive and reflective of the world's multicultural tapestry. Sustainability initiatives are helping to address the industry's environmental impact and reshape consumer behaviour. Furthermore, technological advancements continue to revolutionize the way fashion is experienced and consumed.

While challenges remain, such as ensuring fair labour practices and addressing fashion's waste problem, the Global Fashion Concept represents a positive step forward for the industry. As consumers become more conscious of their fashion choices, and brands embrace responsible practices, the global fashion movement has the potential to influence positive change not only within the industry but also in society as a whole. Therefore, it is important for the Ghanaian fashion designer to have the required competency in sourcing both fabrics and notions, if they are to become active players in the global space of fashion.

### **2.3 The Fashion Landscape: Ghana's Narrative**

Fashion is an aspect of the way of life of a group of people. In Ghana, fashion is inherently embedded in various facets of culture. The Ghanaian in showing respect for ancestors wears clothes mostly developed from Adinkra symbols. Where symbols can be seen repeated directly as designs or other attractive motifs. The average Ghanaian loves beautiful fabrics and colours especially those developed from Adinkra symbols like Akoben, Epa, Gye Nyame and many others (African Dynamo, 2014). Moods and occasions are also expressed in fashion. Typically, the Ghanaian wears dark-coloured clothes to reflect sorrowful moods while bright-coloured clothes are used for joyful or celebrating moods. It is common to find both male and female Ghanaians wearing shades of dark clothes at funerals. In addition, brightly

coloured clothes are mostly worn at joyful occasions such as weddings, parties, outdoorings and many others. Dzrmedo (2009) agrees with this assertion when he writes Mourners, including the bereaved relatives wear red to dark shades of colours.

The Ghanaian is also influenced by religious inclination relative to fashion and style, colour and occasion. Both the Christian and Islamic religion emphasizes modesty and preference for white on most occasions. The traditional religion emphasizes supremacy and preference for shades of warm colours. According to Dzrmedo (2009) traditional religions do not elaborate in fashion with priests and priestesses' customs varying depending on occasion. Further, both Christian and Islamic religion expresses modesty characterized by long flowing gowns that frown on nudity. The biological sex denomination of the Ghanaian also comes into play in fashion. Ghanaian society and culture have defined and constructed expectations of clothing for males and females. Generally, bold, elaborate, shapes as motifs blending with dark coloured shades are revered for the masculine. On the contrary, cute, curvy, smallish and flourishing blending with cool colours like pink, yellowish are preferred on feminine. Michelman and Miller- Spillman (2019), buttresses this point with the assertion that cultural norms and expectations are related to the meaning of being a man or a woman and are closely linked to appearance. However, Michelman and Erekosima (1992) found that the indigenous Kalabari man's attire demonstrates social and political achievement and does not emphasize the proactive aspect of social development unlike that of women in the same society. It is therefore imperative for the designer to pay prime attention to various facets of the Ghanaian fashion landscape in sourcing fabrics.

## **2.4 The Garment Value Chain in Ghana**

The framework which defines the actors or players in the activities along the production of fibres through to the delivery of quality garments for the satisfaction of the customer is more complex in Ghana. According to Simatupang, Piboonrungrroj and Williams (2017), a Value

Chain is a set of activities that a firm operating in a specific industry performs in order to deliver a valuable product or service to the market. Further, Agriculture Technical and Vocational Education and Training ATVET (2014), adds that as a business concept the value chain defines a business-oriented approach that aims at capturing the best value at all stages of production processes and trading.

The Ghanaian garment value chain has both producer and buyer-driven dimensions. Gereffi and Memedovic (2003) opined that, in producer-driven value chains, large, usually transnational, manufacturers play central roles in coordinating production networks (including their backward and forward linkages). Buyer-driven is those in which large retailers, marketers and branded manufacturers play pivoted roles in setting up decentralized production networks in a variety of exporting countries, typically located in developing countries.

VLISCO BV an industrial giant based in the Netherlands operates a business model in Ghana that typically illustrates both producer-driven and buyer-driven. Ghana Textiles Printing Company Limited (GTP) backed by Tex Styles Ghana Limited (TSG) which prints the GTP products and Premium African Textiles Company Limited (PAT) which creates the designs, sells and markets the GTP brand, are all subsidiaries of the global textile giant VLISCO BV from the Netherlands.

GTP has three sister brands WOODIN which is also designed, produced and sold by TSG and PAT, VLISCO is imported from the parent company in the Netherlands and UNIWAX which is produced in Ivory Coast by another subsidiary of VLISCO BV. (Tex- Styles Ghana Limited, 2018).

It is common knowledge that most fabrics and or garments used in Ghana are produced outside Ghana. African Dynamo (2013) asserts that, in an attempt to obtain various print forms of Kente and other African print designs emerging fashion designers import fabrics from various foreign countries. Tex-Styles Ghana Limited (2018) collaborates the importation of

apparel to the United States when she writes it is widely known that most apparel sold in the United States is assembled overseas.

Regardless of the negative economic, environmental and social impact of second-hand clothing, it remains a major strategic business unit in the garment value chain. Agra, Gbadegbe, Amankwah and Gbetodeme (2015) affirm that, an estimated 90% of clothes used in Ghana are of second-hand origin. While Dutton (2014) as cited by Agra et al., (2015) puts the second-hand clothes imported to Ghana to about 30,000 tonnes. Sarpong et al. (2011) adds that, they are sourced from all over the global North including Europe, America and Asia.

The major economic force behind the penetration of used clothes is the cheaper price. Chronicle Feature Article (2008) suggests that cheaper cost of fabrics and or garments makes even the economic poor able to afford decent clothing. HEVA (2016), in its analysis of the fashion value chain of Kenya also identified high cost of production inefficiencies as making local garment producers unable to complete domestically and in the immediate East Africa Market. The production of cotton in Ghana has consistently reduced from the flourishing years in the 1970's to 1980's owing to constraints from farmer attitude to that of governmental support to the industry, (Asinyo, Frimpong & Amankwah, 2015). Both production and the distribution phases of the Ghanaian garment value chain has major players and small – indigenous operators. The small-scale garment manufacturers mostly make tailored-made or customized garment for their clients. They are in the majority in the garment construction enterprise. Many of actors in this phase of the value chain undergo informal apprenticeship education and training. Koranteng (2015), collabourates that apprenticeship is a popular form of education and training for skill acquisition in vocational trade areas such as sewing or dressmaking industry especially in the rural areas of Ghana. Further, while Ampong (2004), reports that about 65.6% of the labour force nationwide acquires vocational skill through apprenticeship system, Sarpong, Howard and Osei-Ntiri (2011) confirms that, 60% being the

majority of their respondents who were fashion designers indicated they acquire their garment construction skills through informal or apprenticeship training.

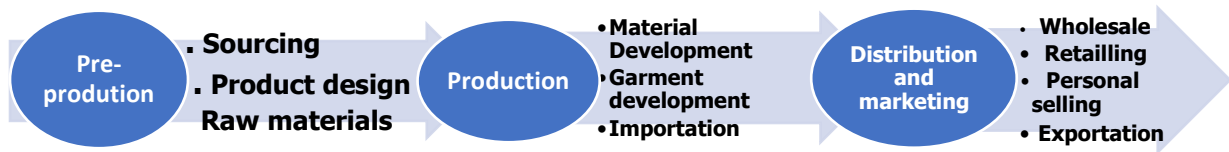


Figure 2.1: Researcher's perspective on the garment value chain in Ghana

## 2.5 Garment Construction Processes

Regardless of how well fabrics are sourced, if the construction processes fail one way or the other, the quality of the final product cannot be assured. Garment construction processes involve all that goes into bringing garment design perceived into reality. Right from the paperwork stage to the transformation of fabrics using the ideal body measurements. Obviously, the above discussion corresponds to the fact that garment construction readily begins with fabric purchasing. Rajitha (2005), affirms that to produce garments with a good fit, there is a need to understand all the technicalities that goes into good knowledge of fabrics followed by what goes into making it. This however depends on the ability to select the right fabric, colour and design for the right occasion. Those involved in making clothes/ garments either for personal or commercial purposes needs to know the processes and the principals involved in its production.

The processes of garment construction involve the following stages:

- Body measurement stage
- Pattern making stage
- Laying and cutting out stage
- Seaming cut out pieces into final garment

- **Body Measurement Stage**

During garment making, it is very important that anybody measurement required is recorded and taken accurately to avoid any irregularities during construction of garments. According to Rajitha (2005) it is a step in sewing that must be done with great cushion. All necessary procedures involved including the right equipment needed at the measuring stage must be taken with care.

Whichever purpose the garment is for, either made or ready-made must follow the correct and accurate measurements. The sizes discovered will determine the yardage of fabrics to be sourced. When the measurement to be used is not accurate, it will affect the amount of fabrics to be sourced. Most garments are made either custom or tailored made. Whichever form it takes keen attention needs to be given the body measurement involved. The correct body measurements are needed to ensure the right pattern size to use and to know the required alterations to be made (Smith, 2012).

- **Pattern Making Stage**

During garment construction, the accuracy of the right body measurements proceeds with pattern preparations. Smith (2012) highlighted that Pattern sizes are usually chosen by the hip or bust measurement; for tops follow the bust measurement but for skirt and pants use the hip measurement. On the other hand, when dress patterns are chosen go for whichever of the body measurements that is largest. Pattern development takes two forms according to Kendra (2002) that is the human body measurement or the dress form measurement. She further affirms that both measurements need to be taken accurately and correctly as well. There is also the need to be familiar with all the knowledge and techniques involved to achieve accurate pattern.

During pattern preparation, either on dress form or the body, the standard body measurement is used, knowing the right standard measurement to use is required and a key component. Standard body measurements come in different sizes. Rajitha (2005), clearly

enumerate the standard body measurements that can be used to develop patterns these vary from sizes 8 upwards to 18 for females.

Patterns prepared comes with symbols that give clear directions to use to ensure accuracy in cutting out. Such symbols among many others include grain line, fold bracket, notches and cutting line. Once patterns are made, they can as well be altered if it doesn't suit the user according to Smith (2012) these alterations relate specifically to commercial patterns. Sections such as bust, waist, hips, back, sleeve and others can either be lengthened or shortened as well as make changes before laying out.

- **Laying and Cutting Out Stage**

The next stage after pattern preparations is laying and cutting out. During fabric laying, the larger patterns pieces are placed first followed by the guide sheet layout. The grain lines arrow needs to be located; one end of the arrow must be pinned to the fabric. Then the distance to the fabric fold or the selvedge is measured to ensure the patterns laid follows the right grain. According to Wiese (2016) for cut-on-fold pattern pieces, one side is cut first, then flip the pattern pieces, align centre front/ centre back and then the remaining side is cut. It explains also that plaids and strips are necessary fabric to be given special attention during layout, the pattern pieces must be marked to indicate the plaid match point. Kendra (2002) affirms that there is always the need to layout pattern pieces as straight as possible using the grain lines. Laying out straight will also make the fabric straight to ensure garments hangs well to avoid diagonal wrinkles which creates discomfort when final garment is made.

The next step after layout is cutting after close marking out is done to show all necessary pattern markings are clear and visible. During cutting according to Kendra (2002), there is the need to ensure that all pattern pieces are straightened while securing one hand on the pattern pieces before cutting. For cutting out, fabric is usually folded selvage to selvage with the fabric folded, the pattern is pinned on top and both the right and left side piece are cut out at the same

time. If pattern pieces have to be cut on a single layer fabric, matching pairs are cut. On the other hand, if fabric has a design lay the fabric design side upwards so that the pattern pieces can be arranged to show off the design. If the design has left and right-side pattern pieces, they are cut on single fabric with the fabric right side up and the pattern right-side.

There is always the need to ensure extreme care is taken during cutting as echoed by the Sewing Project(4-H) (2014) that, fabrics like broadcloth, velvet, corduroy and others. These fabrics has special nap and pile. Precaution such as putting the pieces together to ensure grain line run in the same direction to if there will be different shades of fabrics in the final garment.

### **Seaming pieces together (sewing garment)**

The type of fabric sourced placed a significant role during the process of sewing. Technically not all seams will suit certain fabrics. A wrong choice of seam is likely to affect the garment quality in the final product. According to Smith (2012), once choice of seam used during the garment construction determines the overall look and quality of the garment. Even though the most common seam, used mostly, it is very important to have the best knowledge when choosing seams for all fabrics. During production, seams should be selected according to the fabric sourced.

Sewing Project 4-H (2014) lays out three main types of fabric structures that is woven, knits and nonwovens. Woven fabrics have their yarns interlaced and right angles, knits on the other hand, are formed by interloping yarns and non-wovens are pressed into shapes. Most fabrics used by garment makers falls under any one of the above fabric types. Such fabrics include woven fabrics such as muslin, percale, chambray, poplin, among others. Kids such as jersey, stretch fabrics and other pile fabrics among many others. A number of seam finishes will be appropriate for certain kinds of fabrics during production as listed by (Sewing Project 4-H, 2014).

Fake furs will require seams with bindings to reinforce areas of strain. Fleece fabrics will require seams for strength and decorative effect because of their nature, therefore seams such as slot, tucked and welt will not be a bad idea. Interesting fabrics like leather, suede and synthetic suede will go for those seams that are pressed open example plain and trimmed. They could as well be regular, topstitched or flat fell. With napped and pile fabrics such as flannelette, velvet and corduroy, seams should always be graded to eliminate bulk because of their nature. Pinked, overcast, zigzag will suit them. Seam tape will also be a good choice.

Interesting fabrics used for most garments like shears and laces choice of seams such as French and mock French and double stitched seam will work better for them due to their strong nature. Silk and silk like fabrics are mostly suitable for casual and semi- casual wear depending on the style depending on the style. Narrow seams like those used on sheers are very good to use such as French, double- stitched and flat – fell seams. If for any reason, a plain seam is use then tricot finish is required. Once the right sourced fabric goes through the appropriate processes during the garment construction, making sure all precautions are taking throughout the processes then good quality garment is assured for the final product.

## **2.6 Physical Properties and Characteristics of Fabrics to Source**

All fabrics have essential fibre properties and characteristics within that makes them unique. Knowing how these properties and characteristics relate help fashion designers' source for the right fabrics to suit their designs and work. Textile School (2011) conceptualize physical properties of fabrics as “the static physical dimensions of fabric while the characteristics remains the dynamic physical parameters of fabrics”. Therefore, the unique properties fabrics have corresponded with their characterization. It is the garment makers responsibility to select the suitable one for the intended garment to be made.

A general look at basic properties of fabrics, there are certain features which are necessary to consider; breathability, weight, drape, durability, softness and many others. These

properties have a link in the general characteristics of any fibre choice a garment maker makes or source. It all depends on the intended purpose and the usage such as corporate, hospitality, healthcare, industrial or sportswear. Sometimes elements such as cool, dry, warm flexibility or even protection may be the main expectant property in a particular fabric. Generally, fabrics constructed and made available in the market for purchase are made with basic elements called fibres. The performance of such fabrics depends on the characteristics and properties. Cadigan (2014), affirms that all stages in production of fabrics will surely have a bearing on the end cost to the fashion designer. Every stage will affect the properties, functions and durability of the fabric and the final garment. The fashion design works with fabrics hence knowing their fundamental formation must be of keen interest to them.

Fabrics are generated from fibers which are grouped from natural consisting of source such as animal, plant and mineral source. Fabrics generated from the sources are cotton, jute, kapok linen, wool, silk and many others. Others that are generated from artificial sources can either be synthetic or regenerated origin. Such fabrics are nylons, rayons, acrylic, polyester and many others.

All the fabrics available to the fashion designer have their unique properties and characteristics which must be of kin interest. In relation to the choices they made during construction to suit the performance or the end use of the intended garment. According to Cadigan (2014), structural characteristics of fibres affect the final usage. She categorised fibres into length, shape, density, longitudinal configuration and surface texture.

Length of a fibre either staple or filament can affect texture, bulk, hand, appearance and its final use either positively or negatively. Again, the shape of a particular fibre will determine lustre or shine, bulk, texture and hand of the fabric. This can be observed when the fibre is viewed cross sectional. The density of a fabric also explains the thickness which is the measurement that provides the base weight of the fabric. It helps to determine a fabric being

solid or hollow. The purpose or end use of the fabric choice will inform the particular density for consideration. The lengthwise or characterization is also determined through the fabrics longitudinal configuration. Basically, the structure can be straight, crimped, curled or twisted. Straight and crimped are the most commonly used. The characteristic feature such as resiliency, elasticity, abrasion resistance and many others will be informed by its configurations. The ability of fabrics such as permeability, stiffness, strength, dyeing, wrinkled and hand is characterised by surface texture (Cadigan, 2014).

## **2.7 Notions Make Quality Sense**

The term "notion" refers to a little object or accessory used in the fabrication of clothing, such as buttons, snaps, and collar stays that are stitched on or otherwise affixed (Jones, 2022). In garment construction, notions are little things or accessories, such as buttons, snaps, and collar stays, that is sewn or otherwise connected to the garment. Smith (2012) extends notions meaning and says that the term covers not just buttons, snaps, hooks and eyes, and Velcro but all the odds and ends that a sewer requires which includes, elastics, ribbons, various trimmings, and boning. The notion is an American version of what the British refer to as haberdashery, which means a business or a person who sells small articles for sewing. In some instances, a spool of thread is regarded as an idea in a fabric store, which will have a section or department devoted to them including needles, thread, pins, marking pens, and seam rippers. So basically, anything that one needs to sew something together is considered a notion.

Closures on garment items such as shirts, jackets, and pants are frequently utilized (Weil, 1999). Zippers are widely found in clothing such as skirts, dresses, jeans, and outerwear. They are made up of two rows of teeth that interlock when the garment is closed to keep it securely attached. Threads for instance are one of the most important sewing items because it is what ties the fabric together. It is available in a variety of colours and thicknesses or weights, allowing you to select the best type for your project. According to Bittner (2004), thinner

threads are preferable for delicate textiles, while thicker threads can be used on heavy fabrics without the risk of breaking. In some instances, interfacing which is a material that is frequently used to reinforce portions of cloth that require extra support is considered a notion too. Hendrickson (2009) states that it is available in both sew-in and iron-on forms, and varying weights are available depending on the amount of support required. Interfacing is commonly used around collar edges, waistband seams, and button plackets.

A notion in sewing is basically any tool that is utilized in the process of making a garment (Jones, 2022). This might range from scissors to measuring tape to pins and needles. While some sewing jobs may just necessitate the use of a few simple tools, others may necessitate the use of more specialist equipment. Whatever type of project one is working on, having the correct notion on hand will make the process go much more smoothly leading to quality.

Sourcing for the right fabrics for a garment's quality is as important as sourcing for notions that some literature refers to as trimmings or accessories. In the opinion of Mondal, Rahman, Sanoar Hosin and Sarkar (2017), all necessary trims and accessories are obtained in the same way that fabric is. Trims and accessories are ordered in advance of the start of production with big factory garment production houses. It will surely be purchased ahead when the kind of production is in form of small scale or possibly customs-made level. Trims usage per garment is used to calculate trims requirements. During quality assurance processes, trim quality is tested and authorized prior to manufacture. Colour bleeding is evaluated on trims such as laces, twill tapes, buttons, zippers, drawcords, and many others, according to Sarkar (2017), Trims other words known as notions that are defective or damaged are separated and are not used in clothing. It is however imperative for the fashion designer to consider choosing notions or trims that will not go a long way to affect the garment to be made. Refusing to make prudent considerations will affect the quality of the garment entirely.

## 2.8 Customer Service

Customers who experience good service quality from a producer are more likely to become satisfied customers (Yip & Meena, 2010). Quality customer service entails providing efficient quick and friendly service building strong relationships with customers handling complaints quickly and responding to customers' issues on time (Diem et al., 2021). Quality customer service is the best way to keep customers coming back thus ensuring long-term success. The key priority to the garment manufacturer as far as quality is concern is to be able to build a stronger relationship with clients. This can be made possible if quality customer care is meted out.

Customer service as a concept has had many attempted definition and explanation perhaps with emphasis on the industry experience or biases of a proponent. However, there is a general chorus on the theme of assessing the customer's experience in their relationship with a good or service provider. Ayitey (2018), report on the Ghana Customer Service Index 2018 published on myjoyonline website has it that the index attempts to determine the degree of satisfaction in patronizing products of companies in both private and public sectors. The year's report emphasized the ranking of products providers in Ghana along the following thematic areas: look and feel, competence, professionalism, ease of doing business, processes and procedures, customer focused innovations, staff management, feedback and complaints.

According Hendriyani and Auliana (2018). Customer relationship management (CRM) describes the management of detailed information about individual customer and carefully manage customer touch points in order to maximize customer loyalty. In a foreword to the UK Customer Satisfaction Index 2019, the Institute of Customer Service's Chief Executive opined that whiles the essential components of great customer experience have not changed fundamentally in over a decade, customer priorities relative to both the interaction and over all relationship with an organization continues to expand. Today and moving forward. In the face

of fierce competition fuelled by technological advancement led globalization. The survival and growth of an organization will depend on the ability of comprehensively understand the customer better and provide high customer service levels for a lifelong customer bond. Owing to the diversity to the diversity, creativity, socio-cultural trends, complexity, automation and many other prepositions in the fashion value chain. It is important for all the actors in the fashion value chain to pay much attention to detail and make customer service the key to their fashion enterprise in earning competitive advantage for survival and growth.

According to the Institute of Customer Service (2019), customers continue to attract high importance to product or service reliability and quality in employee competence, attitude and helpfulness. Further, emotional connection, ethics and the sense that organisations genuinely build experiences around their customers' needs significantly influence customer satisfaction. Therefore, earning high levels of customer satisfaction that enables sustained business performance depends on developing a service-oriented culture in which relationship commitment, operational excellent relationship and behaviours are rooted in an organizational value and understanding customer priorities. Though the Ghana Customer Service Index is one of the foremost formal reports on customer experience in the Ghanaian economy, the index since inception has not singled out attention on the fashion industry. Nevertheless, this study draws inspiration from the Index to bring to the fore to all actors in the fashion value chain and in particular the designer in the Sunyani Metropolis the need to be customer centric in sourcing fabrics to ensure quality product delivery for customer satisfaction.

## **2.9 Quality Assurance in Garment Construction**

Designing, creating, reviewing, and testing products to see whether they satisfy the intended quality level for a company's target market is known as quality assurance (Montgomery, 2019). Rather than quality control an aspect of quality assurance which takes a retrospective look at quality upon production, quality assurance is a very comprehensive

process aimed at satisfying the consumer of a fashion product. Keist (2015), asserts that quality assurance seeks to build quality into each step of the manufacturing process including designing, production, and beyond. Rahman, Baral, Chowdhury and Khan (2009), on the other hand contributes that quality assurance is a function of quality management which covers the overall determination and implementation of quality policy.

Garment production actors are not bound by defined rules on the frequency and quantity of inspection. Each actor tends to develop their own framework in this respect. The core outcome is that the final product should conform to the standards and specifications as required by the market of the goods or service. Rahman et al., (2009), confirms that most garment factories in Bangladesh uses different tools for quality management. Adding that most players at the garment exportation section of the fashion value chain employs the acceptable quality level (AQL, 2.5 grade) in their garment export trade in the same country. According to Islam (2016), Acceptable Quality Level describes the maximum quantity of defective item that could be considered acceptable during random sampling. Expressed in percentage (%) number of average defective items where average defective item is the multiple result of total number of defective items found during inspection and total number of items inspected. Prior shipping readymade garments, production inspectors randomly sample finished garments to ensure only passed garments are shipped to the importer.

As complex area even at the construction stage of the value chain it takes, a look at products right from the design idea until it is finally gets to the customer. Through the pre-construction (input sector) and the construction (production sector) stages various tools are employed by various garment factories to continuously improve on the in-process quality of the construction process. Keist (2015) submits that prior to the assembly of garment both fabric and all other design elements are assessed and tested to eliminate defects.

Stages of production for garment or apparel construction can be grouped into four.

These are:

1. Procurement and Inspection of raw material
2. Laying and Cutting of fabric/material
3. Assembly of the product
4. Finishing and Packaging

### **1. Procurement and Inspection of Raw Materials**

The process of apparel manufacture begins with the procurement of raw material and inspection or checking of the same. This includes the fabric, notions and closures (zippers, buttons, interlinings, labels, tags and many others). Keist (2015), affirms that ensuring that all raw materials are well checked during procurement saves time and money in the long run hence ensuring that material test is paramount in the pre-production quality control phase.

A study by Meredith et al., (2017) showed that, fabric inspection is done to detect faults or defects in the fabric and all other design element. Ideally, hundred per cent (100%) of fabric received should be checked before it is cut. Rahman et al., (2009), suggests a piece goods quality control system which employs four (4) points in checking at least 10% of fabric quality in stock before sewing. The fault or defect is assigned points based on its size, type, spread etc. The total points in a given linear length are then totalled and the fabric is ‘accepted’ or ‘rejected’. However, when the fabric is procured from a reliable source or when the fabric is certified as fault free by the fabric manufacturer, only representative sample quantities are checked. Many garment manufacturing companies have customized their own system by adapting from existing systems according to their need and specialized fabric types. The acceptance criteria also depend on the final product (style, market, functionality, performance base, etc.) being made (Meredith et al., 2017).

Fabric defects can relate the following in isolation or combination on:

(a) Yarn faults

(b) Weaving faults

(c) Dyeing faults

(d) Finishing faults

- a) Yarn fault defects can result from warp yarns having a larger diameter or smaller diameter than those normally used in the fabric.
- b) Weaving faults can also result from filling wise band across the full width characterized by a change in appearance from normal colour or texture of finish. Other defects in this respect relates to incidence such as broken end, Float, Kink, Misreed and Smash.
- c) Defects arising from dyeing faults include colour run which is a situation where colour of one area has bled or superimposed on the colour of another area. Again, colour or bleach shading may not be uniform from one location to another.
- d) Defects arising from finishing faults can result from Baggy, Chafe, Cuts, Tenting marks, and uneven finish.

Notions and or closures are also inspected to ensure quality of final garment. Nayak & Padhye (2014) as cited by Keist (2015) has it that accessories such as zippers, buttons, hooks, snap fasteners, drawstrings, hook-and-loop and so on should be inspected or tested to assess their ability to withstand care and maintenance procedures of the garment. According to Islam (2015), various tests or inspection parameters such as dimension, uniformity of colour, puller strength and so on could be applied to zippers. Further, button should have the right size, within tolerance shade, large holes and of uniform thickness. Nayak et al., (2010), puts forward that sewability test be conducted on threads by sewing the thread on the intended fabric at the highest machine speed. Adding that the sew fabric should show consist uniform and consistent stitches to confirm good sewability, and the thread should be free from imperfections such as

knots, snubs, thick and thin places. More so, Keist (2015) contributes that Elastic waistbands are tested for fit and durability, fit is measured by the force needed to stretch the waistband about 2” more than the hip size (as per the size label) and bringing back to waist size. Durability can be measured by stretching the waistband by 50% and measuring the force needed to stretch it.

### **Laying and Cutting of Fabric/Material**

During the production stage which will include among others cutting, assembling, pressing and other finishing procedures, and final inspection, should have in-process quality testing if quality garment is to be produced. Keist (2015) opined that each step of the production process is vital to the overall quality of apparel products. Marker planning and processing of the cutting of the fabric must be done with precision. Haque (2016) describes marker planning as a diagram of a precise arrangement of pattern pieces for a specific style and the sizes to be cut from a single spread, or marker, is a thin paper which contains all necessary pattern pieces for all sizes for a particular style of garments in such a way that, fabric wastage would be least.

Manual marker planning which involves placing pattern pieces on a defined width of the table and creating permutations till the most optimum length is achieved can be very time consuming especially where the number of pattern pieces involved are high. There is also the problem of copying the marker so that it can be replicated for multiple lays. According to Pamuk and Yildiz (2016), though manual makers could account for 13%-15% waste in material with job time requiring several days per suit, they can be used by manufacturers who undertake only short or single garment markers (example customized tailoring). The more efficient technique of marker planning is by using specific computer software or CAD system. In this, the pattern pieces are fed into the system (digitized) and planning is done on a monitor. This technique is time efficient and eliminates most of the errors that are related to a manual plan. A printout of the final marker/s is taken for replication which ensures that the consumption of

fabric per unit of product is maintained. Haque (2016) contends that customer demand for speed in garment production and the need to ensure efficiency in the production process in order to stay alive in a competitive market has compel garment manufacturers to deploy CAD/CAM software in marking.

**Spreading:** Chishlom (1995) has is that prior to spreading a careful inspection of fabrics is done to identify possible defects. Fabric is smoothened and spread along lengths of table in layers. The length of the layer is defined by the marker. The fabric layers are matched along one length edge and are equal in length. The fabric may be spread by hand or with the assistance of machines. These machines may be mechanically, electrically, electronically or computer operated. The final product of the spreading process is called a lay. The lay height will also affect and be affected by the cutting apparatus to be used. Care must be taken during lay preparation that each lay consists of only one type of fabric. Rahman et al., (2009) buttress quality assurance in spreading under nine (9) check points, namely; table marking ends, tension, leaning, narrow goods, counts, ply heights, remnants, fabric flaws and market placing.

**Cutting:** The layers are cut simultaneously using machines that may be controlled either manually or through computer software systems. The height of the lay, thus, the number of layers in each lay, is dependent on the type of cutting apparatus as well as the dimensional stability of the fabric. Regardless of the method employed in cutting, attention should be given to the particular grain line in the markers. Chisholm (1995) observed that companies with strict adherence to quality standards in cutting ensures that the marker do not deviate from the fabric's grain line. Further, Kiest (2015) suggest that pattern pieces need to be cut with precision and on grain. As confirmed by Glock and Kunz (1995), it is imperative to note that cutting has direct contributive quality effect on sewing efficiency and consequently the final garment.

**Bundling:** The cut pieces are bundled for further processes of stitching/embroidery/printing and so on. The number of pieces in a bundle is dependent on the type of production system and the process sequence to be followed. The bundles may have all the components of a garment or only selected ones. Along with bundling, ticketing of the components is done which identifies the layer number within the lay. This is done to ensure that components of one garment are cut from the same layer of fabric. While Kiest (2015) advises on the exercise of care and precision, Rahman et al., (2009) recommends a five (5) check points namely; mis cut, ragged cutting, pattern checks, matching plies and notches, to quality assurance.

### **3. Assembly of the Product**

The garment pieces are assembled through stitching with the use of manual or automated machines. Representing the final part of the actual construction of garment, it is paramount that in-process quality is taken into consideration. The Association of Sewing of Design Professionals (2008) recommends for techniques deployed in assembling must end in a detail, finish, or area that are attractive or inconspicuous, functional and durable. Adding that for a quality professional garment to be assembled the quality standards must apply in such key construction milestone points as seams, darts, underlining, interlining, interfacing, pockets, edge treatment, understitching, closures and hem treatment.

**Fitting test:** Brown and Rice (2001) as cited by Koranteng (2015), propounds that Fit describe the way a garment conforms to the body or the relationship between the garment and the body, which is indicative of the quality of the garment. Usually, a quality inspector will put the garment on a model or mannequin to check whether it fits correctly, as per piece size. Therefore, the number of sizes an inspector can check will depend on the availability of mannequins of multiple sizes. A correctly is ascertained from the functionality of the garment on the mannequin or the actual or physical present person relative ease of movement. ASDP

(2008), affirm that garments are made fit an allowance that invariably allows for natural movement of the body in addition to good look and comfortable feeling.

#### **4. Finishing and Packaging**

Raichurkar (2011), attempts a definition at finishing as the final process comprising of all operational activities required to complete the garment in every detail, and inspection verifying that the garment conforms to design objectives and relevant quality standards. The finishing operational processes includes final inspections, stain removal, repairs, ironing/pressing and folding. The pressing/ironing techniques would also define the final look of the garment (creases, folds, size of fold, etc.). In the opinion of Koranteng (2015), finishing includes how well a garment has been under and or top pressed to outline shapes, how it has been meticulously stitched, how notions have been carefully chosen and used to exhibit quality craftsmanship, and how carefully all parts are aligned and quality controlled to remove any unwanted elements in the likes of hanging threads, and finally made ready for delivery. Again, additional finishing corrective articles could be replacing and placing damaged and unattached or unfirmly attached buttons and zippers, correct positioning of interlinings and specifications, and removal of untrimmed seam allowance and stabbed yarns in the fabric.

Packaging involves putting the approved as finished garment into a package for delivery. Packages should be designed to protect its content throughout the delivery process. The Warehouse Group (2017) suggests that for the purposes of ensuring quality in packing garments must be clean and dry, handlers must have clean hands and work within clean environment, and garment folding must follow prescribed instructions. The method or kind of package use will depend on various reasons including the specifications of the buyer, the display techniques at point of sale, the bulk of the garment (volume of individual piece), the price of the garment, the destination of the buyer and so on. Some garments are hanger packed (coats, jackets, suits, children's dresses etc.), some are fold packed (shirts, t-shirts, track suits,

etc.) and some are folded and then hanger packed (trousers). The most common packing technique is the use of Cartons. A carton is made of layers of corrugated paper stuck together in a box shape (cube/ cuboid). The size of the carton can be customized as per requirement, defining its length, width and height.

## **2.10 Fashion Education and Training in Ghana**

Fashion education and training in Ghana have experienced significant growth and transformation over the years, reflecting the country's increasing interest in the fashion industry as a means of economic empowerment and creative expression. With a rich cultural heritage and diverse textile traditions, Ghana presents a unique platform for nurturing talent and fostering innovation in the fashion sector (Okafor et al., 2020). The roots of fashion education in Ghana can be traced back to traditional clothing and artisanal practices that have been passed down through generations (Langevang, 2017). However, over time, there has been a shift towards formalized education in fashion design and related fields. The establishment of universities, polytechnics, and specialized fashion schools has provided aspiring designers with structured education and training opportunities.

Ghana boasts several reputable institutions that offer fashion-related programs and courses. Some of the prominent ones include the Fashion Design Departments in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Accra Technical University, Sunyani Technical University (STU), Kumasi Technical University (KsTU), Tamale Technical University (TATU), Cape Coast Technical University (CCTU), Koforidua Technical University (KTU), Ho Technical University (HTU), Takoradi Technical University (TTU), Bolgatanga Technical University, and Dr. Hilla Limann Technical University. Additionally, there are private fashion schools and academies that cater to the growing demand for fashion education in the country. These training institutions have various programmes in fashion design which leads to the award of certificate, diploma, degree

and post graduate degree (Amedorme et al., 2014). Amankwah (2007), states that successive governments of the fourth republic have made various attempts boosting the fashion industry through skill development to empower particular youth and women along the value in country.

A major boost to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) where fashion education belongs is the enactment of the Education Regulatory Bodies Act 2020 (Act 1023) leading to the establishment of the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) to principally regulate, promote and administer TVET to drive transformation and innovation for sustainable development. The Commission for Technical Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) is promoting Competency-Based Training (CBT) approach towards skills development (CTVET, 2022 & COTVET, 2012). In the view of many educators in Ghana and elsewhere this approach holds the magic wand to produce the much-needed twenty-first century work skills to graduates (Sweet, 2014; MoE, 2014; Hodge & Harris 2012; Tuckson et al., 2012). The unit-by-unit structured curriculum for all professions, CBT in fashion seeks to concentrate not only on competencies but spreads its training in all areas which include fabric selection. A priority every designer must pay attention to (Obinnim et al., 2019).

Fashion education programs in Ghana generally emphasize a comprehensive curriculum that blends theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Students are exposed to design guidelines, fashion history, garment construction, pattern making, textiles, and other essential elements of the fashion industry (Agbekey, 2020). The curriculum is often designed to foster creativity, innovation, and a deep understanding of Ghanaian cultural aesthetics (Badoe & Opoku-Asare, 2014). It is also designed to bridge the gap between academia and the fashion industry, Ghanaian fashion education institutions increasingly collabourate with local designers, fashion houses, and industry experts (Osabutey & Croucher, 2018). These collaborations provide students with real-world experiences, internships, and opportunities to

showcase their creations at fashion events and exhibitions (Sangpikul, 2020). They are organized to enhance the skills development processes and render the students fit for purpose upon graduation (Li, 2022; Islam, 2022; Butrica & Mudrazija, 2022). As a result, developing the capacity of the Ghanaian fashion designer in sourcing could have ripple effect as they transfer knowledge to the students they host during internship.

Furthermore, fashion education in Ghana has integrated technological advancements to keep pace with the evolving industry. Computer-aided design (CAD) software, digital pattern making, and other digital tools have become essential components of the curriculum, enabling students to enhance their design and production capabilities (Oppong et al., 2013).

Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship in the fashion industry, many fashion education programs in Ghana incorporate business training. Students are equipped with essential skills in marketing, branding, financial management, and understanding market trends to support their potential ventures or careers in the fashion business (Lang & Liu, 2019). A major approach to fashion education and training in Ghana is the traditional apprenticeship training. This approach in Ghana holds deep cultural significance and plays a vital role in preserving traditional textile craftsmanship while fostering the growth of the fashion industry (Abdulai et al., 2018). Rooted in the country's rich heritage of textiles and clothing, dressmaking apprenticeship offers aspiring artisans the opportunity to learn age-old techniques and creative skills from experienced master dressmakers. Dressmaking apprenticeship provides the apprentice the opportunity to construct their own learning knowledge and skills delivered through oral and hands-on training. Usually, assessment evidence is captured in product, performance and orally (Anokye & Samuel, 2014). Historically, women tend to be in the majority in using this particular approach to education and training.

The traditional dressmaking apprenticeship process involves a master-apprentice relationship, where an experienced dressmaker imparts their knowledge and expertise to a

novice (Lave, 2021). The apprentices learn the art of pattern making, cutting, sewing, and embellishing fabrics, along with the techniques for creating traditional clothing and contemporary designs. Master dressmakers are essential custodians of Ghanaian textile heritage. They act as coaches and mentors, passing down their skills, techniques, and design aesthetics to apprentices (Boateng, 2018). The relationship between master and apprentice goes beyond technical training, fostering a sense of respect, discipline, and dedication to the craft. This plays a crucial role in preserving Ghana's cultural heritage. The mastery of traditional techniques ensures that indigenous clothing styles and textiles continue to thrive. The use of vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and symbolic motifs in garments reflects the country's diverse cultural identity (Brooks, 2019). It also delfts into contributing significantly to the socio-economic transformational development of Ghana. It offers a pathway to entrepreneurship and employability, and economic empowerment, particularly for women, who constitute a significant portion of the apprentices (Hutchings, 2020). Additionally, in the opinion of Baden (2005), the craft attracts tourists and buyers interested in authentic Ghanaian fashion and textiles, generating income for the industry and local communities. While traditional dressmaking apprenticeship remains rooted in tradition, there is room for innovation and adaptation to contemporary fashion trends. Some master dressmakers have embraced modern technologies, integrating digital design tools and sustainable practices into their creations while preserving the essence of Ghanaian heritage.

Despite the growth and progress in fashion education in Ghana, several challenges persist. Limited access to resources, inadequate funding, and a lack of modern equipment can hinder the quality of education and training. Additionally, the fashion industry's competitive nature requires continuous adaptation and innovation to remain relevant globally.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for improvement and growth. By addressing the gaps in infrastructure and funding, fashion education in Ghana can reach new

heights. Moreover, leveraging the country's rich cultural heritage and promoting sustainable and ethical fashion practices can position Ghana as a hub for creative and responsible fashion design. Hence, an attempt at assessing the knowledge and processes of sourcing fabrics and notions by the Ghanaian fashion designer with the view to facilitating capacity building for the benefits that come with it is paramount.

### **2.11 Importance of Fabric and Notion Selection in Garment Quality**

In the dynamic world of fashion, creating garments that not only look stylish but also stand the test of time is a true art form. Behind the scenes, according to Chatterjee et al., (2015) the selection of fabric and notions plays a pivotal role in determining the overall quality and durability of a garment. From luxurious haute couture to everyday wear, the careful consideration of these essential elements can elevate the final product from mere clothing to a piece of art that encapsulates both style and substance (Richards, 2021).

The significance of fabric selection in garment production cannot be overstated. Peng et al., (2023) opined that fabrics are the very foundation upon which a design takes shape, influencing everything from the way a garment drapes to its comfort, breathability, and longevity. The choice of fabric can transform a design from stiff and restrictive to fluid and supple, altering the way it feels against the skin and how it complements the body's movements. Furthermore, fabric can greatly impact a garment's response to environmental factors, such as temperature and humidity, making it crucial to consider the intended purpose and the wearer's needs when making such selections (Fernández-Caramés & Fraga-Lamas, 2018).

In tandem with fabric, notions serve as the supporting actors that contribute to the overall excellence of a garment. Notions encompass a wide range of elements, including buttons, zippers, threads, trims, and other hardware used in garment construction. Though seemingly small, these components according to McCormick and Livett (2012), can significantly influence a garment's functionality and aesthetic appeal. For instance, choosing

the right zipper ensures smooth functionality and durability, while the selection of buttons and trims can add a touch of elegance or a modern twist to the design.

The amalgamation of fabric and notions requires a keen understanding of the design's vision, the targeted audience, and the desired level of quality (Julier, 2020). Fashion designers and garment manufacturers must meticulously assess various aspects before settling on the ideal combination. Again, according to Venkatraman and Liauw (2019), factors such as fiber content, weave, weight, colour, and even sustainability credentials must be taken into account when selecting fabrics. Similarly, Bly et al., (2015) added that notions must be chosen not only for their aesthetic qualities but also for their compatibility with the fabric, garment type, and functional requirements.

In this modern age of conscious consumerism, the importance of fabric and notion selection in garment quality is further amplified. Customers are increasingly drawn to garments that not only reflect their personal style but also align with their values, such as ethical sourcing, sustainability, and longevity (Harris et al., 2016). As a result, the significance of making well-informed choices in fabric and notions becomes crucial not only for the success of fashion businesses but also for the larger goal of reducing the industry's environmental impact.

The process of crafting a high-quality garment is an intricate dance between creativity and precision, with fabric and notion selection serving as the choreography that sets the stage for brilliance. From enhancing comfort and durability to influencing the overall aesthetic and environmental impact, according to Harris et al., (2016) the careful consideration of these crucial elements enables the creation of garments that are both timeless and mindful of the world we inhabit. By recognizing the significance of fabric and notion selection in garment quality, the fashion industry can take a stride towards a more sustainable and responsible future while continuing to dazzle us with the beauty of wearable art. Hence, the profound impact of fabric and notion choices on garment quality, exploring how the right decisions can elevate the

garment to new heights while the wrong ones may result in disappointment for both fashion enthusiasts and industry professionals alike is imperative.

Various factors come into play when making these choices, as they directly impact the garment's performance, comfort, style, and overall appeal to consumers. The key considerations and factors that influence fabric and notion selection in garment production as prescribed by (McNeill & Moore, 2015) include:

1. **Purpose and Intended Use:** The primary purpose and intended use of the garment are pivotal factors that guide fabric and notion selection. Different types of clothing, such as formal wear, active wear, or casual wear, require distinct fabrics and notions to cater to their specific functionalities. For instance, sportswear demands fabrics that wick moisture and allow for ease of movement, while formal wear often involves luxurious fabrics like silk or satin, complemented by ornate notions like buttons, zippers, and embellishments.
2. **Fabric Performance:** Garment designers must consider the performance attributes of fabrics before making their selections. Factors such as breathability, stretch ability, drape, and weight all play essential roles in determining how the garment will feel and function on the wearer. Performance-oriented fabrics, like moisture-wicking materials or UV-resistant textiles, enhance the overall functionality and comfort of the garment, making them ideal for specific applications.
3. **Aesthetic Appeal:** The visual appeal of a garment is a vital consideration that influences fabric and notion choices. The texture, pattern, colour, and finish of the fabric can significantly impact the overall appearance and style of the garment. Designers must assess whether the fabric aligns with the desired aesthetic vision, be it a minimalistic and elegant look or a vibrant and bold design.

4. **Seasonal Relevance:** Seasonality plays a significant role in fabric and notion selection. Garments intended for warm weather, like summer dresses, would necessitate lightweight and breathable fabrics such as cotton or linen. On the other hand, winter clothing would benefit from heavier materials like wool or fleece to provide warmth and comfort.
5. **Production Costs:** The cost of fabric and notions can significantly impact the garment's overall cost and, consequently, its pricing. Manufacturers must strike a balance between quality and affordability to ensure that the garment remains competitive in the market. Sometimes, cost-saving measures can lead to compromises in fabric quality, affecting the final product's overall appeal.
6. **Sustainability and Ethical Considerations:** In recent years, the fashion industry has seen a growing emphasis on sustainability and ethical practices. Conscious consumers and brands are increasingly opting for eco-friendly fabrics, such as organic cotton, Tencel, or recycled polyester, and ethical sourcing of notions. Considerations of environmental impact and fair labour practices are now crucial factors in fabric and notion selection.
7. **Production Techniques:** The chosen fabric and notions must align with the garment's intended production techniques. Certain fabrics may require specialized sewing methods or finishing processes, and the compatibility of notions with the fabric's characteristics is essential for seamless integration during production.
8. **Market Trends and Consumer Preferences:** Market trends and consumer preferences are ever-evolving, and garment producers must stay attuned to these changes. Fabrics and notions that are currently in vogue or align with consumers' demands are more likely to find success in the market.

Invariably, the art of fabric and notion selection in garment production involves a careful consideration of multiple factors, each playing a critical role in shaping the final

product. By understanding the purpose, performance, aesthetic appeal, and market demands, designers and manufacturers can create garments that not only meet customer expectations but also reflect the essence of innovation and creativity in the ever-evolving fashion landscape. With sustainability and ethical concerns gaining prominence, embracing conscious choices in fabric and notion selection can pave the way for a more responsible and exciting future in the world of fashion.

## **2.12 Impact of Fabric and Notion Sourcing on Garment Durability**

In the realm of fashion and garment production, durability stands as a hallmark of quality and craftsmanship. Becerra (2016) opined that consumers seek garments that not only exude style but also endure the test of time, withstanding the rigors of everyday wear and frequent laundering. While many factors contribute to a garment's durability, none play a more significant role than the careful sourcing of fabrics and notions. The sourcing process, encompassing the selection of raw materials and components, can substantially impact the garment's resilience, structural integrity, and overall longevity (Mostafiz et al., 2022). In order to get it right, garment manufacturers must pay prime attention various proposition of both fabric and notions, as well as the appropriate sourcing techniques to be used if they are to create apparel that surpasses fleeting trends and endures as a timeless investment. In this respect, the quality and strength of the fabric which has a direct correlation on a garment's ability to withstand wear and tear should come to play. El Nemr (2012) says that garments crafted from superior-quality fabrics, with tightly woven or knitted fibres, exhibit enhanced resistance to abrasion, pilling, and fraying. Sourcing such fabrics does not just happen. In the opinion of Govindan et al., (2015) says it requires the manufacturer deal with reputable suppliers, known for their commitment to quality. More often than not, such sources and their products deliver better performance, ensuring that the garment produced out of them remains intact and appealing over extended periods of use.

Moreover, the material composition of the fabric must be considered. Of course, different fibres, such as cotton, polyester, wool, and blends, offer varying levels of strength and resilience. Natural fibres like cotton and wool often provide excellent breathability and comfort, while synthetic fibres like polyester and nylon offer increased durability and resistance to wrinkles and shrinkage (Doh, 2004). Cognizant of these characteristics, it beholds on the fabric manufacturer to deploy techniques that enable careful blending of fibres to deliver fabrics that capitalize on the best attributes of each component, and translate into further enhancing the durability of garment's to be manufactured down-stream. Furthermore, notions, including zippers, buttons, snaps, and threads, play a critical role in the garment's overall durability. According to Aspers (2016), Substandard or poorly sourced notions can compromise the garment's functionality and structural integrity. Metal zippers may corrode over time, buttons may break or lose their colour, and low-quality threads may result in loose seams and unravelling. Investing in high-quality notions sourced from reputable suppliers ensures that the garment remains intact, enhancing its longevity and performance (Bourne, 2021).

On the other hand, behaviour to environmental factors both fabrics and notions has halo-effect on durability. Garments often encounter various environmental factors, such as sunlight, moisture, and temperature fluctuations (Hu et al., 2012). Fabric and notion sourcing that takes into account these environmental challenges can lead to more durable garments. For instance, fabrics with UV-resistant properties may retain their colour and strength even after prolonged exposure to sunlight, while notions with rust-resistant coatings can withstand moisture without compromising their functionality (Hu et al., 2012).

More so, the way a garment responds to laundering and care practices is directly influenced by its fabric and notion sourcing. Fabrics with excellent colourfastness and minimal shrinkage maintain their original appearance even after repeated washing, while robust notions

withstand the mechanical stresses of washing machines and dryers without damage. Proper sourcing ensures that the garment can maintain its shape, colour, and overall appeal throughout its lifetime. Beyond physical durability, the ethical and sustainable sourcing of fabrics and notions contributes to the garment's durability in a broader sense (Ochieng, 2022). By selecting materials and components sourced through fair labour practices and environmentally responsible methods, the fashion industry can support the production of garments that reflect the guidelines of longevity and social responsibility. Sustainable materials are often designed to endure beyond fast fashion trends, encouraging consumers to invest in garments that stand the test of time, both in terms of style and ethical impact (Gazzola et al., 2020).

Consequently, these factors as earlier discussed goes to affirm the need for garment manufacturers to be responsible in their sourcing for fabric and notions for garment durability. The careful selection of high-quality fabrics, reliable notions, and sustainable materials ensures that garments possess the resilience and endurance to remain in the wardrobe for years to come. Garment producers and consumers alike have the power to influence the industry towards responsible sourcing practices that prioritize both craftsmanship and environmental stewardship. By recognizing the importance of sourcing decisions. Again, Ochieng (2022) says this can collectively contribute to a fashion landscape that champion's durable, long-lasting apparel, transcending transient trends and promoting a sustainable, enduring fashion culture.

### **2.13 Influence of Fabrics and Notions Sourcing on Garment Aesthetics**

In the vibrant world of fashion, aesthetics plays a central role in defining a garment's allure and desirability. The visual appeal of clothing is what captivates consumers, setting trends, and making lasting impressions (Fiore, 2010). However, in the opinion of Volpintesta (2014), behind every captivating design lies a meticulous process of fabric and notion sourcing that significantly influences a garment's aesthetics. The careful selection of fabrics and notions directly impacts the drape, texture, colour, and overall visual appeal of the garment, making it

a pivotal factor in creating pieces that not only look stunning but also evoke emotions and resonate with fashion enthusiasts. The influence of fabric and notion sourcing on garment aesthetics according to Fiore (2010), Highlights the artistry that comes to life through the careful duration of materials and components in different facets. Typically, the choice of fabric can drastically alter a garment's texture and drape, resulting in distinct aesthetic characteristics.

Fabrics like silk exude elegance with their smooth and luxurious texture, while cotton provides a more casual and relaxed feel. Heavier fabrics like wool or tweed lend a structured and sophisticated appearance, while flowing fabrics like chiffon or satin create an ethereal and graceful effect (Stalder, 2019). The interplay of texture and drape contributes to the garment's overall aesthetics, allowing designers to craft pieces that evoke specific moods and styles. Furthermore, fabric selection profoundly influences a garment's colour palette and pattern possibilities. Different fabrics absorb and reflect light differently, affecting how colours appear on the garment's surface. Moreover, some fabrics are more receptive to intricate patterns, while others lend themselves to bold prints or solid colours (Becerra, 2016). The sourcing of fabrics with vibrant hues or unique patterns enables designers to unleash their creativity and manifest their artistic visions, resulting in garments that stand out and make bold statements. Another aspect is the texture of the sourced fabric which according to Cadigan (2014), can influence the garment's draping and structure. For instance, stiffer fabrics, like denim or leather, contribute to a more structured and tailored look, while softer, more fluid materials enhance a garment's draping and movement. The careful balance of draping and structure allows designers to create garments that flatter the body's silhouette and create a sense of harmony between style and comfort (Hope, 2017).

In addition, notion sourcing adds depth and character to a garment's aesthetics through embellishments and details. Whether its delicate lace trims, intricate embroidery, or eye-catching buttons and zippers, the right choice of notions can elevate a garment's design from

ordinary to extraordinary. The interplay of textures and materials introduced by these notions infuses garments with personality and individuality, creating unique pieces that resonate with discerning consumers (Darku et al., 2020).

According to Hu et al., (2012) Fabrics and notions sourcing also account for seasonal relevance, ensuring that garments are suited to the climate and environment in which they are intended to be worn. Light and breathable fabrics dominate warm-weather collections, evoking a sense of freshness and airiness. On the other hand, cozy and warm fabrics take centre stage in winter collections, reflecting comfort and protection from the elements. Aligning aesthetics with seasonal considerations enhances the garment's visual appeal and practicality. For marketing purposes and brand identity for that matter, fabric and notion sourcing are instrumental in shaping and reinforcing unique identity. Brands often develop a signature style through consistent use of specific fabrics, textures, and notions. The careful duration of materials allows brands to establish their aesthetics, ensuring that consumers can instantly recognize their designs and associate them with a distinct identity (Darku et al., 2020).

Therefore, in the accession of Cadigan (2014) achieving the influence of fabric and notion sourcing on garment aesthetics is an art form that breathes life into fashion designs. From the choice of fabric textures and colours to the selection of embellishments and notions, every decision impacts the garment's visual appeal and emotional resonance with the audience. Through skilful sourcing, designers and fashion houses have the power to craft captivating pieces that go beyond mere clothing, becoming expressions of creativity and ingenuity. The artistry of fabric and notion sourcing continues to shape the ever-evolving world of fashion, sparking inspiration and delighting fashion enthusiasts around the globe (Cadigan, 2014). In the fiercely competitive world of fashion, according to (Darku et al., 2020), many fashion enterprises have obtained competitive advantage through the uncompromising commitment understanding that aesthetics are paramount in capturing consumers' hearts and minds. As a

result, behind every captivating garment lies a carefully curated selection of fabrics and notions that contribute to its distinct visual appeal and unique charm. Mention can be made but a few of such case studies of renowned fashion houses and designers that have achieved exceptional garment aesthetics through their meticulous fabric and notion sourcing practices.

#### Case Study 1: Chanel's Timeless Elegance (Kiverska, 2019).

Chanel, the iconic luxury brand, has long been synonymous with timeless elegance. One of the key factors contributing to Chanel's garment aesthetics is their unwavering commitment to sourcing high-quality fabrics and notions. The brand's signature tweed jackets, a fashion staple since the 1950s, exemplify this practice. Chanel sources tweed from specialized mills in France, where traditional craftsmanship meets modern innovation. The intricate patterns and rich texture of their tweed fabrics add depth and sophistication to their designs. Moreover, Chanel's attention to detail in their notion sourcing is evident in the brand's iconic interlocking "CC" buttons, which adorn many of their garments. These finely crafted buttons serve as recognizable symbols of luxury and craftsmanship, elevating the overall aesthetic appeal of their pieces.

#### Case Study 2: Stella McCartney's Sustainable Vision (Caneloro, 2020).

Stella McCartney, a pioneer in sustainable fashion, exemplifies how ethical fabric and notion sourcing can enhance garment aesthetics. With a commitment to eco-friendly materials, the brand uses innovative and sustainable fabrics like organic cotton, recycled polyester, and regenerated cashmere. McCartney's sourcing practices not only contribute to the brand's eco-conscious reputation but also add a modern and clean aesthetic to their designs.

Notably, Stella McCartney's use of sustainable notions, such as recycled buttons and zippers, further enhances the garments' visual appeal while aligning with the brand's ethical values. By blending aesthetics and sustainability seamlessly, Stella McCartney sets a compelling example for the industry.

### Case Study 3: Alexander McQueen's Artistic Expression (Bolton & McQueen, 2011).

Alexander McQueen's eponymous brand is renowned for its avant-garde and artistic designs. The brand's commitment to fabric and notion sourcing aligns with its desire to push creative boundaries. McQueen's sourcing practices often involve working with specialized fabric mills to create custom fabrics that are tailored to their unique designs. This approach allows them to materialize their artistic visions, such as incorporating digitally printed patterns or metallic textures into their garments.

Notably, McQueen's use of unconventional notions, like intricate metal embellishments and sculptural buttons, adds a touch of drama and opulence to their designs. The combination of custom fabrics and unique notions contributes to Alexander McQueen's distinct aesthetics and sets them apart as a leader in the world of haute couture.

### Case Study 4: Zara's Fast-Fashion Appeal (Joy et al., 2012)

Zara, a global fast-fashion retailer, demonstrates how efficient fabric and notion sourcing can enhance garment aesthetics in a fast-paced fashion landscape. Zara's sourcing practices prioritize speed and responsiveness to trends, allowing them to quickly introduce new styles to their collections. Their ability to quickly identify and source fabrics and notions that align with current fashion trends contributes to the brand's appeal.

By carefully selecting fabrics that mimic high-end textures and investing in affordable but visually appealing notions, Zara creates garments that resonate with fashion-conscious consumers seeking the latest styles without breaking the bank.

Successful fabric and notion sourcing practices are at the heart of creating exceptional garment aesthetics. The case studies of Chanel's timeless elegance, Stella McCartney's sustainable vision, Alexander McQueen's artistic expression, and Zara's fast-fashion appeal demonstrate the diverse ways in which sourcing decisions can profoundly impact a brand's visual identity. Whether through a commitment to traditional craftsmanship, ethical sourcing,

artistic expression, or trend responsiveness, these fashion houses exemplify the power of fabric and notion sourcing in elevating garments to the pinnacle of aesthetic excellence. As the fashion industry continues to evolve, these case studies serve as valuable examples of how sourcing practices can shape the narrative of modern fashion and inspire future generations of designers and brands.

#### **2.14 Environmental and Social Considerations in Fabric and Notion Sourcing**

In an era of increasing awareness about environmental sustainability and ethical practices, the fashion industry faces growing pressure to address its impact on the planet and the people involved in the supply chain. Strähle and Müller (2017) opined that, fabric and notion sourcing, which involves the selection of raw materials and components for garment production, plays a pivotal role in determining the industry's ecological footprint and social responsibility. It is therefore imperative that the Ghanaian fashion designer is equipped with the required competency to deploy strategies that puts premium on the importance of environmental and social considerations in fabric and notion sourcing. Hence, focusing on exploring environmental and social consciousness in their fabric and notions sourcing decision-making to foster a more responsible and sustainable Ghanaian fashion landscape.

According to Asif (2022), environmental impact in sourcing refers to the effects that the process of obtaining raw materials and components for manufacturing has on the natural environment. In the context of the fashion industry, according to Brydges (2021), sourcing involves acquiring fabrics, notions, and other materials used in garment production. This process can have significant environmental consequences due to factors such as resource consumption, pollution, and waste generation. It is common knowledge that the production of fabrics and notions often requires the use of valuable natural resources, such as water, energy, and raw materials. Water-intensive crops, like cotton, can put a strain on local water supplies in regions where water is already scarce (Radhakrishnan, 2022). Additionally, according to

Wiedemann et al., (2020) the energy-intensive processes involved in fabric manufacturing, such as spinning, weaving, dyeing, and finishing, contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel consumption. Many traditional fabric manufacturing processes involve the use of harmful chemicals, such as dyes, bleaches, and finishing agents. These chemicals can leach into waterways, leading to water pollution and harming aquatic ecosystems. Moreover, the release of chemical waste from factories can have far-reaching consequences on the environment and public health. The fashion industry is notorious for its high levels of waste generation. During the sourcing and manufacturing processes, substantial amounts of textile waste, such as cuttings and offcuts, are produced (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Without proper recycling or reuse measures, this waste often ends up in landfills, contributing to the growing problem of textile waste and its slow decomposition. Another sourcing pathway which is of concern according to Strähle and Müller (2017) is sourced materials having to travel long-distance, as fabrics and notions are frequently sourced from different parts of the world, and involve shipping these materials across continents results in significant carbon emissions, contributing to the fashion industry's carbon footprint. Therefore, a more environmentally responsible approach towards sourcing fabrics and notions will incorporate and not limited to the following core drivers:

- a) Sustainable Materials: Opting for sustainable and eco-friendly materials is a fundamental step in reducing the fashion industry's environmental impact. Fabrics made from organic cotton, hemp, Tencel, recycled polyester, and other eco-conscious fibres have lower carbon footprints, consume fewer resources, and minimize harmful chemical usage compared to conventional fabrics. Sourcing from suppliers committed to sustainable practices promotes the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity (Nayak et al., 2020).

- b) **Low-Impact Dyeing and Finishing:** Conscious fabric sourcing involves opting for low-impact or natural dyeing methods and eco-friendly finishing processes, reducing the overall environmental burden and promoting cleaner waterways (Khatun, 2022).
- c) **Reduced Waste:** Responsible sourcing practices also aim to minimize fabric waste through efficient utilization of materials. Fabric manufacturers that employ innovative techniques to recycle or repurpose production leftovers contribute to a circular economy, diverting textiles from landfills and reducing the industry's overall waste output (Boiten et al., 2017).
- d) **Reducing Transportation Emissions:** Locally sourcing materials whenever possible and optimizing supply chains can help reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation (Plambeck, 2012).

Social impact in sourcing on the other hand according to Tjahjono et al., (2017), refers to the effects that the process of obtaining raw materials and components for manufacturing has on people and communities along the supply chain. In the context of the fashion industry, according to Mishra et al., (2021), sourcing involves interactions with various stakeholders, including workers, artisans, farmers, and local communities. The social impact in sourcing can encompass a range of factors related to labour conditions, worker rights, community well-being, and cultural preservation (Santos, 2023). Here are some key aspects of the social impact in sourcing:

1. **Labour Conditions and Worker Rights:** The sourcing of materials may involve production in factories or workshops where workers are involved in tasks like weaving, dyeing, cutting, and sewing. Social impact relates to the conditions under which these workers operate, including factors such as fair wages, working hours, health and safety standards, and the presence of child or forced labour. Ethical sourcing practices prioritize the well-being and rights of workers, ensuring safe and respectful working conditions (Meehan & Bryde, 2011).

2. **Fair Wages and Livelihoods:** According to Rogerson (2018), the fashion industry's sourcing practices can have a direct impact on the livelihoods of workers, especially in developing countries where garment production is prevalent. In the opinion of Clube et al., (2022) fair wages are essential for supporting the economic stability of workers and their families, enabling them to meet basic needs and improve their quality of life.
3. **Cultural Preservation:** In certain regions, according to Grobar (2019), fabric and notion sourcing may involve traditional crafts and artisanal practices that have cultural significance. Social impact includes preserving these traditional skills and cultural heritage by supporting artisans and local communities engaged in these crafts.
4. **Gender Equality and Empowerment:** Women make up a significant portion of the fashion industry's workforce, particularly in garment production. Social impact in sourcing involves promoting gender equality by ensuring equal pay and opportunities for women, empowering them economically and socially (Lawal et al., 2016).
5. **Community Development:** Sourcing practices can either positively or negatively affect local communities surrounding production facilities. Fashion design brands and manufacturers can contribute to community development by providing employment opportunities according to Gunawan et al., (2020) by supporting education and healthcare initiatives, and investing in local infrastructure.
6. **Supply Chain Transparency:** Social impact also encompasses the transparency and accountability of supply chains. Fashion design brands that promote supply chain transparency allow consumers to make informed choices, ensuring that products they purchase are sourced ethically and responsibly (Brun et al., 2020).

Addressing the social impact in sourcing is essential for promoting responsible and sustainable practices within the fashion industry Akbar et al., (2021). Brands can adopt various strategies to improve social impact, such as:

- a. **Fair Labour Practices:** Ethical fabric and notion sourcing prioritize partnerships with suppliers and manufacturers that uphold fair labour practices. This includes providing safe working conditions, fair wages, and ensuring that employees' rights are protected throughout the supply chain. Sourcing from suppliers that adhere to recognized labour standards helps improve the well-being of workers in the fashion industry (Rogerson, 2018).
- b. **Transparent Supply Chain:** in the opinion of Brun et al., (2020). Brands that prioritize transparency in their sourcing practices allow consumers to make informed decisions about the garments they purchase. Traceable supply chains enable consumers to understand the environmental and social impact of the fabrics and notions used in their clothes, fostering a more responsible and accountable fashion industry.
- c. **Support for Artisan Communities:** Sourcing fabrics and notions from artisan communities according to Gunawan et al., (2020) can empower local artisans, preserving traditional craftsmanship and cultural heritage. Brands that collaborate with artisan groups provide economic opportunities and contribute to sustainable development in marginalized regions.
- d. **Certification and Standards:** Environmental and social considerations in fabric and notion sourcing can be reinforced through certifications and adherence to recognized standards. Plakantonaki et al., (2023) mentions certifications like Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), Oeko-Tex, and Fair Trade ensure compliance with rigorous environmental and social criteria, providing consumers with reassurance about the products' ethical origins.

- e. **Consumer Awareness:** Consumer awareness plays a crucial role in driving change in fabric and notion sourcing practices. As consumers become more conscious of environmental and social issues, they demand transparency and sustainability from fashion brands (Harris et al., 2016). Ethical sourcing practices not only align with consumer values but according to Papadopoulou et al., (2022) also enhance brand loyalty and reputation to a more sustainable future, where fashion can thrive without compromising the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants. Ultimately, the collective efforts of designers, manufacturers, and consumers are essential in shaping a fashion landscape that values both aesthetics and ethical responsibility.

### **2.15 Enhancing Garment Quality through Sustainability**

In recent years, sustainability has emerged as a transformative force within the fashion industry, prompting a fundamental shift in the way garments are designed, produced, and consumed. Ta et al., (2022) has added that beyond its environmental and ethical implications, sustainability has proven to be a catalyst for enhancing garment quality and elevating the overall value proposition of fashion products. Again, in the view of Danielsen (2023) sustainability and garment quality are intricately linked, and how a commitment to sustainable practices can lead to garments that not only endure as timeless pieces but also resonate with conscientious consumers. One of the cornerstones of sustainable garment production is the careful selection of materials. Opting for eco-friendly and ethically sourced fabrics, such as organic cotton, hemp, Tencel, and recycled polyester, ensures that the garments are free from harmful chemicals and minimize the industry's impact on natural resources. These materials often exhibit superior quality, offering enhanced comfort, durability, and breathability, factors that directly contribute to the overall garment experience (Arana et al., 2020). The case of Patagonia, a renowned outdoor apparel brand, has been at the forefront of sustainable and high-quality garment production for decades. The company's commitment to environmental

responsibility is reflected in its meticulous fabric sourcing and supply chain practices. Patagonia extensively uses recycled polyester, organic cotton, and other sustainable materials to create durable, performance-oriented garments (Arana et al., 2020). Another master piece of an example is Eileen Fisher, a sustainable women's clothing brand that exemplifies circular design guidelines to enhance garment quality and environmental responsibility. The brand embraces eco-friendly fabrics like organic cotton, Tencel, and hemp, focusing on regenerative agriculture and responsible sourcing (Baldissin, 2020).

According to Joy et al., (2012) Sustainability places a renewed focus on craftsmanship, emphasizing the artistry and skill involved in garment production. By encouraging slower, more thoughtful production processes, sustainable practices nurture a culture of meticulous attention to detail and precision. Garments crafted with enduring craftsmanship are more likely to exhibit better construction, stronger seams, and higher resilience, ultimately resulting in higher-quality products that withstand the test of time (Marcello- Falcone et al., 2022). The case of People Tree amplifies adoption of innovative constructional techniques to anchor people-and-profit sustainability approach. People Tree, according to Rathore (2019) which is a fair trade and sustainable fashion pioneer, showcases the potential for quality garment production while supporting artisan communities globally. The brand collaborates with artisans in developing countries, preserving traditional craftsmanship and promoting cultural heritage.

The organization prioritizes fair wages, safe working conditions, and sustainable materials, ensuring that their garments are ethically sourced and made to last. The brand's emphasis on artisanal practices results in unique and timeless pieces, promoting a deeper connection between consumers and the garments they wear. Again, at the heart of sustainability lies the principle of creating products that last. In the opinion of Fletcher (2013), embracing sustainable design and production guidelines translates to garments that are built to endure frequent wear and washing without losing their shape or appeal. Thompson (2019) has added

that, Garments that boast longevity align with the concept of quality over quantity, encouraging consumers to invest in timeless pieces that transcend fleeting trends and reduce the fashion industry's contribution to waste. This can be achieved largely by fostering innovation, prompting designers and manufacturers to explore alternative production techniques and material technologies. A classic case of industry practice is shown through the Patagonia "Worn Wear" program that promotes garment longevity by encouraging customers to repair, reuse, and recycle their products. The brand offers repairs for damaged garments, ensuring that clothing remains functional and wearable for years (Freudenreich & Schaltegger, 2020).

The concept of the circular economy, where resources are continually reused and recycled, leads to the development of novel materials that enhance garment quality. A study by Ferrari and Schulte (2023) reviewed that, fabrics made from recycled fibres or biodegradable materials exemplify the strides made toward a more sustainable and high-quality future. Brands that embrace sustainability often experience a positive impact on their reputation and consumer loyalty. Again, according to LoMonaco-Benzing and Ha-Brookshire (2016), conscious consumers seek out products that align with their values, and garments made with sustainable practices carry a compelling narrative that resonates with these individuals. As a result, brands that prioritize sustainability often cultivate a dedicated customer base, bolstering their success and influence within the fashion industry (Jung & La, 2020). In respect of production, sustainable garment design often emphasizes versatility and timelessness. By creating garments that can be styled and worn in multiple ways, and that remain relevant across seasons and trends, sustainable fashion contributes to wardrobe longevity and a reduced need for constant replacements. This approach enhances the overall quality of garments, making them reliable and adaptable staples in consumers' wardrobes (Marcello- Falcone et al., 2022). Pal (2017) has mentioned that, Nudie Jeans applies this orientation by embracing a repair and recycle program, offering free repairs for their jeans throughout their entire lifetime. Customers can return worn-

out jeans to be recycled into new products, showcasing the brand's dedication to circularity and garment longevity. Another best practice scenario is the Eileen Fisher's "Renew" and "Take Back" initiatives which according to Weber (2019) enable customers to return used garments, which are then up cycled or remade into new designs. By encouraging circularity and reducing waste, Eileen Fisher sets an example for the industry, creating garments with extended lifespans while minimizing their environmental footprint (Weber, 2019).

As sustainability gains traction within the fashion industry, an increasing number of brands and manufacturers worldwide are embracing eco-friendly practices to enhance garment quality and minimize their environmental and social impact. However, the industrial practices some of which has cited earlier go to confirm that sustainability and garment quality are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing. Through conscious fabric sourcing, circular design guidelines, ethical production practices, and a commitment to social responsibility, these brands have showcased the potential for a more sustainable and responsible fashion industry. As consumers increasingly demand transparency and ethical choices, these case studies demonstrate that sustainable practices can lead to garments that not only satisfy aesthetic and functional needs but also align with environmental and social values. By learning from these examples, the fashion industry can pave the way for a more sustainable future, where garment quality and responsible practices thrive in harmony. Therefore, facilitating the adoption of such practices by the Ghanaian fashion designer is a step in the right direction.

## **2.16 Strategies for Enhancing Fabric and Notion Sourcing in Ghana's Fashion Industry**

The fashion industry in Ghana is a vibrant and dynamic sector that celebrates the country's rich cultural heritage and diverse design aesthetics (Eppinger, 2022). Fabric and notion sourcing play a pivotal role in shaping the quality and uniqueness of garments produced in Ghana. Enhancing fabric and notion sourcing in Ghana's fashion industry is also essential for its growth, competitiveness, and contribution to sustainable development however, to

sustainably develop the industry and compete on the global stage, there is a need to explore strategies for enhancing fabric and notion sourcing practices (Eppinger, 2022). Therefore, what are the key strategies that can elevate the sourcing process in Ghana's fashion industry. Though, literature on Ghana specific relative to fabric and notion sourcing are scanty, the few are best practices elsewhere proposes the following strategic measures which when adopted can improve fabric and notion sourcing (Su, 2013).

a) Embracing Local Textile Traditions:

Ghana boasts a wealth of traditional textile techniques, such as kente, adinkra, and batik, which hold cultural significance and artistic value. Embracing and integrating these local textile traditions into garment production can not only showcase Ghana's cultural heritage, authenticity, and uniqueness but also promote sustainable sourcing practices (Agyeman, 2020). By collaborating with local artisans and weavers, fashion designers can ensure the preservation of traditional techniques, fostering a sense of community and ethical sourcing.

b) Sustainable Material Sourcing:

Sustainable sourcing practices are increasingly crucial in today's fashion industry. Research by Marcello-Falcone et al., (2022) highlights the potential for the adoption of eco-friendly materials, such as organic cotton and plant-based fibres, in Ghana's fashion industry. These materials have a lower environmental impact and offer an opportunity to market garments as sustainable and socially responsible, appealing to conscious consumers both locally and internationally (Osei-Tutu et al., 2019). More so, Vesal et al., (2021) advises that investing in sustainable materials can help differentiate brands in the market and attract conscious consumers.

c) Promoting Fair Trade and Ethical Sourcing:

Ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions for textile workers is essential for the sustainable growth of the industry. A study by Addo et al., (2020) emphasizes the importance

of promoting fair trade practices in the sourcing of fabrics and notions in Ghana's fashion industry. Collaborating with Fair Trade organizations and adhering to recognized social compliance standards can enhance the social impact of sourcing practices and contribute to the well-being of workers.

d) Strengthening Supply Chain Transparency:

Supply chain transparency is crucial for building trust with consumers and stakeholders. A study by Kaner (2021) discusses the significance of transparency in the textile and fashion supply chain in Ghana. By providing transparent information about sourcing practices, including the origin of materials and production processes, fashion brands can demonstrate their commitment to ethical sourcing and accountability.

e) Circular Design and Waste Reduction:

Implementing circular design guidelines can lead to more sustainable fabric and notion sourcing practices. A study by Mifetu (2021) explores the potential of recycling textile waste in Ghana's fashion industry. Brands can adopt strategies like up cycling, offering repair services, or repurposing textile scraps to reduce waste and extend the lifespan of garments, enhancing both the environmental and economic sustainability of sourcing.

f) Leveraging Technology for Sourcing:

Advancements in technology, such as online sourcing platforms and digital fabric libraries, can provide Ghanaian designers with greater access to a broader range of fabrics and notions from both local and global suppliers, facilitating cost-effective and efficient sourcing (Vesal et al., 2021).

g) Supporting Local Artisans and Communities:

Collaborating with local artisans and textile producers can create a mutually beneficial partnership that supports traditional craftsmanship while providing designers with unique and handcrafted fabrics and notions. Initiatives like "Fashion Connect Africa" have been

instrumental in facilitating collaborations between designers and local artisans (Fashion Connect Africa, 2021). By supporting local artisans, designers can access high-quality and culturally relevant materials, while artisans gain access to a broader market for their products.

It is envisioned that by implementing these strategies, fashion brands in Ghana can elevate the quality and ethical standards of their garments, appealing to a growing base of conscious consumers and fostering a positive impact on the environment and local communities. However, for these benefits to be realized, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and fashion designers must work together to implement these strategies and drive the transformation of Ghana's fashion industry towards a more sustainable and responsible future. Again, beyond the value chain players collaborative approach, it is important that the industry's strengths are exploited to overcome the weaknesses, so as to exploit the opportunities that the strategies bring. The weaknesses present itself in the following;

a) Limited Access to Diverse Fabrics:

Ghanaian fashion designers often face challenges in accessing a wide variety of fabrics, as the local market may be limited in its offerings. According to Langevang (2017) fashion designers in Ghana often rely on imported fabrics, which can be costly and hinder the creation of more authentic, culturally relevant designs.

b) Cost and Affordability:

The cost of sourcing high-quality fabrics and notions can be prohibitive for many Ghanaian designers, especially for those who are just starting in the industry. As revealed in a study by Niinimäki et al., (2020), the high costs of materials can impact the final pricing of garments, potentially limiting the target market.

c) Sustainability and Ethical Sourcing:

Sourcing sustainable and ethically produced materials can be challenging due to limited availability and transparency in the supply chain. Research by Darku and Akpan (2020)

highlights the importance of ethical sourcing practices but notes that these options may be scarce or relatively expensive for Ghanaian designers.

d) Quality Control:

Ensuring consistent quality in sourced fabrics and notions is critical for delivering high-quality garments. However, a study by Ergasheva (2021) points out that some designers face challenges in maintaining quality control, particularly when dealing with suppliers who may not prioritize quality standards.

Furthermore, globalization presents threat of fierce competition, infrastructural limitations and so on. Existing policies, programs and or initiatives should spur industry players on to leverage on their strengths to overcome the threats. The initiatives and policies that have been implemented to bolster local fabric and notion production in Ghana includes;

1. National Textile Policy and Strategies:

The Ghanaian government has recognized the importance of the textile industry and has implemented various policies to support local fabric production. The "National Textile Policy" aims to promote the development of the industry through capacity building, research and development, and market access (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2017). Additionally, strategies such as the "One District, One Factory" initiative have been introduced to encourage the establishment of textile factories in various districts, contributing to job creation and local economic growth (Ghana Business News, 2017).

2. Promotion of Traditional Textiles:

Efforts have been made to promote and preserve traditional textiles, such as kente and adinkra, through initiatives like the "Wear Ghana" campaign. This campaign, led by the Ghana Tourism Authority, seeks to encourage Ghanaians to wear locally produced fabrics and garments as a means of supporting local artisans and the textile industry (The East African, 2018). Additionally, fashion events and exhibitions that showcase traditional textiles have been

organized to raise awareness and foster appreciation for Ghanaian cultural heritage (Azuah et al., 2021).

### 3. Fair Trade Practices and Ethical Sourcing:

Several NGOs and Fair-Trade organizations have been working to promote ethical sourcing practices in Ghana's textile industry. Initiatives like "Fair Trade Africa" and "Global Mamas" connect local artisans with international markets, ensuring fair wages and ethical working conditions for textile producers (Acquah et al., 2021). These initiatives not only empower local artisans but also enhance the quality and value of locally produced fabrics and notions.

### 4. Capacity Building and Skill Development:

Organizations like the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) have been involved in providing training and skill development programs for local artisans and textile producers (Verma & Mishra 2018). Capacity building initiatives aim to improve the technical expertise of artisans and enhance the overall quality of locally produced fabrics and notions.

### 5. Access to Finance and Market Linkages:

Initiatives that provide access to finance and market linkages play a crucial role in supporting local fabric and notion production. Programs like the "Exim Bank Ghana Export Development and Agricultural Investment Fund" provide financial support to textile producers and facilitate market access for their products (Exim Bank Ghana, 2021). By accessing funding and international markets, local producers can expand their reach and competitiveness.

As industry players exploit these opportunities, it is expected that production of fabrics and notions will increase to support localized sourcing for the advantages that it possesses.

## **2.16 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This section presents an analysis of a theory and its adaptability to creating a framework for the study. The renowned Juran's Quality Trilogy (1986) is adopted to provide the needed guidance and or facilitate answering of the research questions.

Juran's Quality Trilogy is a management concept developed by Joseph M. Juran, a prominent quality management expert. Juran has propounded that, quality expresses itself in product-good and or service features that meet customer demands, as well as the absence of defects. Freedom from defects is very critical that even where there is some room for defects, an allowable percentage, level, or standard is prescribed. Most writing on the subject of quality describes it in terms of transcendent, product manufacturing, user-friendly, and value-based methods. (Hardjono & van Kemenade, 2021; Sebastianelli & Tamimi, 2002; Garvin, 1984) Quality is a universal issue that meets client criteria flawlessly (Soundararajan & Janardhan, 2019; Judi et al., 2011) Slack and Brandon- Jones (2018) defined quality as consistence conformance to customers' expectations. It offers superior features and close tolerance of product.

Quality is also explained in literature based on different dimensions such as performance, which refers to the fundamental aspects of a product's operation; features, also being the additional qualities to the performance dimensions; reliability, which is the likelihood that a product will fail-free in a certain amount of time; conformance, which also means the degree to which a product's standard actually meets its specified standard; durability, the long life span of a product before it gets a replacement; serviceability, which is how easy it is to repair a product; aesthetic, centers on consumers perception about a product; and perceived quality which also means consumers' perceptions of a product, including its reputation, appearance, and brand name (Mukherjee, 2018; Forker,1997; Garvin, 1984).

The Jurans' trilogy however consists of three key components that are applicable to any industry, including garment production. It provides a framework for managing and improving quality within an organization. This is put into three main categories that are quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement.

Quality Planning according to Syreyschikova et al., (2021), involves determining customer needs and developing processes to meet those needs. In garment production, quality planning encompasses understanding the specific requirements and preferences of customers regarding garment design, fit, durability, and aesthetics (Niinimäki, 2017). This information is crucial for creating accurate product specifications and designing production processes that can consistently meet these requirements. In the opinion of Djordjevic et al., (2020), quality planning also involves setting quality goals, establishing metrics for measurement, and defining the necessary quality control procedures.

What this means in garment production is that by implementing effective quality planning, garment manufacturers can ensure that their production processes are aligned with customer expectations. This reduces the risk of producing garments that fall short in terms of quality, fit, or appearance. In this regard according to Tahiduzzaman et al., (2018), it will help in minimizing rework, optimizing production efficiency, and enhancing customer satisfaction. Quality Control, on the other hand, is a step that involves monitoring the production process to identify and address quality issues in real-time (Ding et al., 2017). Quality control in garment production encompasses various activities, such as inspecting raw materials, conducting in-process inspections, and performing final product inspections. Garment manufacturers may also implement statistical process control techniques to analyze production data and identify trends or deviations from quality standards. Quality control helps in detecting and rectifying defects, ensuring compliance with specifications, and maintaining consistent quality throughout the production process (Hoque & Maalouf, 2022).

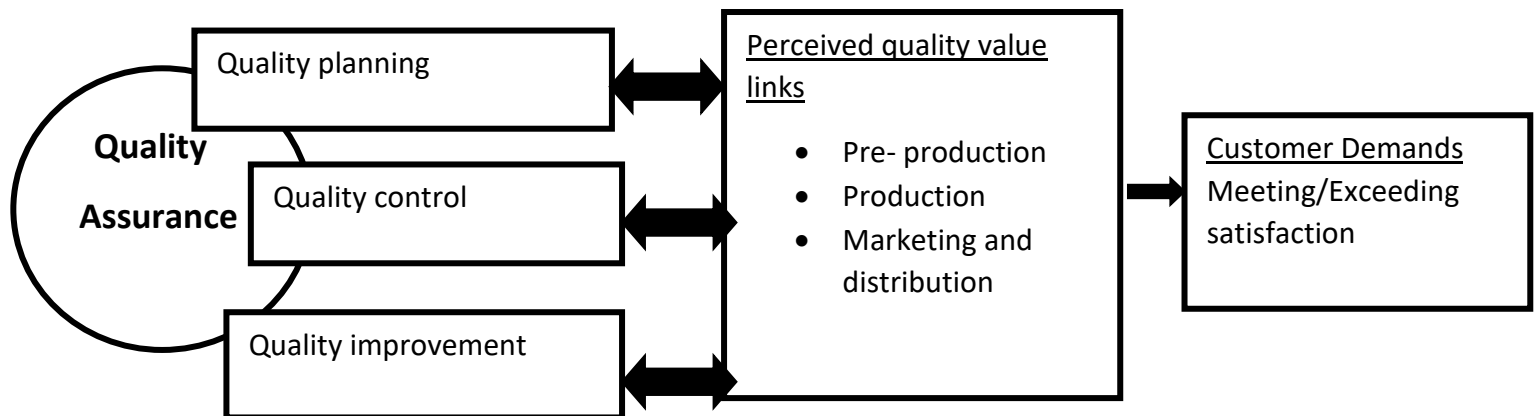
Implementing robust quality control mechanisms enables garment manufacturers to identify and resolve quality issues early in the production cycle. By catching defects early, they can minimize the production of defective garments, reduce waste, and avoid costly rework or returns. Consistent quality control also contributes to maintaining a positive brand reputation and enhancing customer loyalty. The component of quality improvement focuses on continuously improving processes to enhance quality and reduce variation. Foulla (2021) opines that quality improvement involves analyzing data, identifying root causes of quality problems, and implementing corrective actions to prevent recurrence. In garment production, this can involve analyzing customer feedback, conducting audits, and using techniques like Lean manufacturing or Six Sigma to streamline processes, reduce waste, and improve overall efficiency (Mulugeta, 2021).

This implies that, by emphasizing continuous quality improvement, garment manufacturers can achieve higher levels of quality, efficiency, and productivity. It allows them to identify areas of improvement, optimize workflows, and implement best practices to consistently deliver high-quality garments. Efforts to improve quality can result in lower costs, shorter lead times, and higher customer satisfaction, all of which help a business remain competitive in the market.

In reality, any attempt at delivering high-quality products to meet or exceed customer demands ends in attracting profit to the producer. When products delivered are of the required quality perceived by intended customers, fashion products and to a large extent quality garments can accrue higher profits comparable to no other industrial products (Amed & Bery, 2019). Though this attempt may lead to an increase in cost in the long run, irrespective of how efficient the producer may set the production system. The business world of fashion today is anchored on various propositions such as fast fashion, accelerated collections, low-price on-trend garments and so on has a bearing on quality (Busch, 2019). For instance, the fast fashion

linear economy production approach characterized by take-create-waste (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015) results in shorter lead time and overlooks wash and wearer quality control tests prior to market entry.

In managing quality during the garment manufacturing process, Juran's Quality Trilogy provides a rigorous approach. By putting the guidelines of quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement into practice, clothing manufacturers may improve customer satisfaction, reduce defects and waste, and raise overall operational effectiveness. This can lead to a better brand reputation, increased customer loyalty, and enhanced business performance. Therefore, this theoretical framework is expected to backstop the development of innovative guidelines as guidelines in sourcing fabrics and notions, as well as facilitate the construction and delivery of garments to meet and exceed the quality demands of customers.



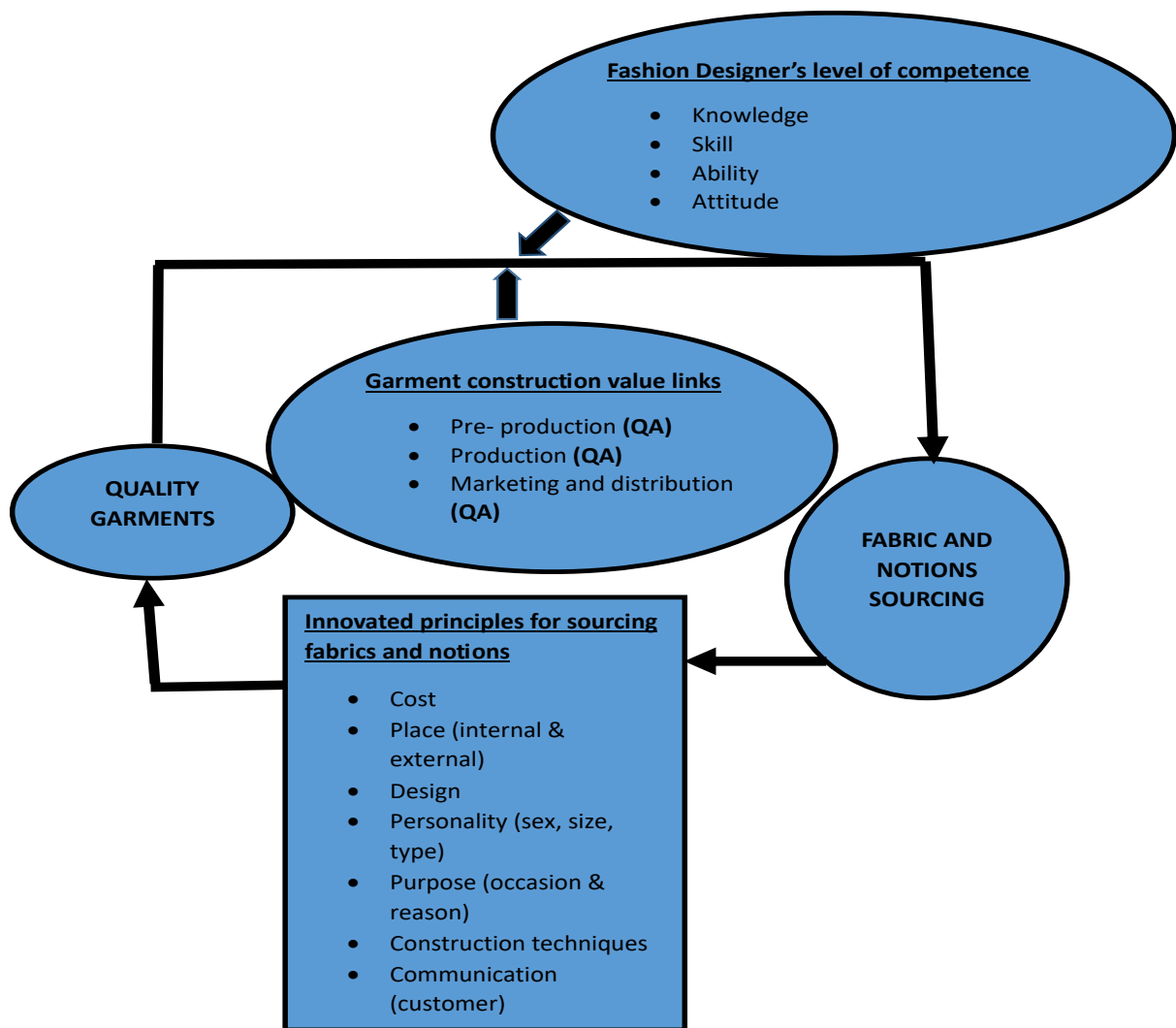
The Researcher’s developed theoretical framework of the study adopted from the Juran Trilogy, (1986)

## 2.14 Conceptual Framework for the Study

Sourcing fabrics and notions play a pivoted role in quality garment construction. Cabrera and Frederick (2021) in sharing their many years of experience as designers and fashion and textile educators contained in their book entitled “101 Things I learned in Fashion School”, were emphatic to remark that the design of individual garments proceeds in earnest

only after arriving at the fabric. Cardigan (2014), in another vein, asserts that modern designers with the aid of advanced technology should not only be able to conceptualize the end fashion product but the textiles to be used. Adding that to know fashion one must know textiles.

The fashion value chain like any other in today's competitive business environment thrives on customer satisfaction. The embodiment of quality must satisfy the end user by capturing his or her perspective on quality. Chowdhary and Poynor (2006) put forward that the function of quality in garments can be perceived from two fronts-intrinsic and extrinsic. Adding that while the intrinsic expresses inherent factors including the type of fashion and support fabric, sizing and constructional processes employed in the production of a quality garment. Extrinsic factors on the other hand, refer to quality and performance in respect of price, brand name, seller's reputation, visual display of garment at the point of sale and promotional strategies employed for customer communication. This study therefore, in concept looks at how an employed appreciable level of fabrics and notions sourcing techniques could impact the quality delivered through the garment construction value links along the broader quality assurance system. The phases of the quality assurance system include quality planning, quality control, and quality improvement. The focused objective(s) as well as the actionable activities needed in achieving them must be carried at each of the value link propositions along the series of activities that is centered on the relationships between the fashion designer, customer, and fabric suppliers, with the view to devising strategies and deploy same to increase profitability and well-being of the fashion designer



The Researcher's construct for conceptual framework of the study (2023)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section of the research looks at the procedure to be used in conducting the research to achieve results. To answer the research questions: What is the competency level of fashion designers in sourcing fabrics and notions for garment production; what guidelines can be formulated to stem the identified fabrics and notions sourcing problems; and to what extent do the new guidelines adopted translate into improving fabrics and notions sourcing and impact the quality of garments constructed? The philosophy behind the research and research design outlined. The philosophy in effect, leads to the specific research methodology: research methods and instruments needed to carry out the different phases of the research, data sources and tools applied, data management and analyses are detailed. Again, factors that contributed to the credibility and trustworthiness are discussed.

#### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

The philosophy underpinning research helps explain reality, supported by theories that explain things as they appear. With this, the reality (ontology) and the explanation of the reality (epistemology) regarding the study is captured. The reality and explanation of it lead to the method, instruments, and data collection (Cohen et al., 2007). Hence, how does the researcher facilitate the formulation of sourcing guidelines for fabrics and notions and their deployment by fashion designers for quality garment construction? As a result, this study sought to assess the competency levels of fashion designers in sourcing fabrics and notions, with the view to facilitate the formulation of sourcing guidelines for adoption and test their impact on constructed garments. Ontologically, is there or not existence of social reality independent of human conception and interpretation, in addition to shared social reality, or only multiple specific contexts? (Ormston et al., 2013). As an ardent in multiple realities to the conception

of people's realities and interpretations shaped by their unique or specific environment. The researcher holds the belief that people are capable of giving different interpretations of the same or similar events. Fashion designers may possess trade secrets for sourcing. In the view of Ormston et al., (2013) these realities can be unpacked only when they are engaged through a study. Therefore, in an attempt to investigate the sourcing constructs of the Ghanaian fashion designer to improve sourcing practices. The interpretive approach was used in this study to inductively assess the level of competency of the Ghanaian fashion designer in sourcing fabrics and notions with the view to facilitating the formulation of guidelines for adoption and evaluating its impact on the quality of constructed garments. Furthermore, the interpretive trajectory was adopted because the study sought to go beyond uncovering a phenomenon to finding means to build capacity to manage the phenomenon

### **3.3 Research Approach**

Qualitative research approach which involves a wide range of field investigation was employed in this study to address the research questions. Ronald et al., (2007) described qualitative research basically as one that focuses on understanding people's experiences. Again, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Ospina (2004) claims that qualitative research studies things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. The adoption of qualitative research made it possible for the researcher to make close observation and as well describe the methodologies fashion designers used in sourcing fabrics and notions, intervened, and evaluated the outcome through expository workshop.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The research design employed in this study was descriptive case study. The aim of descriptive case study according to Sharma (2017) is basically sorting for information through

observation without influencing it. Descriptive case study is to show the correct and exact behaviour of people, events, or situations (Robson, 2012). In this study, the descriptive case study design was adopted because interviews, observation and focus group discussion were used to collect information to describe the observed methodologies used by fashion designers when sourcing fabrics and notions and suggested methods of constructing quality garments through scouring. Additionally, it was adopted to describe general fabrics and notions sourcing, fabrics and notions types and appropriate methods of selection and the new suggested methods of sourcing with regards to quality garment.

Through the descriptive case study method, the researcher was able to use visual aids such as pictures and charts to help bolster the reader in understanding the data distribution.

### **3.5 Population of the Study**

Burns and Grove (2003) describe population as all the elements that satisfy certain measures for inclusion in a work. It also refers to the aggregate or the totality of objects or individuals regarding inferences that are to be made in a sampling study (Sidhu, 2003). The population for the study was all fashion designers in Ghana and the target population for the study was selected fashion designers in the Sunyani Municipal and Kumasi Metropolis who are members of GNTDA. The GNTDA has a membership of 3200 across the Ghana (GNTDA, 2020). The Dekyemso Zone and Odumase Zone A branches of the GNTDA have 30 and 50 membership respectively. The justification for selecting them as representative of the others emanate from the fact that their aims and objectives reflects similarities of the other zone groupings within the country and possess the same problem characteristics empirically identified as the other zones. Aside proximity which is a necessity since the researcher must be meeting the respondents many times during the study. It is, however, pertinent to state that, not

all fashion designers in the Kumasi Metropolis and Sunyani Municipal are registered members of the association.

### **3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique**

Sampling technique is when a portion of the target population is chosen to represent the rest. A sample enables the researcher to study a relatively smaller number of units in place of the target (Leedy & Ormrod 2010).

In this study, the non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique was used to purposefully select the “*Madams*” and “*Masters*” members as the representatives of the two (2) Zones for the study. According to Maxwell (2012) purposive sampling is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected to enable the researcher extract specific information that will be important to the study. The fifteen (15) fashion designers each were selected because they were members of the respective zones in good standing and were willing to part of the study. The sampled size for this study was thirty (30) fashion designers. As trainers, it is expected that they impart the acquired knowledge to their apprentices who will in turn share knowledge with their apprentices soon to keep posterity (Training of Trainers).

Braum, Clarke and Weate (2016) asserted that for qualitative research at least twelve (12) sample size will be appropriate for data analysis. In support of this assertion by Braum, Clarke and Weate, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) affirmed that, data for non-probability sample sizes are thoroughly effective within the first twelve participants being interviewed. The heterogeneity in the sample population (Kumasi and Sunyani) according to Maxwell (2012) ensures that conclusions are adequately represented to cover the entire range of variation rather than only the typical members or some subset of this range since a multi-case approach is adapted, the purposive sampling strategy enabled comparison that highlights the reasons for choice of different and the association.

### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

The process used to gather information in research is referred to as instrumentation (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh 2013). Observation, semi-structured interview and focus group discussions was employed as the main instruments for data collection.

#### **3.7.1 Observation**

Participant observation deals with the behaviour of a person or a group who plays an active role in the situation or context in which the behaviour is recorded and observed. Non-participant observation allows the researcher to be physically present, but only as a spectator who does not directly take part in the activities of the people who are being studied (Cooper et. al. 2004). The researcher employed both participatory and non-participatory observation in soliciting for information. Both participatory and non-participation observation was used to observe twenty (20) of the sampled fashion designers, made of ten (10) each from the respective Zones during sourcing and garment construction period. Observing how fashion designers set out to purchase fabrics and notions through sourcing and gradually link with constructing garments enabled the researcher to facilitate the formulation of sourcing guidelines as set out in objective two (2).

#### **3.7.2 Interview**

Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush (2006) have established that, an interview is a purposeful conversation in which one person asks prepared questions (interviewer) and other answers them (interviewee or respondent). Interviews can take various forms: structured, semi-structured and unstructured.

The researcher adopted the semi-structured interview technique because it provides quick and rich evidence with respondents providing detailed insights of facts (Husband, 2020). The interview guide consisted of question items which probed into the demographic information of the respondents and also used to assess the competency of the fashion designers

on fabrics and notions sourcing. All thirty (30) fashion designers made of fifteen (15) each from the respective zones were interviewed.

### **3.7.3 Focus Group Discussion**

A focus group discussion is a group of people who have been brought together to discuss a specific topic in depth. Holloway and Wheeler (2002) define focus group discussion as an interaction between one or more researchers and more than one participant for the purpose of collecting data. Also, in focus group discussion, researchers interview participants with common characteristics or experience for the purpose of eliciting ideas, thoughts and perception about specific topics or certain issues linked to an area of interest. As part of the strengths of focus group discussion, as noted by Holloway et al, it provides an opportunity for all participants, including the researcher asking questions that stimulate participants' thoughts, reminds them of their own feelings about the research topic and produce more information than individual interviews in a relatively short period of time. It also helps respondents build on the answers of others and help the researcher to clarify conflicts between participants and ask about their different views. In this study, the researcher held two (2) focus group discussion sessions with each of the fifteen (15) sampled from the respective zones present. These sessions provided insightful information to help assess the fashion designers' competencies in sourcing fabrics and notions, as set out in objective one (1).

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

A formal permission was sorted from the Regional Heads of GNTDA in both Ashanti and Bono region. Subsequently, each of the Regional Heads facilitated contact of the respective Zonal Heads. The researcher clearly shared with them the aim of the research and what the study was about.

The researcher deployed the above-mentioned data collection instruments to collect data for each objective separately. This took seven weeks because the fashion designers only met once in two weeks that is only on Mondays for a period of 3 hours. The objectives of the study were made to correspond with the case study descriptive approach of the research.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are very important criteria in evaluating research. Validity is the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific reference the researcher makes based on the data collected. Validity determines whether the research instrument truly measures what it was intended to measure (Mohajan, 2017). It can be achieved if the collected data and methods are accurate and reflects the truth. The instruments were face validated by the Supervisor and colleagues at the Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education Akenten Appiah – Menka University of skills training and Entrepreneurial Development (AAMUSTED). The validates critically made their inputs on the content and construct of the instruments with respect to structure, spelling, appropriateness, meanings among others and these were reflected in the final version of the instruments. To increase the construct validity of this study, the researcher has used triangulation to obtain evidence from multiple sources. That is from observation, interview and focus group discussion.

Reliability is the extent to which results would be stable or consistent if the same techniques were used repeatedly (Bolarinwa, 2015). The role of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study. Pre-test was done on 10 Fashion designers that is, 5 each at Asafo Kumasi and Odumase zone B in Kumasi and Sunyani respectively for the interview guide to determine the appropriateness and quality of information that would be gathered. The result showed similar competencies of fashion designers.

### **3.10 Ethical Issues**

To address ethical issues, the researcher took into consideration ways to ensure or protect the privacy as well as the security of the respondents. This was necessary to prevent future issues (Akaranga & Makau, 2016). Some of the issues that were considered included consent, confidentiality, and data protection. This was done to ensure trust between the researcher and the respondents.

### **3.12 Data Analysis**

Data analysis means to organize, provide structure, and elicit meaning. In a qualitative method of research, data analysis is an active and interactive process (Polit et al., 2001). The choice of data collection methods as stated above, allows for an inductive approach to data analysis where the researcher interprets the emerging themes to draw conclusions and make recommendations (Creswell, 2013). The logic of the design needs to fit the methodologies outlines and ensure consistency and concurrent management of the analysis process to align with the studies principle. The quality trilogy theory underlining the study served as a guide to ensure coordination and linkages in the data gathered to reflect the essence of the study. Data collected in the form of field notes and recordings were transcribed and assembled in a narrative form through listening and writing out the test. Quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel to produce charts and tables for presentation and discussions. Coding in qualitative study according to Maxwell (2012) is fracturing data and rearranging it into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and between categories. The approaches were: code categorization, themes identification and developing the narration. Pictures that describe the situational analysis and evaluation were provided. These were analysed and interpreted to provide guidelines for the guidelines of fabric and notions sourcing to constructing quality garments.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the analysis of data obtained from the research and presents the results in accordance with that analysis. It begins by analysing the raw information obtained from fashion designer in both Kumasi and Sunyani. The data were analysed using statistical methods and techniques appropriate to the study's objectives, and in accordance with the framework established by the research design.

In order to put the responses in context and to better comprehend the sample, the demographics of the respondents are first described in this chapter. On the basis of the study's goals and questions, the results are then arranged and reviewed. Therefore, to give brief and understandable insights into the research issue, each component presents data analysis, interpretation, and discussion in great depth.

In addition to providing detailed responses to the study questions, this analysis of the data also offers important insights into the effects of fabric and notion sourcing for quality garments. These findings set the foundations for the subsequent chapter, which delves into discussions and implications of the results in the larger context of the study.

#### **4.2 Demographic Data of the Respondents**

The demographic data of the Fashion designers at Dekyemso and Odumase zone Kumasi and Sunyani respectively covers the following attributes: gender, age, educational level and number of years of professional practice.

Table 4.1: Demographic data of respondents  
(n=30)

Variable	Variable category	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	33
	Female	20	67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
Age range (in years)	20-25	3	10
	26-30	13	43
	31-35	9	30
	36-40	3	10
	41 and above	2	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>
Educational level	Primary	10	33
	J.H.S.	13	43
	H.N.D	3	10
	Degree	2	7
	None	2	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, (2023)

Women are known for their dominance along the fashion value chain (Majumdar, Shaw & Sinha, 2020), particularly at the production phase globally. As referenced in Table 1, out of the 30 respondents who participated in this research, a clear majority of 20 were females representing 67% whilst the remaining 10, representing 33% were males. The vast difference in the number of females to males gives a clear indication of the dominance of females in the garment construction phase of the value chain in Ghana (Barrientos, 2019). Further, it reaffirms the entrepreneurial and employability opportunities that exist at this phase of the value chain for women and the lack of gendered constraints for which reason women take full advantage (Majumdar et al., 2020). Hence, an attempt at assessing the fashion designer's competency in

sourcing fabrics and notions to facilitate the development of innovative sourcing guidelines and adoption of the same for quality is imperative for creating an enabling environment for female-led businesses to thrive.

Furthermore, the age bracket with the highest number of respondents is 26-30, followed by 31-35 representing 43% and 30% respectively. Again, whilst 3 each out of the 30 representing 10% falls within the age brackets of 20-25 and 36-40, only 2 out of the 30 aligned with the age bracket above 41. The result shows that most of the respondents are in their youthful stage in consonance with Ghana's youthful age definition. The youth is seen as characterized by exuberance, energy and vigour, and the ability to learn faster, which are all characteristics that can facilitate innovation adoption as this study is seeking to deliver.

More so, the findings on the highest level of education indicated that 13 respondents representing 43% had formal basic education up to the J.H.S. level before entering the informal apprenticeship training system in the dressmaking and tailoring trade area. The same education and training arrangements in the dressmaking and tailoring trade area holds for the second majority of 10 out of 30 representing 33% who joined the apprenticeship training, upon dropping out of school at various level in primary school. Respondents who had completed tertiary education at the time of the study accounted for 10% and 7% relative to Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor's Degree (BSc) respectively. In addition, 7% of the respondents had no formal education.



Figure 4.1: Years of professional practice

*Source: Field survey, (2023)*

All the respondents have worked for varying numbers of years as fashion designers, as indicate in Figure 4.1 and are therefore deemed experienced for this study. The findings indicated that 25 out of 30 representing 87% of the respondents had over 10 years of professional practice experience. The rest of the respondents had professional working experience spanning between 0-5 years (3%) and 6-10 years (10%).

#### **4.3 1. Assess the competence of the fashion designers in sourcing fabric and notions for garments construction**

To assess the fashion designer’s level of competency (skill, ability, attitude and knowledge) in sourcing for fabrics and notions to produce quality garment. A Ten (10) question item interview guide on demographic factors such as age, level of education, years of working experience, fashion designer’s competence on fabrics and notions sourcing; their understanding of sourcing, various methodologies used in executing garment construction, guidelines used in sourcing, challenges and influential factors in fabric sourcing was responded to by all the 30 members sampled from the two zones. Focus group discussion was held with

some of the members to compliment the interview. The researcher also organized the members by randomly picking 10 out of the 30 members sampled from the group and practically assessed their competency in sourcing fabrics and notions for garments construction to augment the oral interview. The criteria for the selection were that each member should have the ability to handle sewing machine, identify types of fabrics and notions, should be a regular meeting member and should have attained or completed some kind of training in fashion designing. The 10 members were followed for a certain period of time to assess how they source fabrics in constructing garments.

The researcher prepared a comprehensive timetable indicating when each of them will be under study on how fabrics and notions are sourced for production in their various centres. The researcher followed the selected members to observe how they receive orders from their clients and how they execute it to satisfy them with regards to quality. The follow up includes how orders are received and interpreted, how the necessary fabric is sourced and how the garment is produced or constructed finally. The selected ones were given close monitoring such as finding out the kind of orders client request whether they come with their own fabrics and notions or request for their fashion designers to source for them. Occasions where they had to source for clients, the researcher followed them to places where they obtain them to have an idea on how they went about them and finally monitor the final production to have a fair idea of how it is done.

The modalities for assessment were that fashion designers should be able to:

- 1) Adhere to quality assurance protocols throughout the processes.
- 2) Analyse their clients order (type of style) as they received it.
- 3) Analyse the figure type of the client involved.
- 4) Find out the purpose or the end use of the garment to be made.
- 5) Discuss with the client about the type of fabric and notions relative to cost.

- 6) Discuss with client about the source of the fabric.
- 7) Fashion designer's ability to select the right fabric with regards to what has been agreed with the client.
- 8) The fashion designer's ability to finally construct garment with the sourced fabric and notions where all the right methods of garment construction are followed for quality.



Plate 4.1a: Fashion designers in Kumasi Sourcing for Fabrics and Notions

Source: Field survey, (2023)



Plate 4.1b: Fashion Designers in Sunyani Sourcing for Fabrics and Notions

Source: Field survey, (2023)



Plate 4.3a: Researcher interacting with fashion designers in Sunyani before the assessment

Source: Field survey, (2023)



Plate 4.3b: Researcher interacting with fashion designers in Kumasi before the assessment  
 Source: Field survey, (2023)

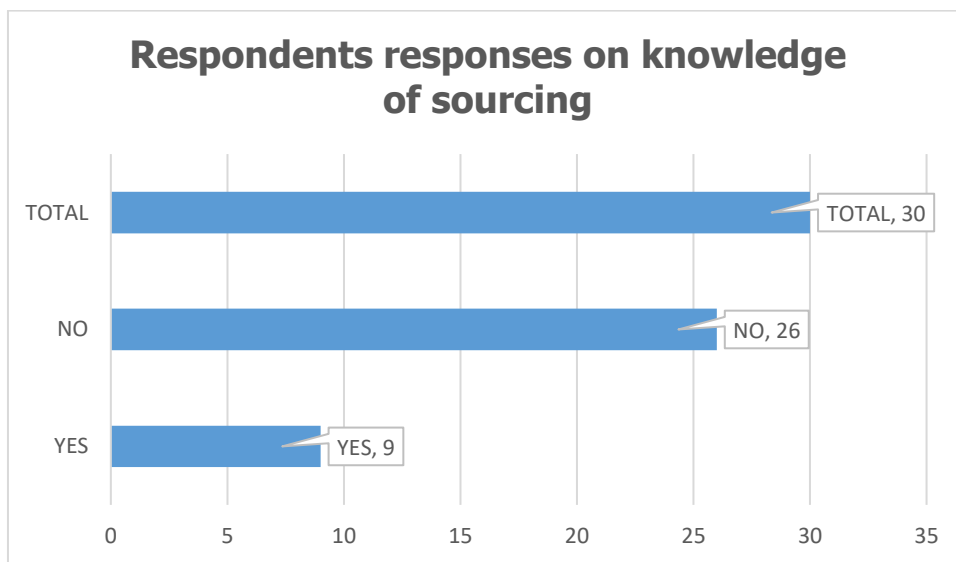


Figure 4.2: Fashion designers’ knowledge of fabric sourcing  
 Source: Field data (2023)

Fashion designers’ responses to the interview on fabric sourcing shows that majority, made up of 86% had little or low knowledge on sourcing for the right fabric (See Fig. 4.2). In a response to what designers think about the concept of fabric sourcing and how is done at their centers, a designer retorted “What is that? Do you really need to consider it? It is done just like

that”. This assertion was supported by most of the discussants during the focus group discussion. However, a small minority representing 14% responded in the affirmative to having good knowledge of fabrics and notions sourcing.

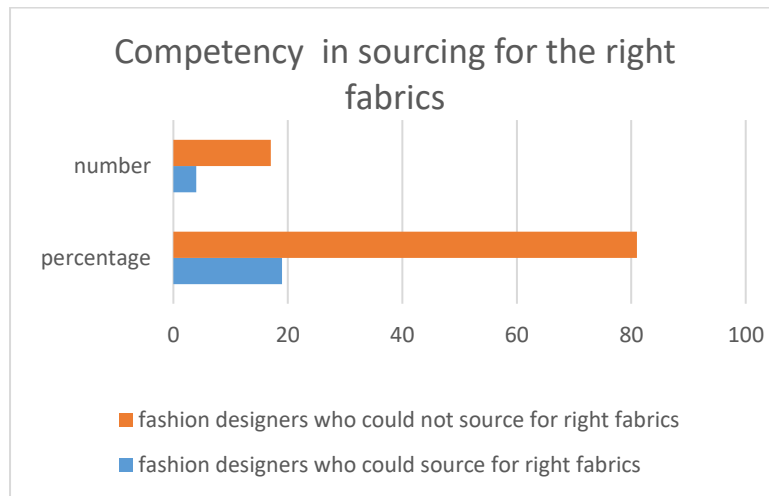


Figure 4.3: Level of competency in sourcing for the right fabric and notions

Source: Field data (2023)

In respect of having competency in sourcing for fabrics and notions under observation, 17 out of the 30 respondents representing 81% of the fashion designers were found to be lacking competency in applying fabric and notions sourcing guidelines to construct quality garment. It was observed that, fashion designers do not analyze the type of garment to be produced as against the fabric and notion sourced, for example. However, a small minority representing 14% were observed and found to have competency in sourcing fabrics and notions (see Figure 4.3).



Plate 4.4a: Sample of completed garments made by fashion designers during the initial assessment in Kumasi

Source: Field work (2023)



Plate 4.4b: Sample of completed garments made by fashion designers during the initial assessment in Sunyani

Source: Field work (2023)

#### **4.4 Formulate innovative fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines**

Formulate innovative fabric sourcing guidelines to address the problem of sourcing among the selected fashion designers. The aim of this objective was to facilitate the formulation of sourcing guidelines to guide the sourcing of fabrics and notions process. An expository workshop was held in both Dekyemso and Odumase to support the formulation exercise. The

researcher showed pictures and short videos recorded during the observational sessions. Again, charts and tables from the quantitative data was also presented to fashion designers. All fifteen (15) selected fashion designers from each zone were present at the expository workshop.



Plate 4.5a: Researcher interacting with respondents during the workshop in Sunyani

*Source: Field survey, (2023)*



Plate 4.5b: Researcher interacting with respondents during the workshop in Kumasi

*Source: Field survey, (2023)*

As a result of the inability of most of the fashion designers to competently apply guidelines to source for fabrics and notions to produce quality garment during the observation, following the evidence that was presented to them by the researcher. Each fashion designer spoke about what could have been done to improve the sourcing process deployed during the observation stage. In all, seven (7) guidelines were agreed upon by all respondents during their respective expository workshop. These seven (7) guidelines were merged from a total of fourteen (14) suggest guidelines with 8 and 6 proposals emanating respectively from the Dekyemso and Odumase workshops. Below are the suggested sourcing guidelines and their justification as agreed upon during the expository workshops.

Table 4.2: The 7 proposed innovative guidelines for sourcing fabrics and notions

<b>Suggested Innovative Guidelines</b>	<b>Justification</b>
Purpose of Garment	The intended use of the garment to be constructed
Source of Fabric and Notions	If the client brought it or the fashion designer is to purchase it.
Type of fabrics and notions	Discuss the right type of fabric that will be appropriate for the intended garment with the client.
Colour of fabrics or notions	Identify the various colours used within the design, composition of the fabric in relation to clients figure details (analysis), that is, body shape.
Cost	Assess the overall cost to cover cost of fabric and notions, garment constructional cost and any other related costs.
Constructional Techniques	All construction techniques needed to be used in relation to the choice of fabrics and notions sourced, body measurements, pattern production, laying out and cutting, assembling, pressing, finishing, and fitting should be considered to arrive at a desirable quality finished garment.
Quality assurance system	Strict adherence to quality assurance protocols throughout the process activities.

#### **4.5 Test the new sourcing guidelines formulated via expository workshop on the selected fashion designers to ascertain adoption and its impact on quality garment constructed**

To assess whether fashion designers have fully adopted the suggested fabric and notion sourcing guidelines or not and its impact on the quality of constructed garments, a period of one (1) month was used by the researcher to observe the fashion designers again. This observation was made on the twenty (20) fashion designers made up of ten (10) from each zone. The selected members were observed right from when they received clients order through to when the final garment when is produced. The researcher deployed the observational strategies employed during the competency assessment stage. This tactic was to enable the researcher ascertain whether there had been improvement in the competence of using the sourcing guidelines to construct quality garments. The sourcing guidelines were applied on the bases of either the fabrics and notions were sourced by the customer or by the fashion designers and labelled as category 1 and 2 respectively. This translates into five (5) garments each constructed at each zone for each category. In both categories 1 and 2, 10 '*garments*' were sewn and 2 samples were selected for analysis which are shown in sample A and B in each category.



Plate 4.6a: Ladies Wear made by Kumasi fashion designers (fashion designer sourced)

Source: Field survey, (2023)



Plate 4.6b: Men's Wear made by Kumasi fashion designers (customer sourced)

Source: Source: Field survey (2023)



Plate 4.6c: Ladies wear made by Sunyani fashion designers (fashion designer sourced)

Source: Field Survey (2023)

#### 4.7 Outcome of fabrics sourced by clients



Plate 4.7: Men's casual wear made by Sunyani Fashion designers (customer sourced)

Source: Field Survey (2023)

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This section discusses and highlights the key study findings and the conclusions drawn from them. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of fabrics and notions sourcing in the garment industry and ways of promoting their usage. Various data collection instruments were developed and deployed to assess the competency of fashion designers in sourcing fabrics and notions as contained in objective one. Sourcing guidelines were then formulated by the respondents to achieve the objective two. The guidelines formulated were applied to ascertain their collective impact on the quality of garment constructed. The applied guidelines were then documented to serve as a resource to guide future sourcing of fabrics and notions. Therefore, the ensuing detailed discussions are done along the thematic areas from the objectives.

#### **5.2 Accessing Fashion Designer's Competencies in Sourcing for Fabrics and Notions to Produce Quality Garments (Objective One)**

Simply put, sourcing describes the process of determining what to procure, identifying and evaluating the source from whom to procure, and engaging the identified source to actually procure in the most effective and efficient manner (Simfoni, 2023). Therefore, sourcing fabrics and notions to produce quality garments involves the selection of raw materials and components for garment production, which makes it a pivotal role in determining the industry's ecological footprint and social responsibility (Strähle & Müller, 2017). This process activity resonates with the objective one of this study, which sort to assess fashion designer's competencies in sourcing for fabrics and notions. In the view of Cabrera and Frederick (2021), Göçer et al., (2015), sourcing forms the bases of the pre-design stage and will have a better

telling on the quality of the end product if is successfully executed by the fashion designer. A significant majority of the respondents representing 86% (see Figure. 4.2) mentioned they had little knowledge of the concept, and has no guidelines to govern its professional business practice execution. Crentsil (2015) and Maluleka (2017) affirms that the areas of competency that can be delivered and possibly acquired in the traditional apprenticeship is mostly dependent on the *madam or master* designer. This is because competence acquisition in the informal training is led by the master- craft -person who is the teacher, facilitator, assessor, and mentor. Hence, the confirmation that they have no knowledge and do not effectively practice sourcing is worrying. Given that a huge majority of the respondents are master-craft persons and have acquired mastery of the trade area through the same learning arrangement, and are training many others. It will consequently be safe to infer that, they may not educate and train their current apprentices on same.

Furthermore, 20 out of the 30 respondents were selected and observed to augment the data collected during the interview, findings from observation were showed respondents lack competency in fabric and notions sourcing. For instance, mostly fabrics and notions were sourced without any due consideration to guidelines of sourcing. Styles sewn were only to the desired of clients, without any input by the fashion designer as to how well the fabric to be used will affect quality in relation to the specific style.

However, a small minority of the respondents representing 14% (see Figure 4.3) responded in affirmative to having knowledge of sourcing and under observation showed to have some level of competence in sourcing fabrics and notions. For instance, they were able to appropriate colour choice during sourcing in relative to intended use and type of garment, and constructional techniques. It became very clear that the need for capacity building in fabric and notion sourcing is imperative. Therefore, the need to build the capacity of the Ghanaian fashion

designer in devising appropriate strategies or guidelines and deploying same to improve quality of their products.

### **5.3 Formulation of innovated guidelines of sourcing through an expository workshop (Objective Two)**

An integrated approach to competency is conceptualized in terms of knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitude displayed in the context of a carefully chosen set of realistic professional tasks which are of an appropriate level of generality (Hager & Gonczi, 2015). The findings on assessing the competency of fashion designers in fabric and notion sourcing as discussed earlier, brought to the fore the need to formulate guidelines for fabric and notions sourcing to complement the existing perfected guidelines to ensure quality garment construction. Sarpong et al., (2011) and Amoakoh (2021) suggested that regular proficiency training for skills and competency upgrading as a strategy for improvement in the Ghanaian fashion business, to equip dressmakers to produce to meet international standards. Moreso, Crentsil (2015) and Kieser (2017) reported that a greater majority of fashion industrialist hold the view that workshops and or seminars can be used to build the capacity of trainees and master fashion designers in new process techniques and Practice Business Competencies (PBCs). Therefore, the researcher organized and facilitated expository workshops for both centers (Kumasi and Sunyani) to guide the formulation of the sourcing guidelines. In all fourteen (14) guidelines were proposed. These guidelines were merged into seven (7) major guidelines (see Table. 4.2) that were adopted for testing. The guidelines as agreed must be integrated always to enable a circular application.

#### **5.3.1 Purpose of Garment**

The intended use of the garment to be constructed must be taken into consideration in sourcing for fabrics and notions. Göçer et al., (2015) opined that cloth is one of the major

factors to be consider in sourcing for fabrics and notions at the pre-design stage. Adding that the envisioned application of the garment to be constructed must inform the choice of fabrics and notions and their colouration. Another aspect of the intended use is the occasion and climate for which it will be worn.

### **5.3.2 Identified Source**

The ideal source for sourcing fabrics and notions must be identified. The respondents proposed two (2) main sources. These sources include sourcing done by the customer and that of the fashion designer. Simfoni (2023) describes sourcing done from outside of the company by a third party as outsourcing type. Similarly, where sourcing is carried by an employee within the organization for an on the behalf of the organization as insourcing type. However, regardless whether the insourcing or outsourcing approach is used, implications on all other guidelines must be safeguarded. Under objective four (4) of this study, fashion designers constructed garments for assessment from each of these sourcing types. It was agreed that the fashion designer should hold a detailed discussion with the customer on the implication of fabrics and notions procured on all other guidelines. This will ensure that proper professional advice is given and both parties are satisfied from the onset.

### **5.3.3 The Right Type of Fabrics and Notions**

Sourcing for the right type of fabrics and notions have an influence on all the other guidelines of sourcing in this regard. Research by Wu and Barnes (2019) emphasizes that fabrics and notions with the right properties for a given application is essential for ensuring product performance. Furthermore, a study by Gonzalez and Goncalves (2020) underscores the importance of cost analysis in sourcing fabrics and notions to maintain competitive pricing. Increasingly, there is a growing emphasis on eco-friendly fabrics and notions in response to consumer demand for sustainable products (Mollenkop et al., 2021). This aspect becomes very

necessary when there is an insourcing practice. The choice of fabric type, texture, and colour directly influence consumer perceptions and preferences. Notions such as buttons, zippers, and trims play a significant role in the overall design of garments and accessories (Kim & Moon, 2018; Giannakis et al., 2020). Therefore, the fashion designer should make an intelligent choice taking into consideration the implication on all other guidelines and desired quality for customer satisfaction.

#### **5.3.4 Cost**

Sourcing decisions in garment construction are complex and multifaceted, with cost being a fundamental principle that significantly influences the entire production process. Cost efficiency is a central consideration in garment sourcing decisions. Carniel and Prado (2019), puts it that achieving cost efficiencies in material procurement, manufacturing processes, and transportation logistics is crucial for the competitiveness and profitability of fashion companies. Hence there must be effort to procure fabrics and notions at the lowest possible cost without compromising on quality (Moon et al., 2019). Efficient supply chain practices, including demand forecasting, inventory management, and lean production, contribute to reduced costs and improved sourcing efficiency in garment construction (Baumeister & Stadler, 2020)

#### **5.3.5 Constructional Techniques**

Fashion designers rely on various guidelines when sourcing fabrics and notions and techniques to bring their creative visions to life. Constructional techniques, which encompass the methods used to assemble and structure garments, play a pivotal role in defining the aesthetic, functionality, and overall quality of fashion pieces. Fashion designers often seek innovative constructional techniques to create unique and visually striking garments. According to Kim and Hong (2021), conventional construction methods can lead to distinct

aesthetics, increase production efficiency and reduce cost, setting designers apart in a highly competitive industry. Techniques such as draping, pleating, and origami-inspired folding provide opportunities for creativity and aesthetic differentiation. Ensuring proper fit and functionality is a core objective in fashion design. Ashdown (2020) emphasizes that constructional techniques influence how garments conform to the body, affecting wearability and comfort. Techniques like dart manipulation, seam placement, and pattern engineering are essential for achieving optimal fit.

### **5.3.6 Choice of Colour**

Colour is a fundamental element in fashion design, significantly influencing consumer preferences, brand identity, and the overall visual impact of clothing and accessories. According to Ali et al., (2021), colour can evoke specific emotions and influence purchasing decisions. Fashion designers often consider consumer preferences and cultural associations when selecting colours for their collections, aiming to create garments that resonate with target audiences. A study by Gwilt (2018) highlights that consumers can associate specific colours with particular fashion brands. Fashion designers must carefully source materials that align with their brand's colour palette to maintain consistency and recognition among consumers.

### **5.3.7 Quality Assurance Protocols**

Quality assurance is a pivotal principle in fashion design and sourcing, ensuring that products meet or exceed predetermined quality standards. Research by Jaiswal and Dalal (2020) underscores the vital connection between consumer expectations and quality in the fashion industry. Consumers expect the garments they purchase to meet certain quality standards in terms of fabric, construction, and finishing. Meeting these expectations is essential for brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Due attention and commitment to quality are more likely to withstand market fluctuations and changing consumer preferences. Sourcing high-

quality materials and ensuring impeccable craftsmanship are essential for building and preserving brand integrity (Ahn & Lee, 2019). Fashion designers must aim at continual improvement informed by feedback from clients and institutional culture to adhere to protocols and effect necessary change (Lee et al., 2020; Melo et al., 2021)

#### **5.4 Testing the Formulated Guidelines to Ascertain its Adoption through Constructed Garments (Objective Three)**

Cloths have been used over the years to show status. Seiber (1974) and also Roach and Eicher (2017) reiterates that the difference in the mood of dressing between the rich and the poor is in the quality and amount of fabric used. Clothing is used for class distinction and many individuals wants to be associated with the rich in the society. These cliental expects to benefit from the dressmaker's skill in projecting their status in the garments made for them. The order purpose for Pleat 4.a and b, was that the clients needed a casual wear that could be used for all occasions. Even the most highly expensive fashion product must answer to functional needs-structure, fit, use and method of construction, therefore aesthetic design moves should be viewed as opportunities to enhance purpose (Cabrera &Frederick, 2021; Roberts-Smith et al., 2021). It was observed that unlike the earlier observation stage where important elements like texture and colour in the fabric were not taken into consideration by the fashion designers in fabric and notions sourcing. This time, there was consciousness in the choice of texture and colour combination-plain and smooth against rough texture (Pleat 4.c and d). It is clearly seen that fashion designers are now able to read meanings into how elements of design are to be used as set out in the proposed sourcing guidelines. Cardigan (2014) as well as DuBreuil & Lu (2020) affirm that a designer's educated decision on colour palette will depend on their brand aesthetic, target market, seasonal inspiration and current trends.

Another significant observation was designer's attitude towards engaging customers on decisions taken in the pre and post design and construction stages relative to the sourcing guidelines and quality. Further to the longstanding practice definition of quality to mean conformance to specification, customer needs include most especially service explanation in simple language, (Juran & Godfrey, 1998; Juran, 1999; Alexander & Thomas, 2015). It was observed that designers took time to explain to customers on their informed decisions fabric sourcing and related construction techniques during the post intervention stage.

Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten (Gucci, 1938). The cost to the customer of a garment made has influence on fabric sourcing. As set out in principle 6, it important that price is arrived at before sourcing especially where the garment is customized as is the case usually with the respondents for this study. Garment costing takes source information from the cost of all raw materials including fabrics through to constructional cost or overheads plus the designer's margin. Cardigan (2014) and Arenas (2017) affirms that costing has influence on textile and material selection, surface design capabilities, design elements and construction method. It is important that a budget or price is put on a garment to allow the designer to choose to use a fabulous and expensive fabric with less constructional detail or settle on rather second textile that carries fantastic collection. The researcher observed that designer consciously applied the principle of agreeing on the cost of a garment before stating a job.

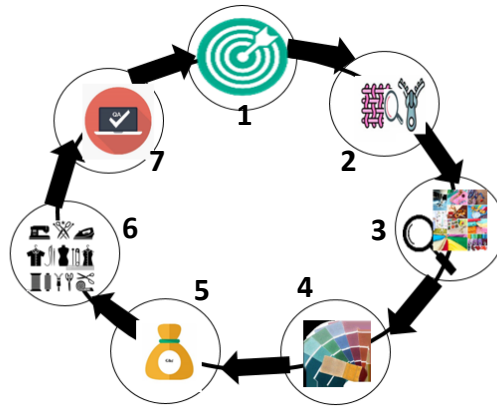
Based on the outcomes of the observations made after the post- intervention phase, it can be concluded that the workshop helped in training the designers on the new sourcing guidelines formulated. Witty and Gaston (2008) as well as Rusilowati and Wahyudi (2020), states that competency is not about failing or passing a respondent but a sum of activities outlined which must be undertaken to develop skills and master knowledge. Thus, as evident in the garments produced after the intervention (workshop), it was observed that fashion

designers have acquired competency in sourcing guidelines and applied them. Therefore, it has been established that simple, practical, repeatable and experiential learning methodology when employed, can lead to effective way of adopting the use of the guidelines of sourcing fabrics to produce quality garments. Mastery of these guidelines has the potential to improve fashion designer's garment quality.

### **5.5 Document Practice Guide Containing the Seven (7) Guidelines for Sourcing Fabrics and Notions (Objective four)**

In order to foster best practices among fashion designers in their attempt at effectively and efficiently sourcing fabrics and notions to enhance the quality of garments constructed, there is the need for a practice guide. A practice guide is a valuable tool used across various fields and disciplines to provide structured guidance, instructions, and best practices for achieving specific goals or tasks (Lewis, Bohnert, Gammon, Hölzer, Lyman, Smith & Gliva-McConvey, 2017). The prepared practice guide contains the seven (7) major guidelines for sourcing fabrics and notions (see Figure 5.1). It emphasizes an integrated application of the sourcing guidelines. It is structured along an icon, meaning, and approach headings for the respective columns.

The icons serve as a pictorial representation of the specific sourcing principle. It is a clear and vivid symbol to facilitate immediate understanding of the approach. On the other hand, the meaning as used in this guide stands for a name or phrase of the step. The meaning is followed by the approach heading. The approach column contains very clear instructions on how to execute each step. Below is the developed practiced guide.









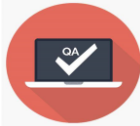
S/N	Icon	Meaning	Approach
1		Purpose of garment	Discuss the purpose of the garment with clients
2		Source of fabrics and notions	Determined the source of the fabrics and notions
3		Type of fabrics and notions	Discuss to agree with clients on the type of fabrics or notions to be used for the garment
4		Colour Choice	Discuss to agree with clients on the choice of colour scheme to be used for the garment
5		Cost of fabrics and notions	Discuss to agree with clients on the cost of fabrics and notions against the construction cost
6		Constructional techniques	Adopt appropriate constructional techniques that can actualize creative visions
7		Quality Assurance	Apply all quality assurance protocols throughout the processes

Figure 5.1 – Documented fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines

Source: Field Survey (2023)

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives the summary of findings, conclusions and the way forward in the form of recommendations. The recommendations put forward have taken into consideration the findings and if implemented, will improve the quality of garment construction among fashion designers in Kumasi and Sunyani Metropolis, and nationwide.

#### **6.2 Summary of Findings**

Analysis of fashion designers' responses to the items in the interview guide showed that out of the 30 respondents 20 were females representing 67% while the remaining 10, representing 33% were males. In addition, the majority of the respondents sampled for this study, representing 43% were in the age bracket 21-30 years. Followed by 30% and within the 31-35 age bracket. The rest are 10% each for the age brackets 20-25 and 36-40, with the least being 7% who are above 41-years. The result for the highest level of education indicated that an aggregated 76% of respondents had formal basic education up to the primary and or JHS level. This followed by an aggregated 17% who completed tertiary education graduating as either Higher National Diploma (HND) or Bachelor's Degree (BSc.) holders. However, 7% of the respondents had no formal education.

With regards to responses and observation of fashion designers' level of competency in fabric and notions sourcing as set out in objective one, the findings indicated that 86% of the fashion designers had little or no knowledge of the sourcing concept and lack competency in sourcing fabrics and notion. However, 14% of the fashion designers had knowledge about the sourcing concept and had some sourcing guidelines fabric and notions sourcing to produce

quality garments. Furthermore, the fashion designers from each zone displayed high level of competency in garment construction techniques.

The researcher facilitated the identification of sourcing guidelines leading to the formulation of same for adoption by the designers at expository workshops held in both Dekyemso and Odumase, as required for objective two (2). In all seven (7) sourcing guidelines were agreed upon. These guidelines were interactively deployed for greater impact on quality. Finally, observation from new garments constructed following the adoption and deployment of the formulated fabrics and notions sourcing guidelines as set out in objective four (4), indicated that all the fashion designers had acquired competency in fabric and notions sourcing, and applied the new formulated sourcing guidelines, leading to improved quality in the garment constructed.

### **6.3 Conclusions**

Garments and prints produced in Ghana are increasingly gaining recognition globally. The informal garment construction sector is mainly customized leaving the fashion designer with much more responsibility and sole decision maker in achieving quality. Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made in relation to the impact of fabrics and notions sourcing on the quality of garment construction among selected fashion designers in Ghana.

Majority of the Fashion designers displayed high level of competency in applying various constructional techniques base on the selected fabrics and notions. Fashion designers were consistent in their seam selection, edge finishing, interfacing and underling selection, pressing, and fine finishing. This competency was deployed to perfection before, during and after the workshop.

However, majority of the designers lacked competency in fabrics and notions sourcing. Fashion designers showed gross misunderstanding of the concept and usage of the guidelines of sourcing fabrics and notions. Though many designers had a garment style in view, for

example, they would not factor the impact of the characteristics of a particular fabric or notion on the intended garment style. This become amply evident in instances where a customer provides their acquired fabric and requested for a specific garment style to be constructed out of it.

Majority of the designers showed clear understanding of the guidelines of fabric and notions sourcing formulated and showed early adoption of the sourcing guidelines. Garments constructed after the workshop exemplified the application of the identified sourcing fabric principled, leading to improved quality. The early adoption of the guidelines goes to confirm the potency in using such rather informal platforms like expository training workshop in facilitating the transfer of technology in the informal education and training. Experiential or competency-based education and training service delivery module is crucial in getting skill training of this nature with specific outcomes acquired.

Lastly, for effective continuous professional practice, there is the need for a practice guide.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

Based on the major findings, the following recommendations have been made:

- 1) The theoretical aspect of the education and training in the informal apprenticeship of fashion designing and garment construction should be enhanced so that textile management studies including areas in elements and guidelines of designs which is a requisite in perfect garment designing would be taught through in-service training programmes for “master or madam” craftspeople’s. This will build their capacity in facilitating same at their various center to their apprentice.
- 2) There is the need for strong linkage or collaboration between the textile manufacturers and importers, and fashion designers. This will serve as a platform for fashion designers to suggest the technical challenges they encounter during fabric sourcing.

- 3) Ghana National Tailors and Dress Makers Association (GNTDA) should enact and enforce quality standard guidelines which will represent the acceptable level of quality and the specified level of proficiency required of a professional garment designer or sewer. The said guideline could focus and not limited to such thematic areas as: Sewing techniques, fit (including pattern manipulation, arrangement and alteration), Textiles, Visual and Surface Design. This initiative will invariably improve on the quality of professional garment.
- 4) There is the need for a strong linkage or partnership between the formal education and training system of fashion and textile and the informal system counterpart to foster technology and innovation transfer which solves present and anticipated skill development gaps.
- 5) There is the need for the Government through the relevant implementing ministry to set up more informal skill development centres that employs competency-based service delivery modules for fashion designers. These avenues would help train, improve and support individuals and associations in the industry.

### **6.5 Suggestions for Further Study**

- 1) This research should be extended to other GNTDA zones and possibly to the Regional levels to help garment makers develop the conscious sourcing for the right fabrics and notions during garment construction.
- 2) This study could be replicated using quantitative study in other zones to see whether there are variations in the knowledge base of fashion designers in effective utilization of sourcing fabrics in garment construction. This will allow for generalization of findings.

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## APPENDIX I

### AKENTEN APPIAH- MINKA UNIVERSITY OF SKILLS TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT



#### DEPARTMENT OF FASHION DESIGN AND TEXTILES EDUCATION

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FASHION DESIGNERS

This study is designed to evaluate the skills and competencies of Fashion designers in sourcing fabrics and notions for quality garment production. It does not require the names of respondents. You are therefore to answer the entire question item as candidly as you can in this interview.

##### SECTION A: Demographic information on Fashion designers

1. Gender M [  ] F [  ]

2. Age

Below 20 years [  ]

Between 20 and 25 years [  ]

Between 26 and 30 years [  ]

Between 31 and 35 years [  ]

Between 36 and 40 years [  ]

Above 40 years [  ]

##### 1. Number of years of practice (working experience)

0-2 years [  ]

3-5 years [  ]

6-8 years [  ]

Over 8 years [  ]

4. Educational level

BASIC [ ]

JHS [ ]

SHS [ ]

VOCATIONAL [ ]

HND [ ]

DEGREE [ ]

NONE [ ]

SECTION B: Knowledge of Fashion Designers in fabrics and notions sourcing

5. What is your understanding of fabrics and notions sourcing?
6. Where do you normally source your fabrics and notions from?
7. Do you have any specific interests that affect your fabrics and notions selection?
8. What are the challenges you face in fabrics and notions selection for your specific garment?
9. What is the most important quality you look for in a fabric or notion during sourcing?
10. How important is colour in your choice of fabrics or notions selection?

## APPENDIX

### AKENTEN APPIAH- MINKA UNIVERSITY OF SKILLS TRAINING AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT



#### Observational checklist

**Criterion A: How fashion designers source fabrics and notions**

**Criterion B: How fashion designers construct garments with sourced fabrics.**

Criterion A	How fashion designers source fabrics and notions		Remarks
<b>Type of garment</b>			
<b>The wearer</b>	<b>Male ( )</b>	<b>Female ( )</b>	
<b>Style line</b>	Shirt ( ) Trousers ( ) Shorts ( ) Suit ( ) Others (state others in the remarks column)	Straight dress ( ) Skirt and top ( ) Trousers & top ( ) Others (state in the remarks column)	
<b>Source of fabric and notions</b>	Designer source ( )	Client source ( )	
<b>Purpose/use of garment:</b> establish if the purpose/ use of the garment is discussed example for casual, occasional, formal, etc.	Yes ( )	No ( )	
<b>Fabric type:</b> discuss if the choice of fabric will suit the garment to be produced as well as the figure type. For example, cotton, silk, and nylon indicate any other. If there will be any changes and suggestions for the order.	Yes ( )	No ( )	
<b>Notions type:</b> discussed suitable notions for the garment such as	Yes ( )	No ( )	

threads, trimmings, zips, buttons, etc.			
<b>Cost of fabric:</b> discussed the entire cost of sourcing and production before they began.	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Criterion B</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Body measurement:</b> Do body measurements take to detail the type of garment to be produced?	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Pattern production:</b> Patterns well drafted, draped or copied	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Fabric Preparation:</b> Care labels checked and fabric pre-washed to check for fastness and prevent shrinkage	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Freehand cutting:</b> Fabric well cut to match motifs grain lines aligned	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Spreading, layout and cutting:</b> Marked, placed and arranged patterns to correspond with motifs and align with grain lines correctly.	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Assembling of garment:</b> Parts of the garment well assembled with the right seams for both flat and round methods	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Pressing:</b> Seams are well pressed with steam during production and after production.	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>Finishing:</b> Seams well finished/ neatened; excess protruding threads removed.	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	
<b>fitting:</b> The designer makes room for fitting, and the finished garment corresponds with	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	

the correct measurement taken before construction.			
<b>packaging:</b> very well packed into appropriate containers to avoid any direct damage.	<b>Yes ( )</b>	<b>No ( )</b>	