# *SHIRIN AMAARE*: BELLISMA-URGE GELE HEADDRESS

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## ABSTRACT

The paper is of qualitative paradigm centred on practice-based research design. It highlights the creative process of a headdress style exhibit fashioned for a Millennial Muslim bride's walima (celebration/reception) using indigenous African resources. The main materials used are "Epele" fabric from Northern Ghana and classic Gele fabrics used in Southern Nigeria. Non-routine design is adopted to impact the outcome. The results are thematically analysed to reflect the use of culture trends, fashion innovation, creativity and production in meeting the needs of the contemporary Ghanaian Millennial Muslim bride. The beautiful headdress accessories wrapped in local African fabrics (from Northern Ghana and Nigeria) are gorgeous with a focus on style, materials and method. The attractive Bellisma-Urge head wraps created give the Millennial Muslim Bride that dazzling look perfect for holding the attention of the groom and every guest; making her the real 'centre' of attraction deservedly.

**Keywords:** *Shirin Amaare*, *Bellisma-Urge*, *Gele*, Headdress, design-led model, consumer fashion theories

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cultural borrowing is accepted in fashion design. Indeed, "Africans have" not only "borrowed many items from cultures outside the continent'' (Smith & Eicher, 1982) but also from themselves even as they combine the indigenous and the foreign to fashion out other dress items (Damalie, 2021). To that extent, Ghanaian Muslim brides have embraced contemporary fashion of dressing, particularly the elegant *Gele* headdress design worn to accessorise the versatile *Shigan Yorubawa* (literally meaning dress of the Yoruba people women), originally from Western Nigeria, and other high fashion from around the globe for their *walima* (wedding celebrations). The secret however is that these borrowed fashion

can be adapted in various styles to suit the needs of Ghanaian Muslim brides. The customised *Gele* head tie in particular is still trending for most Muslim bridal ceremonies in Ghana (Damalie, 2021). The project is premised on Sproles' (1979) sub-culture and innovation-collective theories (as cited in Rahman et al., 2014) and modelled on Pasricha and Kadolph's (2009) design-led concept. The creative design strategy adopted is non-routine in nature (Evbuomwan, Sivaloganathan & Jebb, 1996). The design strategy is informed by the model adopted to impact on the final outlook of the headdress produced.

*The Study - Design brief*

The project is designed for a Millennial Muslim bride's *walima. Walima* is an Arabic term adopted by Hausa speaking communities. The term refers to the celebration or reception held mostly featuring the bride. Recent developments however show that the event is taking various forms. New trending cases indicate that the modern Muslim couples (the brides and the grooms) are expected to attend a reception held in their honour. The couple is mostly dressed in themed fashion and they change clothing severally (Damalie, 2021). The readings however suggest that the bride remains the centre of attention and is expected to look modestly gorgeous during the occasion.

As indicated earlier, the customer is the contemporary Muslim bride with an urge to look beautiful and modest among her social group during her wedding reception (to be held during the day time to evening time). In line with Sproles' theory (1979) as cited in Rahman et al. (2014) and Pasricha and Kadolph's (2009) design-led concept, the project adopted non-routine creative design strategy so as to impact creativity and innovation (Evbuomwan, Sivaloganathan & Jebb, 1996) on the design process and the results. The strategy helped in the selection of the theme vis-à-vis designs, colours and decoration on one hand, and on the other hand selection of materials, and the method of producing the headdress.

*Consumer fashion adoption, Cultural trend analysis, Fashion innovation, Creativity and Production*

The sub-cultural innovation theory explains culture's ability to spread new fashion among the people, while the innovative-collective theory explains that individuals who are creative and innovative are treated as the leaders in fashion because of their choices and styles (Sproles, 1979 as cited in Rahman et al., 2014).

The two theories justifies the study and thus guided the selection of the cultural artefact (*Gele* headdress) and the client sampled to diffuse the fashion brand to be created respectively. Current literature on trends in dressing the Ghanaian Muslim bride indicates that she is a fashion forward client who requires attention to detailing during her *walima* (Damalie, 2021). A lot is expected of what fashion outlook she will wear on the wedding day and no cost is spared in achieving that aim, hence the decision to select her as a client to work on, and to use the occasion to diffuse the brand (exhibit).

Evbuomwan, Sivaloganathan and Jebb (1996) classify non-routine designs as designs that are original or new. These forms of design are innovative and creative designs. Haven adopted creativity and fashion innovation, the project placed high premium on the aesthetics and styles, the materials used and production method applied respectively.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The head dressing accessories fashioned have been rendered in three different fabrics. The main materials used are "*Epele*" fabric from Northern Ghana and original *Gele* fabrics from Southern Nigeria and dressmaker's pins. Inspiration is from the contemporary Ghanaian Millennial Muslim woman's bridal need to cover her hair even though she desires to look trendy and attractive on such an auspicious day in her life, and her value of modernity in her marital life, translated into modern transitional staircases. The collection is titled *Bellisma-Urge* meaning beautiful desires.

### 2.1 Construction Materials & Techniques

*Fashion Fabrics / Colour Palette:* High-end, high-performance traditional *'Epele'* /*Fugu* and *Gele* fabrics are used for executing the project.

i. Exotic Sparkly Crispy Pinked-edge *Gele* wrapper 229 cm by 47 cm fabric piece; Colours - tinted yellow and silver with shimmering effect (left position, ***Fig. 1a***).

ii. Smooth-velvety feel two pieces of the Broad loom woven *'Epele'/Fugu 178 cm by 41 cm fabric piece; Colours* – Bright Pink, white, and black striped design. Colours celebrate the bride's youth and pure nature. The soft-to-touch but firm feel in hold nature of the texture of the fabric is largely due to the twill weave from fine cotton /silky yarns used (centre position, ***Fig. 1b***).

iii. Expensive Crispy Eyelet-edged *Gele* wrapper 178 cm by 44 cm fabric piece; Colours – The pleasant chocolate brown and sparkly gold all-over patterned piece with tiny stoned accents has the traditional crispy nature of the celebrated *Gele* fabric (right position, ***Fig. 1c***).

*Construction Techniques Applied:*

One-time customised draped head dress featuring:

i. Vee and crescent shaped multi-pleated wrap techniques with petal details for embellishment (centre position, ***Fig. 1a***).

ii. Round shaped multi-pleated *Fan* wrap with side rosette touch and eyelet-edged to accentuate the look (right position, ***Fig. 1b***).

iii. A combination of vee and round shaped multi-pleated/ layered wrap featuring *Fan*, front side fascinator, back petals and rosette, and pinked edge details (left position, ***Fig. 1c***).

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## 3. RESULTS: The Bellisma-Urge Headdress



**Fig. 1a** **Fig. 1b** **Fig. 1c**

**Fig. 1a:** The ***Bellisma-Urge*** style 1 displayed on regular size doll head in Pinked edge tinted yellow *Gele* fabric.

**Fig. 1b:** The ***Bellisma-Urge*** style 2 displayed on regular size doll head in smooth-velvety feel two pieces broad loom woven "*Epele*"/ *Fugu* fabric.

**Fig. 1c**: The ***Bellisma-Urge*** style 3 displayed on regular size doll head in expensive crispy eyelet-edged or perforated edge *Gele* fabric.

***Source: Field Data, January, 2022.***

### 3.1 Thematic Analysis

The classic exotic sparkly crispy pinked-edge *Gele* wrapper measures 229 cm by 47 cm. the rectangular fabric piece is tinted yellow and silver colours and has shimmering effect (left position, ***Fig. 1a***) appropriate for the style and occasion. The fabric is relatively broader than the other ones used and could accommodate more pleats as illustrated.

On the other hand the trendy smooth-velvety feel two pieces broad loom woven *'Epele'/Fugu* 178 cm measures 41 cm. The fabric pieces come in bright pink, white, and black striped design. The colours celebrate the youthfulness of the bride and her pure nature. The fabric is soft-to-touch but firm feel in hold. The nature of the texture of the fabric is largely due to the twill weave from fine cotton /silky yarns used (centre position, ***Fig. 1b***). The two separate pieces used accounted in the layered detailing of the style derived as shown.
The expensive crispy eyelet-edged G*ele* wrapper is a classic. It measures 178 cm by 44 cm. the rectangular fabric piece comes in pleasant chocolate brown and has sparkly gold all-over patterned piece with tiny stoned accents. The fabric has the traditional crispy nature of the celebrated *Gele* fabric (right position, ***Fig. 1c***). It is actually half of a full piece. The size allowed for the cuteness required of the style demonstrated. Unlike the old Gele styles, and very much like the new trending styles, the head wraps are not wide but they cover the bride's head and they provide her the finish that she needs.

### 3.2 Discussion

Like the new school of creativity that hit Nigeria's creative artists who are bored with one style taking over for months coming up with several new head wraps. These latest *Gele* styles have a similar structure with a distinctive finish. The gorgeous and stylish headdress collection fashioned is inspired by modern transitional staircases, and exquisitely wrapped in trendy classics of indigenous African fabrics from Northern Ghana and Nigeria. As a collection, it does create a link to tradition and modernity which continue to inspire many designers on the continent and beyond such as Maimouna Diallo of *Maimour style* and Ayesha Ayensu of the *Christie Brown* label cited in Rovine (2016) and Richards (2015) respectively. The headdress equally reflects history and innovation which tells the story of African fashion and how far it has evolved yet maintaining the origins of African dress culture. The headdress shows variety; chic and cute design forms and beauty from the African continent, showcasing Yoruba land in Western Nigeria and Northern Ghana cultures blended with a contemporary built environment. This adds a personal twist to a look only for it to come out as the ultimate look to inspire others.

The three (3) themed headdress collections reflect the customer – the contemporary Muslim bride, and the source of motivation. The options created in the themed collection are significant and needed since the bride's *walima* demands changing outfits severally. Current literature on dressing trends suggests that Muslim brides are expected to change clothes many times during their *walima* (Damalie, 2021). Thus creating variety of options will insure the brides has options. The high-end, high-performance and trendy traditional fabrics and the method adapted for executing the project make the headdress African and culturally-inclined and classic; yet the chic styles created make the traditional fabrics fashionable, new and artistic. In other words, they are not all over the place like the old *Gele* styles.

They are cute but they cover the bride's head and they provide her the finish that she needs with a personal twist. For instance, the vee, face frames of the styles created narrows the face of the bride, while the round face frame styled headdress created broadens the face of the bride. Meanwhile the combined vee and round face framed style created plays a dual role of narrowing and broadening the face of the bride at the same time. The variety of styles rendered is for style effect but can also be used to complement the bride's dress necklines and make up to create dramatic illusions in look.

In addition to that, the petal details used for embellishment i.e. side rosette touch, front side fascinator, and back petals and rosette further places emphasis on different angles of the face of the bride at a time and helps create a distinctiveness in the total look achieved.

Further, the bold colour palette of tinted yellow, pink-black-white and coffee-brown with shimmering effects is a spectacular theme for a modern bride, and meets the contemporary customer's bridal needs, desires and values looking at the trends. Muslim brides, according to Damalie (2021) per the trends wear very colourful clothing during the bridal celebration.

The pinked, smooth and perforated edged fabric finish further ornate the detailing and add to the elegance of the styles created giving emphasis to each piece in the collection as illustrated in **Fig. 1a, 1b** and **1c**. Thus, the materials selected, and the pleated effects give the headdress dress exquisite finish and add to the uniqueness of the styles. They bring freshness to the wearer's outlook in the case of each style as illustrated in **Fig. 1a, 1b,** and **1c**.The looks created are exquisite and meant to impress; to make a good impression for the contemporary Millennial Muslim bride.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Thus, the exquisite *Bellisma-Urge* head wraps collection fashioned reflects the philosophical underpinnings and the design strategies adopted. It echoes African tradition, innovation and creativity in the use of classic materials and methods in rendering unique bespoke *Gele* styles. The beautiful *Bellisma-Urge* head wraps rendered give the contemporary Millennial Muslim bride that indigenous look perfect for attracting the attention of the groom and indeed every guest, making her the real 'centre' of attraction deservedly.

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