

Analyzing the Significance of Indigenous Hats in Ghanaian Culture

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ABSTRACT

Hats are highly noticeable accessories because they immediately capture the observer's attention towards the face. The purpose of this study was to analyse the significance of hat in Ghanaian culture. The majority of Ghanaians are unaware of the history of the Ghanaian hat, and the fashion industry pays little attention to the indigenous hat, disregarding Ghanaian culture. The method adopted for the study was a mixed-method approach where both interviews and questionnaires were used for gathering information for the study. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The study had as its population all regular undergraduate students at Akonten Appiah-Menka University of Skills, Training and Entrepreneurial Development, Kumasi and covered all students with a sample size of 109 students. The method used for gathering information for the study was interview and a questionnaire. The research found that the Dagomba mostly wear hat to depict their culture. It was also revealed that, unlike the Dagombas, the Ashantis and the Gas are of the view that, wearing the hat is purposely for complementing one's clothing. The study concluded that, the Dagomba, the Ashantis and the Gas all depict their culture of hats in variety of ways.

Keywords: hats, culture, head dress, social and values.

INTRODUCTION

Fashion has undergone significant transformations throughout history, encompassing diverse cultures, personal expressions, and societal values (Thomas, 2007; Steele, 2008). Clothing serves as a means of identification, reflecting one's culture, personality, values, and lifestyle, while also being subject to judgment as it is the first aspect noticed by others (Bourdieu, 1990).

Within the realm of fashion accessories, hats hold particular prominence due to their ability to draw attention to the face (McDowell, 2007; Thomas, 2007). They serve various purposes, such as providing protection against weather conditions, being worn for ceremonial events like graduations or religious occasions, ensuring safety, or simply functioning as a fashion statement (Thomas, 2007). Artisans also don hats primarily for safeguarding themselves against potential injuries caused by falling objects or other hazards.

The origin of hats can be traced back to pre-colonial times, and their significance extends beyond being a mere head covering. Head wraps, headscarves, and hats constitute integral elements of styling the hair and dressing the head, including the use of natural hair, hair additions, adornments, chemically treated hair, and extensions, among other variations (Colomba, 2017). Women consciously choose to wear these head coverings in social settings, driven by personal choice or specific purposes.

Historical accounts shed light on the importance of head dress among Ghanaian women. Ferdinand Romer, a merchant in the Gold Coast during the 18th century, observed how distinguished black women in Accra meticulously adorned themselves, paying particular attention to their head dress. The hairstyles varied from

finger-length hair arranged in cylinders or square pyramids to those resembling a cockscomb. The styling techniques included the use of wooden rollers to powder and enhance the shine of these elaborate structures (Romer, 1760). This historical context showcases the Ghanaian women's long-standing penchant for fashionable head dress, highlighting its integral position within their overall attire.

In contemporary times, the influence of Western fashion has resulted in the association of caps, hats, and headbands with the youth fashion culture in Ghana. However, it is unfortunate that the cultural heritage and historical significance of indigenous Ghanaian hats are often overlooked. This lack of awareness, coupled with the prevailing fashion trends, has led to the preference for modern Western hats, disregarding the cultural values of indigenous headwear (Muhammed, 2016).

While the fashion industry has experienced economic growth due to evolving styles and trends, the neglect of indigenous hats has contributed to the increasing dominance of foreign cultures and the erosion of Ghanaian cultural identity. The blind adoption of foreign hat styles without considering the historical and cultural significance has led to the fading recognition of indigenous hats (Alexander, 2011). This situation calls for a thoughtful approach to develop and promote indigenous hats as vital accessories, preserving Ghanaian culture while impacting the fashion industry.

The researchers acknowledge the importance of understanding the values of hats and their impact on the Ghanaian fashion industry. Therefore, the objective of this research is to critically examine the significance of hats and evaluate their influence within Ghanaian fashion (Thomas, 2007; Colomba, 2017; Romer, 1760; Muhammed, 2016; Alexander, 2011).

The study therefore has the following specific objectives:

1. To analyse some of the cultural values or beliefs of hats.
2. To discover the perceptions about hats in the society and among individuals.
3. To determine the impact of hats on the Ghanaian fashion industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural values or beliefs of hats of the Dagomba Tribe

The Dagombas are an ethnic community residing in the northern part of Ghana. They have a population of approximately 931,000 individuals (Gbedze kuku, 2012). Their habitat is situated in the Sudan region, a sparsely populated savannah area below the sahelian belt. The Dagombas speak the Dagbani language, which belongs to the More-Dagbani sub-group of the Gur languages. The ancestral land of the Dagombas, referred to as Dagbon, covers approximately 20,000km² (Gbedze kuku, 2012).

Clothing and body art have long been significant in preserving the histories, values, and ethnic identities of diverse cultures (Acquah et al., 2017). In Northern Ghana, the smock holds great importance as a distinctive garment (Acquah et al., 2017). Wearing a smock or pantaloons without a headgear or hat is considered improper, as hats serve as a means of communication within the Dagbon culture (Acquah et al., 2017). Headgears, known as "zugprisi," are crucial for male adornment, typically handcrafted from hand-woven fabric (Acquah et al., 2017). Care must be taken in wearing hats, especially during social functions, to avoid any missteps that may have unintended consequences (Acquah et al., 2017).

Certain hats are exclusive to title holders and are often red in color, representing the highest level of status within their lineage (Acquah et al., 2017). In Dagbon culture, red is generally prohibited for common use, and only title persons are allowed to wear red hats (Acquah et al., 2017). The exception is found in the Upper East region, where red hats are worn by earthly priests (Tindanas)

The following are the most acceptable ways of wearing hats and what they communicate in Dagbon. It is

important to note that the communication by hats cut across all the three northern regions, Northern, Upper East and West Regions.

a. "*N kpeeka ya ??*" or "*Nkpei-kan*" or "*sobigarima*" is a hat gesture meaning "I have no equal." It involves bending or brushing the top of the hat forward. This bold gesture is used to communicate superiority in various aspects such as wealth, strength, attractiveness, or knowledge. It is a style predominantly worn by wealthy individuals, chiefs, and those who are spiritually fortified, symbolizing their status in the town. However, it is important to note that this provocative behavior can sometimes lead to trouble or confrontations if it inadvertently offends others (Acquah et al., 2017; Quaye, 2023).

Figure 1. Traditional Dagbon hats: wearing the Hat to the forehead



Source. Abukari (2021)

b. "*N laa laa n daan tarima*" holds meaningful messages such as 'I am a peaceful person' or 'I prefer to be left alone.' This message is conveyed through the action of brushing or bending the top of his hat to the left side of his hat. It signifies humility and a desire to avoid conflict.

Figure 2. Traditional Dagbon hats: wearing the Hat to the left



Source. Abukari (2021)

c. The hat gesture known as” Kpi??lana” is when a person folds his hat towards the right side of his head. It signifies that he is a person of strength. He could either be a rich man, or an influential person in society. However, it is worth noting that this gesture might be adapted based on context. For instance, a person could fold their hat to the right but promptly adjust it to the left when approaching a gathering of higher-ranked individuals. Leaving the hat folded to the right in front of a chief or someone of higher status could be considered disrespectful or contemptuous (Acquah et al., 2017; Quaye, 2023).

Figure 3. Traditional Dagbon hats: wearing the Hat to the right



Source. Abukari (2021)

d. The ‘N-monikuyagma’ or ‘Molifee’ holds a distinctive place in Northern culture, being a special white conical hat worn in an upward-pointing manner. The molifee is a hat worn by prominent people in society for special occasions and ceremonies. Its significance is profound, symbolizing the weight of substantial responsibilities. The Yaa-Naa, other chiefs, the wealthy and opinion leaders in society like the imams wear the molifee.

The molifee is the hat that a newly installed chief is given, as a sign of his success. The molifee is however not a preserve of any group of people. Anyone who sees himself as a respected person in society can wear it. Despite the rich cultural significance of these practices, the ‘N-monikuyagma’ or ‘Molfe’ hat has been unfortunately misused by some young men during social events in Tamale. This misuse dilutes the profound meaning it carries, as it fails to grasp the depth of its cultural connotations (Abukari, 2021; Acquah et al., 2017).

Figure 4. Traditional Dagbon hats: Molifee



Source. Abukari (2021)

e. “Aago supriogo” is a satin hat resembling traditional handloom fabric. Its message varies based on how it is positioned when worn. Initially, it was a status symbol for the economically privileged, but it has become

more affordable by repurposing second-hand clothing. These hand-decorated hats come in various colors, with black being the most common (Acquah et al., 2017).

f. The “Boduwa” or mourning towel is worn on the head as a sign of bereavement. It is commonly rolled or knotted for easy removal. It is only worn during mourning and not for fashion purposes. The towel is also draped over a smock as part of Northern regalia and used to wipe sweat. It helps protect against accepting “bad money” during dancing (Acquah et al., 2017; Abukari, 2021).

Figure 5. Regent of Nanung Kingdom, Nyelinbolgu Naa Yakubu Dasana. Wearing the Boduwa



Source. Abukari (2021)

g. “Bugu” is a cylindrical headgear made from tree bark, worn by regents and mourners. “Buri” (plural) come in various sizes and shades. Regents and first daughters wear large Buri with talismans for protection. Smaller ones are worn by other bereaved family members. Some Buri are made from cardboard. Grandchildren or the first grandson wear Buri for comic relief, imitating the deceased (Acquah et al., 2017; Abukari, 2021).

h. “Supri-gbangno” is a headgear created from fortified, multi-colored local fabric, aiming to offer protection to the wearer. It is commonly made using white fabric or Kpankoobgu, a textile crafted from guinea fowl feathers. Similar to the Gbangno, it is worn on important occasions, particularly during periods of tension or conflict (Acquah et al., 2017).

Cultural values or beliefs of hats of the Ga-Adangbe people

The Ga-Adangme, also known as Gã-Ada?b?, Ga-Dangbe, or Ga-Dangbme, are ethnic groups found in Ghana and Togo. They belong to the Ga-Dangme ethnolinguistic group and primarily reside in the Greater Accra, Eastern, and Volta regions of Ghana, as well as in Aného in Togo and Benin (Ameke et al., 2008).

Early European visitors to the Guinea Coast, such as Barbot, de Maree, and Ogilby, provided artistic impressions of the dressing style of the “negro” people. Their observations about the Ga people’s fashion choices were applicable to Ghanaians as a whole. Bossman (1967) noted the various head adornments worn by the inhabitants, particularly the Ga, including long curled and braided hair tied at the crown, hair styled in small curls with oil and dye resembling roses, and the use of gold fetishes or coral decorations. The Ga people also showed a fondness for European hats. According to Jones (1983), lower-class individuals like wine-tappers and fishermen wore girdles to cover their nudity, accompanied by hats or caps made from

animal skins and rushes for protection against the sun. They also wore waistcloths made from bark cloth known as “quaqua.”

In Ga society, young individuals (macroes) and chiefs (cabocero’s) preferred simpler attire. Chiefs wore a “Paan,” a cap resembling those worn by ancient Israelites, and a string or chain of corals around their heads. Women exhibited more fashionable clothing, with their garments being relatively expensive and influenced by European fashion trends (Bossman, 1967).

Certain customs were observed within the Ga culture. For instance, during a fishmonger’s first pregnancy, the women would throw dust and sand over her, then wash it off at the sea while her closest friends shaved her hair in a special pattern and braided it again. Pregnant wives of merchants would wear multiple strings of glass beads around their waist, with their upper bodies bare, as a sign of the husband’s affluence. Upon delivering the baby, the wife would make a cap for her husband using deerskin or sheepskin as a gesture of appreciation (Bossman, 1967).

In traditional Ga religion, the head attire of priests and priestesses has remained constant, reflecting their role, status, beliefs, and spiritual possession. It is not subject to fashion but has incorporated modern materials like hair thread, scarves, and hats when appropriate (Sieber and Herreman, 2000). The head attire of a Ga priestess is an integral part of their overall dressing style, identifying the deity by which they are possessed. Male-possessed deities have upward-projecting headgear, while female-possessed deities are represented by rounded headgear or sections resembling soft balls. Men may follow contemporary hairstyle trends or wear special headdresses for specific occasions, such as otofo initiates, royals, priests, or priestesses (Sieber and Herreman, 2000).

Modern hairstyles among the Ga people may incorporate both human and synthetic hair, and accessories like caps, scarves, veils, animal hair or tails, feathers, beads, combs, shells, wires, and spills may be added for aesthetic purposes. Some individuals, particularly youths, adopt unique hairdos, tassels, or unconventional styles for fashion or self-expression, without traditional or religious significance (Sieber and Herreman, 2000).

Cultural values or beliefs of hats of Ashanti tribe

The Ashanti, an Akan ethnic group in central Ghana, have a rich cultural heritage and distinctive fashion practices. The golden stool holds great significance as a sacred symbol representing worship of ancestors and the well-being of the Ashanti people (Asantehene, 2023). The head dress, an ancient form of art, serves various purposes such as moral, religious, and climatic reasons (Acheampong, 2019). Modern fashion trends among the Ashanti, particularly the youth, are influenced by Western styles and modified versions of traditional head covers. Different hairstyles and headgear signify specific roles, statuses, and beliefs within the community. Chiefs and courtiers wear elaborate clothing and accessories, including special headdresses and regalia made by skilled artisans (Asantehene, 2023). Priests and priestesses have unique dressing styles based on the deities they worship, often characterized by minimal accessories and white face paint during possession (Acheampong, 2019). Marriage customs involve the exchange of fashionable items as part of the bride price, and ceremonial decorations such as body paintings, headwear, and jewelry (Asantehene, 2023). Funerals of chiefs involve distinctive rituals and attire, with royal guards wearing traditional battle dresses and mourners paying respects by removing certain accessories (Acheampong, 2019). Chiefs wear crowns adorned with silver and gold symbols, while heralds and court criers don caps known as ‘adomasa’ (Asantehene, 2023). Turbans and red bands are worn by chiefs and others on solemn or protest occasions (Acheampong, 2019).

Perceptions of the hat in the society and among individuals

Religion:

The major religions in Ghana are Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Religion. As the beliefs of the Ashanti,

Dagomba, and Ga tribes were previously discussed, this context focuses on Christianity and Islam.

In Christianity, women historically covered their heads as a sign of spiritual submission to God and their husbands. Some Catholic women still wear chapel veils, and clergy members wear various types of head coverings like the Kamilavka and Miters. Hats are also worn by many Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, especially for special occasions like weddings. Fascinators have become an alternative to hats (Achaempong, 2019; Sharon-ann, 1998).

Muslim women adhere to the Islamic principle of dressing modestly and cover their heads and part of their faces with a hijab. Muslim men wear the Taqiyah or kufis, which are short, rounded skullcaps, often during prayers. The cultural differences in clothing and beliefs between the two faiths should not lead to a superiority complex.

In Christian customs, a man shows respect by removing his hat but keeping his shoes, while in Arab countries, a Muslim man demonstrates respect by keeping his hat on and removing his shoes (Sharon-ann, 1998).

Social:

Hats are commonly worn by market women, traders, and hawkers in Ghana to protect themselves from the sun (Gbedze kuku, 2012). Hard hats are used in workplaces to safeguard workers from hazards and are proven means of saving lives (Hull, 2013). The traditional cap and gown signify graduation and are worn with specific guidelines on how to wear them (Hull, 2013). Military personnel wear hats to denote their nationality, branch of service, rank, or regiment, while police typically wear distinctive hats such as peaked caps or brimmed hats (Gbedze kuku, 2012). Musicians and celebrities are known for their fashion choices, including various hat styles, and their influence in the fashion world is significant (Thomas, 2016). Hats are also important for covering the head in inclement conditions, especially for babies who lose heat rapidly through their heads (Gbedze kuku, 2012). Different ethnic groups in Ghana have their own unique hat styles, such as the 'Togbenya' worn by the Anlo people and the 'Raffia hat' worn by the Upper East region (Gbedze kuku, 2012). However, in current fashion trends, hats are often worn purely for aesthetic purposes without considering their cultural significance (Gbedze kuku, 2012).

Lifestyle:

Lifestyle encompasses how individuals, families, and societies adapt to their physical, psychological, social, and economic environments on a daily basis (Business Dictionary, 2019). Hats, as fashion accessories, serve to complement and enhance one's overall attire. Just like clothing, hats and headgears are suitable for specific occasions. Combining clothing and accessories expresses personal style and identity. Nunez (2018) explains that accessories can transform a basic outfit by focusing on different pieces. For example, a white button-up shirt and jeans can be accessorized with statement jewelry, a cross body bag, leather boots, a floppy straw hat, and trendy sunglasses for a casual day out with friends. While accessories like handbags, hats, or scarves may not hold much significance individually, when combined with clothing, they contribute to a cohesive and stylish appearance from head to toe. Hats offer an avenue for self-expression and can elevate any outfit, whether it's a stylish or casual look. To achieve a flattering appearance, it is important to choose a hat that aligns with one's personal style. Keeping the clothing simple allows the hat to become the focal point of the ensemble (Hellman, 2017).

Impact of hat on the Ghanaian Fashion Industry

Fashion is the popular style of clothing, accessories, and decorations, with garments being worn by individuals from various backgrounds. Over time, fashion has evolved and adapted as individuals embrace new trends (Sparrow, 2017). The influence of European travelers and trade activities brought about changes in clothing styles along the coastal lands of Ghana, leading to an adaptation of western fashion trends

(Bossman, 1967). The fashion industry in Ghana has provided employment opportunities in clothing manufacturing, fabric production, and the creation of accessories such as shoes, hats, bags, belts, and scarves (Chertky, 2013). Social events and occasions have fostered the production and consumption of fashionable items, bringing unity and satisfaction to society (Alexander, 2011). Technological advancements have enhanced the creative abilities of designers in the fashion industry, allowing for the production of sophisticated and artistically designed headwear (Ramey, 2013). The fashion industry is a significant part of a larger ecosystem, employing millions of people across various sectors (Chertky, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study takes a mixed method approach since the study was carried out in a particular institution with a specific group of people.

Population

The population refers to the total number of units or observations of a particular phenomenon in a given area (Kumekpor, 2002; Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this research, the focus was on the relevance of hat in the Ghanaian context, specifically studying the case of the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills, Training, and Entrepreneurial Development (AAMUSTED) in Kumasi. The population for this study consisted of students belonging to the Ashanti, Dagomba, and Ga ethnic groups.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling method was used to select the respondents to ensure that individuals would have equal chances of being selected. The researchers took into consideration the population that the needed information could be obtained from and sought their interest to participate in the research work; this is the surest way to obtain the required information. Concerning the sample size used: data was collected from 109 students of AAMUSTED campus; 3 students who were Dagombas, 3 students who were Ashantis and 3 students who were Gas were interviewed while, 100 questionnaires were administered to students of the fashion design and, catering and hospitality class.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection process uses a variety of sources and techniques. Primary and secondary data are the two main sources of data that are most frequently used. For this research, interview was used as a source of collecting primary data.

Interview

This study adopts a structured interview because of the use of an interview guide. The interview guide includes many crucial questions that both specify the topics to be covered and provide the interviewer room to diverge. With the structured technique, the interview guide was used because, the interviewer asked a predetermined set of questions in a standardized manner to all interviewees. The goal was to ensure consistency and minimize bias in the interviewing process (Bryman, 2012).

Data Analysis

In this study, a structured interview guide was used to collect data for the objectives. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audiotaped and conducted in both English and Twi, the native language of the majority of Ghanaians. The duration of each interview was approximately 30 minutes.

The interview data, both recorded and written, was translated and transcribed. The transcribed data was then inputted into MS Excel for analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes in the responses. Codes were generated to organize and categorize the data. This coding process facilitated a clearer presentation of the data.

Validity and Reliability

To test for the reliability and validity of the test tool used thus the interview guide used, the pilot study was conducted for 5 randomly selected interviewees. The responses proved that the data collection instrument was valid and reliable.

The reliability of the questionnaire was further tested using Cronbach’s Alpha. According to Cronbach (1951), an instrument is dependable if it has a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.7. Therefore, Cronbach’s alpha score of less than 0.7 is deemed as not reliable whilst a score of at least 0.7 was deemed as reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The background or profile of a respondent is known as a respondent profile. It includes information about the person’s gender, age, type of business they are in, and length of time in business. The characteristic of each demographic profile described below.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic	Classifications	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	65	65
	Female	35	35
	Total	100	100
Age	Below 30	35	40
	31 – 45	25	25
	Above 45	40	35
	Total	100	100
Ethnic Background/ Tribe	Ga	31	31
	Dagomba	34	34
	Ashanti	35	35
	Total	100	100

Programme	Fashion Design	45	45
	Catering and Hospitality	55	55
	Total	100	100
Year of Study	Level 100	25	25
	Level 200	38	38
	Level 300	20	20
	Level 400	17	17
	Total	100	100

Source: Field Data Analysis (2022)

Table 4.1 shows that more than half of the respondents (65%) are males while 35% are females. Most of the respondents (40%) are above 45 years, while 35% are below 30 years. Only 25% of respondents are 31 to 45 years respectively. The percentage of respondents from each tribe that is, Ga, Dagomba and Ashanti are 31%, 34% and 35%. The majority of the respondents 55%, are offering Catering and Hospitality Programme while 45% are Fashion Design students. Most of the respondents 38%, are in level 200, 25% are level 100, 20% are level 300 students and 17% are in their 4th year of their study.

Cultural values or beliefs of hats

Question 1. Do you wear hats? If yes, why do you wear hats?

The first question explored whether individuals wore hats and their motivations behind wearing them. The findings revealed that 44.444% of the students, including all Dagomba students and one Ga student, claimed that the hat was worn for religious and cultural reasons. However, 33.333% of students that is, 2 Ashanti students and 1 Ga student indicated that, they wear hats as a fashion accessory to complement their outfit or to express their personal style. While 22.23% of respondents, including 1 Ga student and 1 Ashanti student, usually wear hats when they want to shield themselves from the sun or if it is especially cold outside. The quote of respondent 2 supports the findings above:

When I'm outdoors for a long period of time in the sun, I usually wear a hat to shield my face and head from the sun's rays (Respondent 2).

In response to the question of whether there are any social repercussions if you do not wear a hat for any event, 80% of respondents said that, not wearing a hat when it is considered customary or expected may be perceived as a lack of adherence to tradition or appropriate dress etiquette. It could potentially be seen as a sign of disrespect or disregard for the occasion. While the remaining respondents (20%) claimed that no consequences or penalties had been applied.

C. Perceptions about hats in the society and among individuals

Question 2. How do people perceive hats in the society?

In the second part of the interview, how people perceive hats in the society and among themselves were discussed. All respondents (100%) claimed that, certain religions have symbolic significance and different

perspectives in the wearing of hats. Respondent 4 confirms the finding above:

I think that religiously, hats have a variety of meanings. For instance, some Christians wear hats or other head coverings as a sign of respect just as the Muslims (Respondent 4).

Question 3. Do hats complement one’s clothing?

In relation to whether hats complement one’s clothing, all respondents (100%) agreed that since the hat serves as a fashion accessory, when chosen thoughtfully, it can enhance and complete a person’s overall look. 77.777% of respondents also believed that, wearing a hat can also indicate someone’s occupation while 22.222% of respondents thought otherwise.

The impact of hats on the Ghanaian fashion industry

Question 4. Has hat affected the fashion industry?

The final part of the interview focused on how hats have affected the Ghanaian fashion industry. According to the respondents, 77.777% believe that there is no economic impact in the Ghanaian fashion industry mostly when the foreign hats are purchased. Approximately 22.222% of the respondents expressed the belief that only a small number of hats were purchased by certain cultures, such as the Dagombas, which does not really contribute to the fashion industry. Respondents 9 confirms the finding below:

I doubt if there is any economic impact in the fashion industry especially when the foreign hats are mostly purchased (Respondent 9).

Approximately 55.555% of the respondents expressed the belief that hats have the potential to create jobs for people in the society, although they did not perceive the existence of a dedicated industry specifically focused on hats. On the other hand, about 44.444% of the respondents doubted that hats could lead to job creation due to low patronage.

Regarding the choice of local and foreign hats, 33.333% of respondents specifically the Dagombas expressed a preference for local hats due to the cultural value attributed to them. Conversely, around 66.666% of the respondents preferred foreign hats primarily because of their aesthetic appeal and perceived beauty. The quote of respondent 6 and 7 supports the findings above:

I love my hat collection because they all have meanings and reflect my cultural heritage (Respondent 6). I

prefer the foreign hat because it is beautiful and serve many purposes (Respondent 7).

All of the respondents (100%) unanimously agreed that the preference for foreign hats has had a negative impact on the patronage and viability of local hats in the market.

Cultural values, perceptions, and the impact of hats on the Ghanaian fashion industry

The tables below are the questions and responses of the questionnaire.

Section A: Cultural Values or Beliefs of Hats

Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do you wear hats?	52%	48%
If you do not wear a hat for any occasion, is there any social implication?	85%	15%

Out of the 52% respondents who claimed they wore hats, 29% indicated that they wore hats as a fashion or style, while the other 23% claimed they wore hats purposely for cultural reasons.

Majority of respondents (68%) agreed that they wore hat for special occasions (weddings, funerals etc), 17% indicated that they wore it for religious ceremonies while 15% claimed they wore it as an outdoor activity.

Most respondents 85% indicated that there were no social implication when the hat is not worn while the rest of the respondents that is 15% think otherwise.

Section B: Perceptions about Hats in Society and Among Individuals

Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
For religious purposes, does wearing a hat have any meaning?	68%	32%
Do hats complement one's clothing?	100%	0%
Do you think wearing a hat indicates someone's occupation?	70%	30%

68% of the respondents did not believe that, the hat has any meaning while, 32% believed that the hat has a significance meaning. All respondents agreed that, the hat complemented one's clothing and most of the respondents (70%) agreed that, the hat could indicate someone's occupation while 30% did not agree to this question.

Section C: The Impact of Hats on the Ghanaian Fashion Industry

Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do hats have an economic impact in the Ghanaian fashion industry?	22%	78%
Has the hat industry led to the creation of jobs for people in the society?	20%	80%
Is the local hats preferred than the foreign hats?	15%	85%
Do you think the patronage of foreign hats has served as a detriment/threat to the local ones?	100%	0%

Most of the respondents 78%, did not believe that hats have an economic impact in the Ghanaian fashion industry and also, it could not lead to the creation of jobs for people in the society by 80% respondents. Most respondents (85%) preferred the foreign hats to the local hats and all the respondents believed that, the patronage of the foreign hats has served as a detriment to the local ones.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions of Findings

This research was conducted to explore the significance of hats within the Ghanaian cultural context. It aimed to uncover the cultural values and beliefs associated with hats, as well as the perceptions of hats within society and among individuals, including the impact of hats on the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Both a questionnaire and an interview guide were employed to gather comprehensive and accurate data for

the research.

According to the findings from the interviews, Dagomba students placed significant importance on the cultural values tied to their specific hat type. Wearing hats for them was a means of proudly representing their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of identity, and preserving traditions. Their preference for local hats over foreign ones was driven by a desire to uphold their cultural identity and heritage, which in turn played a role in generating employment opportunities within the Dagomba community.

Conversely, Ashanti and Ga students held a distinct perspective on hat-wearing. They regarded hats as accessories to enhance their personal appearance and complement their attire, with a focus on fashion and aesthetics rather than cultural symbolism. Their understanding of the cultural heritage associated with their hats was limited, and for many, hats were primarily viewed as fashionable items that added to their overall style.

In alignment with the questionnaire responses, participants acknowledged wearing hats for both fashion and cultural identity. Hat-wearing was associated with special occasions, religious ceremonies, and outdoor activities. The interpretations of the symbolic meaning of hats varied among respondents. All participants unanimously agreed that hats complemented clothing, and a majority believed that hats could signal someone's occupation. Views on the economic impact and job creation in the local fashion industry were mixed. Importantly, a preference for foreign hats over local ones was expressed by respondents, who believed that the popularity of foreign hats had a negative influence on local hat traditions.

Contribution

The primary objective of this study is to uncover the significance of hats and the potential positive impacts they can have on the Ghanaian fashion industry if given proper attention. The findings will provide valuable insights into the historical evidence of hats in Ghana, as well as the evolution and advancements of hat designs over time.

The research outcomes will be advantageous for individuals who prioritize the preservation of Ghanaian cultural values through a diverse range of appropriate hat varieties, thereby promoting indigenous Ghanaian attire. Furthermore, it will contribute to the existing literature on the subject. The beneficiaries of this project encompass the general public, parents, the youth, fashion designers, and specifically students studying textile and fashion. The study will also be valuable for students and lecturers specializing in Fashion Design and Textiles, as well as professionals in the fields of anthropology, ethnography, and ethnology.

Recommendation for future research

The researcher recommended the following to help improve hats production in Ghana:

The primary recommendation is that hat production should be aligned with the beliefs and cultural values of different tribes, incorporating distinctive elements that represent each tribe and differentiate them from one another. This would ensure that hats serve as meaningful symbols of tribal identity.

Exhibitions and digital platforms could be created through collaborative efforts involving cultural institutions, museums, academic researchers, community organizations, and digital content creators. Creating exhibitions and digital platforms to showcase the historical significance of hat-wearing, enables people to explore the evolution, cultural meanings, and stories behind different types of hats. By engaging with these displays, individuals can deepen their understanding of hat-related traditions and engage in conversations that foster appreciation and intergenerational dialogue.

Additionally, the government is advised to enact laws to allow the wearing of hats during national events and gatherings, such as the independence celebrations and Parliamentary seating. This would effectively

showcase the cultural values of different tribes and contribute to promoting Ghana's cultural heritage to the rest of the world.

The government could organize workshops and campaigns aimed at informing individuals about the legal aspects of hat-wearing, enabling them to make informed choices. By enhancing awareness of legal implications, these initiatives empower individuals to navigate hat-wearing practices with greater understanding and compliance.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism is encouraged to support hat production in various tribes across Ghana. This support would not only create job opportunities but also generate revenue for both the country and individuals involved. Consequently, this would help address the issue of youth unemployment in Ghana.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the importance of hat-wearing in Ghana. By using interviews and questionnaires, we learned that different students have different views. For Dagomba students, wearing hats connects to their culture and heritage, showing who they are. But for Ashanti and Ga students, hats are about looking good and being fashionable.

Our questionnaire also confirmed that people wear hats for both style and culture. Hats are worn on different occasions and have different meanings for each person. The agreement that hats match clothes and the different opinions on the impact of hats on jobs show how complex this topic is. The choice for foreign hats over local ones also brings up questions about change in Ghana's fashion.

Overall, this research helps us understand how hats mean different things to different people in Ghana.

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