PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF SMOCK INDUSTRY IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF TAMALE METROPOLIS

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AUTHORS

Thomas O. Asare

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Studies, Kumasi Technical University, Kumasi

Abdul F. Ibrahim

Department of Textile Design and Technology, Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi

Peggy M. A. Howard

Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Studies, Kumasi Technical University, Kumasi

Corresponding author's email: abdulfatahiibrahimk@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Smock seemed to have come from far in history and adored due to its beauty and cultural implications to the society. In recent times, the use of smock seemed to be trending as both the young and old, the working class and the non-working class, the rich and the poor find pride in wearing it. While it is becoming widely used and therefore holding high prospects of being an employment avenue for many, the industry, especially in the Tamale Metropolis, has challenges confronting these prospects. This study explores the prospects and challenges of the smock production industry in Ghana with a specific focus in the Tamale Metropolis. A mixed research approach was therefore employed for the study with the justification that, both qualitative and quantitative research needed to complement each other to produce a full sense of the data collected. A sample of 150 smock producers was purposively selected to respond to the questionnaires and interview. It was revealed that the youth (from 18 years or less to 39 years) were mostly attracted to the industry. The study also found that the smock production industry in the Tamale Metropolis has absorbed many unemployed hands, especially the youth in society. However, the major challenges confronting the industry are low patronage of the local fashion and high cost of raw materials for production. It was, therefore, suggested that the government, NGOs and development partners should map out strategic interventions to help revamp the sector to be able to absorb more unemployed Ghanaians in the society.

Keywords: Prospects; Challenges; Traditional fashion; Smock; Tamale Metropolis

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Smock production is fascinating, and the products themselves signify prestige and status. It is an indigenous textiles production industry, which has been one of the prominent businesses with economic sustainability prospects in the Tamale Metropolis. This prominent industry is facing challenges that seem to be deepening the unemployment rate in the Tamale Metropolis, resulting in migration of some youths into other regions of viable economics prospects, especially the capital of Ghana, Accra (Ghana Journal of Science, Technology and Development-GJSTD, 2013). Different cultures have different costumes and fashion history that identifies them, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated using cloths and adornments as a means of communicating their social and personal status.

One of the most common traditional cloths or attire that is used to communicate in the Northern culture, especially in Tamale, is the smock. Though perception through clothes as objects of ethnic identity may sometimes be misleading, clothes still remain the vital element for non-verbal communication mode of the language of fashion, indicating the significance that accompanies the motifs and symbols expressed in them (Sue-Jenkyn, 2005). Fashion, in its broadest sense, is a particular style that is popular for a period. It can be clothing, cosmetics, or fashionable dress accessories. Fashion, as defined more technically, comprises all sorts of clothing items, textiles fabric and their study (Pearsall, 2002).

The smock industry in the Tamale Metropolis plays a very important role in the socio-economic development by helping generate income for living and a means through which people acquire clothing needs. The smock industry seems to be dwindling because of the low financial support to purchase quality materials for quality production. The producers of the smocks also find it difficult to sustain regular power supply due to the cost involved, especially those who use power machines (Halle, 1996). This research, therefore, looks at the challenges facing smock production in the Tamale Metropolis and its impact on fashion design. Ghana, like many other developing countries, is suffering economically due to the local fashion industry. In the past, the country had a flourishing local fashion industry, but in recent times, the industry has declined drastically (Friedrich & Stiffeing, 2006).

Tamale Metropolis is made up of different cultures, beliefs and societal norms, which influence the trend of smock production; lack of effective media display on the smock production is another factor seriously militating against smock production. Smock production comes in different design that makes it culturally attractive. Smock wearing is popular among men in the Northern part of Ghana (Gadzekpo, 2005). According to Gadzekpo, those from the North were reported to wear several layers of clothes made

from smock materials. The women have their traditional attire also made by smock producers but are largely worn during traditional occasions.

The construction of garments and its accessories used in adoring and displaying of culture, the significance changing trends associated with smock production within the Tamale traditional settings especially among the Dagbons and its impacts in the life of the people are not dealt with (Mayer, 1994). Lack of historical knowledge and the significance of clothing in a traditional setting partly affects modern trends of clothing as witnessed among Ghanaians (Ofori-Ansa, 1993). The challenging issues facing most of the smock producers in Tamale is how to source funds for quality yarn for the weaving of the cloth, marketing of the smock and regular power supply for the electric sewing machine. These challenges have impacted seriously on the production of the smock on a large scale in Tamale Metropolis due to lack of resources. Patronage of locally manufactured products is on the lower side (Ghana's policy document, 2015). Another factor is the high cost of yams for cloths affects the production rate of smock in the Metropolis.

According to Dzramedo and Dabuo (2015), smock weaving is an indigenous textiles production industry, which has been one of the prominent rural enterprises with economic sustainability prospect. Over the years, the industry has become one of the indigenous Ghanaian textile industries that have contributed immensely to the sustainability of rural development and livelihood. Traditionally, the smock is one of the best-worn dresses in Ghana since it gained its popularity in the 12th century (Nartey, 2011). It is often worn in honour and adoration by chiefs and people of high prestige. It adds value to the wearer through its traditional value. To Nelson (1977), the smock is a loose garment worn as an overall. The Oxford dictionary describes it as a loose shirt like garment with the upper part closely gathered in smocking.

Flugel (2010) puts it that clothing is functional wear and protective wear from bad weather conditions. Cumming (2004), therefore put it that, what a person chooses to wear has the capability of reflecting the wearer's personality and likes. Dupsie (2011) asserts that by tradition, Africans offer unique clothes that represent the authentic handpicked designs and fashion trend, which is based on culture and environmental conditions. Dzramedo (2011) concurs to this assertion stating that the desire to link tradition and morality to modern cultural dynamism in relation to its expression in the dress-life of Ghanaian youth is limited and this alludes to the provocative, dangerous and promiscuous lifestyles of today's youth in Ghana.

Smocks traditionally were worn by chiefs and kingmakers of Northern Ghana. They were also worn during festivals and for war dancing. In modern time, they have become designer clothes worn by ordinary men, women and children. The fabrics they are made

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of are also used to make bedspread, tabletops, curtains, handkerchiefs, among others (Ma et al., 2011). Based on the preceding views, smock is a loose outer garment worn occasionally to display cultural prestige and value. It originates from the Northern region of Ghana and has received popular acknowledgement across the nation and beyond. It is woven in horizontal loom and sewn together by hand or machine, and it is a range of patterns, sold in strips of 30cm-60cm in length (Egu, 2009).

A Ghanaian smock is a plaid shirt worn by men, but there are also female versions of it and children alike. The smock is also called a Fugu or a batakari in the northern region, dansika in Frafra, futik in Kusaal both in the Upper East Region. It is worn by kings in the three (3) northern regions but is now popular across Ghana and even southern Burkina Faso. Indigenous textile especially, smock has been one of the economic mainstays of the people in rural settlements of Northern Ghana and with recent acknowledgement of its traditional value and beauty in adorning occasions, several shops have sprung up in the Tamale township and the entire Metropolis with prime focus on commercial production. It is, therefore, no wonder that Nii Bonney (2009) recognises that the smock is acknowledged as a bona fide national dress of Ghana.

The smock is one of the cherished traditional apparels of the people of the north and therefore any effort to reactivate indigenous smock weaving centres in West Gonja District is a recipe for sustainable rural development. According to the West Gonja Human Development Report of 2007, prepared by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), West Gonja is predominantly rural, and its economy is built on the natural resource base. According to Natey (2011), there are various categories of smock including hand woven, machine embroidered, royalty wear, ordinary men's apparel, feminine and masculine designs as well as stylish types for occasions. It is also worth stating that, the appropriate occasion and manner for wearing different smocks will lead to the enhancement of the personality of the wearer.

Often, symbolic patterns and designs are overstocked on the front and back. According to the Shinohara et al. (2008), the most important type is paramount chiefs usually wear the "Kparikoto" which is long from the shoulder to the feet with wide sleeves. Typically, smocks emerge from varying traditions, and these traditions have a significant influence on their designs, texture, colour blend and overall loom quality. They are often identified and named by its place of production due to slight variations in the technologies and methodologies, which yields the product. There are men smocks with sleeves, without sleeves, women's smock, simple wear smocks, and children smocks. Bonney (2009) identified that there are different smocks for different occasions, and they are often handcrafted. First, there is the most widespread and ordinary type called the Danseka. It is also sometimes called "Batakari" or "Fugu".

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This is a sleeveless smock, and it is usually very popular. The second type of smock is the Bana'a; with short sleeves (usually above the elbow) which is associated with relative success and well-being. In the urban/contemporary setting, it will be more appropriate for a "smart casual" dress code as opposed to the Danseka. The Jampa is the third smock type. The sleeves extend to the wrist. This smock indicates high status and chieftaincy. The three smock types thus far described may all have plain embroidery on the neckline. The fourth and most important smock type is the Kparikoto; this has long full and very wide sleeves (easily 4 feet wide). It is normally worn only by paramount chiefs. For important events, they wear several smocks simultaneously, but the Kparikoto is worn only as the outer garment (that is on top of all the others).

With the sleeves of the Kparikoto folded up- on top of the shoulder, the layers of other smocks show a band of colours that project the high social and political status of the wearer. Therefore, the Kparikoto worn over the jampa or bana'a is the appropriate attire when the dress code states "formal" or "traditional" and a smock is chosen to be worn. A bana'a or jampa alone will not do and certainly not a Danseka alone. A much more elaborate version of the Kparikoto is the huge smock/gown ensemble ("elephant gown") traditionally associated with the Sokoto Caliphate. This is distinctly different from the 3 or 4 piece "Agbada"-often made of imported cloth (Nii Bonney, 2009). These huge smock measure eight (8) feet across, are of at least calf length and have elaborate embroidery around the neck, left chest and crossing over the shoulder to the upper back. They are commissioned by high net worth and politically powerful individuals.

They are usually handwoven garment with symbols of prestige and power such as two (2) or five (5) knives, spirals and houses; all in hand done embroidery utilising wild indigenous African silk - sometimes in several layers. They are highly prized by collectors and connoisseurs (Bonney, 2009). Unlike conventional trade, smocks are sold where they are sewn in the Tamale Metropolis, little shops are seen with a few youths sewing together small pieces of the smock fabric into fugu. The trend in Tamale shows specialisation in two stages of the art. There are people who specialise and focus on weaving the fabric. There are also people who put together the pieces of the woven fabrics to produce varying categories of the smock. This industry lately features youths, some of whom are educated, non-educated, school dropouts. The art of smock production is a trending business in the Tamale Metropolis even though it has been in existence for ages.

Notably, Tamale, Bolgatanga, Wa, Daboya, Yendi and its environs have a particularly strong tradition of weaving Fugu. Generations of artisans have been engaged in this profession. This has become hereditary with fathers transferring their knowledge and skills to their sons (Abugri, 2014). On the accounts of Coelho (a foreign visitor), he was

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surprised at the very large numbers of smocks on display at local markets in Northern Ghana and captivated by their splendour but disappointed that sales of the garment were slow: He recalls counting about 20 shops selling smocks in Navrongo. He narrated that, "there were tones of smocks and the sellers wanted them all sold, but while it takes one week for women to weave the material and five days to hand-stitch them into a smock or two days if they use a machine, it takes them an eternity to sell the fruits of their labour. He then challenged the Ministry of Trade and the business promotion organisations to help find foreign markets for the Fugu (Abugri, 2014).

The Savannah Smock show was organised by the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture to promote the various types of smocks, fabrics and accessories from the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions to educate the public about the symbolism related to the garment and its modernised stylish usages (Asare, 2012). The exhibition and fashion show dubbed: "Savannah Smock - Promoting the Smock for Economic Empowerment" was a combination of love for traditional clothing, together with the quest to exploit the uniqueness of the smock to dress impeccably, and the creation of boutiques for the product. Various categories of smock including hand woven, machine embroidered, royalty wear, ordinary man's apparel, feminine and masculine designs, as well as stylish types for occasions such as church, dinner, office, beach, school uniforms and wedding gowns were put on a show.

Recently, a concert dubbed "Batakari Night" in Bolga headlined by the northern musician King Ayisoba and others was to remind Ghanaians of the rich old culture of artistic smock worn occasionally to adorn one's self and the occasion as well. It was aimed at encouraging everyone to wear Batakari (Ampofo-Anti, 1999). To Sabutey (2009), gone are the days when smock-wearing in Northern Ghana was reserved for events such as festivals, funerals, marriage ceremonies and all other events that can be associated with the area's cultural setup. This is because modern globalization, coupled with most people's crave for fashion, has now demystified those perceptions - making the wearing of smock a casual attire for everyday events.

As a result, more and more people both within and outside the catchment area of the Tamale Metropolis are now craving for the smock, not for customary reasons but for reasons related to fashion, show-off and globalisation. And that is giving designers of the outfit a reason to smile, but unfortunately, it has become a headache to some ordinary indigenes because the prices of the once affordable attire have skyrocketed beyond their purchasing powers. With the demand for the product on the rise due to globalisation and modernisation, there is a market for the producers of the Fugu both within and outside the Metropolis. It is creating an economic environment for many indigenes of the Tamale Metropolis to dwell. In some parts of northern Ghana's culture,

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the profession of smock sewing was no child's play; it was a pass-on business by certain families that must be treasured and rolled over to the latest generations in those lines.

As a result, not all dared to take up jobs in that area (Ibid, 2012). In recent times, however, several youths take up engagement in this profession it is well treasured among them as it pays off rightly. The profession was given ease of entry because the cost of producing smocks is low with high technology and superb output. There is virtually no need to import any heavy machinery to produce smocks in the North since everything can be done manually for excellent results. These industries apart from producing costumes and traditional dresses also offer employment to a sizeable number of young men in the three northern regions of Ghana. The smocks have very great significance in the country. They are used for grand durbars, church services, funerals and other serious occasions. They are outstanding in quality and quantity and can serve as a foreign exchange earner to meet the national call for concentration on the non-traditional export sector.

The impact of smock weaving in the Tamale Metropolis and in Northern Ghana has tremendous implications for the fashion industry in the North and in Ghana at large and even beyond its walls. Since Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah declared the smock a battle dress, the attire has made significant strides in becoming very popular with Ghanaians over the years. This attire, which was hitherto thought to be the reserved traditional dress of choice for people of northern Ghana, has gained immense popularity across every class and sphere of the Ghanaian society. This evident popularity has culminated in the proliferation of the smock on the market place, and in recent times, government dignitaries, politicians and even some members of the clergy have resorted to wearing the attire to all functions (Ross and Adedze, 1998).

Challenges need to be overcome to ensure sustainability in the production and marketing of smocks in the Tamale Metropolis. This may include levels of maintaining product value, quality, aesthetics, meeting the needs of suppliers and coping with higher material and labour cost (Lisa et al., 2013). Dzramedo and Dabuo (2015) found that, shortage in accessing raw materials automatically delay the weaving process and hence the sewing process. Gam and Banning (2011) also noted that issues of motivation, inadequate facilities and amenities, lack of funding and insufficient managerial ability as challenges might have bearings on the glowing potential of the product especially with high demands for the use of environmentally safe fibres and organic dyes.

Like any other sector, the fashion industry is not impervious to the threats presented by the world's uncertain future, including climate change, resource scarcity, vulnerable economic conditions, changing consumer behaviour and so on. The challenge to the

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fashion industry then is in understanding these threats and taking appropriate action to safeguard its future, protect the environment and improve the lives of its customers, workers and suppliers around the world (Forum for the Future, 2016). According to Mubarik (2014), problems relating to the cultivation, processing of the cotton into yarns and the weaving processes can be improved with the injection of funds into the smock weaving business to alleviate poverty within the Metropolis.

Amidst these challenges; however, it is worthy of stating that there is a ready market (demand) for smock products in the Metropolis due to increasing crave for the product as trending fashion and its globalisation. Akalaare (2000) confirms this position stating that the demand for smock production is growing. Whereas the smock industry in the Tamale Metropolis is vibrant and promising with its engagement of the youth of the Metropolis, there is the need to ensure its sustainability over time in order to keep the youth, especially in self-employment. One significant measure of achieving this task, according to Dzramedo and Dabuo (2015) is by ensuring a ready market and new markets for the product. A ready market implies regular income and a measure to curb rural-urban migration, which is very prevalent among the youth.

Gam & Banning (2011) also posit that, while the government may not have interest in promoting fashion due to its dynamic nature, NGOs and other institutional bodies could endeavour to support smock production in the Metropolis. Many a time, I have thought of the use of increasing technology to reduce the rigorous processes involved in the processing of the raw materials to help ease the tension associated with every new single order. This would make the product readily available in the market and in shops for ease of access.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research method which allowed intimate interactions with the respondents, and their settings were also employed for the study. The strategy, among other things, included both formal and informal interviews and observations. This aided the researchers' to obtain first-hand information of the prospect and challenges of smock Industries in Tamale Metropolis, on the other hand, the qualitative study focuses on describing situations/phenomenon trying to explain how it happened. For this, the mixed approach is considered necessary for this research as it affords the researchers the flexibility and eases to choose its respondents for data collection. This approach also enhances understanding of concepts, especially those that would have been stated mathematically.

The accessible population for the study comprises the owners and workers of the industry who are into smock production. The area under study has been the Tamale

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Metropolis wherein there is recent sprang up of several small scale enterprises depicting the varied nature of the informal sector in which the smock industry features. Considering the nature of the study, a survey approach was used other than experimental or causal-comparative approaches. This was to collect first-hand information and the chance to interact with the respondents and get to know much more about them through observation.

In researching the subject matter of challenges and impacts of smock production in the Tamale Metropolis, Twelve communities (Lamashiegu, Sakasaka, Kakpayili, Builpiela, Gumani, Gurugu, Yapal'si, Kpalsi, Kanvilie, Kukuo, Fuo, and Central Business Area) within the metropolis were used to obtain a sample of 150 respondents.
Table 1 is the distribution of the sample size among some selected communities where the production is being done. Selection is however, based on predominance in a community.

Table 1. Accessible Population for the Study

S/N	Community	Sample Size
1.	Lamashiegu	18
2.	Sakasaka	25
3.	Kakpayili	12
4.	Builpiela	8
5.	Gumani	11
6.	Gurugu	9
7.	Yapal'si	10
8.	Kpalsi	5
9.	Kanvilie	17
10.	Kukuo	5
11.	Fuo	5
12.	Central Business Area	25
	Total Sample	**150**

2.1 Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were participant observation, Questionnaire and formal interview. Interview guide and observational checklist were used to collect the primary data based on the following objectives:

- To find out the qualification of the respondents in a field survey.
- To identify the type of smock they produce.
- To examine the challenges and prospects facing the respondents.
- To suggest possible ways for the improvement of the smock industry.

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During the administration of the questionnaire, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and that made them responded effectively.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The gender of 150 producers interviewed showed that only 16% of the producers were females while the rest of the 84% of the producers were males. This implies that the industry dominantly features men. The survey revealed that 31% of the producers were aged between 18 to 25 years, 23% were between 26 to 39 years, 35% of the producers were within the age range of 40 to 59 years, and only 11% of the producers were 60 years and above. However, it can be observed that the predominant age range in this venture is 18 to 59 years. This was not different from the researcher's observation of the entrepreneurs. On marital status, it was observed that, the majority (52%) of the respondents are married with 40% of them to be single (unmarried). Only 8% of the respondent were recorded as divorced and was living child or children. This implies that 60% of the respondents have families with much responsibility to cater to in line with this business. As for educational status, it was found that 29% of them attended basic school education, 24% of them show up to secondary school education, 15% had completed Tertiary whereas 25% of the producers had non-formal educations.

About 8% of the producers reported having had no form of education. However, with the current trend of fashion in smock, there is a wide array of smock designs for women with varying threads and colours. About 65% of the producers also design smock clothing for women, while 35% of the designers produce strictly for men. The smocks are also identified by the source of thread, texture and pattern of designs as seen in figure 1.

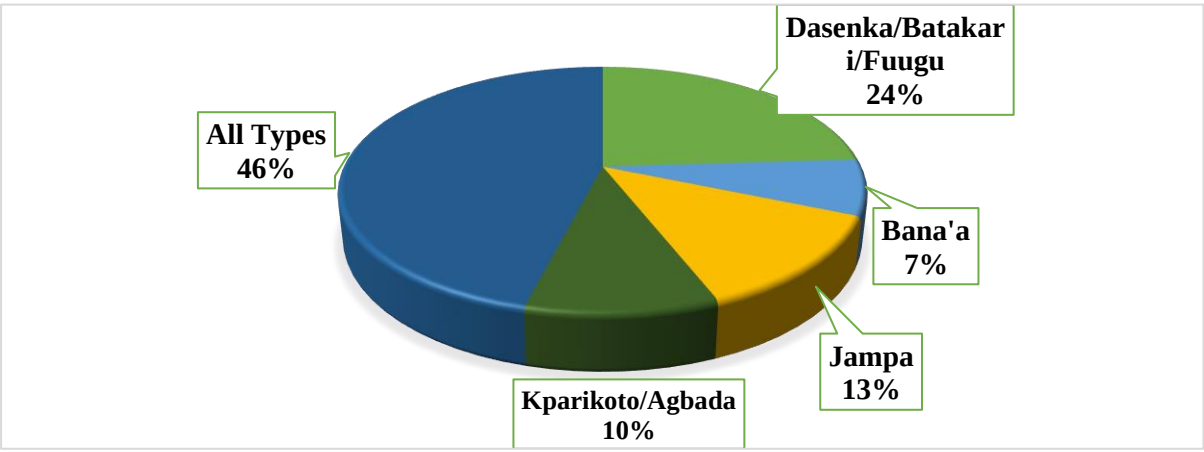


Figure 1: Types of Smock Designs

Figure 1 revealed that there are four main types of smock produced in the Tamale Metropolis. It showed that 24% of the producers produce the Dasenka type, which is also called Fugu or Batakari among some other local dialects. About 7% of the producers design the Bana'a type of smock, while 13% of them produce the Jampa type of smock. The Kparikoto and its higher version; Agbada are also produced among some 10% of the producers. However, 46% of the producer's design all the four types of smock.

Therefore, the Dasenka (Batakari or Fugu) type of smock remained the most commonly designed type of smock among the producers. This may be due to its relative simplicity to produce and quantum of material required to produce as well as its demand in the market. It is a casual dress amongst men. The second common type of smock is the Jampa which is associated with chieftaincy and status. The third commonly produced type is the Kparikoto and Agbada. This type requires more technical knowledge and skills to arrive at a perfectly suiting design. The last but not the least design is the Bana'a which is similar to the Dasenka but with a little longer sleeve to the elbow. The plates below show the smock types.



Plate 1: Examples of Dasenka's Smock

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Plate 2: Examples of Bana's Fugu



Plate 3: Examples of Jampa's Smock



Plate 4: Examples of Kparikoto Smock

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3.2 Prospects of Smock Production in the Tamale Metropolis

Regarding the price range of the products, 11% of the producers quoted GHC100 as the least price obtainable for the products based on the type. About 27% and 19% of the producers respectively quoted a range of GHC100-GHC150 and GHC160-GHC200 for the varying designs/types as the least price respectively. Prices also ranged between GHC200 and GHC400 for about 37% of the producers while 6% of the producers also quoted prices above GHC500. This depicts that smock prices are varied based on the type and designs or specifications. However, it may seem moderate for the various categories of users. It thus suggests profitability or means of economic sustenance to the producers.

The survey also revealed 22% of the producers noting that they have some other business doing aside from the smock business. However, 78% of the producers do not have any other businesses doing other than smock production. This confirms that the fashion of smock for occasions has created a means of employment and survival for a lot of people. A further enquiry revealed that 89% of the producers studied would not have been employed if smock production had not existed. This is because; the venture (smock production) has employed 43% of the producers for over seven (7) years as of now while 31% of them have been engaged for close to seven (7) years now. The data also showed that 15% of the producers had been engaged for close to four (4) years now, with only 11% of the designers to be newly engaged in the smock business. Smock production has been a trade for families and individuals over a long period now and had sustained these producers over time since 65% of the producers said “yes” this trade begun with our ancestors. It presupposes that smock production has prospects of sustaining livelihood through personal job creation if well shaped to attract the needed demand.

Concerning the number of employees per business, at most 15 employees are employed by 32% of the producers whereas 29% of the producers working with more than 15 employees in their business. About 23% of them reported to have 4-7 employees, 8% of the producers also noted to have employed about 11 hands. Meanwhile, only 9% of the producers employed less than three employees. Furthermore, 88% of the producers notified to have trained people who have also established themselves in the smock business. It was interesting when a few producers referred to some other producers contacted by the researcher as their trainers. This suggests that smock production has the potential of absorbing the unemployed hands in the Metropolis if well-structured training centres could be created.

Regarding the profitability of the trade, 43% of the producers cautioned that the art of smock production requires skills and hardworking. About 29% of the producers mentioned that *“it’s a lucrative business”,* 15% opined that *“it requires a relatively low*

start-up capital" and 13% of the producers stated that smock production is a very simple venture. This was further confirmed when 100% of the producers asserted that, the smock business had made significant improvements in their lives and the lives of their close families in terms of livelihood. It can be deduced from the data above that, the art of smock production is a lifetime business because it would be carried through the generations with moderations consistence with trending fashion. It is also a profitable venture requiring a little start-up capital but more of the entrepreneur's skills and spirit of hardworking.

Table 2: Summary of Prospects of Smock Production in TM (n=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Price Range of Smock Products		
Less than GHC 100	16	11
GHC 100-GHC 150	41	27
GHCE160-GHC200	29	19
GHC200-GHC400	55	37
GHC500 and Above	9	6
What other things do you do apart from Smock business?		
Yes	33	22
No	117	78
Would you have been employed if the smock business were not in existence?		
Yes	16	11
No	134	89
How long have you been into smock weaving and production?		
Less than 2 years	16	11
2-4 years	23	15
5-7 years	47	31
Above 7 years	64	43
Has any of your ancestral parents been involved in the smock business too?		
Yes	98	65
No	52	35
How many employees have you engaged?		
Less than 4	13	9
4-7	34	23
8-11	12	8
12-15	48	32
More than 15	43	29
Have you trained some people who have also established themselves in the smock business?		
Yes	132	88
No	18	12

What would you say about the profitability of the smock business?		
It is a lucrative business	44	29
It requires a relatively low start-up capital	23	15
It is very simple to venture into	19	13
It requires only your skills and hardworking	64	43
Has the smock business made any significant improvement in your life (and that of your family)?		
Yes	150	100
No	0	0

3.3 Challenges Facing Smock Production in the Tamale Metropolis

Table 3 showed that only 21% of the producers ever had support from financial and related institutions. Meanwhile, 79% of producers never had a form of support from any financial institution. The study found only 43% of the producers acknowledging recognition from people. This implies that the majority (57%) of smock producers in the Tamale Metropolis are not recognised; rather they suffer devaluation among people. Among issues making up a marketing challenge to the production of smock in the Metropolis, 29% of the producers mentioned lack of appreciation of local fashion among people. This signifies that many people do not recognise the smock as suitable and fashionable.

The table recorded 25% of producers complaining of raw materials for the production of smock to be expensive. About 19% of the producers reported on the influx of shoddy smock products into the market. Limited market and non-existing markets were also identified as challenges by 15% and 13% of producers respectively. These factors, therefore, affirm that the prospects of smock production in the Metropolis are not without hindrance and therefore needing attention. Qualitatively, some producers of smock in the Tamale Metropolis also noticed the following as challenges working against the recognition of smock as a fashionable art in the society:

- Smock is seen as an older tradition.
- People tend to associate the wearing of smock to spiritual rites, which they do not wish to be involved.
- Smock is a garment for the elderly in the community.
- Smock is worn only on festivals and traditional occasions.

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Table 3: Challenges facing Smock Production in the Tamale Metropolis (n=150)

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Have you ever had any support from a bank or any financial institution?		
Yes	31	21
No	119	79
Do people value this business just as any other business in the Metropolis?		
Yes	64	43
No	86	57
Which of the following constitutes marketing challenges in your venture?		
Non-existing Markets	19	13
Limited Market	22	15
Expensive raw materials	38	25
The influx of Shoddy smock products	28	19
Low patronage of local fashion	43	29

3.4 Improving Smock Production in the Tamale Metropolis for Impacts

Figure 2 presents information on what producers believe should be done to improve smock production and also its impact on livelihood in the Tamale Metropolis. This enquiry revealed 37% of the producers suggesting access to a loan for business expansion while 33% of them also mentioned support from NGOs and Development Partners towards creating value for a smock and improving its production. Among some 13% of the producers, attempts should be made to reduce the rigorous processes involved in the production of the smock with the aid of technology. About 17% of the producers also raised the need to widen the market base for smocks. Typically, it can be observed that majority of the producers need partnership in the form of access to loans and support from NGOs and Development agencies to help creates value for smock products in order to improve their production. This eventually creates markets for the product and shift producers' attention from the high cost of raw materials to producing to meet the demands on the market.

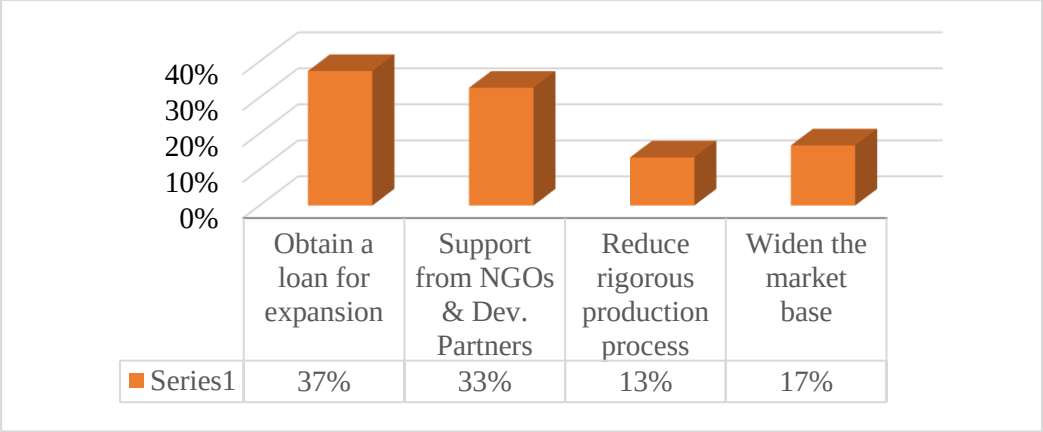


Figure 2: Strategies for Improving Smock Production in TM

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings indicated above, the study, therefore, concluded that smock production holds the key to unlocking unemployment and poverty alleviation in the Tamale Metropolis. This is because, with its current confrontations, it stands as a source of livelihood to the majority of the producers studied.

Typically, 78% of the 150 producers sampled do no other business aside from the production and sale of smocks, and 100% of this sample testified that the venture had made significant improvements in their lives and that of their families.

It suggests, therefore, that, the art of smocking would function appropriately as a business worth undertaking when all underlying challenges are properly identified, evaluated and addressed. Relative to the findings, the following are recommended for consideration:

(i) A branding strategy should be developed for the smock product in the Tamale Metropolis such that, corporate bodies and institutions (both private and governmental) would brand the product for their organisational wear.

(ii) A sensitisation campaign should also be undertaken by civil society groups and volunteers (in groups and as individuals) to awaken people from seeing the beauty of the local fashion, especially the smock industry.

(iii) The government should declare and promote the use of smock for national functions. Official days could be set aside in the week or month for all citizens to fashion themselves in smock products.

(iv) Factories should be put in place to process the raw materials needed for the mass production of smock in large quantities so as to ensure their quality and to be able to feed an ever-growing demand for smock when the sensitisation and promotions policies become successful. This would also reduce the price of

the product to attract more customers. This is because economics principles have it that; with all other things being equal, lower prices attract higher demands, and higher prices attract lower demands except in a few instances for some necessities.

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